

To: **COUNCIL**
16 SEPTEMBER 2015

EXECUTIVE REPORT TO COUNCIL
The Leader

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Since the Council meeting on 15 July 2015, the Executive has met once on 21 July 2015. This report summarises decisions taken at the June meeting by reference to the relevant portfolio within which they fall.
- 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 **Council is asked to consider the recommendations set out at paragraphs 5.1.3, 5.2.4, 5.8.2 and 5.8.3.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The reasons for recommendations are set out in the supporting information and in the reports considered by the Executive.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Alternative options are discussed in the relevant individual reports considered by the Executive

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Children, Young People and Learning

5.1 Recruitment and Retention in Children's Social Care

- 5.1.1 The Executive has approved a package of measures aimed at addressing a longstanding problem in recruiting and retaining children's social care workers. The package was recommended by the Children's Social Care Programme Board which had been established in July 2014 to look at the options and was explained in detail in the confidential report considered by the Executive. The proposals aim to help the Council respond to the national shortage of experienced and qualified children's social workers which has led to competition amongst authorities for the available pool of workers.
- 5.1.2 The Employment Committee was subsequently asked to approve market premium payments to relevant staff, to implement the measures and did so on 3 September. In 2015/16 the cost of implementing the proposals will be met from the Contingency.

- 5.1.3 In order to improve efficiency within the new team, it is intended to extend the use of mobile ICT technology for which a supplementary capital bid is being made. Accordingly, the Executive has:

RECOMMENDED that a new 2015-16 capital budget of £0.1m be approved to invest in ICT technologies to enhance mobile working and improve efficiency in Children's Social Care.

Adult Services, Health and Housing

5.2 Acquisition of Emergency Temporary Accommodation

- 5.2.1 The Executive has authorised the Chief Officer: Property to make an offer to purchase a freehold interest to provide emergency temporary accommodation for homeless households. Authority was also delegated to the Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing, Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing and Executive Member for Transformation and Finance and the Borough Treasurer to agree the detail of the offer to be made and to enter into the contract if the offer was accepted.
- 5.2.2 The Council has a statutory obligation to provide emergency accommodation for homeless households. This is achieved by procuring bed and breakfast accommodation both inside the borough and in Berkshire and North Hampshire. Suitable bed and breakfast accommodation is in short supply and local authorities in Berkshire are competing to acquire it. The Council currently has 30 households in emergency accommodation but this can vary day by day. The predicted net spend on provision of emergency accommodation in 2015/16 is £352,000.
- 5.2.3 A five year business plan has been prepared to show the income, running costs and financing costs associated with the acquisition of the property and its subsequent use as bed and breakfast accommodation for 11 homeless households. Combining the business plan with the savings that will be achieved by using this property rather than alternative bed and breakfast accommodation and potential reductions in home to school transport costs, the Council can expect to achieve annual savings of £184,000. A summary of the business plan on which the offer was based is included in the confidential Annexe to this report.
- 5.2.4 The Council's offer has been accepted and therefore it is:

RECOMMENDED that a supplementary capital estimate of £850k be approved to cover the purchase and ancillary costs to provide emergency temporary accommodation.

5.3 Care Act: Arranging Care And Support (At Home) For People Who Fund Their Own Support Arrangements And Funding Reform

- 5.3.1 The Executive has approved a consultation on the following options for charging arising from the implementation of the Care Act 2014:
- 1 To continue charging for Residential and Nursing care on the basis of the detailed regulations set out in the Charging for Residential Accommodation Guide.

Unrestricted

- 2 To change the Council's policy on the financial assessment of couples to be compliant with the Care Act, and the interim arrangements for people who are adversely affected by this change.
- 3 To charge interest on Universal Deferred Payments at the rate set by the Department of Health
- 4 To charge interest on discretionary Deferred Payments at the maximum rate set by the Department of Health
- 5 To charge administration fees for setting up and managing a Universal Deferred Payment that meets the actual cost of the work
- 6 To charge a fee to self-funders in community based locations for setting up care arrangements that fully recover the cost of that work.

5.3.2 The Executive agreed not to introduce charges for Carers Services at this time and noted the changes to the Means Test proposed by the Government as part of the Funding Reforms phase of the Care Act.

5.3.3 The issue of charging was considered as part of a detailed report on the wider implications of the Care Act 2014. It is no longer mandatory to charge for Residential and Nursing care, but as the Council received £2.5m from charges for Residential and Nursing care in 2014/15, any decision not to charge would create a significant budget pressure.

The most significant change in charging legislation relates to the treatment of couples. The Council's current Policy when assessing an individual requiring support who is one part of a couple is to assess in the most beneficial way to the individual. All couples are offered a joint financial assessment to identify the most beneficial outcome, whilst noting that a spouse or partner is not obliged to disclose their resources, should they choose not to. Joint assessments will no longer be possible under the national legislation. The Council therefore needs to consider how to amend its policy, including any interim arrangements for people who are currently assessed as part of a couple and who would be adversely affected by any change.

The Council has no option but to offer Universal Deferred Payments, which will be mandatory. The Executive has recommended consulting on adding interest to deferred payments at the rate set by the Government as well as charging the true cost of setting up a deferred payment, and an annual management fee subsequently. These fees are not expected to exceed £900 and £300 respectively. The Council would continue to charge the applicant the cost of any other expenses incurred including valuation costs, and disbursements such as land registry fees.

5.3.4 The Executive's attention was specifically drawn to a Government proposal to change the "capital thresholds" which determine when someone is a self-funder. The Government intends, amongst other things, to increase the upper capital limit for someone to be considered a 'self-funder' from £23,250 to £27,000.

5.4 Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme (LCTBS)

5.4.1 The Executive has reviewed the Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme for working age households and will be undertaking a consultation exercise on a number of potential changes:

- 1 That working age households will receive a maximum of 80% of LCTBS support to help pay their Council Tax liability.

Unrestricted

- 2 That working age households income disregards will be increased so that they get to keep more of their income such that:
 - A single person disregard will increase from £5 a week to £10;
 - A couple from £10 to £15 a week;
 - A single parent from £25 to £30 a week.
- 3 That self employed income will be taken as the national minimum wage level at 35 hours a week from 12 months after any recipient of LCTB becomes self employed;
- 4 That child maintenance payments will be taken into account when calculating household income.

5.4.2 The existing Local Council Tax Benefit/Reduction Scheme was introduced in 2013/14. At the time the Council received a transitional Government grant of £119,000 which has subsequently been withdrawn. As the scheme has now been running for two financial years, the time is right to undertake a review. Moreover, as national welfare reform progresses, it is necessary to ensure that the Council's scheme responds to any national changes in policy direction that may arise.

The Council's existing scheme is generous in the level of support it provides compared to schemes provided by other councils. The background to the changes set out above was considered by the Executive. As a result it agreed that a transition scheme should be established for households who faced financial hardship due to the proposed changes. This would also provide an opportunity to review the existing hardship scheme covering changes in household circumstances.

5.4.3 Further revisions may be necessary in due course to take account of Universal Credit.

5.5 Tendering for Housing Related Support Services for Older People

5.5.1 The Executive has agreed that the specification for housing related support services should be reviewed with a view to:

- 1 A contract being let to procure a housing related support service assessment;
- 2 A contract being let to procure housing related support services on a floating/peripatetic basis;

5.5.2 The legacy supporting people housing related support contracts are due for renewal from March 2016, providing an opportunity to review the approach to procuring these services to ensure that they are targeted at the most vulnerable and achieved value for money. The revised approach being proposed will direct resources to support older people in extra care housing as part of the Older Person's Accommodation and Support Services Strategy. As more extra care housing is developed in the Borough, it will be necessary to increasingly redirect resources towards these higher need schemes and away from households that need lower levels of support. Moving towards an approach which assesses need and costs the support on a peripatetic basis will enable more cost effective packages to be established across agencies providing support to a household. It will also allow complimentary services to be added into housing related support or for housing related support to be included in

other services thus providing a more economic service provision but also a single service provider for customers.

5.6 Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board Annual Report

- 5.6.1 The Executive has received and noted the Annual Report of the work of the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board during 2014/15. The report detailed the breadth of activity undertaken by Board members and identified the achievements against the Board's development plan for the past year and the planned developments for the coming year. It also highlighted the achievements made by organisations represented on the Board, which have enabled adults with care and support needs to lead safer lives, whilst retaining as much choice and control as possible.
- 5.6.2 The Executive's attention was drawn to a peer review which had focused on the current working arrangements as well as identifying how well placed the Board was to meet the new duties set out in the Care Act. The conclusion was that the Board was on a firm footing and that there was a shared commitment from the Board to continue to develop local arrangements for the benefit of local residents with care and support needs. The Board has committed to having an Independent Chair and Business Manager. These posts will support the Board in meeting its new duties and strategic objectives as well as ensuring that it is well placed both to hold each member organisation to account for its own safeguarding arrangements. The Council and Bracknell and Ascot Clinical Commissioning Group, have committed to contribute to fund these posts, further evidence of a shared commitment to adult safeguarding.

Transformation and Finance

5.7 Capital Expenditure Outturn 2014/15

- 5.7.1 The Executive has noted that the Capital Outturn for 2014/15 was £25.436m of the £53.806m Capital Programme. This represents 98% of the cash budget (£25.855m).
- 5.7.2 The Executive also approved the carry forward of £27.951m from the 2014/15 capital programme to 2015/16 including £1.300m relating to projects approved in 2013/14. In addition, it has noted the financing of capital expenditure and approved amendments to the 2015/16 Schools Programme as agreed by the Education Capital Programme Board. The latter amendments arise from the Department for Education announcing further funding for the period 2015/18 which due to the timing, was not included in the 2015/16 Budget Papers. Bracknell Forest will receive a total of £9.223m funding in 2015/16 and £32.931m over the three year period for 2015/18.

5.8 Revenue Expenditure Outturn 2014/15

- 5.8.1 The Executive has considered the revenue expenditure outturn for 2014/15, noting that, subject to audit, total spend was £85.801m against an approved budget of £89.572m. This is the seventeenth successive year that the Council has been within budget. As a result, the Council has returned £1.147m to General Balances as opposed to a budgeted withdrawal of £2.624m. The General Fund balance at 31 March 2015 was therefore £10.961m. Of this, £0.932m will be used to finance the 2015/16 budget.
- 5.8.2 Budget carry-forwards have been approved totalling £0.202m, along with the earmarked reserves. The Executive also approved a number of virements relating to the 2014/15 budget between £0.050m and £0.100m. Those in excess of £0.100m,

whilst endorsed by the Executive, require the approval of Council and it is therefore **RECOMMENDED that the virements over £100k (Annexe E) be approved.**

- 5.8.3 The Council is required to approve an annual report on treasury management performance to comply with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance as performance in this area can have a significant impact on the Council's overall financial position and balances. The report for 2014/15 was endorsed by the Executive which has **RECOMMENDED that the Treasury Management Annual Report 2014/15 (Annexe B) be approved.**

6 Appointments and Delegations by the Leader of the Council

- 6.1 The Leader has delegated authority for three specific issues as follows:

to the Executive Member for Transformation and Finance to purchase 2 areas of highway land (to the west of the A322 Bagshot Road and at the junction of A322 Bagshot Road, Downshire Way and Broad Lane).

to Chief Officer Planning & Transport to serve notice at the relevant time on the owners of the TRL site to seek the Section 106 contribution towards the development of the Amber House site for affordable housing.

to the Borough Treasurer to sign the DWP Universal Credit delivery partnership agreement to provide support for customers who may need help in applying for the Universal Credit on line and managing their new benefit.

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.

Background Papers

Executive Agenda –21 July 2015

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