

Notice of Meeting

Council

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



Wednesday 19 April 2023, 7.30 pm
Time Square, Market Street, Bracknell, RG12 1JD

Susan Halliwell
Chief Executive

Agenda

All councillors at this meeting have adopted the Mayor's Charter which fosters constructive and respectful debate.

Item	Description	Page
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The meeting will be opened with prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain

1.	Apologies for Absence	
2.	Minutes of Previous Meeting	3 - 22
	To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 22 February 2023.	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
	<p>Members are asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary or affected interests in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.</p> <p>Any Member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in a matter should withdraw from the meeting when the matter is under consideration and should notify the Democratic Services Officer in attendance that they are withdrawing as they have such an interest. If the Disclosable Pecuniary Interest is not entered on the register of Members interests the Monitoring Officer must be notified of the interest within 28 days.</p> <p>Any Member with an affected Interest in a matter must disclose the interest to the meeting. There is no requirement to withdraw from the meeting when the interest is only an affected interest, but the Monitoring Officer should be notified of the interest, if not previously notified of it, within 28 days of the meeting.</p>	
4.	Mayor's Announcements	

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5.	Executive Report	23 - 30
	<p>To receive the Leader's report on the work of the Executive since the Council meeting held on 22 February 2023.</p> <p>Council is asked to resolve a recommendation in respect of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authority Housing Fund • Joint Venture Business Plan Review 	
6.	Report of Overview and Scrutiny	31 - 52
	To receive a four-year report on progress made in respect of the operation and development of Overview and Scrutiny in Bracknell Forest during 2019 - 23.	

Sound recording, photographing, filming and use of social media is permitted. Please contact Hannah Harding, 01344 352308, hannah.harding@bracknell-forest.gov.uk, so that any special arrangements can be made.

Published: 12 April 2023

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COUNCIL
22 FEBRUARY 2023
7:30pm – 9:25pm

Present:

Councillors Bhandari (Mayor), Mrs L Gibson (Deputy Mayor), Allen, Atkinson, Dr Barnard, Bettison OBE, Bidwell, D Birch, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Brown, Dudley, Ms Gaw, Gbadebo, MJ Gibson, Green, Mrs Hamilton, Mrs Hayes MBE, Heydon, Mrs Ingham, Kirke, Leake, Mrs Mattick, McLean, Ms Merry, Mossom, Neil, Temperton, Turrell, Virgo and Wade

Present Virtually:

Councillors Angell, Finch, Harrison, Ms Hayes, Mrs McKenzie, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, Porter and Skinner

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Brunel-Walker, Kennedy and Parker

40. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brunel-Walker, Kennedy and Parker.

41. Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 11 January 2023 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

42. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

43. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor announced that the money raised for the Mayor's charity this year would be spent on causes within Bracknell Forest. The decision to focus on the local area was a conscious choice, and the Mayor felt proud and happy to be able to support the community in this way.

The Mayor explained that the funds would be distributed to up to five charities, voluntary organisations or community groups who were focused on helping the residents of Bracknell Forest. They were pleased to have found good partners in Berkshire Community Foundation, who helped them to raise funds. The Mayor and their team organised various activities and drives to raise money, and they were grateful for the support they received from fellow councillors, residents and local businesses. The Mayor felt overwhelmed with the response from the community and was delighted to see so many people coming together to support a worthy cause.

The Mayor also mentioned that he attended The Lexicon Awards a couple of weeks ago, celebrating the success of The Lexicon. The Mayor was joined by Chief Executive, Susan Halliwell, and Councillor Mark Brunel-Walker at the event. The Mayor was proud to be associated with The Lexicon, which is considered to be a

jewel in the crown of Bracknell Forest, and he felt honoured to be part of such an exciting event.

Good News

Councillor Mrs Hayes, Executive Member for the Environment, announced some good news to the meeting. The Councillor mentioned that Crowthorne Reduce Our Waste community were organising a Repair Cafe to take place the next Saturday at the Baptist Church on Crowthorne High Street. She encouraged attendees to visit and support the community's efforts to reduce waste. The Councillor expressed a desire for more Repair Cafes to open in the area to reduce landfill waste. She also gave notice that she would share success stories about the flats and houses at the next meeting.

Lastly, she invited people to meet the officers who collect electrical goods and clothing at the John Nike Centre, as well as the team that brings food waste out of landfill. She asked everyone to mark their diaries and join her in supporting these initiatives.

Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning, announced that all schools in Bracknell Forest had achieved a good or outstanding rating in the latest Ofsted report. This achievement was a focus and a key objective of the administration since Conservative candidates pledged in May 1997 to make all schools good schools.

Councillor Dr Barnard highlighted that this achievement was a tremendous one, given that Bracknell Forest has 40 largely independent institutions, including academies and local authority schools, that had signed up to the school improvement and accountability strategy. The strategy was in partnership with the school improvement team at the Borough Council, and it had been delivered successfully.

Councillor Dr Barnard acknowledged that there were huge challenges facing schools, especially after Covid, which has caused unprecedented sickness, illness, and staffing pressures. Despite these challenges, the whole school communities, including school leaders, governors, and staff, had worked collectively and collegiately together to drive up the standards of education in Bracknell Forest. Dr Barnard emphasised that the good or outstanding rating meant that parents applying for secondary school places in Bracknell Forest were to receive an offer to attend a good or outstanding school. Dr Barnard thanked everyone who contributed to this success, including the former Head of the School Improvement service, Rachel Morgan, and Zoe Livingstone, the current Head of School Improvement.

The Mayor added his thanks to the team at the Council who were going above and beyond to achieve these results.

44. 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 11 January 2023. The Executive had met twice since that date: on 24 January and 7 February 2023. The Leader highlighted the following matters that had been considered:

- The Executive had worked hard on the budget and the Executive Member for Finance and Resources was to share more about it later in the meeting.
- A polling districts and polling place review had been conducted after the boundary reviews, including the appointment of designated alternative polling

places to relocate polling stations at short notice if the primary venue were to not be available.

- The Executive had approved the basis of the settlement with the Council's leisure services provider Everyone Active, relating to the financial support provided by the Council in recognition of the impact of COVID-19 on trading at the sites managed by them.
- The Executive had agreed to extend the design and construction support contract with the existing managing partner for a further two-year period.
- The Executive had agreed to the terms for a new shared service agreement between all the Berkshire local authorities and the joint Child Care legal team employed by Reading Borough Council.
- The Executive had approved the final draft of the housing strategy for the period 2023 to 2028, including the amendments made in response to stakeholder consultation.
- The Executive had approved the procurement plan to re-tender Public Health nursing services for 0 to 19-year-olds from April 1, 2024, for a period of five years with up to two further 12-month extensions.

Councillor Bidwell asked the Leader of the Council, Paul Bettison OBE, to provide details of the settlement that was agreed between Bracknell Forest Council and Everyone Active. The Leader advised that they could not be shared in public and offered to arrange for Councillor Bidwell to be briefed by the relevant officers and/or Executive Member.

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

- The Polling District and Polling Place Scheme

On the proposition of Councillor Dale Birch, Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing, seconded by Councillor Chris Turrell, Executive Member for Planning and Transport, it was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations relating to the Polling District and Polling Place Scheme as set out at paragraph 5.1.1 of the Executive Report be approved.

45. **Financial Plans and Revenue Budgets 2023/24**

The Council considered the report by the Executive Director: Resources which set out the financial plans and revenue budgets for the financial year 2023/24 and the supporting information which presented the Council's spending plans for 2023/24 and detailed budgets for the General Fund and Capital Programme.

Councillor Heydon presented the report and said:

"I am delighted for the first time since 2020 to be introducing the budget in the Council Chamber, with all Members able to actually be here. That is a very welcome return to normality.

Unfortunately, outside of this Chamber, the rest of the world continues to be in turmoil. No longer is it really caused by COVID-19, though sadly it's not yet left us completely. In its place we have economic turmoil; inflation and interest rates are at levels not experienced for years; the dreadful situation in Ukraine is impacting us everywhere; and we have national Political turmoil; with now having our third Prime Minister in just over six months.

That has inevitably brought a high degree of uncertainty to our budget planning for 2023/24. I worry that I seem to say this most years, but it really has been difficult, but I will go on to explain the specific challenges we have faced this year and how we have dealt with them.

Non the less I am proposing a budget that is only possible because it is built on sound, prudent and strong financial management. In addition to maintaining our high service levels (which we are justifiably proud of), it is preserving a green borough which I know is important to residents and providing a great place to live work and relax. Lastly, and certainly not least, is our particular attention and care of vulnerable residents, which is even stronger this year because of the underlying financial and international climate.

All councils have a legal duty to set a balanced budget each year. In very simple terms, which means that what we plan to spend must come within the level of resources available to us. Sadly, in recent times we have seen a growing number of authorities – one a near neighbour – for whom that has not been possible.

Let me make this clear - Bracknell Forest Council is not in, or even close to, that situation. However, we have known for many years that our future level of Government funding is at risk. The business rates retention system – which has served Bracknell Forest well since 2013 – has long been set to change in 2023/24.

We expected the planned national business rates revaluation to proceed, but the impact of a national revaluation is always extremely difficult to predict. All Members will be aware that this Council has been facing the added uncertainty of our single biggest ratepayer being transferred to the Government's central list – i.e., potentially a significant drop in revenues.

The impact of those changes could have been catastrophic for our finances. Bracknell Forest has been proportionately the largest beneficiary from the business rates retention system in England. This of course means that proportionately we had potentially the most to lose from any changes to it.

I really do want to acknowledge our financial strength - and our finances are very strong – this is a measure of our Director of Resources (Stuart McKellar) and his team – and believe me I know there isn't a stronger team anywhere. They have helped us plan for a worst-case scenario, this has enabled us to plan and take steps to ensure that this possibility was averted. Stuart – may I put on record our thanks to you and your team. Thank you.

I mentioned the loss of our largest single business rate payer – in the finance settlement we have been compensated £ for £ for the central list change and seen a modest increase in overall business rates income next year. We had been facing a potential recurring loss of income of over £4m, I am sure members will agree that is a very positive result for the Borough.

Of course, it is inevitable that there will be further changes to the local government finance system in the future. However, with a general election certain to come in or before January 2025, there is little chance that the funding system will change significantly in the next few years. This gives us a period of relative financial certainty which is welcomed and will enable [this Administration] to focus on what it does best – delivering high quality services for the residents and businesses of Bracknell Forest.

Within all the terrific services we provide it is almost impossible to single out any specifically. However, I am going to! I feel a special mention is due to our Children's Social Care team. Following an extremely rigorous Ofsted inspection in July last year, the team was judged outstanding, an almost unprecedented rating, of "Outstanding". We should be proud – I am.

This is an exceptional achievement and one that all Members should be proud of. Our investment in the Family Safeguarding Model over the past few years has achieved the impact we hoped it would, delivering the highest possible levels of care and support to the most vulnerable children in our Borough.

It has also helped us buck the national trend of ever-increasing costs to deliver these critical services. The team's focus on early support is reducing the number of children becoming looked after and requiring very specialist, very expensive placements. As a result, the Children's Social Care budget is reducing next year, by over £1.5m. I have to stress – this is NOT to make savings, but to reflect current, actual costs. This proves that it is possible to provide the highest quality services for less money – one of the primary objectives of this Conservative Administration. It is also a reflection on the capability and confidence of our own officers.

We are, of course, having to increase all our budgets due to inflation. The Council is affected by rising prices in the same way as all households and businesses. We have allowed £9.8m in the budget to cover the cost of inflation - three times the inflationary costs we would normally face. In providing this in full allows us to maintain current service levels – which is why I've already said that we haven't cut any services – despite the prevailing pressures.

In addition, there are some services where demand is increasing and others where we believe that increasing budget levels from the current year is important. The first such area is Highways another area where our roads are excellent. Bracknell Forest has typically spent more than the level of its Local Transport Grant allocation every year. For 2023/24 we are proposing to go even further and double the capital investment funded by the Council. In total, our capital spending in the highways infrastructure is increasing by £1.8m in 2023/24 and more in subsequent years.

We are also investing in brand new, temporary housing for homeless families at a site between Opladen Way and the Bagshot Road. It is currently inaccessible, but our officers have successfully bid for external funding to construct a new access road. This is quite innovative, making it possible to develop the current brownfield site and build up to 7 new homes for households who desperately need them.

Turning to the revenue budget, we are adding almost £0.4m to the budget used to support bus services across the Borough. With the current bus contracts ending this Autumn, our aim is to secure a continuation of current routes for those who still rely on them. The social value of this should not be underestimated, nor its contribution to the environment. In passing we have a well thought environmental strategy – and its objectives and its achievements are well worth following.

Despite Bracknell town centre's economy faring relatively well compared to other town and cities, our car parking income remains around 15% below pre-pandemic levels. This means we need to re-set the income budget, at a cost of £350,000. Finally in terms of the most material budget issues, the pressures on our adult social care and mental health budgets continue to rise, as is the case every year and in every council. For 2023/24, we are adding £2.1m to the base budget for these

services, which simply reflects the current levels of demand and cost that we are facing.

When we published our draft proposals for consultation, we hadn't received the provisional local government finance settlement to confirm our funding level for 2023/24. We estimated that there was a potential budget gap of just over £8m at that stage, before any Council Tax increase. With a maximum permitted increase generating just over £3.5m, we knew at that point there would need to be a significant drawing from our reserves to get to a balanced position.

Disappointingly, only three responses were submitted to the budget consultation this year, one of which was from Cllr Temperton on behalf of the Labour Group. The other responses were generally supportive of our proposals, with one raising concerns about our low level of Council Tax and how that might impact on our ability to deliver services.

While I make no apology for Bracknell Forest having one of the lowest tax levels in the country, it is perhaps interesting to note that it is currently around £182 per year below the unitary authority average. That equates to almost a £9m difference in the income we receive.

I can understand why someone may think that this would affect the level of services we can provide and might assume that our budget plans would need to include deep cuts in services. Let me assure you all that this is not the case.

As normal, our Overview and Scrutiny Commission considered the draft budget proposals at its meeting in January. I think it is fair to say that members of the Commission understood the difficult context we and all other local authorities are facing. They did, however, ask that further consideration be given to some specific savings proposals affecting the Environment portfolio. I am pleased to report that the Executive has been able to respond positively and remove those savings from the final budget proposals.

While we have managed to identify a total of £7.5m of savings to help fund spending pressures, which total an eye watering £17m, I am pleased to be able to say, as already mentioned that, once again for 2023/24, our proposed budget does not include any reductions in front-line service delivery. No facilities will close. No one who needs our help will be left wanting. I am incredibly proud of our track record in supporting vulnerable people. It always has been and always will be a priority. For example, we have developed a Financial Hardship Action Plan that is guiding our approach to providing support to households who most need it, through funding things like free school meals during holiday periods. Next year's budget also includes funding, from our own resources, for an extra post to support the delivery this.

Low-income households will also receive financial assistance with their Council Tax bills. Through the Government's Council Tax Support Scheme all households eligible for council tax support – both working age and pensioner households – will automatically receive a £25 discount. That will benefit over 4,000 households in our Borough.

There is also a discretionary element of this scheme. Earlier today, I took the decision under powers delegated to me by the Executive to use this to provide an additional £25 reduction for eligible low-income pensioner households, and to almost double the size of our Council Tax hardship fund for 2023/24, increasing it to £19,000. This fund is managed by our Welfare and Housing team and is available to provide support to any household experiencing financial hardship.

In each of the past three years this Administration has made available local funded reductions in council tax bills for low-income working age families, totalling £400. We will continue this support in 2023/24, supplementing the Government's £25 scheme with a further £75 council tax discount, funded by this Council. That will bring the support provided for council tax bills to a cumulative £500 over 4 years. This Administration doesn't just say that we wish to support vulnerable households – we deliver on our promise to do so.

I want to stress our continued support for the thousands of households who are finding the current climate difficult – we have always supported our vulnerable people and as the needs rise, we are also increasing our support – it would be a record we should be proud of but we also recognise that pride isn't enough – actual support needed is being provided.

Funding for our schools is provided through the separate Dedicated Schools Grant. The total average increase of 6.2% is relatively generous, however indications are that it will not be enough to cover all inflationary cost pressures. This will continue to attract our attention.

Funding for children and young people is provided separately, through the High Needs Block element of the Dedicated Schools Grant. High Needs Block funding for Bracknell Forest is increasing by almost 10% in 2023/24, however it is still not sufficient to meet our spending needs and is an ongoing issue everywhere. The welfare of our young people – both physical and mental – is paramount and The Council is participating in the DfE's Delivering Better Value in SEND programme, with additional funding and focus.

While the projections show that this plan will reduce the current (£7.5m annual) High Needs Block deficit, the scale of this issue both locally and nationally can only be solved by more Government intervention.

I will turn now to Council Tax. The level of council tax increase is one of the most difficult decisions we face each year. [As an Administration] we have to strike a balance between what feels appropriate for the short-term and what we know is required to maintain the level of services our residents need and deserve in the longer term.

We are proposing £7.5m of savings to help balance the budget. We simply cannot go further without starting to impact on front-line services – and I've already mentioned our commitment not to reduce these. Given this, we are proposing the maximum level of council tax increase next year. A 2.99% general rise and a 2% increase to help fund adult social care services, totalling 4.99%. We understand that this is the level of increase being proposed by the vast majority of upper tier councils in England. If you forgive me, I must also mention that this is lower than the current rate of inflation.

While we acknowledge that this won't be universally welcomed, Council Tax in Bracknell Forest will still be in the lowest 10% of unitary authorities, maintaining one of our key manifesto commitments.

Even this level of increase isn't enough to secure a balanced budget. We will therefore be drawing £3.6m from our Future Funding Reserve. This has been deliberately built up over the last few years to support our medium-term financial plans and it is therefore absolutely appropriate that we use it to balance next year's budget.

In these difficult times, I believe that this is the best possible budget. It is possible due to strong, astute financial management. It is also maintaining a borough that is universally popular as being well run, full of facilities and green space and is a great place to live, work, and play. It protects all front-line services and provides targeted financial support at the most vulnerable households who need it most.

On that note, I commend this budget to the Council and formally move all the recommendations shown in your budget papers.”

On the proposition of Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance, seconded by Councillor Bettison OBE, the recommendations as set out in the agenda papers were moved.

In line with tradition, Councillor Temperton, Leader of the Opposition, was invited to respond to the budget. The Councillor did so by saying the following:

“It is very disappointing to find that besides my own and that of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission there were only 2 responses from residents to the Budget consultation. I do not know how this compares with other Councils, but I truly believe that one of the main causes could be that the Budget is always a change budget and so residents can never see the full amount being spent on items such as road maintenance, waste removal, adult and children’s social care.

I was pleased to see that the suggested removal of 25% of litter bins throughout Bracknell Forest has been dropped. We need more bins not less. Also, the reduction of the large fly tipping budget - fly tipping is a blight in every one of our communities.

The Labour Group supported the reduction in the spraying of weedkiller from 3 times a year to two. The Council uses Glyphosate. I appreciate that this is a very effective broad leaf weed and grass killer, but it is a chemical that will be banned in France and Germany by the end of 2023. It kills insects as well as plants and the use of it as has been recently shown to have reduced the seed eating house sparrow population by 25%. It is sprayed between May and October - seed producing months. A compromise of twice a year until another less environmentally invasive chemical is discovered would show Bracknell Forest’s Leadership and commitment to Biodiversity.

The Labour group also opposed the introduction of the payment via QR codes at the Bracknell Forest car parks as a non-essential luxury we could do without in these times of extreme financial pressures. We would ask instead that this money be spent on resurfacing more public car parks - those listed as priority 3 and 4. Both of these are in Great Hollands and serve the doctors surgery, the shopping precinct, the school, flats, industrial units and a gym. These carparks were patched last year, but some of the holes were said to be too deep to be filled. The surfaces have ridges where the tyres have worn away the area between the white markings. I know residents who have tripped, obviously they did not report it in. These car parks are number three and four in priority. Both have a huge footfall and are nearly always full. The athletics track car park is only used when there is a track event- it is empty whenever I drive past it. If this is essential, then so too are the ones at Great Hollands. The cost to resurface priority number 3 is £32,000. It is hoped that the funds will be sufficient to enable this car park also to be resurfaced in 2023/24. The cost for Car park number 4 is £44,000.

The maintenance of the Council’s Housing Stock is essential. In a freedom of information response, it was stated that out of the 155 properties, 61 were energy D

rated and 5 were E rated. We hope improved insulation will be prioritised as essential for carbon reduction.

As for the budget itself:

Since the draft was consulted on, the Final settlement has been published. Compared to the allocations predicted in December, there have been increases and reductions.

Government funding to Local Councils assumed all Councils would raise their Council Tax to the maximum permitted level to cover inflation, energy costs, funding for adult social services and children social care.

These budget Proposals indeed raise the Bracknell Forest Council Tax by the maximum of 4.99% permissible without a referendum.

2% of this rise is to support the high costs of Adult Social Care which dominate the pressures for this Council, as they do for every other. These are costs that should be covered directly by government and not Local Councils. In Bracknell Forest most of the properties are rated Band C and above, every 1% rise in council tax brings in £715K. In areas where most homes are A – C rated the return is very much less – but the needs are still the same.

Obviously, using Council Tax to cover the increasing costs in Social Care is a postcode lottery. This cannot be fair or equitable. Nor can it be sustainable in the long term. Central Government should resource this with adequate increased relevant funding.

Throughout the budget papers there is reference to grants. Some of these are ring fenced but others have to be competed for. Preparing bids for this money is time consuming and costly. Every bid is said to cost about £30K. From a Freedom of Information response - the Bid for £5m for the Deck in 2021 cost £15K for work done by officers and another £13,568 for external contractors. The Second Bid for £8.8m - £16K for officer's time - and £15,450 for external contractors - both bids failed. Such sums are being lost by every Council in the country- at a time when funds are so limited. There must be better ways of funding these projects than having to compete with other Councils from the same pot, for ever resulting in winners and losers.

The Budget for schools is ring fenced. Schools will also have to pay the huge increases in energy costs and inflation costs on all resources. Let us hope any pay award settlement comes with extra money from the Government.

The biggest pressure for school funding is in support of those pupils who require SEND and especially those with the most challenging educational requirements- the High Needs Block. Again, the money from government has increased but it still does not cover the cost of the provision. This budget indicates an overspend of £7.166m this year. This deficit has been accumulating for years and by March 2024 it is estimated to be £30m. I know the officers and Heads are working to provide a solution to this ongoing debt and have acquired a £1m grant to aid the plans. There is also one of the famous 'bids' to fund the provision for two new schools. All the plans seem to be to reduce the annual deficit - not on paying the huge accrued deficit. The DfE has extended the time limit of their responsibility for this debt until 31 March 2026 but then... This is a very large amount of money owed.

This was raised by the Head Teachers at the Schools Forum.

SEND provision is an ongoing issue and we welcome the new appointment of a Designated Social Care Officer to provide social care oversight when developing the Educational Health Care Plans. We also support the paying for the Independent Advice to parents on SEND as this grant is to be cut by Government.

We also of course support the additional staff in the Children's Social Care Duty and Assessment team; the post to support Mental Health and the Out of Hours Teams; and finding the funding to continue the project supporting families with unborn and under 1-year olds again needed to be paid by this Council as the grant is to be cut by government.

The Labour Group is very supportive of the initiative to continue the £100 Council Tax discount for low income working age households, uplifting the £25 Government Council Tax support allowance.

The Covid- 19 reserve is paying for the additional officer to support the much-needed welfare work. This is just a one-year appointment but may well be needed way beyond this.

There will still be £1.656m left over from the Covid funds in March 2024. I am a proud member of this Cross-Party Welfare Group and commend all that has been achieved by its dedicated officers.

The permanent post of Climate Change Officer is applauded.

We fully support the initiative to build flats in Opladen Way to support the homeless. This budget just reflects the changes to be made - not the ongoing expenditure. It therefore says nothing about money to be spent in providing more parking spaces in residential areas. However, there is £200K to be spent on more bays in areas 'experiencing difficulties.' Only 7 locations. But anyone who has recently knocked on a door in Bracknell knows there are very many more areas 'experiencing difficulties' than these 7. Many of our grass verges are now trenches of mud. Many residents are prisoners in their own home, because if they go out after 6.00pm they will not find a place to park on their return. There must be a way to make this better. This is the major concern for many, many residents.

We therefore propose that an extra £100K be allocated to find solutions, to provide some of these bays and improve the verges so that there can be parking but without the destruction. Where there is a will, there is a way. Estates in other towns do not look like ours.

We are fully appreciative of the fact that balances once spent are gone forever. For many years, money has been put aside to support the finances the day the Council no longer receives the business rate from Vodafone - £4m a year. This is saved in the Future Funding Reserve Fund. This business is now to be moved onto the Government's central list, but Bracknell Forest will be compensated for this loss in revenue.

This reserve was set up for a 'rainy day' and this day has come.

There are many gaps in this budget.

When parents with children with Special educational Needs contact me they feel the capacity of the Council is inadequate to deal with the surge in demand for Educational Health Care Plans- lack of Educational Psychologists, Speech and

learning Therapists and Occupational Therapists. All essential when completing an EHCP.

Resolving this will be expensive.

This is a very tough year for all, including Local Councils.

£9.76m included for inflation and the fact that this Conservative led administration is proposing to raise the Council Tax by its maximum permissible level, in an election year, says it all.

There is so much uncertainty for the future funding of Local Councils from the Government- a business rate reset, the Fair Funding Review, the Public Health grant merged into a revised baseline.

To enable future years to resolve the issues of the High needs Block, and SEND provision in this borough, more money will be needed. The Government grants are never sufficient and have fallen far short over the last ten years.

New contracts will reflect increased pay awards, higher energy costs, inflation. Youth Provision throughout the borough is so needed.

Every resident is being hit be they mortgage payers or rent payers.

This is the hardest year any of our residents have experienced for a very long time. In April, Energy prices will rise an average of 20% and Water bills are due to go up 7.5%.

Access to the Local Welfare Scheme, using money from the Government's Household Support Fund, for one-off grants for food and essential bills is now well advertised. But knocking on doors has found residents not yet aware of the help available, so publicity needs to be continued. The present funding ends next month. The need to support will not end then.

I am relieved that new Government funding to support this has been announced - £1.1m over the next 12 months.

There are so many uncertainties about future funding from the government to this Council.

The Council Tax will have to be raised to provide a basis for future years as it is the only guaranteed source of income."

On the proposition of Councillor Temperton, Leader of the Opposition, seconded by Councillor Brown, the following amendment was proposed:

"(a) the capital programme:

Funding for the parking infrastructure upgrade (£0.041m) is removed;
Funding of £0.044m from the identified £0.200m for surface car parks in 2024/25 is brought forward to 2023/24, to accelerate funding for the Great Hollands car park identified as priority number 4;

An additional £0.100m of funding is made available to improve parking on local housing estates, supplementing the current £0.200m allocation.

and to b) the revenue budget:

That the proposed reduction of weed spraying from 3 to 2 times per annum, included in the Executive's draft budget proposals but removed in the final budget, be reinstated, saving £0.028m and that the net additional costs of these amendments be met from further use of the Future Funding Reserve of £0.076m in 2023/24 (including £0.001m to reflect the loss of interest from using the reserve)."

On being put to a vote the amendment fell.

A recorded vote was taken on the substantive motion and the voting was as follows:
FOR (27): Councillors Allen, Atkinson, Dr Barnard, Bettison OBE, Bhandari, D Birch, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Dudley, Gaw, Gbadebo, Mrs Gibson, Gibson, Green, Hamilton, Mrs Hayes, Heydon, Ingham, Kirke, Leake, Mattick, McLean, Ms Merry, Mossom, Turrell, Virgo, Wade

AGAINST (0): None

ABSTAIN: (4) Councillors Bidwell, Brown, Neil, Temperton

Therefore, it was **RESOLVED** that:

Capital Programme 2023/24 - 2025/26

- i) General Fund capital funding of £14.987m for 2023/24 in respect of those schemes listed on pages 184 to 186, of which £6.621m be funded from Council resources;
- ii) The inclusion of £8.366m of expenditure to be externally funded (including £2.930m of S106 funding) as outlined in the summary report for Council (page 164) and included on pages 168 to 171;
- iii) That those schemes that attract external grant funding be recommended to the Council for inclusion within the 2023/24 capital programme at the level of funding received;
- iv) Capital schemes that require external funding can only proceed once the Council is certain of receiving the grant;
- v) The inclusion of an additional budget of £1m for 'Invest to Save' schemes.

Revenue Budget 2023/24

- i. The budget proposals set out in Table 1 (page 2) of the summary report for Council, subject to the changes identified in sections 3.2 (page 3), 3.3 (pages 3 to 5), 3.4 (pages 5 to 7), 3.6 (page 7), 3.9 (pages 8 to 10), 4.3 (pages 11 to 12), 7.2 (page 18) and 7.3 (page 18) of the report, be agreed;
- ii. Fees and charges as set out in Annexe G (pages 93 to 158) be approved;
- iii. A provision for inflation of £9.760m be approved;
- iv. A further council tax discount funded by Bracknell Forest Council in 2023/24 of £75 for working age households receiving council tax support (section 3.9.1(a) page 9);
- v. Notes that the Government has made available a Council Tax Support Fund to provide a £25 reduction in the Council Tax bills for working age and pensioner households receiving council tax support as set out in section 3.3.9 (page 4) and agrees that the Executive Member for Transformation and Finance be authorised to determine the approach to the discretionary part of the fund;
- vi. The commitment budget as set out in Annexe A be approved (pages 20 to 21);
- vii. That the Council should make additional funding available for distribution to schools through the local funding formula at the level set out in section 4.1 (pages 11 to 11) of the summary report for Council subject to any minor

- amendments made by the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning following the receipt of definitive funding allocations for Early Years and High Needs pupils;
- viii. A general contingency totalling £2.750m be included, use of which is authorised by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Executive Director: Resources in accordance with the delegations included in the Council's constitution;
 - ix. Subject to the above recommendations the revised draft budget proposals be agreed;
 - x. A contribution of £3.590m to be made from the Future Funding Reserve (including £0.081m additional interest from the use of balances) to support revenue expenditure;
 - xi. Total net expenditure (after use of balances) of £89.287m (page 19), be approved;
 - xii. The Council's Council Tax requirement, excluding Parish Council precepts, be set at £75.053m;
 - xiii. The Council Tax for the Council's services for each Valuation Band be set as follows:

Band	Tax Level Relative to Band D	£
A	6/9	1,026.24
B	7/9	1,197.28
C	8/9	1,368.32
D	9/9	1,539.36
E	11/9	1,881.44
F	13/9	2,223.52
G	15/9	2,565.60
H	18/9	3,078.72

At the meeting on 07 February 2023 the Executive recommended the 2023/24 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and noted that strategy together with the Prudential Indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement were matters which the Council needed to approve.

- xiv The Council approves the following indicators, limits, strategies and policies included in Annexe E (pages 60 to 83):
 - The Prudential Indicators and Limits for 2023/24 to 2025/26 contained within Annexe E(i);
 - The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy contained within Annexe E(ii);
 - The Treasury Management Strategy Statement, and the Treasury Prudential Indicators contained in Annexe E(iii);
 - The Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator in Annexe E(iii);
 - The Investment Strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26 and Treasury Management Limits on Activity contained in Annexe E(iv);
- xv The formal Council Tax Resolution contained in section 3 be approved:

Council Tax Resolution

- i That the recommendations of the Executive outlined in sections 2.1 and 2.2 be agreed.

ii That it be noted that the amounts calculated for the year 2023/24 in accordance with Section 67 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 are:

(a) **48,756 Tax Base for the Whole Council Area**
being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as amended, as its council tax base for the year

(b) **Tax Base for Part of the Council's Area**

Each Parish Area

Binfield	4,636
Bracknell	20,614
Crowthorne	3,242
Sandhurst	7,986
Warfield	5,349
Winkfield	6,929

being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 6 of the Regulations, as amended, as the amounts of its council tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate

iii That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2023/24 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 as amended (the Act):

(a) £344,283,953 - Total expenditure including general fund, parish precepts and the council's share of any deficit on the collection fund.

being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.

(b) £265,223,413 - Total income including government support and the council's share of any surplus on the collection fund.

being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.

(c) £79,060,540 - Borough and parish precepts net expenditure to be financed from council tax.

being the amount by which the aggregate at iii(a) above exceeds the aggregate at iii(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its council tax requirement for the year.

(d) £1,621.56 - Average Band "D" council tax for whole borough.

being the amount at iii(c) above, divided by the amount at ii(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (including Parish precepts)

(e) £4,007,504 - Parish precepts

being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.

- (f) £1,539.36 - Borough Council tax for Band "D" Properties.

being the amount at iii(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at iii(e) above by the amount at ii(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year if there were an area of the Borough to which no special item relates.

- (g) Borough and Parish Council Tax for each Parish for Band "D":

Binfield	£1,599.47
Bracknell	£1,636.71
Crowthorne	£1,628.55
Sandhurst	£1,615.61
Warfield	£1,585.87
Winkfield	£1,622.37

being the amounts given by adding to the amount at iii(f) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at ii(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

- (h) Part of the Council's area - Borough and Parish Council Tax in each Parish for each Valuation Band

Parish	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Binfield	1,066.31	1,244.03	1,421.75	1,599.47	1,954.91	2,310.35	2,665.78	3,198.94
Bracknell	1,091.14	1,273.00	1,454.85	1,636.71	2,000.42	2,364.14	2,727.85	3,273.42
Crowthorne	1,085.70	1,266.65	1,447.60	1,628.55	1,990.45	2,352.35	2,714.25	3,257.10
Sandhurst	1,077.07	1,256.59	1,436.10	1,615.61	1,974.63	2,333.66	2,692.68	3,231.22
Warfield	1,057.25	1,233.45	1,409.66	1,585.87	1,938.29	2,290.70	2,643.12	3,171.74
Winkfield	1,081.58	1,261.84	1,442.11	1,622.37	1,982.90	2,343.42	2,703.95	3,244.74

being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at iii(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for

the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands

- iv That it be noted that for the year 2023/24 the Police and Crime Panel have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council regarding the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley, in accordance with Section 40 of the Act, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley	170.85	199.33	227.80	256.28	313.23	370.18	427.13	512.56

- v That it be noted that for the year 2023/24 the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, subject to confirmation by the Fire Authority on 15 February, in accordance with Section 40 of the Act, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	52.63	61.41	70.18	78.95	96.49	114.04	131.58	157.90

- vi That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at iii(h), iv and v above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Act, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of council tax for the year 2023/24 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Part of the Council's area - Total Council Tax for each Valuation Band

Parish	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Binfield	1,289.79	1,504.77	1,719.73	1,934.70	2,364.63	2,794.57	3,224.49	3,869.40
Bracknell	1,314.62	1,533.74	1,752.83	1,971.94	2,410.14	2,848.36	3,286.56	3,943.88
Crowthorne	1,309.18	1,527.39	1,745.58	1,963.78	2,400.17	2,836.57	3,272.96	3,927.56
Sandhurst	1,300.55	1,517.33	1,734.08	1,950.84	2,384.35	2,817.88	3,251.39	3,901.68
Warfield	1,280.73	1,494.19	1,707.64	1,921.10	2,348.01	2,774.92	3,201.83	3,842.20
Winkfield	1,305.06	1,522.58	1,740.09	1,957.60	2,392.62	2,827.64	3,262.66	3,915.20

46. Annual update of the Council's Pay Statement

The Council considered the Pay Policy statement for 2023/24.

On the proposition of Councillor Leake, Chair of the Employment Committee, seconded by Councillor Allen, the recommendation that Council review and agree the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24 was moved.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24 be agreed.

47. **Appointment of Deputy Electoral Registration Officers**

The Council considered a report seeking authorisation for the Council's Electoral Registration Officer (ERO), currently the Chief Executive, to appoint additional Deputy Electoral Registration Officers (DERO) to exercise specific powers on their behalf if they are unable to act personally.

On the proposition of Councillor Birch and seconded by Councillor Leake, the recommendation that authority be delegated to the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) to appoint additional Deputy Electoral Registration Officers (DERO) to discharge specific powers if the ERO and DERO are unable to act personally was moved.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the recommendation be agreed.

48. **Questions Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 10**

Councillor Temperton asked Councillor Birch, Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing, the following published question:

"The result of the Inspection by CQC of Heathlands Care Centre in August was 'Inadequate'.

Can the Council be given an update on the situation there now?"

In response, Councillor Birch said the following:

"It is disappointing that the CQC found that a number of areas remain below the expected standards and require further improvement.

The council and NHS professionals continue to work closely with partner agencies to support the provider to make required improvements.

Windsar Care has acknowledged the report and has taken steps to address key issues.

A new permanent registered manager started shortly before the inspection and has now been in post for three months.

Windsar Care have engaged a specialist, independent organisation to oversee the immediate improvements required and to provide assurance and gather the evidence of the progress they are making in implementing the required improvements.

Windsar Care has been taking a range of actions to implement the improvements needed, as identified in the CQC report and professionals have been working hard to support them with this.

Our priority remains our residents, particularly the most vulnerable and we are pleased that Windsar Care is engaging well with the council and Health partners to work through the issues to ensure people receive safe, effective and well-led care.

The CQC will undertake a further inspection of the service in the coming months to gain assurance that the required improvements have been embedded in the service.

The council is currently considering options regarding the future of dementia care at Heathlands and how this valuable and much needed service will be delivered in the future.”

In response to a supplementary question the Executive Member advised that the next CQC visit was to be considered a follow up inspection. At that point they were to continue to make the necessary recommendations and deal with the provider regarding any actions that may need to be taken.

Councillor Bidwell asked Councillor Birch, Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing, the following published question:

Following the very concerning reports of Home Care visits being unofficially cut to five or six minutes instead of the allocated time, residents are anxious for assurance that this could not happen in Bracknell Forest.

Can you tell us how the period of time that the Carer actually spends with the resident and quality of provision allocated in the care packages financed by Bracknell Forest are monitored?

In response, Councillor Birch said the following:

“In April 2022 the Council mobilised a new Homecare Framework (FW) and established new contractual arrangements in the Homecare market. To be able to join the new FW, all providers are required, as a minimum to be rated Good or Outstanding by the CQC. This ensures at baseline level of quality assurance.

Through the FW, the Council has taken robust measures to ensure such practice does not occur within BF and has processes in place to ensure, were this to occur, it would be identified very quickly and rectified.

Under the FW, the minimum time allocation for any care call is 30 minutes and providers must submit invoices accompanied by worker timesheets to be paid. Timesheets are generated by the providers electronic call monitoring systems – a further stipulation of the FW. This requires care workers to ‘check in’ at the beginning of each call and ‘check out’ at the end of the call in the client’s home. Discrepancies of any under / over delivery or any changes between the commissioned and actual hours delivered are would be identified and investigated with the provider.

Care Teams also undertake regular reviews of individuals needs and commissioned support, to ensure the needs of individuals are being met by their current care package. Following reviews any required changes will be incorporated into the commissioned package of care accordingly.

Providers are also subject to robust, regular Contract Monitoring as stipulated by our Contract Monitoring framework for additional assurances on quality. This is to ensure that, providers are delivering care to the standard and quality set out in the

contract service specification and to ensure clients are experiencing good outcomes.

If the standard or quality of service delivery falls below required levels, the contract provides a number of mechanisms to address this with the provider e.g. the implementation of an improvement plan. More stringent measures can also be undertaken, for example if serious quality concerns were identified, a provider could be embargoed from receiving any new packages whilst they rectify the issues. Ultimately if there were serious concerns about the quality of a contracted provider, their contract could be terminated.

A small proportion of services are delivered by providers who are not part of our FW, but whom we have worked with for a considerable period and are subject to Contract Monitoring.

We maintain a very positive working relationship with our homecare providers and engage with providers on a one-to-one basis as well as through wider market engagement on a very regular basis. This allows us to work through any identified issues or concerns very constructively to ensure these are rectified swiftly”.

In response to a supplementary question, the Executive Member spoke about the services provided by Forest Care. Forest Care provided devices that monitored blood pressure, breathing, and movement around the house, among other things. They were also able to communicate with delivery personnel and buzz in appropriate carers. The Executive Member emphasised the importance of using technology to care for vulnerable residents while still ensuring that they had human contact and were not isolated. Overall, the Councillor advocated for the responsible and compassionate use of technology in caring for vulnerable individuals.

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To: Council
19 April 2023

Executive Report to Council The Leader

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Since the Council agenda for the meeting on the 22 February 2023 was published, the Executive met on the 21 March 2023. This report summarises decisions taken by reference to the relevant portfolio within which they fall.
- 1.2 Updated Forward Plans are published every Friday and can be viewed 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 Recommendation

- 2.1 Council is asked to approve the recommendations set out at paragraph 5.8.2 and 5.12.2.

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. The relevant reports that the Executive considered can be found [here](#).

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Alternative options are discussed in the relevant individual reports considered by the Executive. The relevant reports that the Executive considered can be found [here](#).

5 Supporting Information

Planning & Transport

5.1 Proposed Main Modifications to the Bracknell Forest Local Plan ([Ref - I113012](#))

- 5.1.1 The Executive agreed the principle of making Proposed Main Modifications to the Bracknell Forest Local Plan (Pre Submission version), and associated changes to the Policies Map, and they also agreed that the Executive Director: Place Planning and Regeneration, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Transport, agree the draft wording of the Proposed Main Modifications and any consequential changes together with associated changes to the Policies Map and supporting documents, prior to being submitted to the Inspectors for final agreement.
- 5.1.2 Agreement was also given by the Executive that the Executive Director: Place Planning and Regeneration, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning

and Transport, be authorised to agree the wording of the schedule of Minor Modifications and that the consultation on the Proposed Main Modifications to the Bracknell Forest Local Plan (Pre Submission version), consequential changes, amended Policies Map and supporting documents be agreed for a period of at least six weeks over the Summer of 2023.

- 5.1.3 The Bracknell Forest Local Plan (BFLP), was submitted to the Secretary of State on 20 December 2021. This marked the beginning of the examination phase. Public hearings had been held in May, June and October 2022.
- 5.1.4 The Inspectors' Post Hearings letter was received by the Council on 19 January 2023. Whilst the letter confirmed that the production of the BFLP had met the Duty to Co-operate and was legally compliant, it made it clear that Main Modifications were required to make it sound. The Inspectors asked the Council to prepare a schedule of all proposed changes (including consequential changes) for consultation with the detailed wording to be agreed by the Inspectors.
- 5.1.5 The nature and duration of the consultation should reflect that of the consultation held at the Regulation 19 stage, prior to submission. This means that it should last at least 6 weeks. The final set of Proposed Main Modifications must be supported by a revised Policies Map. Consideration needed to be given to whether or not the Proposed Main Modifications need to be subject to Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) and/or Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA). Addenda would be produced to cover these issues and would also be made available for comment.
- 5.1.6 A schedule covering a further category of proposed changes termed Minor Modifications will also be produced by the Council. These would cover factual updates and textual corrections. These would be published for information only and not be put before the Inspectors for consideration.

5.2 Highways and Transport Capital Programme 2023/24 ([Ref - I113024](#))

- 5.2.1 The Executive approved the overall Highways and Transport Capital Programme for 2023/24.
- 5.2.2 The overall Highways and Transport Capital Programme for 2023/24 totals £4.55m, of which over 75% of funding is derived from external sources. Alongside the annual DfT grants for Transport and Highway Maintenance, the programme includes further DfT funding for electric vehicle charging provision following a successful bid. Developer contributions via S106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) supplements the programme along with a local contribution from Borough Capital. Given the ongoing highway maintenance challenges being experienced by all local authorities, the Council has increased its core capital contribution to £1.2m in 2023/24.

5.3 SANG capacity agreements between Bracknell Forest Council and Surrey Heath Borough Council ([Ref - I110981](#))

- 5.3.1 The Executive agreed to enter into an agreement with Surrey Heath Borough Council (SHBC) for land at Shepherd Meadows to serve as further SANG capacity for up to 500 homes in the Borough of Surrey Heath and that the Council applied SANG contributions at rates in line with the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document (SPA SPD) and any other subsequent versions, to be index linked from the date of publication of the SPD.

- 5.3.2 Bracknell Forest Council had an existing agreement with SHBC to provide up to 500 dwellings SANG capacity to mitigate developments in Surrey Heath in the current plan period. This was approved by the Executive in 2015. Up to the end of December 2022, Shepherd Meadows SANG had mitigated 387 dwellings in Surrey Heath with a further 113 dwellings capacity still available. It is proposed to end this agreement during 2023 with SHBC paying the outstanding amount for the remaining SANG capacity.
- 5.3.3 In 2022 SHBC approached BFC to request further SANG capacity to mitigate residential developments that are being planned through its emerging Local Plan. Given that there was SANG capacity still available for Shepherd Meadows SANG and in other SANGs in the southern half of Bracknell Forest, it was considered that Bracknell Forest Council could offer up to 500 dwellings capacity through a new agreement, without affecting capacity needs in Bracknell Forest.

Children, Young People & Learning

5.4 School Places Plan & Capital Strategy 2023-2028 ([Ref - I110076](#))

- 5.4.1 The Executive approved the School Places Plan and Capacity Strategy 2023-2028 and agreed for its publication in April 2023. The Executive agreed that the document could be further amended to incorporate its feedback before publication.
- 5.4.2 The Council had the statutory duty to provide sufficient school places and an agreed vision and approach to doing this would be a key tool in achieving this going forward.
- 5.4.3 Headteachers and Further Education providers had been consulted on what planning for school places should look like in the future during November 2021 to October 2022. Headteachers welcomed this engagement and actively participated in helping shape the Council's vision and approach.
- 5.4.4 The vision and approach would be used to inform the School Places Plan and School Capacity Strategy 2023-28.
- 5.4.5 It is anticipated that the specific needs to be identified at that time will include:
- Closely monitoring mainstream secondary school places and North Bracknell primary school places.
 - Reduction of surplus primary places in South Bracknell and Crowthorne & Sandhurst.
 - Creation of additional capacity for SEND.

5.5 Household Support Fund (Phase four) ([Ref - I111749](#))

- 5.5.1 The Executive agreed that the Household Support Fund (phase four) be distributed through:
- Purchasing supermarket vouchers, or for opted schools to make equivalent arrangements, for children qualifying for Free School Meals in Bracknell Forest primary and secondary schools. Households will receive a £15 voucher per child per week of the holidays.

- Purchasing pre-paid cards or 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.
 - Enhancing the Local Welfare Scheme provision, allowing applications from households in hardship who would not otherwise automatically qualify for the support above.
 - Providing application-based grants to the voluntary, community and faith sector organisations to provide direct support to residents.
- 5.5.2 The Executive also agreed that the contract be awarded as per the strategic procurement plan using the Crown Commercial Framework RM6248. This would provide the required vouchers and payments and the scope for further purchases, should additional grant funding be allocated.
- 5.5.3 The Household Support Fund (HSF) was provided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), with local authorities determining how it is spent within the scope of the guidance issued. The local authority was required by the DWP to create a local eligibility framework to disburse the funding.
- 5.5.4 Recommendations were established based on learning from how the previous equivalent Covid Winter Grant, Covid Local Support Grant and Household Support Fund was spent.

Council Strategy & Community Cohesion

5.6 Council Plan Overview Report ([Ref – I109191](#))

- 5.6.1 The Executive noted the performance of the council over the period from October to December 2022 highlighted in the Overview Report.
- 5.6.2 At the end of the third quarter, 98 actions (83%) were rated as “green” and 18 actions (15%) were “amber”. 2 actions (2%) were complete and 1 action (1%) did not yet require an update.
- 5.6.3 Progress against key performance indicators across the council for each of the Council Plan’s strategic themes was positive. 21 (40%) were “green”, 6 (11%) were “amber” and 7 (13%) were “red”. 18 further indicators (34%) have no set target or data was currently unavailable.

5.7 Service Plans 2023 ([Ref - I110637](#))

- 5.7.1 The Executive endorsed the new service plans and agreed that they be published on the website in April 2023 following the final budget information being added. The Executive also agreed that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director: Chief Executive’s Office for finalisation of the service plans.
- 5.7.2 All directorates have reviewed the content of their individual service plans in preparation for the 2023/24 financial year. The work has been a light touch review, to refresh the plans until September 2023, when it is anticipated that a new Council Plan will be agreed.
- 5.7.3 A total of 35 actions linked to the Council Plan objectives were achieved and therefore removed over the last year and a further 15 have been added for the

upcoming period. Fewer actions have been added compared to last year, primarily reflecting that this was a light touch review and that actions are set for the shorter period until September 2023.

Adult Services, Health and Housing

5.8 Local Authority Housing Fund ([Ref - I113564](#))

- 5.8.1 The Executive considered and approved the proposals for the Council to acquire 7 x three bedroom homes and to refurbish 2 x three bedroom properties in existing stock under the Government's Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) scheme.
- 5.8.2 The Executive RECOMMENDED to Council approval of capital spend up to a maximum of £3.4m to meet the total cost of acquiring the additional homes, to be funded from a combination of the LAHF grant and long-term borrowing.**
- 5.8.3 There was an opportunity to acquire additional three bedroom temporary accommodation to help alleviate current and anticipated pressure on the housing service for larger family homes due to the additional demand from Ukrainian households in the area as well as Afghan households placed in the borough.
- 5.8.4 The Council's current temporary accommodation was predominately two bedroom homes, with a need to increase larger family homes due to current and anticipated demand.
- 5.8.5 Any units acquired will be owned and managed by the Council and would be available for use by the housing service as required, including but not limited to Ukrainian and Afghan households in the borough. The exception to this would be for the four bedroom unit which would need to be provided to a household in bridging accommodation and would become available to the service when no longer required for this purpose.

5.9 Section 75 Agreement (NHS Act 2006) 2023 and Onwards ([Ref - I111501](#))

- 5.9.1 The Executive agreed that:
- Approval be given to the Executive Director: People, on behalf of Bracknell Forest Council, to agree and enter into a S75 agreement from 1 April 2023 effective for a period of 3 years, with added service schedule information for 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.
 - The recommended model of future S75 agreements and noted the proposed improvements in development with Frimley Integrated Care Board (ICB) to the current S75 Agreement.
 - Authority be delegated to the Executive Director: People and the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing to approve and sign off the core S75 Agreement and Schedules and that the spend for these schedules be determined by the Better Care Fund policy framework/budget and Adult Social Care budget.
 - The Better Care Fund Budget for 22/23 is noted, as £18,136,342 with the Bracknell Forest Council contribution £10,132,342. In addition, it was noted that the Adult

Social Care Discharge Fund is reported through the Better Care Fund with a total value of £433,416.

- 5.9.2 The current S75 Agreement expired on 31 March 2023. Existing and new services that were jointly commissioned and/or funded through a pooled budget would need to be covered through a S75 Agreement in order to be compliant with the NHS Act 2006 and have a clear working protocol between Frimley ICB and Bracknell Forest Council.
- 5.9.3 The current S75 Agreement required a refresh in the context of the devolution of all CCG's and the formation of Integrated Care Boards. Further opportunity exists to review joint working approach in the context of inflation, joint uplift processes and renewal timeframes.
- 5.9.4 In addition, the Better Care Fund Schedule and Heathlands Schedule would also require updating to reflect current practice/service delivery.

5.10 Strategic Procurement Plan – Sexual & Reproductive Health ([Ref - I113315](#))

- 5.10.1 The Executive agreed that the Strategic Procurement Plan for the provision of Sexual and Reproductive Health be approved, with Bracknell Forest Council taking a lead on the procurement on behalf of all three councils in East Berkshire Public Health, and that the proposed contractual term be 5 years (3 +2) with a review of the provision in year 3. The Executive also agreed that authority for the contract award and subsequent contract extensions be delegated to the Director of Public Health.
- 5.10.2 The proposed procurement, through a competitive tender process would help maximise tender opportunities that would generate value for money and a high-quality Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health Service.
- 5.10.3 Bracknell Forest Council in partnership with Slough Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead wish to deliver an effective and integrated sexual and reproductive health service provision, in line their statutory functions, and in support of the key objectives in their respective Health and Wellbeing strategies, and Boards, Joint Strategic Needs assessments and the Sexual Health, Health Needs assessment.
- 5.10.4 The procurement will ensure that the Council is compliant with Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Councils' respective Contract Standing Orders, and for timely completion of the tender, award, and mobilisation phases in time for the contract to commence as of July 2024.

Culture, Delivery and Public Protection

5.11 Procurement of Microsoft M365 Licences ([Ref – I113243](#))

- 5.11.1 The Executive agreed that the approved framework be accessed for Microsoft M365 licences via a direct award, to retain the Council's current professional partnership with its current Microsoft Gold Partner, Phoenix Software Ltd.
- 5.11.2 Bracknell Forest Council were currently in contract with Phoenix Software Limited via the current framework agreement. Phoenix Software Limited are a Microsoft accredited reseller and have worked with Bracknell Forest Council for a number of

years and therefore understand the Council's requirements, technology stack, risk appetite and skill sets.

- 5.11.3 Utilising an existing framework allows the procurement to meet the timeframes required as well as enabling a direct award under the terms of Regulation 33(8)(a) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015).

Transformation and Finance

5.12 Joint Venture Business Plan Review ([Ref - I111615](#))

- 5.12.1 The Executive noted the progress made by Bracknell Forest Cambium Partnership for the period December 2021 to December 2022.

5.12.2 The Executive supported the annual refresh of the Joint Venture Business Plan 2020-2023 for the Bracknell Forest Cambium Partnership, alongside the financial budget and forecast, and RECOMMENDED to Council that they be approved.

- 5.12.3 The Executive agreed that the Bracknell Forest Cambium Partnership enters into the Bond and Co-indemnities required to undertake the enabling works related to the sewer move that was required to prepare the council owned land at Market Street for development and noted that there was no flow of liability from this arrangement to the Council. It was also agreed that for future development sites where a similar arrangement was required by a statutory body, that authority be delegated to the Borough Solicitor to provide such approval on the Council's behalf.
- 5.12.4 The Joint Venture Business Plan had not changed materially, although the Jubilee Gardens site would now be considered as part of a wider master planning of secondary sites, such as the Southern Gateway and Eastern Gateway Development area, that had been commissioned by the Council. There was no obligation for the Council to enter any exclusivity arrangements on additional sites and each site would be subject to Executive approval prior to any initial site development proposal (ISDP) being put to the Council for consideration. The Executive had previously agreed to offer surplus land at the Depot site to the Joint Venture under a 12-month exclusivity agreement, ending October 2023.

6 Advice Received from Statutory and Other Officers

Legal Advice

- 6.1 The Borough Solicitor's comments have been addressed in the reports to the Executive.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 The Executive Director: Resources' comments have been addressed in the reports to the Executive.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 Equalities issues, where appropriate, have been addressed in the reports to the Executive.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 Any strategic risks have been identified in the reports to the Executive.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.5 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to have no impact on emissions of CO₂.

The reason the Council believes that this will have no impact on emissions is that the report is providing an update on decisions taken rather than proposing any action. The impact or not of each of the individual decisions was set out in the respective reports.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 6.6 There are no considerations.

Background Papers

Executive Agenda – 21 March 2023

Contact for further information

Hannah Harding, Delivery - 01344 352308

Hannah.harding@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

To: **Council**
19 April 2023

Overview and Scrutiny Report 2022-23 **Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission**

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Council's Constitution requires the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to submit an annual report to the Council on overview and scrutiny activities and their outcomes. The attached report informs councillors of progress made in respect of the operation and development of overview and scrutiny in Bracknell Forest over the four-year period of this administration –2019-2023. The Commission recommends that Council adopts the report.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 **That the 2019-2023 four-year report of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission be approved.**

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 To meet the requirements of the Constitution.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The activities of overview and scrutiny from 2019-2023 are summarised in the report at Appendix A. The outcomes of individual reviews are reflected in the report.
- 5.2 Overview and scrutiny has established a structure that allows activity to better align with the themes of the Council Plan. The function has reviewed and delivered against a work programme that supports the council objectives over the period. The Commission has reviewed its arrangements for health scrutiny and introduced changes to clearly signal when it is formally considering health matters, and has scrutinised the budget and monitored the performance of all council departments through the Council Plan Overview Report.
- 5.3 Over the next year Overview and scrutiny will continue to evolve the positive changes that support effective contribution by aligning work with the new Council Plan. The Commission will continue to develop its programme management role to deliver the work programme in line with council objectives and available resources.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 The Scrutiny function has an important role to play in providing local accountability and transparency in decision-making. It was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 primarily to serve as a check and balance on Executive powers. Subsequent legislation has conferred on Councils the responsibility for scrutinising local NHS Trusts, the work of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, and other partners, such as the Environment Agency. It sits alongside the Council's Standards regime in delivering the accountability that constitutes one of the Seven Principles of Public Life.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Statutory Scrutiny Officer

- 6.3 The report highlights the work of the council's Overview and Scrutiny Commission and panels and the outcomes of this work over a four-year period. Overview and scrutiny has exercised its functions in order to support the development of policy within the council, to scrutinise the council's financial proposals and to improve services the council and its partners provide with the overarching objective of seeking to benefit local communities. The strength of scrutiny is its focus on the long-term development of the council and how the council can meet its communities' needs.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 Throughout all scrutiny activity members are reminded to consider what equality impacts there may be, and review activities are delivered in a way that avoids barriers to wider involvement e.g. timing of review activity, length of reviews and access to information. As part of the scoping process for each review an initial equalities screening is explicitly undertaken and a full equalities impact assessment undertaken if required.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 Effective scrutiny is important to the successful functioning of local democracy by securing the efficient delivery of council services and driving improvements. A robust work programme is essential in order to ensure that overview and scrutiny activity contributes successfully to the work of the council. Poor scrutiny can be indicative of wider governance, leadership and/or service failure.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.6 The recommendation in Section 2 above are expected to:
Have no impact on emissions of CO₂.

The reasons the Council believes that this will have no impact on emissions is that there is no direct link between the recommendations in this report and carbon emissions. Each individual review will assess the impact of climate change, including carbon emissions with details provided in the review scope.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 6.7 The recommendation in Section 2 will have no direct impact on health and wellbeing.

However, the activities of the Commission, which are reflected in the report, have a positive effect on health and wellbeing through the health scrutiny function it performs. In addition, each individual review assesses the impact on health and wellbeing with details provided in the review report.

Background Papers

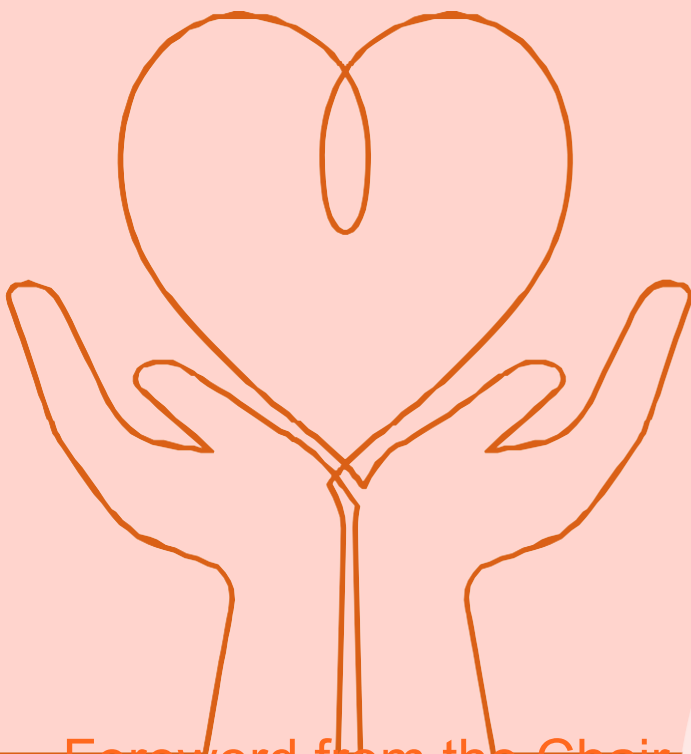
None

Contact for further information

Councillor Robert Angell, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Commission
Robert.angell@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

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Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Review



Foreword from the Chair
of the Overview and



Scrutiny Commission

Overview and Scrutiny Commission Chair: Councillor Robert Angell

Overview and Scrutiny Commission Vice Chair: Councillor Tony Virgo

This report covers April 2022 to March 2023, as well as providing an overview of the work undertaken by members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission over the past four years. As our current term of office comes to an end, we wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on the changes which have been implemented during this whole period to understand what has worked well, and where we can make improvements.

2022-2023

Building on our successful programme of work in 2021-2022 we carried out a further four reviews and reviewed how the recommendations from a previous review had been implemented. We felt this was important to measure the impact our work has on the lives of residents and are committed to this way of working.

In addition to the Panel's scrutiny review work the Commission sat as the Strategic Health Scrutiny Commission for the first time and scrutinised how well current health provisions met existing and emerging needs within the borough. Witnesses from Healthwatch were invited to address the Commission. By doing so, the Commission was able to gain a stronger understanding of the issues facing residents.

In September, witnesses from Public Health provided an update on the progress they have

In October the Commission considered the performance of the Community Safety Partnership and the priorities in the Community Safety Plan for the coming year.

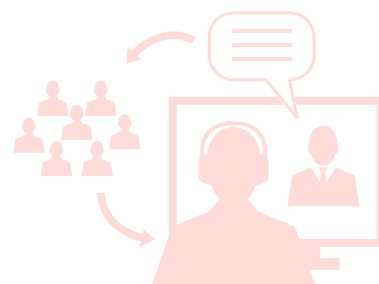
In January the Commission considered the



council's draft budget proposals for 2022/23 before deciding whether they supported the recommendations which were open for public consultation.

Overview and Scrutiny has a vital role in performance management by linking the planning and delivery of services to the experiences of and impact upon local people. The Council Plan sets out the key objectives for 2019 to 2023. At the end of each quarter, the Chief Executive provides a high-level summary report of performance across all services to the Executive, known as the Corporate Performance Overview Report (CPOR), to identify achievements, as well as areas of concern. While the report is useful, there is a future role Overview and Scrutiny could play if data received was timelier.

And last, but not least, coming out of pandemic restrictions we have moved to hybrid meetings!



Past four years

A major success over the past four years has been the Panels and how they conduct their scrutiny reviews. Originally, there was an overarching Commission and three sub-Commissions which each met quarterly. Task and Finish groups would be commissioned to investigate an issue which had been highlighted as warranting closer scrutiny, but it was felt these took too long, and sub-Commission meetings detracted from review work. We reorganised scrutiny in 2019 into a Commission responsible for oversight of cross-cutting issues, such as Climate Change strategy

development, and three distinct Panels which would lead on scrutiny reviews. However, we were forced to suspend Panel review work, for around 6 months, during the Covid-19 pandemic and only three reviews were undertaken during the first half of our tenure.

A renewed sense of purpose in September 2020 meant our work programme was planned to ensure we made the best use of our resources and allowed us to complete a total of 16 reviews, each with a report stating recommendations for the Executive to consider. Some of these reviews took were completed in one day and others took five months, depending on the work involved. Some attracted much media attention, others very little, but all review reports were considered by the O&S Commission and the Executive.

As well as sponsoring the panel activities, the Commission's annual work programme continued to scrutinise established milestone sessions such as health, crime and disorder and the Council's budget. The Council also carried out another review of its own into Digital Access.

Throughout the past four years the Commission has tracked progress towards delivering the Council Plan by reviewing the overview report which identifies achievements, but data presented has sometimes been out of date. By aligning our meetings with performance and finance information and triangulating it with the experiences of residents and customers, members of the Commission can consider the potential impact on all the borough's residents. Going forward it has been agreed CPOR data will be scrutinised by the O&S Commission prior to the Executive so that members of the Commission can help identify areas of concern to the Executive, which I think will be a strength.

The Commission had two conscientious parent governor representatives who, as well as attending Commission meetings, involved in Education, Skills, and Growth O&S Panel reviews. Sadly, their terms of office came to an end recently, but we have successfully recruited a new primary school parent governor representative and are seeking a new secondary school representative, as it is important to us that the voices of parents are heard in scrutiny.

O&S benefits from a wide range of experience and viewpoints. The Commission welcomes input from residents and local organisations via its public participation scheme. Panel reviews have involved a variety of residents and service providers in their reviews but I would like to see an increased impetus placed on publicity and attracting the public to participate in Commission meetings. This should be a feature next term to attract broader opinions on the council's performance.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the officers and staff, from all organisations who have maintained a high level of support for our scrutiny work over the past four years.



Introduction from Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery, acting as Statutory Scrutiny Officer



The important role that Bracknell Forest Council's Overview and Scrutiny functions provide as part of the corporate governance of the council has been illustrated by the programme of meetings and reviews completed over the four years of the work programme.

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny set out the elements that make for effective scrutiny.

These being:

- Dedicated officer resourcing.
- Member training which is of a high quality and integrated into councillors' ongoing work.
- A positive relationship between scrutiny and the executive – driven by a clear understanding of scrutiny's role and responsibilities.
- Timely access to proportionate, high-quality information.
- Good cross-party relationships between scrutiny members.

([The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny](#)).

The requirement for local authorities in England to establish overview and scrutiny committees is set out in [sections 9F to 9FI of the Local Government Act 2000](#) as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The Statutory guidance "[Overview and scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils and combined authorities](#)", sets out that as each council is a "democratically-elected body", it is for each council to determine how it sets out its arrangements to meet the requirement of the Act. Therefore, in line with this guidance, the arrangements in Bracknell Forest Council were revised in 2019, taking on board the feedback from the council's own commissioned review of its arrangements, and the issuing of the statutory guidance (May 2019).

The structure and approaches have now been in place for the last four years. The thematic structure of our panels, with the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, as sponsor and quality assurance, are central to the value of the work to the council, demonstrating the success of these arrangements. The role of the Commission in overseeing workloads, managing the programme and ensuring that the staff resources are used productively, has been at the core of the effectiveness of the work programme. Therefore, it is recommended that this approach is continued into the next Commission.

One change was made during the review period, to strengthen the health scrutiny function. In 2021, the Commission designated one Commission meeting per year as the Commission's Strategic Health Scrutiny Committee. Further, that the Finance and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel be retitled as the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Within the council's Annual Governance Statement (Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement), prepared by the council's Monitoring Officer, he has confirmed that:

Overview and Scrutiny has established a structure that allows activity to better align with the themes of the Council Plan. The function has established and delivered against a work programme that supports the council objectives. The Commission has carried out research and made recommendations to support the Council's climate change targets and has scrutinised the budget and monitored the performance of all Council departments through the Council Plan Overview Report. ([Annual Governance Statement 2020/21](#))

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer has responsibility for promoting the role of overview and scrutiny, and supporting and advising:

- The Overview and Scrutiny Commission & panels
- The Council's Executive and Executive Portfolio holders
- Officers and Chief Officers of the council

In my role of Statutory Scrutiny Officer, I am required to make regular reports to full council on the state of scrutiny, explicitly identifying any areas of weakness. I am happy to give the council assurance that scrutiny over the last four years has been and is effective. The work has been adequately resourced with dedicated scrutiny officers and departmental review resources. It has achieved the work programme it set itself and has been able to be agile to pick up issues of note and concern without losing the focus of the work programme.

In terms of areas of development, the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function must, and must be seen to, hold all commissioners and providers of publicly funded services to account for the quality of their services within the borough area.

As the council increases its role in the system leadership of health and social care, so must the coordination on changes in this system be linked into Overview and Scrutiny. Further, having addressed the role of health within the governance of the Commission, so must the Commission look to see how the other blue light (Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust) services, operating in the borough are commissioned, are performing and are meeting the needs of local people.



Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel



**Chair: Councillor
Mrs Gill Birch**



**Vice-Chair:
Councillor Michael
Brossard**

All the panel members work very well together, and I would like to thank them all for their help and support during 2022-2023. I really appreciate their commitment, expertise and drive to make the council and services better for our residents.

Although the Coronavirus Pandemic has still impacted on our capacity to meet in person, so some activities have taken longer to complete, the officer support has been excellent, and the member involvement has increased so I would like to thank everyone for their commitment and efforts. We have continued to have virtual meetings, and this has enabled us to schedule meetings to accommodate people from outside the council attend reviews to give evidence and take part. However, it is very good to have meetings in person and they are gradually happening, for example desk-top exercises work better, and with one review all of us looking at websites was more effective as a group together.

The four-year plan has been delivered and we have completed all our planned reviews.

Monitoring reviews is standard practice, so the Chair went to the Town and Parish Liaison meeting in November to monitor progress with the recommendations of the [Community Infrastructure Levy](#). It showed that most of the recommendations are actioned and there is more partnership working with the Towns, parishes and Bracknell Forest.



Site visits to local schools

The two reviews completed in 2022-2023 were the special Educational Needs and Disabilities and the Child Criminal Exploitation.

The [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities review](#) was endorsed by The Executive in October 2022.

However, some issues require longer timescales and significant investment. Our recommendations are aimed at addressing issues in order to strengthen services and support provided for children, young people and their families in the borough in the future so some were to be addressed within a six-month timescale, 18 months or three years.

The recommendations were accepted by The Executive, and we monitored the review in March to look at the six month recommendations. Good progress had been made, although the SEND department is still dealing with a backlog of cases, the new structure is now becoming embedded and staff recruitment is nearly complete. Communication is still a priority.

The Panel had a meeting in September to look at the forward plan and another in November to discuss the budget.

We also had a meeting to discuss areas that we think could form the work programme for the next four years. Ideas for reviews are Foster Carers, Residential placements, Transition from Children's Social Care to adult Social Care, Exclusions and Inclusion in Schools and SEMH in young people.

Findings and observations

- The last four years have been challenging with Covid and sickness but I feel that the reviews undertaken: Care Leavers Review, Apprenticeships, Community Infrastructure Levy, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities review, Child Criminal Exploitation have been exceptional reports that have had a positive effect on our residents and improved our services.
- Weekly meetings with the lead officer have been very useful to keep on track with progress with the SEND review. If possible, I would recommend it as best practice to other panels.
- Staff sickness has had an impact on support with delaying the completion of reviews.
- Monitoring the Community Infrastructure Levy and SEND review has enabled the reviews to be concluded. Monitoring reviews is now firmly embedded as good practice.
- Member involvement was excellent with the reviews, up to 14 people, due to a mix of virtual meetings and in person meetings.
- Having meetings at different times, especially in the evening, has meant more members have been able to contribute. Members are now aware that there isn't an expectation of them being able to attend all meetings and visits, but if they have expertise and/or are interested they can take part as much as they have availability.
- There was more opportunity to look at the budget and scrutinise it, but I would like a separate opportunity for the Panel to look at it in greater depth.
- Having the latest Data has been a challenge and I hope going forward we will have the opportunity to receive the latest data to enable effective scrutiny.

Councillor Mrs Gill Birch



Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel



Chair:
Councillor John Porter



Vice-Chair:
Councillor Mrs Tina McKenzie-Boyle



Site visits to assess waste and recycling facilities

At the start of the new term in 2019 the objectives of the panel changed. The purpose was still to scrutinise how each service item had been delivered and whether it met the key objectives. However, in addition the panel will now input into reviews of upcoming contracts, initiatives and plans. This process results in more research and information which increases the influence of scrutiny and therefore allows Councillors to make a greater contribution on behalf of residents. To enable the continued success of this new process the Chair and monitoring officer need to ensure that reviews are revisited so that any recommendations made have been implemented on time and are successful. This part of the new process is vital for scrutiny to be effective.

Reviews during the term 2019 - 2023

Registered providers of social housing

This review looked at registered providers of social housing and was carried out due to an increased number of residents contacting their councillor regarding issues. A key recommendation from the review was for Bracknell Forest Council to provide information on their website about what to expect from landlords, including statutory health and safety requirements. In total five recommendations were made and accepted by the Executive. The full report can be found [here](#)

Burial Choices

This review looked at additional burial space within the Borough as the crematorium is running out of

space. Various sites were visited, and a suitable site was recommended for testing.

The report also identified a second phase to this review which was to understand what other burial options could be offered to residents that would increase the number of burials possible as well as increasing choice. This review requires to be revisited in the new term.

Food waste in flats

After the highly successful implementation of food waste collection from households, the panel reviewed the viability and introduction of food waste collection from flats and houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs).

Recommendations were that the Executive implements a progressive roll out of food waste collection for up to 20% of properties (up to 1800) with officers developing the criteria for suitable flats.

Additionally, a recommendation was that the Executive produces a report reviewing the roll out after 1 year along with a report on the effectiveness and cost by spring 2023. The full report can be found [here](#)

Integrated enforcement

Enforcement often requires collaboration between teams, services or external partners and this review looked at the potential development of this collaborative approach, in the form of a more integrated model. This was achieved by looking at the current enforcement structures and policies at the council while exploring a range of best

practices relating to integrated enforcement from other local authorities.

One of the main recommendations was to introduce the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) as a new standard. A further recommendation was to develop enforcement strategies encouraging greater collaboration across services and with partners. In total five recommendations were made and approved by the Executive. The full report can be found [here](#)

Enforcement strategy

This review, due for approval at The Executive in June 2023, was a companion review following the Integrated Enforcement Review. The objective was to focus on the use, effectiveness, and consistency of application of enforcement powers within the council and discuss if any changes to policy or approach should be recommended. Good practice was recognised within

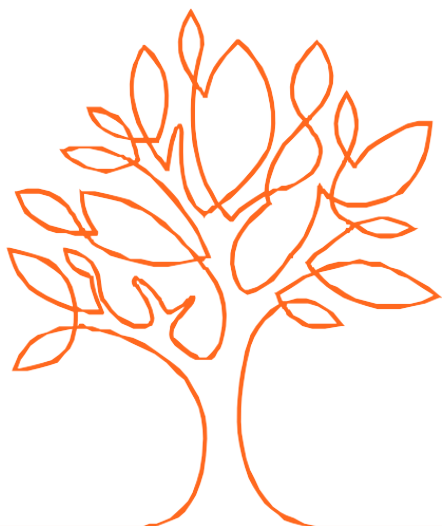
enforcement, specifically around the recent success of the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) which has provided security staff at the Lexicon with greater powers to help curb anti-social behaviour (ASB). Six recommendations were proposed, and the report will be published once approved.

Potential topics for the next four years have been discussed and include residential parking and EV charging for flats, cycleways in the borough, generation of own electricity for Council buildings, review of Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) and a review of parks and open spaces. Additionally, reviews of the burial choices, registered providers of social housing and food waste in flats reviews are a priority.

During the past four years one of my favourite reviews has to be that of introducing food waste into flats and houses of multiple occupancy. The success of food waste into households made this review even more important. The value of food waste collection supports the Council in achieving a greater recycling rate, reducing landfill, cutting emissions, assisting in a small way with achieving zero emissions and saving the Council money. The panel will soon look to review the recommendations and provide an update from officers on their progress.

Finally, I would like to thank my vice chair, Cllr Mrs Tina Mc Kenzie-Boyle, members of the panel and the officers from democratic services for all their hard work and dedication over the past four years.

Councillor John Porter



Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel



**Chair: Councillor
Mike Gibson**



**Vice-Chair:
Councillor Mrs
Isabel Mattick**

The Health and Wellbeing O&S Panel focuses on the Council's work addressing health and social care needs of the local community.

During the last year, a meeting was held to review progress of the recommendations made during the [Blue badge review](#). This enabled officers to provide feedback regarding the impact the recommendations were having and raise any issues that have arisen through the implementation of recommendations. This was an important process and I would like to emphasise the value of reviewing recommendations made in reviews to assess their impact and identify areas for improvement.

The panel recognises that the engagement of the public is key to the success of the scrutiny process, and therefore highlight the importance of public involvement in scrutinizing health and social care services. This was an important aspect of the O&S [review into Mental Health](#) in Bracknell Forest last year which led to 8 recommendations being accepted by the Executive.

The importance of accessibility of meetings and technological advances have enabled the panel to hold hybrid meetings, providing wider opportunities for public engagement. This has resulted in more inclusive, accessible and participative meetings, leading to better decisions and outcomes.



Benchmarking with other local authorities has also been identified as a valuable tool to assess the effectiveness of local health and social care services. This enables the panel to identify areas for improvement but also share good practice with other authorities. Site visits are also an essential part of the scrutiny process in assessing the quality of health and social care services as they provide an opportunity to meet staff and service users, observe how services are delivered and to raise any issues with service providers.

Furthermore, I would like to flag how communication is key. It is important to keep the public informed about the panel's work, as well as ensuring that they understand the importance of scrutiny in improving health and social care services. This encourages service providers to strive for improvement, leading to better outcomes for the local community.

Councillor Mike Gibson

Overview and scrutiny at Bracknell Forest Council

The current Overview and Scrutiny structure with an overarching O&S Commission and three O&S panels, has served the council well for the last four years. Each panel has been responsible for up to two themes from the Council Plan. By aligning activity areas with strategic themes, O&S has focussed on topics that closely supported the council's objectives over the four-year administration period. These themes will be reviewed as part of the development of the Council Plan for the next four years.

These arrangements recognise that scrutiny is most effective when operating the task and finish group model rather than as sub-committees of the Commission. Panels are able to work flexibly to carry out focussed enquiries and deep dive reviews across a wide range of topics in support of the council's objectives. Panels meet as required to deliver the work programme rather than on a pre-agreed fixed cycle.

The format is also flexible, and activities range from a single scrutiny panel meeting on an issue to a three - six month focussed review. In addition to the core panel membership, all non-Executive councillors can take part in any review work. This enables the O&S function to tap into the skills and knowledge of councillors across a wide variety of topics. It also means that councillors who need to balance external responsibilities can be involved effectively based on their availability, interests, and knowledge.

The importance of non-Executive councillors' involvement in policy development and pre-decision input and scrutiny is recognised by this approach, ensuring that scrutiny not only provides challenge but actively contributes to the work of the council.

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Membership:

Councillor Angell (Chair), Councillor Virgo (Vice-chair)

Councillors Mrs Birch, Brossard, Gbadebo, Mrs Mattick,
Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, McLean, Mossom, Porter, Temperton, Gibson

Responsibilities:

- Create a focussed work programme to ensure scrutiny activity contributes effectively to the Council Plan objectives
- Continually manage the work programme to ensure the best use of resources, accommodating any necessary extensions or urgent short-term issues
- Act as sponsor for panels as they undertake deep dive reviews or support policy development
- Consider the recommendations from panels' scrutiny activity and, where they are supported, refer to the appropriate decision-maker
- Scrutinise the council's budget proposals
- Hold the Executive to account for council performance according to the Corporate Performance Overview Report
- Carry out the council's crime and disorder responsibilities and strategic health responsibilities.
- Strategic theme: Value for money
- Manage call in (the process to scrutinise Executive decisions).
- Review the policy framework.

Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel**Panel membership:**

Councillor Mrs Birch (Chair), Councillor Brossard (Vice-chair)

Councillors Ms Gaw, Mrs Hamilton, Gbadebo, Ms Hayes, Ms Merry, Skinner, Temperton

Parent governor representatives (voting): Victoria Hill

Strategic themes:

Education and skills
Economic resilience

Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel**Panel membership:**

Councillor Porter (Chair), Councillor Mrs McKenzie-Boyle (Vice-chair)

Councillors Angell, Allen, Brossard, Brown, Ms Gaw, Mrs Ingham, Kirke

Strategic themes:

Communities
Protecting and enhancing our environment

Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel**Panel membership:**

Councillor Mike Gibson (Chair), Councillor Mrs Mattick (Vice-chair)

Councillors Allen, Atkinson, Bhandari, Brossard, Finch, Mrs L Gibson, Mrs McKenzie, McLean, Skinner, Mrs Temperton

Strategic themes:

Caring for you and your family

O&S activities are supported by officers from the Overview & Scrutiny Team within the wider Democratic and Registration Services function, providing 86 hours of support per week.



Ann Moore
Assistant Director:
Democratic &
Registration
Services

Overview & Scrutiny Officer	Overview & Scrutiny Officer	Overview & Scrutiny Officer	Governance & Scrutiny Manager
0.68 FTE	0.68 FTE	0.68 FTE	0.3 FTE






Scrutiny officers work across all three panels, supporting one review at a time. Moving support between panels ensures sharing of good practice and increases collaboration and understanding across strategic themes. It avoids siloed working and provides a balance of opportunities for councillors and officers to develop and share their skills.




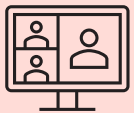




Following a restructure of the Democratic & Registration Services Division a new officer model was put in place from 1 March 2023 to support the scrutiny function.

Head of Scrutiny & Democratic Services	Team Leader: Overview & Scrutiny	Overview & Scrutiny Officer	Overview & Scrutiny Officer
0.3 FTE	0.68 FTE	0.68 FTE	1.0 FTE

Governance and Overview and Scrutiny in figures

This section summarises O&S activities over the current administration:







Commission			
2019-20	2020-21	2021 - 22	2022-23
6  meetings held Climate Change review commenced 	9  meetings held 3 reviews completed – recommendations to Executive	9  meetings held	7  meetings held
2 over 2 hrs	8 over 2 hours	1 over 2 hours	2 over 2 hours
Average 1:40 hrs each	Average 2:20 hrs each	Average 1:40 hrs each	Average: 1:45 hrs each
Total = 9:45 hrs	Total = 20:20 hrs	Total = 15:15 hrs	Total = 16 hrs

Panels			
2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
6  panel meetings held across 3 panels	25  review meetings held across 3 panels	36  review meetings held across 3 panels	25  review meetings held across 3 panels
2  reviews completed – recommendations to Executive 1 review almost complete – on hold	1  review complete – recommendations to Executive 2 reviews close to completion 3 reviews in early stages of pre-review preparation	5  reviews complete – recommendations to the Executive 1 review close to completion 2 reviews in progress 1 post-review feedback completed	4  reviews complete – recommendations to the Executive 2 post-review feedback completed

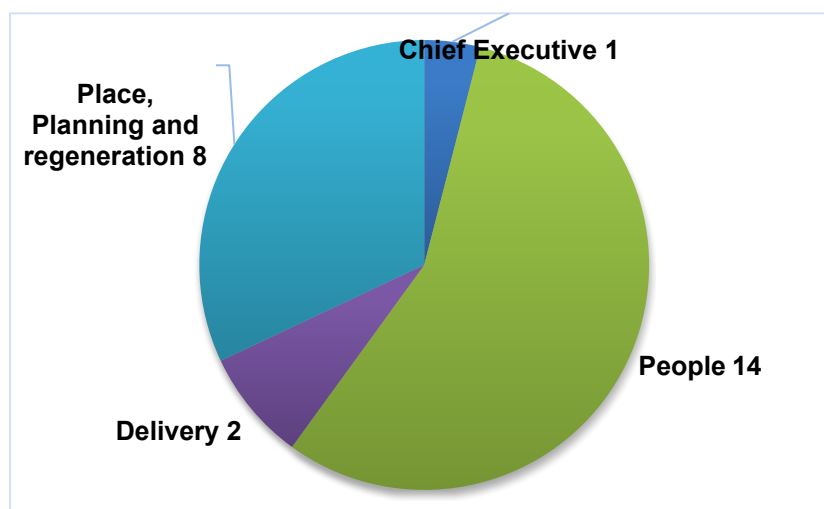
Further insights into O&S activities in 2022-23:

Activity overview by council theme		
 <p>Value for money</p> <p>Time in panel meetings: 4 hours Pages of evidence: 25</p>	 <p>Caring for you and your family</p> <p>Time in panel meetings: 8 hours Pages of evidence: 132</p>	 <p>Economic resilience</p> <p>Time in panel meetings: 4 hours Pages of evidence: 25</p>
 <p>Protecting and enhancing your environment</p> <p>Time in panel meetings: 3 hours Pages of evidence: 10</p>	 <p>Education and skills</p> <p>Time in panel meetings: 10 hours Pages of evidence: 203</p>	 <p>Communities</p> <p>Time in panel meetings: 4 hours 45 Minutes Pages of evidence: 38</p>

Summary of witnesses 2022-23:

Commission	Panels	Total
 <p>13 Officers</p>	 <p>17 Officers</p>	 <p>27 Officers</p>
 <p>4 External</p>	 <p>7 External</p>	 <p>10 External</p>
Executive members: 4	Executive members: 3	Executive members: 7

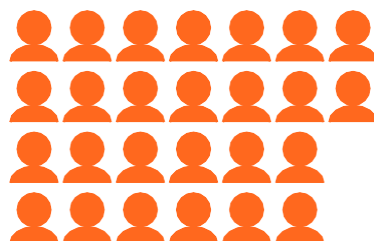
Bracknell Forest Officer witness by directorate



Number of councillors involved in reviews:

32

(Not including Executive Members)



Total press articles:

5



Overview of reviews 2019 – 2023

	2019				2020				2021				2022				2023
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Education, skills and growth Overview and Scrutiny panel			Care leavers				Apprenticeship		Evaluation of Care leavers recommendations		SEND						Child Criminal Exploitation
									Community infrastructure levy								
Environment and Communities - Overview and Scrutiny panel				Burial choices			Registered providers of social housing		Food waste in flats		Integrated enforcement						Enforcement strategy
Health and care - Overview and Scrutiny Panel							Isolation and loneliness				Mental health						Adult safeguarding - postponed until Q2 2023
								Blue badges									Evaluation of Blue badges recommendations

Getting involved

Overview and scrutiny activities benefit from a wide range of knowledge, experience and viewpoints and the Commission is keen to encourage wider participation. Review recommendations help shape the services we deliver for residents. Here are some insights from partners and officers about what they gained from recent reviews.

“The development of the written statement of action was a comprehensive, coproduced piece of work exploring the key actions needed to improve Special Educational Needs and Disability Service in Bracknell Forest. It is vitally important that we aspire to achieve the high standards of support and provision for all of our families and that the actions within the written statement of action aim to deliver that for children and young people with SEN and their families. I welcome the scrutiny review and note the findings.”

Grainne Siggins, Executive Director: People

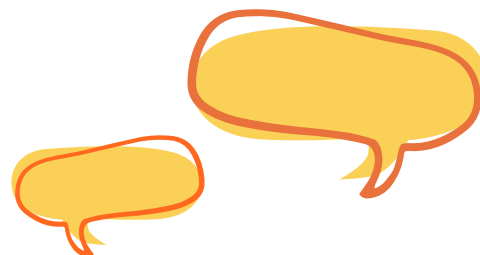
“The findings of the mental health review chime with our experience and we will look to build on them in our work to increase access and self-referral. Being involved in this scrutiny review highlighted the collaboration already in place across primary mental health services and meant we were able to help shape quality recommendations for the benefit of patients.”

Nadia Barakat, Director for Mental Health, NHS Frimley Clinical Commissioning Group

“There are a number of teams, in different departments across the Council that provide enforcement services and the panel heard evidence from them. As one of those teams we have been engaged throughout the scrutiny review process which has enabled us to share our good practice with the panel.

The opportunity to present evidence of current enforcement work and share potential options for the future has been invaluable so that Councillors appreciate the complexity and breadth of enforcement activity.”

Damian James, Assistant Director: Contract Services



Find out more about the [overview and scrutiny work programme](#). If you would like to be involved in future activities, contact committee@bracknell-forest.gov.uk.

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