

**COUNCIL – ADVISORY MEETING
15 SEPTEMBER 2021
7.30 - 10.40 PM**



Present:

Councillors Ms Merry (Mayor), Gbadebo (Deputy Mayor), Allen, Angell, Atkinson, Bhandari, Dr Barnard, Bettison OBE, D Birch, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Brown, Brunel-Walker, Dudley, Finch, Ms Gaw, Mrs L Gibson, MJ Gibson, Green, Mrs Hamilton, Harrison, Mrs Hayes MBE, Ms Hayes, Heydon, Mrs Ingham, Kennedy, Leake, Mrs McKenzie, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, McLean, Mrs Mattick, Mossom, Neil, Porter, Skinner, Temperton, Tullett, Turrell, Virgo and Wade

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Kirke and Parker

15. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Councillor D Birch advised the meeting that subsequent to minute 14 relating to the motion to oppose any moves by the government to abolish the Frimley Integrated Care System it had been confirmed that no changes would be made.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 14 July 2021 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

16. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

17. Chief Constable's Presentation

Police and Crime Commissioner, Matt Barber; Chief Constable, John Campbell and Deputy LPA Commander - Acting Chief Inspector Helen Kenny attended the meeting to provide an update on local policing issues and crime figures within Bracknell Forest.

In response to a question relating to multiple concerns regarding police presence in Crowthorne the Chief Constable confirmed he was not happy with what was described. In relation to attending Neighbourhood Action Group meetings it was clarified that this was a recognised duty when PCSOs are on shift and explanation was given that the issue arose due to the shift pattern of the PCSO. It was reported that the community room at the Crowthorne Fire Station was still being used but at the request of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service the police office was not accessed to allow them more space to achieve social distancing. Neighbourhood officers use mobile devices to stay connected rather than regularly returning to a police point, the effectiveness of Police points were regularly reviewed by the estates team. Acting Chief Inspector Kenny confirmed she would contact Cllr Mrs McKenzie-Boyle to discuss these issues further with the Crowthorne Parish clerk.

A question was raised regarding whether installing additional speed cameras would reduce reported issues of speeding and increased noise from cars and what the

criteria were for installation. Requirements for where to install cameras had increased and were focused on the risk of harm and traffic incidents. Superintendent Kenny advised that police resources were targeted where there was a risk of harm so consideration as given to the road environment, speed and collision data as well as local concerns. This issue was on the neighbourhood team's radar and work was ongoing within local partnerships to work together with other specialists to find solutions. The Police and Crime Commissioner added that there was an opportunity for issues to be escalated from community speedwatch to roads policing unit and he was looking to improve the links between them. He concluded that they were awaiting the outcome of pilots into new technology for noise cameras and average speed cameras before assessing if these were the right solutions for Bracknell Forest.

It was queried about expectations of the police, maintaining confidence in the force in relation to drug dealing when people report incidences. It was requested that communities were kept informed on action that was taking place to encourage them to continue to provide local intelligence. It was acknowledged that there were sometimes operations which could not be shared but the Chief Constable agreed that the communication loop needed to be closed. Acting Chief Inspector Kenny would follow up on the concerns raised about the gap in communication but updated the meeting in activity that had been conducted related to drug issues in the area. Two geographic neighbourhood teams had been forced which meant that each area had more officers on shift with four police officers and 11 or 12 PCSOs which gives more resources to address the intelligence that was reported. Targeted operations were undertaken to counter County Lines issues as risk of harm was significant and exploitative. She acknowledged that due to the way that calls were handled it was tricky for the officers to respond directly to individuals providing intelligence. Local dashboards will collate information and give opportunity for local response and feedback was noted.

Concerns were raised about attendance at anti-social incidents such as car meets, the time it took for neighbourhood police to respond to local councillors and the police presence in Bracknell as well as their attendance at noisy vehicle meets. Councillors were encouraged to escalate issues with response times to the Superintendent Felicity Parker. Acting Chief Inspector Kenny was pleased to report that the previous recruitment commitment had been exceeded and 31 additional officers were working in the area. She explained that she had changed the structure of response teams which meant that one third of the response team was brought back to work directly out of Bracknell again. This equated to one sergeant and eight police constables back in the Bracknell area. The restructure of the neighbourhood team, as explained in an earlier response, aimed to get more problem-solving and community focused officers on duty at the same time to be able to respond to known issues including alignment with Wokingham shift patterns. The Chief Constable responded that priority was given to responding to incidents where there was a risk of harm rather than noisy cars although recognised as a frustration for local residents. Acting Chief Inspector Kenny added that the focus was on preventing incidents using intelligence gathered. The police were looking at a partnership problem-solving approach across both Bracknell and Wokingham to work with organisations such as supermarket security to develop a consistent approach across the borough. In relation to conviction figures related to vehicle gatherings the participants were not always committing a criminal offence, but Section 59 legislation had been used as an effective preventative tool as warnings were given and participants wanted to avoid seizure of their vehicle.

An update was sought on the progress made to address anti-social behaviour by young people in parks and open spaces. In response to specific information relating to incidents in Sandhurst and Crowthorne and the threat of the use of weapons dispersal notices were issued including the use of Section 60 notice and successfully

worked with partners to undertake stop searches. Acting Chief Inspector Kenny advised that further reflection on the approach towards youth ASB had led to pilot operations to adopt a problem-solving approach to understand the root cause of the issue, the individuals involved and the risk factors affecting them.

In response to a question regarding action being taken on the misuse of electric scooters it was acknowledged that there was mixed messaging about them as some local authorities were encouraging their use due to the environmental benefits and this also divided opinion in communities. A successful operation had been run in the Lexicon to initially give a warning and then later seize the vehicle if the offence was repeated.

The Mayor requested that questions that had not been submitted in advance of the meeting be collated and would be responded to in writing. The Mayor thanked the Police and Crime Commissioner, Chief Constable and Acting Chief Inspector for their attendance and informative presentations.

18. Question submitted under Council Procedure Rule 9

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9 (Public Participation), a question was submitted by Mr Cox, resident of Central Sandhurst as set out below:

“I would like to petition the council to do a proper review of 5G technology before proceeding with any more installations (e.g. Ringmead). There has been little to no real life testing done on 5G technology. There is no demand as far as I know from speaking to my friends and residents here in Bracknell Forest. Does the council have any evidence at all of the demand for a new and unsafe technology? This is a call for action as a matter of interest to the health and wellbeing of the community and would appreciate it being raised at the next meeting for action.”

In response Councillor Brunel-Walker, Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration thanked Mr Cox for submitting the question and explained that the Government had set out its ambition to deliver a 5G network across the whole country with information contained within the “Enabling 5G” document published by Ofcom. The aim was to improve the digital connectivity for consumers, business and public services. He stated that the document sets out the way in which the Planning system has been adapted to enable 5G development and the general view from Government was that there is a demand for 5G, and it is committed to its delivery across the whole country.

He explained that the Government was clear that local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds only and should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for an electronic communications system, or set health safeguards different from the International Commission guidelines for public exposure. He explained that as such the council needed to work within the legislative framework set when dealing with requests for new 5G installations and it was not in a position to stop any further installations based on the grounds set out in the published question.

He continued that from a Public Health perspective, the Council was guided by evidence of harm to the wider population and worked within the framework set by Public Health England whose position on the safety of the technology was set out on the government’s website. He quoted that “It is possible that there may be a small increase in overall exposure to radio waves when 5G is added to an existing network

or in a new area. However, the overall exposure is expected to remain low relative to guidelines and, as such, there should be no consequences for public health.”

Councillor Brunel-Walker concluded that the Council would not be undertaking any form of 5G study nor would it be refusing the installation of 5G technology where the normal criteria that would be applied to these types of planning applications were met. He asked that the links to webpages he had referred to be shared via the minutes.

The links to information on this topic are listed below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/telecommunications-security-bill-factsheets/factsheet-6-5g>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/5g-mobile-technology-a-guide>

<https://www.mobileuk.org/5g-and-health>

<https://www.mobileuk.org/5g-and-health-concerns>

19. **Petition submitted under Council Procedure Rule 9**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9 (Public Participation), a petition was submitted by Mr R Edwards, resident of Hanworth as set out below:

“The residents of Hanworth and Great Hollands are affected by increased road noise on A3095 and Nine Mile Ride. We are asking the council to provide a solution to unacceptable levels of vehicular noise which is affecting the amenity, wellbeing and health of local residents.

We urge the Council to work in partnership with the Police to find a solution, not limited to, but including reducing the speed to 40mph along Nine Mile Ride and having “Speed Average” cameras and other noise reducing measures and traffic calming on Nine Mile Ride and A3095”

In response Councillor Turrell, Executive Member for Planning and Transport noted the concerns that were raised and explained that there were outgoing actions to be completed on the scheme, especially on the A3095, including replanting of trees and hedges. He confirmed that the Council was talking to the police about the issues of speeding and anti-social driving and the impact it was having on local residents. He noted that the anti-social traffic noise was heard in quite a few parts of Bracknell across the borough. The Council would continue to work with the Police and follow up this issue and respond to the matters raised. He agreed to Mr Edwards’ request to have a meeting to discuss the matter further.

20. **Mayor's Announcements**

Mayoral announcements

Since the last Council meeting the Mayor had attended nine online Citizenship Ceremonies.

The High Sheriffs of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire had delivered a multi-faith service in Remembrance Reflection and Hope in partnership with the Lord Lieutenants at Dorney Lake.

The Mayor had been pleased to meet the winner of the footprint competition and the Bracknell Forest Giants. The Bracknell Forest Giants came to the Lexicon to celebrate the Borough's forests which make up almost 40% of the landscape and the successful event had been achieved through the collaboration between the Lexicon and Bracknell Forest Council. There was also a story telling show with some of the proceeds being donated to the Mayor's two military charities.

The Mayor reported that the new Elsey Building had been opened at Edgbarrow School. The building which was named after former headmaster Robert Elsey had replaced and upgraded the Maths, English Languages and Art block. The Mayor had enjoyed a full tour of the learning resource with Councillors Mrs Mattick and Wade.

The Mayor was proud to see over 600 participants running in the 36th Bracknell Half marathon, hosted by the Lexicon and organised by Everyone Active and Bracknell Forest Council. She noted that the event raised funds for excellent good causes and congratulated Richard King who completed the course in 1 hour 16 minutes, Claire Welch who was the first woman home in 1 hour 36 minutes, Councillor Ankur Bhandari for raising funds for Diabetes UK and Damian James, Assistant Director Contracts for also taking part. The Mayor was pleased to note that this year edible and biodegradable seaweed-based water capsules were used to refresh the runners.

The Mayor had attended the Annual Memorial Service at Easthampstead Park Cemetery and Crematorium and reflected that it was a moving yet uplifting service ably assisted by the scouts which was appreciated by residents.

The Mayor advised that she had recently attended the High Sheriff's Summer Evening Reception.

The Mayor had joined the Bracknell library celebrations of its 50th anniversary and advised there was a lovely pictorial display of the library through the ages.

The Mayor thanked Dave Donaldson, the Easthampstead Rotary Club and all the volunteers who made the Three Counties Cycle Ride event such a success. More than 250 riders took part to raise funds for good causes including Councillor Dale Birch who was cycling for the Sandhurst Day Centre.

Councillor Brunel-Walker, Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration

Councillor Brunel-Walker reiterated the success of the Bracknell Forest Giants event at the Lexicon which demonstrated the partnership with the Bracknell Regeneration Partnership.

Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning

Councillor Dr Barnard updated the meeting on the progress of the Imagination Library scheme with 175 children signed up to receive one book each month and over 70 library cards had been issued. He explained that to make the scheme sustainable and expand the number of children this was available to, the Council was looking for business sponsorship in future years.

Councillor Dr Barnard was pleased to report that over the summer 400 eligible children took part in the holiday activities and food programme. These activities took place across 16 sites with 3,000 hours of free activities and food was provided. The free school meals voucher scheme was extended over the holiday and the Council managed to reach out to 2,500 children including some under-fives in that scheme.

He thanked the team that pulled the schemes together at short notice and achieved so much for the children of the borough.

Councillor Mrs Hayes MBE, Executive Member for the Environment

Councillor Mrs Hayes MBE encouraged councillors to come along to recycling events taking place during Big Green Week starting on Saturday 25 September from 9.30am at Bracknell Leisure Centre with partners Suez and the Clothing Warehouse. The event encouraged residents to bring their unwanted small electricals and clothing. Residents would receive 500 recycling points for attending which in turn could be donated to local charities.

Councillor Bettison OBE, Leader of the Council

Councillor Bettison OBE, announced that a memorial service was being held to remember late Councillor Jim Finnie, Freeman of the Borough on Saturday 30 October at 2pm. The service at St John the Baptist Church, Crowthorne would be followed by the formal naming of the square in the high street as Jim Finnie Square. He advised that members of the public would be welcome at both events.

21. **Executive Report**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bettison OBE, presented his report on the work of the Executive since that reported at the Council meeting on 14 July 2021. The Executive had met twice on 20 July and 31 August 2021.

The Leader highlighted the following matters that had been considered:

- Within the Capital budget spend of £25.883m the main carry forwards were for £7.6m for Heathlands (on-site); £3.9m for Town centre regeneration and £0.8m for LED lighting replacement.
- The Revenue budget outturn of £87.592m was £3.515m under budget with significant government support. During the 23 years as a Unitary Council the budget had never been overspent.
- Legal preparations for Coopers Hill development of 52 housing/low level flats by Bracknell Forest and Cambium Partnership had been agreed
- Lateral Flow Test project contract extension to March 2022 following the very fast initial set up in early 2021 and on flexible terms to allow for further national policy changes.
- Home Care Commissioning Procurement plan agreed for three years (plus three) on flexible framework contract
- Interim extension to Section 75 Agreement to be agreed by Executive Director: People prior to revised agreement in 2022 reflecting new Better Care Fund guidance. This was an essential framework for much joint working with the Clinical Commissioning Group.

The report contained a recommendation that the Council was asked to resolve in respect of the following matter:

- Treasury Management Performance

On the proposition of Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance, seconded by Councillor Allen it was

RECOMMENDED TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE that the Treasury Management performance in 202/21 as set out in Annexe B to the Executive report be noted.

22. Standards Annual Report

The Council noted the Annual Report which advised them of activity within its Standards framework from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

23. Question Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 10

Councillor Temperton asked Councillor Turrell, Executive Member for Planning and Transport the following published question:

Having seen the recent photos of flooding in London, is the Council confident that the surface drains throughout Bracknell Forest have both the capacity and adequate maintenance to deal with extreme rainfall?

In response Councillor Turrell agreed that the images of recent flash flooding in London were alarming but noted that such intense rainfall related to storm weather was typically rare. He observed that the urban density of London, and other large towns and cities, increased their vulnerability to flash flooding whilst mixed urban and rural areas fare better with greener environments providing increased drainage capacity and natural water attenuation.

He stated that it was a requirement of new developments within Bracknell Forest sites to ensure that flood risk did not increase or impact upon the wider drainage infrastructure as a result of urban growth. He added that it was equally important to ensure that the existing drainage network was subject to improvements where needed. He advised that like all local authorities, and especially as lead local flood authority, Bracknell Forest Council applied an evidence and risk-based approach to ensure that finite Government funding for maintenance improvements was targeted to where it was needed most. He added that the important routine and cyclical maintenance of gullies, pipework and culverts would have increased focus in areas where flood risk potential was higher.

He concluded that he was confident that Bracknell Forest Council took a responsible approach to flood risk but the impact of significant weather events could always pose a threat to highway drainage networks.

Councillor Temperton asked a supplementary question whether the Council utilised modelling software to predict the impact of extreme rainfall and urged residents to contact the Council when they saw blocked drains on both paths and roads.

Councillor Turrell agreed with request to encourage residents to report blocked drains to help maintain the drainage system. He responded that he would follow up with officers regarding the use of computing modelling to understand the network and the potential impact. He agreed that this was an issue that needed to be taken seriously.

24. Motion submitted under Council Procedure Rule 11

Motion 02/2021 was moved and seconded by Councillors Turrell and Dudley respectively as follows:

This Council believes local input to planning decisions is valued by residents and is of the utmost importance, and will continue to uphold the right of residents to make such representations in respect of planning decisions.

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

Motion 03/2021 was moved and seconded by Councillors Temperton and Brown respectively as follows:

The Council asks the Executive to look to provide a Community Home within Bracknell Forest for some of our Bracknell Forest children who are awaiting foster parents, to avoid sending them to live outside the borough. This would provide a local home, enable continuity of schooling, retention of friendships and a better experience for the children.

An amendment was proposed and seconded by Councillors Dr Barnard and L Gibson respectively as follows:

The Council asks the Executive to keep under review the provision of a Community Home within Bracknell Forest, providing that any provision must not be to the detriment of our clear commitment to providing bespoke and personalised support for our children.

The timescale for reviewing and if appropriate delivering any agreed provision requires the Council to ask the Executive to reaffirm its commitment to putting the needs of every child and family requiring our support first.

To achieve this we will continue to work as a community to expand activity aimed at delivering high quality foster placements by recruiting more foster carers, with enhanced therapeutic support where needed for Bracknell Forest children of all ages. This avoids sending them to live outside the borough unless this is in their best interests. This approach provides a local home for a child, enables continuity of schooling, the retention of friendships and a better experience for children.

On being put to the vote the amendment was accepted. On being put to the vote the new substantive motion was carried.

CHAIRMAN