

**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND
COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
PANEL**

**25 JUNE 2013
7.30 - 8.48 PM**



Present:

Councillors Finnie (Chairman), McLean (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Barnard, Brossard, Ms Brown, Gbadebo, Harrison, Ms Miller and Porter

Executive Members:

Councillors Mrs Ballin and Mrs Hayes

Also Present:

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)
Mark Devon, Chief Officer: Leisure & Culture
Bev Hindle, Chief Officer: Planning & Transport
Steve Loudoun, Chief Officer: Environment & Public Protection
Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture & Communities
Amanda Roden, Democratic Services Officer

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Finnie be elected Chairman of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year 2013/14.

COUNCILLOR FINNIE IN THE CHAIR

2. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor McLean be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year 2013/14.

3. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 30 April 2013 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising

Councillor Harrison raised an objection to the title of the 'Climate Change Action Plan' and requested for the title of the plan to be reviewed given the focus of its content on sustainability and reduction of waste. This would be investigated further.

4. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor Mrs Barnard indicated that she was the spouse of an Executive Member.

5. **Public Participation**

There were no submissions from members of the public in accordance with the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

6. **Quarterly Service Report (QSR)**

The Panel considered the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the Quarterly Service Report (QSR) for the fourth quarter of 2012/13 (January to March) relating to Environment, Culture and Communities (ECC).

Major variances in revenue had occurred in areas including the Waste Management Refuse Collection Contract, Waste Management Disposal, Development Control Income, Cemetery and Crematorium Income, Landscape Services Vehicles, Coral Reef Income/closedown, Licensing Income, Cemetery and Crematorium Service Agreement Cremators, Libraries Income, Supervision Fees Adoption Highways, Traffic signals, Local Development Framework carry forward, Concessionary Fares, Building Control Chargeable Account, Data Capture Tree Preservation Order Files, and Land Charges Provision for claimed personal searches.

Capital schemes identified to be carried forward were: Bridge Structural Maintenance, Car Park Maintenance, Disabled Facilities Grant, Forest Road footway, Local Safety Schemes, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace enhancement works, South Hill Park – Grounds Restoration Project, and Westmorland Park.

Key highlights included: overall and outstanding performance at Coral Reef which received good custom following re-opening in March; difficult changes introduced successfully such as car park charging at The Look Out and charges for garden waste collection; positive engagement with the public and completion of the public examination associated with the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADPD); and another successful Bracknell Half Marathon.

Work was due to be undertaken on improvements to Sandhurst Library. At Bracknell Leisure Centre the new multi-purpose activity room was due to be opened and the health and fitness suite was due to be extended in June. There would be changes to the Residents Parking Scheme and improvements to Twin Bridges. The blue bin incentive scheme was performing well and also the recycling rewards scheme. The Public Realm contract would be announced in 2014.

The ECC Department's projected saving was £350,000, a carry forward of £82,000 had been requested, and there was an underspend of £650,000 overall. Although staff turnover at the year end showed a reduction compared with the previous year, it was considered to be sufficient to bring new skills and fresh ideas and innovation to the Council.

In response to Members' questions, the following points were made:

- £120,000 was thought to cover the total liability in relation to land charges provision for claimed personal searches, assuming that all residents affected would apply.
- In relation to remedial action against under performance, recruitment had been undertaken and some internal appointments made. It was hoped that further resources would be in place by autumn 2013.
- Although the capital programme did not provide for further enhancement works to Coral Reef following the roof repairs, consideration would be given to

disabled access and possibly widening the stairs to allow the use of rubber rings in the future.

- On page 5 of the QSR, residents' survey results should show use of libraries as 69%, and not 31%.

7. **Schools Annual Environmental Management Report for 2011/12**

The Panel considered the Schools Annual Environmental Management Report for 2011/12, in relation to transport, energy use, and water consumption.

This was the ninth Annual Environmental Management Report for schools, which began as a Children, Young People and Learning initiative in 2003/04. The Report was based on consumption and cost data for the previous financial year, and was produced with input from different parts of the Environment, Culture and Communities department. The energy performance of Bracknell Forest Schools compared well against national performance indicators with the majority of schools showing improvement in energy performance.

The Borough Council did not have direct responsibility for schools but schools' performance formed part of the Council's overall performance. Many schools in Bracknell Forest were registered with the Eco-Schools programme. It was difficult to gain a true measure of water consumption as water meters at schools could sometimes be inaccurate. Electricity usage continued to rise each year due mainly to increasing IT requirements of schools and the use of air conditioning, so electricity remained the greatest fuel cost affecting schools budgets.

In response to Members' questions, the following points were made:

- Headteachers were offered support and advice on energy usage and monitoring. It would be beneficial to educate pupils in respect of the importance of conserving energy and water.
- St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School was the first in the Borough to install a solar photovoltaic system during 2011. Its energy consumption figures for the previous year 2010/11 would be obtained for comparison purposes to establish the impact of the system.
- Technical staff within the Council could advise on costs to schools. There was no direct grant, for example, for monitors but the Council would try to facilitate resources through external sources.
- The Children, Young People and Learning Department was thought to have a budget for climate change which could be directed to schools, invest-to-save schemes, and costs could be reviewed on a case by case basis.

8. **Residents Survey**

The Panel reviewed the results of the recent residents' survey relevant to Environment, Culture and Communities, and considered what information should be collected on service users' experiences.

The survey was delivered to all households in the Borough. Residents also had the option of completing the survey online. In total, 4,816 postal and 212 online surveys were returned, giving a total response of 5,028. This equated to a response rate of approximately 11% which compared favourably with the national average response rate for this type of household survey of between 3% and 5%.

Respondents were asked to provide details of the Council services they used and the frequency they used them. The most frequently used services were refuse

collection/recycling with 96% of respondents using them at least once a month and 82% using them once a week. 73% of residents used parks and open spaces at least once a month.

Respondents were then asked to rate their satisfaction with the services provided, with satisfaction highest for parks and open spaces (86%) and local tips/household waste recycling centres (82%). The main exception was the planning service where 43% of respondents did not know how satisfied they were with this service but 76% indicated they had never used the service.

The final part of the survey looked at respondents' suggestions on things the Council could do differently to have a positive impact within Bracknell Forest. Relevant to the services provided by Environment, Culture and Communities were the following suggestions:

- Improve maintenance of public areas – 14%
- Improve/change road maintenance/infrastructure – 13%
- Return to weekly refuse collections – 9%
- Recycle a wider variety of materials – 8%
- Other changes/improvements to waste refuse collection – 8%
- Improve/change local public transport – 7%
- Improve/change provision of parking places – 7%
- Stop building/over-developing the area – 5%
- Better provision of open/green spaces – 5%
- Improve/change provision of sport/recreation services – 5%
- Remove/change/reduce car parking charges – 4%

In response to Members' observations, the following points were made:

- Extra effort would be made to engage with the under 25 age group in future residents' surveys. It was suggested that social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, could be useful in this area. This idea would be put forward to colleagues in Corporate Services.

9. Residents Parking Scheme

The Panel considered the consultation exercise on a Residents' Parking Scheme and the issues raised within the public consultation. The Council needed to plan for the necessary changes that accompanied a regenerated town centre, and this included taking the appropriate steps to ensure that residents within close proximity were protected, where possible, from increased parking pressures.

On 11 June 2013, the Council's Executive approved the outline public consultation exercise on a Residents' Parking Scheme surrounding Bracknell town centre. Ward Members were being engaged and the consultation would run for four weeks from 21 June 2013 until the end of the school term. The information gained from the initial consultation would be used to inform the design of the scheme which would then be subject to formal public consultation. Concerns with the scheme had so far been dealt with.

In response to Members' observations and questions, the following points were made:

- A projected eight million shoppers were expected to come to the regenerated town centre.

- If people parked illegally due to the new parking arrangements, this would be dealt with as appropriate, and the situation would be monitored.
- Officers were keen for there to be minimal disruption to residents affected by the scheme and how they currently parked.
- The scheme was needed and the Planning Committee had given permission for the scheme to be implemented along with the town centre regeneration but people could have a say on how the scheme was shaped.
- Feedback from the initial consultation and the formal public consultation could be brought before Members at a future Panel meeting or in between Panel meetings as needed.
- It was important to clarify that the scheme was not a tax on residents and that it was not for profit.
- The views of Members and the public should be taken into account.
- Displaced parking as a result of the scheme was a possibility.
- It would be beneficial to share the advantages and disadvantages of a scheme and the consultation views expressed with residents, possibly via the Town and Country publication.

10. **Local Development Framework - Update Report**

The Panel received a progress update in respect of the Local Development Framework and Local Development Scheme. Modifications would be included in the document along with the Core Strategy and Development Plan. Work still needed to be undertaken on this. Longer term needs for housing would be reviewed. The options paper would include how to proceed and would be considered by the Council's Executive soon. There would be a formal process for consultation and how Members could be involved would be considered. The Community Infrastructure Levy was in the last rounds and an examination was due in the autumn, with adoption for implementation planned for April 2014.

The Panel noted the documents that currently formed part of the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan and the stage reached in the preparation of other documents, particularly the Site Allocations Development Plan Document, that would form part of the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan on adoption.

11. **Bus Strategy Working Group Update Report**

The Working Group of this Panel which had previously reviewed a proposed reduction in available bus subsidy budget recommended that a review of the Borough's Bus Strategy be undertaken to inform future financial support and bus services. Accordingly, the Bus Strategy Working Group was established to review the Bus Strategy for implementation in April 2014.

The approval of the Executive to undertake a twelve week consultation exercise in respect of the Draft Bus Strategy would be sought in July. The Panel noted the progress achieved to date by its Working Group reviewing the Bus Strategy and that its comments had been incorporated into the consultation draft.

The Working Group would have an opportunity to see the amended Strategy in the Autumn.

12. **Overview and Scrutiny Progress Report**

The Panel noted the bi-annual Progress Report of the Assistant Chief Executive on Overview and Scrutiny activity over the period September 2012 to April 2013 and local and national developments in Overview and Scrutiny.

13. **Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions**

The Panel noted the forthcoming Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions relating to Environment, Culture and Communities.

CHAIRMAN