

**TO: COUNCIL  
25 NOVEMBER 2015**

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**COUNCIL PLAN 2015-2019  
Chief Executive**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to invite Council to approve the attached Council Plan.

**2 RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 That the Council Plan 2015-2019 and attached as Annex A be approved.**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 3.1 Since becoming a Unitary Authority in 1998 the Council has made savings in its annual revenue spending in excess of £70m. Of this over £18m has been removed from budgets in the last few years. By all comparative measures, the Council provides value for money. However, pressure on public sector spending remains intense and it is predicted that a further £25m of savings will be needed over the next five years.
- 3.2 This scale of savings coming on top of previous economies means it will not be possible to continue to deliver services in the way we have come to accept and expect. In order to meet this challenge the council needs to find a framework for delivering services that allows us to adapt, innovate, find new ways of working and, in some cases, reduce what we do.
- 3.3 The Council Plan is rooted firmly in the Conservative election manifesto of 2015. It puts those election commitments into the post general election financial context to provide the organisation with a strategic approach and framework to meet the challenges ahead.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 To continue with the current framework of priorities and Medium Term Objectives (MTOs).

**5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 5.1 The Executive is recommending to Council that it approves the Council Plan 2015-16 as set out in Annex A. The Council Plan represents a new framework in which the Council will deliver services by allowing it to adapt, innovate, find new ways of working and, in some cases, reduce what it does.
- 5.2 Since becoming a unitary authority in 1998, the Council has made savings in its annual revenue spending in excess of £70m. Of this, over £18m has been removed from budgets in the last few years. By all comparative measures, the Council provides value for money. However, pressure on public sector spending remains intense and it is predicted that a further £25m of savings will be needed over the next five years. This scale of savings coming on top of previous economies means it will not be possible to continue to deliver services in the current way. The Council Plan has therefore been developed by members of the Executive with support from the Overview & Scrutiny Commission to respond to the new environment. It is centred upon a new narrative or philosophy for the organisation, with six strategic themes or priority areas:

## Unrestricted

- Value for money
- A strong and resilient economy
- People have the life skills and education opportunities they need to thrive
- People live active and healthy lifestyles
- A clean, green, growing and sustainable place
- Strong, safe, supportive and self-reliant communities

5.3 Key messages within the narrative are that:

- Many residents of Bracknell Forest are affluent, well educated and independent. We want to continue to support that by providing core services that all residents can benefit from
- But we recognise that we need to prioritise if we are to live within our means, and that will mean making difficult decisions
- We will prioritise people and areas with the greatest need, early help and prevention so struggling or vulnerable people can maximise their opportunities to become independent.

5.4 Each theme is underpinned by a number of key measures of success and a selection of associated performance indicators. Individual departmental service plans will contain further performance indicators reflecting the day to day operations. Progress against the Council Plan will be reported to the Executive via a quarterly overview report from the Chief Executive. At the end of the financial year an annual report will be published summarising progress made over the year.

5.5 Implementing the Council Plan over the next four years will mean that some services will change significantly and may be run in a different way. All services are to be fundamentally reviewed over the next four years, including consideration of the basic purpose, levels of service and alternative delivery models. Charging will also be reviewed with a view to reducing the subsidy on some services. In addition, the Council will seek to generate additional income.

5.6 The Council Plan contains a commitment to consult on major changes and assess how these changes will impact on communities. Any time a significant change to a service is considered the council will consult with residents and service users.

5.7 The Council is a high-performing organisation which gives it a strong foundation from which to face these new challenges and remain high-performing. To develop and underpin the changes a Transformation Board is being established with external support and challenge from two private/independent organisations; Activist and iESE.

5.8 The Executive has therefore recommended that the attached Council Plan 2015-19 should be approved.

## **6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

### Borough Solicitor

6.1 In the event of service reductions arising as a result of the Council seeking to achieve its predicted savings targets, these will need to be carefully managed to minimise the risk of legal challenges. Where challenges against service reductions have been presented before the courts in recent years these have highlighted the need for Councils to engage in meaningful public consultation and have regard to its equality duties prior to decisions being made.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 In parallel with the Council Plan a new Medium Term Financial Strategy is being developed to identify the scale and timing of the financial challenge facing the Council. The Council Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy are complementary, with the Council Plan articulating the Council's strategic approach and priorities within the overall financial envelope.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 An initial Equalities Impact Assessment screening is attached at Annex B.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 The Council Plan is the over-arching framework and strategic approach for the organisation for the duration of the current administration. This has primarily been motivated by the anticipated future budget cuts, and the need to respond to these with a new approach. It is important that the council has a framework in place so that it can face the budget challenges ahead in a coherent and consistent way, and in this way effectively manage risk.

**7 CONSULTATION**

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 Executive  
Conservative Group  
Overview and Scrutiny Commission  
Corporate Management Team  
Departmental Management Teams  
Corporate Performance Group  
Senior Leadership Group

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Face to Face meetings  
Email  
Telephone

Representations Received

- 7.3 The Council Plan has been in development since the May 2015 elections. Representations received have been incorporated in to the document as it has developed.

Contact for further information

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