

Notice of Meeting

Executive

Councillor Temperton (Chair),
Councillor Neil (Vice-Chair),
Councillors Bailey, Bidwell, Gillbe, Jefferies, Purnell and Wright

Tuesday 17 October 2023, 5.30 pm
Council Chamber - Time Square, Market Street, Bracknell, RG12 1JD



Agenda

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

Item	Description	Page
1.	Apologies Reporting: ALL	
2.	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> Reporting: ALL	
3.	Minutes	5 - 28
	<p>To consider and approve the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 19 September 2023.</p> Reporting: ALL	
4.	Urgent Items of Business	
	<p>Any other items which, pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman decides are urgent.</p> Reporting: Hannah Harding, Team Leader - Democratic Services	

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Executive Key Decisions

The items listed below all relate to Key Executive decisions, unless stated otherwise below.

5.	Overview and Scrutiny Review Reports- Enforcement Strategy and Child Criminal Exploitation	29 - 48
	To present two Overview and Scrutiny Reports 'Enforcement Strategy' and 'Child Criminal Exploitation'. Reporting: Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery	
6.	Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2023 - 2033	49 - 132
	To seek approval for public consultation on the draft Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034, the themes and objectives and the proposed action plan. Reporting: Chris Mansfield, Head of Economic Development and Regeneration	
7.	Prevent Strategy 2023-26	133 - 156
	To seek approval to the Prevent Strategy 2023-26. Reporting: Grainne Siggins, Executive Director People	
8.	Budget Update	157 - 202
	To provide an update on the current year's predicted spending against budget and an outline of future financial prospects. Reporting: Stuart McKellar, Executive Director: Resources	
9.	Future of Downshire Homes Limited	203 - 216
	To approve the most appropriate future management arrangements for residential properties purchased by Downshire Homes Limited, with funding provided by Bracknell Forest Council. Reporting: Stuart McKellar, Executive Director: Resources	

Exclusion of the Press and Public

Agenda items 10, 11 and 12 are supported by annexes containing exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. If the Committee wishes to discuss the content of these annexes in detail, it may choose to move the following resolution:

That pursuant to Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) Regulations 2012 and having regard to the public interest, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of items 10, 11 and 12 which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

- (3) *Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).*

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10.	Bridgewell Supported Living	217 - 252
	To provide an update on the progress of the Bridgewell Supported Living project. The project was previously approved for delivery by Executive on 21 June 2022. Further decision is required relating to the capital cost of the building works and the re-approval of the strategic procurement plan for the procurement of the landlord service provider and the care & support service provider. Reporting: Melanie O'Rourke, Assistant Director: Adult Social Care	
11.	0-19 Public Health Nursing Contract	253 - 262
	To approve the award of the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Contract. Reporting: Heema Shukla, Deputy Director: Public Health	
12.	Occupational Health Provider Procurement	263 - 276
	To agree to procurement commencing for the selection of an occupational health provider to directly follow on from the termination of the current contract, which terminates on 30 June 2024. Reporting: Paul Young, Assistant Director: Human Resources and Organisational Development	

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: 6 October 2023

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**EXECUTIVE
19 SEPTEMBER 2023
5.30 - 6.20 PM**

Present:

Councillors Temperton (Chair), Neil (Vice-Chair), Bailey, Bidwell, Jefferies, Purnell and Wright

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Gillbe

18. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Bidwell and Neil declared affected interests in relation to item 11 being the Council's representatives on the Board overseeing the joint venture and would leave the meeting for the item.

19. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive on 18 July 2023 together with the accompanying decision records be confirmed as a correct record.

20. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

Executive Decisions and Decision Records

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

21. Membership of the Joint Public Protection Committee

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- i. Agrees to authorise the appropriate amendment to the inter Authority Agreement to reflect the change to the membership of the Joint Public Protection Committee.
- ii. Agrees to the proposed changes to the Joint Public Protection Committee's Terms of Reference as set out in paragraph 5.5 of the report.
- iii. Delegates authority to the Assistant Director: Contract Services in consultation with the Borough Solicitor to implement amendments to the Inter Authority Agreement dated 6th January 2017 as well as the Committee's Terms of Reference in accordance with the recommendations above.

22. Quarter one Council Plan Overview Report

RESOLVED that the performance of the council over the period from April-June 2023 highlighted in the Overview Report in Annex A is noted, this includes any

recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny in Annex B.

23. **SEND Written Statement of Action**

RESOLVED that

- i. the progress made on implementing the SEND Written Statement of Action to improve services to children and families and the feedback from the DfE and NHS England since the end of June 2023 is noted.
- ii. the invitation from the DfE to participate in the Safety Valve intervention programme 2024-25 for local authorities with high Designated Schools Grant (DSG) deficits is noted.

24. **Agree site for new Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) School**

RESOLVED that

- i. the Executive agree Bucklers Park as the site for the new special school.
- ii. the Executive delegate authority to the Executive Director – People, and the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning, to agree any minor amendments that may be further required.

25. **Approval of the draft All-Age Integrated Carers Strategy 2024-2029, as the basis for public consultation**

RESOLVED that

- i. the draft All-Age Integrated Carers Strategy 2024-2029 is approved, as the basis for public consultation over a period of 12 weeks.
- ii. approval be delegated to the Executive Director: People in consultation with the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing and the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning to endorse and sign off the consultation process.
- iii. The Executive receives a revised draft of the strategy following consideration of consultation feedback.

26. **Updated Sexual and Reproductive Health Recommissioning**

RESOLVED that

- i. a two-year direct award be approved to an eligible provider to ensure continuity of Specialist, Integrated SRH service provision beyond the 30 June 2024 across Berkshire East ((RWBM), Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) and Slough Borough Council).
- ii. the contract award be delivered as the Lead Authority for the procurement. The decision will be taken at RBWM's Cabinet on the 27th September and SBC's Cabinet on the 18 September 2023. The final decision will therefore be confirmed by the 28th September 2023 when all 3 meetings will have met to take their decisions.

- iii. Bracknell Forest Council work with the market and NHS commissioning bodies to develop a life course response to sexual and reproductive health needs that offers better services for local communities. This process will result in initiation of a procurement of the Specialist Integrated SRH service during the lifetime of the 2-year contract to ensure longer term provision.

27. **Depot - Surplus land**

RESOLVED that

- i. the outline Initial Site Development Plan for surplus land at the Depot site be approved.
- ii. should recommendation 2.1 be approved, detailed proposals will be developed including design, submission of a planning application and the commercial arrangements including development funding finalised in a further Settled Site Development Plan that the Council will need to approve in around 12 months' time.
- iii. the JV will engage with registered social landlords to investigate the viability of increasing the level of affordable housing in the development above the minimum policy compliant level (currently 25%) up to potentially 100%, prior to submission of Settled Site Development Plan.
- iv. the Borough Solicitor be authorised to appropriate the land at edged red on the plan attached as Annex 1 for planning purposes under Section 122(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, when a planning consent is in place.

28. **Approval of the Strategic Procurement Plan for Integrated Therapies Service and associated contract extensions**

RESOLVED that

- i. the Executive approve the Strategic Procurement Plan for the provision of an Integrated Therapies Service as a jointly commissioned service with NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Slough Borough Council. NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board will be the lead commissioner.
- ii. the Executive agree the proposed contractual term of 7 years, starting with an initial period of three years and two further optional extension terms of 2 years (3+2+2 years).
- iii. the Executive delegate authority for the contract award decision to the Executive Director: People in consultation with Executive member for Children, Young People & Learning.
- iv. the Executive approve an extension via waiver of the current Children and Young People's Occupational Therapy Service Level Agreement for one year to cover the dates 02/09/23-01/09/24 and, if required, to cover the dates 02/09/24-01/09/25.
- v. the Executive approve an extension via waiver of the current Children and Young People's Speech and Language Therapy contract for one year to cover the dates 03/09/23-02/09/24 and, if required, to cover the dates 03/09/24-02/09/25.

CHAIRMAN

Bracknell Forest Council Record of Decision

Work Programme Reference	I116711
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1. **TITLE:** Membership of the Joint Public Protection Committee

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Delivery

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To review membership of the Joint Public Protection committee with a view of increasing from 4 members to 6 members (3 members from each participating authority)

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

That the Executive:

- i. Agrees to authorise the appropriate amendment to the inter Authority Agreement to reflect the change to the membership of the Joint Public Protection Committee.
- ii. Agrees to the proposed changes to the Joint Public Protection Committee's Terms of Reference as set out in paragraph 5.5 of the report.
- iii. Delegates authority to the Assistant Director: Contract Services in consultation with the Borough Solicitor to implement amendments to the Inter Authority Agreement dated 6th January 2017 as well as the Committee's Terms of Reference in accordance with the recommendations above.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

At the 12 June 2023 Joint Public Protection Committee meeting the Members resolved to recommend to each of the partner authorities that the membership of the Committee be amended to include three Members from each authority, namely the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Public Protection, and two Council representatives. They also recommended that West Berkshire Council's Constitution, as the host authority, be amended to reflect this decision.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

Not to amend the membership of the Committee.

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

10. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:**

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
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19 September 2023	26 September 2023
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**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I114713
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1. **TITLE:** Quarter one Council Plan Overview Report

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

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To provide the Executive an update on the delivery of the objectives set out in the Council Plan.

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that the performance of the council over the period from April-June 2023 highlighted in the Overview Report in Annex A is noted, this includes any recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny in Annex B.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

To brief the Executive on the council's performance, highlighting key areas, so that appropriate action can be taken if needed.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

None applicable.

9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Chief Executive

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

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
19 September 2023	26 September 2023

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**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I114982
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1. **TITLE:** SEND Written Statement of Action

2. **SERVICE AREA:** People

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To provide the Executive with an update on progress that has been made on delivery the WSOA action plan since the last Executive report in June 2023.

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that

- i. the progress made on implementing the SEND Written Statement of Action to improve services to children and families and the feedback from the DfE and NHS England since the end of June 2023 is noted.
- ii. the invitation from the DfE to participate in the Safety Valve intervention programme 2024-25 for local authorities with high Designated Schools Grant (DSG) deficits is noted.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

When the WSOA was produced it was agreed that the executive would have updates on progress made on implementation of the plan, following the DfE and NHS England reviews.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

None

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

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

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
19 September 2023	26 September 2023

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**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I115756
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1. **TITLE:** Agree site for new Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) School

2. **SERVICE AREA:** People

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To seek agreement to nominate Bucklers Park site as the proposed site for the new Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) School.

4 **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that

- i. the Executive agree Bucklers Park as the site for the new special school.
- ii. the Executive delegate authority to the Executive Director – People, and the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning, to agree any minor amendments that may be further required.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

- i. The Council needs to provide new places for future SEND provision since it currently pays for a high number of pupils to be educated out of the borough which is expensive and is projected to increase in terms of demand and cost. Part of the emerging SEND strategy is to provide more places within the borough which includes the provision of new schools. The opportunity to utilise the land at the Bucklers Park site at a cost of a nominal £1 purchase price from the developers and for the DfE to fund the design and build of a new school, is an opportunity for the Council which it is recommended should be pursued.
- ii. Therefore, it is considered that the Bucklers Park land is an excellent opportunity to deliver a new SEND school and should be progressed.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- i. That the Council purchases land on alternative sites such as the former Warfield School site (which is smaller in area and will incur the cost of a purchase price) or other sites likely to be at full residential market value which will be expensive, uncertain and with an unknown time scale likely to be outside of the terms and conditions for a successful DfE funding bid.
- ii. The potential alternative sites considered:

- Warfield School Site (All Saints Rise) which is much smaller in area (1.24 hectares verses 2.35 hectares at Bucklers Park); has a number of buildings which would need to be demolished; and involves a negotiated purchase price from the owner. The time scale remains uncertain.
- Amen Corner South site – which may be needed for a primary school and will not be available for a number of years which does not meet the timescale for the DfE to fund the school due to the site developer needing to use it as a compound for materials during construction. If eventually available for SEND purposes it may also require to be purchased at full market value as the site will also have a residential value which means it would be very expensive compared to the nominal £1 purchase price of the Bucklers Park site. Negotiations would be required with the developer/landowner.
- Warfield east site – which is secured for a primary school but will not be available for a number of years and depends on an associated planning permission being implemented, which again does not meet the timescales for the funding bid. If eventually available for SEND purposes, half of the site for a 1-form of entry primary school potentially has to be purchased at full market value as the permission relates to a primary school not a SEND school. Further, the other half of the site (to make a 2 FE school) will be required to be purchased at full market value because the planning permission permits housing on this part should the second form of entry part of the primary school not be required. This means the purchase of the site would be very expensive compared to the nominal £1 purchase price of the Bucklers Park site. Negotiations would be required with the developer/landowner.

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

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

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
19 September 2023	26 September 2023

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I114642
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1. **TITLE:** Approval of the draft All-Age Integrated Carers Strategy 2024-2029, as the basis for public consultation

2. **SERVICE AREA:** People

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To seek approval of the Co-produced draft All-Age Integrated Carers Strategy 2024-2029 for Bracknell Forest as a basis for undertaking a public consultation over a 12 week period to inform the identified priorities, final strategy and local delivery plan

4 **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that

- i. the draft All-Age Integrated Carers Strategy 2024-2029 is approved, as the basis for public consultation over a period of 12 weeks.
- ii. approval be delegated to the Executive Director: People in consultation with the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing and the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning to endorse and sign off the consultation process.
- iii. The Executive receives a revised draft of the strategy following consideration of consultation feedback.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

- i. The All-Age Integrated Carers Strategy will support the Council in meeting their statutory responsibilities to carers and young carers as determined under the Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014.
- ii. The All-Age Integrated Carers Strategy will support us in achieving our key objectives as determined in the Council Plan.
- iii. The strategy will support a number of Bracknell-Forest Place Health and Care Plan 2022-2025 priority areas.
- iv. Public consultation of the co-produced strategy will ensure residents of Bracknell Forest have an opportunity to understand the proposed partnership approach to supporting carers and the associated priorities. Residents will be able to provide feedback which will be taken into consideration when drafting the final strategy for publication.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

Understanding carers' needs and providing appropriate advice and support to carers are statutory obligations under relevant legislations. Therefore, it is essential we identify and outline how we intend to support carers in Bracknell Forest as a partnership. For this reason, no other alternatives were considered other than the development of this strategy.

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

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

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
19 September 2023	26 September 2023

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I115490
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1. **TITLE:** Updated Sexual and Reproductive Health Recommissioning

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Place, Planning & Regeneration

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To update the committee on the progress and next steps for the Sexual and Reproductive Health mandatory service provision.

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that

- i. a two-year direct award be approved to an eligible provider to ensure continuity of Specialist, Integrated SRH service provision beyond the 30 June 2024 across Berkshire East ((RBWM), Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) and Slough Borough Council).
- ii. the contract award be delivered as the Lead Authority for the procurement. The decision will be taken at RBWM's Cabinet on the 27th September and SBC's Cabinet on the 18 September 2023. The final decision will therefore be confirmed by the 28th September 2023 when all 3 meetings will have met to take their decisions.
- iii. Bracknell Forest Council work with the market and NHS commissioning bodies to develop a life course response to sexual and reproductive health needs that offers better services for local communities. This process will result in initiation of a procurement of the Specialist Integrated SRH service during the lifetime of the 2-year contract to ensure longer term provision.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

- i. The contract for the Specialist Integrated SRH service for residents in the local authorities across Berkshire East (Bracknell Forest Council; (RBWM) and Slough Borough Council) is due to expire on 30 June 2024.
- ii. The recommended approach agreed by all local authorities was to retender under the light touch regime of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (the Regulations). The maximum financial envelope for BFC and Slough Borough Council was also agreed; for RBWM this occurs at award stage so had not yet taken place.
- iii. In March 2023 the Director of Public Health gained approval for BFC to go out to tender for the Berkshire East Specialist Integrated SRH Service.
- iv. This included a recommendation to continue joint commissioning arrangements

across Berkshire East to continue funding the total contract value jointly with BFC to lead the procurement process to tender under the light touch regime

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

Detailed within the report.

9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Director of Public Health

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

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
19 September 2023	26 September 2023

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I114754
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1. **TITLE:** Depot - Surplus land

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Resources

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To approve the initial site development plan for surplus land at the Depot site.

4 **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that

- i. the outline Initial Site Development Plan for surplus land at the Depot site be approved.
- ii. should recommendation 2.1 be approved, detailed proposals will be developed including design, submission of a planning application and the commercial arrangements including development funding finalised in a further Settled Site Development Plan that the Council will need to approve in around 12 months' time.
- iii. the JV will engage with registered social landlords to investigate the viability of increasing the level of affordable housing in the development above the minimum policy compliant level (currently 25%) up to potentially 100%, prior to submission of Settled Site Development Plan.
- iv. the Borough Solicitor be authorised to appropriate the land at edged red on the plan attached as Annex 1 for planning purposes under Section 122(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, when a planning consent is in place.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

- i. The proposed ISDP is an outline proposal for development of the Council-owned Depot site. This will become surplus to the functioning of the Depot site itself once the redevelopment of the site is completed. If approved, this outline proposal will be refined during the coming months and will be subject to several conditions being fulfilled, including securing planning permission and fulfilling best consideration requirements for the land value.
- ii. The proposal uses a parcel of land which would otherwise be left vacant or sold to a third-party developer. Its proposed development via the JV allows the Council retain a high level of control over what is to be built on the site.
- iii. The development would provide c40 new houses and flats close to the town centre, with a proposed 25% policy compliant scheme as a minimum. The opportunity to

deliver an increased number of affordable units on site will be explored in the coming months, before a final proposal is brought before the Council for consideration in a Settled Site Development Plan, in around 12 months.

- iv. The proposed development links to the Bracknell Forest Housing Strategy 2023 to 2028. This strategy sets out four priorities:
 1. Prevent homelessness & increase housing options and support for households in need.
 2. Deliver new homes in sustainable communities that meet the needs of residents.
 3. Make the best use of existing homes and improve housing quality.
 4. Provide a range of housing options for people with care and support needs.

This development will align with this strategy by:

- Providing housing with varying unit sizes, including larger units suitable for family occupancy.
 - Exceeding the strategy requirements by providing 10% of housing as wheelchair adapted (strategy 5%).
 - Capping the rent for affordable homes at Local Housing Allowance rates
 - Delivering a high-quality development, indistinguishable from private for sale homes in the neighbourhood.
- v. The scheme development will be closely monitored through the detailed design, planning and construction stages and will include opportunities such as apprenticeships and work experience. Following completion this development will enhance town centre living in the centre of Bracknell, helping support an 18-hour economy by creating a lively mixed-use destination with residential and potential commercial uses close to the town centre.
 - vi. In order to ensure that the redevelopment can come forward, its benefits be realised and that the Council can meet its obligations under the JV legal agreement, it is proposed that the Council appropriates its land at the Depot site for planning purposes under S122 Local Government Act 1972 and utilises the statutory powers under s.203 Housing & Planning Act 2016 to facilitate the works without risk of injunction once planning permission has been obtained. This report seeks that this is delegated to Borough Solicitor who will ensure that all legal tests are complied with before Appropriation is undertaken.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

The Executive could decide not to endorse the recommendations made in this report. This would mean that the Council may need to consider an alternative approach to development for the Surplus land at the Depot, including disposing of the surplus land to a third party. In that situation, the Council would achieve a guaranteed capital receipt (the level of which would depend on market interest) but would lose control over the nature and scale of development on the site. A commercial as opposed to residential development has been investigated, but was found not to be viable, as has previously been reported to the Executive.

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

10. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** Councillors Bidwell and Neil declared affected interests in relation to being the Council's representatives on the Board overseeing the joint venture and would leave the meeting for the item.

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
19 September 2023	26 September 2023

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**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I115811
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1. **TITLE:** Approval of the Strategic Procurement Plan for Integrated Therapies Service and associated contract extensions

2. **SERVICE AREA:** People

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To seek approval for the procurement of an Integrated Therapies Service, to include Occupational Therapy (OT) and Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) and to extend the current contracts with Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust for SALT and OT services for children and young people in Bracknell Forest to allow for the procurement to be undertaken. Approval is sought to extend the contracts for one year initially with the option to extend for up to a further one year'.

4 **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that

- i. the Executive approve the Strategic Procurement Plan for the provision of an Integrated Therapies Service as a jointly commissioned service with NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Slough Borough Council. NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board will be the lead commissioner.
- ii. the Executive agree the proposed contractual term of 7 years, starting with an initial period of three years and two further optional extension terms of 2 years (3+2+2 years).
- iii. the Executive delegate authority for the contract award decision to the Executive Director: People in consultation with Executive member for Children, Young People & Learning.
- iv. the Executive approve an extension via waiver of the current Children and Young People's Occupational Therapy Service Level Agreement for one year to cover the dates 02/09/23-01/09/24 and, if required, to cover the dates 02/09/24-01/09/25.
- v. the Executive approve an extension via waiver of the current Children and Young People's Speech and Language Therapy contract for one year to cover the dates 03/09/23-02/09/24 and, if required, to cover the dates 03/09/24-02/09/25.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

1. The procurement of the Integrated Therapies Service is required to meet the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

2. The proposal for jointly commissioning an Integrated Therapies Service will include a core clinical service. The core clinical offer includes SALT, OT and Physiotherapy. This core element of the integrated service will provide services where there is a clinical need such as intervention when a child or young person has experienced an accident or where there is a specific clinical need such as Dysphagia. Physiotherapy services are included in the core health service and are commissioned to provide assessment and intervention to children and young people who present with a nonacute condition affecting their physical development and/or function and where specialist physiotherapy support is required. Clinical pathways for this cohort of Children and Young People will predominantly be through community health services such as health visiting, community paediatrics and primary care and Acute pathways.
3. The proposed joint commissioning model will ensure the best use is made of resources. Currently, there are four different contracts with different specifications, eligible populations/schools and monitoring arrangements. This results in inequitable provision and outcomes, service gaps, and disputes. A joint arrangement across East Berkshire would ensure a consistent service model is delivered across the area. A single provider ensures reduced variation in practice, more standardisation and a reduction in variation of access and outcomes. Impact measures would be monitored in a consistent way, the inequality of outcomes is reduced and there would be an increase in children who can access the service. A single needs assessment ensures the pooling of public health input, clinical expertise, schools' feedback, data and informatics and community insights. An aligned strategy means an at scale approach to tackling issues such as recruitment and retention, quicker resolution of disputes, and a single contract management approach.
4. The service model and specification will be jointly developed by NHS Frimley ICB, BFC, RBWM and Slough Borough Council to include the learning that took place during the pandemic, use of technology, and a contract monitoring and performance management framework with clear key performance indicators. Regular and robust contract monitoring will be undertaken throughout the life of the contract. A joint contract will clearly outline the costs of the service and the funding contribution of each Commissioning Partner. Key data sets will be presented in a dashboard at the SEND Improvement Partnership Board to provide the required system oversight.
5. Engagement will take place in the autumn term 2023 with key stakeholders including schools forum, service users, schools, health professionals, parents and the parent carer forums across East Berkshire to support the development of the new service model and specification. Workshops led by NHS Frimley ICB are taking place throughout July and August with multi-agency professionals at the three Local Authorities to progress this work. The Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) workshop took place on 24th July 2023.
6. Bracknell Forest Council wants all children and young people in the borough to be safe, to learn, to gain confidence, be happy and be supported to reach their full potential. Ensuring all children and young people with SEND are supported in achieving their aspirations is of paramount importance to us.
7. In November 2021, BFC's SEND services were inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and nine significant areas for improvement were identified. The fifth area for improvement is 'the lack of support available to children and young people while waiting excessive amounts of time to access occupational therapy services. Also, the lack of capacity in the occupational therapy team, resulting in delays to their contributions to education health and care plans (EHCPs).

Improving OT wait times is a key improvement that needs to be delivered, as set out in our Written Statement of Action (WSOA).

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

1. Do nothing: The current contract and associated obligations will lapse, therefore there would be no provision for an Integrated Therapies Service. This would leave us unable to meet our statutory duty to provide OT, SALT and physiotherapy to children and young people in Bracknell Forest. It would also leave us unable to fulfil our duty to ensure all EHCP assessments are completed within the 20-week timeframe, including the necessary input from SALT and OT therapists.
2. Extending beyond the requested period: There is no further provision within the current contract for this to be extended. Additionally, the service specifications have not been reviewed for several years and are no longer fit for purpose.
3. A competitive tender as the sole commissioner: The Integrated Therapies Service must be commissioned jointly by BFC and NHS Frimley ICB, as stated in the SEND Code of practice (2015). BFC and NHS Frimley ICB could commission this service jointly without RBWM and Slough Borough Council. However, the same provider currently provides the same services across Berkshire. Under Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 and Section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006 local authorities and NHS Frimley ICB have a statutory duty to consider the extent to which children and young people’s needs could be met more effectively through integrating services and aligning or pooling budgets in order to offer greater value for money, improve outcomes and/or better integrate services for children and young people with SEN or disabilities.
4. A joint commissioning exercise with a Local Authority partner as the lead commissioner: NHS Frimley ICB is the largest financial contributor to the service. The three Local Authorities are much smaller partners and due to resourcing challenges, neither BFC, RBWM or Slough Borough Council can act as lead commissioner for this project.
5. Spot purchasing without a contractual arrangement: Best value for money is unlikely to be achieved. The SEND Code of practice states that BFC and NHS Frimley ICB must jointly commission a service and publish

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

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

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
19 September 2023	26 September 2023

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To: **Executive**
Date of Meeting

**Overview and Scrutiny Panel Reviews –
Reports to Executive (Outstanding reports from 2022/23)
Executive Director of Delivery (Statutory Scrutiny Officer)**

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present to the Executive the findings of two reviews undertaken by the Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel, which were undertaken in the last administrative term.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 **That the reports and their recommendations be noted.**
- 2.2 **On the report from the Education, Skills and Growth Panel, on Child criminal exploitation to note the recommendations and refer the report to the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning.**
- 2.3 **On the report from the Environment and Communities Panel, on Enforcement Strategy to note the recommendations and refer the report to the Executive Member for Culture, Delivery and Public Protection**

3 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The presented scrutiny reviews were undertaken in the last administrative term but, weren't presented to the Executive, due to insufficient time in the municipal calendar.
- 3.2 However, these reports have now been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission in their new term and the Commission has endorsed the reviews recommendations and asked for these to be presented to the Executive.
- 3.3 The comments from the relevant Officers have been incorporated into the review reports and no concerns have been indicated with any of the proposed recommendations. The views of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer have also been incorporated at the Commission meeting of the 6 July 2023.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Alternative options have been incorporated into the recommendations for the Executive.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commission schedules reviews to encompass the full four year terms of the Commission. This review programme will therefore always have reviews that are completed in the term of a Commission, but will leave reviews completed but not presented to either the Commission, the Executive or both. The process to follow in these reviews is to present these to the next Commission for review. At this review meeting, the Commission's normal process

would be applied, in that the Commission could either endorse the recommendations of the review, ask for further work or close the review without further work being undertaken. These reviews have now been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, at its meeting held on the 6 July 2023.

- 5.2 At the Commission's meeting of the 6 July 2023, following a robust debate, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission resolved "... that Option 1 be followed and the Chairs of the relevant Panels present both reports and recommendations, in their entirety, to the Executive on 19 September 2023".
- 5.3 Subsequent discussions with the Chairs of the relevant Panels has resulted in the Chairs authorising the Statutory Scrutiny Officer to present these reports on their behalf to the Executive. This is because these reviews were completed by Panels in the 2022/23 municipal term, therefore the Chairman who conducted these reviews are now unable to present these reports. It was felt by the current Chairs that they could not add any additional insight to the details of these reports for the Executive and so, the proper process for presenting these to the Executive was through the Statutory Scrutiny Officer.
- 5.4 It should be noted by the Executive that for the Child Criminal Exploitation report, special representations were made by the Commission's Parent Governor representative advocating for the Child Criminal Exploitation Scrutiny Review Report to be received by the Executive at the September meeting. It was also noted in the debate "... The importance of the reviews going to the Executive as soon as possible so as not to delay any positive impact the recommendations would have on children".

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 Enforcement Strategy – There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.
- 6.2 Child Criminal Exploitation - There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report. However, where personal data is being shared, it is vital to ensure the necessary data protection requirements are in place, such as a Data Protection Impact Assessment, information sharing agreement and that the Register of Processing Activity (ROPA) is updated. Further guidance on data protection matters is available on the intranet and can be obtained from the Data Protection Officer.

Financial Advice

- 6.3 Enforcement Strategy – These recommendations will mean additional responsibilities are to be added to existing employees' workloads. All costs (including training) will be contained within existing budgets but if they exceed these they will be highlighted as budget pressures and additional funding will be requested as part of the annual budget cycle. Some costs may well be offset through additional income gained by enforcement activity.
- 6.4 Child Criminal Exploitation - Any actions arising from the recommendations are expected to be delivered within existing budgets.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.5 Enforcement Strategy – No additional comments.

- 6.6 Child Criminal Exploitation – No additional comments.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.7 Enforcement Strategy – The review scope, activities and recommendations were all considered in the initial equalities screening attached at Appendix B.
- 6.8 Child Criminal Exploitation - The review scope, activities and recommendations were all considered in the initial equalities screening attached at Appendix B.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.9 Enforcement Strategy – The implications of poor enforcement performance would be reputational damage for the Council as there would be a potential for increased levels of low level and anti-social crime, an inability to protect our highly valued green spaces and appearance of residential communities. At the same time this would undermine the basis of formal application and approvals processes described within the attached report.
- 6.10 Child Criminal Exploitation - There are no specific strategic risk management issues arising from the recommendations in this report.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.11 Enforcement Strategy – The recommendations in Section 2 and 5 above are expected to have no impact on emissions of CO2 because there is no suggested increase in activity or travel that would generate a change.
- 6.12 Child Criminal Exploitation - The recommendations in Section 2 and 5 above are expected to have no impact on emissions of CO2 because there is no suggested increase in activity or travel that would generate a change.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 6.13 Enforcement Strategy – The Council is committed to actively protecting and enhancing the borough's environment to keep it clean and green through enforcement. This supports Bracknell Forest being one of the healthiest places to live. Residents will therefore experience better health, both physical and mental.
- 6.14 Child Criminal Exploitation - The Council is committed to improving and protecting the mental health of children and young people. These recommendations are designed to support this ongoing work by increasing awareness of CCE, including the use of cannabis on vulnerable children and the impact it can have on their wellbeing.

Background Papers

Contact for further information

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Overview and Scrutiny Panel Report

REVIEW TITLE	O&S PANEL	DATE
Enforcement Strategy	Environment and Communities	16 March 2023

“This review was a direct result from the Integrated Enforcement review which was completed in September 2022. The panel wanted to ensure that the policy and strategy of enforcement were being followed.”



Councillor John Porter,
Chair: Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Recommendations



1. Executive member for Planning and Transport to contact the relevant minister, with a request for local authorities to have greater power in declining retrospective planning and prevent abuse of the planning system. This should be achieved by July 2023.
2. Raise awareness of [One.network](#) on the Council website to enable residents to find who is responsible for highways works and identify unauthorised works. This should be achieved by July 2023.
3. Investigate development of the use of CCTV as an enforcement tool to simplify the enforcement process when issuing fines, e.g., for fly-tipping. This will be an ongoing process; however, an update will be expected in 12 months' time.
4. Increase enforcement through the development of the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) training.
 - By adding value to the existing enforcement toolkit e.g., the use of the power to stop vehicles.
 - Look at the effectiveness of the existing partnership arrangement with the Lexicon security operators.This will be an ongoing process; however, an update will be expected in 12 months' time.
5. Develop and maintain the policy of enforcement regarding flyposting to ensure consistency is achieved throughout the borough. To be reviewed within 6 months.
6. Improve communication on the Council website:
 - To include greater coverage and reporting of success stories within enforcement including successful prosecutions.
 - Provide more information around highways works and the fact that emergency work can go ahead with retrospective application for a permit.Progress on this should be expected imminently and reviewed within 12 months.

Background information and key findings

This companion review follows the Integrated Enforcement Review (September 2022) which identified that enforcement is a complex area covering a wide range of services across various departments, organisations, and agencies. It focussed on looking at what enforcement powers the council holds and how these are distributed across teams within the council. One of the recommendations was to develop enforcement strategies encouraging greater collaboration across services and with partners. Therefore the aim of this review 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.

The panel found that:

- Enforcement processes can be complex which can make it difficult for residents to understand or follow, this was evident when looking at enforcement strategies within planning.
- Greater power within planning for local authorities needs to be sought.
- There was evidence of good examples of effectiveness of powers within enforcement, specifically with the recent implementation of CSAS powers for Lexicon staff. Further success was seen within the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) regarding the issue of fly tipping.
- Greater publicity of enforcement strategies and success stories will help to improve the effectiveness of enforcement powers.
- One.network is a useful tool that can enhance residents' knowledge of highways work.

Good Practice



The panel recognised the good work that exists within enforcement, specifically the recent success story around the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) which has provided security staff at the Lexicon with greater powers to help curb anti-social behaviour (ASB). It is anticipated that this scheme will act as a pilot and be a useful contribution to the recommendation to increase enforcement through the development of the CSAS scheme.

Review findings



As acknowledged in the recent integrated enforcement review enforcement is an activity which covers a broad range of services across many departments within the Council. The review highlighted that the range of activities within enforcement can be complex and is often not helped by public misinformation regarding processes and policies. Awareness of enforcement can be raised through publicity to make sure residents can see the results of successful enforcement within the borough and are aware of the processes involved in enforcement across the Council.

A focus in this review was for the Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel to look at strategies and policies with consideration of the following:

- ✓ Is the policy fit for purpose or does it need to be reviewed?
- ✓ Is it being adhered to, if not why?
- ✓ Are there any ways the process or policy can be enhanced?

The Panel identified and interviewed senior officers from Bracknell Forest Council including the Executive Director of Place, Planning and Regeneration, Assistant Director of Contract Services, Head of Natural Estates, Assistant Director Planning, Assistant Director Highways and Transport and the Head of the Public Protection Partnership. Additionally, desktop analysis of policies and other relevant documents was undertaken by the panel.

Planning



Councillors highlighted that a common complaint from residents was regarding concern around planning enforcement. This was often in relation to what is, to the casual observer, a dismissive

approach to planning applications which can result in the erection of buildings larger than the submitted plans followed by a reliance on retrospective planning to resolve the issue. Councillors are concerned that planning enforcement within the borough is perceived as weak which may result in an increase of planning breaches.

Senior officers explained that after a breach of planning has been reported the enforcement process can be lengthy. Buildings need to be physically measured and compared to approved plans. Officers then need to check to see if retrospective planning could be made and assess the harm that the breach has made. To appeal against a refusal of planning requires a long list of grounds. However, if there is genuine reason and harm being caused by a breach then it is pursued using a rigorous eight-phase investigation which forms part of the council's [local enforcement plan](#) for planning. Retrospective applications then need to be dealt with on the same basis as the initial application which adds further time to the process.

The panel raised the point that the tightening of planning enforcement is not a priority within central government and the wider planning system. In fact, there is a focus to deliver more homes through permitted development and hence increased possibilities for people to make changes without the need for planning permission.

Discussions around the conversion of office blocks, which is covered by prior approval processes, highlighted a need for improved protection of residents. Planning enforcement follows legislation and therefore doesn't have much input into the conversions of these buildings. There have been concerns with one particular property, Hayley house, which needed to be passed onto the PPP and the fire service.

Overall, the planning team confirmed that they are confident with the strengths of their enforcement strategy and feel it supports and reinforces cases where they need to go to court to make prosecutions. Evidence of this is seen within the planning policy document where an eight-phase investigation flow chart, on page 28, can be found which details the process from receipt of complaint through to direct action if necessary. This strategy remains successful due to regular reviews and updates in response to changes in legislation.



After discussions about issues within planning enforcement the panel felt that local authorities should have greater powers to help address abuse of the planning system, specifically regarding retrospective planning. It was felt that a step towards achieving this would be for the Executive member for Planning and Transport to contact the relevant minister in central government.

Highways and Transport



An issue discussed around highways was the volume of work taking place, however, it was acknowledged that companies have a statutory right to carry out work. The council cannot decline applications but are able to control when the work happens. The website [one.network](#) can help increase awareness and provide a platform to find out when and where work is taking place.

By registering for free residents can use the one.network website to receive updates of work due to take place in the selected area and also the duration of the work. This information is helpful for residents as it keeps them up to date with disruption within the chosen area caused by highway work. If they wish residents can also use the information to report unauthorised works to the council which will assist officers to investigate and implement enforcement to contractors and companies undertaking works without a permit.



After learning about the benefits the one.network website can provide the panel recommends improving awareness via promotion on the council website. This will be beneficial for residents and the council and could be a useful tool to help monitor and report unauthorised highways work.

Public Protection Partnership		
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The Public Protection Partnership (PPP) is a shared service delivering Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards on behalf of two authorities Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Council.

A focus within the PPP’s strategy is to take an approach of tackling issues from 3 ways:

- ✓ Prevention – using media and information on the website to provide information to the public around a topic. The use of signage and CCTV as a preventative measure.
- ✓ Intelligence gathering – encouraging residents to report offences, highlighting ways to achieve this i.e. Who to contact, where on the website to find forms to report concerns and breaches of enforcement.
- ✓ Enforcement – issue of fines

This strategy has produced some successful results:

- **The Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS)**
Thames Valley Police have accredited ABM Facility Services UK Ltd, a private company who hold the security contract at the Lexicon Shopping Centre in Bracknell. Five of their Security Officers have been presented with individual CSAS certificates. These members of the security team have been granted police powers to assist them in tackling ASB, all have been police vetted and completed a CSAS training course. Working in partnership with Thames Valley Police and Bracknell Forest Council, the Security Officers have the authority to issue fixed penalty notices (FPN) for graffiti, fly-posting, cycling on a footpath as well as breaches of the Alcohol Public Space Protection Order (PSPO).
- **Fly tipping** – there has been a marked reduction in fly tipping and resulting prosecutions for offenders. A decision was made about 12-18 months ago to employ a dedicated resource to specifically deal with this problem. Some recent successes in this area are evidenced here:

Offence 	Outcome 
Fly tipper convicted after collecting rubbish from residents to be disposed of was found fly tipped at a disused school site.	The defendant was fined £320 and was ordered to pay a contribution towards the prosecution costs
Fly tipper convicted at Reading Magistrates Court following rubbish found fly tipped outside a charity shop.	The Court sentenced by way of a conditional discharge for 12 months and ordered the defendant to pay a contribution towards the prosecution costs.

- The PPP also utilise the positive effects that publicity of successful cases and outcomes can have. The main benefits of this:
 - Develops knowledge and awareness of enforcement which can result in increased reporting from the public of enforcement breaches.
 - Can help to act as a deterrent if there is publicity around the fines given.
 - Provide reassurance that Councils are implementing successful enforcement strategies.

The good practice and examples provided by the PPP have highlighted some ways to enhance enforcement strategies within the Council. Therefore, the panel proposed the following recommendations:



- Improve communication, through greater coverage and reporting of success stories on the Council's website. This could be used to develop and increase understanding of enforcement processes.
- Increase enforcement through the development of CSAS.
- Investigate the use of CCTV to enhance the enforcement process when issuing fines, e.g for fly-tipping. CCTV can additionally act as a deterrent and provide reassurance to the public with respect to fly-tipping hotspots.

Parks and open spaces (rangers)



There was discussion within this review regarding CSAS training of park rangers, which could enable them to issue fines regarding littering, dog fouling etc. Whilst currently staff within the Parks and Countryside don't have enforcement powers it was acknowledged that expanding CSAS powers within this area would not be appropriate for the following reasons:

- ✓ Due to the nature of their work park rangers often work on an individual basis and therefore for safety reasons it was not felt appropriate to provide them with CSAS powers
- ✓ Residents are respectful of park rangers, and it is felt that this relationship could be harmed through providing them with powers to enforce fines. It was acknowledged that they can achieve good results through speaking with and asking residents to pick up litter or clear up dog fouling without additional powers enabling them to issue fines. They are respected within the community and have a good relationship with the public.

The Parks and Countryside team carried out an extensive piece of work to look at how some enforcement action might be delivered for dog fouling and environmental crime issues. It was found that this wasn't straightforward in terms of ensuring how staff would be able to witness offences and then go through a process of issuing a fixed penalty notice. They concluded that giving rangers these additional responsibilities would be too much of a shift in terms of the core work they are currently required to do. An important aspect noted was whether pursuing CSAS training for park rangers was worthwhile to target a minority of people who commit these crimes. It was however noted that there is a process in place if a ranger, or member of the public, were to witness an offence such as dog fouling where a form can be completed, and the issue is followed up with the PPP partnership to take further action.



The panel concluded that no recommendations were necessary within the parks and countryside team, and it was agreed that the team is successful in their approach towards enforcement and the work they do.

Financial considerations

These recommendations will mean additional responsibilities are to be added to existing employees' workloads.

All costs (including training) will be contained within existing budgets but if they exceed these they will be highlighted as budget pressures and additional funding will be requested as part of the annual budget cycle. Some costs may well be offset through additional income gained by enforcement activity.

Review Panel

Councillor Angell	Councillor Mrs Ingham
Councillor Allen	Councillor Kirke
Councillor Brossard	Councillor Mrs McKenzie-Boyle (Vice chair)
Councillor Brown	Councillor Porter (Chair)
Councillor Ms Gaw	

Contributors to the review

Andrew Hunter	Executive Director: Place, Planning and Regeneration, Bracknell Forest Council
Damian James	Assistant Director: Contract Services, Bracknell Forest Council
Sean Murphy	Head of Public Protection Partnership
Alison Beynon	Strategic Manager, Public Protection Partnership
Councillor John Harrison	Executive Member for Culture, Delivery and Public Protection
Councillor Chris Turrell	Executive Member for Planning & Transport
Wayne Scott	Traffic Manager: Highways and Transport
Stephen Chown	Head of Natural Estates: Parks and Countryside
Max Baker	Assistant Director: Planning
Esther Prangley	Governance and Scrutiny Officer, Bracknell Forest Council

Overview and Scrutiny Panel Report

REVIEW TITLE	O&S PANEL	DATE
Child Criminal Exploitation	Education, Skills and Growth	March 2023



“The review was originally in our forward plan to investigate how County Lines operate within Bracknell Forest and consider how a range of partners work together to reduce opportunities for exploitation. However, the Covid Pandemic had a huge impact on how these operate. Therefore, the review was broadened to look at Child Criminal Exploitation and looked at any changes to CCE activity because of the pandemic. National evidence pointed to an increase in localised CCE activity. Safeguarding of our young people is incredibly important in this age of fast communication and social media pressures that can make them far more vulnerable to exploitation. How our council and community work in partnership is key to protecting them.”

Councillor Gill Birch, Chair: Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Recommendations



1. Collaborate with Thames Valley Police and other relevant partners to develop and implement regular Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) awareness campaigns within schools, targeting both children and parents. **12 months.**
2. Engage with local businesses and community organisations to develop strategies designed to both raise awareness of CCE and promote the creation of safer places for children and young people. **12 months.**
3. Conduct a comprehensive review of the website to enhance its usability and accessibility in relation to child exploitation. Ensure the information on the relevant web pages is clear and concise, and that there are links to relevant external resources. Engage with children and young people during the process and consider ‘Good Practice’ from other Local Authorities identified by the Education, Skills, Growth O&S Panel. **6 months.**
4. Develop and implement a survey focused on CCE for safeguarding leads from schools in the borough. Use the findings to identify gaps and areas for improvement in existing policies and practices relating to CCE. Consider working with the Education, Skills, Growth O&S Panel on this. **6 months.**
5. Conduct regular awareness campaigns on the use of cannabis and its impact on vulnerable children and young people. Use a variety of communication channels such as social media, print materials and public events to reach a wider audience. **6 months.**
6. Work with partners to develop and maintain a map or database of vulnerable areas and hot spots related to CCE. **12 months.**

Key findings

The Panel found that:

- Councils have a key role in identifying support as early as possible to help children and young people escape and recover from the exploitation that they have suffered.
- Raising awareness of child exploitation has the potential to disrupt or prevent exploitation. There are a number of ways awareness can be raised, from communication campaigns to drama productions, social media and word of mouth.
- Exploitation around drugs has become more localized and grooming is increasingly happening online.
- Child Criminal Exploitation hotspots do change, partly due to multi-agency work but also as groups and children move on.
- The multi-agency group is getting stronger in sharing intelligence and educating children about technology use.
- There's a screening tool in place that is suitable for all exploitation and referrals are encouraged from anybody that's worried that a child might be exploited. When a referral is received it goes to a triage meeting where there are a number of agencies involved including Makesafe, Youth Justice, Youth Services and the permanency team within children's Social Care.
- Where the victim, the perpetrator, and the location are known, then there is a strategy in place to disrupt one of these three things in an attempt to prevent harm or a crime. An increasing challenge associated with this approach is that while locations used to be predominantly physical locations, they are now often online which makes it harder to detect the perpetrator, and therefore makes it harder to disrupt.
- Every two weeks, internal departments within Thames Valley Police meet and review all the intelligence around county drugs lines that are currently operating in the area. That meeting is broken down into vulnerable persons and locations.
- Nationally, there isn't a strong data set around the crossover between CCE and Children Looked After (CLA). However, children who come into care (particularly later on in their lives) are more likely to go missing. In this context, a young person under the age of 18 years is to be considered "missing" if they are absent from their place of residence without authority, or in circumstances where the absence causes concern for safety of the child. Research shows there is a strong correlation between children who are missing and CCE. There is also a strong correlation between children excluded from school and CCE.
- Community prevention and contextual safeguarding are developing aspects of CCE prevention at the Council. More work is needed to make sure that our communities are vigilant and supportive.
- One important aspect of responding to exploitation is the more holistic the service's responses to young people are, the better trajectories are for children and young people.

Good practice:

- There has been much multi-agency work undertaken in Bracknell Forest to tackle County Lines. Additionally, a lot of prevention work relating to CCE is done within the partnership with the Thames Valley Police, Missing And Child Exploitation (MACE), and Makesafe. This has led to a yearly decrease in number of children who are reported as missing.
- The Council has undertaken considerable work on developing and embedding a language that is considerate and careful and does not include victim-blaming vocabulary towards children who are being exploited.
- In the financial year of 2018/19 greater resources were put into the missing and exploitation team by the Council, which led to the creation of the exploitation prevention manager post. As this has continued to develop a strong emphasis on seeing young people face to face was introduced, particularly for return conversations, and this has played part in the decrease of the number of missing children in recent years. This new approach facilitates a conversation in a much more informal way. As a result, the quality of the information from return home conversations has become much better and much more effective in helping identify sources of harm. Now, these conversations are one of the most important sources of information.

- It was recognised by officers at all levels that the staff support offer for officers in Children Services is strong. The work within social care (including work around CCE) can be emotionally demanding and so it is important that officers feel supported. Some of this work includes a monthly supervision meeting where a well-being score takes place.

Background

Child exploitation is a serious and growing crime. It is complex and continually changing. In general, child exploitation occurs when an individual or group takes advantage of a power imbalance to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into criminal or sexual activity or modern slavery. The effects of child exploitation can be devastating and have a profound impact on children for the rest of their lives.

Child criminal exploitation (CCE) activity can include children 'being forced to work in cannabis factories, being coerced into moving drugs or money across the country, being forced to shoplift or pickpocket, or threatening other young people. One of the most common types of CCE activity is County Lines. This involves 'organised drug dealing networks that exploit children and vulnerable adults to move, hold and sell drugs across the UK using dedicated phone lines to take orders'. Exploitation is a key component of the business model and gangs use children because they are 'cheaper, more easily controlled and less likely to get picked up by the police.' More local carrying of drugs, across the same borough or district, is also increasingly seen by councils and partners.

The Bracknell Exploitation Annual Report 2021/22 noted significant multi-agency work in Bracknell Forest to tackle County Lines drug dealing. In this period, there was one county drugs line active in Bracknell that was known to have exploited children to move drugs and there were no known missing children linked to CCE. These reductions suggest the problem profile is now largely confined to the town itself.

Councils have a key role to play in tackling child exploitation, from awareness-raising and staff training to prevention and support for children who have been victims. Councils cannot do this alone and so close working with partners including the police, NHS and schools is vital if areas are to have the right systems in place to prevent and disrupt criminal activity putting children and young people at risk.

Review findings

Makesafe

The Bracknell Forest Makesafe is a small team comprising a manager, a specialist social worker and a specialist family worker. The team undertakes direct work with children at risk of exploitation. In 2021/22 the Council's Makesafe team reported that the number of vulnerable children assessed as Level 3 (evidence of active exploitation) had halved from the previous year.

	2020/21	2021/22
Assessed as Level 1 (Vulnerabilities to exploitation but no indications child is being groomed)	51%	67%
Assessed as Level 2 (Indicators that the child is being groomed for the purposes of exploitation)	24.5%	22%
Assessed as Level 3 (Evidence of active exploitation.)	24.5%	11%

The reduction in level 3 cases creates a shift towards more awareness raising and preventative support for young people.

The Makesafe team noted that “nothing has been usual for children since the pandemic began”. The goal is to move forward collaboratively to make Bracknell Forest as safe as it can be for children as they regain some of the opportunities lost in covid. This review aimed to support that goal by considering key aspects of safeguarding and scrutinising how effective they are.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

The MASH is the ‘integrated front door’ for all new safeguarding concerns about children consisting of staff from Social Care, Early Help, Youth Justice, Police, Education, Health, Housing, and Probation collectively working to triage new reports about children. Reports are received from referral partners all across the Borough – including members of the public, professionals and families of children directly.

The MASH has embedded the use of an integrated CCE screening tool into practice to collate information and screen these worries or indicators – this is either completed by the MASH or the MASH support other agencies who know children best to complete the screening tool to draw out the level of concern/risk and the next steps. MASH staff are trained to use the tools appropriately, as well as how to use professional judgement alongside the tool.

The MASH is the central point for receiving all missing children notifications from the Police into Children’s Social Care and plays an integral role in coordinating follow-up activity for each child who is reported missing – including ensuring that Return Home Conversations take place by the relevant agency and practitioner.

Return Home Conversations may take place by the Youth Service, Children’s Social Care fieldwork teams or the Make Safe exploitation team – the MASH role is to ensure that contacts are received, triaged and allocated to the correct follow-up agency with minimal delay and no later than 24 hours.

Missing And Child Exploitation (MACE)

The MACE is concerned with oversight and scrutiny and aims to ensure everything that should be done for that child is being done. The MACE may also look at how partners can work together to neutralize hotspots.

MACE convenes once a month, but many other meetings happen as issues emerge. The agenda is fixed, and a child will stay on it until such a time it is agreed as a collective that the risk is lessened. Once this happens the child will go on to the risk management meeting and agenda. This is a meeting between the police and Makesafe.

This allows the sharing of police intelligence, concerns around CCE and any information that provides partners to maintain a grasp on what’s going on. They work together to prevent and avoid the criminalisation of children.

Youth Justice Team

The Youth Justice Team works with children over the age of ten who are at risk of entering the criminal justice system. Some of these children who come into contact with the service may be demonstrating behaviours that could be indicative of CCE – for example using substances or showing violence and aggression at home toward their parents.

The team use a range of assessment tools (including the screening tool) to help identify children whose behaviour may be caused by CCE and work closely with the exploitation team in these instances. The team works with the police to prevent and avoid criminalisation of children who have offended because they have been exploited by others to do so.

Youth Justice Team is multidisciplinary. There is a health worker social worker speech and language worker, and mental health worker. The ability to respond to all areas of a child’s life where they’re struggling or navigating difficult things culminates in playing a part in tackling CCE.

If there is evidence of a child being exploited there is a National Referral Mechanism (NRM). The referral will be evaluated by the staff at the NRM who will then provide conclusive grounds that the child in question has been exploited. This can be used as evidence in court. It is a useful tool that supports a child through a criminal investigation where they are the victim. If a child ends up in court because of a drug offence etc, and there is evidence of exploitation, Youth Justice will mitigate for them on that basis.

The Youth Justice Team works closely with schools to keep young people in school. There is an education worker in the team who links with the schools and will attend some of the exclusion meetings. The education worker will try to put things in place to make it easier in school for that child and to hopefully prevent exclusion. The team have also done some group work in schools where they have talked about exploitation with a group of boys. This started before the pandemic and is starting to resume again now. Children tend to react positively to the sessions.

The Youth Justice Team and Thames Valley Police recently carried some sessions on knife crime with the children and parents at a local school within the borough.



After learning of recent successes of crime related awareness activities in local schools, the Panel recommends Officers collaborate with Thames Valley Police and other relevant partners to develop and implement regular CCE awareness campaigns within schools, targeting both children and parents.

Community Safety Team

The Community Safety Partnership's (CSP's) three-year plan for 2020-23 contains a priority of reducing and responding to exploitation. The plan is required to be reviewed each year and, in 2021/22, a key focus area of Serious Violence and All-age Exploitation was set. In terms of governance, a strategic Serious Violence and Exploitation Sub-Group has been set up to collectively identify how to prevent and tackle it as well as manage performance and progress and report back to the CSP. The sub-group also oversees two operational groups: one for u18s at risk of exploitation and serious violence and one for adult victims at risk and perpetrators (including those who may present a risk to u18s). The strategic group and both operational groups are all multi-partner groups involving organisations and Council services including Involve, Berkshire Youth, BFC Youth Services, police, school representatives, the Lexicon and The Wayz.

BFC Community Safety co-ordinates bids against the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Safety Fund which, in 2022/23, has included youth diversionary work in the town centre and a youth project in Crowthorne Parish which involved Parish Council engagement. Both projects are being conducted using community youth organisations.

BFC Community Safety is also currently supporting the NHS to conduct a focus group of professionals across several boroughs to look at the prevention of serious violence and exploitation involving young people up to the age of 25. The project aims include identifying where there are gaps and opportunities in provision to reduce young people's involvement in serious violence.

BFC Community Safety has arranged access to a Serious Violence Dashboard which has been set up by the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) showing local perpetrators of serious violence and the people (including children and young people) who are at risk from those perpetrators. This data will be used by the two operational groups to manage local offenders and safeguard those at risk from them. A wider programme of work is taking place with the VRU, one strand of which is auditing existing community and voluntary sector provision as well as identify gaps in provision.

BFC Community Safety has a growing network of contacts with the local community through services and organisations including Involve and Parish/Town Councils. For ease, awareness and advice content is mostly shared online or by e-mail as this enables messages to be shared to as wide an audience as possible without incurring costs and requiring large resources - although it is recognised that not everyone regularly uses or has access to the internet. Officers have set up stands and held events in the past but did generally find that engagement was difficult, attendance was sporadic, and reach was limited.

It is acknowledged by officers that CCE awareness does need to be regular and available in different formats. Examples of recent CCE awareness activities include an online modern slavery and exploitation event featuring several different speakers hosted by Involve. Attendance was fair but several resources were produced and shared. Work also took place with Bracknell and Wokingham College's Media Department where films on child exploitation were made and shared publicly.

Contextual Safeguarding

'Working Together to Safeguard Children' and a growing number of other key national publications and research papers provide local authorities and partner agencies with a mandate to address the growing concerns around contextual risks affecting children and young people.

The approach of Contextual Safeguarding was developed by Dr Carlene Firmin and colleagues at the University of Bedfordshire in 2015. It's an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Contextual Safeguarding is therefore the intervention into the contexts presenting harm to children- those being peer groups, schools, neighbourhoods and online.

Most of the Council's work with businesses on reducing child exploitation is focused within the town centre, which is the social hub of Bracknell Forest. The Community Safety Partnership has a close working relationship with the Lexicon and the Peel Centre, and this relationship is in place in meetings such as the Partnership Problem-Solving Groups and Town Centre Management meeting. Police, the Council and businesses work together in this way to problem-solve crime and disorder issues. CCTV in the town centre is in place, not only to prevent crime and disorder but also to offer a level of protection to children and young people. Braccan Walk Youth Centre is also a well-placed safe space for children and young people and work is taking place to map what it currently offers as well as what its potential is.

The Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board is leading on contextual safeguarding within the borough. Identified with the Board's strategic plan is the aim to address contextual safeguarding and the Board aims to achieve this by "promoting a contextual safeguarding approach by partner organisations". Adopting this holistic approach to safeguarding practices encourages earlier identification of any potential harm within the wider environment and promotes collaboration with wider partners to help reduce risk.



As part of the ongoing work to address contextual safeguarding in Bracknell Forest it is recommended officers at the Council engage with local businesses and community organisations to develop strategies designed to both raise awareness of CCE and to promote the creation of safer places for children and young people.

The changing nature of CCE

Officers from the Council highlighted the importance of recognising the changing nature of the issue and how the Council and its partners respond to it, both flexibly and collectively. The impact of the cost-of-living crisis was identified by officers from the Council and its partners as an emerging issue that will have an impact on the ever-evolving nature of child criminal exploitation.

Nationally, recent trends have seen younger children as well as children from more typically middle-class backgrounds being targeted by criminals, with social media increasingly used to lure them in. Snapchat is particularly used by exploiters as the primary function of the popular app is the ability to send impermanent content. In addition, during the Covid lockdowns, there was an increase in the use of children's bank accounts by criminals to store illicit cash. This was also seen across the country.

These changes will require another shift approach, as is often the case with the evolving CCE landscape, for the detection of earlier signs of CCE is becoming harder.



Due to the changing nature of Child Criminal Exploitation and the role education plays in protecting children from exploitation it is recommended officers develop and implement a survey focused on CCE for safeguarding leads from schools in the borough. Use the findings to identify gaps and areas for improvement in existing policies and practices relating to CCE.

As highlighted, exploiters adapt their tactics and techniques. For instance, if there is an increased police presence or more public awareness of exploitation at a particular place then the exploiters will move. This can be challenging to monitor, and the sharing of information is key in ensuring there is a quick response when there is a change of location.

The changing of 'hotspots' is discussed regularly in MACE meetings. Targeting vulnerable locations used by exploiters is part of a wider strategy to prevent or reduce exploitation. Some of these locations may have businesses nearby.



It was recognised by officers there is potential for work to be done with partners to allow for more effective monitoring of hotspots by regularly exchanging relevant information. Therefore, it is recommended the Council work with its partners to develop and maintain a map or database of vulnerable areas and hot spots related to CCE.

It is recognised by officers that cannabis use is a gateway for exploitation in the local area. Moreover, the drug market is changing across the country, and there is a rise in the use of cannabis edibles by children. They are often sold online and are delivered in the post so they are hard to trace as they look like sweets. The consumption of these edibles (as well as cannabis in general) by children and young people is a significant concern. The impact of cannabis on children who are vulnerable (particularly with mental health concerns) can be really dangerous and officers recognise more can be done locally to promote this impact.



It is recommended that the Council conducts regular awareness campaigns on the use of cannabis and its impact on vulnerable children and young people. A variety of communication channels such as social media, print materials and public events should be considered in order to reach a wider audience.

Website feedback

Website Desktop Exercise

The Panel met in person to carry out a review of the Council's website within the context of child exploitation. The Panel concluded:



The information on the '*Report child abuse or concern about a child*' webpage is too long and 'wordy'. The language used is overly technical and is not clear or concise enough.



It is not clear on the webpage who MASH is. It is also unclear what hours the phone line is open.



There are very few links to useful and relevant external resources relating to child exploitation.



The Croydon Council's website was identified as an example of good practice.



Based on their findings during the website review, the Panel recommends officers conduct a comprehensive review of the website to enhance the usability and accessibility in relation to child exploitation. Ensure the information on the relevant webpages is clear and concise, and that there are links to relevant external resources. Engage with children and young people during the process and consider 'Good Practice' from other Local Authorities identified by the Panel during this review.

“It was wonderful to learn how the different partners work together care so much about our young people. The case studies showed how they really make a difference to young people and their compassion and understanding of the problems that our young people face was brilliant.’

This review was fascinating, and all the panel members learnt a great deal about how our Community Partnership and businesses work together. Partnership working has always been a strength of Bracknell Forest Council, but I would like to say thank you to everyone who gave evidence and came to talk to us for their professionalism and dedication in keeping our young people safe. Many thanks to all the officers, police, Community and young people for their input and support.

A special thank you to Joey Gurney and my Vice- Chairman Michael Brossard for all their help and patience.

I commend the recommendations in the report to you all and we will review this in a years' time.”

Councillor Mrs Gill Birch, Chair: Education, Skills and Growth Scrutiny Panel

Review panel

Councillor Mrs Birch (Chair)	Councillor Ms Hayes
Councillor Brossard (Vice Chair)	Councillor Ms Merry
Councillor Ms Gaw	Councillor Skinner
Councillor Gbadebo	Councillor Temperton
Councillor Hamilton	Victoria Hill (Parent Governor Representative)

Contributors to the review

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Helen Kenny	Chief Inspector, <i>Thames Valley Police</i>

Steve Bailey	Head of Service for First Response Family Safeguarding & Youth Justice, <i>Bracknell Forest Council</i>
Fiona Tolson	MASH Team Manager, <i>Bracknell Forest Council</i>
Jo Graves	Youth Justice Team Manager, <i>Bracknell Forest Council</i>
Dave Phillips	Safeguarding Board Business Manager, <i>Bracknell Forest Council</i>
Alison O’Meera	Head of Community Safety, <i>Bracknell Forest Council</i>
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To: **Executive**
17th October 2023

Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034 Executive Director of Place Planning & Regeneration

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the draft Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034, the themes and objectives and the proposed action plan for the purpose of carrying out public consultation.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 **Executive is asked to agree the draft Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034 for public consultation as detailed in paragraphs 5.19-5.21**

3 Reasons for Recommendation(S)

- 3.1 To enable a public consultation process seeking the views of residents, businesses, and partner organisations on the strategy and the proposed action plan.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 The alternative option is to rely entirely on external policies and strategies to help guide and shape the future support for our local economy. This approach would not focus specifically on the needs of Bracknell Forest's residents and businesses and may reduce the opportunities to achieve the council's objectives.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Council is committed to achieving growth and prosperity through a thriving and connected economy. The role the Council plays is both as an enabler and through direct delivery working collaboratively with employers, business representatives, regional and national government, and residents. This strategy will be delivered in partnership with the business and education sector and through working with neighbouring local authorities.
- 5.2 To date, the Council has drawn upon, established mechanisms to support the local economy, including, local plan policies, partner organisations and business liaison through its relationship with Berkshire Local Enterprise partnership (Strategic Economic Plan [TVB SEP - Strategy.pdf \(thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk\)](https://www.thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk)), member led organisations such as Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Business and more recently the Bracknell Business Improvement District [Home - Bracknell BID](#).
- 5.3 At a local level, the primary conduit to our business community is through the economic development service and the Bracknell Forest Economic & Skills Development Partnership (ESDP), an independently chaired forum established more than 15 years ago to promote dialogue between the council and the local employers and businesses. [Get involved in business | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

5.4 Over ten years ago, in partnership with the ESDP, an economic strategy was produced but is no longer relevant, not least given the significant national and global events such as the UK's exit from the European Union and the Covid Pandemic. [Local Economic Development Strategy 5 July 11 Annex 2 Strategy FINAL FOR EXEC.pdf \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](#) Along with these factors, the Council's commitment towards achieving Net Zero by 2030 heightens the need to bring together a coordinated strategy for our economy.

5.5 Earlier this year, a procurement process sought a specialist consultancy to work with the council and our partners to develop a new strategy. The Council selected the Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership based on their breadth of local knowledge and costs.

5.6 The initial stages included targeted engagement with key stakeholders involving the business sectors, Bracknell Business Improvement District, internal services and councillors through briefings and workshops. In addition, a comprehensive technical analysis and literature review bringing together relevant research and commentary has been used to provide a context and rationale for the draft strategy and action plan. The strategy itself looks ahead ten years with a focus on the next 1-5 years to respond to the consequences of the cost-of-living crisis, global events, changing working patterns post pandemic and the drive towards net zero.

Draft Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034

5.7 The focus is on economic and business performance, including the factors that enable businesses and the economy to succeed and grow and that can be influenced at local level: access to skilled people, business support and the business environment as well as high quality infrastructure. This cannot be growth at any cost; the climate emergency means that sustainable development is no longer optional and supporting green and clean growth will be vital.

5.8 There are other strategies and plans which have a direct bearing on the Economic Strategy, primarily:

- The Bracknell Forest Local Plan currently in development, which provides the strategy and evidence base for housing and commercial development to 2037
- Bracknell Forest Council Plan 2023-2027

Other plans which have been considered include:

- Bracknell Forest climate change strategy and sustainability appraisal
- Bracknell Forest equality scheme 2022-25
- Bracknell Forest Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022-26
- Bracknell Forest housing strategy 2023 to 2028

5.9 The Economic Strategy is based on three central sources of evidence:

- A detailed data analysis using recognised statistical sources on four main themes: economic and business performance, people, work & skills, infrastructure and connectivity, and health & well-being. The data are contained in a separate databank and the analysis is contained in a Technical Annex which accompanies the Draft Economic Strategy.

- The data analysis uses five-year time series of the most recent data available
- A comprehensive literature review and contextual analysis including relevant secondary sources for information on the national and local economy and policy context not included in the data analysis

5.10 To understand Bracknell Forest’s relationship to the wider economy and its performance in context, we have used three main comparator areas – the Berkshire economic area, the Bracknell Forest Functional Economic Area (FEA) and the Southeast Region as a whole:

- Berkshire Economic Area comprising the six unitary Local Authority Areas (LAAs)
- The Bracknell Forest functional economic area (FEA) comprising: Reading, Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham and the contiguous Surrey LAA of Surrey Heath as well as Bracknell Forest itself.
- The Southeast Region

The Draft Vision

5.11 **By 2034, a growing and resilient economy that matches the best in Berkshire, supports, attracts, and retains high-quality businesses, promotes sustainable growth in clean and green, knowledge-based industries, and provides economic opportunity with good, secure jobs for our people who all have the skills to succeed.**



The objectives of the Economic Strategy

5.12 The main objectives under each theme are as follows:

Economic performance: Improve Bracknell Forest’s economic performance, particularly declining productivity, and knowledge-intensity. Protect Bracknell Forest against losses of large, foreign owned businesses and improve FDI rates.

Business competitiveness: Reverse the decline in the business stock, improve business competitiveness and resilience, including start-up and survival rates, conserve and grow the knowledge economy e.g., Information & Communications (ICT) and specialisms such as Film & TV, support growth companies, the large employers of the future.

People, work and wellbeing: Address Bracknell Forest’s poor skills profile through both supply and demand side measures (e.g. Management and leadership to drive up skills demand in SMEs), enable local, well-paid, secure employment for local people.

Place, Climate Change, infrastructure, and connectivity: promote Bracknell Forest’s many advantages as a business and residential location. Ensure supply matches demand for employment space and housing, drive transition towards net zero, maintain good ICT connectivity and environmental sustainability.

5.13 Below is a diagram summarizing the four themes and key measures against which a balance scorecard is created.



Balance scorecards

5.14 A balanced scorecard approach is used to assess the performance and resilience of the Bracknell Forest economy and for managing the delivery of the Economic Strategy 2024-34. The focus of the Economic Strategy is the performance of the Bracknell Forest economy which, at local level, is determined by three contributory factors: business competitiveness, people & skills, and infrastructure & connectivity.

5.15 The analysis and engagement has identified the following key characteristics:

Theme 1: Economy

Competitiveness- Bracknell Forest does not perform as well on overall competitiveness as the other Local Authority Areas (LAAs)

Productivity- Bracknell Forest's productivity is also weaker than comparative areas. The analysis indicates less resilience to economic shocks given the economy is not recovering as rapidly as those of neighbouring areas.

Knowledge Economy and Specialisation- Bracknell Forest's knowledge economy is smaller than that of the comparator areas and neighbouring local authorities and appears to be declining.

Internationalisation- Bracknell Forest's levels of internationalization are high, which is both positive and negative.

Theme 2: Business Competitiveness

Business growth-The business population in Bracknell Forest has declined by 1.92% between 2018 and 2022.

Business creation and survival- Bracknell Forest's rate of business creation has been lower than the comparator areas over time and has declined since 2017.

Business size and structure -Bracknell Forest has higher percentages of medium and large companies who are major sources of local employment.

Key industries and sector shifts -Information & Communications, Professional Scientific & Technical, and Arts Entertainment & Recreation have all lost share in Bracknell Forest in the last five years, while Construction, Transport and Motor Trades have all increased. This makes the business structure less knowledge-intensive and less productive.

Information and communications -Bracknell Forest, while known for being a location for ICT businesses, could be losing a share of these industries while some other LAAs nearby doing better. Potential risk that the loss of 'campus'-based IT businesses will not be filled by alternative growth sectors.

The visitor economy -Bracknell Forest although not considered a tourist 'destination' has mainly day visitor tourism. Longer stays tend to be business-related.

Theme 3: People, Work and Wellbeing

Population and change -Bracknell Forest currently has a slightly younger age profile than the comparator areas, but this is forecast to change over the lifetime of the Economic Strategy.

Qualifications and skills -Attainment at NVQL4+ and NVQL3+ levels are lower than in the comparator areas and seem to be declining further, with businesses struggling to find higher skilled employees locally.

Employment and employment specialisms -Bracknell Forest has seen a larger loss of jobs than the comparator areas over the recent period. In relation to knowledge economy jobs, Bracknell Forest fares less well.

Occupational structure -18% of Bracknell Forest residents work in the lowest occupational groups and are more likely to be in low paid and insecure employment. This is likely to be linked to low educational attainment and low skills.

Earnings - while there has been recent rapid growth, residents' earnings remain significantly below workplace wages. This indicates that not all Bracknell Forest residents are able to access local well-paid employment and that higher skilled workers are commuting in from elsewhere to better paid jobs.

Wealth, health, and wellbeing -Bracknell Forest residents are less wealthy than in the local comparators, so while housing is relatively affordable, they may not necessarily be better off as a result. Overall levels of resident health within Bracknell Forest are good.

Theme 4: Place, Climate Change, Infrastructure and Connectivity

Employment space -reducing demand for employment space seems likely to continue, with A+ grade space being in more demand. Hybrid working will continue to impact on the office property sector with further rationalization expected for many years to come. Conversely there remains strong demand for light industrial and non-office commercial space.

Climate Change -Identify and develop support for green industries and opportunities to enhance the drive towards net zero. To include stronger partnerships with research and development programmes, supporting electric vehicle charging facilities and capacity across business areas.

Housing -housing in Bracknell is relatively affordable, but still out of the reach of many on lower incomes. Increased supply of new homes will help to maintain and improve affordability.

5.16 *Emerging headline actions*

- Review business support and the enterprise environment for business support and creation.
- Identify and target sectors with higher levels of productivity.
- Support the transition to a more knowledge-based economy.
- Support the transition to net-zero and emerging green-tech sectors.
- Track foreign owned businesses, with a view to promote retention within the Bracknell Forest area.
- Monitor and evaluate sector growth and decline to help target suitable interventions.
- Identify high-growth businesses and support.
- Engage with key businesses to encourage local supply chain development.
- Promote Bracknell Forest's business location credentials and brand, also with wider Berkshire offer.
- Work with education and training providers to help upskill the resident working population.
- Work with education and training providers to encourage higher level qualified school and college leavers.
- Work with landlords and landowners to invest in their portfolios to meet current requirements.
- Continue to invest in digital infrastructure across full-fibre, gigabit and 5G networks.

- 5.17 The accompanying action plan contains, under each theme, the priorities for action, the objectives, milestones, targets and timescales, the lead organisation, and partners.
- 5.18 To drive forward the economic strategy and to focus on the four themes, consideration will be given to:
- reviewing the existing delivery structure including the scope and shape of the Economic & Skills Development Partnership and the regional economic development ecosystem with the winding up of the local enterprise partnership in April 2024.
 - Producing a Bracknell Forest promotional prospectus/collateral to capitalise on the Bracknell Forest Brand.
 - Energise and deliver impactful Business Liaison and support.
 - Effectively monitor business performance and respond to outputs and wider economic determinants.

Public Consultation and next steps

- 5.19 Subject to Executive approving the draft Strategy, it will be placed on the Council's consultation portal for 6 weeks. A series of questions will accompany this consultation covering the technical analysis, key themes, and actions. In addition, through the council's social media channels, business and community networks, residents and employers will be encouraged to consider and respond to the strategy.
- 5.20 A series of engagement sessions will be held with the business sector, including the Economic & Skills Development Partnership the Bracknell Business Improvement District, so that the voice of business is clearly articulated in the strategy. The document will also be made available in hard copy to the Town and Parish Councils and at all libraries in the Borough.
- 5.21 Following the consultation stage, any comments or suggestions will be reviewed and where possible incorporated into the strategy. It is then intended to present the final strategy and supporting documents to the Executive in the New Year seeking formal adoption.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 As a matter of good practice consultation process for the draft strategy should reflect the following guiding principles set out in case law.
- The consultation must be undertaken at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage.
 - The Council must give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit intelligent consideration and response.
 - Adequate time must be given for consideration and response.
 - The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising any proposals.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 A strong economy delivered through this strategy and action plan will encourage businesses to thrive and in turn contribute towards a positive business rates position supporting council services.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 As set out in the report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 An Equalities Impact assessment screening has been undertaken.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 As the report and recommendation seeks to undertake a consultation process, there are no strategic risk management issues to address currently.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.6 The Strategy will contribute towards a reduction in emissions of CO2 by supporting the positive transition to net zero. The Action Plan priorities will drive behavioural change, increasing opportunities for greener business practices and more sustainable use of buildings and resources.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 6.7 The responses to the economic strategy consultation will be assessed in relation to health and wellbeing considerations.

Background Papers

[Appendix 1 Draft Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034 Summary](#)

[Appendix 2 Draft Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy Action Plan](#)

[Appendix 3 Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy consultation](#)

Contact for further information

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BRACKNELL FOREST ECONOMIC STRATEGY



2024

2034

Summary draft
October 2023

Foreword



Since forming the new Labour administration in May we have been proactively developing an Economic Strategy for Bracknell Forest. This summary document brings together information from a whole series of detailed documents that provide the evidence base, strategy, literature review, technical annex and action plan that underpin this draft economic strategy for Bracknell Forest. To deliver this strategy the council will need to work closely with all our partners and in particular the businesses that are already located in the Borough. We are looking forward to hearing your views on our ambitious strategy and the actions we have identified.

Councillor Paul Bidwell

Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration – October 2023

1. Introduction

Bracknell Forest is a premier business location due to its strategic position near London, accessibility between the M3 and M4, proximity to major airports, a widely skilled workforce, ample commercial space, business-friendly policies, and excellent connectivity. Major global

high-tech and Research & Development companies like Syngenta, 3M, Daler Rowney, Fujitsu, and Honda have headquarters here, fostering low unemployment and a robust local economy. The area's green spaces, comparatively affordable housing, good schools, nearby job opportunities, and strong communities make it appealing for young families and professionals alike. The recent development of The Lexicon reflects the forward-looking community spirit, enhancing



Bracknell Forest's allure as both a great business and residential destination.

2. Why an economic strategy?

Recent challenges, including the Covid-19 pandemic, EU exit, and the Ukraine conflict, have affected both local and national economies. In the past three years, Bracknell Forest's local economy has demonstrated some resilience but has fallen behind in several important areas. It is now the opportune moment to leverage Bracknell Forest's strengths and advantages to shape a thriving economic future, driving

towards net zero. The Economic Strategy aims to achieve four primary goals.

1. Provide an understanding of current **economic performance**, the strengths and challenges facing the local economy and its relationship to the wider sub-regional economy.
2. Set the **future direction**; the industries, businesses, jobs, and skills on which to focus and what Bracknell Forest Council can do to foster and nurture them.
3. Communicate the **vision**: to potential investors and businesses, entrepreneurs, partners, and the wider community.
4. Provide the **evidence**: data and analysis to support the case for investment and action.



Figure 1: The four purposes of the Economic Strategy

3. The vision for our economy

Our vision: *By 2034, a growing and resilient economy that matches the best in Berkshire, supports, attracts, and retains high-quality businesses, promotes sustainable growth in clean and green, knowledge-based industries, and provides economic opportunity with good, secure jobs for our people who will have the skills to succeed.*



Figure 2: The vision for Bracknell Forest's economy

4. Economic context

UK's uncertainty. UK productivity remains below pre-2008 levels and has deteriorated further since the Covid-19 pandemic. Presently, high interest rates and inflation worsen the UK's current economic performance, while some economists believe that historic underlying issues have been exacerbated by policies, including austerity, quantitative easing, and most recently increases in interest rate aimed at controlling inflation.

5. The scope of this Economic Strategy

The focus is on economic and business performance, including the factors that enable businesses and the economy to succeed and grow and that can be influenced at the local level: access to skilled people, business support and the business environment as well as high quality infrastructure all contribute to this. However, this cannot be growth at any cost; the climate emergency means that sustainable development is no longer optional and supporting green and clean growth and a drive towards net zero will be vital for our economic future.

6. Timescale

The Economic Strategy covers the period 2024 to 2034. It is action orientated setting out priorities and actions for the first one and three years, after which evaluation and review will set the course for the next period.

7. The objectives of the Strategy

The main objectives under each theme are:

1. Economic performance: Improve Bracknell Forest's economic performance, particularly declining productivity, and knowledge-intensity. Protect Bracknell Forest against losses of large, foreign owned businesses and improve FDI rates.

2. Business competitiveness: Reverse the decline in the business stock, improve business competitiveness and resilience, including start-up and survival rates, conserve and grow the

knowledge economy e.g. Information & Communications (ICT) and specialisms such as Film & TV, support growth companies, the large employers of the future.

3. People, work and wellbeing: Address Bracknell Forest's poor skills profile through both supply and demand side measures (e.g. management and leadership to drive up skills demand in SMEs), enable local, well-paid, secure employment for local people.

4. Place, climate change, infrastructure, and connectivity: promote Bracknell Forest's many advantages as a business and residential location. Champion green business development and initiatives to support the transition to net zero. Supply matches demand for employment space and housing, maintain good ICT connectivity and environmental sustainability.

8. Our approach

The Council has used a balanced scorecard approach to assessing the performance and resilience of the Bracknell Forest economy and for managing the delivery of the Economic Strategy 2024-34. A balanced scorecard is a useful quality management tool to improve performance across interacting factors.

The Economic Strategy 2024-34 is determined by three contributory factors: business competitiveness, people & skills, and climate change, infrastructure & connectivity. Together with economic performance, these contributory

factors make up the balanced scorecard for the Economic Strategy 2024-34 and action plan.

Economic performance: *“Competitiveness is reasonably good measured nationally, but locally there are areas of underperformance, productivity is weak and Bracknell Forest is heavily reliant on foreign-owned companies, increasing vulnerability to outward investment. The knowledge economy appears to be declining although there are some specialisms in Bracknell Forest on which to build”.*

**Bracknell Forest
Balanced scorecard assessment
headline summary**

People, work and skills: *“Low and worsening skills levels and weakening demand for higher level skills mean Bracknell Forest may be heading for a low skills equilibrium with lower value employment increasing and knowledge economy jobs declining”.*



Figure 3: The balanced scorecard for the Economic Strategy

Business competitiveness: *“Bracknell Forest’s business population shows a lack of resilience and dynamism compared to other nearby local economies and underperforms on business creation and survival, as well as decline in some key sectors such as Information & Communications”.*

Place, climate change, infrastructure and connectivity: *“Popular business location, strategic location, good transport connectivity, excellent ICT connectivity, green space and quality of life are strengths on which to capitalise. Strong competition as a business location from elsewhere means commercial space has to be top quality and of the right kind”.*

APPENDIX 1

9. Bracknell Forest economic performance: scorecard summary

Indicator	Key metric	Summary of current state	Priorities for action
E.P.1. Competitiveness	Legatum Institute and UK Competitiveness Index annual rankings	Bracknell Forest benefits from its strategic location in the prosperous South East and as a popular business location at the heart of two important growth corridors with good international connectivity. However, Bracknell Forest does not perform as well on overall competitiveness as the other LAAs in the FEA. It rates less well on investment conditions and negatively on enterprise environment.	Investigate the underlying weaknesses in enterprise conditions and identify actions to address them e.g. targeted business support. (See business competitiveness)
E.P.2. Productivity	GVA per filled job	Bracknell Forest's weak productivity performance is a cause for concern. The analysis indicates that there is a lack of resilience to economic shocks such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the economy is not recovering as rapidly as neighbouring areas. This is despite the presence of large companies and high levels of internationalisation which would normally result in higher productivity. The causes are likely to include an over representation of less productive sectors as well as management and skills issues.	Carry out research into local business finance and investment readiness of SMEs. Invest in management and leadership skills as well as nurturing and providing the right conditions for more productive, knowledge economy businesses. (see business competitiveness & people, work and skills)
E.P.3 knowledge economy and specialisation	Percentage of knowledge economy businesses	Bracknell Forest's knowledge economy is smaller than that of the comparator areas and neighbouring local authorities and appears to be less resilient. There is some degree of specialisation which could indicate the presence of nascent clusters, e.g. Film and TV, Scientific R&D. These are not necessarily peculiar to Bracknell Forest and extend across neighbouring local authorities.	Build networks of knowledge in key knowledge economy sectors and clusters working with partners across the wider area.
E.P.4. Internationalisation and FDI	No. of foreign owned companies	Bracknell Forest's levels of internationalisation are high; it has the second highest level of companies in foreign ownership and the highest percentage of employment in foreign owned companies among the Berkshire LAAs. This puts Bracknell Forest at risk of outward migration of companies and jobs, should the benefits of staying in the UK not seem sufficiently attractive in future. Secondly, although foreign owned companies are more likely to trade and, hence, be more productive, the benefits do not appear to be feeding through to the local economy. Recently, FDI activity in Bracknell Forest has been low.	Monitor levels of foreign ownership and FDI. Focus on retention of large businesses, particularly foreign-owned businesses and ensure that they are made to feel valued and have the right conditions. Promote the benefits of locating in Bracknell Forest and work with Department for International Trade (DIT) to land more FDI projects in Bracknell Forest.

10. Bracknell Forest business competitiveness: scorecard summary

Indicator	Key metric	Summary of current state	Priorities for action
B.C.1. Business growth	Growth in number of registered businesses	A growing business population is an indicator of an area's attractiveness as a business location. The business population in Bracknell Forest has declined by 1.92% between 2018 and 2022. Weak growth before the pandemic was followed by losses during and since, indicating a lack of resilience.	Work with partners to target business support on those sectors are most important to retain and grow in Bracknell Forest e.g. <i>ICT, Professional, Scientific & Technical, Arts Entertainment & Recreation</i> .
B.C.2. Business creation and survival	Start up rates per 10,000 Working Age Population (WAP)	Bracknell Forest's rate of business creation per 10,000 WAP has been significantly lower than the comparator areas over time and has declined markedly since 2017. 4 and 5 year survival rates are also lower than in the comparator areas.	Increase business start-up support. Work with large companies and the Bracknell Business Improvement District BID to support new businesses in supply chains where there are local gaps.
B.C.3. Business size structure	No. and percentages of companies in the 250+ and 50-249 employees size brackets and £1m-£5m turnover	Bracknell Forest benefits from having higher percentages of medium and large companies who are major sources of local employment. However, this leaves Bracknell Forest open to large losses of local jobs if big companies downsize or relocate.	Continue to build relationships with large companies to understand any issues e.g. recruitment, planning, and make sure they are positive about Bracknell Forest. Nurture small companies in the £1m-£5m turnover bracket to develop the next generation of large employers.
B.C.4. Key industries and sectoral shift	Shift share by industrial sector	<i>Information & Communications, Professional Scientific & Technical, and Arts Entertainment & Recreation</i> have all lost share while <i>Construction, Transport and Motor Trades</i> have all increased making the business structure less knowledge-intensive and less environmentally sustainable.	Develop a local industrial strategy and action plan to ensure Bracknell Forest retains its position as a location for knowledge-based businesses. This would include building on nascent clusters e.g. <i>Scientific R&D and Film & T.V. and Medical Devices</i> as well as local supply chain and local workforce development to ensure large companies are embedded.
B.C.5. Information & Communications	Percentage of ICT businesses and digital creative subsectors	Bracknell Forest, known for being a location for ICT businesses seems to be losing share while others nearby are doing much better e.g. Wokingham. Bracknell Forest could exploit niches where it seems to have a strength.	Support <i>Publishing, Broadcasting and Film & TV</i> sectors, working with other local authorities nearby in the digital creative industry locations.
B.C.6. Tourism and Hospitality		Bracknell Forest has mainly day visitor tourism and, for overnights stays, business tourism. Overnight tourism is predominantly the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) sector which may be at risk if large companies downsize or relocate.	Work with tourism organisations to promote Bracknell Forest attractions and encourage more day visitors. Carry out risk analysis for MICE sector and work with accommodation providers to explore alternatives.





11. Bracknell Forest people, work, and wellbeing: scorecard summary

Indicator	Key metric	Summary of current state	Priorities for action
P.W.W.1. Population change	No. and percentages of people in 25-49 age group	Although Bracknell Forest has a slightly younger age profile than the comparators, this is forecast to change over the lifetime of the Economic Strategy and there may be a shortage of workers.	Work with nearby areas to monitor population changes and address any shortages arising e.g. through encouraging returners.
P.W.W.2. Qualifications and skills	Percentage of WAP qualified at NVQ4+ and NVQ3+	The skills of the Working Age Population are of particular concern in Bracknell Forest. They are not significantly lower at NVQL4+ and NVQL3+ than the comparator areas, but they seem to be declining further. Bracknell Forest is in danger of becoming a low skills, low value economy if this is not addressed urgently.	Work with employers, particularly large employers, the ESDP and education providers, to upgrade skills through apprenticeships, traineeships and other schemes. Work with SMEs to increase demand for higher level skills e.g. through management and leadership.
P.W.W.3. Employment & employment structure	No.s and percentage in employment	Bracknell Forest has seen a larger loss of jobs than the comparator areas over the recent period and is showing less labour market resilience.	Monitor employment and work with large employers to minimise losses if possible.
	No.s and percentage in employment in knowledge economy and high skills specialisms	Bracknell Forest leads on knowledge economy employment at the main comparator level but is losing out to fast growth Reading and Wokingham at local level. ICT job losses are of particular concern. There are signs of other specialisms e.g. Film & TV, medical devices, scientific R&D but may not be embedded in the area.	Monitor employment in knowledge economy and knowledge economy sub sectors, work with large employers and SMEs to understand skills need and provide more business support to prevent further losses and embed nascent clusters. (see business competitiveness)
P.W.W.4. Occupational structure	No.s and percentage employed by occupational group	18% of Bracknell Forest residents work in the lowest occupational groups and are more likely to be in low paid and insecure employment. This is likely to be linked to low educational attainment and low skills.	See above on skills.
P.W.W.5. Earnings	Percentage difference between resident and workplace wages	Despite recent rapid growth, residents' earnings remain significantly below workplace wages, indicating that not all Bracknell Forest residents are able to access local well paid employment and that higher skilled workers are commuting in from elsewhere to better paid jobs.	This is also likely to be linked to educational attainment and skills. Encourage local employers to recruit locally and upskill.
P.W.W.6. Wealth, health and wellbeing	Basket of measures including, Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI) employment rate, life expectancy, well-being	Bracknell Forest residents are less wealthy than in the local comparators, so although housing is relatively more affordable, they may not be better off as a result. Employment, historically high, has proved less resilient. Health is good but anxiety levels are higher than in other areas.	Monitor the basket of measures and evaluate success of Economic Strategy and other relevant policies in ensuring all are benefiting.

12. Place, Climate Change, infrastructure, and connectivity: scorecard summary

Indicator	Key metric	Summary of current state	Priorities for action
P.CC.I.C.1. Employment space	Average take up rate	Weaker demand for employment space seems likely to continue due to the adverse economic conditions and increase in home/hybrid working. Only category A space is easy to let and landlords need to refurbish. There may be unmet demand for light industrial units and small flexible maker spaces. Nascent high tech clusters would benefit from a technology park approach. There is probably sufficient retail space now due to The Lexicon and there may even be a surplus.	Engage with commercial agents to monitor demand. Support/allow further permitted development rights (PDR) if necessary. Engage with landlords to encourage refurbishment to higher standards Engage with developers to enable more provision of light industrial space & space suitable for high tech and creative digital businesses in the specialised sectors Promote Bracknell Forest as a business location Develop a Local Industrial Strategy (see Business Competitiveness)
P.CC.I.C.2. Climate change	Kt CO ² e per Km ²	Bracknell Forest's emissions are low but further decline of the knowledge economy may hinder future progress. Car dependency is high and public transport, cycling and walking rates are low.	Support the knowledge economy (see Business Competitiveness) Encourage modal shift e.g. through addressing safety concerns re cycle paths, working with large employers on cycle to work schemes, EV charging points.
P.CC.I.C.3. Housing	Affordability ratio	Although housing in Bracknell is relatively affordable it is still out of the reach of many on lower incomes. Increased supply of new homes will help to maintain and improve affordability. Bracknell Forest is not seen as an aspirational place to live for higher skilled individuals, although this is changing. Attracting young people to town centres can help to counteract population ageing and revitalise town centres.	Monitor employment and retail space availability as above and take a flexible approach to PDR, particularly in town centres, if surplus space is a persistent issue. Promote the benefits of Bracknell Forest as a place to live and work
P.CC.I.C.4. Working patterns	Home/hybrid working rates	Bracknell Forest residents have lower rates of working at or near home and higher rates of travel to work further away. Although this is typical of areas like Bracknell with high levels of skilled trades and construction employment, it may be that lower skilled Bracknell Forest residents are filling elementary jobs such as cleaning and care in other areas with higher skills profiles.	Promote local working and local recruitment, working with large employers so more Bracknell residents can benefit from working locally. Examine the need for local support services e.g. networks, flexible, rentable by the hour, office space, for those working from home.
P.CC.I.C.5. ICT infrastructure	Broadband availability	Currently, Bracknell Forest's performance on broadband and mobile availability is among the best.	Maintain and promote Bracknell Forest's record on ICT connectivity.

13. Headline Thematic Priorities

Economic and Skills Development Partnership (ESDP)	
 <p>Bracknell Forest Partnership Economic & Skills Development Partnership</p>	<p>The ESDP, founded in 2010, aims to develop and maintain a dialogue with business, educational and skills providers around common interests to make Bracknell Forest a better place in which to do business and to maximise the number of local people in employment. Utilising the full strategy datasets, technical annex, and action plans to refocus ESDP activities around the four key areas identified within the economic strategy. Potentially form four working groups within ESDP to take each of the themes and respective action plan to drive forward progress, working with Bracknell Forest officers and councillors and key partners and stakeholders.</p>
Bracknell Business Improvement District (BID)	
 <p>Bracknell BID</p>	<p>In 2020, businesses in the Southern and Western Business Areas of Bracknell voted in favour of plans to set up a Business Improvement District (BID), to run from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2025. A Business Improvement District is a defined geographical area within which the businesses have voted to invest collectively to improve their trading environment. The lifetime of the BID is covered by Regulations and is set at no more than 5 years. A not-for-profit company is set up and run by the businesses in the area and is responsible for ensuring that the aims and objectives of the BID Proposal are delivered. The role and standing of the BID are critical to the future success of the local economy. The strategy will actively support the BID to deliver its business plan and to secure another term.</p>
Business Liaison and Account Management	
	<p>Meaningful engagement with businesses within Bracknell Forest will form a key component of delivering successful outputs and outcomes from the economic strategy. Whether as part of a wider inward investment aspiration, through retaining businesses within the area, to better understanding the challenges and support requirements of our wider business community. Some account management will be directly with the businesses, other engagement will be through our partners such as the Business Improvement District, the Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, the LEP Growth Hub and other umbrella organisations.</p>
Place Promotion and Destination Management	
	<p>The strengths of Bracknell Forest as a business location and as a day visitor destination were confirmed by the economic strategy research. These strengths along with the comparatively affordable housing need to be effectively captured and promoted to encourage new businesses to locate here and to help retain businesses within the area. Whether through promotional material, websites, social media and attendance at key events, we want to see Bracknell Forest's profile as a business destination improved. Although not a traditional 'tourist' destination, the area is a popular day visitor destination for both shopping and leisure activities, this consumer focus is complemented by a strong business tourism sector servicing meetings, conferences, and events. These tourism opportunities can be further developed from their current baseline.</p>

Climate Change and Drive to Net Zero



In July 2019 Bracknell Forest Council agreed a climate change motion. We have committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2050 and have published a Climate Change Strategy. Our climate change action plan has two main strands 1. To reduce carbon emissions under the Council’s control and 2. To Influence and lead community action against climate change. This economic strategy includes actions where we can influence and lead our business community to become aware of climate change the drive to achieve net-zero. There are also significant economic opportunities emerging through the green technology sectors that Bracknell Forest is well-placed to take advantage of. We through this strategy will encourage and support the move to net-zero and local growth of the green-tech sectors.

14. Delivery Mechanisms

Delivery Mechanisms



The primary delivery mechanism for this strategy will be through the Place, Planning & Regeneration Directorate and officers within the Council. However, for such cross-cutting strategies many other departments within the Council will all contribute to the successful delivery of the strategy, its actions, outputs and ultimately outcomes. In addition to the Council, many other key partners, and stakeholders both within Bracknell Forest and wider pan-Berkshire organisations will also contribute to the successful delivery of the strategy. These have been identified within the accompanying action plan see Appendix.

15. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and Reporting Outputs and Outcomes



The detailed action plan has identified over twenty actions across the four headline economic strategy themes that could be taken forward by the Council and its partners and stakeholders. These actions where possible have been linked to indicators that will help measure success in delivering the economic strategy outputs and ultimately outcomes. These will be monitored at least annually and reported back to both stakeholders, ESDP and the appropriate Council committee for review.

Appendix – Action Plan

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BRACKNELL FOREST
ECONOMIC STRATEGY
ACTION PLAN

2024

2034



Action Plan Draft 1.3
October 2023

Appendix 2

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Introduction

This action plan accompanies the Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034. The Economic Strategy uses a balanced scorecard approach to assess the strengths and limitations of the Bracknell Forest economy and for managing the delivery of the Economic Strategy 2024-34.

The focus of the Economic Strategy 2024-34 is the performance of the Bracknell Forest economy which, at local level, is determined by three main contributory factors: business competitiveness; people, work and wellbeing; and infrastructure & connectivity. Together with economic performance, these contributory factors or themes make up the balanced scorecard for the Economic Strategy 2024-34 and action plan. *Figure 1*

Objectives

The main objectives under each theme are as follows:

1. **Economic performance:** Improve Bracknell Forest’s economic performance, particularly declining productivity, and knowledge-intensity. Protect Bracknell Forest against losses of key foreign owned businesses and improve Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

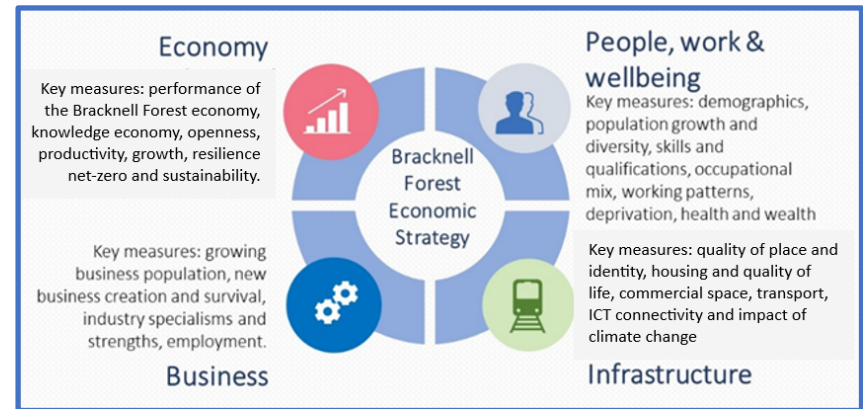


Figure 1 The balanced scorecard for the Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy

2. **Business competitiveness:** Reverse the decline in the business floorspace stock, improve business competitiveness and resilience, including business start-up and survival rates, conserve and grow the knowledge economy e.g. *Information & Communications (ICT)* and regional specialisms such as *Film & TV*, support growth companies, the large employers of the future.
3. **People, work and wellbeing:** Address Bracknell Forest’s skills profile through both supply and demand side measures (e.g. management and leadership to drive up skills demand in small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), enable local, well-paid, secure employment for local people.

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4. **Place, climate change, infrastructure, and connectivity:** promote Bracknell Forest's many advantages as a business and residential location, and commitment to achieving net zero. Ensure supply matches demand for employment space and housing, maintain good connectivity and environmental sustainability.

The action plan, which should be read in conjunction with the Economic Strategy and contains, under each theme:

- the current state
- the target state
- key metrics
- priorities for action
- timescales
- lead officer and partners.

Appendix 2

Action Plan Theme 1: Economic Performance:

Indicators: E.P.: Competitiveness; E.P.2: Productivity; E.P.3: Knowledge economy and specialisation; E.P.4: Internationalisation

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
E.P.1. Competitiveness	Bracknell Forest benefits from its strategic location in the prosperous South East and is a popular business location, at the heart of two important growth corridors, with good international connectivity. However, according to both the UK Competitiveness Index and the Legatum Institute's Prosperity Index 2023, Bracknell Forest does not perform as well on overall competitiveness as the other Local Authority Areas (LAAs) in the Bracknell Forest Functional Economic Area (FEA). In particular, it rates less well on investment conditions and negatively on enterprise environment.	Bracknell Forest scores as well on the UKCI as the best performing Local Authority Areas in the Functional Economic Area	Improved position in the UK Competitiveness Index 2030 Legatum Institute Prosperity Index 2030

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer / partners
E.P.1. Competitiveness	E.P.1.1. Identify the underlying weaknesses in investment conditions, e.g. investment capital availability, and enterprise environment e.g. ease with which businesses can start up and grow. Through regular business liaison and dialogue with local agents and business representatives.	By April 2025	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration (HEDR) Berkshire Growth Hub, Banks, Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce/ Federation of Small Business, and other business representative organisations
	E.P.1.2 Target available financial support and business support, identify and plan how to fill gaps.	By April 2025	
	E.P.1.3 Work with partners and Central Government to identify funding opportunities to support business to meet needs. Actively monitor .gov.uk releases, register with appropriate departments such as Innovate UK. (See also B.C.1.1. & B.C.2.2.)	Ongoing	

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Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
E.P.2. Productivity	Bracknell Forest's productivity performance is a cause for concern. The analysis indicates that there is a lack of resilience to economic shocks such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the economy is not recovering as rapidly as those of neighbouring areas. This is in spite of the presence of large companies and high levels of internationalisation which would normally result in higher productivity. The causes are likely to include an over representation of less productive sectors e.g. <i>Warehousing</i> , as well as management and skills issues.	Bracknell Forest's productivity is growing on an annual basis	GVA per job matches that of the best Local Authority areas in the FEA 2034

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer /partners
E.P.2. Productivity	E.P.2.1. Carry out or commission research into innovation and investment readiness of SMEs in high productivity sectors e.g. <i>Advanced Manufacturing</i> . (See also E.P.1.3. & B.C.1.1.)	By April 2025	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration Berkshire Growth Hub/ Henley Business School/ESDP/ Activate Learning Thames Valley Chamber, FSB Central Govt, others
	E.P.2.2. Work with partners to encourage investment in management and leadership skills in SMEs to drive up productivity. (See also P.W.W.2.2.)	Begin April 2024	
	E.P.2.3. Using new planning policies and an effective business liaison programme provide the right conditions to encourage more productive, knowledge economy/ high productivity businesses to locate in Bracknell Forest. (See also P.CC.I.C.1.3.)	Ongoing	

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
E.P.3. Knowledge economy and specialisation	Bracknell Forest's knowledge economy is smaller than that of the comparator areas and neighbouring local authorities and appears to be declining. There is some degree of specialisation which could indicate the presence of nascent clusters, e.g. <i>Film & TV, Scientific R&D</i> . These are not confined to Bracknell Forest but extend across neighbouring LAAs. Potential to host the supply chain rather than actual studios.	Knowledge economy matches the best LAA in the FEA	Percentage of Knowledge Economy businesses matches best in FEA by 2030

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Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer / partners
E.P.3. Knowledge economy and specialisation	E.P.3.1. Monitor knowledge economy to ascertain whether recent losses are temporary or ongoing and, in particular, recent losses of large knowledge economy companies e.g. ICT. Tracked through local business intelligence, Department for Business and Trade, Non-Domestic Business rating records.	April 2024 to March 2025	Head Of Economic Development and Regeneration Berkshire Growth Hub/ LAAs in the FEA/Henley Business School/ESDP/ others
	E.P.3.2. Track companies in the KE specialisms <i>Scientific R&D, Computer Programming, Head Office & Management Consultancy Activities, Information Services</i> and <i>Film & TV</i> and work with these businesses and partners in the wider area to understand what would help to retain and embed them in the sub-region. (See also: B.C.5.1.)	By April 2025	
	E.P.3.3. Build networks of knowledge and innovation across the FEA, through partner engagement, interaction with bodies such as Innovate UK and appropriate higher education institutions.	April 2025 onward	

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
E.P.4. Internationalisation	Bracknell Forest's levels of internationalisation are high; it has the second highest level of companies in foreign ownership and the highest percentage of employment in foreign-owned companies among the Berkshire LAAs. This puts Bracknell Forest at risk of outward migration of companies and jobs, should the benefits of staying in the South East or the UK seem insufficiently attractive in future. Furthermore, although foreign-owned companies are more likely to trade and, hence, be more productive, the benefits do not appear to be feeding through to the local economy. Recently, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) activity in Bracknell Forest has been low.	Bracknell Forest retains all current internationally owned companies and increases FDI rates.	No. of foreign owned 250+ companies, steady state until 2028. Increased by 10 by 2034. Five year FDI rates doubled.

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer / partners
E.P.4. Internationalisation	E.P.4.1. Track levels of foreign ownership and FDI. Focus on retention of large, foreign-owned businesses and ensure that they have the right conditions to remain in Bracknell Forest.	Begin April 2024	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration/ Comms/ DBT / Berkshire Prosperity Board /ESDP
	E.P.4.2. Promote the benefits of locating in Bracknell Forest and work with Department for Business and Trade (DBT) to land more FDI projects. creating up to date promotional material that can be supplied to Businesses and Government agencies	Commence Jan 2024	

Appendix 2

Action Plan Theme 2: Business Competitiveness

B.C.1: Business growth; B.C.2: Business creation and survival; B.C.3: Business size structure; B.C.4: Key industries and sectoral shift; B.C.5: Information and Communications; B.C.6: The visitor economy

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
B.C.1. Business growth	A growing business population is an indicator of an area's attractiveness as a business location as well as the entrepreneurialism of its people and the resilience of its businesses. The business population in Bracknell Forest has declined by 1.92% between 2018 and 2022. Slow growth before the pandemic was followed by losses during and since, indicating a potential lack of resilience.	A growing and resilient business base	Business growth rate to match the best of the Local Authority Areas in the Functional Economic Area by 2028

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer /partners
B.C.1. Business growth,	B.C.1.1. Work with partners such as the Growth Hub to target business support in those sectors that are most important to retain and grow in Bracknell Forest e.g. <i>ICT, Professional, Scientific & Technical, Arts Entertainment & Recreation</i> . Organise sector specific events with targeted support. (See also: E.P.1.3 & E.P.2.1)	From April 2024	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration/ Berkshire Growth Hub
	B.C.1.2. Monitor business growth/decline and analyse causes e.g. economic shocks, birth/death/churn rates, out migration, low start-up rates, barriers e.g. premises, skills in Bracknell Forest and the FEA. Utilise a combination of official statistics (ONS) supplemented by any specific local data to create a benchmark to monitor against, ideally annually but in-line with ONS release schedule.	From Jan 2024	

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
B.C.2. Business creation and survival	Bracknell Forest's rate of business creation per 10,000 WAP has been significantly lower than the comparator areas over time and has declined markedly since 2017. Both 4- and 5-year survival rates are lower than in the comparator areas.	Entrepreneurial and dynamic local economy	Business births per 10,000 WAP to match the best in the Functional Economic Area

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer /partners
B.C.2. Business creation and survival	B.C.2.1. Engage with large companies and those in the BID area to map local supply chains and identify gaps which local companies might fill. (See also: B.C.3.2.)	April to October 2024	Head of Economic Development and

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Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer /partners
	B.C.2.2. Increase business start-up support and support new businesses, particularly in local supply chains where there are local gaps. Work with Berks Growth Hub, Chambers, FSB and external bodies such as Enterprise Nation. Monitor for central Government start-up initiatives. Commercial sponsors such as banks and tech companies e.g. Google Garage (See also: E.P.1.2. & E.P.1.3. & P.CC.I.C.4.2.)	April 2025 onward	Regeneration /Comms Growth Hub/ BID/ESDP others
	B.C.2.3. Publicise new businesses supported and promote a culture of entrepreneurship in Bracknell Forest. Council PR & comms, social media, magazine attendance at business events, partner and stakeholder comms.	April 2026 onward	

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
B.C.3. Business size structure	Bracknell Forest benefits from having higher percentages of medium and large companies who are major sources of local employment. However, this leaves Bracknell Forest open to potentially heavy losses of local jobs, if big companies were to downsize or relocate. Companies in the £1-5m turnover brackets have been shown to be where fast growth companies can be found but percentages in this turnover bracket are lower in Bracknell Forest than in the other LAAs in the FEA.	Medium and large companies are embedded in BF & fast growth companies are increasing	No. and %ages of companies 250+ / 50-249 employees & £1m-£5m turnover are steady/ growing.

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer / partners
B.C.3. Business size structure	B.C.3.1. Produce annual risk assessment for large companies and identify any at risk of relocation/downsizing. (See also: P.W.W.3.1. & P.W.W.3.2.)	From April 2024	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration /Comms/BID
	B.C.3.2. Through the business liaison programme of active engagement continue to build relationships with large companies to understand any issues e.g. recruitment, planning, try to address any concerns and make sure they are positive about Bracknell Forest. (See also: B.C.2.1. & B.C.3.2.)	From April 2024	
	B.C.3.3. Utilise local and commercial datasets to map and build relationships with small companies in the £1m-£5m turnover bracket to understand their needs e.g. finance, innovation support and help to develop the next generation of fast growth companies. (See also: E.P.2.1. & E.P.2.2.)	From April 2025	Some outsourcing maybe required.

Appendix 2

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
B.C.4. Key industries and sectoral shift	<i>Information & Communications, Professional Scientific & Technical, and Arts Entertainment & Recreation</i> have all lost share in Bracknell Forest in the last five years, while <i>Construction, Transport and Motor Trades</i> have all increased making the business structure less knowledge-intensive, less productive and less environmentally sustainable.	A sustainable and productive knowledge intensive economy	Percentage of businesses in key sectors matches Functional Economic Area best by 2034

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer / partners
B.C.4. Key industries and sectoral shift	B.C.4.1. Work with Partners to develop a local industrial strategy and action plan for Bracknell Forest to ensure it retains its position as a location for knowledge-based businesses. This could include building on nascent clusters e.g. <i>Scientific R&D</i> and <i>Film & T.V. and Medical Devices</i> as well as developing local supply chains, management and leadership, local workforce skills and boosting innovation. (See also: P.W.W.3.2.)	Begin Industrial Strategy April 2024. Implementation 2025 onwards	EDPP&R / LEP/ESDP

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
B.C.5. Information & Communications	B.C.5.1. Bracknell Forest, known for being a location for ICT businesses, seems to be losing share of these industries while other LAAs nearby are doing much better, e.g. Wokingham. Bracknell Forest could exploit niches in the creative digital IT subsectors where it seems to have a strength, e.g. <i>Publishing, Broadcasting</i> and nearby <i>Film & TV</i> sectors	Bracknell Forest is the leading location for ICT businesses	Percentage of ICT businesses, digital creative matches FEA best 2030

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer / partners
B.C.5. Information & Communications	B.C.5.1. Support <i>Publishing, Broadcasting and Film & TV</i> sectors, working with other Berkshire authorities, LEP and Film Berkshire. (See also: E.P.3.1. & E.P.3.2. & E.P.3.3.)	From April 2025	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration / Berkshire Growth Hub/ LAAs in the FEA/Henley Business School/Berkshire Film Office

Appendix 2

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
B.C.6. The Visitor Economy	Bracknell Forest has mainly day visitor tourism. The relatively small percentage of overnights stays tend to be business-related and is predominantly the meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) sector. This may be adversely affected if key companies downsize or relocate.	Bracknell Forest has a thriving day trip visitor economy and is a popular MICE location for business	No. of day visits and overnight business visits increased by 15% by 2028 (VE data)
Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer/key partners
B.C.6. The visitor economy	B.C.6.1. Work with tourism organisations to promote Bracknell Forest attractions and encourage more day visitors. Support the creation of a Berkshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership, become an active participant in the new LVEP structure.	Start April 2026	Head of Economic Development & Regeneration/Communications team/ Tourism South East/Hotels /ESDP
	B.C.6.2. Carry out risk analysis for Meetings, Conferences and Events (MICE) sector and work with accommodation/ venue providers to explore alternative market segments and marketing opportunities.	By April 2026	

Appendix 2

Action Plan Theme 3: People, work and wellbeing

P.W.W.1: Population change; P.W.W.2: Qualifications and skills; P.W.W.3: Employment & employment specialisms; P.W.W.4: Occupational structure; P.W.W.5: Earnings; P.W.W.6: Wealth, health and wellbeing.

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
P.W.W.1: Population change	Although Bracknell Forest currently has a slightly younger age profile than the comparator areas, this is forecast to change over the lifetime of the Economic Strategy and there may be a shortage of workers.	A local workforce is readily available and sufficiently skilled.	No. & %age in 25-49 age group (ONS 'prime age' within workforce)

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer/key partners
P.W.W.1: Population change	P.W.W.1.1. Work with ESDP and LAAs/partners in nearby areas e.g. the FEA to monitor population changes and skills. Address any skills shortages arising e.g. through encouraging returners. Engagement with further education and skills providers.	From 2026 onward	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration /ESDP/LAAs in FEA / BID/LSIP

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
P.W.W.2: Qualifications and skills	The skills of the working age population (WAP) are of particular concern in Bracknell Forest. Not only are they significantly lower at NVQL4+ and NVQL3+ than in the comparator areas, but they seem to be declining further. Businesses find it hard to secure higher skilled employees locally. Bracknell Forest could become a low skills, low value economy if this is not addressed urgently.	Higher level skills and qualifications meeting the needs of the knowledge economy	NVQ4+ and NVQ3+ match the best in the FEA by 2030

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer/key partners
P.W.W.2: Qualifications and skills	P.W.W.2.1. Through proactive engagement work with employers, particularly large employers, the ESDP and education providers, to upgrade skills through relevant apprenticeships, tailored traineeships and other business partnering schemes. Maintain engagement with LSIP and other skills providers.	Ongoing	Bracknell Forest Skills lead/ ESDP/ Henley business school/ colleges/training

Appendix 2

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer/key partners
	P.W.W.2.2. Work with SMEs to increase demand for higher level skills e.g. through management and leadership. Monitor that there are skills providers available within the Council catchment. (See also: E.P.2.2.)	April 2025 onwards	providers / Activate Learning

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
P.W.W.3: employment & employment specialisms	<p>Bracknell Forest has seen a larger loss of jobs than the comparator areas over the recent period and is showing less labour market resilience.</p> <p>In relation to knowledge economy jobs, Bracknell Forest is losing out to fast growth places such as Reading and Wokingham. ICT job losses are of particular concern. There are encouraging signs of employment specialisms e.g. <i>Film & TV, Medical Devices, Scientific R&D</i> but they are not just in Bracknell Forest but also the wider area.</p>	No. of jobs is increasing. Jobs in knowledge economy and specialisms are a growing percentage of jobs.	No. of jobs in Bracknell Forest increased by 5% by 2030

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer/key partners
P.W.W.3: employment & employment specialisms	P.W.W.3.1. Monitor employment statistics, maintain good local engagement, working with large employers to minimise job losses should they look likely, through local reemployment/redeployment (See also: B.C.3.1. & B.C.3.2.)	Ongoing	Bracknell Forest skills lead/ESDP/Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (LSIP)
	P.W.W.3.2. Monitor employment in knowledge economy and knowledge economy sub sectors, actively work with large employers and SMEs to understand skills need and provide more support to prevent further losses and embed nascent clusters.(See also B.C.4.1.)	Ongoing	Bracknell Forest skills lead/ESDP/training providers

Appendix 2

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
P.W.W.4: Occupational structure	18% of Bracknell Forest residents work in the lowest occupational groups and are more likely to be in low paid and insecure employment. This is likely to be linked to low educational attainment and low skills.	Residents are able to obtain good, secure, well paid employment	Percentage of those in lowest 3 occupational groups is halved by 2034

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer/key partners
P.W.W.4: Occupational structure	P.W.W.4.1. Work with local employers to employ more local people and provide work-based training and development through apprenticeships, traineeships and HE access courses. Engage with further education and skills providers, utilise their employer networks. Support any local programmes.	Ongoing	BF skills lead/ESDP/training providers/ DWP

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
P.W.W.5: Earnings	Despite recent rapid growth, residents' earnings remain significantly below workplace wages, indicating that not all Bracknell Forest residents are able to access local well paid employment and that higher skilled workers are commuting in from elsewhere to better paid jobs.	Local well paid jobs are filled by local people with the right skills	Residents' wages match workplace based earnings by 2030

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer/key partners
P.W.W.5: Earnings	P.W.W.5.1. This is likely to be linked to educational attainment and skills. Encourage local employers to recruit locally and upskill through bespoke Bracknell Forest Programme. (See also: P.W.W.4.1)	Ongoing	BF skills lead/ESDP/training providers /Activate Learning

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
P.W.W.6: Wealth, health, and wellbeing	Bracknell Forest residents are less wealthy than in the local comparators, so although housing is more affordable, they may not be better off as a result. Employment, historically high, has proved less resilient. Health is good but anxiety levels are higher than in other areas.	All are able to benefit from economic growth	GDHI in Bracknell Forest increases by more than inflation year-on-year

Appendix 2

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer/key partners
P.W.W.6: Wealth, health and wellbeing	P.W.W.6.1. Monitor the basket of measures for wealth, health and wellbeing e.g. GDHI, earnings, housing affordability, well-being. Evaluate the success of the Economic Strategy and other relevant policies in ensuring all are benefiting.	2028	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration / Policy & Performance Lead /Public Health

Action Plan Theme 4: Place, climate change, infrastructure and connectivity

Indicators: P.CC.I.C.1: Employment space; P.CC.I.C.5: Climate change P.CC.I.C.3: Housing; P.CC.I.C.4: Working patterns; P.CC.I.C.5: ICT infrastructure.

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
P.CC.I.C.1: Employment space	Weaker demand for employment space seems likely to continue due to the adverse economic conditions and increase of home/hybrid working. Only category A space is easy to let, and landlords need to refurbish any that does not meet a high standard with “home from home” amenities. There may be unmet demand for light industrial units and small, flexible, “maker” spaces and workshops. high tech clusters would benefit from a technology park approach.	Outdated employment space stock is upgraded and supply matches demand	Average times to let match the best in the FEA by 2028

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer/key partners
P.CC.I.C.1: Employment space	P.CC.I.C.1.1. Engage with commercial agents to monitor demand. Support/allow further PDR if necessary. Promote local agents forum to monitor the market demand, meet quarterly.	Ongoing	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration/Comms/ Commercial property agents/landlords/ developers/ESDP/Bracknell BID
	P.CC.I.C.1.2. Engage with landlords/Developers to encourage refurbishment to higher standards. Most likely via above agents forum but where possible direct engagement is preferable.		
	P.CC.I.C.1.3. Engage with developers to enable more provision of light industrial space and space suitable for high tech and creative digital businesses in the specialised sectors. Link to Local Plan requirements, take a proactive approach to attract developers to opportunity sites.		

Appendix 2

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer/key partners
	P.CC.I.C.1.4. Promote Bracknell Forest as a business location. Through websites, comms, and social media. Create a specific workstream with ESDP around destination promotion.		

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
P.CC.I.C.2: Climate Change	Bracknell Forest's emissions are low but any further decline of the knowledge economy may hinder future progress, if less environmentally friendly sectors take its place. Car dependency is high and public transport, cycling and walking rates are low.	Continued progress to net zero	Kt CO ₂ e per km ²

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer/key partners
P.CC.I.C.2: Climate Change	P.CC.I.C.2.1. Support the knowledge economy. (See also: E.P.3. & B.C.4.)	See E.P.3. & B.C.4	HEDR
	Support the knowledge economy (see Business Competitiveness) Encourage modal shift, working with employers on cycle to work schemes, EV charging points. Promote green technologies and sectors to support the drive towards net zero.	Ongoing	HEDR/Comms/ Planning/transport providers

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
P.CC.I.C.3: Housing	Although housing in Bracknell Forest is relatively affordable, it is still out of the reach of many on lower income households. Increased supply of new homes will help to maintain and improve affordability. The green open spaces, good provision of leisure activities and the accessibility of the town should be further promoted. Attracting young people to town centres can also help to counteract population ageing and revitalise town centres.	Housing is affordable and young people are staying in Bracknell Forest and new residents are attracted by the quality of the living environment.	Affordability ratio of 7 times median salary: median house price

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer/key partners
	P.CC.I.C.3.1 Monitor the potential conversion of employment space to Permitted Development.	Commence April	Head of Economic

Appendix 2

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer/key partners
P.CC.I.C.3: Housing	P.CC.I.C.3.2. Promote the benefits of Bracknell Forest as a place to live and work. Destination management prospectus produced.	2024	Development and Regeneration /Comms /Planning

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
P.CC.I.C.4: Working patterns	Bracknell Forest residents have lower rates of working at or near home and higher rates of travelling to work further away. Although this is typical of areas like Bracknell with concentrations of skilled trades and construction employment, it may be that lower skilled Bracknell Forest residents are filling elementary jobs, such as cleaning and care, in other areas with higher skills profiles.	Well paid local employment for all.	%age of residents working at or near home to match the FEA lead 2031

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer/key partners
P.CC.I.C.4: Working patterns	P.CC.I.C.4.1. Promote local working and local recruitment, working with large employers so more Bracknell residents can benefit from working locally. Encourage local promotion of vacancies.	From April 2024	HEDR/key employers. /
	P.CC.I.C.4.2. Understand the need for local support services e.g., networks, flexible, rentable by the hour, office space, for those working from home. Support these and the creation of new spaces.	From April 2024	Growth hub/ BID/Comms

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
P.CC.I.C.4: ICT infrastructure	Currently, Bracknell Forest's performance on broadband and mobile availability is among the best.	Leading position.	Fibre/5G availability.

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer/key partners
P.CC.I.C.5: ICT infrastructure	As part of a wider "locate in Bracknell Forest campaign", promote high ICT connectivity as a reason to locate in Bracknell Forest for businesses and people. Websites, marketing collateral, social media.	From April 2025	HEDR/Comms

BRACKNELL FOREST ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Consultation Full Draft
October 2023

2024

2034



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1. Introduction

Bracknell Forest is a premier location for business; its strategic location to the West of London, between the M3 and the M4, proximity to the country's main airports, a large workforce within short commuting distance, a plentiful and wide range of commercial space and a business-friendly planning environment, as well as excellent broadband and mobile connectivity are among the success factors which make Bracknell Forest the location of headquarters of major global, high tech and scientific R&D companies. Today, Syngenta, 3M, Daler Rowney, Fujitsu and Honda are among many prestigious businesses located in Bracknell Forest. Historically, this winning formula has resulted in almost full employment and a buoyant local economy.

85 The abundant green space, relatively affordable housing, good schools, access to nearby employment and strong local communities in Bracknell, as well as in areas like Crowthorne and Sandhurst, which still retain their village character, make the quality of life a draw for young families. The recent regeneration of The Lexicon shopping centre embodies the forward looking attitude and civic pride of the community and has added to the attractions of Bracknell Forest as a place to live.



Figure 1: The Lexicon in Bracknell

1.1. Why an economic strategy for Bracknell Forest

Recent economic circumstances have been challenging. The Covid 19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns, the UK's departure from the EU and the war in Ukraine have all had an impact on local as well as national economies.

Over the last three years, the evidence indicates that Bracknell Forest's local economy has shown some signs of resilience but has underperformed on a number of key metrics. The time is right to build on Bracknell Forest's many strengths and advantages and create a dynamic future. The Economic Strategy has four purposes:

1. Provide an understanding of current **economic performance**, the strengths and challenges facing the local economy, its relationship to the wider sub-regional economy
2. Set the **future direction**; the industries, businesses, jobs and skills on which to focus and what Bracknell Forest Council can do to foster them
3. Communicate the **vision**: to potential investors and businesses, planners, partners and the community
4. Provide the **evidence**: data and analysis to support the case for investment and action *Figure 2*



Figure 2: The four purposes of the Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy

1.2. The scope of the Economic Strategy

The focus is on economic and business performance, including the factors that enable businesses and the economy to succeed and grow and that are able to be influenced at local level: access to skilled people, business support and the business environment as well as high quality infrastructure. This cannot be growth at any cost; the climate emergency means that sustainable development is no longer optional and supporting green and clean growth will be vital.

There are a number of other strategies and plans which have a direct bearing on the Economic Strategy, primarily:

- The Bracknell Forest Local Plan currently in development, which provides the strategy and evidence base for housing and commercial development to 2037
- Bracknell Forest Council Plan currently in development *Figure 3*

Other plans which have been taken into account include:

- Bracknell Forest climate change strategy and sustainability appraisal
- Bracknell Forest equality scheme 2022-25
- Bracknell Forest Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022-6

More detail on relevant strategies, plans and reports is contained in the accompanying literature review.

Timescale

The Economic Strategy covers the period 2024 to 2034. It is action orientated setting out priorities and actions for the first one and three years, after which evaluation and review will set the course for the next period.



Figure 3: Relationship with other relevant plans

2. Methodology and approach

The Economic Strategy is based on three central sources of evidence:

- A detailed **data analysis** using recognised statistical sources on four main themes: economic and business performance, people, work & skills, infrastructure & connectivity and health & well-being. The data are contained in a separate databank in Excel format and the analysis is contained in a Technical Annex which accompanies the Economic Strategy.
- The data analysis uses five year time series of the most recent data available
- A comprehensive **literature review** and contextual analysis including relevant secondary sources for information on the national and local economy and policy context not included in the data analysis
- A series of **consultations** with Bracknell Forest Councillors, stakeholders, partners, businesses and key internal personnel to inform the direction of the strategy



The findings from these sources have been analysed and synthesised to provide the evidence base and direction of the Economic Strategy 2024 to 2034.

Figure 4

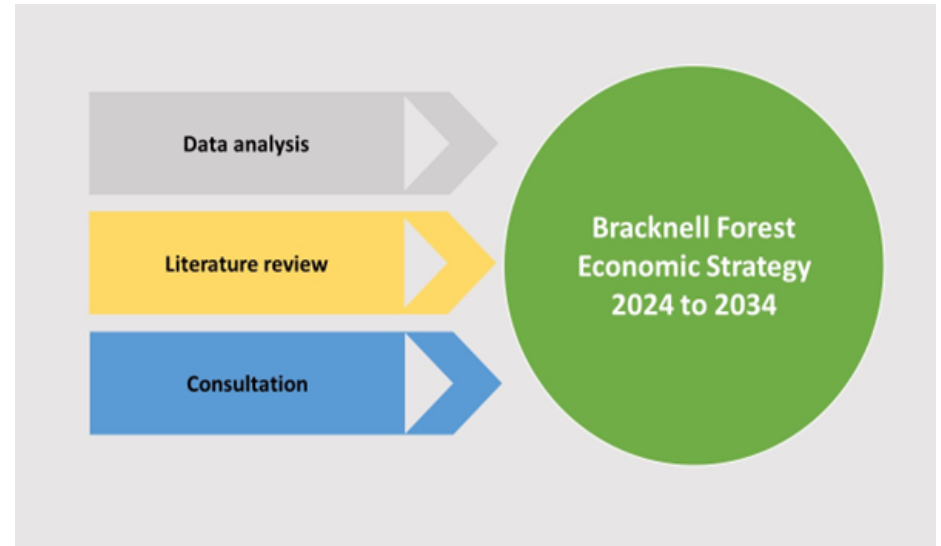


Figure 4: The inputs to the Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034

1.3. The comparator areas

To understand Bracknell Forest’s relationship to the wider economy and its performance in context, we have used three main comparator areas – the Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area, the Bracknell Forest Functional Economic Area (FEA) and the South East Region as a whole:

- **Berkshire LEP** are comprising the six unitary Local Authority Areas (LAAs) of West Berkshire, Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, Reading and Slough.
- **The Bracknell Forest functional economic area (FEA)** comprising: Reading, Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham and the contiguous Surrey LAA of Surrey Heath as well as Bracknell Forest itself.
- The **South East Region**

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We have examined the performance of the individual Local Authority Areas (LAAs) in the Bracknell Forest FEA where relevant. *Figure 5*

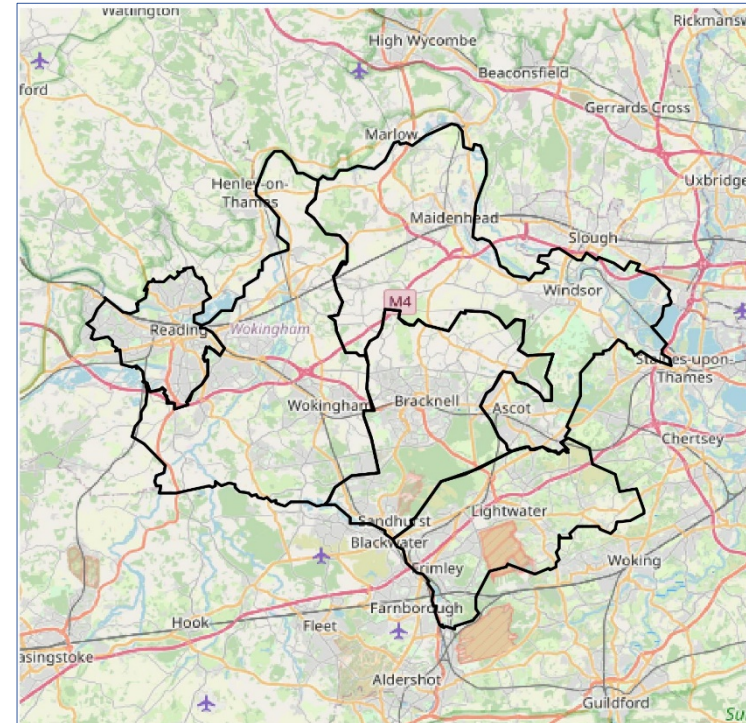


Figure 5: The LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA

1.4. Our approach

We use a balanced scorecard approach to assessing the performance and resilience of the Bracknell Forest economy and for managing the delivery of the Economic Strategy 2024-34. A balanced scorecard is a useful quality management tool to improve performance across interacting factors.

The main focus of the Economic Strategy 2024-34 is the performance of the Bracknell Forest economy which, at local level, is determined by three contributory factors: business competitiveness, people & skills and infrastructure & connectivity. Together with economic performance, these contributory factors make up the balanced scorecard for the Economic Strategy 2024-34 and action plan. *Figure 6*

Based on the analysis from the research and consultations, under each factor or theme, i.e. *Economic Performance, Business Competitiveness, People & Skills* and *Infrastructure & Connectivity*, each chapter sets out:

- ◆ indicators and current state
- ◆ the priorities for action
- ◆ the key measures and metrics *Figure 6*

The accompanying action plan contains, under each theme, the priorities for action, the objectives, milestones, 1 and 5 year targets and timescales, the lead organisation and partners.

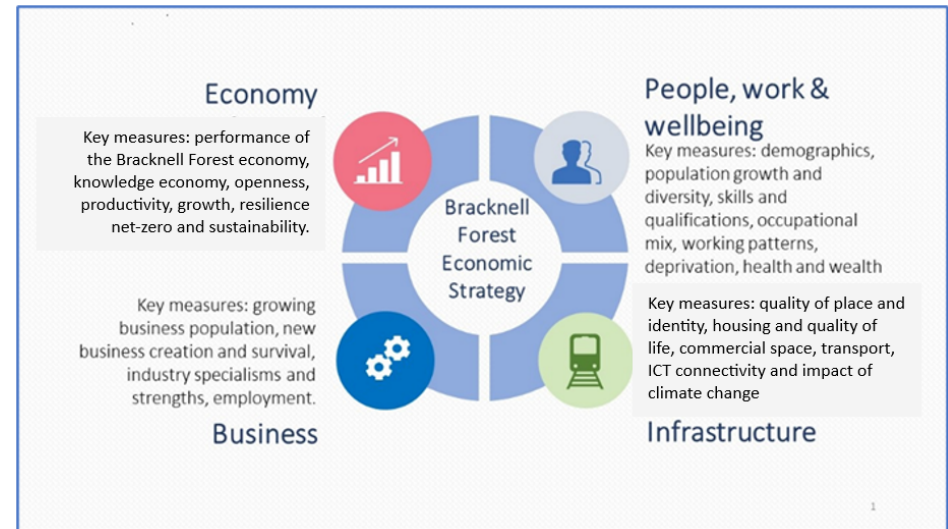


Figure 6: The balanced scorecard for the Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy

N.B. Data included in the Economic Strategy are used to illustrate specific points and do not include the full range of data in the Technical Annex which accompanies this Economic Strategy as supporting evidence.

1.5. The vision for Bracknell Forest’s economy

Our vision: By 2034, a growing and resilient economy that matches the best in Berkshire, supports, attracts and retains high-quality businesses, promotes sustainable growth in clean and green, knowledge-based industries, and provides economic opportunity with good, secure jobs for our people who all have the skills to succeed. *Figure 7*

1.6. The objectives of the Economic Strategy

The main objectives under each theme are as follows:

1. **Economic performance:** Improve Bracknell Forest’s economic performance, particularly declining productivity and knowledge-intensity. Protect Bracknell Forest against losses of large, foreign owned businesses and improve Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) rates.
2. **Business competitiveness:** Reverse the decline in the business stock, improve business competitiveness and resilience, including start-up and survival rates, conserve and grow the knowledge economy e.g. Information & Communications (ICT) and specialisms such as Film & TV, support growth companies, the large employers of the future.
3. **People, work and wellbeing:** Address Bracknell Forest’s poor skills profile through both supply and demand side measures (e.g. management and leadership to drive up skills demand in SMEs), enable local, well-paid, secure employment for local people.
4. **Place, climate change, infrastructure and connectivity:** promote Bracknell Forest’s many advantages as a business and residential location. Ensure supply matches demand for employment space and housing, maintain good ICT connectivity and the transition to net zero.



Figure 7: The vision for Bracknell Forest’s economy

3. Context, scenarios and solutions

1.7. Economic context

The Economic Strategy is set within the context of severe challenges to both national and international economies. Globally, recovery from the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic is uneven and supply chain disruption continues which, together with the war in Ukraine and resultant high fuel prices, high inflation in Europe and the poor trading relationship between China and the USA, are having ongoing negative effects on western economies. In the UK, the effects of departure from the EU are causing further uncertainty. Productivity growth in the UK, which had not recovered to pre-2008 levels before the 2020 lockdowns, has performed very poorly since. *Figure 8*

OS While the UK's relatively poor performance is currently being exacerbated by high interest rates and inflation, historic underlying issues do not appear to have been addressed and, in the opinion of some economists, possibly even made worse by successive government policies, most recently austerity followed by high levels of quantitative easing and then by successive rises in interest rates to try to curb inflation.

Analysis of the UK's long term economic decline is outside the scope of this Economic Strategy although future scenarios have a direct bearing and are therefore considered overleaf.

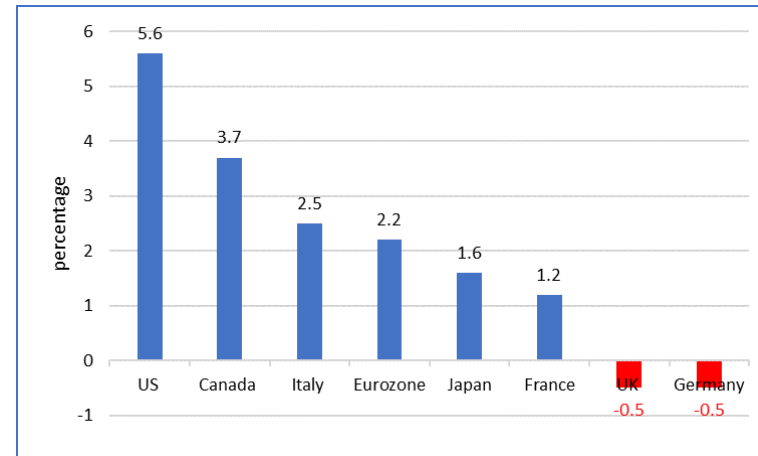


Figure 8 Percentage change in real GDP in G7, Q1 2023 compared to Q4 2019

Source: OECD stat and ONS House of Commons Economic Indicators no. 02784

Growth is expected to remain relatively weak. The Office for National Statistics (ONS)'s latest forecast is for growth in the UK to average 1.4% per annum until 2030¹, although the ONS warns that even this is unlikely to be realised in the immediate future. The Treasury produces monthly reports summarising a range of economic forecasts which predict growth in UK GDP of between -1.5% and 0.6% in 2023² and -1.1 and 2% in 2024. Inflation is predicted to fall by the end of 2024 to 2.1% (Consumer Price Inflation (CPI), average of all forecasts) as interest rate rises take effect and supply chain problems even out. However, unemployment is expected to remain at 4.2%, in spite of the shrinking number of people in the workforce.

Local economies will need to be highly resilient to survive and prosper. Our assessment of Bracknell Forest's economy against our balanced scorecard is set out in detail in the following chapters. The summary is in *Figure 9*:

94 In the light of our assessment we have set out overleaf three broad medium-term scenarios for the time period of this Economic Strategy 2024 to 2034 based on three key indicators, productivity, business growth and employment.

- **Headline economic performance:** competitiveness is reasonably good measured nationally, but locally there are areas of underperformance, productivity is weak and Bracknell Forest is heavily reliant on foreign-owned companies, increasing vulnerability to outward investment. The knowledge economy appears to be declining although there are some specialisms in Bracknell Forest on which to build.
- **Business competitiveness:** Bracknell Forest's business population shows a lack of resilience and dynamism compared to other nearby local economies and underperforms on business creation and survival, as well as decline in some key sectors such as *Information & Communications*.
- **People, work and skills:** Low and worsening skills levels and weakening demand for higher level skills mean Bracknell Forest may be heading for a low skills equilibrium with lower value employment increasing and knowledge economy jobs declining.
- **Place, climate change, infrastructure and connectivity:** Popular business location, strategic location, commitment to achieving net zero, good transport connectivity, excellent ICT connectivity, green space and quality of life are strengths on which to capitalise. Strong competition as a business location from elsewhere means

Figure 9: Bracknell Forest balanced scorecard assessment summary

¹ [Regional and National Economic Indicators report 24 May 2023 ONS](#)

² [Independent forecasts for the UK economy June 2023 HMT](#)

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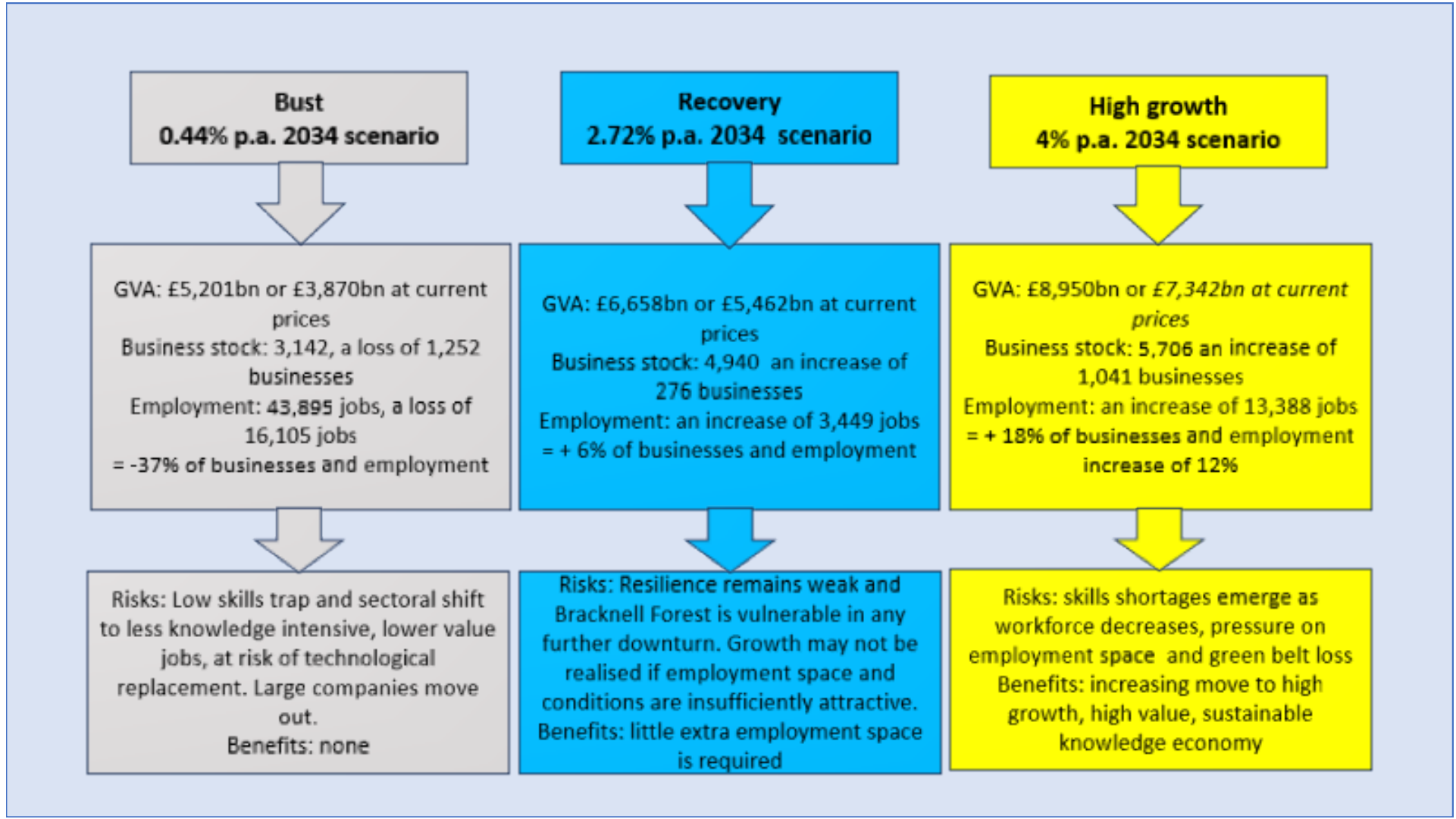


Figure 10: The three scenarios for the Bracknell Forest Economy over the lifetime of the Economic Strategy 2024-2034

4. Bracknell Forest: economic performance

1.8. Economic performance overview

Bracknell Forest lies at the heart of two major growth corridors from London to Bristol and London to Southampton³, broadly running along the M4 and M3 corridors⁴. We would expect Bracknell Forest to perform well economically due to its strategic location between the M4 and M3 growth corridors and relative proximity to London, the most competitive area in the UK. This has enabled it to be a popular location for large companies and corporate headquarters including global technology companies such as 3M, Fujitsu, Cadence and Dell, leading companies in chemicals and pharmaceuticals, for example Boehringer Ingelheim and Afton Chemical, and specialists such as Syngenta in agricultural technologies.

We would therefore expect Bracknell Forest to perform broadly in line with the Berkshire LEP and to outperform the South East region as a whole. The South East is a very large and disparate region which includes extensive rural areas which tend to be less productive, areas of geographic peripherality and places suffering the effects of coastal decline. However, on a number of measures, Bracknell Forest's economic performance is below that of the Berkshire LEP and the Bracknell Forest Functional Economic Area (FEA) and below that of neighbouring local economies, particularly Wokingham, Windsor and Maidenhead and in many respects, Reading. The reasons are examined in this chapter under each indicator.

³ Source: "Where growth happens: the high growth index of places" Grant Thornton

⁴ Source: "UK Competitiveness Index 2021" Nottingham Business School. The UKCI states: "It is obvious that the most competitive localities continue to be those within the boundaries of, or nearby to, London including those along the main motorway arteries into the capital."

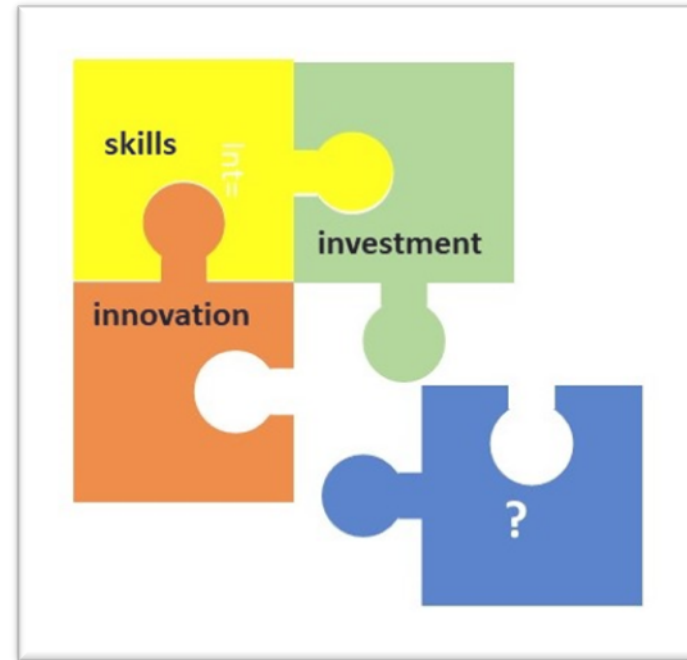


Figure 11: The productivity puzzle

INDICATORS

E.P.1 Competitiveness; E.P.2. productivity; E.P.3. Knowledge economy & specialisation; E.P.4. internationalisation

1.9. Bracknell Forest: economic performance assessment

E.P.1. Competitiveness

According to the UK Competitiveness Index 2023⁵, London is the top location among city regions and LEP areas.

Bracknell Forest is ranked 35th out of 362 UK locations in 2023, which, although relatively high in the national rankings, was lowest among the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA. *Table 1*

	2023	2019	change
Windsor & Maidenhead	14	13	-1
Wokingham	15	12	-3
Reading	22	25	+3
Bracknell Forest	35	34	-1
Surrey Heath	27	33	+6

Table 1: The Bracknell Forest FEA rankings in the UK Competitiveness Index 2023 and 2019

Source: UK Competitiveness Index Nottingham Trent University

The Legatum Institute’s Prosperity Index ranked Bracknell Forest 34th out of 362 local authorities although its rankings on individual “pillars” or domains varied significantly from 8th on *Living Conditions* to 337th on *Enterprise Conditions*. *Table 2*

Domain	National Rank
Safety and Security	145
Personal Freedom	77
Governance	170
Social Capital	169
Investment environment	117
Enterprise Conditions	337
Infrastructure	99
Economic Quality	53
Living Conditions	8
Health	21
Education	80
Natural Environment	42

Table 2: Bracknell Forest’s rankings on the UK Prosperity Index 2022

Source: Legatum Institute

The most relevant domains to the Economic Strategy are:

- *Investment Environment*, the extent to which investment capital is readily accessible and in demand (117)
- *Enterprise Conditions*: the degree businesses are able to start, compete, and expand e.g. ease of recruitment, skills (337)
- *Economic Quality*: how well a local economy is equipped to generate wealth sustainably and with the full engagement of the workforce (53)

Bracknell Forest scores particularly poorly on *Enterprise Conditions*

⁵ [UK Competitiveness Index 2023](#) Nottingham Trent University

E.P.2.Productivity

Bracknell Forest’s output of £4.956bn in 2021 accounted for 14.52% of the Bracknell Forest FEA’s total output. Alone among the comparator areas, Bracknell Forest experienced a net decrease of 4.52% in total GVA over the 2017 to 2021 reference period. Although all comparator areas were negatively affected in between 2019 and 2020, the year of lockdowns, Bracknell Forest’s was a particularly marked decline, indicating a lack of economic resilience. *Figure 12*

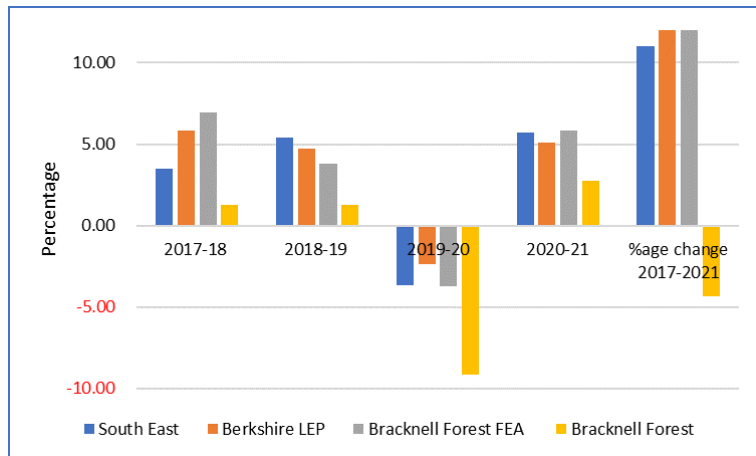


Figure 12: Percentage change in GVA in Bracknell Forest and the comparators between 2017 and 2021 and total change 2017-21
 Source: ONS Regional gross value added (£m at current prices, balanced method)

Within the Bracknell Forest FEA, Wokingham, Surrey Heath and Reading all achieved significant growth in GVA between 2017 and 2021, notwithstanding the very difficult economic period. *Table 3*

Bracknell Forest displayed weak growth in the pre-pandemic years leaving it exposed to the shock of lockdowns in 2019 to 2020 and a weaker recovery in 2020 to 2021.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	change 2017-21
Bracknell Forest	1.25	1.24	-9.17	2.74	-4.34
Reading	11.33	-1.47	-6.84	12.31	14.76
Windsor & Maidenhead	0.66	-1.72	-6.62	7.22	-0.95
Wokingham	11.35	14.01	4.22	2.41	35.50
Surrey Heath	12.20	11.69	-0.83	1.85	26.57

Table 3: Percentage change in GVA in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA and the comparators between 2017 and 2021 (£m at current prices)
 Source: ONS Regional gross value added (balanced)

Output per job shows a similar pattern; Bracknell Forest’s output per filled job of £76,178 in 2021 was 17.08% higher than that of the South East (£63,164) but 9.4% lower than that of the Berkshire LEP (£84,093) and 3.5% lower than that of the Bracknell Forest FEA (£78,963).

Among the comparator areas, only Bracknell Forest experienced a net decrease of 0.13% in GVA per filled job over the 2017 to 2021 reference period. *Figure 13*

The presence of large companies, including many blue chip global corporations, which are generally more productive would normally be expected to result in high GVA per job. The fact that this is not the case is indicative of lower value employment.

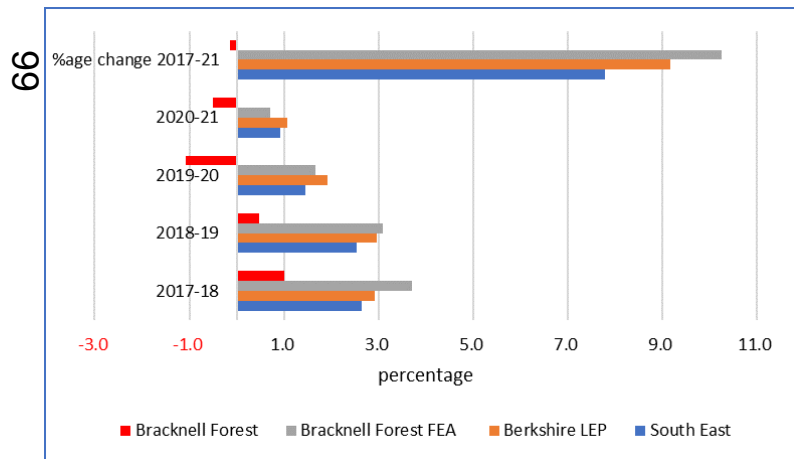


Figure 14: Percentage change in GVA per filled job in Bracknell Forest and the comparators between 2017 and 2021 and total change 2017-21
 Source: ONS Regional gross value added (at current prices, balanced method)

Bracknell Forest is well placed to take advantage of the growing ‘green-tech’ economy which straddles many sectors which include: Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency, Electric Vehicles (EVs) and Green Transportation, Waste

Management and Recycling, Environmental Monitoring and Sensors, Smart Grid and Grid Management, Green Building and Sustainable Construction, Renewable Resource Mapping and Forecasting, Sustainability Software and Analytics and Green Finance and Investment. The recent Oxford Economics ‘Green Growth’ Index cited the South East has having one of the best UK scores for the greatest opportunity but with the least challenge⁶. *Figure 13b*

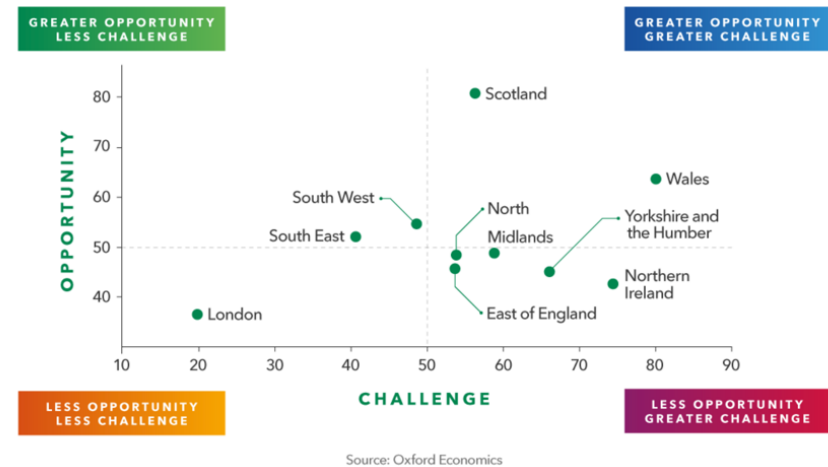


Figure 13b: Green Growth Index, The scoring range is from zero to 100, with 0 indicating the least opportunity for green growth and 100 indicating the most opportunity. Source: Oxford Economics/Lloyds Banking Group

⁶ Source: <https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/assets/pdfs/who-we-are/green-economy/uk-green-growth-index.pdf>

Bracknell Forest’s productivity gap

Management and leadership, workforce skills and capital investment, for example in new technology, are major drivers of productivity growth along with innovation, export propensity and less tangible factors such as entrepreneurial culture.

Sectoral composition is also an important factor; sectors such as *Advanced Manufacturing* are significantly more productive and contribute more to productivity growth whereas other industries such as *Transport & Storage* can have a negative effect⁷.

Bracknell Forest’s lower percentage of businesses in knowledge based sectors in relation to the comparators for example, *Professional, Scientific & Technical* and relatively high percentage of businesses in *Construction* and *Retail* support this conclusion.

100 The reasons for Bracknell Forest’s weak performance on productivity growth and output per job are likely to be multifactorial; actions to improve sectoral mix, entrepreneurship, skills, including management and leadership, and business performance are within scope of the Economic Strategy.

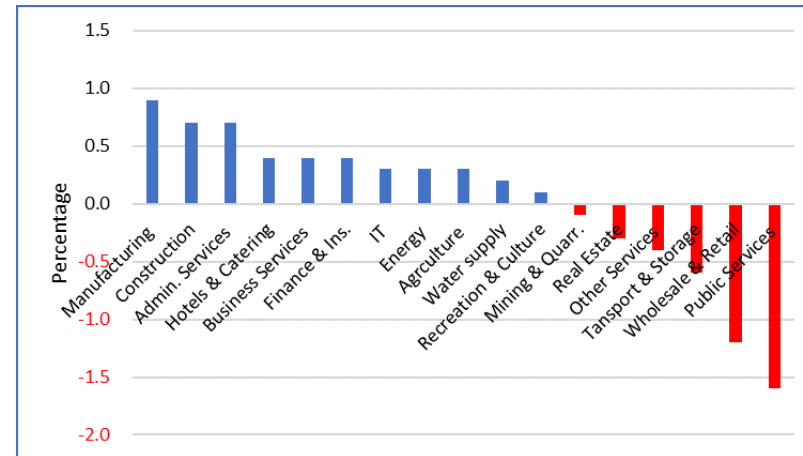


Figure 15: Contributions to total growth in output per hour worked by industry relative to the 2019 average

Source: ONS Productivity Overview 2022

⁷ Source: *Below the Aggregate: A Sectoral Account of the UK Productivity Puzzle*. ESCoE Discussion Paper 2018-06 May 2018

E.P.3. The knowledge economy and specialisation

A key test of a local economy is the strength of its knowledge economy, i.e. the part of the economy which is based on creating value through the application of intellectual capital ranging from highly technical industries and knowledge-intensive services to the creative industries. Businesses in the knowledge economy tend to be higher value and have higher worker productivity so it is an important contributor to economic growth. As well as employing highly skilled workers, knowledge economy businesses are often intensive users of information technology and have high levels of research and development and innovation.

The health of Bracknell Forest’s knowledge economy is particularly important because attracting and retaining global companies depends on the presence of knowledge-based services and supply chains and strongly embedded knowledge clusters.

In Bracknell Forest, 16.64% of businesses are in the knowledge economy⁸, lower than the Berkshire LEP area (18.03%) and the Bracknell Forest FEA (18.51%) but higher than the South East (12.34%).

All the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA, have experienced a decline in the knowledge economy between 2018 and 2022 but Bracknell Forest has seen the largest decline of 3.94%, a further indication of the lack of resilience in the Bracknell Forest local economy. *Figure 15*

⁸ We have used a relatively tightly focused definition of the knowledge economy comprising Medical Devices; Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnology; IT Services; Communications; Computing & Advanced Electronics (manufacturing); Other Technical Consultancy Services; Aerospace & Transport; Creative Content; Software: High Tech Financial Services. The Technical Annex contains a fuller explanation,

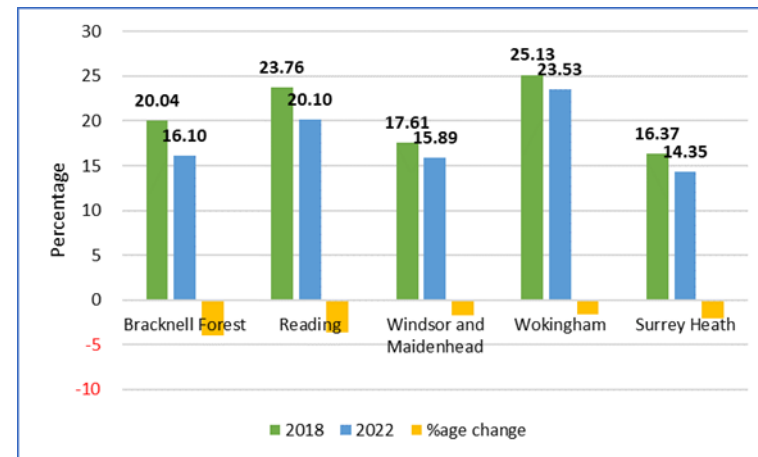


Figure 16: Change in knowledge economy businesses as a percentage of all businesses between 2018 and 2022 in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA

Source: ONS UK Business Counts (enterprises by broad industrial sector)

Specialisation

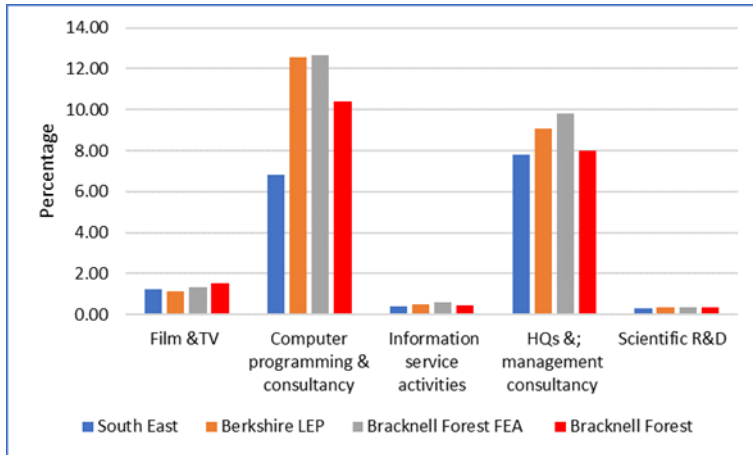


Figure 17: Business in high employment LQ industries in Bracknell Forest and the comparator areas as a percentage of all businesses in 2022
 Source: ONS UK Business Counts (enterprises by 2 digit SIC)

A degree of specialisation in local economies can lead to greater productivity as they are more likely to generate networks of knowledge, which in turn drive new innovation and growth within existing industries, and aid transitions to new types of high-value activity. For example, a place is more likely to move from computer software development to smartphone app development, than it is to go from shirt production to app development.

Based on Location Quotients (LQs) which measure concentrations of employment in a particular industry at local level, Bracknell Forest would appear to have specialisms in *Scientific R&D, Computer Programming, Head Office & Management Consultancy Activities, Information Services and Motion Picture, Video &TV or Film &TV*. These are all knowledge-based sectors and could provide opportunities for further agglomeration and growth in employment and output. *Figure 16*

The Film & TV sector which although a small sector at 70 businesses or 1.53% of the business population, is the highest percentage among the main comparator areas and is also the highest percentage of all ICT businesses. (See next chapter). However, within the Bracknell Forest FEA, all areas have seen a growth in the sector, linked to the growth of Pinewood studios in Slough and Shepperton studios, where Netflix are expanding their UK operations as part of UK-wide growth in this sector. Windsor & Maidenhead has the highest percentage of film & TV companies in the Bracknell Forest FEA at 1.92% of all businesses and a long established cluster around the Bray Film Studios. There may be a case for working with other areas nearby on joint initiatives to support this fast growth sector.

E.P.4. Internationalisation

Internationalisation, including trade, foreign ownership and foreign direct investment (FDI) are indicators of a dynamic and open local economy. According to ONS, businesses which trade internationally are 21% more productive than those who do not, after controlling for size, industry and ownership status and, although they make up only 4.6% of the national business base, they account for 40% of employment. *Manufacturing* and *Wholesale & Retail* businesses are the most likely to trade ⁹, fewer than 5% of British owned companies trade whereas 30% of EU owned and 37% of US owned companies trade.

Bracknell Forest's levels of internationalisation are high; among the authorities in the Berkshire LEP area - itself, highly internationalised by regional standards¹⁰ - Slough, Reading and Bracknell Forest have similarly high levels of foreign ownership. Bracknell Forest has the second lowest proportion of EU owned firms at 0.74% which could stand it in good stead if there is further fallout from the UK's departure from the EU. *Table 4*

Foreign owned companies account for half of all employment in Bracknell Forest, providing 34,012 of the area's 67,693 jobs in 2020, the highest percentage amount the local authorities in the Berkshire LEP area. The majority of these (42.99% or 29,101) are provided by non-EU firms which could be a benefit in the case of further fall out from the UK's departure from the EU. *Figure 17*

However, Bracknell Forest is not performing particularly well in terms of FDI. Details of investments are confidential but Department of International Trade data shared with Berkshire LEP show that the number of successful FDI projects

in Bracknell Forest in the last year has been less than a quarter of the number in Reading and has resulted in only a small number of new jobs.

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⁹ ONS: *UK trade in goods and productivity*

¹⁰ *Up to date regional figures are not available but in 2018, only 1.47% of South East firms were foreign owned, according to ONS.*

	Foreign owned	% of total	EU owned	% of total	Rest of World	%age of total
Bracknell Forest	155	3.28	35	0.74	120	2.54
West Berkshire	210	2.39	95	1.08	115	1.31
Reading	235	3.31	75	1.06	160	2.26
Slough	240	3.66	95	1.45	145	2.21
Windsor & Maidenhead	255	2.67	90	0.94	165	1.73
Wokingham	225	2.50	65	0.72	160	1.78

Table 4: Foreign ownership of firms in the LAAs in the Berkshire LEP area 2020
 Source ONS: UK business activity, size and location

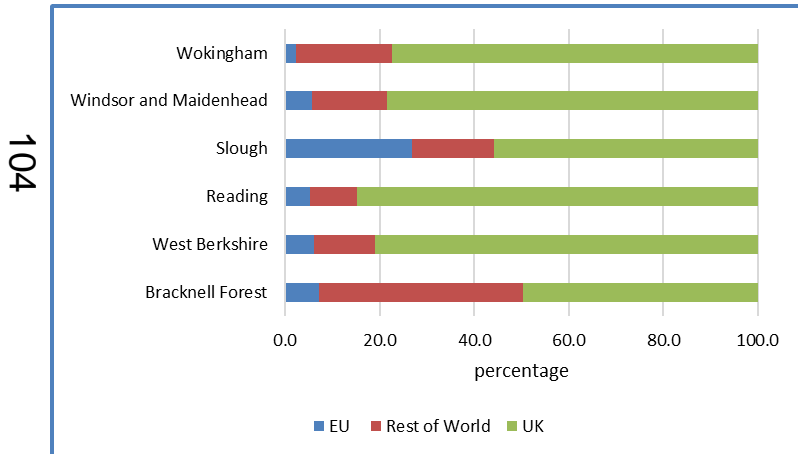


Figure 18: Percentage of total employment by EU, rest of world and UK firms in the LAAs in the Berkshire LEP area 2020
 Source ONS: UK business activity, size and location

1.10. Bracknell Forest economic performance: scorecard summary

Indicator	Key metric	Summary of current state	Priorities for action
E.P.1. Competitiveness	Legatum Institute and UK Competitiveness Index annual rankings	Bracknell Forest benefits from its strategic location in the prosperous South East and as a popular business location at the heart of two important growth corridors with good international connectivity. However, Bracknell Forest does not perform as well on overall competitiveness as the other LAAs in the FEA. It rates less well on investment conditions and negatively on enterprise environment.	Investigate the underlying weaknesses in enterprise conditions and identify actions to address them e.g. targeted business support. (See business competitiveness)
E.P.2. Productivity	GVA per filled job	Bracknell Forest’s weak productivity performance is a cause for concern. The analysis indicates that there is a lack of resilience to economic shocks such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the economy is not recovering as rapidly as neighbouring areas. This is despite the presence of large companies and high levels of internationalisation which would normally result in higher productivity. The causes are likely to include an over representation of less productive sectors as well as management and skills issues.	Carry out research into local business finance and investment readiness of SMEs. Invest in management and leadership skills as well as nurturing and providing the right conditions for more productive, knowledge economy businesses. (see business competitiveness & people, work and skills)
E.P.3 knowledge economy and specialisation	Percentage of knowledge economy businesses	Bracknell Forest’s knowledge economy is smaller than that of the comparator areas and neighbouring local authorities and appears to be less resilient. There is some degree of specialisation which could indicate the presence of nascent clusters, e.g. Film and TV, Scientific R&D. These are not necessarily peculiar to Bracknell Forest and extend across neighbouring local authorities.	Build networks of knowledge in key knowledge economy sectors and clusters working with partners across the wider area.
E.P.4. Internationalisation and FDI	No. of foreign owned companies	Bracknell Forest’s levels of internationalisation are high; it has the second highest level of companies in foreign ownership and the highest percentage of employment in foreign owned companies among the Berkshire LAAs. This puts Bracknell Forest at risk of outward migration of companies and jobs, should the benefits of staying in the UK not seem sufficiently attractive in future. Secondly, although foreign owned companies are more likely to trade and, hence, be more productive, the benefits do not appear to be feeding through to the local economy. Recently, FDI activity in Bracknell Forest has been low.	Monitor levels of foreign ownership and FDI. Focus on retention of large businesses, particularly foreign-owned businesses and ensure that they are made to feel valued and have the right conditions. Promote the benefits of locating in Bracknell Forest and work with Department for International Trade (DIT) to land more FDI projects in Bracknell Forest.

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5. Business competitiveness

1.11. Business competitiveness overview

Bracknell Forest is a popular location for businesses with many advantages including access to a large pool of workers within commuting distance, good transport and IT communications infrastructure and a range of commercial and retail premises available.

The business population of circa 4,500 includes many well-known, large companies and corporate headquarters, provides 68,000 jobs and makes up 14% of the Bracknell Forest Functional Economic Area. *Figure 18*

Nevertheless, as with performance on productivity, Bracknell Forest shows a lack of resilience and dynamism compared to other nearby local economies and underperforms on business creation and survival as well as decline in some key sectors.

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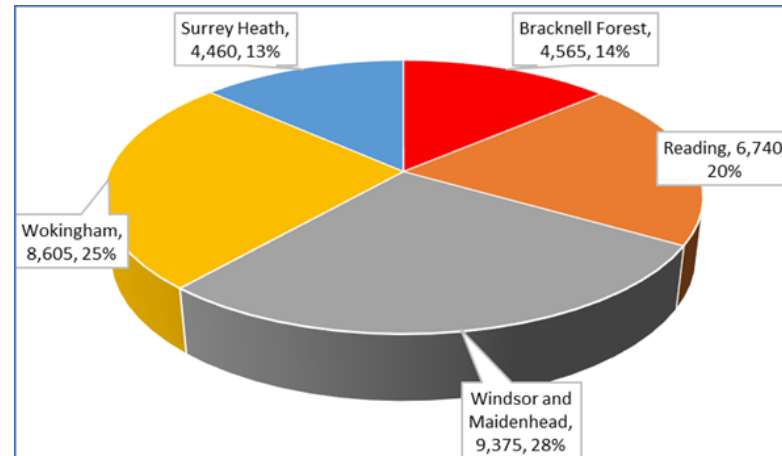


Figure 19: Numerical and percentage (rounded) share of total businesses in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA in 2022

Source: ONS UK Business Counts (enterprises)

INDICATORS

B.C.1. Business growth; B.C.2. business creation and survival; B.C.3. business size; B.C.4. key industries and sectoral shift; B.C.5. information and communications, B.C.6; the visitor economy

1.12. Bracknell Forest business competitiveness assessment

B.C.1. Business growth

Between 2018 and 2022, the business population in the South East region grew by around 2%, in spite of adverse economic circumstances. The largest growth sectors in the region were *Construction, Retail, Transport & Storage* and *Accommodation*, all sectors which tended to do well during lockdown. These sectors also grew in the LEP area and the Bracknell Forest FEA, although not enough to offset losses in *Information & Communications* and *Professional, Scientific & Technical* sectors. *Table 5*

In all the LAAs in both the Berkshire LEP area and the Bracknell Forest FEA the number of businesses declined between 2018 and 2022. Bracknell Forest lost 1.92% of its business stock or 100 businesses, of which 5 were large companies. Within the FEA, Reading suffered a larger loss at 2.03% and Surrey Heath lost 5.21%. *Figure 19*

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	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Change 2018-22
South East region	2.58	0.82	0.43	-1.79	2.00
Berkshire LEP	1.74	0.68	-1.18	-2.17	-0.97
Bracknell Forest FEA	1.74	0.36	-1.27	-2.30	-1.52
Bracknell Forest	0.21	1.18	-1.17	-2.14	-1.93

Table 5: Percentage change in stock of enterprises in Bracknell Forest and the comparator areas, 2018-2022

Source: ONS UK Business Counts (enterprises)

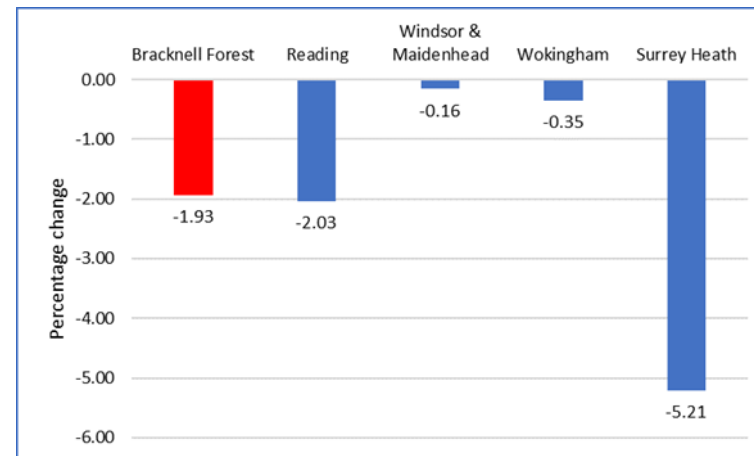


Figure 20: Percentage change in stock of enterprises in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA 2018-2022

Source: ONS UK Business Counts (enterprises)

B.C.2. Business creation and survival

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	change 2017-18
South East	87.70	88.20	91.72	84.69	84.05	-3.65
Berkshire LEP	101.29	100.68	103.57	88.73	87.43	-13.86
FEA	93.47	92.10	91.63	77.26	79.33	-14.14
Bracknell Forest	79.72	72.34	76.39	62.58	65.64	-14.08

Table 6: Business births per 10,000 WAP among the comparator areas 2017 to 2021
 Source: ONS Business demography

The rate of new business creation per 10,000 working age population (WAP) is used as a measure of the entrepreneurial dynamism of a local economy. The rate of business creation per 10,000 WAP has declined in all the comparators over the period 2017 to 2021, but Bracknell Forest has consistently had the lowest rate of business creation and the second largest decline in its rate over the period 2017 to 2021. Table 6

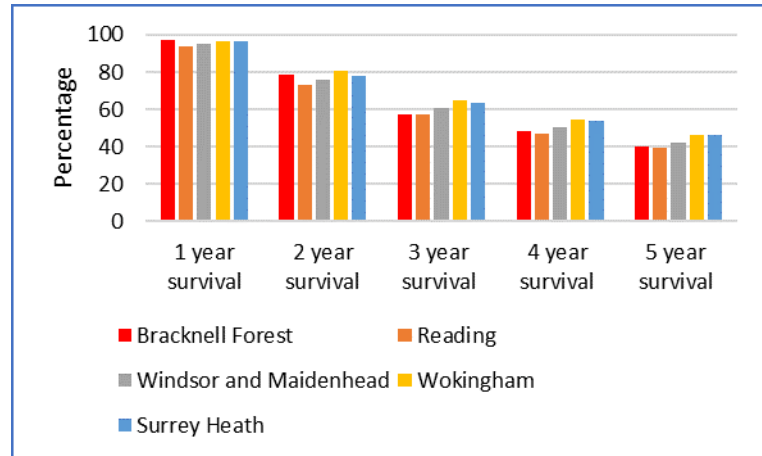


Figure 21: Survival rates for businesses born in 2016 in Bracknell Forest and the LAAs in the FEA
 Source: ONS Business demography

Bracknell Forest, which tend to do slightly better on 1 and 2 year survival rates for businesses born in 2016, has the lowest 5 year survival rates for these businesses, both among the comparator areas and among the LAAs in the FEA. Figure 20

B.C.3. Business size

Bracknell Forest has a higher percentage of businesses in the medium (50-249) and large (250+) employment size bands than the comparator areas, although this equates to fairly small numbers as the business population as a whole is not large. There were just 35 large and 85 medium businesses in 2022 in Bracknell Forest, making Bracknell Forest vulnerable to employment and output losses, if just a few large firms and medium firms were to relocate. *Figure 21*

Consistent with its higher percentages of businesses in the top employment size brackets, Bracknell Forest also has more businesses in the >£50m and £10m-£50m bands than the comparators.

However, the £1m-£5m band is where the fast growth companies for the future can often be found and Bracknell Forest has the lowest percentage (300 businesses) in this bracket *Table 7*

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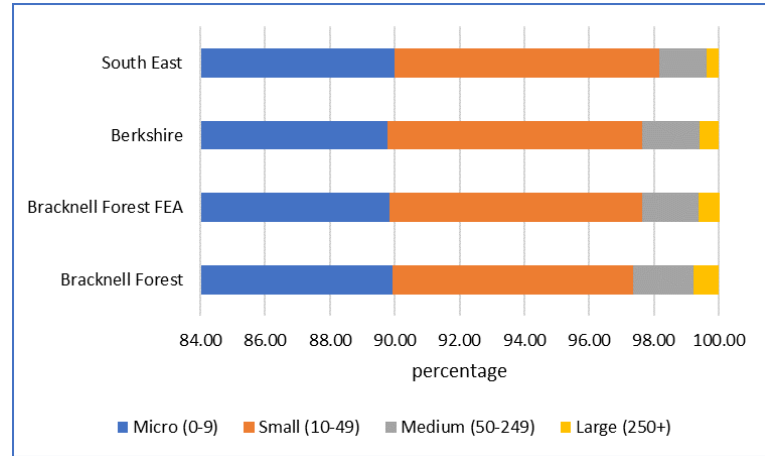


Figure 22:

Percentage of businesses by employment size in the comparator areas 2022
 Source: ONS UK Business Counts enterprises by industry and employment size band

	<£1m	£1m-5m	£5m-10m	£10-50m	>£50m
South East	91.05	6.69	1.01	0.91	0.33
Berkshire LEP	89.94	6.86	1.28	1.36	0.57
Bracknell Forest FEA	90.19	6.74	1.17	1.33	0.58
Bracknell Forest	89.70	6.57	1.20	1.75	0.77

Table 7: Percentage of businesses by turnover size band in the comparator areas 2022
 Source: ONS UK Business Counts - enterprises by industry and employment size band

B.C.4.Key industries and sectoral shift

Bracknell Forest is known for its knowledge economy businesses and *Information & Communications* (ICT) in particular, as well as the *Professional, Scientific & Technical* sector. Not only are these businesses an important part of the Bracknell Forest economy and its identity as a successful business location, they are also essential for growth and prosperity and underpin other sectors in the local economy, for example, drawing in skilled workers who support local services. These key knowledge economy sectors are also more environmentally friendly than other sectors such as *Construction* and *Transport*.

Between 2018 and 2022, there has been a significant growth in *Construction* and a relatively large decline in *Information & Communications* businesses in Bracknell Forest. *Figure 22*

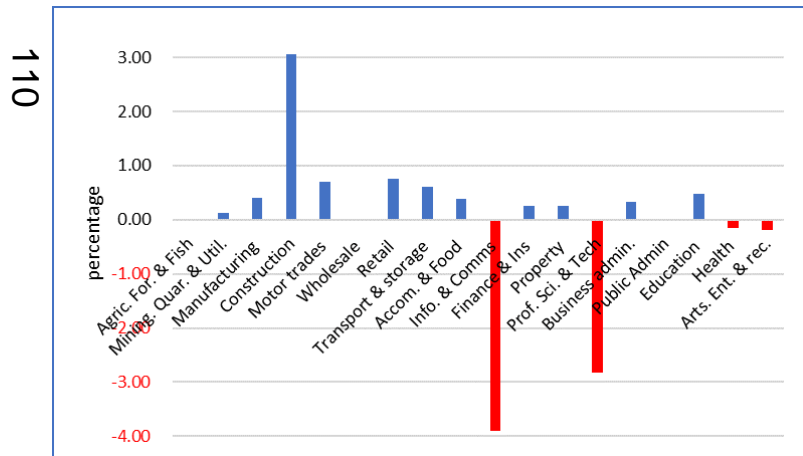


Figure 23: Change in percentage of businesses by industry in Bracknell Forest between 2018 and 2022

Source: ONS UK Business Counts (enterprises by broad industrial sector)

- **Professional, Scientific & Technical** is the largest sector accounting for 18.18% of Bracknell Forest’s businesses in 2022. Despite its being the largest sector, Bracknell Forest still has a lower percentage of *Professional, Scientific & Technical* businesses than both the Berkshire LEP area and the FEA as a whole.
- Bracknell Forest is highly dependent on **Construction**, the second largest sector; at 17.52% of all businesses compared to just 11.79% in the Berkshire LEP area. *Construction* is a cyclical industry, dependent on spending in the wider economy and so this may leave Bracknell Forest somewhat exposed in an economic downturn.
- **Information & Communications** (ICT) is the third largest business sector in Bracknell Forest at 13.47% of all businesses, lower than in the Bracknell Forest FEA (15.66%) and Berkshire LEP area (15.32%).
- ICT businesses have declined in all the comparator areas since 2018 but largest decline has been in Bracknell Forest which has lost 195 businesses or 24.07% of ICT stock.
- Together with the lower representation of the *Professional, Scientific & Technical* this indicates a shift to a somewhat less knowledge-intensive economy than the comparators. This has been raised as an issue in the consultations.
- In Bracknell Forest, 735 out of 4,565 or 16.10% of total businesses were in the **knowledge economy** sectors in 2022. This is lower than both Berkshire LEP (18.03%) and the Bracknell Forest FEA (18.51%), but higher than the 12.34% of knowledge economy businesses in the South East region as a whole.

B.C.5 Information and Communications

The *Information and Communications* (ICT) sector is not only important as a generator of GVA and knowledge-based employment but also as a factor underpinning the success of other knowledge economy sectors. There were 615 businesses in the ICT sector¹¹ in Bracknell Forest in 2022 representing 13.47% of total businesses, the lowest percentage among the comparator areas with the exception of the South East region.

Source: ONS UK Business Counts (enterprises Section J)

Among the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA, Bracknell Forest has experienced the greatest decline in its ICT sector as a percentage of all businesses. In 2022, ICT businesses comprised 13.47% of all businesses, a decline of 3.89% from its 2018 figure of 17.36%. The ICT-rich economy of Wokingham retains its lead and has shown the smallest decline of 1.84%; 1 in 5 of all businesses in Wokingham were in the ICT sector in 2022. *Figure 23.*

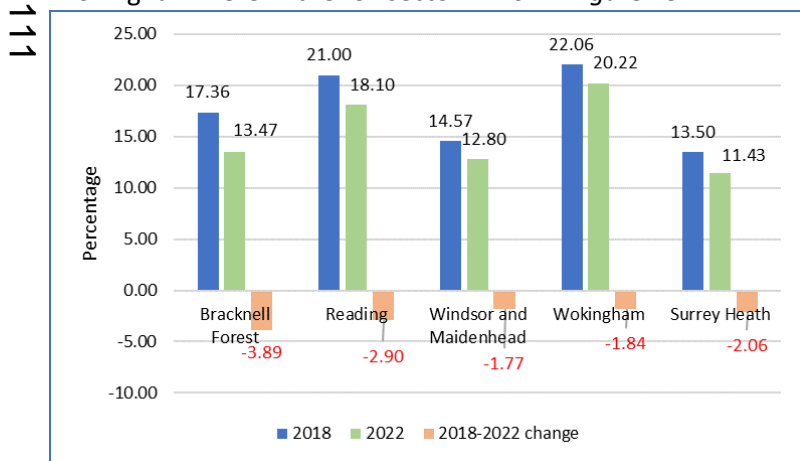


Figure 24: ICT businesses as a percentage of all businesses in the LAAs In the Bracknell Forest FEA 2018 -2022

¹¹.

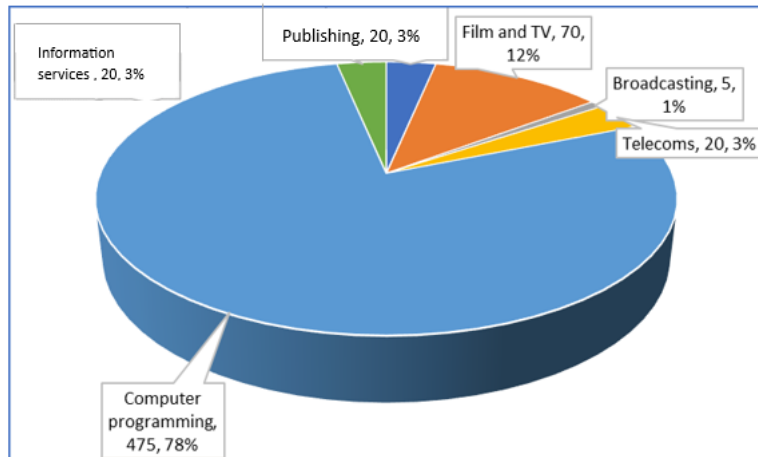


Figure 25: ICT subsectors as a percentage of ICT businesses in Bracknell Forest in 2022
Source: ONS UK Business Counts (enterprises)

112 The largest ICT subsector in Bracknell Forest is *Computer Programming* with 78% of all ICT businesses, broadly in line with the comparators. Where Bracknell Forest appears to have a strength is in the more creative sub sectors of *Publishing, Broadcasting* and *Film & TV*, which together account for over 15% of all ICT businesses, compared to 10% in the Berkshire LEP area. *Figure 24*

B.C.6. The visitor economy

Bracknell Forest is not normally considered a tourist ‘destination’ in contrast to nearby Windsor, for example. However, it is home to a number of smaller, day visitor attractions that not only attract residents but also appeal to a sizeable local visitor catchment area. These are primarily day-trip attractions such as The Lookout Discovery Centre, Coral Reef Waterworld, Lily Hill Park, , South Hill Park Arts Centre and, as a shopping destination, the Lexicon. There are a number of local festivals and events such as the Bracknell Ale and Cider Festival which generate additional visits into the area. Lapland UK (sited just within Bracknell Forest) has become a well-established winter attraction.

Overnight stays in Bracknell Forest are predominantly by business travellers in the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) market, supplemented by weekend stays for family events such as weddings. Proximity to Ascot and Legoland also generates some leisure overnight stays for Bracknell Forest accommodation providers. Key hotels such as the Coppid Beech with over 200 rooms, Easthampstead Park with 92 rooms, The Village Hotel with 210 and Stirrups with 46 rooms, two Travelodges, two Premier Inns and many smaller independent providers offer a considerable range of accommodation types and price points to suit most overnight visitors.

The post-Covid changes to the commercial office sector will potentially have a negative impact on the MICE sector in Bracknell Forest with possibly lower demand for business overnight stays, locally held meetings, conferences and exhibitions. Venue operators heavily reliant on the weekday MICE sector may need to refocus into generating more leisure business to supplement any decline in business visitor revenues. Many hotels and venues have introduced low cost hot-desking space and easy to hire by the hour meeting rooms to cater for the growth in hybrid and more flexible working practices and downsizing of large corporate premises.



Figure 26: Coral Reef Waterworld

1.13. Bracknell Forest business competitiveness: scorecard summary

Indicator	Key metric	Summary of current state	Priorities for action
B.C.1. Business growth	Growth in number of registered businesses	A growing business population is an indicator of an area’s attractiveness as a business location. The business population in Bracknell Forest has declined by 1.92% between 2018 and 2022. Weak growth before the pandemic was followed by losses during and since, indicating a lack of resilience.	Work with partners to target business support on those sectors are most important to retain and grow in Bracknell Forest e.g. <i>ICT, Professional, Scientific & Technical, Arts Entertainment & Recreation</i> .
B.C.2. Business creation and survival	Start up rates per 10,000 Working Age Population (WAP)	Bracknell Forest’s rate of business creation per 10,000 WAP has been significantly lower than the comparator areas over time and has declined markedly since 2017. 4 and 5 year survival rates are also lower than in the comparator areas.	Increase business start-up support. Work with large companies and the Bracknell Business Improvement District BID to support new businesses in supply chains where there are local gaps.
B.C.3. Business size structure	No. and percentages of companies in the 250+ and 50-249 employees size brackets and £1m-£5m turnover	Bracknell Forest benefits from having higher percentages of medium and large companies who are major sources of local employment. However, this leaves Bracknell Forest open to large losses of local jobs if big companies downsize or relocate.	Continue to build relationships with large companies to understand any issues e.g. recruitment, planning, and make sure they are positive about Bracknell Forest. Nurture small companies in the £1m-£5m turnover bracket to develop the next generation of large employers.
B.C.4. Key industries and sectoral shift	Shift share by industrial sector	<i>Information & Communications, Professional Scientific & Technical, and Arts Entertainment & Recreation</i> have all lost share while <i>Construction, Transport and Motor Trades</i> have all increased making the business structure less knowledge-intensive and less environmentally sustainable.	Develop a local industrial strategy and action plan to ensure Bracknell Forest retains its position as a location for knowledge-based businesses. This would include building on nascent clusters e.g. <i>Scientific R&D and Film & T.V. and Medical Devices</i> as well as local supply chain and local workforce development to ensure large companies are embedded.
B.C.5. Information & Communications	Percentage of ICT businesses and digital creative subsectors	Bracknell Forest, known for being a location for ICT businesses seems to be losing share while others nearby are doing much better e.g. Wokingham. Bracknell Forest could exploit niches where it seems to have a strength.	Support <i>Publishing, Broadcasting and Film & TV</i> sectors, working with other local authorities nearby in the digital creative industry locations.
B.C.6. Tourism and Hospitality		Bracknell Forest has mainly day visitor tourism and, for overnights stays, business tourism. Overnight tourism is predominantly the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) sector which may be at risk if large companies downsize or relocate.	Work with tourism organisations to promote Bracknell Forest attractions and encourage more day visitors. Carry out risk analysis for MICE sector and work with accommodation providers to explore alternatives.

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6. People, work and wellbeing

1.14. Bracknell Forest: people work and wellbeing: overview

Bracknell Forest is a popular place to live and work. Its population is growing and it has a younger age profile than surrounding areas. On the whole, its residents report high levels of well being and life expectancy is increasing.

There are challenges, however, from an economic point of view. Skills levels among the working age population are significantly lower than in the comparator areas and are not showing any improvement. Over the lifetime of the Economic Strategy, the population is forecast to age and the numbers of 25 to 49 year olds will decrease, leading to possible shortages of labour. Residents earnings, though rising quickly, are lower than workplace wages meaning that locals are missing out on economic opportunity. Household incomes are lower than the comparator areas.

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Without action, Bracknell Forest may be heading for a low skills equilibrium with lower value employment increasing and knowledge economy jobs declining. Since skills demand is a derived demand, resulting from business strategy, it is essential to address both the demand for, and supply of, skills by driving up management and leadership skills and strategic aspiration. *Figure 26*

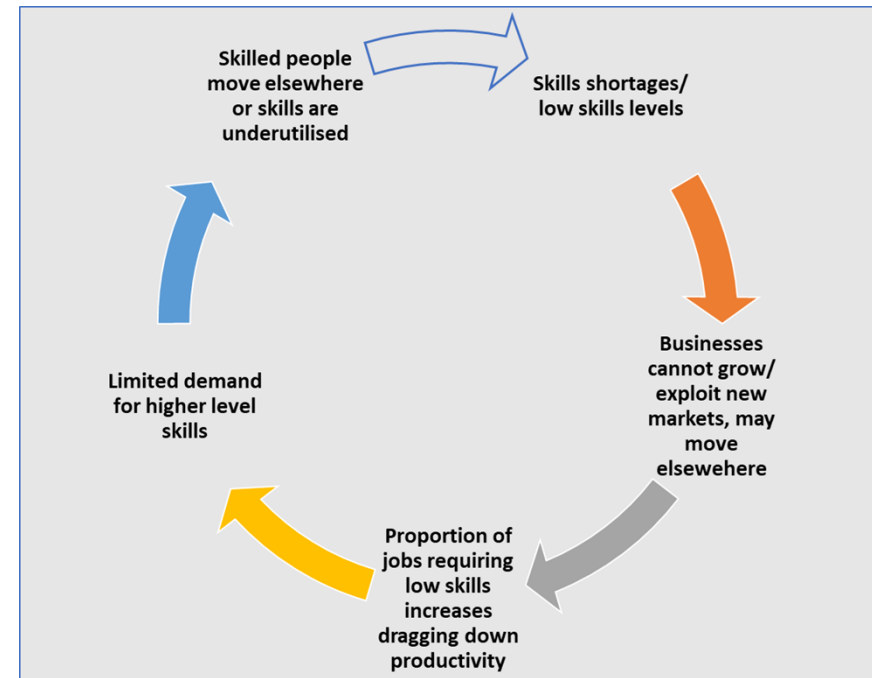


Figure 27: The low skills trap

INDICATORS

P.W.W.1. population change; P.W.W.2. qualifications and skills; P.W.W.3. employment & employment specialisms; P.W.W.4. occupational structure; P.W.W.5. earnings; P.W.W.6. wealth, health and well-being.

1.15. Bracknell Forest: people work and wellbeing: assessment

P.W.W.1. Population change

In 2021, the population of Bracknell Forest was 125,174, an increase of 10,085 or 8.5% over the decade. This is a rate of growth that, while higher than that of the South East as whole (6.52%) and in keeping with its location close to London and between the M3 and M4 growth corridors, is lower than in neighbouring fast growth areas such as Reading (10.44%) and Wokingham (13.73%).

While population growth is forecast to slow to 2.97% between 2021 and 2035 ageing will continue. The current, slightly younger profile of Bracknell Forest residents will be superseded by a decrease in those aged 25 to 49 and the largest percentage growth in those aged 65+ among the comparator areas.

This indicates that there may well be a shrinking local workforce, not just in Bracknell Forest but in the wider Bracknell Forest Functional Economic Area (FEA). *Figure 27*



Figure 28: Forecast percentage change in population by age group in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA 2021-2035
 Source: ONS Population projections

P.W.W.2. Qualifications and skills

Bracknell Forest’s working age population is notably less highly skilled. By some margin, Bracknell Forest has the lowest percentage of its working age population (16-64) qualified at NVQ 4 and above and NVQ3 and above among the comparator areas. Bracknell Forest has just 39.1% of its working age population qualified to NVQ4 and above compared to 52.1% in the Bracknell Forest FEA as a whole. Among the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA, Windsor and Maidenhead has the most highly qualified resident working age population at the higher levels, NVQ4 and above and NVQ 3 and above and Bracknell Forest has the least qualified at these levels. *Figure 28*

The improvement that the comparator areas have experienced at NVQ Levels 4+ and 3+ over the period 2017 to 2021 have not been repeated in Bracknell Forest. The percentage of the working age population qualified at NVQ Level 4+ has declined by 3.5% in Bracknell Forest whereas in the FEA as a whole, there has been an increase of 5.57%.

It is not clear why this should be the case; either skilled workers are moving out or are leaving the labour force, perhaps through early retirement in Bracknell Forest. Low skills have been raised as a concern during the consultations and knowledge economy businesses reported not being able to find the right skills locally.

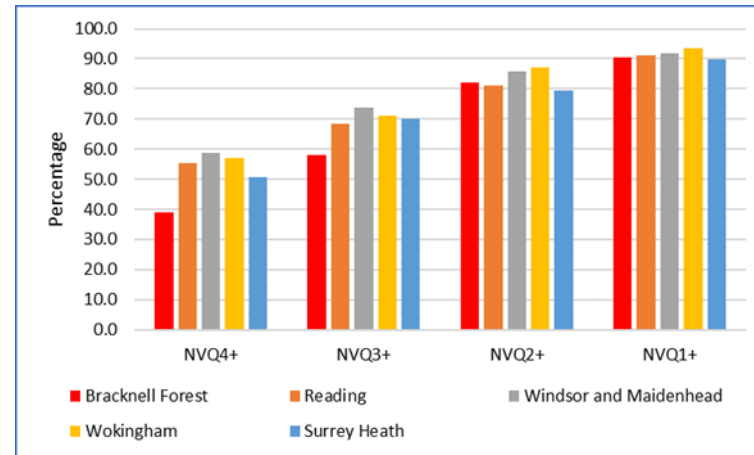


Figure 29: Percentage of working age resident population qualified at levels NVQ4+, NVQ3+, NVQ2+ and NVQ1+ in 2021 in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA
Source: ONS Annual Population Survey

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P.W.W.3. Employment & employment specialisms

According to ONS¹², there were 60,625 people in employment in Bracknell Forest in 2021.¹³ While the main comparator areas have seen a small growth in employment between 2017 to 2021, Bracknell Forest has seen a significant loss of 3.92% or -2,475 jobs.

The biggest loss has been circa 3,000 jobs in *Information & Communications* at -4.24% of all jobs. This has been offset to an extent by job gains in *Professional, Scientific & Technical* job gains which has enabled Bracknell Forest to retain its lead in knowledge economy jobs among the comparator areas at 17.39% of all employment. However, Bracknell Forest has seen the greatest decrease in share of knowledge economy jobs at -1.55% between 2017 and 2021. *Table 8*

At LAA level, Bracknell Forest has a lower percentage of *Information & Communication* jobs (13.20%) than both Reading (15.78%) and Wokingham (14.40%), its main competitors as a location for the ICT sector and for knowledge economy employment.

The percentage of businesses in the two key knowledge economy sectors of *Information & Communications* and *Professional, Scientific & Technical* is lower than their shares of employment in Bracknell Forest, which suggests that many of these jobs are in large companies and reinforces the need to retain these important employers.

	Bracknell Forest 2017 %age	Bracknell Forest 2021 %age	Bracknell Forest change %age	Bracknell Forest change no.
Professional, Scientific & Technical	11.09	14.85	3.75	2,000
Information & Communications	17.43	13.20	-4.24	-3,000
Retail	9.51	9.90	0.39	0
Business Administration and Support	9.51	9.90	0.39	0
Health	7.92	9.90	1.97	1,000
Education	7.92	8.25	0.32	0
Wholesale	9.51	7.42	-2.09	-1,500
Accommodation & Food	4.75	4.95	0.19	0
Construction	3.17	4.12	0.95	500
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	4.75	4.12	-0.63	-500
Manufacturing	2.38	2.89	0.51	250
Motor Trades	1.98	2.47	0.49	250
Financial & Insurance	1.98	2.47	0.49	250
Property	2.77	2.47	-0.30	-250
Transport & Storage	3.17	1.48	-1.69	-1,100
Public Administration. & Defence	1.58	0.99	-0.60	-400
Mining, Quarrying & Utilities	0.32	0.41	0.10	50
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	0.24	0.21	-0.03	-25
	100	100	3.92%	-2,475

Table 8: Change in share of total employment by sector in Bracknell Forest 2017 to 2021
 ONS: Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) (Employment by Broad Industrial Group)

¹² Source: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) 2021 Employment (Employment includes employees plus the number of working owners. BRES therefore includes self-employed workers as long as they are registered for VAT or Pay-As-You-Earn (PAYE) schemes. Self-employed people not registered for these, along with HM Forces and Government Supported trainees are excluded.)

¹³ The Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) does not include HM Forces data and Sandhurst Military Academy is a large employer in Bracknell Forest. MOD data available separately shows that in 2021 there were 1,040 military personnel employed in Bracknell Forest including 750 officers and 250 other ranks (rounded).

Employment specialisms

Location quotients (LQs) measure concentrations of employment in an area compared to either the region or nation. Compared to the South East region, Bracknell Forest has concentrations of employment in *Scientific Research and Development, Computer Programming, Information Services, Repair of Computers, Other Manufacturing, Activities of Head Offices, Wholesale, Film & TV* and *Manufacture of Chemicals*. *Figure 29*

Bracknell Forest retains its advantage in these sectors among the local authorities in the Bracknell Forest FEA, except for *Computer Programming* where Wokingham has a slightly higher percentage of total employment.

The consultations highlighted the need for the Economic Strategy to identify key growth sectors and sectors where Bracknell Forest has an advantage for future support, particularly in knowledge-based industries which are environmentally more sustainable.

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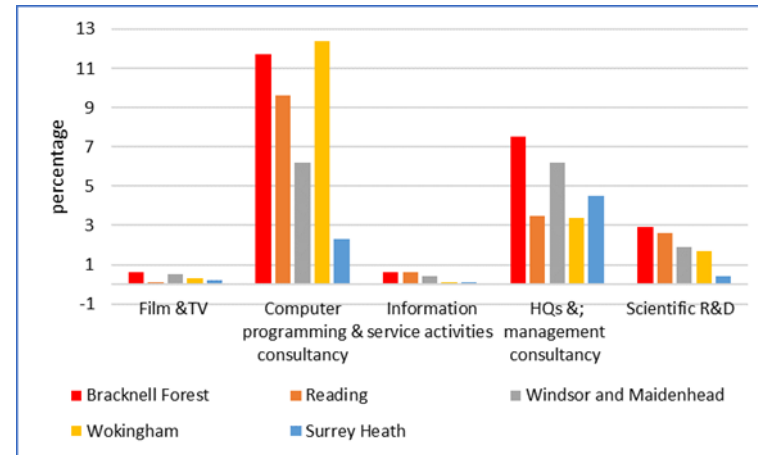


Figure 30: Percentage of total employment by specialism in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA 2021
 Source: Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) (2 digit SIC)

P.W.W.4. Occupational structure

Bracknell Forest’s occupational structure is similar to that of the main comparator areas, but within the Bracknell Forest FEA some differences are apparent; 57% of Bracknell Forest’s residents in employment are employed in the top 3 occupational groups, very similar to Reading (56%) but significantly below Windsor & Maidenhead and Wokingham, the two areas with faster growth and productivity. *Figure 30*

Bracknell Forest performs well at the intermediate occupational level i.e. the middle three groups: just under a quarter (24.8%) of Bracknell Forest residents are employed in these occupations. Within these three groups, Bracknell Forest has the highest percentage employed in *Group 5: skilled trades* at 8.4% of residents in employment.

However, 18% of Bracknell Forest’s employed residents work in the bottom 3 occupational groups, of which 10.1% are in *Group 9: elementary occupations*, the lowest skilled and lowest paid, consistent with the low skills profile¹⁴.

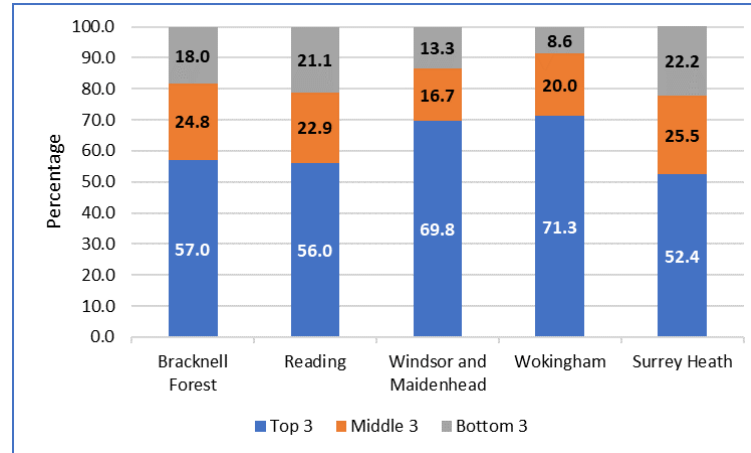


Figure 31: Percentage of residents in employment by occupational group in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA 2021
 Source: ONS Annual Population Survey

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¹⁴ Group 1: managers, directors and senior officials; Group 2: professionals; Group 3: associate professionals; Group 4: administrative & secretarial; Group 5: skilled trades; Group 6: caring, leisure & other services; Group 7: sales & customer service; Group 8: process, plant & machinery operatives; Group 9: elementary occupations

P.W.W.5. Earnings

Both residents and workplace wages have seen rapid increases in Bracknell Forest. Residents' gross median weekly wages have grown by 19.72% from £608.90 in 2018 to £729.00 in 2022. Workplace wages have grown by an even greater percentage of 24.10%, rising from £682.80 in 2018 to £847.30 in 2022.

Bracknell Forest residents' wages are higher than Reading residents' wages but lower than those of the other LAAs in the FEA, consistent with the lower skills and occupational profile of Bracknell Forest residents.

Due to the rapid growth in Bracknell Forest workplace wages, they now outstrip median gross weekly wages, not only in all the comparator areas, but also in all the LAAs in the FEA. *Figure 31*

121 The large disparity between residents' and workplace wages of 16.22% indicates that residents are not all benefiting from well-paid local employment and a significant percentage of residents are occupying less well paid jobs either locally or elsewhere.

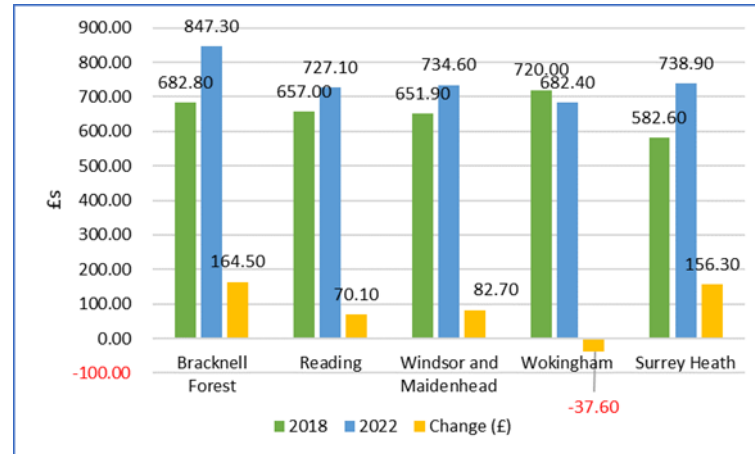


Figure 32: Workplace gross median weekly wages in £s in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA and change in £s between 2018 and 2022

Source: ONS Annual Survey of Household Earnings (workplace-based)

P.W.W.6. Wealth, health and well-being

A competitive, resilient and sustainable economy will only be successful if everyone in Bracknell Forest can benefit. For individuals, low educational attainment and low skills mean limited access to economic opportunities and lower wages, as well as increased chances of poor health, which itself comes at an economic cost. Less wealth in the local economy means local businesses and services, most visibly those on high streets, may struggle and, longer-term, fewer higher value and more low skilled, low pay businesses will be attracted to the area. Higher skilled individuals may move out or commute to better jobs elsewhere, which benefits neither the environment nor the local economy.

Although interventions to improve educational outcomes, health and social inclusion are outside the scope of this Economic Strategy and covered in other strategies, monitoring wealth, health, well-being and economic inclusion will help to make sure that the Economic Strategy is improving fairness of outcomes.

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- In 2020, **General Disposable Household Income (GDHI)** in Bracknell Forest was £23,905, the lowest among the comparators. Although it has increased by £1,796 or 8.12% from 2016, this was a lower rate of growth than any of the comparator areas.
- The **employment rate** in Bracknell Forest has shown notably less resilience through the period of the pandemic, starting off as the highest among the comparators in 2018 at 85% of 16-64 year olds and ending up as the lowest in 2022 at 78%, probably due to the number of people in lower value, less secure employment.
- Before the pandemic, Bracknell Forest had an **unemployment rate** of 2%, lower than all the comparators. During 2020/21, it increased almost two and a half times, i.e. the largest increase out of all the comparator areas and it remains the highest unemployment rate.
- **Life expectancy** has increased for both females and males in Bracknell Forest. Females born in 2017-19 can expect to live to 85.42 years, 2.35 years longer than those born in 2007-9 while males born in (2017-19) can expect to live to 81.74 years, 2.38 years longer than the earlier cohort - almost on a par with Wokingham, the area with the best life expectancy.
- In 2021, 86.95% of Bracknell Forest residents reported being in either very good or good **health**, similar to both the FEA (86.97%) and Berkshire LEP (86.60%) and above the South East region (83.99%).
- **Housing affordability** is better in Bracknell Forest than the comparators with a median house price/earnings ratio of 9.8. in 2022 and is improving; between 2018 and 2022, the ratio fell by 7.81% in Bracknell Forest and rose by 4.63% in the South East.
- Bracknell Forest residents tend to give themselves somewhat lower **well-being** scores on “life satisfaction”, “happiness” and “worthwhile” and higher scores on anxiety than the comparators. In all areas, well-being ratings worsened during the pandemic and have not returned to previous levels.

1.16. Bracknell Forest people, work and wellbeing: scorecard summary

Indicator	Key metric	Summary of current state	Priorities for action
P.W.W.1. Population change	No. and percentages of people in 25-49 age group	Although Bracknell Forest has a slightly younger age profile than the comparators, this is forecast to change over the lifetime of the Economic Strategy and there may be a shortage of workers.	Work with nearby areas to monitor population changes and address any shortages arising e.g. through encouraging returners.
P.W.W.2. Qualifications and skills	Percentage of WAP qualified at NVQ4+ and NVQ3+	The skills of the Working Age Population are of particular concern in Bracknell Forest. They are not significantly lower at NVQL4+ and NVQL3+ than the comparator areas, but they seem to be declining further. Bracknell Forest is in danger of becoming a low skills, low value economy if this is not addressed urgently.	Work with employers, particularly large employers, the ESDP and education providers, to upgrade skills through apprenticeships, traineeships and other schemes. Work with SMEs to increase demand for higher level skills e.g. through management and leadership.
P.W.W.3. Employment & employment structure	No.s and percentage in employment	Bracknell Forest has seen a larger loss of jobs than the comparator areas over the recent period and is showing less labour market resilience.	Monitor employment and work with large employers to minimise losses if possible.
	No.s and percentage in employment in knowledge economy and high skills specialisms	Bracknell Forest leads on knowledge economy employment at the main comparator level but is losing out to fast growth Reading and Wokingham at local level. ICT job losses are of particular concern. There are signs of other specialisms e.g. Film & TV, medical devices, scientific R&D but may not be embedded in the area.	Monitor employment in knowledge economy and knowledge economy sub sectors, work with large employers and SMEs to understand skills need and provide more business support to prevent further losses and embed nascent clusters. (see business competitiveness)
P.W.W.4. Occupational structure	No.s and percentage employed by occupational group	18% of Bracknell Forest residents work in the lowest occupational groups and are more likely to be in low paid and insecure employment. This is likely to be linked to low educational attainment and low skills.	See above on skills.
P.W.W.5. Earnings	Percentage difference between resident and workplace wages	Despite recent rapid growth, residents' earnings remain significantly below workplace wages, indicating that not all Bracknell Forest residents are able to access local well paid employment and that higher skilled workers are commuting in from elsewhere to better paid jobs.	This is also likely to be linked to educational attainment and skills. Encourage local employers to recruit locally and upskill.
P.W.W.6. Wealth, health and wellbeing	Basket of measures including, Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI) employment rate, life expectancy, well-being	Bracknell Forest residents are less wealthy than in the local comparators, so although housing is relatively more affordable, they may not be better off as a result. Employment, historically high, has proved less resilient. Health is good but anxiety levels are higher than in other areas.	Monitor the basket of measures and evaluate success of Economic Strategy and other relevant policies in ensuring all are benefiting.

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7. Place, climate change, infrastructure and connectivity

1.17. Place, climate change, infrastructure and connectivity: overview

Originally a small rural district, with a population of around 20,000 by the late 1940s, Bracknell was one of the first new towns to be built with the aim of creating an ideal living and working environment, incorporating the amenities of urban life with access to green, open spaces. The district's population rose rapidly and is now over 125,000.

Residents benefit from extensive employment opportunities close by, relatively affordable housing and excellent amenities including the newly regenerated The Lexicon shopping centre, South Hill Park Arts Centre, Coral Reef Waterworld and access to 150 parks and green spaces. The business population of around 4,500 companies provide 68,000 jobs and Bracknell Forest is a favourite location for large companies including corporate HQs. Excellent broadband and mobile connectivity, good connections to the rail and motorway networks and airports, a large local workforce, a variety of business accommodation as well as an enterprise-friendly planning regime that has conserved employment space are key to its continuing commercial success and could be further promoted.

Enabling further population and employment growth without compromising the environment and quality of life is one of a number of challenges. There is a mismatch in terms of the type of employment space currently available and market demand for flexible, very high quality space and light industrial space. There may prove to be an oversupply of office space, if home and hybrid working continues at current levels, particularly if any large companies were to relocate. Although ICT connectivity is excellent, this lead needs to be maintained. More local employment for local people would help to reduce high levels of commuting and car dependency and support progress to net zero.



Image 31: South Hill Park2

INDICATORS

P.CC.I.C.1:Employment space; P.CC.I.C.2: climate change

P.CC.I.C.3: Housing; P.CC.I.C.4: Working patterns; P.CC.I.C.5: ICT infrastructure.

1.18. Bracknell Forest: place, climate change, infrastructure and connectivity assessment

P.CC.I.C.1. Employment space

Consultation with local commercial agents indicates that demand for employment space is weak and likely to remain so, as hybrid working practices continue to be a feature of the new post-Covid era. Large companies are downsizing, rents are plateauing and only the very best commercial space (Category A plus) is being let easily. This type of accommodation offers a high level of amenities (a “home from home”) in order to tempt workers back into the office. Less attractive, cheaper space, of which there is quite a lot in Bracknell Forest, is proving harder to let. The advice to landlords is to break up large spaces into smaller, flexible units and to refurbish.

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Even so, there may be surplus office space for which conversion to residential through Permitted Development Rights (PDR) might be a good solution, bringing more residents back into town centres, particular younger residents seeking flats. Demand for housing is likely to continue to rise while demand for commercial and office space is likely to continue to plateau or decline. In June 2023, the five year average take up rate had fallen to 96,500 sq.ft. significantly below the ten year average of 133,000 sq.ft.¹⁵

Market intelligence from local agents also suggests that there is unmet demand for high quality light industrial units for SMEs which is a possible area for intervention, although it may not be a commercially viable proposition for developers at this time.



Figure 32: Generic workspace image courtesy of Jopwell

In terms of retail space, The Lexicon development has enabled Bracknell Forest to greatly improve its retail offer and revitalise the town centre. Taking proposed developments into account, there should be sufficient retail space in the Borough for the next decade. Should the growth in online retail continue, combined with slower than forecast population growth, there may even be an oversupply. As with commercial space, it may be necessary to take a flexible approach to repurposing of surplus retail space in future.

¹⁵ Source: Bracknell Office Market Overview June 2023.

P.CC.I.C.2. Climate change

Relative to the comparator areas, Bracknell Forest has lower greenhouse gas emissions per square kilometre (KM²), second only to the South East and has also seen a year-on-year decrease between 2018 and 2020, the latest data which are available. *Figure 37*

It will be important to monitor these figures going forward and continue to focus on measures to reduce CO² emissions. Examples include further financing of EV charging points to encourage the use of hybrid/electric vehicles within the area, as well as promoting the use of public transport and encouraging modal shift e.g. to cycling and rail travel.

Local government plays a crucial role in influencing climate change mitigation efforts and driving the transition to net-zero carbon emissions through the promotion of policies that directly impact businesses and residents. These can include setting emissions reduction targets, adopting energy-efficient building standards and incentivising renewable energy adoption. By supporting a regulatory environment that promotes sustainability and carbon reduction, a clear message is sent to businesses and residents about the importance of taking climate action. They can also establish incentives, such as grants to encourage businesses to invest in energy-efficient technologies and sustainable practices, making it economically beneficial for them to reduce their carbon footprint.

Local government can also lead by example through their own operations and practices. They can implement green procurement policies that prioritise the purchase of eco-friendly products and services, which can create a market demand for sustainable offerings from local businesses. Additionally, local government can invest in renewable energy, energy-efficient infrastructure, and sustainable transportation systems, showcasing the feasibility and benefits of these technologies. Public awareness campaigns and community engagement initiatives can further mobilise residents and businesses to take action on climate change and accelerating the drive to net-zero.

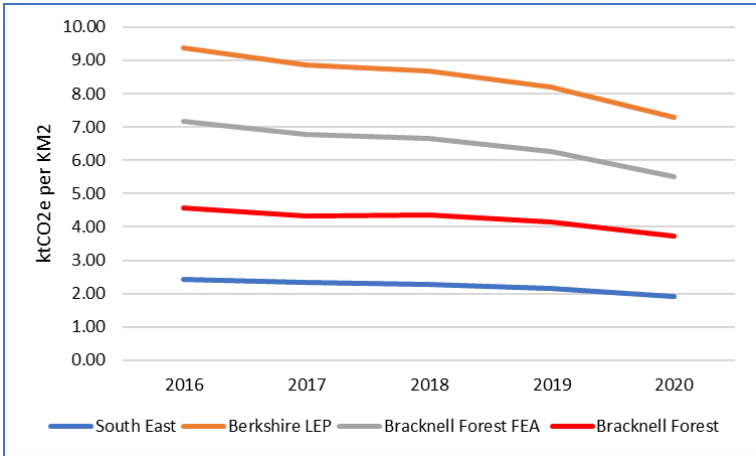


Figure 33: Greenhouse gas emissions per KM2 (kt CO2) in Bracknell Forest and in the comparator areas in 2022

Source: Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (DBEIS) UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions national statistics

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P.CC.I.C.3. Housing

Bracknell Forest has an increasing and ageing population and constraints on land availability, including green belt, flood plains and designated landscape sites which make meeting local demand for housing challenging. Notwithstanding the issues, Bracknell Forest Council has managed to identify sufficient land which largely involves increasing existing town centres and using previously developed land, although some loss of green belt may be inevitable. This will not only help to meet local demand for housing, but also support economic prosperity and a thriving local economy.

Housing affordability is relatively good in Bracknell Forest, although owning a home will still be beyond the reach of many on lower incomes. Housing affordability is generally measured by the median house price to median residence-based earnings ratio. On this metric, Bracknell Forest performed better than all comparator areas in 2022, with a median house price to median earnings ratio of 9.8. in 2022 compared to 10.78 in the FEA as a whole.

Over the last five years, housing affordability has improved in Bracknell Forest and worsened across the comparator areas. Between 2018 and 2022, the median house price to median residence-based earnings ratio fell by 7.81% in Bracknell Forest and rose by 4.63% in the South East, the largest improvement and deterioration in affordability among all comparator areas, respectively. This is probably due to the rate of wage rises in Bracknell Forest, rather than falling house prices and will still leave owning a home beyond the reach of many of the lower paid. *Figure 33*

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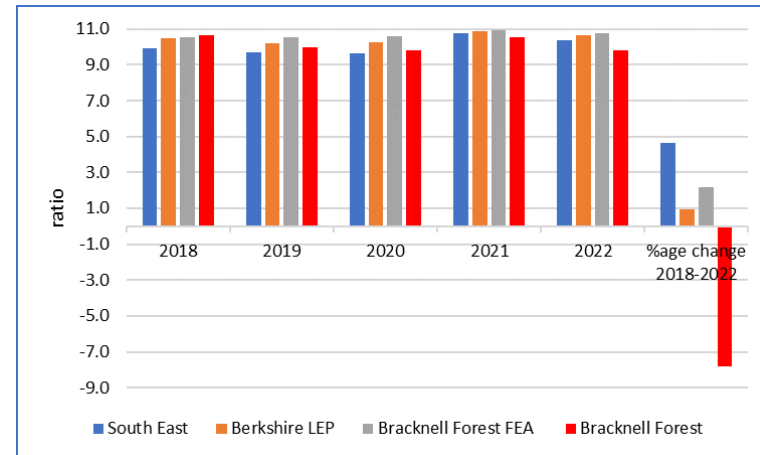


Figure 34: Ratio of median house price to median gross annual residence based earnings in Bracknell Forest and the comparator areas 2018 to 2022 and over all change

Source: ONS Small area housing statistics

P.CC.I.C.4. Working patterns

There has been a slight increase in part-time working in Bracknell Forest from 27.87% of all employment in 2017 to 29.31% in 2021. Over the same period, however, part-time working in the comparator areas has decreased slightly, indicating that the nature of employment in Bracknell Forest may be less secure.

Table 9

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	%age change
South East	33.69	33.52	33.10	32.55	32.56	-1.13
Berkshire LEP	29.31	29.51	29.31	28.49	28.60	-0.71
Bracknell Forest FEA	31.15	36.19	31.06	30.10	29.85	-1.30
Bracknell Forest	27.87	27.87	28.33	28.81	29.31	1.44

Table 9: Part-time employment as a percentage of all employment of residents of working age in Bracknell Forest and the comparator areas 2017 to 2021

Source: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey

Bracknell Forest has seen a significant increase in people reporting that they work from home from 11.1% in 2011 to 39.9% in 2021. However, because this is Census 2021 data which was conducted during the pandemic, many people reporting that they worked from home may have been doing so only temporarily.

Nevertheless, some trends are apparent; Bracknell Forest had the lowest percentage of individuals working from home in 2011 and the second lowest in 2021. A similar pattern can be seen among the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA where Bracknell Forest had the second lowest percentage of homeworking in both 2011 and 2021. This is likely to be due to Bracknell Forest having more jobs within its industrial mix that cannot be done remotely than the comparator areas. Figure 34

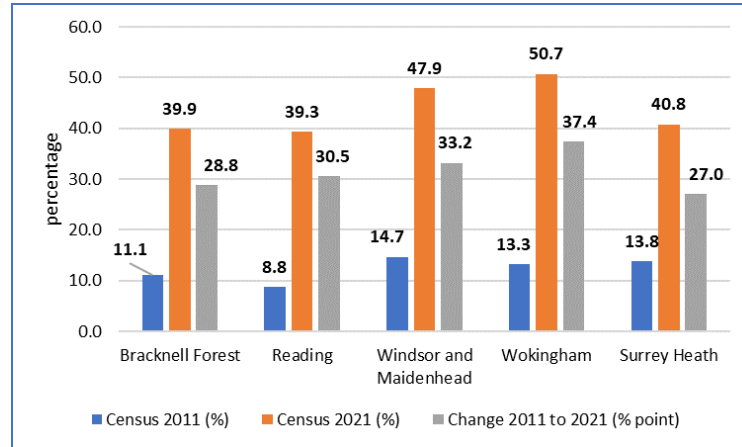


Figure 35: Percentage of those who work at or mainly from home in 2011 and 2021 and percentage change in the LAAs in Bracknell Forest FEA

Source: ONS Census data

Travel to work

Along with other factors such as quality of life, housing availability, services and transport infrastructure, the distance residents have to travel to work is an important factor in the overall desirability of Bracknell as a place to live and as a business location.

Bracknell Forest residents tend to have to travel further to work than their counterparts in the comparator areas. Bracknell Forest has lower percentages of residents of working age in employment close to home who travel less than 2km and between 2-5km to work (8.8% and 9.6% respectively).

Conversely, higher percentages of Bracknell Forest working age residents in employment travel middle distances of between 10km and 30km than the comparator areas, although Bracknell Forest has the lowest percentages of workers travelling more than 30km to work.

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The data indicate more residents travelling to other areas such as Slough and Reading and fewer working either close to home or in better paid jobs in London. The slow and inconvenient rail connection, highlighted during the consultations, is highly likely to be a factor but the lower skills profile of Bracknell Forest residents may also preclude many of them from obtaining highly paid employment in London as well as from being able to afford the expensive rail fares. *Figure 35*

Unfortunately, the concomitant of this is that Bracknell Forest has the highest percentage of people using a car or van to get to work among the comparator areas and lowest use of trains, buses and cycling as a means of commuting.

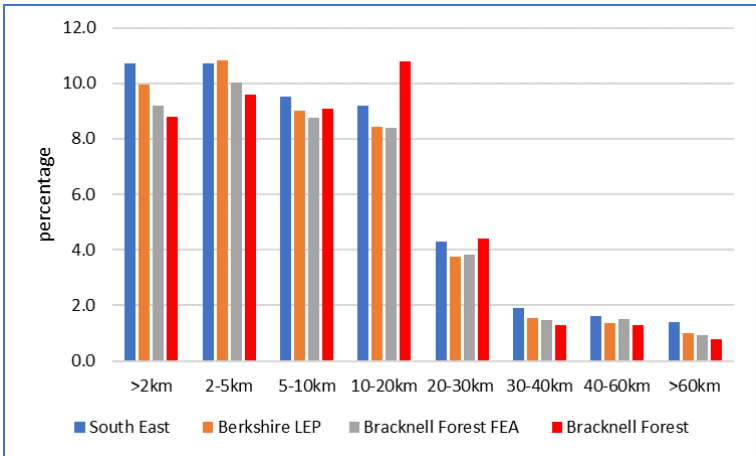


Figure 36: Distance travelled to work as a percentage of those in employment aged 16-64 in Bracknell Forest and the comparator areas
 Source: ONS Census 2021

P.CC.I.C.5 ICT infrastructure

In relation to the comparator areas and among the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA, Bracknell Forest performs very well on broadband availability. It comes in second only to Reading on availability of Gigabit, Ultrafast Fibre (UFFB) and Superfast Fibre (SFFB) and is ranked first in the Full Fibre category. This excellent connectivity is a major contributor to Bracknell Forest’s attractiveness to both businesses and residents, and is essential in attracting and retaining a strong *Information & Communications* sector.

Bracknell Forest has the highest levels of 4G availability among the Berkshire comparator areas and is second only to Reading among the LAAs within the Bracknell Forest FEA. 90.46% of premises are able to receive 4G signal from all operators. Along with its broadband coverage, this makes for excellent connectivity in Bracknell Forest. *Figure 36*

130 This level of connectivity is particularly desirable for business, but should not be taken for granted; businesses migrating into Bracknell Forest will expect this level of connectivity to be maintained and improved.

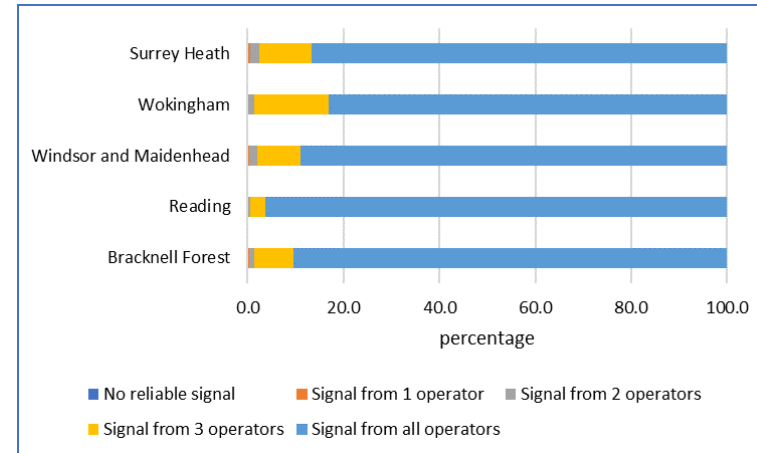


Figure 37: 4G availability: percentage of premises in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA with: No reliable signal, signal from 1/2/3 operators, signal from all operators in 2022

Source: Ofcom Connected Nations (South East data unavailable)

1.19. Place, climate change, infrastructure and connectivity: scorecard summary

Indicator	Key metric	Summary of current state	Priorities for action
P.CC.I.C.1. Employment space	Average take up rate	Weaker demand for employment space seems likely to continue due to the adverse economic conditions and increase in home/hybrid working. Only category A space is easy to let and landlords need to refurbish. There may be unmet demand for light industrial units and small flexible maker spaces. Nascent high tech clusters would benefit from a technology park approach. There is probably sufficient retail space now due to The Lexicon and there may even be a surplus.	Engage with commercial agents to monitor demand. Support/allow further permitted development rights (PDR) if necessary. Engage with landlords to encourage refurbishment to higher standards Engage with developers to enable more provision of light industrial space and space suitable for high tech and creative digital businesses in the specialised sectors Promote Bracknell Forest as a business location Develop a Local Industrial Strategy (see Business Competitiveness)
P.CC.I.C.2. Climate change	Kt CO ² e per Km ²	Bracknell Forest’s emissions are low but further decline of the knowledge economy may hinder future progress. Car dependency is high and public transport, cycling and walking rates are low.	Support the knowledge economy (see Business Competitiveness) Encourage modal shift e.g. through addressing safety concerns re cycle paths, working with large employers on cycle to work schemes, EV charging points.
P.CC.I.C.3. Housing	Affordability ratio	Although housing in Bracknell is relatively affordable it is still out of the reach of many on lower incomes. Increased supply of new homes will help to maintain and improve affordability. Bracknell Forest is not seen as an aspirational place to live for higher skilled individuals, although this is changing. Attracting young people to town centres can help to counteract population ageing and revitalise town centres.	Monitor employment and retail space availability as above and take a flexible approach to PDR, particularly in town centres, if surplus space is a persistent issue. Promote the benefits of Bracknell Forest as a place to live and work
P.CC.I.C.4. Working patterns	Home/hybrid working rates	Bracknell Forest residents have lower rates of working at or near home and higher rates of travel to work further away. Although this is typical of areas like Bracknell with high levels of skilled trades and construction employment, it may be that lower skilled Bracknell Forest residents are filling elementary jobs such as cleaning and care in other areas with higher skills profiles.	Promote local working and local recruitment, working with large employers so more Bracknell residents can benefit from working locally. Examine the need for local support services e.g. networks, flexible, rentable by the hour, office space, for those working from home.
P.CC.I.C.5. ICT infrastructure	Broadband availability	Currently, Bracknell Forest’s performance on broadband and mobile availability is among the best.	Maintain and promote Bracknell Forest’s record on ICT connectivity.

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ENDS

To: **The Executive**
Date: **17 October 2023**

Prevent Strategy 2024-27 **Executive Director: People**

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Bracknell Forest Prevent Strategy 2020-23 has now expired and a revised strategy for 2024-27 has been prepared.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 **That the Executive approve and adopt the Bracknell Forest Prevent Strategy 2024-27**

3 Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 3.1 Prevent is one of the four elements of CONTEST, the government's counter-terrorism strategy. It aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. The Home Office works with local authorities and a wide range of government departments, and community organisations to deliver the Prevent Strategy.
- 3.2 Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and its revisions places a duty on specified authorities to "have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism" in the exercise of their functions.
- 3.3 In addition, the December 2019 update of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, introduced a new duty for local authorities to "provide support to people vulnerable or susceptible to being drawn into terrorism or violent extremism".
- 3.4 Bracknell Forest's response to both duties is the Prevent Strategy which draws together how it will work with partners to comply with the duties and prevent harm.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 No alternative options have been considered for the following reasons:
- The duties are laid down in law
 - A published strategy and action plan sets out our identified priorities as well as how we plan to tackle them
 - Prevention and support for those at risk of radicalisation is a multi-agency process which is best co-ordinated through a strategy and action plan
 - Acts of terrorism and radicalisation destroy communities and lives, causing deaths and injuries to many and leaving communities living in fear and sometimes divided by hatred and confusion. Radicalisation is the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies.

5 Supporting Information

Context

5.1 In addition to the 2015 Act described above, there is the UK Strategy for Countering Terrorism (known as CONTEST) which is a delivery plan made up of 4 strands: Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare. The aim of CONTEST is to reduce the risk to the UK and its citizens and interests overseas from terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence.

Principles of the Bracknell Forest Prevent Strategy 2024-27

5.2 These comprise the following:

- Prevent is everyone's business. Therefore, the aim of this strategy will be to make basic awareness training mandatory for all Local Authority staff, and specified partnership authorities will be required to complete a training assurance update for the quarterly Prevent Steering Group
- Actions taken will always be proportionate to the risk identified for Bracknell Forest
- Prevent is part of the wider safeguarding agenda and focuses on providing support and re-direction to vulnerable individuals who at risk of being drawn into terrorism

Governance and Monitoring

5.3 Governance and monitoring take place through the Prevent Steering Group which is a multi-partner group made up of representatives shown in the table below.

It is chaired by the BFC Assistant Director: Chief Executive's Office.

The Prevent Steering Group is a sub-group of the statutory Community Safety Partnership which is held to account annually by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's Crime and Disorder Committee.

Bracknell Forest Council	Chief Executive's Office
	Community Safety
	Youth Justice
	Children's Social Care
	Adult Social Care
	Community Engagement and Equalities
	Education Safeguarding
	Adult Safeguarding
	Executive Member: Culture, Delivery and Public Protection
Police	Counter-Terrorism Policing South East
	Bracknell and Wokingham Local Police Area
Health	Bracknell and Ascot Integrated Care Board
	Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust
	Broadmoor Hospital
Probation	The Probation Services

Fire	Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service
Bracknell and Wokingham College	Prevent/Safeguarding Lead

It is noted that Prevent comprises a safeguarding function and, therefore, the Prevent Steering Group has a line of accountability to the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board too, allowing those members to have reassurance of the ongoing work as well as being able to input to further development.

5.4 Where a person is identified as being at risk of radicalisation, they are referred to Counter-Terrorism Policing South East who assess the referral. If appropriate, they are referred into a Channel Panel which is a multi-partner group who meet to compile and put in place a support package for the individual. Support could include assistance with education or employment, health support, and ideological mentoring to provide vulnerable individuals with the skills to protect themselves from being drawn into committing terrorist-related activity or supporting terrorism.

5.5 The Bracknell Forest Channel Panel schedules monthly meetings to discuss any referrals. It also holds 2 separate meetings to discuss and share good practice and learning. It is chaired jointly by the Business Manager of the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board and the BFC Community Safety Prevent Lead.

5.6 **Profile**

The Bracknell Forest Counter-Terrorism Local Profile (CTLP) produced by Counter-Terrorism Policing South East, informs our awareness and understanding of the local terrorism risk. Due to the sensitive nature of the content, it is shared with a restricted group of partners.

Bracknell Forest is graded as a low-demand and low-risk area in terms of threat of active terrorism. The CTPL for 2023 designated it as a Tier 3 non-priority area.

In 2022, referrals for right-wing (white supremacy) terrorist behaviour outnumbered those for Islamist referrals in all of Berkshire. This type of terrorism is also the most prominent threat of extremism in Bracknell Forest (CTPL, 2023).

Increased focus on terrorism have meant an increased role for policing in recent years. This has led to some communities feeling uncomfortable with a sense of being under scrutiny. Prevent work in Bracknell Forest does not stereotype communities and takes measures to counter this. It recognises that it is important to have and maintain communication across communities and to make this work accountable to people within them.

5.7 **Comparison to the 2020-23 Prevent Strategy**

There has been no change to the local threat, harm and risk to Bracknell Forest since the previous strategy. Bracknell Forest is still a non-priority area for threat of terrorism and extremism, the Channel Panel receives low numbers of referrals, and the new strategy will prioritise awareness-raising and training which are fundamental.

Our approach has been strengthened in the new strategy by adopting the considerations raised in the latest Thames Valley CTLP:

- the referral pathway to the Channel Panel is to be clearer and more transparent to all referring agencies

- six and 12-monthly reviews of all closed cases should take place to review concerns and lessons learnt
- a focus on awareness raising with older adults, the private sector and LGBTQ+ groups and communities is recommended (as this has been identified as a gap in referrals across the Thames Valley)
- the impact of asylum hotels and the cost-of-living crisis on hate crime and Prevent referrals should be monitored and explored.

5.8 Home Office Benchmarking Performance

In June 2023, an evaluation of Bracknell Forest's implementation of the Section 26 Duty (referenced in 3.1 above) was undertaken by a Home Office Regional Advisor.

The feedback below highlights where we are doing well but also indicates that we need to consider a more robust approach to training:

'Overall assessment of implementation of the Prevent Duty in Bracknell Forest is that is it performing well across the core benchmarks of the Duty. There is strong partnership engagement and buy-in, good understanding of the local risk and strong leadership across Prevent from Justin and from Bracknell Forest as a whole.

The key areas of focus going forward should be around the training strategy and including mandatory training for staff and/or a process to better understand the numbers around training. Bracknell Forest has a strong risk assessment, referral process, and partnership plan but currently due to gaps in training, it is hard to evidence that these are filtering down to the wider partnership and key members of staff. A training strategy to differentiate and identify key staff that should be trained will also help'.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 The legal issues are addressed within the report. There is a general duty on specified authorities, which includes local authorities, pursuant to Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism when exercising its functions. Section 20 of the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019 amended Section 36 of the 2015 Act, to include as a part of a local authority's assessment and support to identify individuals who are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 There are no financial implications to adopting this strategy.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 The Prevent Steering Group
 The Community Safety Partnership
 The Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board

Equalities Impact Assessment

6.4 Attached

Strategic Risk Management Issues

6.5 By completing a Bracknell Forest Prevent Strategy and Action Plan, Bracknell Forest Council is complying with the duties placed upon it by law.

In addition, without an understanding of our local profile of risk of terrorism as well as a co-ordinated and collaborative approach set out through objective setting and a work plan to monitor progress, prevention and response to those who are vulnerable to radicalisation is reduced.

Climate Change Implications

6.6 The recommendation in Section 2 above is expected to:

Have little or no impact on emissions of CO2. Meetings will be held on a virtual platform. In the event any in-person meetings occur, we will be taking steps to reduce waste by encouraging members and partners to use public/active travel to get to the venue, minimise printing by promoting the use of digital copies and encouraging the use of sustainable and re-useable refreshment resources.

Background Papers

Bracknell Forest Prevent Strategy 2024-27

Equalities Impact Assessment

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Bracknell Forest Prevent Strategy

2024 - 2027

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1. Prevent Overview
2. Definitions
3. The Counter Terrorism & Security Act 2015
4. Threat and Risk
5. Governance and Monitoring
6. Local Context
7. Local Profile and Considerations
8. Focus Areas & Plan

1. PREVENT OVERVIEW

The updated and strengthened UK Government CONTEST Strategy was launched in June 2018. The aim of CONTEST is to reduce the risk to the UK and its citizens and interests overseas from terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence.

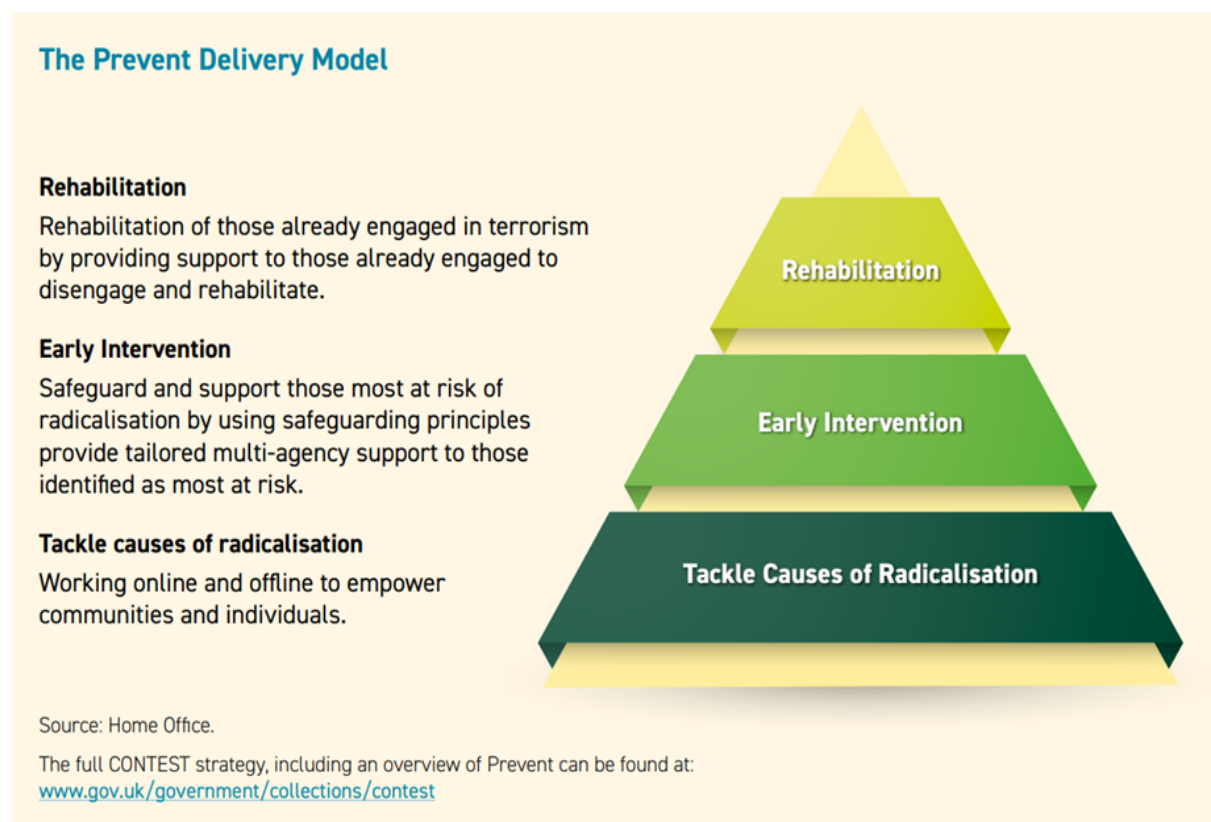
The CONTEST Strategy consists of the following four work strands:

- **Prevent:** to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism
- **Pursue:** to stop terrorist attacks
- **Protect:** to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack
- **Prepare:** to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack.

Prevent recognises that there is no socio-demographic profile of a terrorist in the UK, and no single pathway or 'conveyor belt' leading to terrorism.

The aim of Prevent is to safeguard and support those vulnerable to radicalisation and to stop them from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. It also includes supporting the rehabilitation and disengagement of those already involved in terrorism.

The Prevent Delivery Model below sets out the national approach to tackling the causes and risk factors that can lead to an individual becoming radicalised, support those who are at risk of radicalisation and rehabilitate those who have already engaged with terrorism.



2. DEFINITIONS

The Counter Extremism Strategy (2015) defines **extremism** as “the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for death of our armed forces as extremist.”

The Prevent Strategy (2011) defines **radicalisation** as “the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.”

The Terrorism Act (2000) defines **terrorism** as an action that endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people, causes serious damage to property, or seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system. The use or threat must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.

3. THE COUNTER TERRORISM AND SECURITY ACT 2015

On 1 July 2015, the Counter Terrorism and Security Act (CTSA) 2015 became statutory. Section 26 places a statutory Prevent duty on specified authorities in the exercise of their functions, to have ‘**due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism**’. These authorities include schools, colleges, universities, local authorities, health, the police and prisons.

The Prevent Duty currently sets out three key themes for local authorities:

Leadership

For all specified authorities, those in leadership positions are expected to:

- establish or use existing mechanisms for understanding the risk of radicalisation
- ensure staff understand the risk and build the capabilities to deal with it
- communicate and promote the importance of the duty; and
- ensure staff implement the duty effectively

Working in partnership

Local authorities must demonstrate evidence of effective partnership and co-ordination through existing multi-agency forums e.g., Community Safety Partnerships

Capabilities

Frontline staff who engage with the public should understand what radicalisation means and why people may be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism as a result. They need to be aware of what is meant by the term ‘extremism.’ Staff need to know what measures are available to prevent people from becoming drawn into terrorism. They need to

understand how to obtain support for people who may be being exploited by radicalising influences. Local authorities must ensure they provide appropriate training for staff.

Specific guidance on the Prevent Duty is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/revised-prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales>

4. THREAT & RISK

The threat level for the UK is set by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC). Threat levels are designed to give a broad indication of the likelihood of a terrorist attack. There are five levels:

- **Low** means an attack is unlikely
- **Moderate** means an attack is possible, but not likely
- **Substantial** means an attack is strongly possible
- **Severe** means an attack is highly likely
- **Critical** means an attack is expected imminently

The UK threat level was first published in 2006. In 2019, changes were made to reflect the threat posed by all forms of terrorism, irrespective of ideology. Since 2019, the threat level has fluctuated between severe and substantial. Up to date information on the current threat level can be found at: www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels

The CONTEST strategy identifies the following types of terrorism that the UK faces:

- **International:** terrorist organisations operating in Syria and Iraq e.g., Da'esh and Al Qu'ida
- **Extreme Right-Wing:** Organisations with a specific ideology characterised by anti-democratic opposition towards equality
- **Northern Ireland-related:** Politically motivated violence to de-stabilise the democratic process.
- **Other:** small movements in reaction to a single issue, specific incident, or ideology

The UK level of threat is complex and multi-dimensional and ranges from self-initiated terrorism where individuals are intent on carrying out crude attacks to sophisticated networks pursuing ambitious and coordinated plots. The most likely attack methodologies are bladed/blunt force weapons; vehicles; and explosives. However, most of the activity we see is in other forms such as radicalising others, fund raising or preparing acts of terrorism.

Internationally Inspired Terrorism

The UK continues to face an evolving threat from radicalisation, extremism and terrorism. Internationally inspired terrorism (Da'esh, Al Qa'ida, Al Muhajiroun) continues to pose the most significant threat to the UK. Extremist travel remains a potential threat although stricter border controls continue to hamper returnees. However, despite the

reduction in travel to conflict zones to join terrorist organisations operating in Syria and Iraq, travel still poses a potential threat.

Self-Initiated Terrorism

As highlighted by the UK-based terrorist acts in 2017, and the subsequent plots disrupted since the Westminster attack in March 2017, the nature of the threat has now moved to self-initiated terrorism not linked to one specific ideology where vehicles, knives and explosives are used to commit acts of terror within the UK.

With periods of isolation throughout 2021 due to the global pandemic, and the likelihood that more time was spent online, there was the potential for risk to increase.

Furthermore, there is a realistic possibility that the pandemic may have had an adverse effect on people's mental health due to the impact of living in isolation and not having access to the same level of support previously experienced. This is likely to have increased levels of vulnerability to extremism and terrorism.

Far Right & Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism

The threat posed from the far right and extreme right-wing organisations have also evolved - 2021 has seen an increase in demonstrations, protests and visits recorded across the UK. There are 3 main types:

- **cultural nationalism (CN)** is a belief that 'western culture is under threat from mass migration into Europe and from a lack of integration by certain ethnic and cultural groups. The ideology tends to focus on the rejection of cultural practises such as the wearing of the burka or the perceived rise of the use of Sharia law.
- **white nationalism (WN)** is a belief that mass migration from the 'non-white' world, and demographic change, poses an existential threat to the 'white race' and 'western culture'. It comprises advocates for some sort of white homeland, either through petition of already existing countries, or by the (if necessary, forced) repatriation of ethnic minorities.
- **white supremacism (WS)** is a belief that the 'white race' has certain inalienable physical and mental characteristics that make it superior (with some variation) to other races. often associated with conspiracy theories that explain the decline in 'white' political and social status over the last 100 years. This can also encapsulate a belief in the spiritual supremacy of the 'white race', often describing racial differences in quasi-religious terms (such as 'the Aryan soul').

An up-to-date list of organisations currently proscribed within the UK can be found on the government website at:

[Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/proscribed-groups)

Online radicalisation

Online radicalisation of individuals is used in all forms of extremism and terrorism. Extremists and terrorist organisations can access and disseminate content globally. It is

difficult to police and is therefore a persistent challenge for those working in counter terrorism. 2021/22 saw an increased shift towards the use of encrypted sites and applications to spread propaganda. Whilst the use of mainstream platforms such as Facebook and Twitter still exist, extremist activity continues to shift into more encrypted and private communication channels. Whilst these platforms are legitimate and not indicative of extremist/terrorist activity, lesser-known sites may be less moderated and may allow more radical content and discussion. This could ultimately lead to new threats in the online sphere of social media.

5. GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING

This Strategy has been developed and will be delivered by the Bracknell Forest Prevent Steering Group. The Prevent Steering Group is a multi-agency partnership group comprising representatives from the following agencies.

Bracknell Forest Council	Lead Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection
	Community Safety
	BFC Prevent Lead
	Youth Justice Service
	Children & Adults Social Care
	Community Engagement and Equalities
	Bracknell Forest School Safeguarding
	Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board
Police	Counter-Terrorism Policing South East
	Thames Valley Police Bracknell and Wokingham Local Police Area
Health	Bracknell and Ascot Clinical Commissioning Group
	Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust
Probation	National Probation Service
Bracknell and Wokingham College	Prevent/Safeguarding Lead

Progress against implementation of the action plan will be monitored by the Prevent Steering Group with any issues of concern being escalated to the Bracknell Forest Community Safety Partnership.

The Bracknell Forest Community Safety Partnership provides the direct governance for the Prevent Steering Group. However, Prevent is a safeguarding issue and therefore the Prevent Steering Group also has a line of accountability to the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board, allowing those members to have reassurance of the ongoing work as well as being able to input to the further development of the Prevent work.

6. Local Context

Bracknell Forest is one of 6 unitary authorities in Berkshire in the South-East of England and is 28 miles west of London and is part of the Thames Valley Police area. Bracknell Forest is a low demand and low risk area regarding the threat of active terrorism and

continues to be designated as a Tier 3, non-priority area in the latest Counter-Terrorism Local Profile (2022).

The borough is providing accommodation for refugees from many countries. Many individuals remain in temporary bridging accommodation whilst awaiting a permanent living solution. There are potential concerns regarding their vulnerability. There are also likely to be vulnerabilities with refugees who have arrived in Bracknell under the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme.

Recent terrorist attacks in the last year in the UK, along with the current nature of the threat to the UK, continues to demonstrate that no area is free from the risk of vulnerable people being drawn into terrorism. This sits alongside the increasing threat of vulnerable individuals being influenced via the internet through social media and gaming platforms.

Bracknell Forest is in the least deprived 10% of local authorities in England and has a population of 124,608 which has increased by 10% in the last 10 years. Bracknell Forest's population profile is similar to England's with a median age of 39 years. The proportion of working-aged adults in Bracknell Forest is slightly higher than England's profile with notably higher proportions of 35 to 54-year-olds. People aged 65 and over make-up 15% of Bracknell Forest's population, compared to 18% nationally (Office for National Statistics, 2023).

In 2021, nearly 78% of Bracknell Forest's population were from a white British background. 14% of Bracknell Forest's population were from ethnic minority groups (excluding white minorities), compared to 19% in England. A further 8% of both Bracknell Forest and England's population were from a white non-British background. People from an Asian background made up 7% of Bracknell Forest's total population and were the largest ethnic minority group. All ethnic groups increased in number and proportion in Bracknell Forest over the last decade, apart from the white British group that reduced by over 7 percentage points.

Bracknell Forest has 31 primary phase schools, 6 secondary schools, 1 SEND (special educational needs and disability) and 1 Pupil Referral Unit. Overall, results are consistently in line with or above the national averages.

Mental health problems affect around one in four people in any given year. They range from common problems, such as depression and anxiety, to rarer and more severe disorders such as psychosis. 13% of Bracknell Forest's population aged 16 and over are estimated to have a common mental disorder, compared to national (17%) and regional (15%) prevalence rates.

On 31 January 2023, 0.7% of people in Bracknell Forest were recorded as having a serious mental health disorder on their GP Record. This is over 750 adults. 12.4% of people in Bracknell Forest were recorded as having depression on their GP record. This is approximately 13,600 adults. Estimated prevalence in children (2022): Nationally, 18% of children aged 7 to 16 and 22% of those aged 17 to 24 are estimated to have a probable mental health disorder.

Hate Crime

The definition of what constitutes a hate crime in England and Wales was agreed in 2017 by the police service, Crown Prosecution Service, prison service and other agencies

Hate crime in England and Wales is defined as, ‘any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on a personal characteristic’.

There are five centrally monitored strands of hate crime:

- Race or ethnicity
- religion or beliefs
- sexual orientation
- disability
- trans gender identity

The Community Safety Service at BFC continues to monitor and review all hate crime weekly. TVP review all incidents, occurrences, and crime with a hate crime marker at the Daily Management Meeting for identification of trends, repeat victims/perpetrators, hot spots and the appropriateness of their response.

There is no change in the Bracknell Forest current hate crime landscape. Almost all of reported hate crime is a characteristic of a different incident, i.e., on-going neighbour dispute, family dispute or other crime/disorder and falls into the crime type of Public Order Offence.

Like other areas across the Thames Valley and the UK, Bracknell Forest has seen a rise in incidents, where a hate crime flag has identified as a factor of an occurrence/crime. Whilst a proportion of this increase can legitimately be attributed to better recording of hate crime and/or due to increased confidence in reporting, more monitoring must be done to fully understand our local picture.

There is currently no evidence, data or anecdotal, to suggest that any community or group within Bracknell Forest is overtly targeted because of who they are or represent.

More information can be found at:

<https://www.berkshirepublichealth.co.uk/jsna/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Bracknell-Forest-People-and-Place-Summary-February-2023.pdf>

<https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-02/community-analysis-2022.pdf>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022>

7. Local Profile

The local profile is informed from a number of sources that provide a summary of Counter Terrorism concerns which provide an outline of the key threats, risks and vulnerabilities within Thames Valley between January and December. This focuses on individual districts where isolated or emerging incidents of note have occurred but allows local authorities to view their individual threats and risk areas in relation to bordering areas, providing context, and encouraging information sharing across the force and the region.

National Threat Level

The national threat level is currently at Substantial (meaning an attack is likely) and has been since the 9th of February 2022. It is assessed that an attack would most likely be conducted by a self-initiated terrorist acting independently of, but possibly inspired by, established terrorist groups or organisations.

Key messages from 2022

1. Self-initiated terrorism continues to be deemed the most likely form of terrorist attack in the UK
2. Extreme right-wing terrorism continues to be most concerning for the South-East region, from of all three ideological strands referred to above. Most likely form being via self-initiated terrorist.
3. Extremist Islamist inspired terrorism remains a threat across the South-East region, most likely form being via self-initiated terrorist.
4. The use of the internet in terrorism, specifically in radicalisation, continues to be a key theme within the South-East.
5. Berkshire has been identified as the most vulnerable county within the Thames Valley by way of Prevent cases and hate crime.
6. The high proportion of Prevent cases across Thames Valley were below the age of 30, almost half of which were under the age of 18.

Considerations for prevent action plan and local risk assessments for 2023/2024

1. A significant gap has been identified in referrals from private industry across the South-East. Prevent boards have been encouraged to take a view on this when developing new action plans.
2. Mental health issues and a significantly high proportion of under 18's in Prevent cases have been identified as two key themes across the Thames Valley during 2022.

3. Prevent-related local initiatives would benefit from considering how they reach and address older as well as younger audiences and vulnerable people. Data in the extreme right wing space highlights that while a younger demographic (under 30s) is typically involved in online extremism, the most recent successful extreme right-wing attacks in the UK have been committed by older males.
4. Online activity (use of encrypted apps, and of mainstream as well as fringe sites and forums) remains a consistent feature of Prevent referrals and of general extremist activity across the region.
5. The extreme right-wing space indicates an increasing focus on and targeting of the LGBTQIA community.
6. There is a risk of protest activity targeted at asylum hotels. It is likely that public awareness of housing immigrants in hotels across the country will increase in 2023/24 and onward. As the cost-of-living crisis continues to worsen, it is possible that some of these hotels may experience increased protest activity. Understanding the potential risks through local risk assessment may help manage this effectively.
7. Groups that promote an extremist worldview and/or seek to target and marginalise perceived 'out-groups' can be opportunistic in their appropriation of local and national concerns, using them as a vehicle to promote their own narratives and objectives.
8. Development of cohesion and understanding within all community remains an important part of countering those with destructive and divisive motives.

9. 2023 Action Plan

While Bracknell Forest is assessed as low risk in response to the nature of the terrorism threat to the UK, regionally and local risks identified the following objectives and focus areas set out in the 2023 Action Plan.

These actions will be proportionate to the risk profile while showing how BFC and partners will meet the expected benchmarks for compliance with the Prevent Duty.

Progress against all benchmarks and focus areas will be reviewed at the Prevent Steering Group and updated in response to the annual CTLP and local risk assessment.

Objective 1: Accountability

Benchmark 1 - Risk Assessment

The organisation has a local risk assessment process reviewed against the Counter Terrorism Local Profile

Benchmark 2 - Multi Agency Partnership Board

There is an effective multi-agency partnership board in place to oversee Prevent delivery in the area

Benchmark 3 - Prevent Partnership Plan

The area has an agreed Prevent Partnership Action Plan.

Focus areas: -

- i. Local risk profile, monitoring Prevent referrals, local Hate Crime data, Asylum and refugee trends

Objective 2: Support

Benchmark 4 - Referral Pathway

There is an agreed process in place for the referral of those identified as being at risk of radicalisation.

Benchmark 5 - Channel Panel

There is a Channel Panel in place, meeting monthly, with representation from all relevant sectors.

Benchmark 6 – Prevent problem-solving process

There is a Prevent problem-solving process in place to disrupt radicalising influences.

Benchmark 7 - Training

There is a training programme in place for relevant personnel.

Focus areas: -

- i. Address gaps in referrals from private industry
- ii. Refresh training offer and make mandatory

Objective 3: Communities & Engagement

Benchmark 8 – Venue Hire and IT Policies

There is a venue hire policy in place, to ensure that premises are not used by radicalising influencers, and an effective IT policy in place to prevent the access of extremist materials by users of networks.

Benchmark 9 - Engagement activity

There is engagement with a range of communities and civil society groups, both faith-based and secular, to encourage an open and transparent dialogue on the Prevent Duty.

Benchmark 10 - Communications

There is a communications plan in place to proactively communicate and increase transparency of the reality / impact of Prevent work and support frontline staff and communities to understand what Prevent looks like in practice.

Focus area: -

- i. Engagement and awareness with older age groups, LGTBQIA and other communities.

Initial Equalities Screening Record Form

Date of Screening:	Directorate: People	Section: Community Safety
1. Activity to be assessed	Prevent Strategy and Action Plan 2024 - 2027	
2. What is the activity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy/strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change	
3. Is it a new or existing activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Existing (New 3-year plan which will replace the previous plan)	
4. Officer responsible for the screening	Justin Whitlock	
5. Who are the members of the screening team?	Alison O'Meara, Justin Whitlock	
6. What is the purpose of the activity?	<p>Section 26 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (the Act) places a duty on Local Authorities ("specified authorities" listed in Schedule 6 to the Act) in the exercise of their function, to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.</p> <p>Our Prevent Strategy mirrors the three key objectives of HM Governments Prevent Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat that we face from those who promote it • Prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure they are given appropriate advice and support • Work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation which we need to address <p>Our Action Plan objectives are built around the Home Office benchmarks identified in the annual assessment, with the addition of focus areas identified in the CTLP (Counter Terrorism Local Profile).</p> <p>Objective 1. Accountability</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Risk Assessment ii. Multi Agency Partnership Board iii. Prevent Partnership Plan <p>** Focus area 23/24 – Risk profile, monitoring channel referrals, local hate crime data, Asylum & Refugee trends.</p> <p>Objective 2. Support</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> iv. Referral Pathway v. Channel Panel vi. Prevent Problem Solving Group vii. Training <p>** Focus area 23/24 – Private industry, Mandatory training, Online risk</p>	

	<p>Objective 3. Communities & Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> viii. Venue Hire & IT Policies ix. Engagement Activity x. Communications <p>** Focus area23/24 – Engagement and awareness raising with older age groups and LGBTQ+ groups.</p>			
7. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?	<p>The activity is designed to benefit all members of the community, particularly those who are vulnerable to radicalisation and exploitation. The plan sets out priorities for the Prevent Steering Group over the next 3 years (reviewed and updated yearly), together with how we intend to achieve the aims within each area of focus.</p>			
Protected Characteristics	<p>Please tick yes or no</p>	<p>Is there an impact?</p> <p>What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both?</p> <p>If the impact is neutral please give a reason.</p>	<p>What evidence do you have to support this?</p> <p>E.g. equality monitoring data, consultation results, customer satisfaction information etc</p> <p>Please add a narrative to justify your claims around impacts and describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion as this will inform members decision making, include consultation results/satisfaction information/equality monitoring data</p>	
8. Disability Equality – this can include physical, mental health, learning or sensory disabilities and includes conditions such as dementia as well as hearing or sight impairment.	<p>Y ✓</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>Positive impact.</p> <p>BFC has a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. This will enable victims who have a disability to access specialist support.</p>	<p>It is identified that those with a disability can at times be disproportionately vulnerable to radicalisation and exploitation from those with an agenda to do so This Strategy and action plan recognises those vulnerabilities and is in place to support those at risk by facilitating access to appropriate interventions and professions.</p>
9. Racial equality	<p>Y ✓</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>Positive impact.</p> <p>BFC has a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. This will enable victims of all races to access specialist support.</p>	<p>Race has been taken to include colour, nationality, ethnic and national origins, in line with the Race Relations Act 1976</p> <p>We recognise that this agenda has been closely associated with race and have aligned ourselves with complimentary agendas such as Hate crime and Community Cohesion to ensure that no one racial group is disproportionately focussed or unfairly targeted in response to an act of terrorism or media coverage.</p>
10. Gender equality	<p>Y ✓</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>Positive impact.</p> <p>BFC has a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. This will enable victims, regardless of gender, to access specialist support.</p>	<p>There is currently no evidence to suggest the gender equality is negatively impacted by this agenda. However, by monitoring of the CTLP (Counter Terrorism Local Profile) and subsequent briefings, we are able to monitor Local, regional and national referrals and incidents to ensure we can respond to emerging trends in this context when necessary. If this process was not in place, individuals would not be able to</p>

				access specialist support available through the multi-agency Channel Panels or Counter Terrorism Policing South East.
11. Sexual orientation equality	Y ✓	N	Positive impact. BFC has a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. This will enable victims, regardless of sexual orientation, to access specialist support.	There is currently no evidence to suggest that sexual orientation equality is negatively impacted by this agenda. However, by monitoring of the CTLP (Counter Terrorism Local Profile) and subsequent briefings, we are able to monitor Local, regional and national referrals and incidents to ensure we can respond to emerging trends in this context when necessary.
12. Gender re-assignment	Y ✓	N	Positive impact. BFC has a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. This will enable victims who have had gender re-assignment to access specialist support.	There is currently no evidence to suggest the gender equality is negatively impacted by this agenda. However, by monitoring of the CTLP (Counter Terrorism Local Profile) and subsequent briefings, we are able to monitor Local, regional and national referrals and incidents to ensure we can respond to emerging trends in this context when necessary. If this process was not in place, individuals would not be able to access specialist support available through the multi-agency Channel Panels or Counter Terrorism Policing South East.
13. Age equality	Y ✓	N	Positive impact. BFC has a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. This will enable victims of all ages to access specialist support.	There is currently no evidence to suggest the age equality is negatively impacted by this agenda. However, if this process was not in place, individuals within the protective characteristics would not be able to access specialist support available through the multi-agency Channel Panels or Counter Terrorism Policing South East.
14. Religion and belief equality	Y ✓	N	Positive impact. BFC has a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. This will enable victims of all religions and belief to access specialist support.	We recognise that Religion and belief has been negatively associated with this agenda and therefore have aligned us with complimentary agendas and partners, such as Hate crime, Community Cohesion and Engagement Partnership and Faith & Belief Forum, to ensure that no one Religion or belief group is disproportionately focussed or unfairly targeted in response to an act of terrorism or media coverage. Continued consultation with the Home Office and CTPSE will assist in monitoring this and ensure

				those being targeted or vulnerable to radicalisation/exploitation will be able to access specialist support available through the multi-agency Channel Panels or Counter Terrorism Policing South East without prejudice. By monitoring of the CTLP (Counter Terrorism Local Profile) and subsequent briefings, we are able to monitor Local, regional and national referrals and incidents to ensure we can respond to emerging trends in this context when necessary.
15. Pregnancy and maternity equality	Y ✓	N	Positive impact. BFC has a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. This will enable victims who are pregnant to access specialist support.	There is currently no evidence to suggest that those with Pregnancy and maternity protective characteristics are negatively impacted by this agenda. However, if this process was not in place, individuals within the protective characteristics would not be able to access specialist support available through the multi-agency Channel Panels or Counter Terrorism Policing South East.
16. Marriage and civil partnership equality	Y ✓	N	Positive impact. BFC has a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. This will enable victims, regardless of whether they are married or have a civil partnership, to access specialist support.	If this process was not in place, individuals would not be able to access specialist support available through the multi-agency Channel Panels or Counter Terrorism Policing South East. Home Office and CTPSE would not understand the nature and profile of those being targeted or vulnerable to radicalisation/exploitation. This would limit the effectiveness of any response that we and they provide locally, regionally and nationally.
17. Please give details of any other potential impacts on any other group (e.g. those on lower incomes/carers/ex-offenders, armed forces communities) and on promoting good community relations.	N/A			
18. If an adverse/negative impact has been identified can it be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or for any other reason?	N/A			
19. If there is any difference in the impact of the activity when considered for each of the equality groups listed in 8 – 14 above; how significant is the	No			

difference in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?			
20. Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination in relation to any of the Equality Duties?	Y	N ✓	Please explain for each equality group
21. What further information or data is required to better understand the impact? Where and how can that information be obtained?	Counter Terrorism Local Profile produced by CTPSE – this is an Official Sensitive Document only shared with Prevent Duty Partners.		
22. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?	Y	N ✓	
23. If a full impact assessment is not required; what actions will you take to reduce or remove any potential differential/adverse impact, to further promote equality of opportunity through this activity or to obtain further information or data? Please complete the action plan in full, adding more rows as needed.			
Action	Timescale	Person Responsible	Milestone/Success Criteria
Monitor the Action Plan	Every 3 months	Prevent Steering Group Abby Thomas: Prevent Steering Group Chair	Report outcomes, review referral data and develop appropriate interventions, partnership co-operation and protocols to ensure accessibility of all
24. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?	Prevent Strategy and Action Plan 2024-27		
25. Please list the current actions undertaken to advance equality or examples of good practice identified as part of the screening?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the CTLP and appropriately disseminate Engage with National and Regional Prevent and Channel networks, disseminate good practice and learning locally and neighbouring authorities 		
26. Assistant director's signature.	Signature:		Date:

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TO: THE EXECUTIVE
DATE: 17 OCTOBER 2023

**Budget Update
(Executive Director: Resources)**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Recognising the scale of the financial pressures the Council is currently facing due to inflation and service demand, this report provides an update to the Executive on the Council's financial situation in the current year and a forward look to the potential financial position in future years.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive:

- 2.1 **Notes the Council's predicted current year financial position summarised in Table 1 and detailed in Annex A;**
- 2.2 **Endorses the actions agreed by the Corporate Management Team to help contain expenditure in the current year as set out under paragraph 5.4;**
- 2.3 **Notes the Council's predicted medium-term financial prospects based on the assumptions detailed in paragraphs 5.9 to 5.16 and summarised in Table 2, which is subject to development of detailed draft budget proposals for 2024/25 and future years and to confirmation of the local government finance settlement in December;**
- 2.4 **Note that the Executive will be asked at its November meeting to recommend to Full Council a Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy, that will provide funding from capital resources to secure additional capacity needed to drive transformation change to help secure a sustainable future financial position;**
- 2.5 **Agrees the proposed use of the Council's funding to support delivery of affordable housing as set out in paragraphs 5.20 to 5.22.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

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

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Current Year Financial Position

- 5.1 The Council approved the current year's budget and council tax at its in-person meeting on 22 February 2023. Consideration at the time was given to the outlook for the economy as a whole, the impact of demographic changes and the resulting pressures on services and other risks contained within the proposed budget. The impact of high inflation dominated our financial planning. The Council typically allocates around £2m - £3m each year to cover the cost of inflation, which represents the extra we need to spend just to maintain current service levels. For 2023/24, we had to set aside just under £10m. The Contingency was increased to £2.75m in the final budget proposals, a higher level than in any previous year, reflecting the scale of the identified financial risks. While the budget including service pressures of more than £6m, the agreed 2023/24 budget was felt to be realistic and manageable.
- 5.2 The first budget monitoring report of the year indicated a potential problem. Based on actuals to the end of May, an overall overspend of between £0.7m and £1.2m was predicted by the year end. The first figure represented the sum of all Directorates' projected outturn estimates at that point, while the latter included "emerging issues", which had been identified as additional risks.
- 5.3 By the next monitoring return, based on actual expenditure and income to the end of June, the position had deteriorated significantly to an overspend of between £2.3m and £4.2m (including Emerging Issues). This position was highlighted to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 31 August by the Executive Director: Resources in his introduction to the quarterly Corporate Performance Overview Report (CPOR) and represented an unprecedented position for the Council.
- 5.4 Having considered this position, the Corporate Management Team at its meeting on 16 August agreed the following actions to help ensure a balanced position by the end of the year:
- The Executive Director : Resources to write to all staff, explaining the current budget position, and instructing that the measures below should be followed with immediate effect;
 - a. All new expenditure not essential to the delivery of front-line services should be avoided;
 - b. Opportunities to make savings in non-staffing budgets should be actively investigated;
 - c. Any proposed new staffing recruitment (either permanent or temporary) must have Departmental Management Team approval;
 - d. CMT will receive weekly updates on the most significant pressures being experienced in each Directorate, to ensure there is a clear focus on understanding and responding as quickly as possible to issues being faced.
 - The Executive Director: Resources was also asked to explore changes to the Council's financial systems that could help automatically enforce tighter spending controls.
- 5.5 The most recent budget monitoring information presented to CMT on 21 September is summarised in Table 1 below and shows a slight improvement on predicted variances (-£0.259m) and a material improvement to the position including Emerging Issues (-£1.144m), where mitigating savings plans are being developed to support Adult Social Care pressures. Despite the improvement, the projected overspend is still up to a potential £3.0m and is of significant concern. It should be noted that this position excludes the impact of the national pay award, which has not yet been agreed but is expected to exceed the budgeted amount.

Unrestricted

Table 1: Latest Predicted 2023/24 Budget Out-turn

	Current Approved Budget £000	Predicted Variance £000	Variance Including Emerging Issues £000
Central Directorates	18,357	694	1,226
Delivery Directorate	21,013	652	812
People Directorate	65,847	3,215	3,373
Non-Departmental	-14,974	-285	-125
Sub-Total	90,243	4,276	5,286
Contingency	2,321	-2,261	-2,261
Overall Position	92,564	2,015	3,025

- 5.6 The table shows that just over £0.4m has already been allocated from the original £2.75m in the corporate contingency, most notably £0.35m to support additional staffing in the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) service. Information about all the variances being reported against approved budgets is included in the detailed budget monitoring report attached as Annex A to this report. This includes a pressure on the schools budget of over £7m, which will be subject to intense scrutiny through the Department for Education's Safety Valve programme, which Bracknell Forest has been invited to participate in. The expected outcome of this programme is to agree a robust plan to return to a balanced in-year position over a time period of around five years, which will require savings of over £7m to be identified and delivered.
- 5.7 The Council's in-year financial position will be kept under tight review by CMT in the weeks and months ahead. Should the predicted overspend not show a clear downward trajectory, further actions will be initiated. The Executive is asked to endorse the actions being taken and to note that it cannot currently be ruled out that an in-year emergency budget will be required.

Medium-Term Prospects

- 5.8 Although the current year's financial position is particularly challenging, Bracknell Forest Council currently enjoys a strong financial position relative to most similar local authorities. This is illustrated in benchmarking data published by the newly-created Office for Local Government, set out in Annex B to this report. The Council's reserve levels are comparatively high as is our spending on social care services, while our overall spending, borrowing and Council Tax levels are below average.
- 5.9 In looking to future years, the starting point is to consider the level of resources that will likely be available to support spending. For several years this has been a difficult task, since the Government has provided only one year's worth of grant settlements at a time. Alongside publishing the provisional 2023/24 local government finance settlement in December 2022, the Government issued a policy statement covering its expected approach for some of the most significant factors in the 2024/25 settlement, which is expected to be published in mid-December 2023. [Local government finance policy statement 2023-24 to 2024-25 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/local-government-finance-policy-statement-2023-24-to-2024-25). This brought some more certainty to planning for 2024/25. The key factors in estimating the Council's future resources are as follows.

Core Settlement (Guaranteed Business Rates and Revenue Support Grant)

- 5.9.1 In 2023/24 the Council received a core grant settlement of £19.610m (comprising £17.462m from Business Rates and £2.148m from Revenue Support Grant), a 5% increase over the previous year. With the policy statement confirming that the core settlement will be broadly unchanged in 2024/25, a small increase (3%) in the Council's allocation is being assumed.

Specific Grants

- 5.9.2 The Autumn statement on 17th November 2022 introduced a number of changes to the Spending Review 2021 funding levels, the most significant being:
- £1 billion of new grant funding in 2023/24 for social care, increasing to £1.7 billion from 2024/25, allocated to support system capacity and hospital discharges;
 - Delaying the planned Adult Social Care charging reforms from October 2023 to October 2025, but allowing funding intended for implementation to be retained in council budgets to help meet current pressures (£1.3billion in 2023/24 rising to £1.9billion in 2024/25);
 - The core schools budget will receive £2.3 billion of additional funding in 2023/24 with a further £2.3 billion in 2024/25.
- 5.9.3 Allocations of these additional grants in 2024/25 have not been published at an individual authority level, so we have assumed the same proportion is received of the overall figure as in 2023/24.
- 5.9.4 The same approach has been taken to estimating funding from the New Homes Bonus (NHB) grant, despite no confirmation having been received that it will continue into 2024/25. With the future of NHB having been uncertain for many years and the Government not yet having published a response to its consultation in early 2021 regarding the grant's continuation, it is assumed that there is insufficient time to amend the grant without creating financial instability for many district councils who rely on it.

Business Rates Retention System

- 5.9.5 In parallel with the 2023 business rates revaluation exercise, the Government moved a number of large hereditaments ("properties") from local business rates lists onto its Central list. This included the network for a multi-national telecommunications company which had been on Bracknell Forest's local list since 2014. A technical adjustment, supported by the Council during the Government's consultation on how best to deal with such transfers, helped ensure that our position was broadly protected during this exercise.
- 5.9.6 Under the Business Rates Retention System, local authorities are able to retain a proportion (typically 25% - 35%) of growth in their collectable business rates to incentivise investment in economic development. With the central list transfer having removed a significant level of uncertainty from Bracknell Forest's retained income and up to date ratings valuations having been determined from April 2023, it was expected that the Council's income from the business rates retention system would be protected in future years. Indeed, it was initially estimated that the Council's retained income would rise slightly from the current budgeted income of £10.6m in the years ahead.

- 5.9.7 The amount of business rates collectible is determined by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA), which sets rateable values (RVs) for all business premises. Outside of the periodic national revaluations that affect all business premises, the VOA continuously re-assesses premises in response to valuation appeals submitted by occupying businesses and their ratings agents and to changes in use or occupier. Local authorities are usually unaware of any revaluations until the VOA issues updates to its ratings list, typically on a weekly basis. When this happens, the local authority needs to adjust its business rates system to reflect the revised valuation and backdate this to the effective date determined by the VOA. This is typically to the start of the current valuation list (i.e. the 2023 list) but can be backdated to the previous list (in this instance 2017). The local authority then issues a revised bill and either seeks to collect the increased sum due or, more typically, makes a refund for sums paid in excess of the (downwards) revised bill(s).
- 5.9.8 The Council has recently noticed an emerging pattern of large-scale RV reductions being notified for many premises in The Lexicon. This was unexpected, given the recently published 2023 valuation list and its effect is exacerbated by the effective dates for the RV reductions being set generally back to the opening of The Lexicon, in 2017. While just over 20 properties have appeared to date on the VOA updates, these include the largest units who have on average seen reductions in rateable value of 33% from the 2023 list and 50% from the latest 2017 listings. While the Council includes annual provisions for potential RV reductions when it calculates business rates income receivable, those provisions are not on anything like this scale.
- 5.9.9 As a consequence, the Council will face a material shortfall in its budgeted income in the current year, that will manifest in a large deficit on the 2023/24 Collection Fund at the end of the year. It is impossible to accurately determine the value of this until figures for more properties are known, however it is likely to be in the order of several £s million. The Council will also face a large reduction in future income retained through the Business Rates Retention System. Again, it is impossible to accurately predict the impact with only partial information, however a loss of around £1m per year (roughly 10% of the current retained business rates income) is feasible and will be used at this stage in projecting future resource levels.
- 5.9.10 With any deficit on the Collection Fund needing to be recovered in the next year's budget, this will need to be met either by reducing spending by an equal sum in 2024/25 or from the Council's reserves, which include a sum of £6.26m for Business Rates Revaluations.

Council Tax

- 5.9.11 With the exception of the Dedicated Schools Grant, which is largely passported through to schools, Council Tax represents by far the most important income source to the Council. The budgeted income from Council Tax in the current year is £75.053m.
- 5.9.12 The permitted level of increase in Council Tax each year is determined by the Government. For 2024/25, the policy statement confirmed that the general increase permitted for all authorities would be up to 3%, with additional flexibility for social care authorities to increase by a further 2%. Applying the maximum permitted increase would raise a further £3.75m, with growth in the taxbase from new property completions adding potentially around £0.7m.

5.9.12 Income from Council Tax is paid into the Collection Fund as it is received and the budgeted amount transferred to support General Fund services. There will always be a surplus or deficit on the Collection Fund at the end of the year, reflecting the difference between the actual versus budgeted income. The surplus or deficit in 2023/24 will need to be estimated by the mid-January 2023. A surplus can be used to help the 2024/25 budget, while a deficit needs to be recovered in that year. There is no indication at this time that the income being collected is materially different from what was expected.

5.9.13 The Executive at its meeting in February 2024 will recommend to Council the level of Council Tax considering the Local Government Finance Settlement, the results of the consultation and the final budget proposals. For planning purposes, it is assumed at this stage that the maximum permitted increase will be applied.

Reserves

5.9.14 The Council has deliberately set aside funding into reserves in recent years to help protect against both immediate and future risks and to support delivery of its priorities. In terms of budget setting, the most significant reserves are the Future Funding reserve (£16.3m available after using £3.6m to support the current year's budget) and General Reserves (£6.6m available - £11.1m less a £4.5m minimum recommended level). This funding can be used to ensure a balanced budget is achieved in future years, however reserves can only be used once and their use does not help secure an on-going sustainable financial position. With £3.6m of reserves having been used in the current year, drawing a higher sum in 2024/25 would be affordable but would not represent a step towards achieving medium-term financial sustainability.

5.9.15 It should be noted that the Government will expect the Council to use its reserves to support a Safety Valve deal (See paragraph x.x below), meaning that the current earmarking of reserves for particular purposes will need to be fundamentally reviewed in coming months.

5.10 Having assessed the level of resources potentially available, it is important to review the Council's future spending needs and compare the two. At this relatively early stage in the budget preparation process there is not a fully developed list of service pressures and potential mitigating savings. Work on these will continue over the Autumn, in preparation for draft budget proposals being published for consultation in December. An initial calculation of likely inflationary pressures can, however, be undertaken.

5.11 The starting point for future years' budgets is the Council's Commitment Budget, which represents a rolling base budget including unavoidable future spending commitments. Most notably, these are contributions to the Berkshire Pension Fund, which increase each year to help ensure the pension scheme is fully funded over time and borrowing costs arising from the Council's approved capital programme. The Commitment Budget is expected to increase by £1.0m in 2024/25 and by much lesser sums in subsequent years. A detailed review of the Commitment Budget will be undertaken in parallel with development of the draft budget proposals for 2024/25.

Inflation, Revenue Pressures and Savings

5.11.1 The budget preparations for 2024/25 are being undertaken against the backdrop of stubbornly high inflation rates. While the headline level is lower than twelve months ago and energy prices seem to have passed their peak,

we are still a long way from the Bank of England's target 2.5%. This inevitably affects the budget provision we will need to make for price increases, some of which are contractually set, and drives the Council to consider high increases in its own fees and charges, to cover rising costs.

- 5.11.2 Starting with pay inflation, the national employers' body has once again this year offered a flat rate £1,925 increase for most local government workers. While this has not yet been agreed by Trades Unions, who are pressing for a significantly more generous offer, it is broadly equivalent to the 4% provision for pay inflation included in the Council's approved budget. Looking ahead to 2024/25, it is inevitable that Trades Unions will continue to demand pay increases for their members that secure parity against private sector pay rises. The national pay negotiating body representing local authorities will counter this with an argument that local government's financial position makes this unaffordable. At this stage, recognising that a balance will need to be struck and that inflation is likely to fall in the coming months, a provision for a 3.5% pay award (at a cost of £3.1m) has been included for planning purposes in 2024/25, falling to 3% and 2% in subsequent years.
- 5.11.3 Energy prices increased significantly faster than the headline inflation rate in 2022 and the early part of 2023 but are now falling. The Council has arrangements in place to forward purchase these commodities, which provides some protection against the extreme fluctuations that the market has seen. Despite this, the Council suffered average energy increases of 92%. Early indications for 2024/25 are that energy prices will fall by around 25%, which is the current budget assumption (a budget reduction of £0.7m), with further (albeit smaller) reductions in subsequent years.
- 5.11.4 The most significant inflationary costs arise from non-pay budgets (excluding for energy). Should the headline inflation rate in Autumn 2023 be around 6.5% - 7% (which looks likely), this will add around £6.3m to the current cost of service delivery. This figure is included for planning purposes in the future financial projections, however attention is being given to how contractual inflation can be absorbed or managed as the detailed budget proposals are progressed. Any potential impact on service levels arising from this exercise will need to be highlighted for Members' consideration. It is assumed that inflation will fall back towards the Bank of England's target over the next three years.
- 5.11.5 Recognising the impact of these inflationary increases on the Council's costs, it is proposed that our fees and charges also work towards average increases of 5%, which would generate additional income of around £1.7m, with future increases mirroring pay award assumptions (3% and 2%). As always, there will be some service areas where charges are market driven and this level of increase is not sustainable. Individual service areas will need to make this assessment in calculating fees and charges for Members to consider as part of developing the Council's draft budget proposals that will be published in December.
- 5.12 In addition to additional inflationary costs, the Council's budget is affected each year by other cost pressures, notably relating to increased demand for services. As has been stated above, it is too early at this stage of the budget process to accurately predict the scale of these for 2024/25. However, Members are advised that pressures approved in the last two budgets totalled £13m, while savings totalled £10m and included £3.5m in 2023/24 related to the business rates revaluation that

cannot be repeated. In an average year, pressures identified would generally be expected to be double the level of savings.

5.13 For illustrative purposes only, it is assumed in this report that revenue pressures in each of the coming years will be identified totalling around £5m while savings will be around £2.5m. All potential budget proposals identified will need to be considered against the following emerging Council Plan priority themes before being included in the draft 2024/25 budget, to ensure they are aligned with agreed priorities:

- Engaged and Healthy Communities
- Thriving and Connected Economy
- Green and Sustainable Environment

5.14 Given the paucity of funding and the wide range of pressures on the Council's budget, careful consideration will need to be given to the introduction of major new initiatives to pursue those priorities at pace.

Capital Programme Proposals

5.15 As is the case with revenue budget pressures and savings, it is too early in the budget process to provide an indication of the nature and scale of proposals that will be brought forward for consideration. Any agreed proposals that exceed funding available from capital grants, asset disposals or meet the criteria for invest to save schemes will need to be funded from borrowing, with an associated impact on the revenue budget to fund debt interest and provision for principal repayment.

5.16 For illustrative purposes, an allowance has been made in the medium-term projects for new capital programme proposals totalling £5m and assumed capital income of £2m, reflecting the Council's typical experience in previous years. Allowance has therefore been made in the medium-term revenue budget projection for debt charges on a net additional £3m of borrowing, which typically impacts the year after the capital schemes are first approved and will cost around £0.25m.

5.17 Table 2 below draws together the planning assumptions in paragraphs 5.9 to 5.16 together to give an indication of the Council's potential future financial prospects. It is particularly important to emphasise that the level of pressures and savings is included simply for illustrative purposes, informed by figures in previous years' budgets. Actual proposals for 2024/25 will be considered by Members in the Autumn before being agreed and published as part of the Council's draft budget in December.

Table 2 – Illustrative Medium Term Financial Prospects

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Base Revenue Budget (adjusted for one-offs)	88.64	97.35	107.62	113.97
Commitments	1.11	1.00	0.05	0.18
Inflation (pay, non-pay and fees and charges)	9.76	7.01	3.56	2.56
Contingency (£2.75m in 23/24, may change)	2.75	0.00	0.00	0.00
Identified Savings (illustrative only)	-7.53	-2.50	-2.50	-2.50
Identified Pressures (illustrative only, incl. for Capital Prog)	5.49	5.00	5.25	5.25
Estimated Change in Business Rates growth retained	-2.19	1.00		
Specific grant changes	-0.27	-1.24		
Use of Specific Reserves for One-Off Pressures	-0.41	-		
Expenditure	97.35	107.62	113.97	119.46
RSG and Business Rates Baseline	-19.61	-20.20	-20.70	-21.10
Council Tax (+ 4.99%)	-74.30	-78.79	-83.46	-88.25
Collection Fund Deficit (Council Tax & NNDR)	0.90	-	-	-
Use of General / Future Funding Reserves	-3.59	-	-	-
Council Taxbase Growth (estimate)	-0.75	-0.70	-0.60	-0.50
Resources	-97.35	-99.69	-104.76	-109.85
Cumulative Gap (Before Use of General Reserves)	0.00	7.93	9.21	9.62
Annual Gap (Before Use of General Reserves)	0.00	7.93	1.28	0.41

- 5.18 In summary, this shows that the Council will need to either reduce pressures or identify further savings to bridge an identified gap of around £9.5m over the next three years to 2026/27. The gap is currently significantly front loaded, due to the current high level of inflation, that is expected to reduce over time. The Council is able to use its available reserves to smooth the phasing over time, although drawing from reserves in any one year adds future risk as it increases the cumulative gap to be bridged in the period.
- 5.19 Delivering this level of savings, particularly in such a short time period, represents a huge challenge for an organisation of the Council's scale, with over £100m having been saved since the Council was created in 1998. While all parts of the Council will be expected to make a contribution, efficiencies alone will not bridge this scale of gap. Transformational change will be required and the Business Change programme that is being developed alongside the Council Plan will bring a focus to this. Additional capacity will be required to drive change at pace, the scale and nature of which is currently being assessed. In order to avoid placing further pressure on existing revenue budgets, the Executive and Full Council will be asked in November to adopt a Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy, that will enable eligible transformation costs to be capitalised and funded from asset sale(s), as permitted by Government.

Proposed Release of Funding to Support Affordable Housing

- 5.20 The Executive has previously confirmed its support for the Market Street development being taken forward by the Bracknell Forest Cambium Partnership, most recently at its meeting in July 2023. At that time offers from registered social landlords to purchase the 48% affordable units in the scheme were being assessed and it was recognised that a further financial contribution from the money the Council secures from developers to deliver affordable housing may be required. Authority was delegated to the Executive Member for Social Care, Health and Housing to approve an additional contribution of £0.5m.

- 5.21 In the event, the impact of continuing high inflation and rising borrowing costs has added more pressure to the scheme's finances. There is a residual funding gap of £1.5m, that cannot be bridged and which the Council's previously approved additional contribution of £0.5m is insufficient to cover. In order to secure the scheme's delivery, which includes a significant number of affordable units, the Council is being asked to input a total of £2m of its s106 funding received to deliver affordable housing, representing £1m more than has previously been approved. While this late development is not welcome news the Council's funding, which can only be used for the purpose of supporting affordable housing delivery, will secure delivery of the scheme.
- 5.22 At this time, there is insufficient funding available to support the proposal in full, with the Council currently holding £1.2m of affordable housing funding, including £0.5m already committed to Market Street. However, an agreement is in the process of being finalised with a developer that will secure a sum of almost £2.7m by May 2024 at the latest and a further sum of this level by no later than December 2024. The Council will not be required to contribute this funding before it is received, hence there will be no adverse cashflow impact.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The Council is required to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs. As part of those arrangements, it is under a duty to monitor its budgets throughout the financial year and to take appropriate action to deal with any deterioration in the financial position revealed by the regular monitoring.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 The financial implications of this report are included in the supporting information.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 The Council's budget proposals impact on a wide range of services. Detailed consultation is undertaken on the draft budget proposals when they are published in December each year to provide individuals and groups the opportunity to provide comments.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 The Council's strategic risk register contains a specific risk highlighting "significant pressures on the Council's ability to balance its finances whilst maintaining satisfactory service standards". While this is a long-standing issue, the situation in the current year and future year prospects mean that the risk is particularly difficult to manage at the current time. This paper has been brought to the Executive at this time to ensure there is a shared understanding of the situation and to agree an outline approach to achieving financial sustainability over the medium-term, to help focus more detailed work on specific options over the coming months.

Climate Change Implications

6.5 There are no direct implications arising from this report which sets the context for the Council's budget considerations. An assessment will be undertaken of the revenue and capital budget proposals as they are developed for Members' consideration against the Council Plan priorities, which include supporting a clean and sustainable environment.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 A detailed consultation will be undertaken on the Councils draft budget proposals for 2023/24 after they are published in December 2022.

Contacts for further information

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Unrestricted

Budget Monitoring

2023/24 End of Year Projections

From July 2023 Actuals

It is recommended that CMT:

1

Note that the variances reported by directorates indicate expenditure above the approved budget (£2.015m), after taking into account the balance on the Corporate Contingency (£2.261m). Once Emerging Issues are included the overspend increases to a potential £3.025m. This is an improvement of £0.259m on reported variances and £1.144m including Emerging Issues since last month;

2

Review measures currently put in place to a) limit non-essential expenditure and b) to implement in year savings for both the Council and Schools Budgets;

3

Note the virements being proposed by directorates;

4

Note the balances remaining on major earmarked reserves;

5

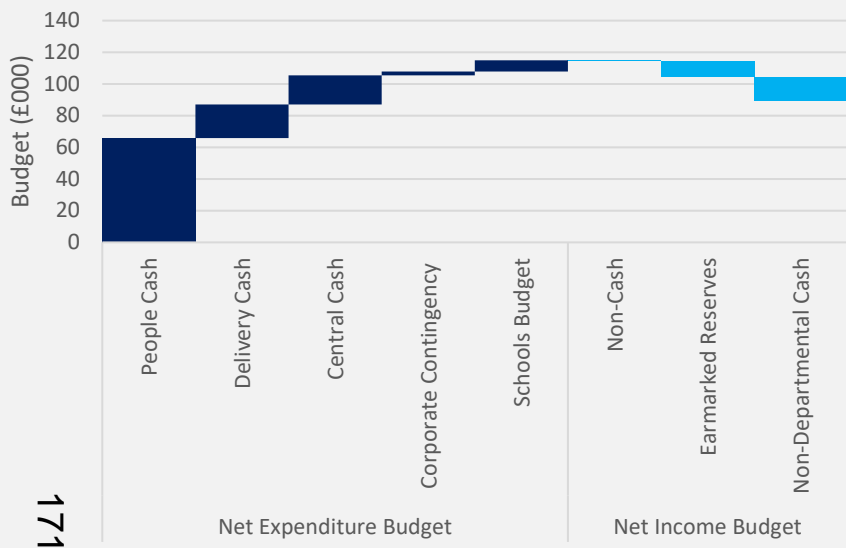
Note that work is on-going to validate data underpinning variances on the High Needs Block of the Schools Budget. At this stage the variance reported is a £7.166m overspend anticipated in the original budget and a £0.150m indicative overspend at College Hall Pupil Referral Unit, mainly for additional management support;

6

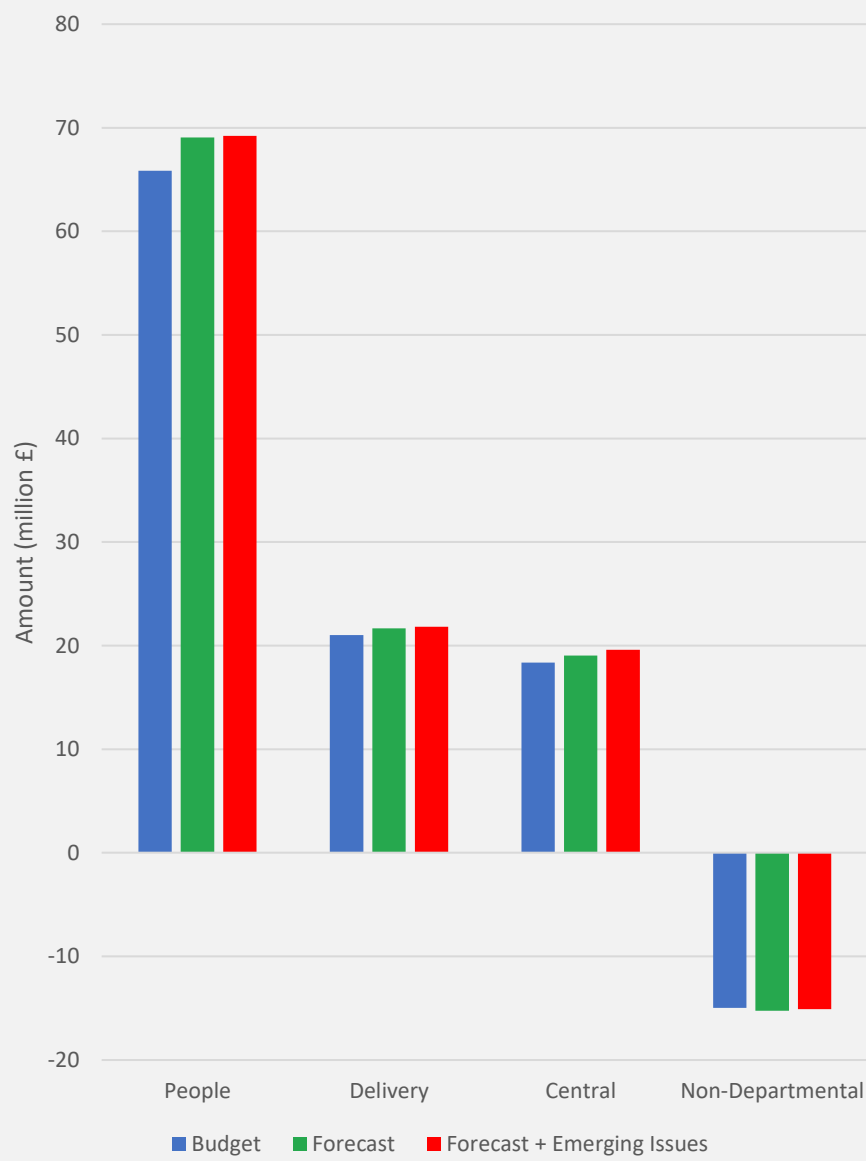
Note the projected outturn for the Business Rates Scheme and Council Tax.

Overall Summary

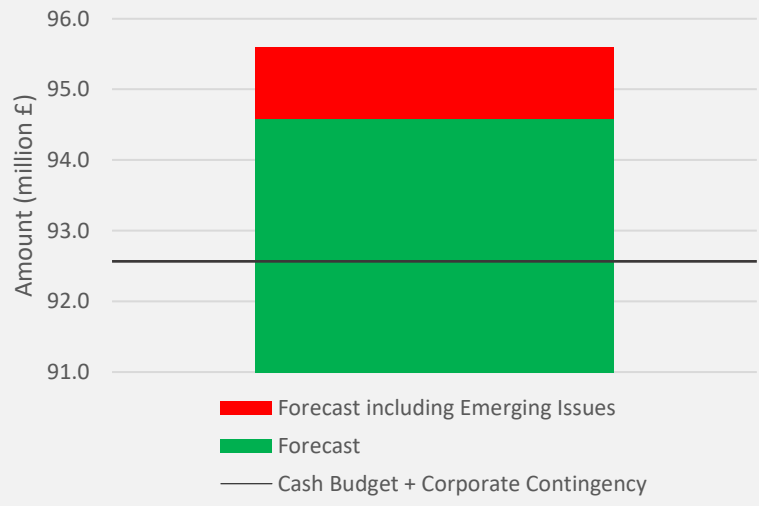
Budget Breakdown



Cash Budgets and Forecasts



Council Forecast Outturn and Budget



Virements

DESCRIPTION	Central (£'000)	Delivery (£'000)	People (£'000)	Non-Departmental (£'000)	Corporate Contingency (£'000)	Contribution to/(from) Earmarked Reserves (£'000)
Previously Reported	1,314	520	510	-450	-429	-1,465
Section 106 SPA funding to support the delivery of the Parks & Countryside service. £278K previously drawn down rather than £228k in error.	-50					50
Binfield Health & Community Centre - rental income covers MRP and Interest charges		-191		191		
TOTAL	1,264	329	510	-259	-429	-1,415

Summary – Assistant Director Level

	Original Cash Budget (£'000)	Virements & Budget C/Fwds (£'000)	Current Approved Cash Budget (£'000)	Variance (£'000)		Variance + Emerging issues (£'000)	
				Last Month	This Month	Last Month	This Month
Director: Place, Planning & Regeneration	8,626	1,105	9,731	647	657	1,107	1,183
Director: Resources	6,515	71	6,586	182	52	182	52
Chief Executive's Office	1,952	88	2,040	-15	-15	-15	-9
CENTRAL	17,093	1,264	18,357	814	694	1,274	1,226
Executive Director of Delivery	230	-4	226	0	0	0	0
Assistant Director: Customer Services & ICT	12,308	-211	12,097	56	-68	56	-68
Assistant Director: Property Services	-4,774	184	-4,590	185	185	195	195
173 Borough Solicitor	699	8	707	50	50	100	100
Head of Democratic & Registration Services	1,976	94	2,070	0	0	0	0
Assistant Director: Contract Services	10,245	258	10,503	578	485	749	585
DELIVERY	20,684	329	21,013	869	652	1,100	812
Executive Director of People	1,681	11	1,692	12	83	12	83
Education and Learning	2,542	369	2,911	463	467	463	467
Children's Social Care	19,927	86	20,013	816	832	816	832
Contribution to Costs from Schools Budget	-468	0	-468	-7	-7	-7	-7
Commissioning	2,957	-16	2,941	-142	-90	-142	-90
Adult Social Care	20,818	63	20,881	996	1,216	2,190	1,374
Mental Health & Out of Hours	13,097	109	13,206	120	345	120	345
Early Help & Communities	4,783	-112	4,671	668	369	668	369
PEOPLE	65,337	510	65,847	2,926	3,215	4,120	3,373

Summary – Assistant Director Level

	Original Cash Budget (£'000)	Virements & Budget C/Fwds (£'000)	Current Approved Cash Budget (£'000)	Variance (£'000)		Variance + Emerging issues (£'000)	
				Last Month	This Month	Last Month	This Month
Interest and Investment Income	1,804	130	1,934	0	-150	-150	-150
Minimum & Voluntary Revenue Provisions	2,465	61	2,526	-179	-240	-179	-240
Council Wide Items	70	-450	-380	105	105	265	265
New Homes Bonus Grant	-786	0	-786	0	0	0	0
Services Grant	-681	0	-681	0	0	0	0
Business Rates Income Growth & Grants	-10,561	0	-10,561	0	0	0	0
Transfers (to)/from DSG Adjustment Account	-7,166	0	-7,166	0	0	0	0
Other	140	0	140	0	0	0	0
NON-DEPARTMENTAL	-14,715	-259	-14,974	-74	-285	-64	-125
TOTAL	88,399	1,844	90,243	4,535	4,276	6,430	5,286

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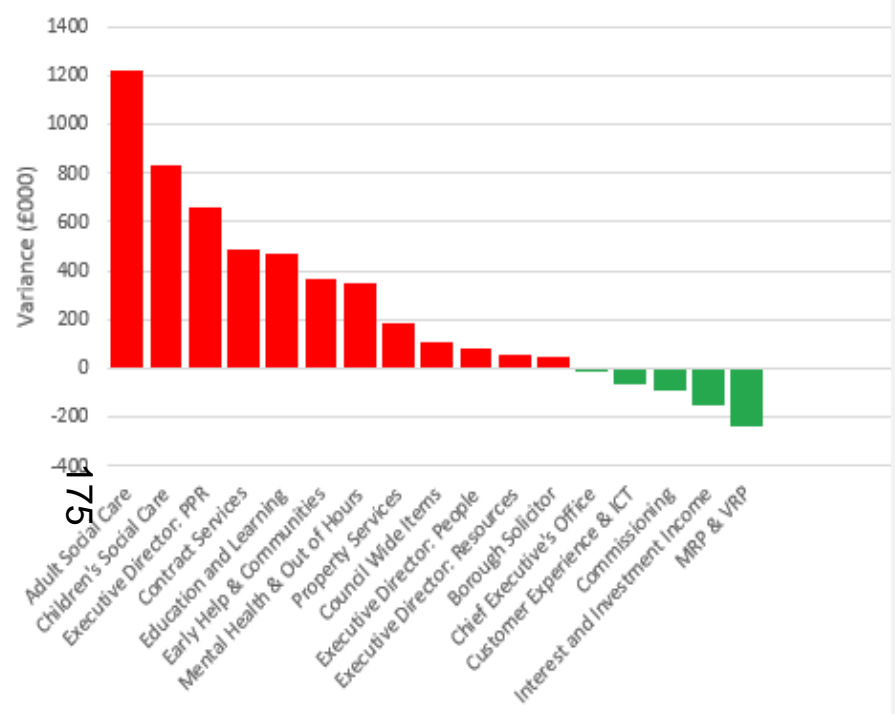
CORPORATE CONTINGENCY	2,750	-429	2,321	-2,261	-2,261	-2,261	-2,261
TOTAL	91,149	1,415	92,564	2,274	2,015	4,169	3,025

EARMARKED RESERVES	-8,482	-1,415	-9,897	0	0	0	0
OVERALL TOTAL	82,667	0	82,667	2,274	2,015	4,169	3,025

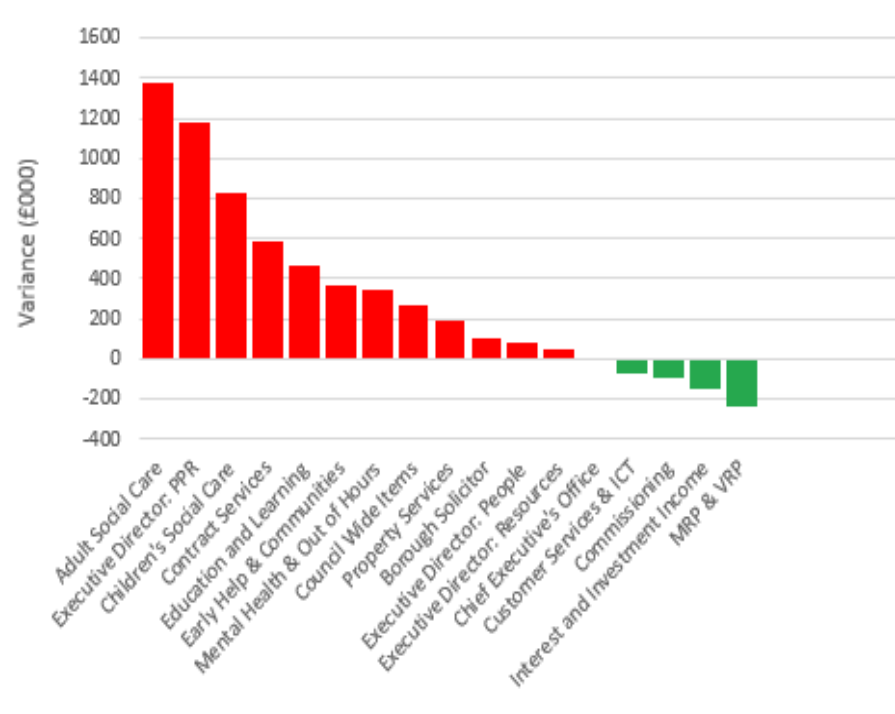
NON-CASH BUDGETS	-546	0	-546	0	0	0	0
SCHOOL BUDGET	7,166	0	7,166				
OVERALL TOTAL	89,287	0	89,287				

Cash Budget Summary

Variances



Variances including Emerging Issues



Cash Budget Summary – New Variances and Emerging Issues

The variances reported by directorates indicate expenditure above the approved budget (£2015m), after taking into account the balance on the Corporate Contingency (£2.261m). Once Emerging Issues are included the potential overspend increases to £3.025m. This is an improvement of £0.259m on reported variances and £1.144m including Emerging Issues since last month.

CENTRAL

Significant Variances

Place, Planning and Regeneration

- Within Reactive Maintenance, the previously reported additional drawdown from reserves to support budgets of £0.140m upon review has been revised downwards to £0.085m, which will leave a pressure on road markings (£0.055m). In addition, consultants are being used to manage the SUDS workload due to staff vacancies at a cost of £0.010m and the previously reported pressure on contract costs has increased by £0.015m to £0.115m.
- A budget of £0.100m was provided to support Town Centre Events during the year. An amount of £0.020m was set aside for the Coronation, however this event was managed by Delivery and contingency funding was provided to support costs. In addition an amount of £0.010m was requested for a contribution towards Xmas lights but this can be met from the services base budget (-£0.030m).
- Based on figures for the first quarter, the income position at the Look Out has improved (-£0.030m).

Resources

- The previously reported under-recovery of income, from Council Tax and Business Rates recovered through court judgements, will now be met from a one-off contribution from reserves (-£0.100m).
- In response to Departmental budget pressures, in-year savings have been identified on the OD training budget by limiting non-essential training (-£0.030m).

Significant Emerging Issues

Place, Planning and Regeneration

- Parks and Countryside - Surrey Heath purchase SANG capacity from Bracknell Forest for the completion of dwellings. It is unclear at present if there will be sufficient housing development in Surrey Heath to meet the income target for this financial year (£0.060m).

DELIVERY

Significant Variances

- The Valuation Office has applied a 20% reduction in Rateable Value to the Borough libraries for the 2017 Business Rates list. This was agreed on 9th July 23 and the refund has been backdated to 1st April 2017 (-£0.124m).
- Waste Collection/Recycling - due to additional bin collections, new properties/flats requiring additional bins and collections, and an increase in special collection income, there is an underspend to be reported (-£0.093m).

Cash Budget Summary – New Variances and Emerging Issues

The variances reported by directorates indicate expenditure above the approved budget (£2015m), after taking into account the balance on the Corporate Contingency (£2.261m). Once Emerging Issues are included the potential overspend increases to £3.025m. This is an improvement of £0.259m on reported variances and £1.144m including Emerging Issues since last month.

DELIVERY continued

Significant Emerging issues

- West Berkshire Council have indicated that the previously reported pressure for the Public Protection Partnership budget can be reduced by £0.071m to £0.100m. They will continue to look at ways of making efficiencies in year and update us accordingly.

PEOPLE

Significant Variances

- Additional costs associated with support for the Education and Learning AD in respect of SEND and the recruitment of a new AD (£0.071m).
- Adult Social Care - within the Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities a further adverse movement of £0.149m due to increased costs in supported living (£0.192m), direct payments (£0.024m) and short-term Support (£0.064m) partly offset by a favourable variance from increased income in supported accommodation (-£0.130m). Plus, an increase in the adverse variance on ASC Client Costs (£0.077m).
- Mental Health - within CMHTOA client costs an increase in the adverse variance (£0.336m) primarily relating to Nursing over 65s (£0.188m), Homecare (£0.100m), direct payments (£0.043m) and other short-term support (£0.068m) partly offset by a decrease in Residential (£0.075m). There are favourable movements on CMHT Client Costs (-£0.035m), and Care management (-£0.056m), with the latter primarily due to a Better Care Fund allocation of £0.073m.
- Within Housing options, a reduction in the adverse variance relating to emergency accommodation (£0.345m), due to a decrease in B&B nightly lets (-£0.056m) and the assumption that a significant number of people/families will have moved to Amber House and Silva homes by the end of September (-£0.284m). Partly offset by additional repairs and maintenance costs within Housing Management and Property (£0.042m).

Cash Budget Summary – New Variances and Emerging Issues

The variances reported by directorates indicate expenditure above the approved budget (£2015m), after taking into account the balance on the Corporate Contingency (£2.261m). Once Emerging Issues are included the potential overspend increases to £3.025m. This is an improvement of £0.259m on reported variances and £1.144m including Emerging Issues since last month.

PEOPLE continued

Significant Emerging issues

- There are several potential sources of funding being explored and at this stage it has been assumed that two thirds of the potential funding will be available to meet pressures (-£1.036m):
 - Last year £0.500m was provided from the Better Care Fund to help meet the additional costs of early discharges but a case has still to be made for this year;
 - Based on the three areas of priority / conditions, it is believed that the additional Market Sustainability & Improvement – Workforce Fund grant received this year (-£0.550m) can be applied against key budgets in adults and older adults to offset existing overspends, rather than specific new schemes;
 - As the increase in cost appearing in budgets relates to both increase in demand, complexity / need and increase in unit lost by some providers, it is legitimate to apply some of the remaining inflation uplift funding (-£0.500m) to increases in provider costs in packages of care which relate to increased unit cost.

NON DEPARTMENTAL

Significant Variances

- There will be increased income from investments due to higher interest rates (-£0.150m). This was previously reported as an Emerging Issue.
- Minimum Revenue Provision - additional budget allocation relating to capital expenditure at Binfield Health & Community Centre following the signing of the rental agreement. This will not be required until next year and therefore increases the underspend (-£0.061m).

Significant Emerging Issues

- The increased income from investments has now been moved to the reported variances section (£0.150m).

CONTINGENCY

Significant Variances

- No new variances to report.

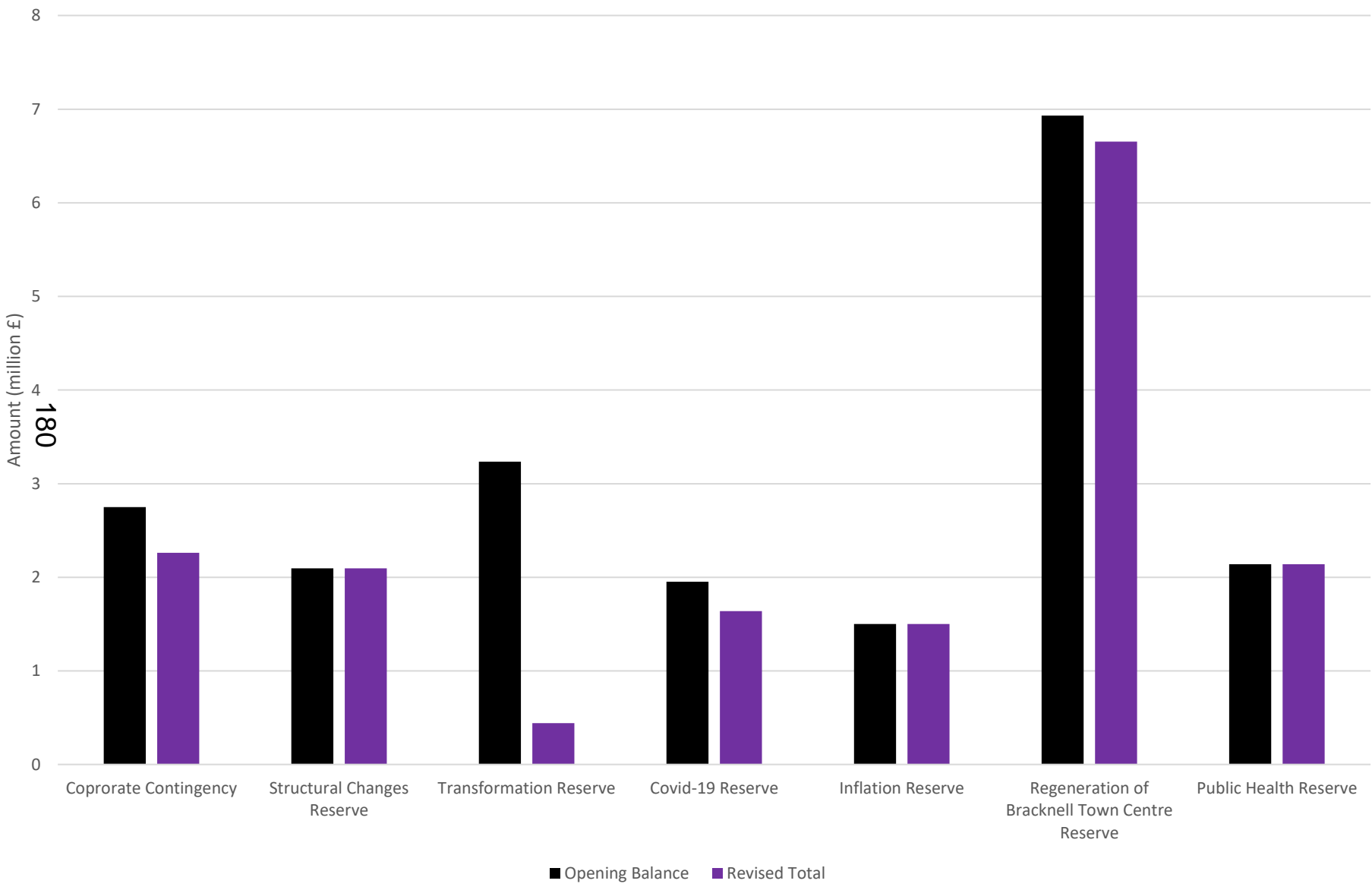
Earmarked Reserves

DESCRIPTION	Corporate Contingency (£'000)	Structural Changes Reserve (£'000)	Transformation Reserve (£'000)	Covid-19 Reserve (£'000)	Inflation Reserve (£'000)	Regeneration of Bracknell Town Centre Reserve (£'000)	Public Health Reserve (£'000)
OPENING BALANCE	2,750	2,096	3,234	1,952	1,500	6,931	2,139
Budgeted Increase / (Decrease)				-313		-100	
Projects to be funded from the Public Health Reserve							Figure TBC
Business Change Team			-669				
CSC - SEN Improvement Plan			-85				
Childrens Social Care - Market Development			-60				
Adult Social Care - Finance Reform			-54				
Chief Executive - Assistant Director: Strategic Projects Post (£125K 2024/25)			-245				
Development of Leisure Strategy			-50				
Initial works related to the replacement of Bracknell Leisure Centre			-50				
Arts & Culture Strategy Development			-40				
Property - Asset Review (£22k 2024/25)			-85				
Joint Venture Business Partner						-78	
Restructure of ICT team			-200				
ICT - Technology to support hybrid meetings			-60				
Social Care - Customer Journey and Social Care Business Systems			-526				
Adult Social Care - Embedding Strength Based Practice			-89				
Co-production Framework and Toolkit Development			-29				
Dedicated Counter Fraud Resources			-40				
Climate Change - Business Analyst			-63				
Business Change Programme Development			-10				
Buckler's Park Community Hub			-75				
Strategic Procurement Plan (IDOX Replacement)			-195				
Two interim business analyst roles (for six months) to support Children's and Adults system reconfiguration work			-62				
To secure car parking infrastructure						-100	
Programme management support relating to the Berkshire Deal - contribution from each Unitary	-27						
To support grant writing services provided by Involve	-5						
A new post within Democratic & Registration Services to support the Opposition Groups	-17						
Town Centre events for the Coronation of King Charles III	-30						
Support for SEND services	-350						
New member training	-60						
Blue Badge Digital System			-4				
Safety Valve Consultant- from September for one year			-100				
REVISED TOTAL	2,261	2,096	443	1,639	1,500	6,653	2,139

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Earmarked Reserves

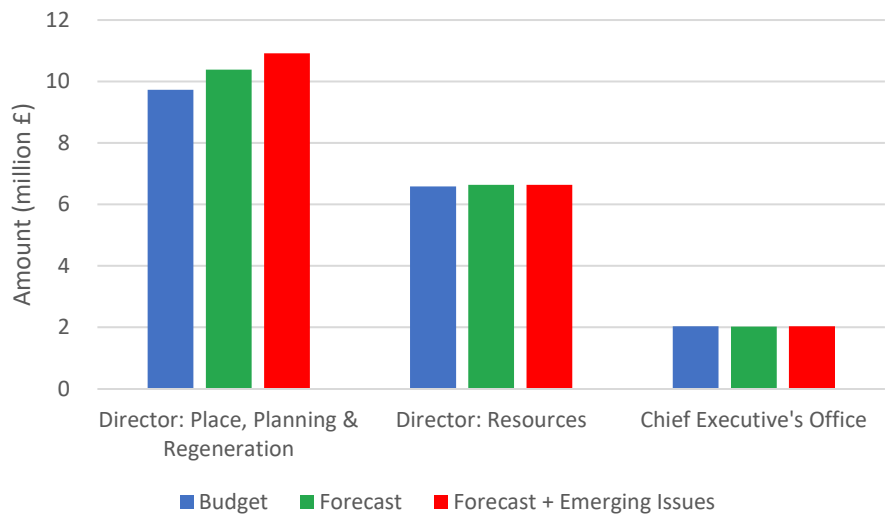
Movement of Major Reserves



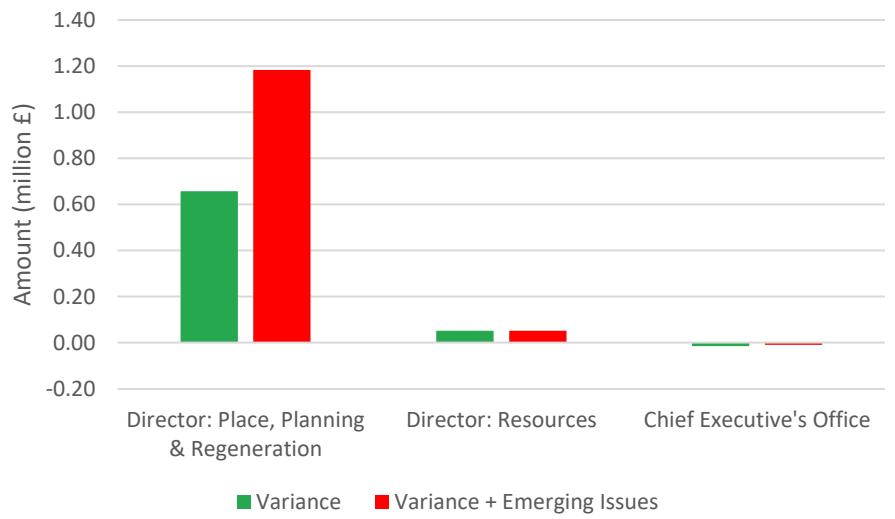
Central Directorates

Central Directorate Summary

Central Directorate Budgets and Forecasts

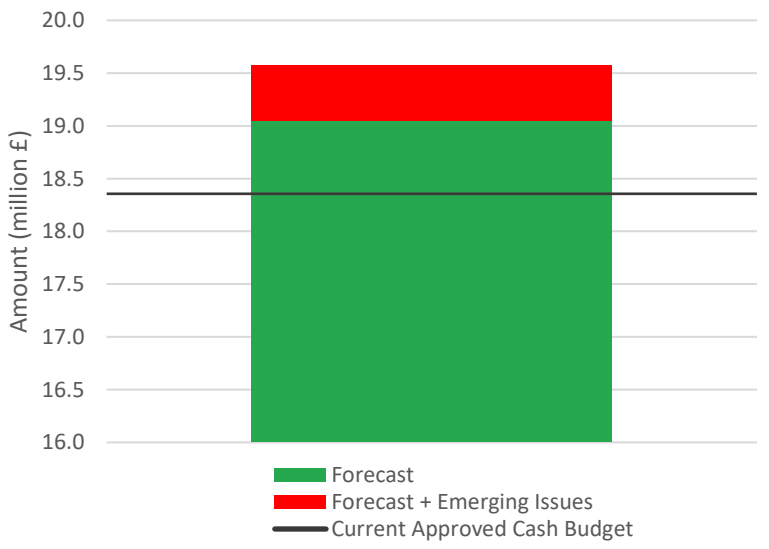


Central Directorate Variances



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Central Directorate Forecast Outturn and Budget



Summary and Significant Cumulative Variances

A forecast variance of £0.694m rising to £1.226m including Emerging Issues. This is an improvement of £0.120m / £0.048m including Emerging Issues compared to last month.

The most significant cumulative variances are:

- An ongoing shortfall in Development Management Income (£0.250m) which could increase to £0.710m once Emerging Issues are considered. Overspends are also occurring on Supplies and Services budgets (£0.080m).
- The Building Regulations service will not generate sufficient income to meet costs (£0.150m).
- Income targets at the Look Out will not be achieved (£0.135m).
- An underspend on Concessionary Fares (-£0.075m).
- An overspend on patching road markings, minor works and other contract costs within Reactive Maintenance (£0.100m).
- A shortfall in income from Monitoring Street Works (£0.102m) partly offset by additional income from Rechargeable Street Works (-£0.070m)

Central Directorate Significant Movements this Month

Department	Description	£'000
CENTRAL	Variances Previously Reported	814
PPR: Reactive Maintenance	The previously reported additional drawdown from reserves to support budgets of £0.140m has been revised downwards to the agreed £0.085m, which will leave a pressure of £0.055m on road markings. In addition consultants are being used to manage the SUDS workload due to staff vacancies at a cost of £0.010m and the previously reported pressure on contract costs has increased by £0.015m to £0.115m.	80
PPR: Regeneration and Economic Development	A budget of £0.100m was provided to support Town Centre Events during the year. An amount of £0.020m was set aside for the Coronation, however this event was managed by Delivery and contingency funding was provided to support costs. In addition an amount of £0.010m was requested for a contribution towards Xmas lights, however this budget forms part of the services base budget and is therefore not required.	-30
PPR: The Look Out	Based on the income received Apr-Jul, there has been an improving position on admissions for the Discovery Centre. The overall variance of £0.135m now reflects the Catering function.	-40
183 RESOURCES Revenue Services	As previously reported income from Council Tax and Business Rates recovered through court judgements remains significantly below pre-Covid levels. Should income targets not be achieved reserves are held that could be used to support the budget as a one-off in 2023-24. The pressure has therefore been removed. The final figure forms part of year end Collection Fund calculations so will not be known until the end of financial year.	-100
RESOURCES Organisational Development	In response to Departmental budget pressures, in-year savings have been identified on the OD training budget by limiting non-essential training.	-30
CENTRAL	Final Variances	694
CENTRAL	Emerging Issues Previously Reported	460
PPR: Parks and Countryside	Surrey Heath purchase SANG capacity from Bracknell Forest for the completion of dwellings. It is unclear at present if there will be sufficient housing development in Surrey Heath to allow a drawdown from reserves to meet the income target for this financial year.	66
ChEx OFFICE Policy and Performance	One-off In-Phase development costs have exceeded the budget but we are still awaiting confirmation of final costs and timings	6
CENTRAL	Final Emerging Issues	532
CENTRAL	Variances + Emerging Issues	1,226

Central Directorate Savings RAG ratings

CENTRAL - CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE

Description Impact	2023/24 £'000	Delivered On Track Not Delivered	Notes
Communications and Marketing Reduction in various supplies & services budgets	-5		
CENTRAL - CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE TOTAL	-5		0

CENTRAL – RESOURCES

Description Impact	2023/24 £'000	Delivered On Track Not Delivered	Notes
Finance Reduction in various supplies & services budgets	-5		
Organisational Development Reduction in overall training budget through a review of essential and mandatory training offered	-25		
Insurance & Risk Management Reduction in budgeted resources for cyber security costs following the receipt of Government funding and a re-assessment of how the identified support will be procured.	-50		
CENTRAL – RESOURCES TOTAL	-80		

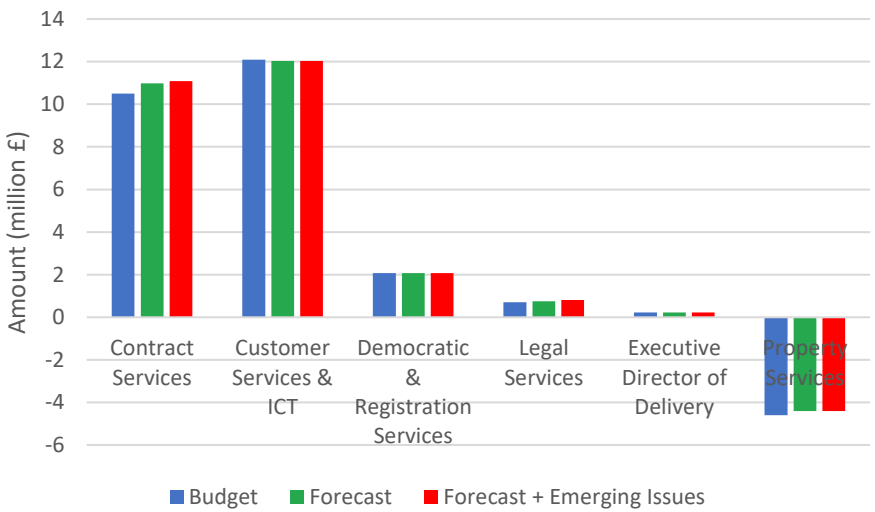
CENTRAL – PLACE, PLANNING & REGENERATION

Description Impact	2023/24 £'000	Delivered On Track Not Delivered	Notes
Director PPR Reduction in various supplies & services budgets	-10		
Planning Increase in Community Infrastructure Levy Administration income	-50		
Transport Strategy Reduction in road safety expenditure in line with the level of expenditure in prior years	-30		
Highway Engineering Administration fees generated from the construction of vehicle access crossings	-20		
Traffic Reduction in winter maintenance contract to reflect milder winters in recent years	-20		
Traffic Increase in income from Street Works	-20		
Parks & Countryside Increase in income from Surrey Heath Suitable Alternative Non-Green Spaces (SANGS)	-50		
Parks & Countryside Increased use of commuted sums for open space maintenance	-25		
Regeneration & Economic Development Reduction in various supplies & services budgets	-10		
Traffic Reduction in software budget to reflect prior year's expenditure	-10		
Commuted Sums/S278/S38 Increase in draw down from reserves - with development growth continuing balances should be maintained.	-100		
Planning Increase amount dawn from SANGS to support the budget	-50		
Travel Planning Income from developers buying into a Travel Plan service offered by the Council, rather than the individual occupiers/site developers having to run their bespoke travel plan.	-25		
CENTRAL – PLACE, PLANNING & REGENERATION TOTAL	-420		

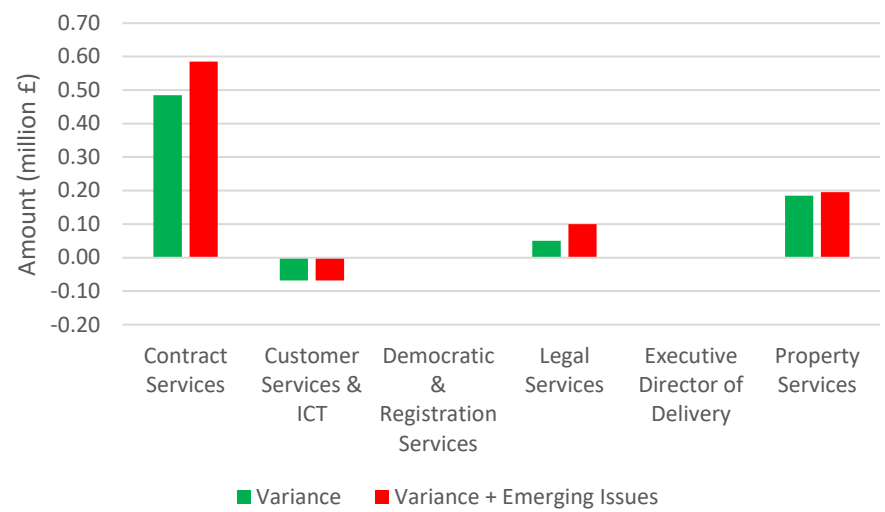
Delivery Directorate

Delivery Directorate Summary

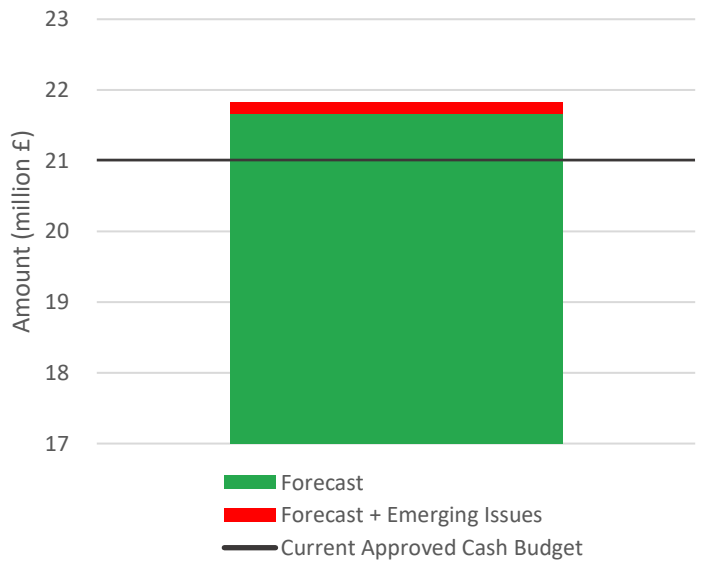
Delivery Directorate Budgets and Forecasts



Delivery Directorate Variances



Delivery Directorate Forecast Outturn and Budget



Summary and Significant Cumulative Variances

A forecast variance of £0.652m rising to £0.812m once Emerging Issues are taken into account. This is an improvement of £0.217m / £0.288m including Emerging Issues compared to last month.

- The most significant cumulative variances are:
- The purchase of a piece of land at Easthampstead Park school to be funded from Property Services as a Revenue Contribution to Capital (£0.085m).
 - The £0.100m saving relating to the letting out of Time Square will not be achieved as the NHS will no longer be renting any of the space.
 - The Waste PFI contract is expected to overspend by £0.613m. This reflects the latest tonnages, the haulage contract renewal and the removal of charging for DIY waste
 - A budget pressure within Legal Services relating to the cost of supporting the SEN Service (£0.050m) which due to uncertainty around the expected end date could potentially rise to £0.100m.
 - West Berkshire Council have indicated that there is a pressure on the Public Protection Partnership budget (£0.100m). Further efficiencies are being examined so the variance remains an Emerging Issue.

Delivery Directorate Significant Movements

Department	Description	£'000
DELIVERY	Variations Previously Reported	869
DIGITAL, CUSTOMER FOCUS & ICT Libraries	The Valuation Office has applied a 20% reduction in Rateable Value to the Borough libraries for the 2017 Business Rates list. This was agreed on 9th July 23 and the refund has been backdated to 1st April 2017, as such we have received a credit of £0.124m.	-124
CONTRACT SERVICES Waste Management	Waste Collection/Recycling - due to additional bin collections, new properties/flats requiring additional bins and collections, and an increase in special collection income, there is an underspend of £0.093m to be reported.	-93
DELIVERY	Final Variations	652
DELIVERY	Emerging Issues Previously Reported	231
187 CONTRACT SERVICES Regulatory Services	West Berkshire Council have indicated that the previously reported emerging issue for the Public Protection Partnership budget can be reduced by £0.071m. They will continue to look at ways of making efficiencies in year and update us accordingly.	-71
DELIVERY	Final Emerging Issues	160
DELIVERY	Final Variations + Emerging Issues	812

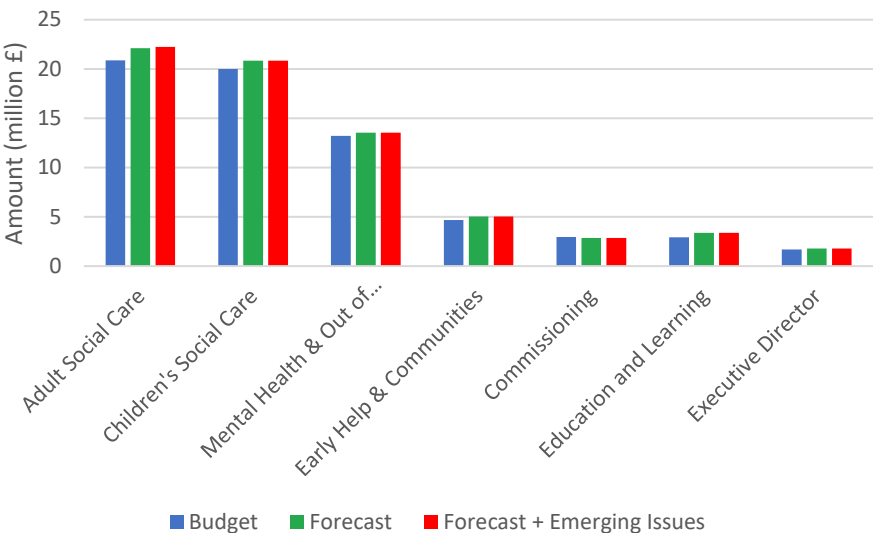
Delivery Directorate Savings RAG ratings

Description Impact	2023/24 £'000	Delivered On Track Not Delivered	Notes
On / Off Street Parking Procurement of a new contracted services provider resulted in a budget saving.	(130)	Delivered	
On / Off Street Parking Procurement of a new banking charges contract resulted in a budget saving.	(50)	Delivered	
On / Off Street Parking Selling overnight/weekend space at Time Square & High Street.	(20)	Not Delivered	Position regarding High Street has moved on since this saving was agreed. Saving will not be achieved.
Cemetery & Crematorium Additional income based on previous overachievement of income target.	(50)	On Track	Too early in the year to determine if this will be achieved. GJ to monitor.
Contract Services – Departmental Management Ongoing underspends on printing and other smaller supplies and services.	(7)	Delivered	
Waste Disposal Anticipated contract efficiencies and lower tonnages.	(350)	Not Delivered	Too early in the year to determine if this will be achieved. To be monitored closely with Reading.
Democratic & Registration Services Ongoing underspends on small supplies and services.	(9)	Delivered	
Community Hub/Facilities Coffee charge increase per cup and PAT testing being brought in-house.	(5)	On Track	Time needed to see the impact of the price increase on usage.
Legal Ongoing underspend on seminar costs.	(1)	Delivered	
Print Room Closure of the print room resulted in a redundancy, therefore a saving within the DSB.	(38)	Delivered	
Grounds Maintenance General budget reduction.	(15)	Delivered	
Leisure Additional Management Fee income from EA for the new Splash pad.	(10)	Delivered	
Office Accommodation Letting out space in TS.	(50)	Not Delivered	Bracknell Primary Care and the Clinical Education team are no longer in discussions to take on this lease.
DELIVERY TOTAL	(735)		

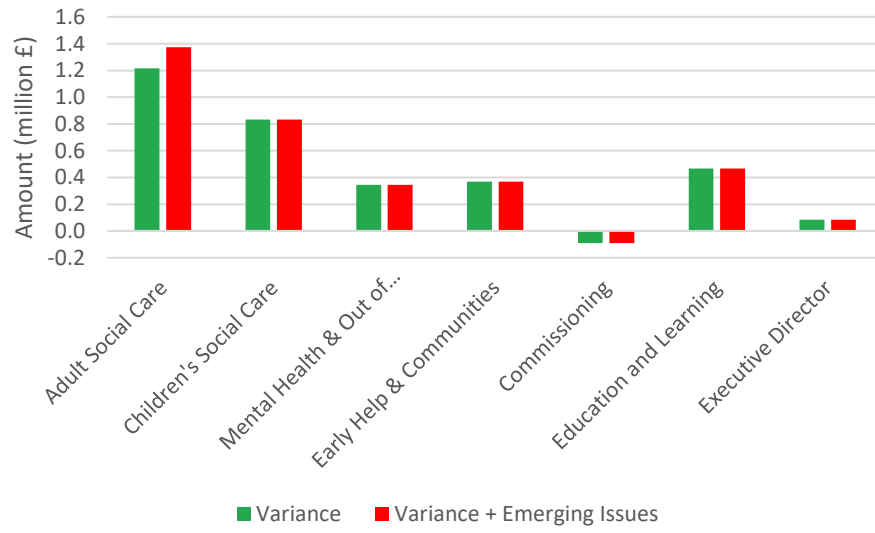
People Directorate

People Directorate Summary

People Directorate Budgets and Forecasts

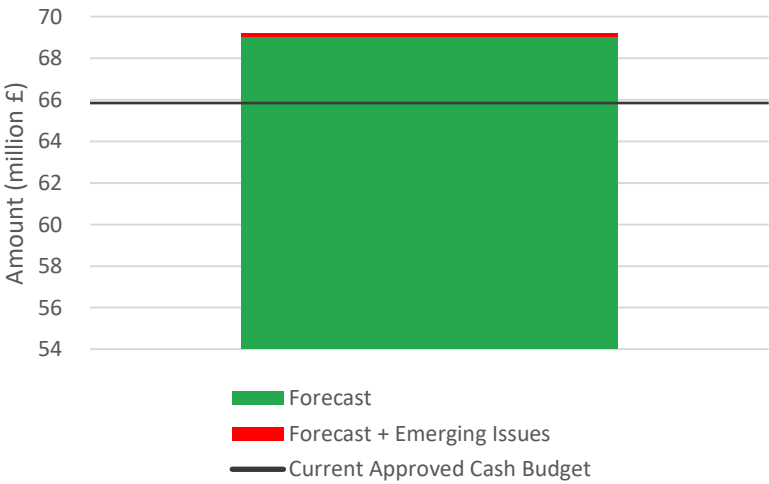


People Directorate Variances



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People Directorate Forecast Outturn and Budget



Summary and Significant Cumulative Variances

A forecast variance £3.215m rising to £3.373m once Emerging Issues are taken into account. This is a deterioration of £0.289m / improvement of £0.747m including Emerging Issues compared to last month.

The most significant cumulative variances are:

- Education and Learning (£0.467m) - Pressures on the Devolved Staffing Budget in particular the SEN Team (£0.316m), SEN pupil transport costs (£0.060m) and loss of income from the Education Psychology Service (£0.040m).
- Children's Social Care (£0.832m) – an overspend on residential placements (£0.598m) and an increase in spend to support CLA aimed at preventing higher, long-term costs (£0.585m), partly offset by underspends on support to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (-£0.142m), Childcare Solicitors (-£0.090m) and the DSB (-£0.141m).
- Adult Social Care (£1.216m/£1.374m) –An overspend on care costs (£1.554m) partly offset by underspends on care management costs (-£0.109m), Intermediate Care (-£0.085m) and Assistant Director budgets (-£0.065m). Emerging issues primarily relate to loss of Health income relating to s117 discharges and Continuing Health Care (£1.194m) partly offset by potential additional income from the BCF, Market Sustainability & Improvement – Workforce Fund and unallocated inflation funding (-£1.036m).
- Early Help and Communities (£0.369m) – Overspends on Housing options (£0.057m), relating to emergency accommodation, Welfare and Benefits (£0.218m) and Housing Management (£0.119m).

People Directorate Significant Movements

Department	Description	£'000
PEOPLE	Variations Previously Reported	2,926
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Additional costs associated with support for the Education and Learning AD in respect of SEND and transition to recruitment of a new AD.	71
EDUCATION & LEARNING	No significant changes in variances to report	4
CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE	The forecast over spending on CLA placement costs (excluding care leavers and asylum seekers) is forecast to increase by £0.057m to £0.598m with no significant changes from last month. There are a number of relatively small forecast cost reductions across a range of budgets including Childcare Solicitors, Special Guardianship Orders and the recharge from the Emergency Duty Team.	16
CONTRIBUTION TO COSTS FROM SCHOOLS BUDGET	No significant changes in variances to report	0
COMMISSIONING	The adverse movement primarily relates to the vacancy factor not being achieved an additional agency costs within Quality Assurance.	52
ADULT SOCIAL CARE	Within the Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities a further adverse movement of £0.149m due to increased costs in supported living (£0.192m), direct payments (£0.024m) and short term Support (£0.064m) partly offset by a favourable variance of increased income in supported accommodation (-£0.130m). Plus an increase in the adverse variance on ASC Client Costs (£0.077m).	220
MENTAL HEALTH & OUT OF HOURS 191	Within CMHTOA client costs an increase in the adverse variance of £0.336m primarily relating to Nursing over 65 (£0.188m), Homecare (£0.100m), direct payments (£0.043m) and other short term support (£0.068m) partly offset by a decrease in Residential (£0.075m). There are favourable movements on CMHT Client Costs (-£0.035m), and Care management (-£0.056m), primarily due to a BCF allocation of £0.073m.	225
EARLY HELP & COMMUNITIES	Within Housing options a reduction in the adverse variance relating to emergency accommodation (£0.345m), due to a decrease in B&B nightly lets (-£0.056m) and the assumption that a significant number of people/families will have moved to Amber House and Silva homes by the end of September (-£0.284m). Partly offset by additional repairs and maintenance costs within Housing Management and Property (£0.042m).	-299
PEOPLE	Final Variations	3,215

PEOPLE	Emerging Issues Previously Reported	1194
ADULT SOCIAL CARE	<p>There are several potential sources of funding being explored and at this stage it has been assumed that two thirds of the potential funding will be available to meet pressures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last year £0.500m was provided from the Better Care Fund to help meet the additional costs of early discharges but a case has still to be made for this year. • Based on the three areas of priority / conditions, it is believed that the additional Market Sustainability & Improvement – Workforce Fund grant received this year (-£0.550m) can be applied against key budgets in adults and older adults to offset existing overspends, rather than specific new schemes. • As the increase in cost appearing in budgets relates to both increase in demand, complexity / need and increase in unit lost by some providers, it is legitimate to apply some of the remaining inflation uplift funding (-£0.500m) to increases in provider costs in packages of care which relate to increased unit cost. 	-1,036
PEOPLE	Final Emerging Issues	158

PEOPLE	Variations + Emerging Issues	3,373
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People Directorate Savings RAG Ratings

Description Impact	2023/24 £'000	Delivered On Track At risk	AD Comment
Adult Social Care Outcome focussed reviews for all client groups- CTPLD and Act	-200		First cohort achieved savings second cohort has yielded some savings so far. Still 2 months on the project. £111K saved so far
Outcome focussed reviews for all client groups- CMHT	-250		£96K achieved so far with some clients still to review
Early Help and Communities Service efficiency and historic underspending:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> End of lease on a property 	-27		Budget removed and no costs incurred
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underspend on Early Help grants budget 	-28		We underspend 28k of the grant in prior years. We are still underspending on the budget. 28k on track
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of all Budget headings and historic underspends 	-24		Budget removed and <u>spend</u> on target in these headings
Welfare Benefits – Review of all Budget headings and historic underspends	-76		Budget removed but this service is showing an overspend
Grant funding is received in respect of the Supporting Families Programme that duplicates activities funded by the council. Greater use of grant will be used to deliver the programme	-100		This saving originated from the SF spend plan. This covers the FSA shortfall income from schools (as we can no longer charge schools), CAF co-ordinator can no longer be funded from <u>schools</u> grant, and community safety post no longer grant funded. Again, to keep the post we had to find alternative funding.

Description Impact	2023/24 £'000	Delivered On Track At risk	AD Comment
Education and Learning: Service efficiencies and historic overspendings:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underspend on commissioned service relating to support for young people Not in Education, Employment or Training 	-25		Budget reduced and <u>spend</u> on target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underspend on former <u>teachers</u> pension 	-50		Budget reduced, underspend anticipated.
Children's Social Care The Asylum Seekers National Transfer Scheme provides grant funding at a daily rate which has exceeded local care costs by £0.100m in each of the last 2 years. As numbers transferred increase, additional staffing is required to manage caseloads and a net saving of £0.050m is proposed	-50		Budget reduced, underspend anticipated
Anticipated Underspend in Leaving Care	-109		Budget reduced; current forecast is for a £0.023m overspending.
Practice continues to see the number of Children Looked After reducing. Average for the last 2 years has reduced to 118 placements compared to 127 over the last 4 years. Current data – which is high cost, volatile and subject to change at short notice – projects a net saving against accommodation and care provision, plus a range of related support services.	-1,589		Budget reduced; current forecast is for a £0.598m overspending. Forecast placement numbers remain in line with those anticipated in the budget, although more higher cost care packages have been required resulting in a 9% increase in average costs after allowing for 2023-24 price uplifts.
Delete Early Help Development Worker as more use made of online portal for referrals	-22		Post deleted. No spend
PEOPLE TOTAL	2,550		

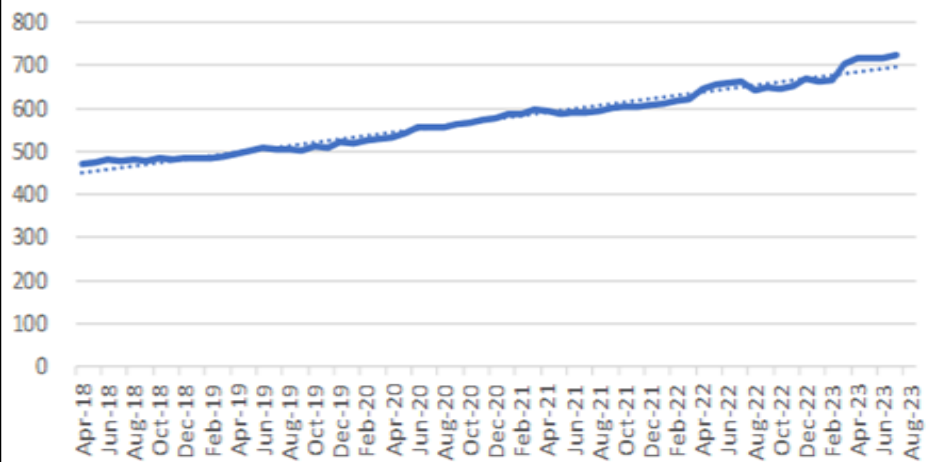
Adult Social Care

All Clients

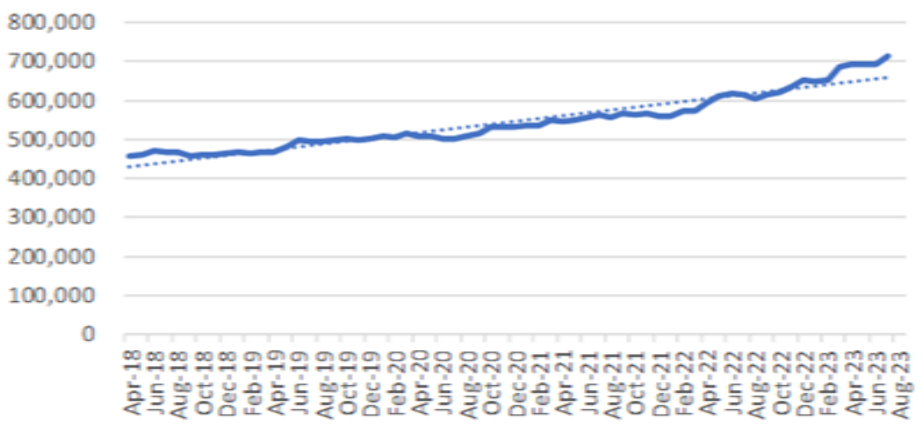
No. of clients



Average weekly cost (i.e. unit cost - £)

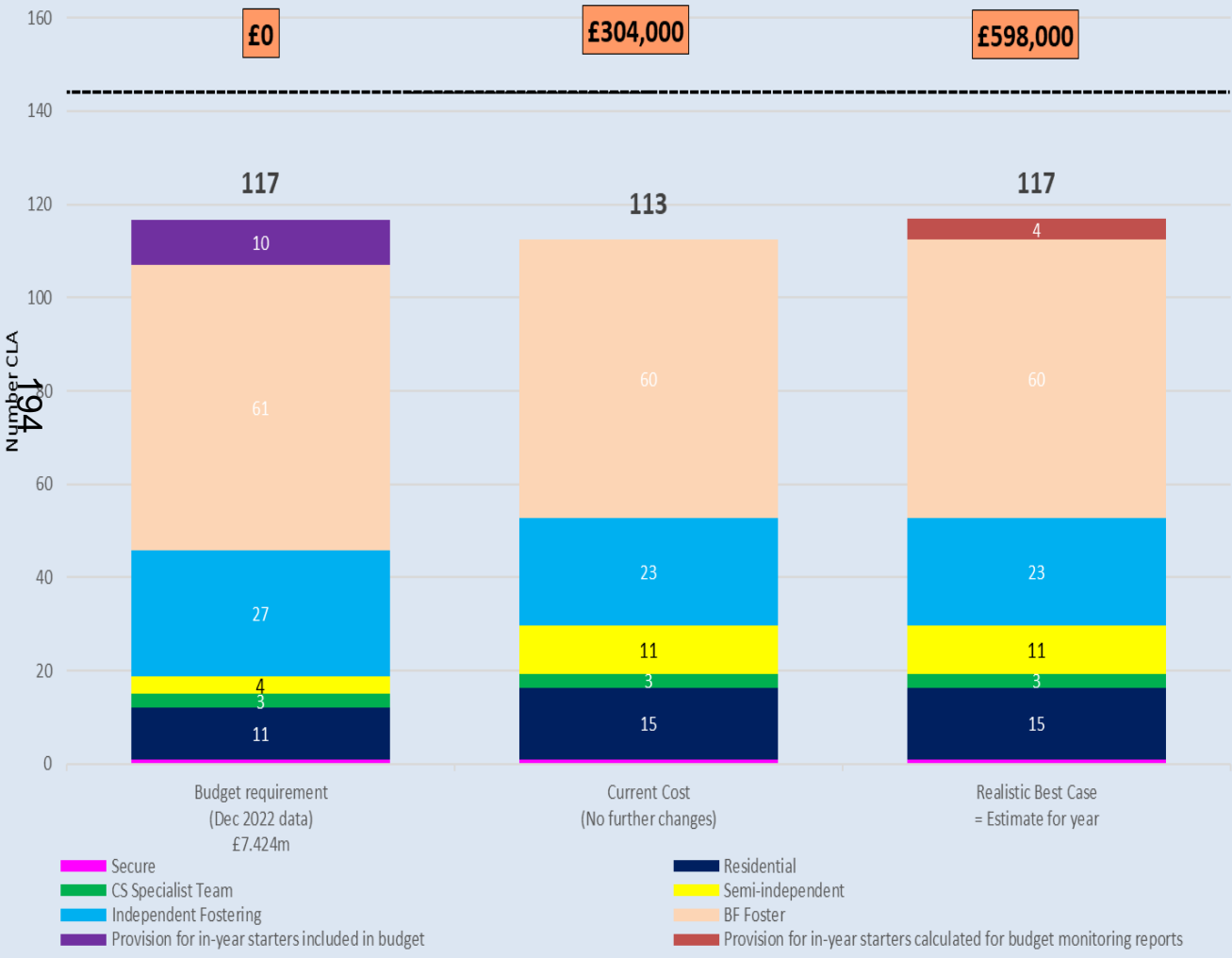


Total Net Weekly cost (£)



Children's Social Care

End of month CLA Numbers (expected average FTE for year - NOT current headcount) and forecast budget variances (EXCLUDES Care Leavers and Asylum Seekers)



COMMENTS

- Original budget requirement of 117 FTE placements set at 31 December 2022 commitments, with expected 2023-24 leavers removed, plus estimate for new starters based on recent 2-year average
- 31 July actual predicts average 112 FTE for year (was 109 Last month), excluding any further new starters with £0.304m forecast overspend
- Realistic forecast adds the 2-year average new starter numbers for year-end estimate of 117 FTE (was 114 FTE) with £0.598m forecast overspend
- Main explanation for variances are:
 - Increase in residential placements of 3.6 FTE to 15.4 FTE (+40%)
 - Average cost of placement after allowing for 7.5% inflation provision is +8.8%, most significantly as a result of +22% increase in average cost of residential placement to £0.241m per annum
 - Income from Health has increased by £0.380m to reflect the changing profile

Schools Budget

SCHOOLS BUDGET	Budget	Variance (£'000)		Variance + Emerging Issues (£'000)	
		Last Month	This Month	Last Month	This Month
		Schools Block	91,840	-90	-90
High Needs Block	30,906	7,316	7,316	7,316	7,316
Early Years Block	8,690	0	0	0	0
Contribution from BFC	0	0	0	0	0
Dedicated Schools Grant	-124,270	0	0	0	0
DSG Reserve - New Schools (to be applied)	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	7,166	7,226	7,226	7,226	7,226

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THE SCHOOLS BUDGET

The Schools Budget is a ring fenced account, fully funded by external grants, the most significant of which is the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). There are financial concerns regarding the size of the deficit forecast for the High Needs Block and the available options. This is a national issue, recognised by the DfE through the introduction of legislation confirming any accrued debt rests with the DfE and not LAs. From 1 April 2026, liability is expected to revert back to LAs at which point the £42.6m forecast deficit will present a significant financial challenge.

Current forecast:

- Pressures on the High Needs Block (HNB) element of the Schools Budget continue. There is insufficient data at this stage of the year to present forecast variances in the budget monitoring report, although work has commenced, additional staff recruited and progress is being made on a substantial data cleansing exercise which is expected to significantly improve data quality. There has been no material update from SEN Team to produce revised forecasts from last month although progress has been made on reconciling actual payments made to forecasts from pupil lists. The following provides a high level position summary:
 - Kenel Lane Special School:** Good level of information provided. Indicates £0.021m budget under allocation. Can expect further allocations during the year with no significant budget variance anticipated at this stage, with a small under spending considered the most likely outcome.
 - Mainstream – BF schools including SRPs.** Good level of information provided on mainstream schools. £3.424m funds allocated to schools, up £0.120m from last month. Leaves £0.603m budget to allocate. Average monthly allocation is £0.082m which indicates no significant variance at this stage. A number of long standing queries remain outstanding (see table below right) and could impact on the forecast. SRP forecasts remain volatile and subject to outcomes of on-going conversations with schools, in particular additional places at KGA and Owlsmoor, and core top up payments to Meadow Vale and the Pines.
 - Mainstream schools – other LAs.** Limited information update e.g. only notified of 1 September 2023 starter which indicates data is incomplete.
 - NMSS and FE.** Pre-16 data for current placements considered reliable and includes 4 new starters at September 2023. Summer term actual payments made generally reconcile to pupil listing from SEN Team. FE placements generally dependent on providers supplying information.
 - College Hall PRU - +£0.150m forecast over spending.** Agency headteacher recruited to cover substantive headteacher who remains on long term sickness absence at an estimated cost of £0.093m has resigned and new arrangements will need to be put into place, most likely to a higher figure. In addition, existing interim head to be retained for a day a week. Current budget is over allocated by £0.082m.
 - Other AP placements.** Data seems incomplete e.g. only 3 new starters this financial year.
 - Budgeted deficit anticipated when setting the 2023-24 HNB budget.** There was an estimated over spending of £7.166m at the time of approving the budget.
- Budget variance forecasts for the Schools Block and Early Years Block will be reported as key data emerges e.g. school and EY census data, during the course of the year to inform updates. At this stage, only the £0.090m planned under spend on the Schools Budget is being reported.

Progress against resolving historic school funding queries::

Budget monitoring forecasts will also be impacted as a number of the historic school funding queries remain unresolved.

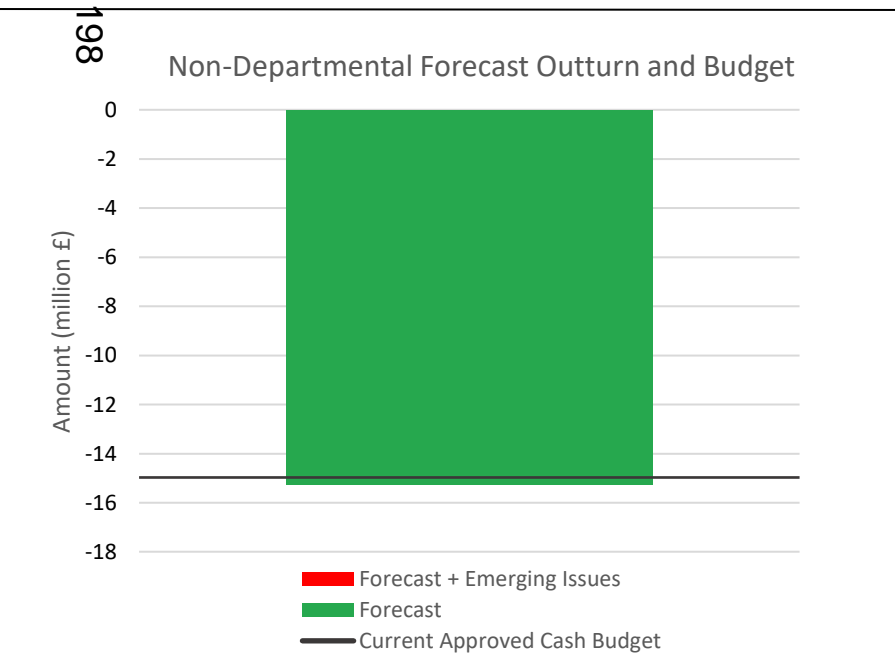
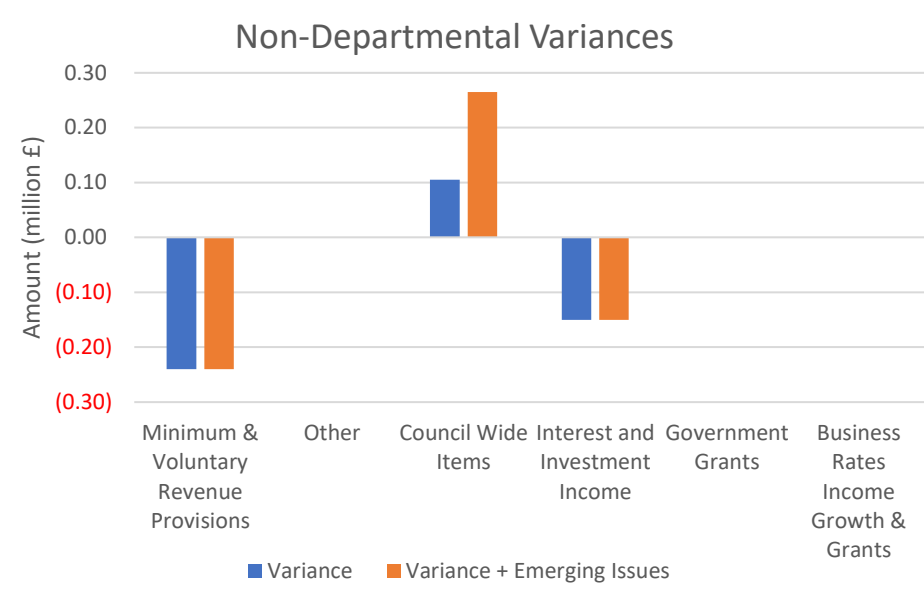
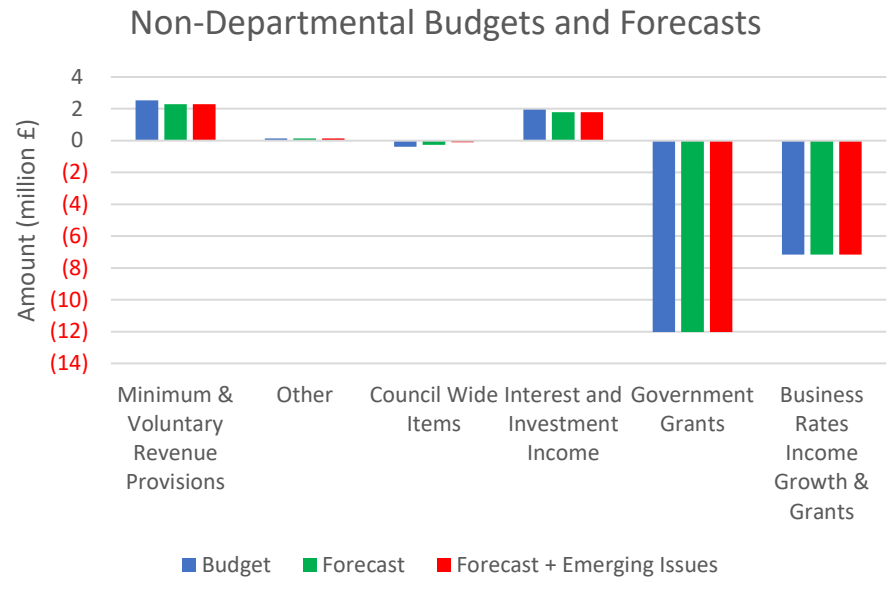
The adjacent table sets out monthly progress with a target for completion deadline of 31 August.

There remains a risk that the target will not be met.

School Funding queries from February / March 2023	Capita ONE changes				
	March	April	May	June	July
	Agresso report updated				
	March / Apr	May	June	July	August
No. school funding queries	239	239	239	239	239
No. registered COMPLETE	107	125	129	133	139
No. resolved in month	107	18	4	4	6
Outstanding queries	132	114	110	106	100
% complete cumulative	45%	52%	54%	56%	58%

Non-Departmental

Non-Departmental Summary



Summary and Significant Cumulative Variances

The Collection Fund shows the transactions of the Council in relation to Business Rates and Council Tax.

- Any Collection Fund variances will impact on the 2024/25 budget.
- Current projections suggest that the Local Council Tax Benefit Support Scheme could underspend (-£0.310m). This excludes the additional relief provided to Council Taxpayers on low incomes or experiencing financial hardship (£0.340m) which will be transferred to the General Fund at the year-end and where a budget of £0.399m is available to meet the additional costs.
- At this early stage Business Rates income appears to be materially lower than budgeted. Further work is being carried out.

On General Fund budgets there is a variance of -£0.285m reducing to -£0.125m when Emerging Issues are included. An improvement of £0.211/£0.061m including Emerging Issues compared to last month. The most significant cumulative variances are:

- An underspend on the Minimum Revenue Provision primarily due to significant capital carry forwards into 2023/24 (-£0.240m).
- A pressure on Employers pension deficit contributions due to the impact of academisations (£0.105m).
- Additional investment income resulting from higher interest rates (-£0.150m).
- An Emerging Issue relating to a delay in closing Downshire Homes Ltd which reduces the level of savings achievable (£0.140m).

Non-Departmental Variances

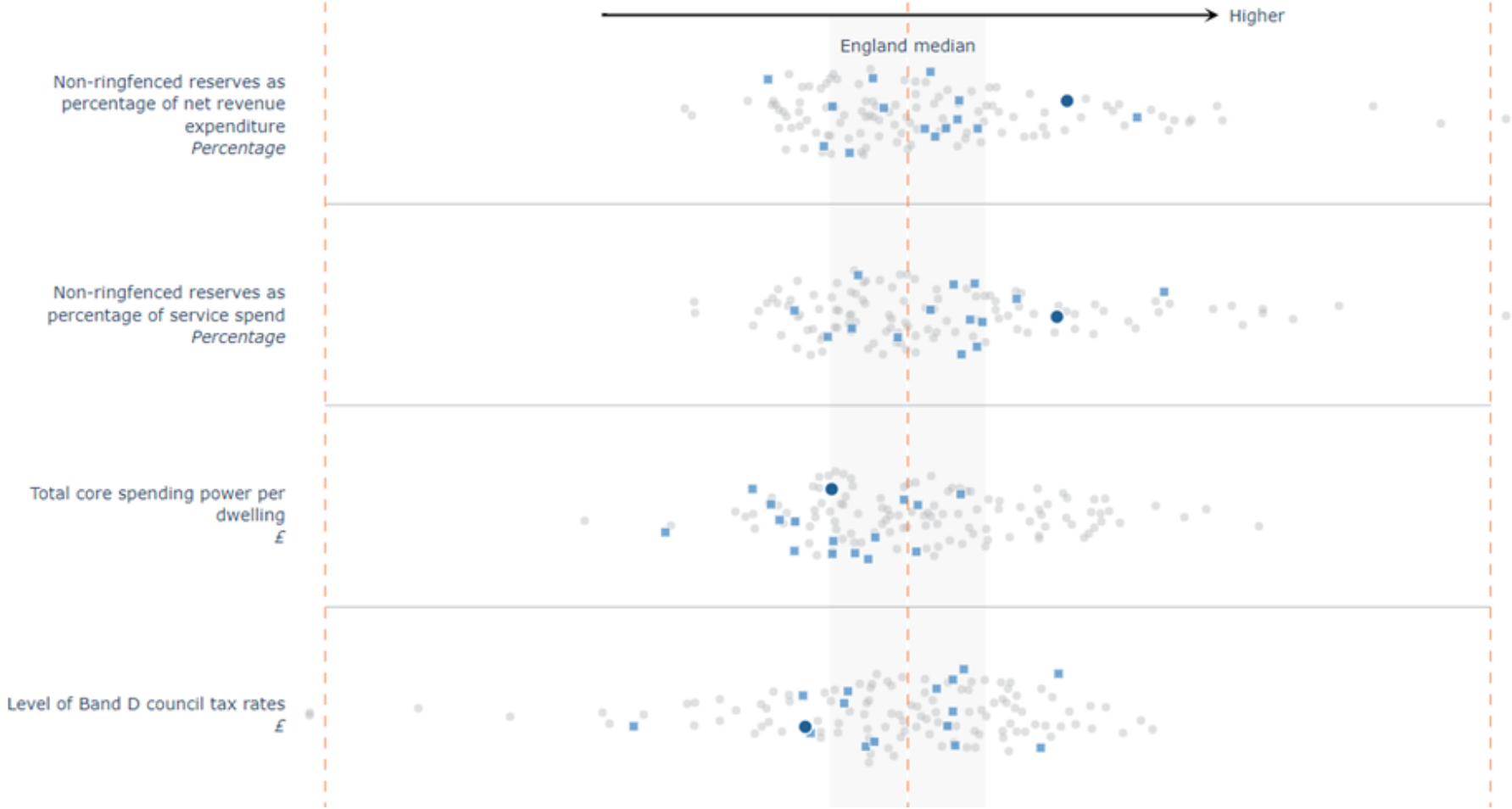
Department	Description	(£'000)
NON-DEPARTMENTAL	Variances Previously Reported	-74
INTEREST & INVESTMENT INCOME	Increased income from investments due to higher interest rates - previously reported under Emerging Issues	-150
MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION	Additional budget allocation relating to capital expenditure at Binfield Health & Community Centre following the signing of the rental agreement. This will not be required until next year and therefore increases the underspend.	-61
NON-DEPARTMENTAL	Final Variances	-285
NON-DEPARTMENTAL	Emerging Issues Previously Reported	10
INTEREST & INVESTMENT INCOME	Increased income from investments has now been moved to the reported variances section	150
NON-DEPARTMENTAL	Final Emerging Issues	160
NON-DEPARTMENTAL	Final Variances + Emerging Issues	-125

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Annex B – OFLOG Financial Benchmarking

- Unitary Authorities**
 - Bracknell Forest
- Similar authorities**
 - Some data unavailable*
 - Bracknell Forest's CIPFA Nearest Neighbours
- England**
 - Other English local authorities with responsibility for this area

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Annex B – OFLOG Financial Benchmarking

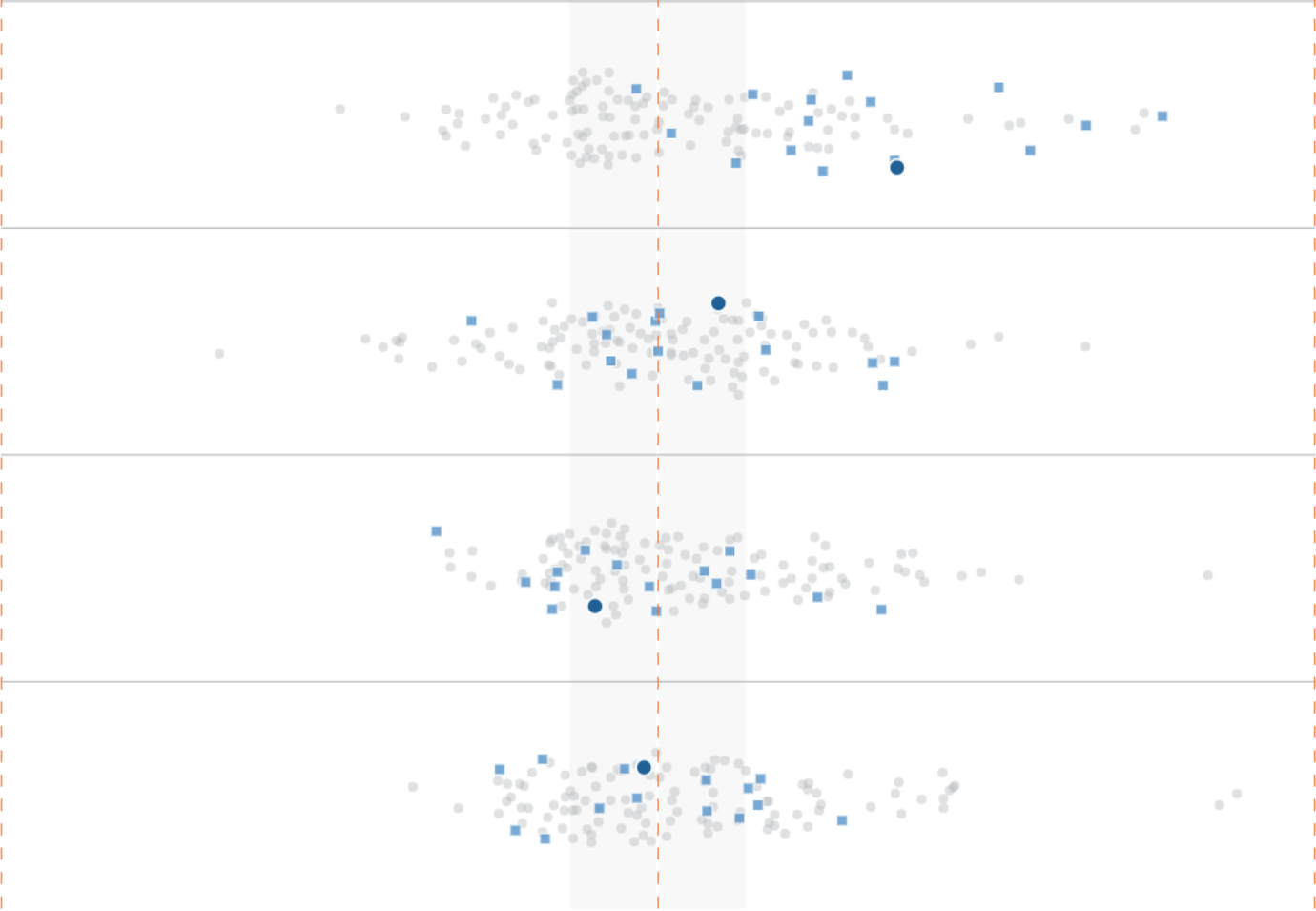
202

Council tax revenue per dwelling
£

Social care spend as percentage of
core spending power
Percentage

Debt servicing as percentage of
core spending power
Percentage

Total debt as percentage of core
spending power
Percentage



Median range

To: **Executive**
17th October 2023

Future of Downshire Homes Limited
Executive Director: Resources / Executive Director: People

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The report considers future management arrangements for residential properties owned by the Council's wholly owned housing company, Downshire Homes Limited and proposes that they are transferred to the Council at a market value, to be managed alongside the Council's own stock of residential properties. This is intended to streamline and simplify the housing management arrangements of the stock and minimise overheads arising from operating a separate legal entity.

2 Recommendation(s)

That the Executive:

- 2.1 Agrees to consolidate the ownership and management of the Council's housing portfolio by transferring (at market price) the Downshire Homes Ltd properties to the Council by March 2024;
- 2.2 Agrees that the 4 properties currently occupied by tenants holding assured shorthold tenancies (ASTs) are offered for sale to registered social landlords, noting that they will be included in the transfer of properties to the Council if sales cannot be secured in the timescale above;
- 2.3 To facilitate the consolidation in the most tax efficient way, supports the director(s) of DHL to progress a solvent liquidation of the company, through which its assets will transfer to the Council as shareholder and agrees to indemnify the directors, the company and the appointed liquidator against any potential claims arising from this act;
- 2.4 Notes that a key factor in the proposed approach will be the value of the existing loans from the Council to DHL compared with their original purchase price and funding from Council loans and that current expectations based on indicative valuations of a sample of the properties are that the sums will broadly match;
- 2.5 Agrees that, in the event that the value of the properties has increased materially at the time of the transfer compared with the original purchase price, the Executive Director: Resources be authorised to use Council reserves to settle any resultant capital gains tax liability, as set out in paragraph 5.20.
- 2.6 Authorises the Legal Services Manager to conclude the appropriate legal agreements to enact the proposals above.

3 Reasons for Recommendation(S)

- 3.1 The transfer of stock from DHL to the Council is recommended on the basis that this will facilitate a more streamlined and simplified approach to managing temporary

accommodation and the small volume of supported housing properties held in the DHL portfolio, reducing the administrative burden and additional overhead costs created by the current arrangement.

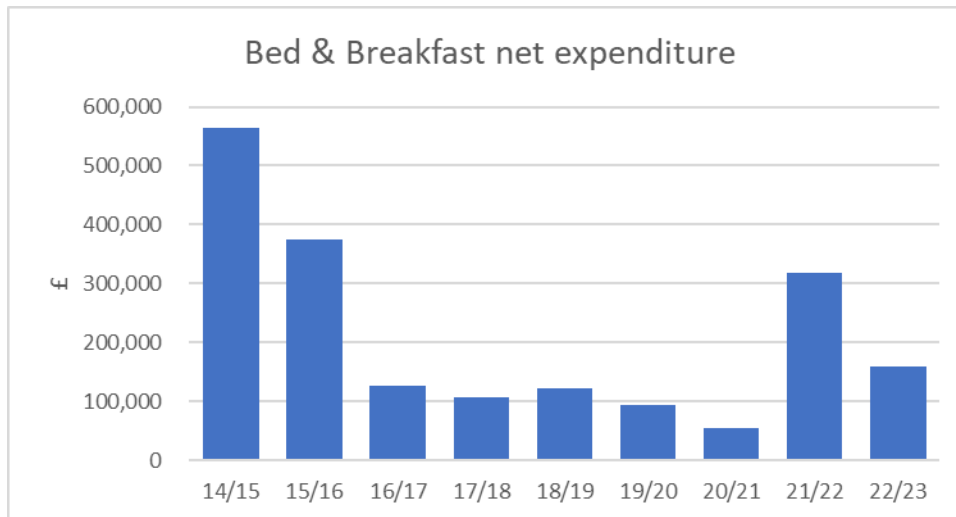
4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Do nothing - retain housing stock both with the Council's wholly owned housing company DHL and with the Council directly. This is not recommended since the proposed approach enables the benefits obtained by having the DHL housing stock to be retained at a lower overall cost to the Council.
- 4.2 Trickle transfer – to gradually transfer properties from DHL to the Council over time. This option has been discounted due to the additional costs that would be incurred in Stamp Duty Land Tax, which can be avoided by taking the recommended approach.
- 4.3 To transfer the Council's directly owned housing stock to DHL. This is not recommended because the Council would need to undertake additional borrowing to on-lend to DHL for the company to fund the purchase of its properties for “best consideration”. In addition, the company needs to pay VAT on its expenditure which the Council does not, meaning that such a transfer would cost more than currently, with no added benefit.

5 Supporting Information

Background

- 5.1 Downshire Homes Limited (DHL) is a company set up in 2015 which is wholly owned by Bracknell Forest Council. In line with its agreed objectives, DHL has purchased a portfolio of housing accommodation which it primarily lets to clients who have presented to the Council as statutorily homeless. The purchase of the property portfolio has been funded by interest bearing loans from the Council.
- 5.2 DHL currently owns 64 properties. The original purpose of DHL was to enable the Council to achieve savings by:
 - 5.2.1 increasing the availability of housing for homeless families and enable the Council to discharge its homeless duty. In particular, increased availability of such accommodation assured a reduction in the need to use Bed & Breakfast accommodation (which is expensive and usually unsuitable);
 - 5.2.2 enable savings in care costs for Adult Social Care clients with Learning Disabilities by procuring shared properties, enabling sleep-in carers to provide support for a number of clients.
- 5.3 DHL became operational in 2015/16 with the first properties purchased in April of that year. Analysis of Bed & Breakfast expenditure shows that the company has been successful in helping the Council reduce the use of this accommodation. The graph below shows expenditure for the two years prior to DHL and the subsequent financial years.



- 5.4 Aside from the 64 residential properties held in DHL, the Council currently also directly owns 69 houses, 7 properties used for adults with learning difficulties, a 10 bed hostel and a 3-bed non-licensable house with multiple occupation (HMO). These, together with circa 30 private sector leased properties, are all managed by the Council's Housing Service and are used as temporary accommodation for homeless households.
- 5.5 With effective move-on arrangements to ensure throughput of households into longer-term accommodation making more efficient use of the stock and a proactive approach to homelessness prevention, the Council does not need to substantially expand the capacity of its temporary accommodation further. Should that position change, the Council is permitted to hold a maximum of 199 properties without having a separate Housing Revenue Account. The Council's HRA was closed when its housing stock was transferred to Silva Homes in 2008. The operational, financial and legal implications of re-opening the HRA are significant and external specialist advice would be needed should this be considered as an option at a future time.

Future Options – Summary

- 5.6 A review of different options has been undertaken with specialist housing and legal input and concluded that there is no significant advantage in retaining stock in a separate vehicle, while managing stock held both within a company and directly owned adds an unnecessary layer of complexity and cost. Further, whilst it was initially felt that the housing company had potential to operate at some point as a new build development vehicle, the Council has since entered into a Joint Venture with Countryside Properties, a leading UK mixed-tenure developer, to redevelop a number of council owned sites as part of the phased regeneration of Bracknell town centre. Through this partnership arrangement the Council benefits from significant development expertise and resources which do not exist in DHL.
- 5.7 Given the complexity associated with a relatively large-scale transfer of assets between a wholly-owned company and its local authority owner, specialist advice has

been sought from DHL's auditor Hazlewoods, who also provide tax and business restructuring services. They have advised that a straightforward "re-purchase" of the properties by the Council from DHL would attract significant Stamp Duty Land Tax liabilities. Their recommended approach to best achieve the transfer of the properties while legitimately minimizing tax liabilities is through a managed "solvent liquidation" of the company. This secures the winding up of the company, with its assets transferring to the Council as shareholder in return for cancellation of the loans, although it technically remains solvent and able to continue to trade.

- 5.8 The solvent liquidation would need to be declared by the company directors. With the retirement of the former Chief Executive last year and the changes to elected Councillors in May, the only current director is the Borough Solicitor, who has been appointed to undertake a director role on behalf of the Council. At this stage, it is not proposed that additional directors are appointed to the company, given the direction of travel in this report. Should an alternative approach be approved by the Executive, consideration will need to be given to the appointment of additional directors to ensure the effective running of the company into the future.
- 5.9 The director(s) will need to certify that the company is in a solvent position. The company's accounts and the on-going support from Bracknell Forest Council indicate that this is the case. However, it is normal in such circumstances that indemnities are provided from the shareholding entity (in this case Bracknell Forest Council) to the company, the individual director(s) and the appointed liquidator to cover the unlikely event of a claim being made by a third-party creditor that could potentially be viewed as casting doubt on its solvency and possibly trigger an unwanted insolvency situation. It is proposed that the Council provides such indemnities, in a form to be advised by a qualified external body. Given that the Council is the sole owner, funder and major creditor of DHL, the risk of any indemnity needing to be called upon is low.
- 5.10 It is recommended that the Council uses its powers under Part 2 of the 1985 Housing Act to transfer the DHL stock as this will give it more flexibility in relation to the use of the properties in future. Properties acquired under alternate legislation (as detailed below under Legal Advice) could only be used as temporary homeless accommodation.

DHL Tenancy Agreements

- 5.11 Several distinct types of occupation agreements have been used by DHL. 6 of the properties are used to accommodate people with learning disabilities in shared houses. These 6 properties can all be transferred from DHL to Bracknell Forest Council with no adverse implications arising from the existing landlord and tenant agreements.
- 5.12 The majority of the other properties are used as temporary accommodation for homeless households. Of these, 60 could be transferred immediately, with no adverse implications.
- 5.13 There are, however, 4 remaining Assured Shorthold Tenancies in place for DHL properties that have been used to discharge the Council's full homelessness duties, a

figure that has been significantly reduced by the Council's Housing team working pro-actively with tenants over the past 2 years to identify suitable alternative accommodation and their status will therefore alter upon transfer as the Council becomes their landlord. An alternative option that is being explored is agreeing a sale of the those properties to a registered social landlord (RSL), who commonly offer such tenancies.

Financial Impact

- 5.14 DHL is a wholly owned company within the Bracknell Forest Council "group". Thus, while it operates as a separate entity, the company's finances are intertwined with the Council's. Indirectly, this is seen in the reducing costs to the Council of bed and breakfast accommodation since DHL was established, as illustrated in the chart under paragraph 5.3. More directly, the loan arrangement, housing management and support services are provided by the Council and paid for by DHL. While the loans provided to the company to purchase its properties are interest bearing, the Council has not budgeted to receive this income, since DHL's ability to service the interest payments are dependent on the company's trading and cash positions.
- 5.15 There are a range of burdens arising from operating DHL, albeit with less of an obviously quantifiable financial impact. For example, the company's existence requires the production of group accounts and therefore creates additional work for the finance team and external audit at year-end. The Board has been made up of unremunerated senior officers and members, which involves a time commitment associated with the operation of the company. IT provide support to install the accounting software. Additionally, the requirement to keep separate accounting records and require suppliers to invoice differently, depending on whether a property is Council or DHL owned, adds administrative burdens.
- 5.16 A summary of DHL's financial performance for the last six financial years is set out below, before financing costs. This provides an indication of the underlying "trading" position of the company that the Council will inherit when the properties are transferred.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-2023
	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Cash Revenue	-426	-603	-779	-845	-849	-810
Cash expenses excl. premises, repairs and renewals	56	162	130	117	101	113
Cash expenses - premises, repairs and renewals	47	100	162	110	389	341
Cash (profit) / loss before finance costs	-323	-342	-487	-619	-360	-369

- 5.17 Repairs and renewals costs were significantly higher in 2021/22 than in the preceding years and are continuing at a high level into the current financial year. However, a large part of these are one-off remediation, compliance and thermal efficiency works while the turnover of tenants was much higher than would normally be expected for

the reason set out in paragraph 5.13 above, attracting higher void costs. The Council would also deal with larger scale works as part of its capital programme allocation for housing property structural maintenance, on a prioritised basis. A working assumption is that a realistic annual budget for revenue repairs and renewals would be £250k, giving a budgeted cash operating surplus of around £0.4m for the company.

- 5.18 There are, however, a number of adjustments that need to be made to that to reflect the different financial regime the Council operates within. These are set out in the following table.

	£m
Estimated cash surplus (excluding financing costs) – DHL	-0.40
Reduction in DWP subsidy for tenants receiving benefits (since private landlords attract more favourable subsidies)	0.07
Reduced VAT costs	-0.05
Reduced audit, computer software, and professional fees	-0.05
Adjusted cash surplus – BFC	-0.43
Less: depreciation charged in DHL accounts	-0.20
Replaced with Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) in BFC accounts	0.25
Net impact on BFC budget	-0.38
(Note: excludes impact of property revaluations / impairments which affect DHL's calculated profit / loss but have no net impact on BFC's finances)	

- 5.19 In order to enable a solvent liquidation of DHL, the market value of the properties at the point of transfer needs to exceed the value of its loan to the Council (£20.31m) This was comfortably the case at the last balance sheet date of 31 March 2023, when the assets were valued in DHL's accounts at £23.40m

- 5.20 However, an increase in value of the properties overall will attract a capital gains tax liability at the point of transfer of ownership. A sample of properties have been assessed by the Council's Property team, who have indicated that their sale value can realistically be expected to be broadly in line with the original acquisition price and thus the level of Council loans to DHL. There remains a possibility that a corporation tax liability could arise. It is proposed that the Executive Director: Resources be authorised to use Council reserves to cover any corporation tax liability incurred up to a value of £0.1m, a one-off sum far lower than the on-going savings that the transfer will realise.

- 5.21 In the very unlikely event that the asset values fall significantly, the Council will need to write off a proportion of the loan to ensure that it is covered by the value of the assets transferring. This would create a neutral overall financial position for the Council since, were the dwellings to have been purchased by the Council rather than DHL, it would have needed to borrow the same sum for the original purchase. Any such write off will be dealt with in line with delegations included in the Council's constitution.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice (provided by Legal Services Manager – People)

- 6.1 There are 3 distinct types of occupation agreements that are in use by DHL, namely:
- a) an Excluded licence to occupy agreement for interim accommodation;
 - b) a non-secure licence agreement for temporary accommodation; and
 - c) an assured shorthold tenancy (AST).
- 6.2 A stock transfer to the Council on a tenanted basis would result in different outcomes for occupants depending on the occupation agreement in use.
- 6.3 The non-secure /excluded licence agreements can be transferred on a tenanted basis without creating secure tenancies where the premises are being used for the purposes of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (the 1996 Act). This is because there is an exception for temporary accommodation at paragraph 4 of Schedule 1 of the Housing Act 1985 (the 1985 Act) which states that a tenancy granted for the purpose of fulfilling any function provided under Part 7 of the 1996 Act is not a secure tenancy unless the local authority has notified the tenant that the tenancy is to be regarded as a secure tenancy. The ASTs are being kept under review.
- 6.4 Accordingly, it is also recommended that the Acquisition Agreement (the key terms which are summarised at Appendix 1) will bind DHL to sell (and the Council to purchase) all of the properties owned by DHL.

Temporary accommodation

- 6.5 The Council can use its powers under Part 2 of the 1985 Act (s17) to acquire the properties from DHL. It is possible for the Council to use this power for acquiring temporary accommodation, although alternatively it could use its powers under Section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972 (to acquire) and Part 7 of the 1996 Act (to operate) temporary accommodation.
- 6.6 Any accommodation acquired using the power under Part 2 of the 1985 Act would ordinarily need to be accounted for within a Council's HRA. However, as the Council does not hold an HRA, there is an exception that it could rely on which would mean it would not need to re-open an HRA. The Council is able to hold up to 199 properties

without re-opening a HRA; these properties can be used for permanent or temporary accommodation.

- 6.7 For completeness sake, a dwelling owned by the Council (irrespective of whether it is held in an HRA or not) will be a secure tenancy unless one of the exemptions in the 1985 Act apply; the most relevant of which is where accommodation has been provided to homeless persons under Part 7 of the 1996 Act.
- 6.8 If property is developed or acquired using the Council's powers under Part 2 of the 1985 Act then once the 200 dwelling threshold had been reached, the Council would be required to account for those properties in a re-opened HRA under the terms of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
- 6.9 If the Council relied on its powers under Section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972 (to acquire) and Part 7 of the 1996 Act (to operate) to acquire temporary accommodation, it would need to account for the properties in the General Fund, irrespective of the 200 dwelling limit.
- 6.10 It is recommended that the Council uses its powers under Part 2 of the 1985 Act as this will give it more flexibility in relation to the use of the properties in future: if it uses its powers under Part 7 of the 1996 Act, it must continue to use the properties for those purposes (i.e. its homelessness duties).
- 6.11 Given that the Council currently directly owns 89 residential properties (the details being set out in paragraph 5.4) aside from the 64 properties held in DHL, the question about re-opening an HRA does not immediately arise because it will be under the 200 dwelling threshold referred to above and certainly the Council would not be required to re-open its HRA as a result of the acquisition of DHL's stock.

Accommodation for people with learning disabilities

- 6.12 As noted above, six of the DHL properties were used to accommodate people with learning disabilities in shared houses (as non-licensable HMOs. Five of these dwellings were leased by DHL to Look Ahead Care, Support and Housing, However Look Ahead served notice on DHL to end their leases in January 2023. Upon termination of the Look Ahead Leases the Council immediately entered into Private Sector Leasing agreements for these dwellings with DHL being the Private Sector Leasing Properties and thus subsequently the occupiers of these properties have entered into new excluded licences with the Council (who is now the head tenant under the Private Sector Leasing Agreement with DHL of the Private Sector Leasing Properties) with no adverse implications arising from the existing landlord/licensor and tenant/licensee agreements.
- 6.13 As this accommodation is being used to permanently accommodate people with learning disabilities, the Council would not be using its powers under Part 7 of the 1996 Act to acquire the properties and therefore, it is expected that the Council will use its powers under Part 2 of the 1985 Act to acquire this housing.

- 6.14 The terms of the draft Acquisition Agreement will need to be reviewed if the option of a managed “solvent liquidation” of the company is to be pursued as opposed to a ‘trickle transfer/purchase’ approach.

Financial Advice

- 6.15 Finance have been involved in the consideration of the financial impact of closing the company, set out in the main body of the report.
- 6.16 In setting the 2023/24 budget, Council approved a saving of £0.24m, which was the estimated impact at that time of effecting a closure of DHL mid-way through the financial year. DHL’s financial performance in 2022/23 was below expectations and the closure has been delayed to help avoid a large one-off corporation tax liability. The budgeted saving will therefore not be achieved in 2023/24, although the full year expected saving of £0.4m will assist the 2024/25 budget.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.17 N/A

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.18 No equality impacts have been identified. A number of ‘tenanted’ properties would be transferred from DHL to the Council. In these cases it is the Council who has entered into the non-secure agreements with occupants rather than DHL. The transfer of the freehold of these properties to the Council would not therefore have an impact on the existing ‘landlord/tenant’ relationship. The properties are managed by the Housing Service and the Council is the landlord. Occupants of these temporary accommodation properties would continue to receive the same service from the Council’s Housing Management Team. Rent is set at Local Housing Allowance levels (i.e. benefit eligible) and this would not change.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.19 The dissolution of the Company and resulting transfer back to the Council of the Housing Stock will eliminate any residual financial risks relating to insolvency as well as legal risks e.g. relating to Directors liabilities for wrongful trading, breach of health and safety legislation and conflicts of Interest.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.20 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to have no impact on emissions of CO2. DHL’s housing stock is currently managed and maintained by the local authority’s Housing Service and would continue to be post transfer to the authority. The Council has been working in partnership with the Council’s Sustainability Officer to identify opportunities to improve the thermal efficiency of the temporary accommodation portfolio. Some energy grants to provide insulation at reduced cost which are available for private sector stock (including DHL) would not be available once the properties transfer to the Council.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 - Key Terms for Acquisition Agreement

Contact for further information

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Appendix 1

Key Terms for Acquisition Agreement

1 The Parties

1.1 Downshire Homes Limited (the **Company**); and

1.2 Bracknell Forest Council (the **Council**)

2 The Transaction

2.1 The Parties will enter into an Acquisition Agreement (the **Agreement**) whereby:

2.1.1 The Council agrees to buy and the Company agrees to sell the Properties on the terms of the Agreement.

2.1.2 On the **[Initial Completion Date]**, the Company shall transfer the Private Sector Leasing Properties, Non-Secure Agreement Properties and the relevant AST Properties (where the Condition Precedent has been satisfied) to the Council for the Purchase Price.

2.1.3 On each further AST Property Completion Date, the Company shall transfer the relevant AST Properties to the Council for the Purchase Price.

2.1.4 Each AST Property is sold with vacant possession on completion. The Company shall decant the AST Properties in accordance with a plan agreed with the Council.

3 Condition Precedent

3.1 The transfer of each AST Property will be conditional upon satisfaction of the Condition Precedent.

3.2 Neither Party may waive the requirement for the Condition Precedent to be satisfied in relation to any AST Property.

3.3 The Parties shall keep each other informed of the progress in satisfying the Condition Precedent and in particular when each Party considers that the Condition Precedent has been satisfied in relation to an AST Property.

4 Form of Transfer

In relation to each Property, the Company will transfer its freehold estate to the Council by way of a transfer in the form of the Transfer which is to be appended to the Agreement.

5 **Title**

5.1 The Company will transfer each Property to the Council with full title guarantee.

5.2 The Company shall dispose of the Properties free from encumbrances other than any existing encumbrances, which shall include:

5.2.1 The occupancy agreements for interim and temporary accommodation in relation to the Non-Secure Agreement Properties; and

5.2.2 The excluded licences between the occupiers and the Council in relation to The Private Sector Leasing Properties

5.3 The Council shall raise no pre-completion enquires.

6 **Council Loan**

On the transfer of each Property by the Company to the Council, the Council shall write down the Council Loan by the amount of the Purchase Price paid by the Council for the relevant Property.

On the transfer of the last Property the Council shall write down the Council Loan in its entirety.

7 **Definitions**

AST Properties means the [x] existing residential properties owned by the Company and let to tenants on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy as set out in Part 1 of Schedule 1 and "AST Property" shall mean any one of them as applicable;

AST Property Completion Date means the date [x] working days after the Condition Precedent Satisfaction Date;

Condition Precedent means the requirement for each AST Property to be void;

Condition Precedent Satisfaction Date means the date which the relevant AST Property becomes void;

Council Loan means the loan for [£x] from the Council to the Company dated [x];

Initial Completion Date means the date for completion of the sale of the Private Sector Leasing Properties, Non-Secure Agreement Properties and the relevant AST Properties (where the Condition Precedent has been satisfied) by the Company to the Council;

Private Sector Leasing Properties means the [5] existing residential properties owned by the Company and leased by the Company to the Council as set out in Part 2 of Schedule 1 and "Private Sector Leasing Property" shall mean any one of them as applicable;

Non-Secure Agreement Properties means the existing residential properties owned by the Company and let to occupants on a non-secure licence agreement as set out in Part 3 of Schedule 1 and “Non-Secure Agreement Property” shall mean any one of them as applicable;

Properties means together the existing residential properties owned by the Company as set out in Schedule 1 and “Property” shall mean any one of them as applicable;

Purchase Price means the market value of each Property as set out in a schedule to the Agreement.

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TO: Executive
DATE: 17 OCTOBER 2023

Bridgewell Supported Living Executive Director: People

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Executive on the progress of the Bridgewell Supported Living project, which was approved for delivery by Executive on 21 June 2022. Key issues relating to capital cost of the building works and the strategic procurement plan for the procurement of the a) landlord service provider and b) the care & support service provider are highlighted in this report.
- 1.2 Planning Permission for the scheme was granted in September 2023. A decision is now required to proceed to the next stage of the project, which includes commencing the construction works and agreeing the strategic procurement plan for the service providers.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive:

- 2.1 Note the progress to date on the design development and agree the timetable in paragraph 5.27.
- 2.2 Recommend to Council to approve the additional cost of works for the new accommodation by £400k, changing the previous budget from £7.15m to £7.55m as detailed in paragraph 5.12.
- 2.3 Note the value improvement items to improve sustainability in paragraphs 5.11.
- 2.4 Approve the revised strategic procurement plan for appointment of the provider of landlord services (Housing Association) and care services (Support Provider) for the provision of Bridgewell Supported Living scheme for adults with learning disabilities as laid out in paragraphs 5.16 to 5.20.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 As per the rationale set out in the previous Executive report, the service is needed because without the new accommodation, a large cohort of vulnerable people are either already or will soon be living in accommodation not suited to their needs, or unable to be adapted to be suited to their needs. People have the right to suitable accommodation as well as independence. On completion of the project, residents will have an increase in independence and reduction of social isolation. They will be able to enjoy freedom and independence and are encouraged to be in control of their lives, ensuring that they are supported to manage their daily living skills to the best of their ability.
- 3.2 The added value of Supported Living is that parents / carers are enabled to better juggle their roles in caring and paid work, leading to improved well-being, avoiding a detrimental effect on the family's financial circumstances. Ensuring the right

accommodation with a person-centred care and support package will reduce escalation to costly residential placements.

- 3.3 Design and Build: the design and build contractor (Neilcott Construction) was appointed through competitive restricted tender in January 2023. They have developed the design and obtained planning permission. As the concept design progressed into a detailed technical specification, Neilcott obtained pricing from their supply chain, which exceeds the budget by £400k. Further details are given in paragraphs 5.9 to 5.15.
- 3.4 Provider Model: prior to commencing procurement activity, the Commissioning team has been working with Campbell Tickell (Subject matter expert consultancy) to undertake a detailed options appraisal of each of the commissioning models available for Bridgewell. Following this review, a change to the Strategic Procurement Plan is being requested that was previously approved by Executive in June 2022.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Design and Build: The proposed design is for four households with 5-bedrooms and en-suites plus shared communal areas. In the concept stage, self-contained flats were considered but found not to be suitable. The groups that we are proposing have at least a moderate learning disability, their mobility is deteriorating, and they are getting older. The current cohorts being considered, are not able to participate to any significant extent in their meal preparation; some of them currently reside together. Some need support or at least monitoring while they eat. Cost reduction by decreasing the number of bedrooms to be built could lower the overall capital cost but it will increase the per square meter cost of the project, which will in turn incur abortive design cost. Changing the scheme dramatically at this stage, will also affect the planning permission.
- 4.2 Commissioning Model for procurement of the Housing provider and Support provider: The previously approved Strategic Procurement Plan (SPP) set out an approach to separately procure the a) housing provider through competitive tender and b) the care & support service provider through either the upcoming Supported Living Framework or via a separate compliant tender process. This would result in two separate unrelated procurement and contractual arrangements with two providers. Following a detailed commissioning review of this approach, it is now accepted that, this is not the most advantageous route to market, to ensure the service offers a seamless, high-quality service to tenants, value for money for the Council and is an attractive opportunity to prospective bidders.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 5.1 The Care Act 2014 places a requirement and duty on all Local Authorities to; collaborate and integrate with other public authorities (e.g. housing, health); to ensure that information, advice and independent advocacy is available to all when they need it; to provide people with a choice of diverse and high-quality care providers and ensure no vulnerable person is left without the care they need. We have a duty of care to provide services for adults (18 years and over) who live within the borough who are dependent on others for care and/or support because of their disability.

- 5.2 The Community Team for People with a Learning Disability (CTPLD) is a team of social care and health staff who work together to provide support and advice for those with learning disabilities and their carers.
- 5.3 A review was undertaken, which identified that some of the accommodation being used to house people with a learning disability was unsuitable and did not meet their needs.
- 5.4 At that point in time, the CTPLD service managed a caseload of 420 people (2021/22). 162 of these individuals were tenants of the Council commissioned properties. All were in receipt of individually tailored support packages. Some of the properties were not suitable for the needs of many of the individuals and were not able to be adapted to meet their needs. Consideration was given to locating some of the cohort on the Heathlands site (now operating as Heathlands Care Centre and Frimley Health's intermediate care unit). A site survey revealed there was not enough space for a separate unit. The size of the proposed new Heathlands accommodation, along with the focus of its main client set precluded housing this cohort in the main building; although Heathlands remained an option for those with Learning Disability in the latter stages of dementia. As part of this review, Bridgewell site was identified as a suitable location to build new supported living housing.
- 5.5 Bridgewell project aims and objectives were established:
- Ensure individuals under the care of CTPLD maintain their independence in their local community and remain close to friends and family.
 - Ensuring individuals reside in a suitable quality of accommodation which will suit their ageing needs.
 - Make revenue savings from current support costs.
 - CTPLD are able to monitor the effectiveness of the support being provided.
 - Opportunities to make use of latest assisted technologies.
 - Increase in flexible accommodation in the borough.
- 5.6 A feasibility study was undertaken to develop the concept design and in parallel a comprehensive business case was developed to assess the build cost, operational costs and savings. Soft market testing with providers was undertaken, concept design was further developed with information from survey data and the business case was fully completed. Housing LIN (a specialist consultancy in this sector) were appointed in July 2021 to provide specialist advice (rent model) for developing the business case and provide quality assurance.
- 5.7 Housing LIN's review of the financial assessment to support the business case for the Bridgewell project summarised that the Council's business case was:
- Detailed - there is considerable detail in relation to all the relevant costs.
 - Comprehensive - the financial assessment covers development costs, housing costs and care costs.
 - Robust - assumptions are clear and explicit.
 - Costs that are tentative at this stage are due to be sense tested through 'soft market' testing.
 - The assumed cost savings that are modelled are relatively conservative and are based on what appears to be a thorough understanding of current and anticipated care costs of identified individuals for this new service.
 - The overall approach is financially prudent and avoids 'aspirational' savings targets or expectations.

- 5.8 An update on the key project particulars was provided to Executive in January 2022 and a full approval to proceed was granted by the Executive in June 2022. The approval included:
- to build two-storey building with four distinct households consisting of 5-bedrooms (total 20-beds), sustainability rating of Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) Excellent.
 - the Strategic Procurement Plan for the building design and works (including early/enabling works).
 - the Strategic Procurement Plan for the a) landlord service provider and b) the care & support service provider

Capital Cost

- 5.9 Following Executive approval of the capital budget of £7.15m the Council completed the procurement activity and appointed a preferred Design & Build contractor (Neilcott Construction) in January 2023 for progressing the project for planning application and detailed design during the pre-construction services stage. Pre-planning application consultation as well as the statutory planning consultation were undertaken. The project was granted planning permission in September 2023.
- 5.10 The project focus on sustainable value and efficiency credential was previously enhanced from BREEAM Very Good to the current target of BREEAM Excellent. The scheme incorporates air source heat pumps, photovoltaic (PV) cells and is gas free. Cavity wall insulation to the external walls is specified as non-combustible material. A roof garden for use by the residents is also a key feature of this scheme. Elevation and floor plans are attached in Appendix 1.
- 5.11 Neilcott worked with their supply chain to develop comprehensive costings for the works contract. The unprecedented market conditions affecting construction activities have adversely affected the contractor's cost proposal for this project. For example, elements of packages containing mechanical & electrical, groundwork, brickwork, etc. have been subject to substantial price increases, thereby exacerbating the increase in price of those packages. Additional requirements arisen from site surveys (e.g. contaminated waste), change in regulatory requirements (e.g. introduction of the new Part L Building Regulations) and planning requirements were taken into consideration. The market tested construction cost return is £400k over budget. The increased amount includes the following value improvements:
- a) addition of triple glazing to windows [3.5% betterment to the energy assessment over the previous double glazed specification which will translate into operational efficiency],
 - b) additional 20% additional photovoltaic cells for extra energy production with limited battery storage i.e. lower utility cost, and
 - c) the first year maintenance of major plant [forward funding the first year's servicing and maintenance during the building defects period i.e. it will reduce the operational cost for one year],

these all make this scheme more sustainable than when initially approved.

- 5.12 A detailed review of the contractor's cost plan is being undertaken by our cost consultant, Modus. A number of corrections (consisting of errors, duplications, overspecification and additions) were made to the contractor's cost plan, which led to

a reduction in Neilcott's base cost plan. Despite the intense scrutiny and value engineering, an increase to the budget by £400k is necessary. This will enable the Council to enter into a lump sum works contract with the contractor after the ongoing due diligence is completed. The works contract will be awarded under delegated authority as per the approved SPP for the building design and works. The delegated authority stated that the contract award for Phase 2 Main Works (including early/enabling works) – (Royal Institute of British Architects) RIBA Stage 5 onwards will be made by the Executive Director: People in consultation with the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing.

Unknown Risks

- 5.13 Below ground risk, as with any other development, will remain until the demolition of the existing building and completion of the civil works. Intrusive survey has been carried out. We know there is some asbestos in the building but as currently there are guardians living in the building, survey of sub-structure is not possible. Contamination in the foundation of the existing building is unknown.
- 5.14 Utilities – during the early stage of the design, SSE indicated that a substation will not be necessary. A detailed application for an electrical incoming quotation was made to SSE in March 2023, however, they have failed to quote by their set deadline of 25 August 2023. SSE is being actively pursued for a quote. It is not unusual for SSE to change its scope and stipulate significant requirements e.g. a new substation. At this moment, we can only identify it as a risk but if it were to materialise then substantial cost could apply.
- 5.15 Such unknown costs could be met from the project contingency of £317k. however, this is also needed to cover possible other contractor claims over the works duration.

Strategic Procurement Plan: Service Providers

- 5.16 The Strategic Procurement Plan (SPP), approved by the Executive in June 2022 to secure the landlord and care and support providers set out the following route to market:

Package 1: Landlord Services – a compliant Single Stage Tender Procedure* using the Find a Tender Services (FTS)

Package 2: Care & Support Services –

- a) a compliant Single Stage Tender Procedure* using the Find a Tender Services (FTS) OR
- b) a compliant framework**.

*The Council will run a single stage tender with a Select Questionnaire assessing the capability of bidders to provide a service as part of the Invitation to Tender (ITT).

**The Council is developing a supported living care provision framework. If such a framework is available within the timescale of this project and can provide a route for procuring care and support services, then the Council may opt to use the framework instead of the single stage tender procedure.

- 5.17 However, as the project has matured, and detailed work began on engaging key stakeholders and developing the model and service specifications, a number of challenges were identified which required the project group to reconsider what is the most appropriate commissioning model and route to market to secure the required provision. This has been in consideration of a number of factors including:

- The risk of excluding a number of potential providers from bidding, by limiting our commissioning approach to only one route to market - by procuring the landlord services and care and support services as two, entirely separate contracts. Many housing and care and support providers have a preferred model of delivery that doesn't align with this approach. Therefore, a more flexible route to market is needed to ensure we can attract a range of providers.
- Ensuring the model is financially efficient and offers value for money for the Council
- Ensuring the model is not overly onerous on Council resources in relation to management of the contract and the relationship between providers
- Ensuring the Landlord/Housing Management provider is in a position to be eligible for EHM (Enhanced Housing Management) - the service would need to fall under the criteria of 'specified housing' as outlined in the 2014 housing benefit circular A8/2014 to be eligible for EHM.

5.18 Campbell Tickell are a subject matter expert consultancy; they were appointed in May 2023 to undertake a detailed options appraisal of each of the commissioning models available for Bridgewell. In the initial phase of their consultancy, Campbell Tickell provided an options paper. The options put forward by Campbell Tickell, have been fully considered by the project group and reviewed in consultation with the Executive director people and DMT. Following this review, the proposed route to market was agreed as set out below (please see appendix 2 for full, revised Strategic Procurement Plan):

5.19 To undertake one procurement activity, through a restricted tender process for a single contract, consisting of two lots:

Lot 1: Landlord Services, including housing management (Housing Association)

Lot 2: Care and Support Provision (Support Provider)

To bid for the single contract, Suppliers will have 3 options under which they are permitted to submit a bid:

Option 1 (Single provider bid): One organisation delivers both the housing management and care and support function. The Housing Association has a separate CQC registered Care and Support arm.

Option 2 (Consortium bid): A Housing Association delivers the landlord and housing management functions and has a service level agreement (SLA) in place with a CQC registered care and support provider to deliver the care and support provision. The Housing Association retains overall responsibility for delivery of the whole contract

Option 3 (Consortium bid): A Housing Association delivers the landlord function and sub-contracts, with a CQC registered Care and Support provider, as their managing agent to deliver both the housing management and care and support functions. A formal management agreed will be required between the two organisations to clearly outline each of the organisation's roles and responsibilities.

There are technical differences between options 2 and 3 and it will be dependent upon the bidders on how they may wish to submit their proposals. All three options will be included in the tender documentation, and bidders will not be permitted to bid for a single Lot.

5.20 As such, whilst these options present different ways for the market to engage with this opportunity, the contract model of options 1, 2 and 3 will be the same.

The Council will be commissioning a single contract for both the landlord and the care and support provision. These will be set as Lot 1 – Landlord and Lot 2 – Care. Bidders can then choose to bid for both Lots as a single entity, for both Lots as a main contractor with a subcontractor to deliver a Lot (but the main contractor is still responsible for both), or as a joint venture / consortium, where each member delivers a Lot.

However, this will only be presented as 1 contract, and no bidder will be permitted to bid for a single Lot, i.e. bid for Lot 1 without Lot 2 or vice versa. As far as the Council is concerned it is commissioning only 1 contract. As we have split it into 2 Lots this means the Council can reserve the right to terminate and separately tender either element during the life of the contract.

Business Case Update

- 5.21 The business case (v7) approved by Executive in June 2022 was reviewed in September 2023. Impact on market conditions relating to increase in interest rates and staffing costs were factored into this review (v11).
- 5.22 The operational team has reviewed and updated the pen pictures of the envisaged cohort who will move into their new homes, identified staffing needs, considered assistive technology and the general assumptions of the business case.
- 5.23 The main differences from the previous v7 were that in v11 of the business case, additional requirement for capital is included, cost of borrowing increased by 3.52%, staffing costs and structure review as well as inflation was applied to the rent and service charge. Cost allowance for contract management of the facilities management function is now included. Void percentage has been increased and prudent scaling-up period for the first year is now included. The projected savings are summarised follows:

Table 1.

	V11	V7
5-year saving (£):	-205,930	-974,582
25-year saving (£):	-6,526,534	-6,682,476
Payback period (years):	26.00	26.00

- 5.24 The updated business case shows a decrease in savings by £0.156m (£6.7m to £6.5m) over a 25-year period. Whilst the business case still provides a saving over a period of time, it is important to note that one of the main drivers for this project is to improve the standard of accommodation for the residents, many of them are currently living in unsuitable accommodation. This project will help deliver the Council's commitment of ensuring that people are supported to be independent, resilient, physically and emotionally healthy.
- 5.25 As noted earlier in this report, the early version of the business case was reviewed by Housing Lin. Furthermore, a recent review of the business case was completed by Campbell Tickell as part of their assignment to review the commissioning and procurement strategy. They also agreed with the overall approximated example and the rents and service charges set out in the Councils financial modelling, but recommended that a proportion of the housing management and management overheads is moved into the service charges as 'enhanced housing management'. The enhanced management charge, allocated to the service charges in supported housing schemes, covers the costs of increased resources required to carry out more intensive housing management duties due to the nature and needs of the client

group, this includes the security of the building and management of the communal areas.

5.26 Further work has been undertaken to reassure commissioners as to the ongoing viability of the business case beyond supporting the individuals identified as already having suitable needs. Following analysis and discussions with operational teams there is confidence that there will be a continued demand for the services for the foreseeable future. There are a number of reasons for this:

- properties have been designed so that they can potentially accommodate younger groups of adults with learning disabilities in the future. By designing the service are four self-contained properties we will have flexibility to change the delivery of part of the service as needs change.
- there is an expectation that there will be continued demand from older people with learning disabilities as they become more physically frail, as well as people who require support later in life because their ageing parents can no longer care for them. As of September 2023, there were 45 adults with learning disabilities living with parents aged 60 and over, and 133 adults aged 50+ supported by the Community Learning Disability Team.
- Bridgewell is designed to be a “home for life” meaning that people will remain living in there for a long period of time. This means that there will be a relatively small number of placements available in any given year. The business case is built on the expectation that voids will be 7.5% meaning that social workers will have time to carefully consider the right person to move into the service.

Timetable

5.27 The outline timetable is summarised below.

Table 2.

Nr.	Activities	Timeline
1.	Contractor Appointment	Jan 2023
2.	RIBA Stage 3 Design	Jan-Apr 2023
3.	RIBA Stage 3 estimate	May 2023
4.	Planning application submitted	May 2023
5.	RIBA Stage 4 design and cost	Jun-Sep 2023
6.	Executive Reporting – capital budget and Provider SPP	Oct 2023
7.	Early/Enabling Works	Nov 2023
8.	Main Works	Dec'23/Jan'24
9.	Commence Provider Procurement	Jan 2024
10.	Provider appointment	October 2024
11.	Complete building works	March 2025
12.	Service Commencement	April 2025

Conclusion

5.28 The project still has risks and dependencies but also provides an opportunity to provide fit for purpose supported living accommodation to the residents of this borough. In absence of this provision, finding suitable alternatives would be difficult to find or likely to be most costly. The project cost will continue to be reviewed throughout the duration of the project.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 Change to the Strategic Procurement Plan for the Providers will require revised approval. Legal advice including the drafting of appropriate contracts will be provided throughout the procurement cycle. Specialist legal and procurement advice will be required and external legal costs (c. £25k) has been factored into the project budget.

Executive Director: Resources

- 6.2 The financial implications are included in the body of the report. The capital requirement will have a cost to the Council, however the exact amount will depend upon the financing of the overall project - which the Council will minimise by the effective use of capital resources (capital receipts, CIL/S106 and borrowing) as part of its overall Treasury Management strategy. Should the Council need to borrow to finance the expenditure every £1m of borrowing will have an approximate revenue impact of £80,000 p.a. The capital is expected to be repaid through ongoing revenue savings on an 'invest to save' basis.

Procurement

- 6.3 The revised strategic procurement plan for the provider has been reviewed by the Procurement department to ensure these comply with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Standing Orders. It is imperative to ensure sufficient market interest and clarity on the evaluation approach to undertake a robust process.

Property

- 6.4 The building contractor quote for servicing and maintenance of plant over the 12-months defects period after Practical Completion is included within the body of this report. This will provide an option for the Council to avail the maintenance from the contractor versus the Housing Association landlord service provider during the first year of the services commencing. The Council's Term contractor's would also be invited to provide cost for the servicing and maintenance (this is subject to the Property team having the capacity and resources to manage this site) once the defect period has expired. This will provide an option for the Council to avail the ongoing maintenance from the term contractor versus the Housing Association landlord service provider.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.5 The new accommodation will be designed and built to comply with current British Standards for accessibility for disabled people. An EIA was previously completed as part of the Strategic Procurement Plan (SPP); this has been further reviewed as part of the revised Strategic Procurement Plan.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 6.6 Health and wellbeing aspects are continually considered in terms of the design. Specifications will be compiled accordingly.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.7 This project recognises the adverse impact from climate change as such the project is targeting BREEAM Excellent sustainability and performance rating, i.e., a score of $\geq 70\%$. Triple glazed windows, PV cells, Air Source Heat Pumps feature in this scheme.
- 6.8 Options for improvement to this project's sustainability credentials are listed within the body of the report.

Strategic Risk Management

- 6.9 There are several dependencies and risks that are being closely monitored and managed but may adversely affect the cost and programme. The strategic risks to the project are as follows:

Strategic Risks

Risk No.	Workstream	Title	Description/Impact	RAG Status	Preventative/ Mitigating Actions
R001	Business Case	Reduced Savings	Financial model indicates reduced saving and/or unreasonable payback period	<i>Red</i>	Establish costs at earliest opportunity and take account of any changes as project progresses. Housing LIN – subject matter expertise reviewed the business case. Campbell Tickell appointed to review provider strategy agreed with the FBC. FBC updated Sep'23 to reflect capital cost, staff cost, voids, etc. Value engineering undertaken. Additional budget to be requested.
R002	Operational	Rent fluctuation	Rent level fluctuation may affect the payback period of the capital cost.	<i>Amber</i>	Rent level is modelled at £400/week, which was market tested with Registered Providers and also reviewed by Housing LIN and Campbell Tickell. The Council is paying this level for supported living in some cases. If the estimated rent is not achieved then the capital payback period would increase. Conversely, in the current market, the rent levels may need to be adjusted to a higher level at the time-of-service commencement in early 2025 to allow for significant inflation.
R006	Business Case	Excess voids	Excess voids may adversely impact the business case	<i>Red</i>	Careful planning; we have reviewed a second cohort. Well-designed void and nomination agreements. Void rates increased in the business case model update; scaling up period included. Consider other local authority demands in the short term.
R008	Design/Build	Increased build costs	Build cost not accurate	<i>Amber</i>	Cost plan tested at RIBA Stage 3; additional budget requirements identified. It is worth noting that the impact from unknowns e.g. below ground and utility providers remains a risk.
R009	Design/Build	Incorrect design	Design not fit for purpose	<i>Amber</i>	Subject Matter Experts informed the design as it progressed. Soft market test of the design was completed at early stage.
R010	Operational	Existing tenancies	Unable to exit from current arrangements in time for opening of the new LD provision	<i>Red</i>	We have factored in a transition period and factor this in the business case. In a previous review the cohort envisaged to move into the new accommodation was not based on long-term contracts; this will be reviewed again and could add costs.
R021	Operational	Contract monitoring	Contract monitoring/Specification – Facilities Management & assurance roles and responsibilities not clear.	<i>Amber</i>	Whilst Facilities Management activities are expected to be part of the Housing Association specification, the quality assurance of the contract is suggested to sit with Corporate Property. Allowance has been made in the business case model.
R022	Procurement	RP Procurement	RP / Care specification, procurement and contract monitoring detail	<i>Amber</i>	Campbell Tickell has been appointed to provide limited support for developing a specification for procurement activity.

			responsibilities lack expertise / resourcing.		
R023	Procurement	RP Interest	Housing Association may not be interested or compelled to bid for the requirement. This could impact the business case	Amber	Campbell Tickell review provided insights and assessed risks. This enabled a revision to the SPP. Undertake further market engagement. Address potential concerns such as: treatment of voids, needs for the service, rent status, housing benefit, CQC assurance.
R025	Design/Build	Utilities	Utilities cost in general and SSE cost specifically could be over the estimated budget. E.g. if broadband/water companies charge for incoming services for off-site or if SSE requires a new substation.	Amber	Applications for all utility companies have been made; these are actively chased. SSE is one of the main risks but they are taking longer than usual to respond. Its own deadline of 25 Aug 2023 has not been met for giving us a quote. In the early stage of design, SSE quote received on 20 Sep over budget. Requires review.
R027	Operational	CQC	Care Quality Commission's Views on the Service Model	Amber	Ensure the successful care provider is compliant with CCQ guidance 'Right Support, Right Care, Right Culture'. Continue to engage with CQC to ensure their understanding of the ethos of the model and good practice expected of the provider. Build in further opportunities for co-production with people and families.
R028	Design/Build	Credit Check	Contractor could enter into administration	Amber	Whilst it is possible for any large or small contractor/sub-contractor to go into administration, our main contractor has been credit checked and is currently of sound financial standing (multiples of our works contract value).
R029	Design/Build	Vacant Property	Ad Hoc Guardians may not vacate the existing building to meet construction timetable	Amber	Provide adequate notice period as well as prior notification for Ad Hoc to manage a timely exit from the existing building.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Pre-planning consultation was completed. Further statutory consultation by the Local Planning Authority for the planning application was undertaken. Soft market testing was completed with a range of providers and local authorities.

Background Information
Stage 4 Design and Cost
Campbell Tickell Report

Contacts for further information

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Amy Jones Head of Strategic Commissioning
01344 351684 amy.jones@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

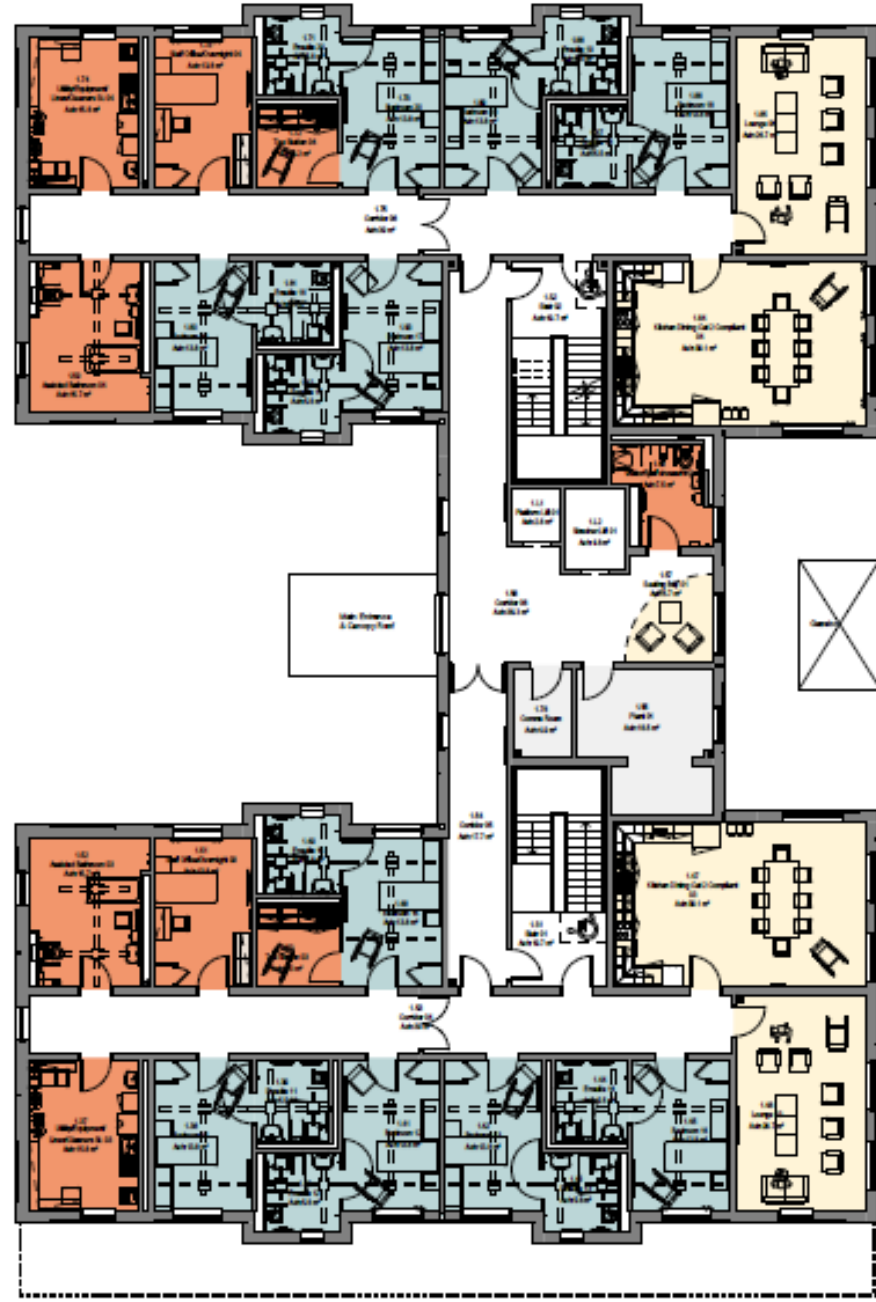
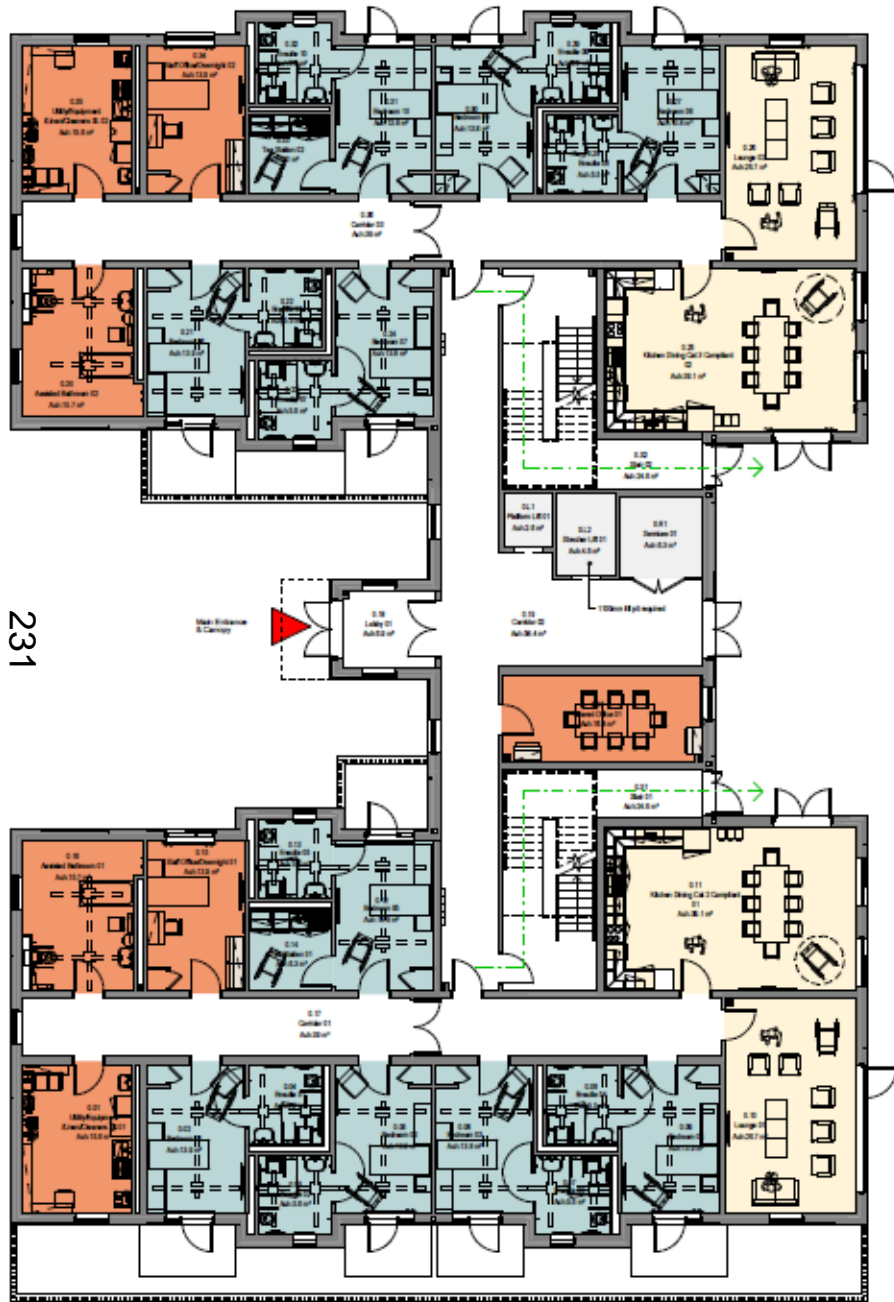
Appendix 1 – Elevations and Design Plans



Indicative Elevation CGI



Site Plan



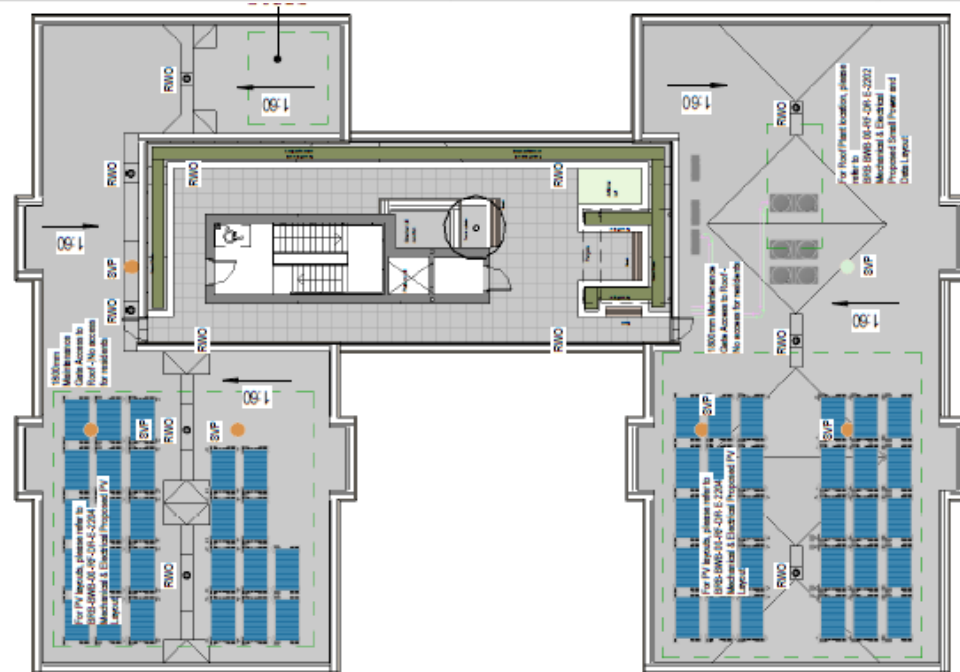
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Ground Floor

First Floor



Roof Elevation and Floor Plan



Equalities Screening Record Form Annex A

Date of Screening: August 2023	Directorate: People	Section: Strategic Commissioning
1. Activity to be assessed	Development of new build supported living accommodation for adults with learning disabilities, including: Procurement of Building Contractor Procurement of Housing/ Landlord Provider and Care and Support Provider	
2. What is the activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy/strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change	
3. Is it a new or existing activity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Existing	
4. Officer responsible for the screening	Sally Cathcart-Cunnison	
5. Who are the members of the EIA team?	Bethan Clarke, Sally Cathcart-Cunnison	
6. What is the purpose of the activity?	<p>The purpose of the activity is to develop a new build supported living scheme for adults with learning disabilities and autism who have eligible adult social care needs as defined by the Care Act. A fundamental component of <u>the Care Act</u> is the 'suitability of accommodation' in meeting the 'at home' care and support needs of older and vulnerable people. The proposed design is for four 5-bedroom households on the Bridgewell site to accommodate twenty people in total.</p> <p>The proposal is that the council will build and develop the housing through the procurement of a building contractor. The council will procure a Registered Housing Provider to deliver the housing provision and landlord services and a Care and Support provider to support the individuals with person centred support packages that enable them to live as independently as possible in the community.</p> <p>The care and support service includes activities such as personal care, household care, social support, assistance with medication and be able to stay in their home even if their care and support needs change. These services will be provided 365 days a year, to people with a range of disabilities and health conditions. The activity will seek to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure individuals under the care of CTPLD maintain their independence in their local community and remain close to friends and family. • Make substantial revenue savings from current support costs. 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure CTPLD are able to monitor the effectiveness of the support being provided. • Create opportunities to make use of latest assisted technologies. • Increase availability flexible accommodation. 						
7. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?			<p>The activity is designed to target adults with a learning disability. People who are 18 years and over who are eligible for supported living defined in legislation such as the Care Act 2014. This will include, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who access social care support • People who access local health services • People with care and support needs, which includes people with a range of disabilities and health conditions. <p>There are currently 121 individuals with a learning disability who are tenants of BFC commissioned properties. All are in receipt of individually tailored support packages. A review of housing needs identified that some of the properties are not suitable for the needs of many of the individuals and they are not able to be adapted to meet their needs.</p> <p>The proposed supported living scheme aims to benefit twenty adults with learning disabilities in total as the initial cohort. The design of the scheme is such that it will enable people to remain living in the scheme should their needs change. Over the lifetime of the development more people will benefit from the scheme as and when voids/ vacancies become available.</p>						
Protected Characteristics			<p>Please tick. yes or no</p> <p>Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.</p> <p>What evidence do you have to support this? E.g., equality monitoring data, consultation results, customer satisfaction information etc. Please add a narrative to justify your claims around impacts and describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion as this will inform members decision making, include consultation results/satisfaction information/equality monitoring data</p>						
8. Disability Equality - this can include physical, mental health, learning or sensory disabilities and includes conditions such as	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N	<p>Yes. The impact is expected to be positive.</p> <p>The scheme is intended primarily for people with learning disabilities. People may have additional physical or mental health needs: Based on people in receipt of supported living up to and during 2022/2023 the Primary Support Reasons are:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>PSR</th> <th>Count</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	PSR	Count	Percentage			
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dementia as well as hearing or sight impairment.				<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Personal Support</td> <td>15</td> <td>5.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Visual Impairment</td> <td>1</td> <td>0.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dual Impairment</td> <td>1</td> <td>0.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Memory & Cognition</td> <td>4</td> <td>1.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Learning Disability</td> <td>230</td> <td>81.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mental Health</td> <td>23</td> <td>8.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Social Isolation/Other</td> <td>8</td> <td>2.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Grand Total</td> <td>282</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Personal Support	15	5.3%	Visual Impairment	1	0.4%	Dual Impairment	1	0.4%	Memory & Cognition	4	1.4%	Learning Disability	230	81.6%	Mental Health	23	8.2%	Social Isolation/Other	8	2.8%	Grand Total	282																											
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9. Racial equality	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N	Yes.	<p>Based on people in receipt of supported living during 2022/2023 (up to as per report from LAS), indicates the ethnicity breaks down as:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Ethnicity</th> <th>Count</th> <th>Percentage</th> <th>BFC*</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>WHITE</td> <td>249</td> <td>88.3%</td> <td>86.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BAME</td> <td>26</td> <td>9.2%</td> <td>13.9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Grand Total</td> <td>282</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>NR</td> <td>7</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>*ONS 2021 Census – all ages</i></p> <p>Below is a breakdown of the ethnicity breakdown for Bracknell Forest taken from the 2011 Census.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>White</th> <th>Mixed/ multiple ethnic group</th> <th>Asian/ Asian British</th> <th>Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British</th> <th>Other Ethnic Group</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>People aged 65-74</td> <td>96.45%</td> <td>0.47%</td> <td>2.34%</td> <td>0.51%</td> <td>0.24%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>People aged 75-84</td> <td>98.29%</td> <td>0.25%</td> <td>1.27%</td> <td>0.11%</td> <td>0.08%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>People aged eighty-five and over</td> <td>98.51%</td> <td>0.32%</td> <td>0.95%</td> <td>0.11%</td> <td>0.11%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total population aged sixty-five and over</td> <td>97.34%</td> <td>0.37%</td> <td>1.80%</td> <td>0.32%</td> <td>0.17%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Ethnicity	Count	Percentage	BFC*	WHITE	249	88.3%	86.1%	BAME	26	9.2%	13.9%	Grand Total	282			NR	7				White	Mixed/ multiple ethnic group	Asian/ Asian British	Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British	Other Ethnic Group	People aged 65-74	96.45%	0.47%	2.34%	0.51%	0.24%	People aged 75-84	98.29%	0.25%	1.27%	0.11%	0.08%	People aged eighty-five and over	98.51%	0.32%	0.95%	0.11%	0.11%	Total population aged sixty-five and over	97.34%	0.37%	1.80%	0.32%	0.17%
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11. Sexual orientation equality	Y	N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes.	<p>Eligibility for the service will be based on a Care Act assessment. The impact on sexual orientation equality is expected to be neutral.</p> <p>Expectations around service accessibility will be specified within the contractual agreements.</p>																																																								
12. Gender re-assignment	Y	N	Neutral impact is expected.	<p>Eligibility for the service will be based on a Care Act assessment. The impact on gender re-assignment equality is expected to be neutral.</p>																																																								

		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<p>BFC do not gather information on this equalities strand.</p> <p>According to the NAS, there is some evidence to show a link between gender dysphoria and autism, and that autistic people may be more likely than other people to have gender dysphoria (discomfort or distress when their assigned sex is different from the gender they identify with). However, there is little evidence about the reason(s) why, and some recent research suggests the link between autism and gender dysphoria is not so clear. Further research is needed. More research is also required to develop and test assessment tools, support and treatment for autistic people experiencing gender dysphoria.</p>																																				
13. Age equality	Y	N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<p>There is no envisaged negative impact upon an individual as a result of their age.</p> <p>There will be no change in eligibility for this service. The CTPLD will prioritise referrals to the service on the basis of needs.</p> <p>The scheme is being designed to ensure that people will be able to continue living in the property should their needs change, such as increased frailty due to age.</p>																																				
14. Religion and belief equality	Y	N	Neutral impact is expected	<p>Based on people in receipt of supported living during 2022/2023, indicates the breakdown between religion and belief: -</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Religion</th> <th>Count</th> <th>Percentage</th> <th>BFC*</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Christian</td> <td>72</td> <td>74.2%</td> <td>47.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hindu</td> <td>1</td> <td>1.0%</td> <td>2.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jewish</td> <td>2</td> <td>2.1%</td> <td>0.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Muslim</td> <td>1</td> <td>1.0%</td> <td>1.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No Religion</td> <td>20</td> <td>20.6%</td> <td>40.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not answered</td> <td>1</td> <td>1.0%</td> <td>5.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Grand Total</td> <td>97</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>NR</td> <td>186</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>*ONS 2021 Census – all ages</i></p> <p>The 2011 Census indicates against the above, that 59.3% of people reported to be Christian, 4.8% Muslim, 1.5% Hindu, 0.8% Sikh, 0.5% Jewish, 0.4% Buddhist, 0.4% other religion and 25.1% no religion.</p> <p>See: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/articles/howreligionhaschangedinenglandandwales/2015-06-04 Office for National Statistics</p>	Religion	Count	Percentage	BFC*	Christian	72	74.2%	47.5%	Hindu	1	1.0%	2.4%	Jewish	2	2.1%	0.2%	Muslim	1	1.0%	1.8%	No Religion	20	20.6%	40.4%	Not answered	1	1.0%	5.6%	Grand Total	97			NR	186		
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				The impact is expected to be neutral. There will be no change in eligibility for this service. The CLDT will prioritise referrals on the basis of need.
15. Pregnancy and maternity equality	Y	N	Neutral impact is expected.	No evidence could be found to suggest an adverse or positive impact based on pregnancy or maternity alone.
16. Marriage and civil partnership equality	Y	N	Neutral impact is expected.	No evidence could be found to suggest an adverse or positive impact based on marriage or civil partnership alone.
17. Please give details of any other potential impacts on any other group (e.g., those on lower incomes/carers/ex-offenders, armed forces communities) and on promoting good community relations.				<p>People on lower incomes & Armed forces community</p> <p>No evidence could be found to suggest an adverse impact on these groups.</p> <p>Carers</p> <p>The impact on carers is expected to be positive as the scheme will increase the amount of supported living accommodation in the borough, enabling people to remain living closer to their families.</p> <p>People will have an individual person-centred support package that enables carers to be involved as much as they can and want to be in the person's support.</p>
18. If an adverse/negative impact has been identified can it be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or for any other reason?				n/a
19. If there is any difference in the impact of the activity when considered for each of the equality groups listed in 8 – 14 above; how significant is the difference in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?				n/a

20. Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination in relation to any of the Equality Duties?	Y	N X	No adverse impacts have been identified.
21. What further information or data is required to better understand the impact? Where and how can that information be obtained?	<p>The Care Act sets out the Council's responsibilities in terms of meeting eligible adult social care needs.</p> <p>The care and support service will be required to be registered with the CQC for the delivery of personal care.</p> <p>There is guidance published by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) which sets out what the provider is required to do to meet the CQC regulations and ensure the support is delivered in line with good practice. This will be included in the development of the service specification.</p>		
22. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?	Y	N X	
23. If a full impact assessment is not required; what actions will you take to reduce or remove any potential differential/adverse impact, to further promote equality of opportunity through this activity or to obtain further information or data? Please complete the action plan in full, adding more rows as needed.			
Action	Timescale	Person Responsible	Milestone/Success Criteria
Equalities monitoring will be built into contract monitoring.	From commencement of contract	Head of Strategic Commissioning	Equalities recording in LAS and evidence gathered from contract monitoring can be reviewed to identify any positive/negative impact on protected characteristics
Annual Report on Equalities Monitoring – Services	Annual basis	Head of Strategic Commissioning	The Annual Report, which is completed each year on Equalities Monitoring – Services can be used for monitoring purposes. The report aims to show that the council is providing a fair and equitable service to all residents who are eligible for support.

24. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?	The People Directorate
25. Please list the current actions undertaken to advance equality or examples of good practice identified as part of the screening?	To be discussed with project group and as part of the development of the service specification.
26. Assistant Director signature	Signature: Melanie O'Rourke Date: 13 September 2023

When complete please send to abby.thomas@bracknell-forest.gov.uk for publication on the Council's website.

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To: **Executive**
17th October 2023

CONTRACT AWARD FOR 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service Director of Place, Planning and Regeneration

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Health Visiting Service and the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) are prescribed/mandated Local Authority Public Health functions under the [Health and Social Care Act 2012](#). They are delivered by the 0-19 Public Health Nursing contracts.
- 1.2 To share the conclusion of the 0-19 Public Health Nursing service tender, completed on 4th August 2023, and seek permission from the Executive to award the contract to the preferred bidder.
- 1.3 To seek permission from Executive to approve the budget for the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service Contract.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Executive approve the award of the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service Contract to Provider A for a 5-year contract term with two 12-month optional extensions
- 2.3 That Executive approves the budget (as provided in section 2.3 and detailed in section 9 of the confidential annex -) for the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service for the 7-year maximum contract period with a start date from 1st April 2024. This will be paid from the ring fenced Public Health Grant allocation to the Council to deliver the public health functions.

3 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The full Invitation to Tender (ITT) for the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service was carried out as prescribed by the Bracknell Forest Council Procurement Manual. The tender was published from 09 June 2023 to 27 July 2023.
- 3.2 The tender was for a 5-year initial contract term from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2029, with two 12-month optional extensions.
- 3.3 The outcomes of the moderated evaluation are set out below:
- Provider A – The successful bidder and now the recommended provider.
 - Provider B – The unsuccessful bidder. The bid was scored below 40% threshold for the quality score and was not considered further.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Not to commission the service. However, the [Health and Social Care Act 2012](#) assigns local authorities in England the statutory responsibility for commissioning public health services for children and young people aged 0-19 years (including children aged up to 25 years with special educational needs and disabilities).

- 4.2 Failure to commission the service will not be in accordance with the statutory requirement.

5 Supporting Information

5.1 National context

- 5.2 The 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service consists of Health Visiting (0-5 years) and School Nursing Service (5-19 years and up to 25 years for children with special needs and disabilities (SEND)) and includes the National Child Health Measurement Programme.
- 5.3 The Health Visiting Service and National Child Measurement Programme are prescribed/mandated Local Authority Public Health functions under the [Health and Social Care Act 2012](#). Local areas provide additional optional elements which include the majority of the School Nursing service to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. In Bracknell Forest the NCMP is delivered by the school nursing service.
- 5.4 The 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service is funded from the annual ring fenced [Public Health Grant](#).
- 5.5 In May 2021, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) provided [guidance](#) on a new model for commissioning and delivering the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service with recommendations to include two additional optional contacts for the Health Visiting Service within the first year of new borns. Other recommendations include approaches to commissioning an effective evidence-based school nursing service.
- 5.6 The current contract for the 0-19 Service with Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BHFT) ends on 31 March 2024 with no option for further extension.
- 5.7 The new service contract is intended to replace the current contract. The specification is an outcomes-focused to improve health and wellbeing for children, young people and families in Bracknell Forest and reduce inequalities.
- 5.8 Priority 1 of the [2022-2026 Bracknell Forest Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) intends to “Give all children the best start in life and support emotional and physical health from birth to adulthood” and cited the evidence-based Healthy Child Programme delivered through the 0-19 Service as the main vehicle for delivering this priority. Successful recommissioning of the service will contribute significantly to achieving this strategic objective.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

6.1 Legal Advice

The advice of Procurement and Finance have been reviewed. The award is legal and compliant. Our Standard Conditions of Contract : Services (Issue Dated: August 2021) are the basis for the signed document.

6.2 Procurement Advice

Following review, it is confirmed that the procurement was carried out compliantly and in line with the SPP and the published tender documents. Following evaluation Provider A, was the highest scoring bidder. Award of contract to Provider A.

6.3 Finance Advice

At the 1st April 2023 the Public Health reserve stood at £2.1m, there are currently £1.5m of in year project commitments, which would bring the reserve down to £0.600m. Current projections against this years Public Health grant show an anticipated transfer to reserves of £0.300m which would bring the reserve back to £1m at the 31st March 2024. Current and future commitments need to be reviewed and where possible reduced to ensure sufficient funding is available within the reserve to meet the potential deficit.

6.4 Equalities Impact Assessment

An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed for this requirement. This initial assessment determined that a full Equality Impact Assessment was not required. A copy of the EIA is available on request.

6.5 Climate change

ProviderA has a Green Plan. The focus of this plan is on reducing the carbon emissions that it has direct control over (NHS carbon footprint) as well as setting the foundation to manage the reduction of carbon emissions that it can influence (NHS carbon footprint plus).

7 Background Papers

NONE

8 Contact for further information

Heema Shukla Deputy Director Public Health
Heema.shukla@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Tanvi Barreto Senior Public Health Strategist
Tanvi.barreto@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

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To: **Executive**
17 October 2023

Re-procurement of an Occupational Health Provider for Staff Executive Director: Resources

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Council's contract to provide an Occupational Health (OH) service for staff through its current occupational health provider contract with Cordell Health terminates on 30 June 2024. Agreement is needed at this time on the approach to securing a suitable arrangement to put in place from 1 July 2024, subject to procurement. This report incorporates issues and opportunities to ensure that the provision of an occupational health provider for the future takes into account the needs of both staff and management.

2 Recommendation

That the Executive:

- 2.1 Approves the proposed re-procurement of an occupational health contract for the provision of occupational health service for staff who work for the council in any capacity, including schools.
- 2.2 Following the completion of the procurement process, delegates the contract award to the Executive Director: Resources in consultation with the Executive Member, Finance and Business Change.

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 The Council currently spends approximately £80,000 a year on its current occupational health service, which provides a variety of services, such as; pre-employment screening, sickness referrals, ill-health retirement, management guidance and advice as well as health surveillance such as; statutory hearing tests, night worker assessments as well as immunisation, disablement advice, home visits, emergency planning advice, health related risk assessments, training and advice services, and health promotions when required. The provision of these services supports managers with staff absence management and employees early return to work which has a positive impact on sickness absence levels.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Consideration has been given to securing a provider to supply both occupational health and counselling services, which was the approach undertaken the last time the service was procured. However, as there were no bids at that time to provide both services, separate procurements are being undertaken on this occasion.
- 4.2 If we were no longer to provide an occupational health service then this would be considered to have a negative impact on managing staff absence and would likely have an adverse impact on the level of days lost to sickness absence.

5 Supporting Information

Occupational Health Provision

- 5.1 The Council's current contract for the provision of occupational health services terminates on 30 June 2024. The Occupational Health service is a key component of the Council's managing sickness absence policy and supports the Council's aim to minimise employee sickness absence levels and facilitate employees' return to work after periods of absence. The provision of an OH service also ensures that the Council meets certain statutory requirements.
- 5.2 Council employees' average sickness figure for 22/23 was 8.42 days per employee compared to 7.7 days per employee for all Public Sector Employees in 2022. The public sector figure has steadily increased over the last couple of years whilst Bracknell Forest's has remained relatively steady. This has been a consistent position and is based on a 3-pronged strategy of:
- i. Having a robust sickness absence policy in place,
 - ii. Ensuring managers are well trained and supported in the use of the policy,
 - iii. Ensuring a proactive approach to the OH service (including early intervention and in-depth management reports).
- 5.3 A professional, high quality OH provider, which the council has confidence in and supports the council's sickness absence management strategy is considered essential. Good quality OH clinicians/support staff and systems and processes, reduces the administrative burden on both management and HR, and assists the council with achieving its sickness absences targets.
- 5.4 Through accessing expert OH advice, which takes into consideration the requirements of an employees' role, such as their terms and conditions, setting and any overriding government guidance/legislation, absence can be minimised and the Council's duty of care to its staff fulfilled.
- 5.5 The OH service forms an important part of the Human Resources service level agreement purchased by schools and academies within the Borough and elsewhere, and is viewed positively by headteachers, with questionnaire feedback showing the overall service was considered either excellent or good.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 This is included in the confidential Annex.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 Recent spending on OH services has been around £80,000 per year, though this can vary as it is dependent on the number of referrals to the service.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.4 Trades Union representatives have not been consulted during the pre-procurement stage but will be consulted prior to a provider being awarded the contract on the terms of the service provision.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.5 A summary EIA accompanies this report.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.6 Employers have a legal duty to implement a health surveillance programme if their employees are exposed to certain health risks. The programme should ensure that procedures are in place to detect early signs of work-related ill health, with the results swiftly acted upon. For certain health risks, there is a statutory duty on employers to provide occupational health surveillance, this can be fulfilled by appointing a competent Occupational Healthcare provider.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.7 Appointments are primarily offered by video and telephone, although face to face appointments are offered if required or recommended, to ensure OH users are fully supported. Through the tender process we will assess tenderers' ability to deliver a service that supports the council's climate change agenda, for example by offering local, accessible services that minimise the need for car journeys.

Background Papers

- Principal Procurement Plan – attached
- Summary EIA – contained within Principal Procurement Plan
- Draft DPIA – contained within Principal Procurement Plan

Contact for further information

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Gifty Nwabueze - 01344 352016

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