

Notice of Meeting

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Councillor Angell (Chairman),
Councillor Virgo (Vice-Chairman),
Councillors Mrs Birch, Brossard, Gbadebo, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle,
McLean, Mrs Mattick, Mossom, Porter, Temperton and Tullett
Tracey Wright, Bracknell Forest maintained primary school parents
Mark Glanville, Bracknell Forest Maintained Secondary School
Parents



Also Invited:

Councillors Dr Barnard, Birch, Harrison and Heydon

Wednesday 11 November 2020, 6.30 - 9.00 pm

Online only

Agenda

Item	Description	Page
1.	Work Programme Update	3 - 6
	<p>Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairs to provide a verbal progress update on the work programme and, specifically, request approval for the following scopes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Wellbeing & Finance Panel Isolation and Loneliness Review Draft ScopeEducation, Skills & Growth Panel Apprenticeship Revised Scope <p>The Commission to consider any proposed changes to the Overview and Scrutiny work programme such as scope, scheduling or duration and its potential impact on the delivery of the overall programme.</p> <p>Reporting: Kirsty Hunt</p>	

Sound recording, photographing, filming and use of social media is permitted. Please contact Kirsty Hunt, 01344 353108, kirsty.hunt@bracknell-forest.gov.uk, so that any special arrangements can be made.

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Community Impact Assessment Review – Isolation and Loneliness Health, Wellbeing and Finance Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Reason for review

The Community Impact Assessment and Resident’s Survey highlighted a number of issues faced by residents who felt isolated and lonely during the Covid-19 pandemic. This review will focus on what services and support is currently being provided in order to reduce social isolation and loneliness; what works well and what could be improved in the future.

Objectives/scope

The review is looking to:

- Identify causal factors, services and support provision for people who feel socially isolated or lonely in the Borough, with a view to determining what works well and what requires improvement, with a focus specifically on four key issues highlighted in the Community Impact Assessment and Resident’s Survey:
 - Digital access
 - Confidence reconnecting with communities and services
 - Volunteering engagement and the role of the Voluntary Community Sector
 - Wider factors such as unemployment and mental health
- Assess the work of health colleagues, specifically GP Surgeries, in ensuring residents are aware of how and when to contact them, particularly during the pandemic.

The review will do this by:

- Undertaking a desk top analysis of the Community Impact Assessment and the Residents’ Survey.
- Understanding the impact of current services and support provided by the Council, health colleagues and the voluntary sector.
- Benchmarking against comparator authorities.
- Consulting residents about their experiences in these key areas using focus groups; social media campaigns; mystery shopper calls and ‘walking a day in their shoes’.
- Consulting staff/volunteers about their experiences in these key areas using focus groups, testing forms/procedures used by staff, etc.
- Potentially, working with essential shops to find out what support they provide to people feeling isolated and lonely and if provision could be widened.
- Working with GP surgeries to identify good practice in communicating with their patients.

At the conclusion of this work the Panel will produce a report highlighting its findings and proposing recommendations to the Executive about how the Council, health colleagues, voluntary sector and private sector can tackle the key issues identified in the Community Impact Survey and Resident’s Survey.

Delivery methods: Focus groups, social media campaigns, mystery shopper tests, ‘walking a day in their shoes’, testing forms/procedures.

Council theme: Strong, safe, supportive and self-reliant communities; active and healthy lifestyles

Council team: People

Review due: March 2021	Proposed by: Cllr Malcolm Tullett, Chair Health, Wellbeing and Finance Panel
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Equalities Impact Assessment

The Community Impact Assessment is one of the tools the Council uses to help show it has due regard in the exercise of its equality duty under the **Equality Act 2010**. During this review councillors will scrutinise if this tool ensures the policies, practices, projects and activities which shape the Council’s work, and its work with partner organisations, are ensuring equal access to all services. The selection of witnesses to participate in the review will specifically and deliberately include representatives of groups working with and for people with protected characteristics. Overview and Scrutiny will offer facilities, such as language translation, as necessary to engage with ‘hard to reach’ residents.

Financial and legal implications

There are potentially legal and financial implications of any recommendations arising from this review which will be fully addressed in the review report. In addition, there may be a small cost required to ensure equality of engagement by ‘hard to reach’ residents i.e. translation services.

Climate Change implications

Part of the aim of a Community Impact Assessment is to reduce environmental impact where possible. In most cases the general impact for the community should be positive and delivering Council priorities. However, this is not always straightforward e.g. the Council may need to reduce a service to make savings which will ultimately benefit residents in terms of keeping Council Tax levels low, but the loss of the service itself could have a significant impact on climate change. In this case councillors may consider that, overall, the impact is negative and therefore will need to consider how to reduce or eliminate this impact e.g. by promoting alternatives to the service. Therefore, there is scope to assess the current practice of including climate change mitigation and adaptation into this review and councillors will escalate identified issues in relation to climate change to the O&S Commission as part of its review into Climate Change to avoid scope drift.

Apprenticeships Review Education, Skills and Growth Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Reason for review

In January 2020 Government data showed the number of people starting an apprenticeship in England fell to 125,800 between August and October, down 4.7% from 132,000 in the same quarter a year earlier. That number was up by 15.4% year-on-year.¹ One reason for this appears to be the Apprenticeship Levy, introduced in 2017, which requires businesses with annual payrolls of over £3m to pay 0.5% of their wage bill into a pot each month. Last year a total of £96m of unused funds expired in July and August 2019 due to the complexities of this system.

Bracknell Forest Council employs several apprentices and promotes apprenticeships across the borough but apprenticeship participation in Berkshire is lower than the national average. Only 6% of workplaces in Berkshire have an apprentice, compared to 12% nationally.² Also, in July 2020 the Government announced a range of new incentives for companies to hire apprentices as part of its response to the Covid-19 pandemic which include additional funding and a six month 'Kickstart' program.

Objectives/scope

The review is looking to identify how to:

- increase in the number of young people taking up apprenticeships in the borough
- increase in the diversity range of apprenticeships in the borough
- reduce the barriers locally which prevent young people taking up apprenticeships with focus on the impact of Coronavirus.
- Identify and assess barriers to local businesses employing apprentices and reduce those barriers.

The review will do this by:

- Undertaking a desk top analysis of apprenticeship opportunities in the borough for young people aged 16+.
- Benchmarking against comparator authorities.
- Consulting young people about what apprenticeship opportunities they would like in the borough and, specifically, apprentices from a disadvantaged background.
- Reviewing current barriers/incentives.
- Analysing the uptake of 'Degree' apprenticeships for current employees versus new apprenticeships.
- Reviewing uptake of the 'Kickstart' program in the borough and considering options for how this might be promoted to increase take up further.

1

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/861944/Apprenticeships-and-traineeships-commentary.pdf

2 in Berkshire, October 2017:

<http://www.thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk/getfile/Public%20Documents/Data/Skills%20Education%20and%20Employment/Apprenticeships%20in%20Berkshire%202017%20-%20Final.pdf?inline-view=true>

At the conclusion of this work the Panel will produce a report highlighting its findings and propose recommendations to the Executive about how the Council, its partners and private companies in the borough can increase the number and diversity of apprenticeships in the borough.

Delivery methods: Challenge sessions; interviewing young people and providers of apprenticeships; desktop analysis of local and national apprenticeship data.

Council theme: Education and Skills

Council team: Education and Learning

Review due: January 2021

Proposed by: Cllr Mrs Birch, Chair
Education, Skills and Growth Panel

Equalities Impact Assessment

The Social Mobility Commission published a report in June 2020 ³ which noted disadvantage gaps existed at “every stage” of the apprenticeship journey, from initial selection of candidates by employers to the quality of training available. Their analysis found there was a 36% decline in starts by learners from disadvantaged backgrounds between 2015/16 and 2017/18 – the year the levy was introduced – in comparison to a 23 per cent decline for more privileged apprentices. At the same time only 13% of degree-level apprenticeships – the “fastest growing and most expensive apprenticeship option” – were taken by disadvantaged apprentices. During this review the Panel will ensure they consult specifically with apprentices from a disadvantaged background.

Financial and legal implications

There are potentially legal and financial implications of any recommendations arising from this review which will be fully addressed in the review report.

Climate Change implications

Offering apprenticeships to school leavers who would like to train in fields which support climate change e.g. growth of renewable energy, would not only support young people into gainful employment but also ensure skills meet new industry needs and could benefit the borough in terms of meeting its climate change targets. Potential opportunities and recommendations between apprenticeships and climate change will be fed into the O&S Commission’s work on climate change.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/apprenticeships-and-social-mobility>