

**EXECUTIVE
18 OCTOBER 2022
5.00 - 5.57 PM**



Present:

Councillors Bettison OBE (Chair), Dr Barnard (Vice-Chair), Harrison, Mrs Hayes MBE, Heydon and Turrell

Present Virtually:

Councillors Brunel-Walker

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors D Birch

47. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

48. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive on 29 September 2022 together with the accompanying decision records be confirmed as a correct record.

Executive Decisions and Decision Records

The Executive considered the following items. The decisions are recorded in the decision sheets attached to these minutes and summarised below:

49. Budget Update

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- i. notes the identified best-case and worst-case scenarios for the Council's current year financial position summarised in Table 1 and detailed in Annex A of the Executive Director: Resources report.
- ii. approves drawing the full £1.5m from the earmarked reserve for Inflationary Costs to support the current year's budget, as proposed in paragraph 5.3 of the Executive Director: Resources report.
- iii. Endorses the actions agreed by the Corporate Management Team to help contain expenditure in the current year as set out under paragraph 5.5 of the Executive Director: Resources report.
- iv. Supports the proposed responses to immediate budget priorities set out in the report and specifically:
 - a) approves drawings from reserves to meet time-limited costs proposed for core foster care allowances (£0.154m in 2022/23, paragraph 5.10), social worker recruitment and retention subject to detailed review by the Employment Committee (£0.190m, paragraph 5.15) and SEND support

service staffing (£0.271m + £0.197m + £0.022m, paragraphs 5.25, 5.27 and 5.28); and

b) approves inclusion in the Commitment Budget 2023/24 funding of £0.371m for core foster care allowances (paragraph 5.10), additional funding and associated savings of £0.115m and -£0.179m respectively related to the enhanced foster care approach, £0.456m for social worker recruitment and retention proposals (paragraph 5.15) and £0.052m for SEND support service staffing (paragraph 5.28).

- v. Notes the Council's predicted medium-term financial prospects detailed in paragraphs 5.29 to 5.53 and summarised in Table 3 of the Executive Director: Resources report.
- vi. Reaffirms its support for the 7 key principles to guide budget preparations set out under paragraph 5.54 of the Executive Director: Resources report.

50. **Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Overview and Scrutiny Review**

RESOLVED that the Executive agrees the Education, Skills and Growth Overview & Scrutiny Panel's recommendations as set out in the Panel report and paragraph 5.8 of the report, taking into account the comments of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer

51. **Financial Hardship Action Plan and Household Support Fund (Phase 3) distribution**

RESOLVED that:

- i. the distribution of the Household Support Fund (Phase three) through the following routes be approved.
 - a. Supermarket vouchers to Free School Meal pupils at Bracknell Forest schools, ages 5-16.
 - b. Offering the local foodbanks additional funding, including to provide fuel vouchers and fresh food.
 - c. Purchase supermarket vouchers to distribute to low-income households receiving income based council tax reduction or housing benefit but not the benefits, such as universal credit, which would qualify them for the £650 national cost of living payment.
 - d. Enhancing the Local Welfare Scheme provision, allowing applications from households in hardship who would not otherwise automatically qualify for support.
- ii. the financial hardship action plan (2022-2024) for operational implementation is endorsed.

CHAIRMAN

Bracknell Forest Council Record of Decision

Work Programme Reference	I109006
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1. **TITLE:** Budget Update
2. **SERVICE AREA:** Resources
3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To provide the Executive with an update on the current year's predicted spending against budget and an outline of future financial prospects.

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes
5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

- i. notes the identified best-case and worst-case scenarios for the Council's current year financial position summarised in Table 1 and detailed in Annex A of the Executive Director: Resources report.
- ii. approves drawing the full £1.5m from the earmarked reserve for Inflationary Costs to support the current year's budget, as proposed in paragraph 5.3 of the Executive Director: Resources report.
- iii. Endorses the actions agreed by the Corporate Management Team to help contain expenditure in the current year as set out under paragraph 5.5 of the Executive Director: Resources report.
- iv. Supports the proposed responses to immediate budget priorities set out in the report and specifically:
 - a) approves drawings from reserves to meet time-limited costs proposed for core foster care allowances (£0.154m in 2022/23, paragraph 5.10), social worker recruitment and retention subject to detailed review by the Employment Committee (£0.190m, paragraph 5.15) and SEND support service staffing (£0.271m + £0.197m + £0.022m, paragraphs 5.25, 5.27 and 5.28); and
 - b) approves inclusion in the Commitment Budget 2023/24 funding of £0.371m for core foster care allowances (paragraph 5.10), additional funding and associated savings of £0.115m and -£0.179m respectively related to the enhanced foster care approach, £0.456m for social worker recruitment and retention proposals (paragraph 5.15) and £0.052m for SEND support service staffing (paragraph 5.28).
- v. Notes the Council's predicted medium-term financial prospects detailed in paragraphs 5.29 to 5.53 and summarised in Table 3 of the Executive Director: Resources report.

- vi. Reaffirms its support for the 7 key principles to guide budget preparations set out under paragraph 5.54 of the Executive Director: Resources report.

7. REASON FOR DECISION

The recommendations are intended to ensure that the Executive is aware of the Council’s current and predicted future financial position.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The Executive could choose not to support expenditure on the proposed priority areas. This is not recommended as the measures proposed are viewed as preventing more significant cost increases in the period ahead.

- 9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Executive Director: Resources

- 10. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
18 October 2022	25 October 2022

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I105206
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1. **TITLE:** Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Overview and Scrutiny Review

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Delivery

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To consider the recommendations of the review into Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. The review seeks to understand the response by the Council and their partners to the outcome of the SEND Ofsted inspection.

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that the Executive agrees the Education, Skills and Growth Overview & Scrutiny Panel's recommendations as set out in the Panel report and paragraph 5.8 of the report, taking into account the comments of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

- i. The Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel concluded their findings based on the evidence considered and review that was undertaken.
- ii. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission has endorsed the review recommendations, taking into account the review report and the views of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer.
- iii. The comments from the relevant officer set out in paragraph 7 of the report do not indicate any concerns with the proposed recommendations.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

The Executive could decide:

- to agree the recommendations as set out in the Panel's report
- to agree the recommendations in part
- to ask for further work to be undertaken recognising that this would delay the Panel's next piece of work
- to note the Panel report

9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Executive Director: People

10. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
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18 October 2022

25 October 2022

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I109392
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1. **TITLE:** Financial Hardship Action Plan and Household Support Fund (Phase 3) distribution

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Chief Executive's Office

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To seek approval on the distribution plans for the third phase of the Household Support Fund grant, provided by the Department for Work and Pensions. To brief the Executive on the operational action plan for reducing the longer term impact of financial hardship for residents.

4 **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

- i. the distribution of the Household Support Fund (Phase three) through the following routes be approved.
 - a. Supermarket vouchers to Free School Meal pupils at Bracknell Forest schools, ages 5-16.
 - b. Offering the local foodbanks additional funding, including to provide fuel vouchers and fresh food.
 - c. Purchase supermarket vouchers to distribute to low-income households receiving income based council tax reduction or housing benefit but not the benefits, such as universal credit, which would qualify them for the £650 national cost of living payment.
 - d. Enhancing the Local Welfare Scheme provision, allowing applications from households in hardship who would not otherwise automatically qualify for support.
- ii. the financial hardship action plan (2022-2024) for operational implementation is endorsed.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

1. There is increasing financial hardship in the community, and nationally, related to rising inflation and the cost of living crisis. This has extended the financial uncertainty many households faced during the pandemic. The financial hardship action plan offers a preventative approach to hardship, drawing together existing support across the voluntary, community and faith sector and council to maximise resources. This aims to help residents be more financially independent and the community more resilient.

2. Residents are likely to be concerned about their finances and Councillors may be asked what support is available, the action plan aims to help answer these questions.
3. The commitments within the action plan will be delivered over the next 18 months, however the council recognises that there is also immediate hardship facing many households in the borough. Therefore, the additional funding provided within the Household Support Fund is welcomed short term support. The recommendations on distributing this funding are set out to enable the funding to be distributed to as many households as possible through mechanisms available between now and March 2023.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

1. The relevant Officer and Councillor groups considered other options for spending the Household Support Fund, but it was concluded that these would not be as effective as those recommended for supporting those most in need. The proposals broadly follow the previously agreed mechanism in distributing preceding tranches of funding. Discussions with other councils also show that many are also choosing to fund supermarket vouchers and boosting existing support mechanisms such as welfare funds or voluntary and community sector partners.
2. There is no statutory requirement to deliver a financial hardship action plan, and there are limited additional resources available to do this, so the plan makes best use of existing resources. The Executive could decide not to endorse the delivery of the action plan, or any further development. However, given the current economic climate, without any action there is likely to be increasing pressure on household finances and on demand for services such as welfare, housing, social care and council tax in the near future.

9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Assistant Director: Chief Executive's Officer

10. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
18 October 2022	25 October 2022