

**TO: COUNCIL
27 NOVEMBER 2013**

**EXECUTIVE REPORT TO COUNCIL
The Leader**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present a summary of the decisions made by the Executive since the last meeting of the Council, summarised by reference to the relevant portfolio within which they fall.
- 1.2 Since the Council meeting on 17 July 2013, the Executive has met twice, on 15 October 2013 and 12 November 2013 and this report covers decisions taken at those meetings.
- 1.3 Updated Forward Plans are published every Friday and are available for public inspection at Easthampstead House in the usual way and online at www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk. Full details on the decisions taken by individual portfolio holders can also be accessed online through the Council's website.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The recommendations at paragraphs 3.1.5, 4.1.6, 5.2.5 and 5.3.4 of the report are recommended to Council by the Executive.**

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Transformation and Finance

3.1 2013/15 Capital Programme - Impact of DfE Funding Announcement

- 3.1.1 The Executive has agreed the basis on which Department for Education (DfE) Targeted Basic Need (TBN) Grant of £7.867m will be used to create additional school places at Winkfield St Marys, Owlsmoor, Garth Hill and potentially a new Special Educational Needs Facility at Eastern Road.
- 3.1.2 The DfE had previously allocated £5.874m of Basic Need grant to Bracknell Forest across the two financial years 2013/15, which was less than half of the level allocated in previous years. This will be used to create the additional school places required to meet the Council's statutory duty in accordance with the Capacity Strategy approved in October 2012, subject to Council approval.
- 3.1.3 Although the Basic Need grant was less than half of what had been received in previous years, the DfE also provided an opportunity to bid for additional grant funding under their TBN programme. Only schools with 'good' or 'outstanding' Ofsted inspection results were eligible for this grant, however, reflecting the Government's wish to shift to a building process that favours the expansion of good and outstanding schools. As a result of the bids submitted, the Council has been awarded a further £7.867m of TBN funding, subject to a number of conditions which the Executive is content to accept. This success constitutes a significant investment into the school estate, and the Executive is recommending that the education capital programme be re-aligned to match the total available funding.

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3.1.4 The Executive also discussed how best to effect the temporary expansion of Garth Hill College and has delegated authority to the Chief Officer: Property in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation to negotiate a viable solution.

3.1.5 Accordingly, the Executive is recommending to Council:

1 That the Basic Need grant be allocated as follows:

Project	2013/14 £000	2014/15 £000	Total £000
Cranbourne Classrooms	0	141	141
Harmans Water Surge Classroom	25	0	25
The Pines Expansion	650	650	1,300
Garth Hill Expansion	834	834	1,668
Owlsmoor Expansion	1,158	1,053	2,211
Amen Corner Primary School	25	25	50
North Warfield West Primary School	25	25	50
North Warfield East Primary School	25	25	50
TRL Primary School	25	25	50
Blue Mountain Learning Village	170	159	329
Total:	2,937	2,937	5,874

2 That the Targeted Basic Need grant be allocated as follows:

Project	2013/14 £000	2014/15 £000	Total £000
Winkfield St Marys Surge Classroom	114	200	314
SEN Facility Eastern Road	495	1,309	1,804
Owlsmoor Expansion	285	653	938
Garth Hill Expansion	1,283	3,528	4,811
Total:	2,177	5,690	7,867

3 That a supplementary capital estimate be included in the 2013/14 capital programme in order to facilitate the temporary expansion of Garth Hill College.

The associated report is attached.

3.2 Commitment Budget Report 2014/15 - 2016/17

- 3.2.1 The Executive has approved the Commitment Budget for 2014/15 to 2016/17 and the proposed budget process for 2014/15. This brings together the Council's existing expenditure plans and its approval marks the first formal stage in the planning of the revenue budget for 2014/15.
- 3.2.2 The Commitment Budget is based on the 2013/14 budget adjusted to exclude the effects of drawing from balances and takes approved existing commitments including the full-year effect of pressures and economies into account. Over the next three financial years, planned expenditure stands at £83.951million, £84.143million and £84.890million respectively.
- 3.2.3 Significant changes to the commitment budget previously submitted to the Executive in February 2013 include:
- The removal of one off items included in the 2013/14 budget such as, the revenue contribution to the works at Time Square (-£1.100m); the Members' Initiative Fund (-£0.420m) and investment in dementia and long term conditions (-£0.183m).
 - The revenue impact of the 2013/14 capital programme including, IT maintenance and support costs (+£0.071m) and the minimum revenue provision (+£0.262m), representing the annual amount of the capital investment repaid from revenue.
 - The increase in the employer's contribution to the pension fund arising from the inclusion of non contractual overtime and additional hours for part time staff within pensionable pay (+£0.180m).
- 3.2.5 The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2014/15 is not expected until at least December 2013. However the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2013/14 covered two years. Along with the announcements in the Spending Round in June, and subsequent consultation papers issued during the summer, it is likely that further reductions of £0.380million will be required.
- 3.2.6 Calculations indicate that, without taking service pressures or developments into account, by 2016/17 the Council will face an underlying funding gap of approximately £14.8million. However taking service pressures into account this could be as high as £19.3million. This figure is approximately 21% of the budget requirement in 2016/17.
- 3.2.7 Work in the coming months will focus on the challenges created by the likely initial funding gap in 2014/15. Although the Council has a track record of delivering efficiency savings and reducing back office costs to protect front line services, it is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve similar savings year on year. Consideration will need to be given to a range of alternative ways of bridging the expected funding gap during the coming months.

3.3 Bulk Print Strategy

- 3.3.1 The Executive has agreed to enter into a shared service with Wokingham Borough Council for bulk printing from 1st January 2014. As a result, this Council's existing Print Room will close. It has, however, decided to retain a Graphics Design capability in-house.
- 3.3.2 The Print Room has been subject to a number of reviews over the past seven years. The latest has seen the unit achieve its income target for the first time since 2004/05 despite the volume of print declining by 32% over the past four years. However, the

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reduction in staff from 3.0 fte to 1.5 fte had created resilience issues with some days or half-days when the in-house service had had to close due to leave or sickness. This had not been a satisfactory situation for services with printing to be done, in some cases to meet statutory deadlines. In addition, the existing equipment was reaching the point where replacement would be necessary.

- 3.3,3 The Executive accepted that the lack of resilience and level of investment which would be required to create a sustainable in-house unit, could not be justified given the alternative options available. In contrast to the investment required to maintain an in-house service, the shared service will be cost neutral even allowing for operational costs and a contribution to this Council's overheads. It will also significantly improve the resilience of both operational staff and management. In addition, the shared service will ensure a degree of continuity and understanding of this Council's requirements through the retention of existing staff, whose expertise and knowledge is highly valued.

Children, Young People and Learning

4.1 Youth Justice Plan 2013 - 2016

- 4.1.1 The Executive is commending the Youth Offending Services' Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2013-16 (Annex A) to Council for approval before its submission to the England and Wales Youth Justice Board for detailed validation and approval.
- 4.1.2 The Plan contains information on resourcing and value for money, structure and governance, performance, partnership arrangements, risks to future delivery and a local delivery action plan. It also outlines five priorities; preventing youth crime, reducing reoffending, keeping the number of children and young people in custody to a minimum, safeguarding young people from harm and managing risk of harm.
- 4.1.3 The three main national indicators of performance are the levels of reoffending, first time entrants to the Youth Justice System and custodial sentencing. Performance in all three national indicator areas in Bracknell Forest exceeded national and local targets and was better than the national average.
- 4.1.4 The plan has been widely consulted on and has received the full support of the Youth Offending Service Performance Management Group, Community Safety Partnership, Department of Children, Young People and Learning and the Corporate Management Team.
- 4.1.5 The three year plan will be refreshed annually to reflect any changes which could impact on the priorities and the Youth offending Service's ability to deliver the range of services designed to reduce youth offending within Bracknell Forest.
- 4.1.6 Accordingly, the Executive has RECOMMENDED that the Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2013-16 (Annex A) be approved for submission to the England and Wales Youth Justice Board. The associated report and annex are attached.**

4.2 Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Annual Report

- 4.2.1 The Executive has noted the learning and recommendations contained within the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Annual Report. The report looks at the effectiveness of safeguarding and child protection practice in Bracknell Forest for 2012/13 and includes details of achievements and challenges, as well as an assessment of policies, procedures and performance management information.
- 4.2.2 The areas of main activity to note in the last year included:

- the undertaking of the safeguarding self-assessment within Bracknell Forest demonstrating a strong commitment to safeguarding across all Council departments,
- an in-depth case review of a small number of children that had not met the criteria for a Serious Case Review but where the LSCB believed further analysis would help inform future practice,
- the success of the 2013 LSCB Conference on the theme of Safeguarding Vulnerable Children which was attended by 250 members.

In addition, the LSCB is actively working with local and national partners to tackle the challenges identified in the report including substance and alcohol misuse, neglect, domestic violence, child sexual exploitation, and early help.

4.3 Annual Review of the Children and Young People's Plan 2012/13

- 4.3.1 The Executive has noted the progress and achievements from April 2012 to March 2013 outlined in the Children and Young People's Plan (2011-14).
- 4.3.2 The Plan was initially developed by the Children and Young People's Partnership and published in 2011. The priorities within the plan consist of four Outcome Priorities and six Underpinning Priorities which are reviewed annually to ensure that the priorities are being met, and new actions identified to ensure continued progress and development.
- 4.3.3 The current review showed that there has been very good progress made across all of the priorities. Strong partnership working, joint planning and a focus on keeping children and young people at the heart of the work have been evident throughout the review. However it was recognised that more could be done to further improve outcomes for children, young people and families and areas for further action in the coming year have been identified.

4.4 Children, Young People & Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel Report: School Governance

- 4.4.1 The Executive has fully endorsed the recommendations that arose from a report by a Working Group of the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel which reviewed issues in the delivery of effective school governance.
- 4.4.2 The Executive has thanked colleagues in the Working Group for their report and time spent considering the issues regarding school governance. The recommendations from the report will enable improvement, and help strengthen school governance in the borough.

4.5 Child Poverty Strategy - Review and Next Steps

- 4.5.1 The Executive has noted the progress made in achieving the key priorities of the Child Poverty Strategy which underpins the Children and Young People's Plan. The Executive has also noted the next steps to progress further key areas of work in support of the Child Poverty Strategy and the approach to maximise income opportunities.
- 4.5.2 The Child Poverty Strategy was one of a number of strategies developed in 2011 to support the delivery of the priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan. The strategy is being delivered by a range of partners supporting the objectives. Partnership working will continue to be important in the future to ensure the best use of resources and to support families in need in the most effective and efficient way.

- 4.5.3 As the economic climate continues to have an impact on families, it is important that the priorities and actions moving forward focus on the right areas of need and action. Wider focus groups are to be developed to target current issues such as welfare changes and some existing groups will be involved in shaping future actions. New initiatives will be developed to support and work with children, young people and families who are affected by poverty, including the Family Focus Initiative (nationally known as Troubled Families), making use of the Pupil Premium for disadvantaged pupils and funding for disadvantaged two-year olds. Changes in the Housing and Benefits services to maximise customer income and independence will enable families to take advantage of the opportunities presented by economic development in the borough and to maximise income opportunities for families.

Culture, Corporate Service and Public Protection

5.1 Customer Contact Strategy and Channel Strategy Progress Report

- 5.1.1 The Executive has noted the progress made on the Customer Contact Strategy and has endorsed the Phase Two Action Plan, including the replacement of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The Action Plan also includes measures to improve the customer experience whilst reducing costs. The Executive has endorsed the acceleration of channel shift by adopting a 'digital by design' approach to redesign services. This is a simple on-line process enabling customers to self-serve, which could then also be used by the Customer Services team if customers contact the Council by telephone or in person.

- 5.1.2 Overall, progress to date has been very positive with a number of actions completed. Some significant achievements include:

- The successful redevelopment of the website which has received a four star SOCITM rating and been rated in the top 20 of council websites in the country with 46% of local people using the site.
- The launch of a mobile version of the website and all on-line forms being made 'mobile-friendly' so that they work with all devices.
- A digital inclusion project has been established to work with partners to develop a range of activities for customers who do not access the internet or lack the confidence to do so.
- Social media pilots have been run successfully during 2012 and routine use of social media has now been adopted by a number of services.

5.2 Phase 2 Parks and Open Spaces Quality Improvements (Bracknell Town Council)

- 5.2.1 As a result of consultation on the Parks & Open Spaces Strategy (2012), Mill Park and Calfridus Way Recreation Grounds were identified to receive funding to support quality improvements. The funding was to be provided by financial contributions from developers which have been secured under Section 106 of the Town and County Planning Act 1990.
- 5.2.2 A range of improvements at Mill Park, led by Bracknell Town Council, are underway and include a new outdoor play area with equipment suitable for children and young people, adult outdoor gym equipment and improving the Mill Pond pavilion building. At Calfridus Way Recreation Ground, the proposal is to provide a new car park for 36 additional spaces, a dropped kerb, new entrance gate and landscaping.

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- 5.2.3 Key objectives set out in the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (2012) were: provision, maintenance, and use and enjoyment and, in carrying out these works, the main objective would be to safeguard and raise quality standards.
- 5.2.5 Accordingly, the Executive has RECOMMENDED that £80,000 of s106 contributions (as summarised in Annex 1) be allocated to Bracknell Town Council as a grant to fund site works to improve recreational facilities and associated quality standards at Mill Park and Calfridus Way Recreation Grounds. The associated report and annex are attached.**
- 5.3 Phase 2 Parks and Open spaces Quality Improvements (Binfield Parish Council)**
- 5.3.1 Improvements at Binfield Cricket Club have also been identified as a project for allocation of Section 106 monies following consultation on the Parks & Open Spaces Strategy (2012). The funding provided to Binfield Parish Council would help to part-fund improvements at the Cricket Club.
- 5.3.2 Binfield Cricket Club has been established since 1865 and encourages participation in sport for all ages to increase fitness and interact socially. The Cricket Club has secured planning approval for the erection of an outbuilding for showering and changing facilities close to the existing pavilion. The main features will be changing facilities for ladies, a new disabled toilet, and improved changing facilities for male teams.
- 5.3.3 Further funding for the project would be matched through a combination of financial contributions from club members and grant support from organisations such as the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and Sport England.
- 5.3.4 Accordingly, the Executive has RECOMMENDED that £45,000 of s106 contributions (as summarised in Annex 1) be allocated to Binfield Parish Council as a grant to fund site works to improve recreational facilities and associated quality standards at Binfield Cricket Club. The associated report and annex are attached.**

Planning and Transport

6.1 Street Works Permit Scheme Application

- 6.1.1 The Executive has approved the introduction of a Street Works Permit Scheme, subject to consultation and successful application to the Department for Transport. The aim of the permit scheme is to reduce traffic congestion caused by road works across the whole of the Bracknell Forest road network and beyond. It was also agreed that the specific details of the Draft Scheme should be delegated to the Chief Officer: Planning and Transport in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Transport.
- 6.1.3 It is estimated that currently over 10,000 excavations take place annually in the Borough to enable various types of road and street works to be carried out. The excavations can cause considerable inconvenience to residents and businesses as well as causing substantial delays to traffic. The introduction of a permit scheme will enable the Council to have more control and allow for increased collaboration with utilities to dovetail their works with road works promoted by the Council.

6.2 Framework Agreement Road Based Passenger Transport

- 6.2.1 The Executive has approved the award of the Framework Agreement for Bus Services (Road Based Passenger Transport) to a number of operators.

- 6.2.2 The Council's Bus Strategy is currently in development and being discussed with an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group. The Strategy will define what the Council deems appropriate under the Transport Act 1985 to secure the provision of public passenger transport services. This framework agreement will provide the structure to procure routes, ensuring by the right quality test, that any route details put forward by operators fulfil the requirements defined in the Bus Strategy.

Council Strategy and Community Cohesion

7.1 Complaints Annual Report

- 7.1.1 The Executive has considered a report summarising complaints made against the Council in 2012/13, including those made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), and has endorsed the approach taken by officers when dealing with and learning from complaints.

- 6.3.2 The LGO received 9 complaints about the Council in 2012/13, which is significantly lower than the 15 complaints in 2011/12 and the 20 in 2010/11. This was the lowest number of complaints received by any of Berkshire's six unitary authorities. The LGO determined that an additional remedy was required in only one of the 9 complaints that were reviewed.

- 6.3.4 The volume of complaints can be regarded as low when compared to other similar authorities, and very low in view of the huge number of customer interactions by the Council each year. The extent to which complaints are upheld was lower still. This continues the positive trend in recent years.

7.2 Corporate performance Overview Report

- 7.2.1 The Executive has received the Corporate Performance Overview Report for the first quarter of 2013/14 (April to June 2013). At the end of this quarter the Council continues to perform well. Of the 307 actions 246 were either complete or on target and data relating to the key performance indicators show that 49 (82%) were classified as being green (on target), 4 (7%) were amber, with only 7 (11%) being red.

7.3 Overview & Scrutiny Report on 'A Review of Delegated Authorities'

- 7.3.1 The Executive has determined its response to the recommendations that arose from a report by a working group of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission which reviewed the Council's delegated authority arrangements.
- 7.3.2 Since the introduction of executive arrangements under the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's delegated authority arrangements had not been reviewed and Members will be pleased to note that the review was not due to any signs that the arrangements were faulty. The Working Group concluded that the Council has sound and well understood arrangements in place for delegated authorities, achieving an appropriate balance between the Executive taking responsibility, and empowering officers to carry out their duties and deliver essential services.
- 7.3.3 The Executive thanked the Working Group and commended the thoroughness of the its review.

7.4 Peer Challenge Action Plan

- 7.4.1 During March 2013 the Council's Peer Challenge review took place, from which the LGA Peer Review Team found that Bracknell Forest Council is a good Council, and

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'has much to be proud of'. However there were a number of small areas identified for improvement and seven recommendations were made by the team.

- 7.4.2 An action plan has been developed to respond to the recommendations and these have been integrated into the Council's "Good to Great" programme. This programme will be an important part of the process to enable the Council to develop new, and better, ways of doing things.
- 7.4.3 The Executive has endorsed the actions outlined in the Action Plan and has noted that staff will be offered the opportunity to volunteer to be part of a project group to take these actions forward. Each department will also develop its own action plan built from team discussions.

Environment

8.1 Utilities Category Strategy

- 8.1.2 The Executive has noted the findings of the Category Management Review of Utilities and has endorsed the Action Plan following this review.
- 8.1.2 A review was undertaken regarding the procurement of energy to determine if there could be efficiencies in the way the Council procures energy and if savings could be made. The review considered gas, electricity, oil and water costs and the Category Team considered the current procurement position and problems, issues and risks associated with this.
- 8.1.3 The review had revealed that there was limited scope to reduce expenditure through procurement; but there was potential to achieve savings by demand management. Through investment in building maintenance, introduction of energy efficient technologies and increased energy conservation, real savings could be realised.
- 8.1.3 The Action Plan sets out the steps to explore the potential opportunities identified by the review.

8.2 Appropriation of land at Quelm Park Roundabout

- 8.2.1 The Executive has agreed that the land between Quelm Park roundabout and Watersplash Lane, Warfield, should be appropriated from use from open space to use for planning purposes. This decision was taken having considered the objections received following advertisement of the proposed appropriation.
- 8.2.2 Sites in North Bracknell have been proposed for residential development as outlined in the recently adopted Site Allocation Local Plan. The appropriation of this land will allow a link road to be constructed. This is required to enable the delivery of one of the major sites.

9 Appointments and Delegations by the Leader of the Council

- 9.1 The Leader of the Council has authority to make appointments to advisory panels and sub-groups of the Executive. On 14 November 2013, the Leader established a Local Plan Member Working Group of five members. The membership of the Working Group is:

Cllrs Turrell (Chairman), Birch (Vice-Chairman), Blatchford, Dudley and Finch.
- 9.2 In addition, on 7 November 2013, the Leader delegated to the Executive decisions relating to:

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- The proposed appropriation of land at Quelm Park.
- The application for release of the section 52 agreement on land at Blue Mountain Golf Course.
- The decision to be taken on the future of Bracknell Market following the conclusion of the public consultation.

9.3 Arising from one of the recommendations referred to in 7.3.1 above, the Leader has also delegated responsibility:

- (a) For Bracknell Market to the Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration; and,
- (b) For reducing smoking to the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health & Housing.

These delegations remove anomalies which had seen these responsibilities appearing within two portfolios.

9.4 On 18 November 2013, the Leader delegated to the Executive decisions relating to areas proposed for a Neighbourhood Plan.

10 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

10.1 The Borough Solicitor's comments on each item referred to in the annex can be found in the reports presented to the Executive.

Borough Treasurer

10.2 The Borough Treasurer's comments on each item referred to in the annex can be found in the reports presented to the Executive.

Equalities Impact Assessment

10.3 Equalities issues, where appropriate, have been addressed in the reports to the Executive.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

10.4 Any strategic risks have been identified in the reports to the Executive.

Background Papers

Executive Agenda – 15 October 2013

Executive Agenda – 12 November 2013

Contact for further information

Jemma Durkan, Corporate Services - 01344 352209

jemma.durkan@bracknell-forest.gov.uk