

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
1 SEPTEMBER 2022  
6.02 - 8.32 PM**



**Present in person:**

Councillors Angell (Chair), Mrs Birch, Brossard, Mrs Mattick and Porter

**Present virtually:**

Councillors MJ Gibson, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, Temperton

**Executive Members in attendance:**

Councillor Mrs Haye MBE

**In attendance in person:**

Heema Shukla, Deputy Director of Public Health, Bracknell Forest Council

**In attendance virtually:**

Stuart McKellar, Deputy Chief Executive, Bracknell Forest Council

Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery, Bracknell Forest Council

Stuart Lines, Director of Public Health, East Berkshire

Rachel Smith, Social Prescriber, Bracknell Forest Council

**16. Minutes of previous meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 7 July 2022 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

Responses to all of the queries and requests for information raised in the meeting had been received or formed part of the agenda.

**17. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

There were no indications that members would be participating while under the party whip.

**18. Urgent Items of Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

**19. Public Participation**

No submissions had been made by members of the public under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

**20. Public Health Update**

The Commission considered the report from the Public Health Team which highlighted past progress and future priorities.

It was highlighted the team had been working for 18 months in their current format across East Berkshire in a hub and spoke model, a shared team across East Berkshire, managed by Bracknell Forest Council and included a commissioning lead role. Members of the Panel were informed the Public Health Team carried out roles and services which were not mandated, as well as those that were mandated by Government.

Arising from the discussion the following points were made:

- School nurses drop in visits had increased as a survey showed this was what users and school staff wanted. The service was planned to be re-tendered next year, possibly across East Berkshire.
- The Public Health Team gave advice and support in terms of health emergency planning but were not involved in access issues, such as attendance at Brants Bridge Urgent Care Centre. It was agreed Heema Shukla, Deputy Director Public Health would ask NHS colleagues how access to Brants Bridge was being publicised and circulate the response following the meeting.
- Child measurement programmes carried out in Reception and year 6 served two purposes. Firstly, it provided surveillance on obesity and height which would be accrued at a national level. Secondly, parents/carers locally received a letter about their child's measurements. The letter included advice about where to receive support, if necessary, or they may be offered a meeting with the school nurse. This included support to parents/carers of underweight children.
- Children's oral health was checked by Health Visitors at pre-school level and parents/ carers received advice on weaning and healthy diets. However, it was noted there used to be a national survey on dental care of children, but this was not always the case now as it was not a mandated requirement for Public Health nationally. Last year Bracknell Forest Public Health Team worked to support parents/carers in areas where oral health was poorer, but this year's priorities included a whole school approach to look at every aspect of health rather than fragmented interventions.
- The revised Bracknell Forest Health and Wellbeing Strategy had been published and two of the priorities were being discussed at the Health and Wellbeing Board on 7 September. The priorities included setting up a more robust governance for 0-5 year old children's services.
- The capacity of adult weight programmes to tackle obesity had been increased due to 600 people being on the waiting list. Bracknell Forest Public Health Team had recently commissioned Southampton University to look at a whole system wide approach to tackle obesity and the first meeting of a group convened to look at this had taken place, which included businesses and the voluntary sector. A briefing about this project had been delivered to Councillors recently.
- Winter planning included a vaccination programme as well as warm homes and food security.
- The team were working to ensure health was considered in all policies/procurement in the future and grants had been given to the welfare and housing teams to see what could be done for low income and asset rich/cash poor families, especially help to access grants for gas and electricity price increases.
- The team were also looking at how to increase food share and food larder projects across Bracknell and had been working with providers, such as Silva Homes, to see if they had a food larder which residents could access. It was noted it was not just the amount of food, but the quality, that was important

and there were apps which people could download to support food reaching those who needed it most.

- A 'warm hub' or 'warm bank' initiative was discussed as options to help create warm spaces for residents' struggling to heat their homes this Winter. The team were also looking at options for venues in the borough to teach younger people how to cook on a budget. Wokingham and Bracknell College, Children's Centres and Libraries were suggested as place which could accommodate this type of project.
- It was agreed the Deputy Director, Public Health, would liaise with Cllr Tina McKenzie-Boyle about attending a meeting of Crowthorne Parish Council to discuss potential 'warm hub' ideas.
- It was agreed the discussion about 'warm hubs' or 'warm banks' should form part of the agenda for the Climate Change Advisory Panel and the Vice Chair of the Panel agreed to raise it at the next meeting.
- Due to an increase in parents requesting support with mental health issues the team were looking at a similar programme to Homestart, a mentor type scheme, as well as starting up several groups for mothers to help tackle this issue.
- Support for children and young people who struggled with their mental health was available in schools, but it was recognised more targeted support was needed in all schools across the borough to support children and young people, as well as teachers/support staff providing support themselves.
- It was recognised more targeted support for some families was needed and the team were working with family hubs where Health Visitors were located and with Frimley Integrated Care Board to achieve this.
- The Community Map had been updated following the Covid-19 pandemic and there was a new platform which should make it easier to use.
- Young Health Champions had informed the team they would like more physical activities available to support with mental health issues. The team were looking at how to increase physical activities outside school and how to increase peer support.
- Currently, Social Prescribers only worked with adults, but they were liaising with Kooth, Sporting Mind and voluntary groups to see what could be expanded to children and young people.
- In response to a question asked about a wellbeing pamphlet distributed around the borough it was confirmed the information contained in the pamphlet relating to serious reactions was correct. Heema Shukla, Deputy Director of Public Health agreed to circulate figures regarding yellow card notifications to Councillors and to check the pamphlet had been circulated to all wards.

## 21. **Council Plan Overview Report**

The Deputy Chief Executive at Bracknell Forest Council, Stuart McKellar, introduced the Council Plan Overview Report (CPOR) covering the first quarter of 2022/23 and highlighted that:

- This quarter marked the beginning of Ukranian families arriving in the UK. There were 82 guests who arrived in Quarter 1 with another 72 expected. All those families had now arrived but members of the Commission were informed Ukranian families were likely to continue arriving in the UK for some time.
- An Inspection of Children's Local Authority Services (Ilacs) took place during Quarter 1 and the authority received an Outstanding grade for their services to children in the borough.

- The Council had received an award for Council of the Year at the Energy Efficiency Awards for supporting over 700 households become more fuel efficient. Councillors wished to pass on their thanks to Hazel Hill, Energy Efficiency Officer, for her hard work in this area.
- The Council had moved away from 'forward' acronym to three new values: 'Inclusive, Ambitious, Always Learning'.
- Following a Joint Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inspection the Council was required to publish a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) to address issues which were identified during the inspection. The WSOA was approved without amendments.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission thanked officers for bringing the quarterly Corporate Performance Overview Report in a timely manner.

Arising from discussion the following points were made:

- Page 44 – 2.2. – The Council had adopted a flexible working policy with staff able to work 1-2 days in the office during the week but, this was not actively being encouraged at this time, due to covid. However, Social Workers were back in the office similar to pre pandemic levels.
- Page 44 – There was provision being made in case Ukranian families presented themselves as homeless and a working arrangement was in place to match those who would like to be a host with those where the hosting arrangement had broken down.
- Page 45 – The Care Quality Commission was working with Bracknell Forest Council to address issues at Heathlands Care Home. Councillors had received a written response specifically on this issue which would be published alongside the minutes.
- It was agreed a response would be made available following the meeting about whether residents with oil heating would qualify for the £400 energy rebate from the Government. It was also noted the Council had received grant funding for over £1 million to look at how to keep homes warm and, in particular, make our least inefficient buildings in the borough, more efficient.
- Page 45 - 3.2 – Councillors wished to pass on their thanks to the SEND team for preparing the WSOA.
- Page 51 – 1.1.07 – it was confirmed 25% fulfilment savings from Business Change Team were accurate at this time.
- Page 49 – it was confirmed Bracknell Forest Council were sharing the burden with the supplier. The Council was in continuous discussion with suppliers on how to mitigate inflationary costs.
- It had been expected some bus routes were being withdrawn in September but, the Government had pledged to support current services until the end of March, so that budget pressure had been removed.
- The first quarter end in June showed a potential underspend but Councillors were informed the position was worsening every month due to inflation and other costs impacting on the Council, similarly to household budgets.
- Page 53 – It was noted there was a continuing issue with reporting from the Business Improvement District (BID) since it was established in 2020, which had not been anticipated. Lengthy work arounds had been applied and the Council had engaged a consultant to work with Northgate and the BID to ensure enhancements to that service included improvements to reporting.
- It was agreed a question regarding how residents were consulted on travel in the borough was undertaken would require a response from the relevant Assistant Director and the response circulated to Councillors following the meeting.

- Page 55 – It was confirmed the Family Safeguarding Model had been reviewed a couple of times.
- Page 56 - L139 – It was agreed this indicator should be green, not amber.
- Page 58 – 4.1.06 – It was agreed the indicator on the Children and Young People Plan should be green.
- Page 59 – L404 – It was agreed a response would be circulated following the meeting regarding the number of Children and Young People visits to Everyone Active this quarter as it seemed unusually low.
- Councillors were glad to see bio-diversity and introduction of food waste into flats was coming to fruition following the scrutiny review into food waste.
- Electric charging points in the borough were grant funded and it was confirmed 32 would go into shopping centres. Bracknell Forest Council were part of a Berkshire wide EV group exploring options for additional electric charging points.
- Page 61 – L418 – It was noted this target was pre the Covid-19 pandemic and needed to be amended.
- Page 63 – L406 – the target seemed low and it was agreed a response to this would be given following the meeting.
- Page 63 - 6.10.08 – It was queried whether there should be an indicator on Afghanistan refugees similar to Ukrainian refugees in the borough. It was agreed a response to this question would be circulated following the meeting.

Question and written answer provided in response regarding Heathlands Care Home: ***“It is noted Heathlands Care Home has fallen into Special Measures. What monitoring was in place with the Care Home prior to the inspection? Why was monitoring not sufficient enough to ensure this service did not fall into an inadequate rating? What is the Council’s plan to ensure this provider improves and what lessons are being learned to ensure other providers in the area do not fall into inadequate ratings also?”***

**What monitoring was in place with the Care Home prior to the inspection?**

“Firstly, the home provider was identified through a competitive procurement process. The process involved detailed responses to a range of questions, with an evaluation panel made up of professionals from the council, the health service and carers of people with dementia. The process included a visit to one of the organisation’s homes by members of the commissioning and safeguarding teams. All of the provider’s services had “good” CQC results at the time of applying for the contract.

From the time of opening until the time that the inspection took place the council was in close contact with the service and was monitoring regularly. It was this monitoring and concerns raised by our partners in the NHS that caused us to notify the CQC leading to the inspection. As soon as the council was aware of concerns we instigated a “red flag” stopping further placements and took steps to ensure the welfare of all residents.

**Why was monitoring not sufficient enough to ensure this service did not fall into an inadequate rating?**

The purpose of our monitoring and support to services is to ensure that people are safe and to help services to improve. Monitoring will not prevent providers from experiencing operational challenges, rather it will ensure that the council and our partners are aware of risks – as it did in this instance. By the time of the inspection the council was working very closely with the organisation to stabilise and support improvement, but unfortunately this was insufficient due to the scale of the challenges that have been explained in the CQC report.

**What is the Council's plan to ensure this provider improves?**

The onus is on the provider to ensure that they improve by the time of their re-inspection in October. However the council is working with them closely to ensure that these improvements take place. As an immediate step the provider employed a specialist CQC Compliance agency to replace the home manager and deputy with specialists and to develop and oversee an improvement plan. The AD for Commissioning and Operational ADs are holding twice weekly meetings to oversee progress and plan activity to ensure the provide makes sufficient progress. We are receiving feedback from a wide range of professionals who are engaged with the service including social work, nursing, medication specialists, safeguarding team and commissioning.

**What lessons are being learned to ensure other providers in the area do not fall into inadequate ratings also?**

As indicated above, the council is not able to ensure that providers do not fall into inadequacy. All social care services are regulated by the Care Quality Commission and have to maintain standards to maintain their registration. The role of the council is to ensure that we have the best possible intelligence about local services and that we are able to responded quickly when providers face problems such as those encountered by Windsar Care.

We are continuing to reflect and learn from the experience of Windsar Care. One thing we are doing is to review the processes and resources that we have in place to respond when we see the first signs of problems. It is a widely know national issue that social care providers are coming under un-precedented challenges currently, and we want to assure ourselves that we are prepared as well as we can be to respond to future incidents of this type.”

**22. Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel Report: Integrated Enforcement**

The Chair of the Environment and Communities Panel introduced the Integrated Enforcement review report and the following points were made:

- Members of the Commission welcomed the idea of a lead officer in the Council for enforcement.
- A discussion took place about the difficulties for officers being given powers to fine people if they were not Police Officers. However, it was acknowledged there would be training in place to ensure officers undertaking enforcement roles remained safe, i.e. to challenge in two's, and provision of a uniform, so this recommendation was accepted.
- The review found Thames Valley Police were often not able to participate in CSAS training and members of the Commission agreed a recommendation intended to ensure someone from Thames Valley Police was available was important to ensure training was of good quality.
- Councillors thanked Joey Gurney, Governance and Scrutiny Officer for his hard work supporting Councillors during this review.

**The Commission endorsed the recommendations in the Integrated Enforcement review report for submission to the Executive on 22 September 2022.**

## 23. **Work Programme Update**

Each Panel Chair in attendance provided a verbal update on work programme progress.

### Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The SEND review report had been finalised and would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 6 October.

The Chair requested Overview and Scrutiny Commission members approve the Child Criminal Exploitation review scope which had been circulated with the agenda. The Panel had originally intended to review County Lines but, due to Covid and issues affecting people travelling across county lines, the scope had been revised. The scope was approved.

The Chair of the Education, Skills and Growth Panel invited Councillors to a meeting of the panel on 28<sup>th</sup> September to discuss the progress made to date and future review ideas.

### **The Commission agreed the Child Criminal Exploitation review scope.**

### Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The Health and Care Panel would meet on 10 October, 6.30pm, to discuss the impact of the review on blue badges and how the recommendations had been carried out. At the meeting members of the Panel would also have the opportunity to discuss the next project for the Panel to review. It was planned to bring the scope to the next Overview and Scrutiny Commission meeting for consideration.

### Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

It was noted the Environment and Communities Panel had their next review scope agreed at the previous meeting in July and would begin work on this review on 6 October.

The work ethic in all the panels was commended by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

**CHAIRMAN**