

TO: COUNCIL
26 NOVEMBER 2014

EXECUTIVE REPORT TO COUNCIL
The Leader

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Since the Council meeting on 17 September 2014, the Executive has met three times, on 23 September 2014, 21 October 2014 and 18 November 2014. This report summarises decisions taken at the September and October meetings by reference to the relevant portfolio within which they fall. The November meeting occurred too late for the decisions taken at the meeting to be included in this report and these will be reported back at the next Council meeting.
- 1.2 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 paragraph 5.5.4 of the report are recommended to Council by the Executive.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The reasons for recommendation are set out in the supporting information.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None at this time.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Transformation and Finance

5.1 Office Accommodation Strategy

- 5.1.1 The Executive has endorsed the progress made towards implementing the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy. The Strategy, approved in 2011, had been developed to achieve a number of objectives including: the decommissioning of Seymour House, improving customer experience and improving the efficiency and maintenance of council buildings. Over the past year significant progress has been made towards achieving these aims with the complete refurbishment of Time Square and the decommissioning of Seymour House to enable its demolition as part of the regeneration of Bracknell town centre.
- 5.1.2 The refurbishment of Time Square has enabled the application of new office layouts which in turn has meant that it has been possible to increase the number of occupants from 550 to 720 and provide space for breakout areas and new meeting rooms.

- 5.1.3 Work is now taking place to improve the space available in Easthampstead House so that it can remain operational in to the immediate future. The creation of larger office space on the ground floor to accommodate Corporate ICT Services is now complete. Further work now underway will result in the creation of a new meeting room on the fourth floor and transformation of the first floor into an open plan office area; a move that will allow the Construction and Maintenance Team to be relocated from the Commercial Centre. New lighting will also be installed and the lifts replaced.
- 5.1.4 A key aspect of this work has been the provision of an improved customer experience and the majority of frontline services have now been relocated to Time Square. The Customer Services Team are now located in a single area on Ground Floor North in Time Square. This area has been comprehensively refurbished to bring it in-line with Disability Discrimination Act requirements, a new self-service booking in and ticketing system has been installed and six public meeting rooms are now available for customers seeking confidential advice. Further service improvements have also been made with the co-location of the Registrar Service alongside the Customer Service Team. All work which has received positive feedback from our customers and staff.

Culture, Corporate Services & Public Protection

5.2 Community Hubs – Strategic Housing Areas

- 5.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework requires Local Authorities to develop policies that promote social interaction and create healthy, inclusive communities. It also states that planning policies should plan positively for the provision of shared space and community facilities and that an integrated approach should be taken to the location of housing and community facilities. Furthermore recent evidence from the Jennets Park and The Parks developments show that community hubs are highly valued by residents. Consequently the Executive has endorsed proposals for the development of multi-function community hubs at the Warfield and TRL strategic housing sites along with a proposal to use Section 106 funding to expand Farley Wood Community Centre
- 5.2.2 Whilst community hubs are listed as infrastructure in the Site Allocations Local Plan Policy and in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, the Executive's endorsement of these proposals will help support the Local Planning Authority's negotiations with developers and signal the Council's commitment to prioritising the provision of community facilities in new developments.
- 5.2.3 Although it is intended that these community hubs will be delivered through the use of Section 106 receipts, the Council's financial position means that consideration will need to be given to how the centres will be managed and run. Once the Council has adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule it will have to pass on either 15 or 25% of any CIL receipts collected to town and parish councils, which they will be able to spend on any development related project in their areas, including giving assistance to projects that have been secured through Section 106 contributions. The Executive has therefore agreed that town and parish councils are the most appropriate bodies to run community centres in future and that the Council should enter into discussions with the relevant town and parish councils over the possibility of pooling their CIL receipts with the developers' Section 106 funding to contribute to the building and running costs of these new facilities.

5.3 Customer Contact Strategy 2011-2014

5.3.1 Good progress has been made on the delivery of the Customer Contact and Channel Strategies which describes the Council's approach to dealing with customer contact and was adopted in 2011.

5.3.2 Highlights of the work on the Strategy's implementation to date include:

- Upgrading the Library Management System to improve online access for customers
- Substantial progress in respect of channel migration for some services. In particular, the number of online applications for secondary school places increased from 22% last year to 65.9% and the number of online applications for primary school places rose from 33.8% to 70.5%. There was also a 50% increase in the number of online renewals received for the brown bin service
- The Digital Inclusion Project has been actively taken forward and work has taken place with the Open Learning Centre and Age Concern to encourage people to try out technology and develop their digital skills
- The implementation of an automated telephony service enabling callers to be automatically transferred to the person they wish to speak to when they state the person's name. This system is currently managing 25% of the calls received by the Customer Contact Centre
- The Benefits and Housing Services have been redesigned resulting in a much more responsive service. In most cases, Customers now require only two interactions with the Council when previously there may have been as many as thirty

5.3.3 Notwithstanding the progress made, there is still work to do to further enhance customer experience including implementation of a new Customer Relationship Management system. This will enable as much as possible to be delivered via self-service using a mobile device, allow customers to develop online accounts so that they can log and track enquiries and service requests and extend the recycling rewards/incentive scheme. Work is also underway to explore the development of online bookings and exploring the possibility of introducing instant messaging or web chats so that customers who are experiencing difficulties in accessing services online can have an online conversation with a Customer Service Advisor to help them find what they are looking for.

5.3.4 It is planned that these actions, and more, will be developed and delivered through 2014-2015. At the same time work will start on the development of new Customer and Digital Strategies that will not only take into account more recent developments in technologies and changes in customer behaviour but also continue the focus on delivering the best experiences for our customers whilst delivering maximum efficiencies.

5.4 Enforcement Policy (Regulatory Services)

5.4.1 The Executive has approved the revised draft Enforcement Policy for Regulatory Functions for public consultation.

5.4.2 The Enforcement Policy sets out the procedure that will be adopted by the Council when it seeks regulatory compliance; ensuring consistency and transparency in decision making and enforcement. The current Enforcement Policy was adopted in June 2012. However, the issuing of the Regulators' Code on 6 April 2014 has meant that the Policy has had to be updated to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose and that the Council continues to operate within the proscribed legislative framework.

5.4.3 The revised policy will be subject to an eight week public consultation and the Executive has authorised the Director of Environment, Culture and Communities to approve the final version in consultation with the Executive Member for Leisure, Corporate Services and Public Protection following the completion of this consultation exercise.

5.5 Polling District and Polling Places Review 2014

5.5.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 placed a statutory duty on all local authorities to review polling districts and polling places within 16 months of 1 October 2013 and then every five years thereafter. The Council's Electoral Review Steering Group completed a review of the Borough's polling districts and polling places in September and the Executive has now approved a number of proposals made by the Steering Group and recommends that these be adopted by Council to ensure that the Borough's voters are able to vote at polling places that are convenient and easily accessible and that future demand arising from development can be met.

5.5.2 Thirty of the Borough's thirty three polling districts meet the statutory criteria for polling districts and provide reasonable and accessible facilities and these will see no changes as a result of this review. There will also be no changes made at the current time in Polling District CN (Crowthorne) although this will be kept under review as development at the TRL site progresses. If approved by Council, the most significant changes will be:

- Polling district BB will be split to create a new polling district (BC) which will cover properties in Wykery Copse, Peacock Lane and Waterloo Road; the polling place for the new BC district will be at Jennets Park Community Centre. Voters in the revised area BB will continue to vote at Farley Wood Community centre
- Polling district BL will be split to create a new polling district BLP which will cover The Parks. Voters from The Parks will in future vote at the Parks Community Centre. Voters remaining in the revised BL district will continue to vote at St Pauls Church

5.5.3 These changes will come into effect when the revised Register of Electors is published on 1 December 2014

Recommendation

5.5.4 That:

- (i) **No changes are made to the following polling districts and polling places which meet the statutory criteria and provide reasonable and accessible facilities:**

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| BA | BD | BE | BF | BG | BH | BJ | BK | BM | BN |
| BP | BQ | BT | BW | CS | SJ | SO | SP | SQ | WG |
| WM | WN | WP | WQ | WS | WV | WW | WX | WY | WZ |

- (ii) **No changes are made to polling district CN (Crowthorne) noting that the TRL site is a long term development area and therefore will be kept under review as development progresses**
- (iii) **A new polling district BC is created to cover those properties in the Wykery Copse development, Peacock Lane and Waterloo Road which**

are currently located in BB and that the Jennett's Park Community Centre, Tawny Owl Square, is designated as the polling place for the new BC polling district. Electors in the revised BB polling district will continue to vote at Farley Wood Community Centre.

- (iv) A new polling district BLP is created for The Parks and surrounding roads and that the Parks Community Centre is designated as the polling place for the new BLP polling district. Electors in the revised BL polling district will continue to vote at St Paul's Church.

5.6 Amendment to the Council's Policy on Directed Surveillance and Use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000

5.6.1 The Council's RIPA Policy ensures that any covert surveillance carried out by employees is undertaken in accordance with the law and that the appropriate authorisations are sought whenever a covert operation is planned. Over the past year, the Council has authorised 4 covert operations, all of which were in relation to sales of alcohol to underage young people. Following an inspection of the Council's RIPA policy and procedures the Office of the Surveillance Commissioners recommended that the following minor changes be made to the Policy:

- The Director of Corporate Services should relinquish her current role as an Authorising Officer but should remain as the Senior Responsible Officer for the Policy
- The Policy should be updated to include reference to the Council's Central Register of Authorisations
- Changes in legislation mean that approval from the Magistrate's Court must be sought in respect of all applications made under RIPA. Consequently urgent oral authorisation is no longer an option and all references to these must be deleted

5.6.2 These changes have now been incorporated into the Council's Policy and the revised policy approved by the Executive ensuring that the Council's RIPA policy remains up to date and fit for purpose.

Children, Young People and Learning

5.7 Provision of Short Breaks

5.7.1 The Executive has approved changes to the provision of the Short Breaks Programme for disabled children. The provision of these short break services is a key factor in ensuring that parents and carers feel supported and helps maintain cohesion of family units. In 2011, government legislation placed a legal duty on local authorities to provide a range of short break services that included day time and overnight care either in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere, educational or leisure activities for disabled children outside their homes and services to assist carers in the evening at weekends and during the school holidays. However at the same time, ring fencing for the Aiming High budget which supported this nationally was removed, giving local authorities greater flexibility to make decisions based on local needs.

5.7.2 As a result of the new changes, savings of £106,000 have been identified in the Aiming High budget with the following key changes being agreed for implementation:

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- The number of targeted Kidz Saturday and holiday schemes sessions (38 and 38 respectively) will be reduced to 38 holiday sessions and 20 Saturday sessions. The cost per session for parents will rise £20
- The number of targeted Konnections Saturday and holiday schemes sessions (38 and 38 respectively) will be reduced to 38 holiday sessions and 20 Saturday sessions. The cost per session for parents will rise from to £20
- The John Nike holiday scheme provision will be reduced by half
- The Oakwood holiday scheme provision will be reduced by half
- The following services will be withdrawn: Sibling Support (BandS), the Parent Group Dialogue, annual consultation with children and young people, FRC Go! family activities, the Family Fun Day, activities for physical and complex needs, the Transition Grant and the Carers' Grant

5.7.3 This decision has been taken following extensive independent consultation with parents, carers and the children and young people making use of the Aiming High services as well as service providers and professionals. The consultation showed widespread understanding over the need to make savings and the majority of those consulted with felt that increasing charges to bring them in-line with mainstream provision was fair if it allows the Council to avoid a further reduction in provision.

5.7.4 The Council is committed to providing high quality service provision to children and young people with disabilities and will continually monitor and evaluate the situation going forward. In adopting these changes it is hoped that these vital services will continue in a way that minimises disruption for those who use them.

5.8 Education Capital Programme – Cranbourne Primary School

5.8.1 The Executive has approved the awarding of the contract for construction works for new classrooms at Cranbourne Primary School under the Education Capital Programme.

5.8.2 The work will include the demolition of the existing pre-school classroom, reception classroom and lean to storage areas and the creation of three new classroom areas including associated toilets, kitchen and storage areas. Work will start on site in November 2015 with completion scheduled for the start of the 2015/16 academic year.

5.9 Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2013/14

5.9.1 The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has a statutory duty to publish an annual report detailing the effectiveness of child safeguarding and child protection practice in the local area. The annual report should cover work carried out to promote child welfare in the Borough over the past financial year and must be presented to the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, the local Police and Crime Commissioner and the local Health and Wellbeing Board. As part of this approval process the Executive has received the Bracknell Forest LSCB Annual Report for 2013/14 and noted its key messages in relation to child safeguarding.

5.9.2 In Bracknell Forest, the LSCB's remit is wide ranging and the success of its work across the Borough is a testament to the strength of the partnership working that has taken place across all its priority areas. Key areas of work over the past year have included the joint commissioning of the Children's Society to carry out a survey of over 2,000 children and young people, completion of a Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Strategy and the on-going development of the CSE Strategy and Operational Groups, a successful conference focusing on the theme of Neglect which was attended by over 200 delegates and welcomed the Right Honourable Frank Field MP as its key note speaker, the development of the Continuum of Need document setting

out local arrangements for managing early help through to thresholds for children's social care, the development of the Learning and Improvement Framework which sets out how all partner organisations will contribute to and undertake learning to improve safeguarding practice and the completion of a Serious Case Review (the report will be published once all criminal proceedings in relation to the case have been completed).

5.9.3 Notwithstanding the positive work that has taken place across the safeguarding arena, the LSCB will continue to set a challenging agenda for agencies across Bracknell Forest over the coming years. To help them achieve this aim the LSCB has agreed that its priorities in 2014/15 will focus on:

- Supporting the further implementation of the early help framework
- Reducing the impact of domestic abuse on children, young people and families
- Reducing the impact of substance and alcohol misuse on children, young people and families
- Further developing the co-ordination of protection and support to young people at risk of CSE
- Developing a greater understanding of neglect and reduce the impact that this has on children, young people and families
- Reducing the impact of parental mental illness on children and young people
- Increasing the understanding of the harm associated with the misuse of technologies, its links with bullying and the further development of proactive strategies to support children, young people and their families

5.10 Annual Report on the Statutory Roles and Responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services 2013/14

5.10.1 An annual report that provides an account of the role of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Service has been prepared with the report providing an overview of both roles in terms of their key statutory functions, evidencing the accountability links between the Director, Leader Member, Chief Executive and Leader. In line with this requirement, the Executive has received and endorsed the second Annual Report on the Statutory Roles and Responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services 2013/14 and its associated action plan.

5.11 Blue Mountain Programme – Learning Village and Community Facilities Delivery Strategy

5.11.1 Since 2003, over 5,000 additional school places have been created across the Borough. However, most primary schools in the Borough are operating at full capacity and there is a significant shortage of secondary school places in north Bracknell. The successful delivery of a Learning Village with a nursery, two-form entry primary school and seven-form entry secondary school with post 16 provision and integrated SEN provision on the Blue Mountain Development site will provide 1851 additional school places in the north of the Borough and is essential to allow the Council to meet its statutory obligation to provide sufficient school places. In order to take this forward, the Executive has now approved the delivery strategy for the development of the learning village and integrated community facilities on the site.

5.11.2 In approving the delivery strategy the Executive has agreed a project scope, timetable, funding model and procurement plan that will see the Learning Village completed in time for the start of the 2017/18 academic year. The Executive has also requested that the Leader delegate a decision in relation to the terms of the acquisition and disposal of land at Blue Mountain to the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation.

- 5.11.3 At a proposed cost of £39.07million, the development of the Blue Mountain Learning Village will represent the largest one-off capital investment made by the Council and will require funding from multiple sources including contributions from the Basic Needs Grant, Targeted Basic Need Grant and external contributions including Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy funding. The funds for the project will be staggered over a seven year period and the Council will borrow funds from external sources in order to complete the project.

Economic Development and Regeneration

5.12 Work Plan for the Council's Business and Enterprise Service

- 5.12.1 The Executive has endorsed the Business and Enterprise Service's work plan and authorised the drawing down of funds from the Economic Development Reserve to fund the plan for the period up to 31 March 2016.
- 5.12.2 Supporting the economic development and prosperity of the Borough is a key priority for the Council and a dedicated Business and Enterprise Team has been recruited to help achieve this. One of the Team's first tasks will be the development of a robust ten year Local Economic Framework for the borough which will focus on retaining existing businesses helping to bring about the conditions in which they can grow and thrive, attracting new inward investment, supporting small and medium sized businesses and, where possible, generate indigenous enterprise.

Council Strategy and Community Cohesion

5.13 Corporate Performance Overview Report

- 5.13.1 The Executive has received an update on Council performance during the first quarter of the 2014/15 financial year (April to June 2014).
- 5.13.2 The Council has made a successful start to the 2014/15 financial year and at the end of the first quarter 9 of the 263 key actions in the service plan have been completed, 238 are on target and 16 have not yet been started. Analysis of the Council's 76 key performance indicators shows that the majority are on target.

5.14 Complaints against Bracknell Forest Council in 2013/14

- 5.14.1 The Executive has received and noted the annual report setting out statistics and learning in relation to complaints made against the Council including those made to the Local Government Ombudsman.
- 5.14.2 During 2013/14 the Local Government Ombudsman received 28 complaints against the Council. Whilst this was higher than in previous years (compared to an average of 19 complaints a year for the past three years) it was lower than the numbers received by the other Berkshire unitary authorities. The Ombudsman subsequently decided to investigate 24 of these complaints but did not uphold any. During the period covered by the report 99 complaints against the Council were received by the Council and dealt with through the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure. This included those referred to the Ombudsman.
- 5.14.3 Analysis of the complaints found no obvious patterns emerging with complaints being received by all sections of the Council. The one exception to this was fifteen complaints about the waiting times being experienced in the Council's main reception area. This had arisen as a result of trialling a new way of delivering the Housing and Benefits Services. The Council has actively pursued a solution to the queue management issues and waiting times have now been reduced to a minimum.

6 Appointments and Delegations by the Leader of the Council

6.1 The Leader has agreed that decisions on the following matters are to be delegated:

- i. Authority to take a decision on the terms of the acquisition and disposal of land at Blue Mountain is to be delegated to the Executive Member for Transformation and Finance
- ii. Authority to make a Compulsory Purchase Order in relation to acquiring access rights in the vicinity of the Grange Hotel in order to help facilitate the regeneration of Bracknell Town Centre is to be delegated to the Executive Member for Transformation and Finance

6.2 Land North of Quelm Park Roundabout

In March 2014 the Planning Committee approved, subject to completion of a Section 106 Agreement, an application for planning permission submitted by Berkeley Homes (Oxford and Chiltern) Limited for a major development of up to 750 houses plus a primary school on land between Harvest Ride and Watersplash Lane, Warfield. The application also proposed the construction of a "Link Road" between Harvest Ride and the Three Legged Cross junction. Part of the Link Road is proposed to be constructed upon land immediately to the north of the Quelm Park roundabout which is owned by the Council and which in November 2013 the Executive agreed to appropriate from use as open space to use for planning purposes. To allow Berkeley Homes to go on to the Council land to construct the road a Licence Agreement was required and I nominated the Executive Member for Transformation and Finance, Councillor Ward, to take the decision on whether or not to grant the Licence.

As the decision was required to be taken urgently in order for planning permission to be granted at the earliest opportunity to facilitate the construction of the school in accordance with the programme envisaged by the Council, the possible application of the "call in" process was, following notification to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and with the agreement of the Deputy Mayor, excluded. On 22nd October 2014 the Executive Member for Transformation and Finance approved the granting of the Licence.

7 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

7.1 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

7.2 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

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

Strategic Risk Management Issues

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

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Background Papers

Executive Agenda – 23 September 2014

Executive Agenda – 21 October 2014

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