

Notice of Meeting

Executive

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

Tuesday 23 January 2024, 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	
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>	
3.	Minutes	3 - 24
	To consider and approve the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 12 December 2023.	
4.	Urgent Items of Business	
	Any other items which, pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman decides are urgent.	

Executive Key Decisions

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

5.	Quarter two Council Plan Overview Report	25 - 60
	To provide the Executive with an update on the delivery of the objectives set out in the Council Plan.	

EMERGENCY EVACUATION INSTRUCTIONS

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	Reporting: Katie Flint, Policy and Performance Lead	
6.	Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034	61 - 168
	To approve the draft Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034. Reporting: Chris Mansfield, Head of Economic Development and Regeneration	

Exclusion of the Press and Public

Agenda item 7 is supported by an annex containing exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. If the Committee wishes to discuss the content of this annex 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 item 7 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).*

7.	Procurement Plan for the Children’s Residential Framework 2024	169 - 194
	To seek approval to be part of a consortium that is tendering for a new Children’s Residential Care Contract for a term of 4 years (with a further 4 optional extension years) from 1st October 2024 to 30th September 2028. The current Children’s Residential Care Contract expires on the 30th September 2024. Bracknell Forest Council has been a partner in the current Children’s Residential Framework with 20 other local authorities and will continue in the same partnership. The procurement and contract management of the Framework will be led by Southampton City Council. Reporting: Grainne Siggins, Executive Director People	

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: 15 January 2024

EMERGENCY EVACUATION INSTRUCTIONS

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**EXECUTIVE
12 DECEMBER 2023
5.30 - 6.32 PM**

Present:

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

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Purnell

46. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

47. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive on 14 November 2023 together with the accompanying decision records be confirmed as a correct record.

48. 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:

49. Capital Programme 2024/25

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- i. Approves, for consultation, a Council funded capital programme of £8.328m for 2024/25 as set out in paragraph 5.17 and summarised in Annex A, including the new schemes listed in Annexes B – D of the report.
- ii. Approves, for consultation, the inclusion of £4.554m of expenditure to be externally funded (including £0.380m of S106 funding) as outlined in paragraph 5.18 of the report.
- iii. Approves, for consultation, the inclusion of an additional budget of £1m for Invest-to-Save schemes.

50. Revenue Budget 2024/25

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- i. Agrees the draft budget proposals for 2024/25 as the basis for consultation with the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and other interested parties or individuals.

- ii. Agrees the Treasury Management Strategy and associated documents at Annexe E of the report and request that the Governance and Audit Committee review each of the key elements.
- iii. Agrees that the 2024/25 Schools Budget be set at the eventual level of the Dedicated School Grant income plus any accumulated DSG balances.
- iv. Authorises the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning to agree the allocation of the sums available for schools and Early Years funding as set out in recommendation 2.3 of the report, having regard to the decisions and recommendations of the Schools Forum and to agree detailed budgets for services centrally managed by the Council.
- v. Notes that a separate report is included on the agenda for this Executive meeting regarding the Council's participation in the Department for Education's Safety Valve programme, that is likely to significantly affect the Council's medium to long-term financial prospects and may impact on the draft budget proposals for 2024/25 included in this report.
- vi. Agrees that the Council Tax Base be set at 49,694 (Band D equivalents) for 2024/25 as outlined in Annexe H of the report.
- vii. Approves the virements relating to the 2023/24 budget as set out in Annexes F and G of the report and recommends those that are over £0.100m for approval by Council.
- viii. Approves the write-off of £54,150 for a commercial property debt that is no longer recoverable (see paragraph 12.1) of the report.

51. Making (adoption) of the Winkfield Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2037

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- i. Agrees the formal "making" (keeping in legal force) of the Winkfield Neighbourhood Development Plan to continue to form part of the statutory Bracknell Forest Development Plan pursuant to Section 38A(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended); and
- ii. Agrees the form, content and publication of the Decision Statement (set out in Appendix A of the report) pursuant to Regulation 19 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

52. Personal Budgets Policy

RESOLVED that:

- i. The Executive Approve the revised Personal Budgets Policy including the revisions outlined in section 1.2 of the report.
- ii. The Revised Personal Budgets Policy be published and implemented December 2023.

53. Serious Violence Strategy 2024-2027

RESOLVED that:

- i. The Bracknell Forest Serious Violence Strategy 2024-2027 be endorsed.
- ii. A more detailed Action Plan be compiled which will be subject to review and approval by the Executive Director together with the portfolio holder Cllr Iskandar Jefferies.

54. **Community Support: Winter Update**

RESOLVED that:

- i. The updated financial hardship action plan is endorsed (appendix A of the report).
- ii. The COMF spending plan is agreed (appendix B of the report).

55. **Safety Valve Programme Plan**

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- i. Approves the Council's initial Safety Valve proposal detailed in confidential Annex B of the report for submission to the Department for Education by 15 December 2023.
- ii. Delegates authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to amend the initial proposal if necessary in response to feedback from the Department for Education prior to a final Safety Valve proposal being presented to the Council meeting on 10 January 2024.

56. **Building Maintenance and Repairs Services Contract**

RESOLVED that the Executive approves the Strategic Procurement Plan set out in Appendix A of the report to tender the services for a single organisation to provide 24 hour Building Maintenance and Reactive Repairs Services for the Councils corporate stock and buy back schools.

57. **Neutral Agency Vendor and Specialist Recruitment Provider Procurement**

RESOLVED that the Executive approve the re-procurement of a neutral vendor contract to provide the Council with agency staff in accordance with the strategic procurement plan attached as Appendix A to the report.

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**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I115785
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1. **TITLE:** Capital Programme 2024/25

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Resources

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To approve the Council's budget proposals for budget consultation.

4 **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- i. Approves, for consultation, a Council funded capital programme of £8.328m for 2024/25 as set out in paragraph 5.17 and summarised in Annex A, including the new schemes listed in Annexes B – D of the report.
- ii. Approves, for consultation, the inclusion of £4.554m of expenditure to be externally funded (including £0.380m of S106 funding) as outlined in paragraph 5.18 of the report.
- iii. Approves, for consultation, the inclusion of an additional budget of £1m for Invest-to-Save schemes.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

The reasons for the recommendations are set out in the report.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

The final budget proposals will include consideration of any alternative options highlighted during the required consultation period.

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

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

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
12 December 2023	20 December 2023

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**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I115464
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1. **TITLE:** Revenue Budget 2024/25

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Resources

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To approve the Council's budget proposals for consultation

4 **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- i. Agrees the draft budget proposals for 2024/25 as the basis for consultation with the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and other interested parties or individuals.
- ii. Agrees the Treasury Management Strategy and associated documents at Annexe E of the report and request that the Governance and Audit Committee review each of the key elements.
- iii. Agrees that the 2024/25 Schools Budget be set at the eventual level of the Dedicated School Grant income plus any accumulated DSG balances.
- iv. Authorises the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning to agree the allocation of the sums available for schools and Early Years funding as set out in recommendation 2.3 of the report, having regard to the decisions and recommendations of the Schools Forum and to agree detailed budgets for services centrally managed by the Council.
- v. Notes that a separate report is included on the agenda for this Executive meeting regarding the Council's participation in the Department for Education's Safety Valve programme, that is likely to significantly affect the Council's medium to long-term financial prospects and may impact on the draft budget proposals for 2024/25 included in this report.
- vi. Agrees that the Council Tax Base be set at 49,694 (Band D equivalents) for 2024/25 as outlined in Annexe H of the report.
- vii. Approves the virements relating to the 2023/24 budget as set out in Annexes F and G of the report and recommends those that are over £0.100m for approval by Council.
- viii. Approves the write-off of £54,150 for a commercial property debt that is no longer recoverable (see paragraph 12.1) of the report.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

The recommendations are designed to allow the Executive to consult on its draft budget proposals for 2024/25 as required by the Local Government Act 2003.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

The range of options being considered is included in the report and its Annexes.

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

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

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
12 December 2023	20 December 2023

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I117788
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1. **TITLE:** Making (adoption) of the Winkfield Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2037

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

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To agree that the Winkfield Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' if the majority of those who vote at the referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan are in favour of Bracknell Forest Council using the Neighbourhood Plan to help decide planning applications in the Winkfield neighbourhood area.

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- i. Agrees the formal "making" (keeping in legal force) of the Winkfield Neighbourhood Development Plan to continue to form part of the statutory Bracknell Forest Development Plan pursuant to Section 38A(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended); and
- ii. Agrees the form, content and publication of the Decision Statement (set out in Appendix A of the report) pursuant to Regulation 19 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

The Council in its capacity as the Local Planning Authority has a statutory duty, as set out in Section 38A(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ("PCPA"), to make a neighbourhood development plan if more than half of those voting at a referendum have voted in favour of making the neighbourhood development plan. This must be done within 8 weeks of the referendum (as prescribed by Regulation 18A of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) ("the Regulations")). Regulation 19 requires the Council to then publish a statement setting out the decision and details of where and when the decision statement may be inspected. This must be done as soon as possible after deciding to make the neighbourhood development plan.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

1. If the Council considers that the making of the Neighbourhood Plan would breach, or otherwise be incompatible with any EU obligation or any of the Convention rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998 (as amended)), it would not have a duty to make the Neighbourhood Plan, as set out in Section 38A(6) of the PCPA. In which case the Neighbourhood Plan would cease to form part of the Development

Plan, as set out in Section 38(3B) of the PCPA.

2. The independent Examiner who reviewed the Neighbourhood Plan considered that, subject to modifications, it met the basic conditions and statutory requirements, including the basic condition that the Neighbourhood Plan is compatible with EU obligations and Convention rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998 (as amended)). The Council concurred with the Examiner's conclusions as set out in the published 'Post Examination Decision Statement.' Therefore, it would be in breach of the Council's statutory responsibilities in respect of Neighbourhood Planning under Section 38A(4) of the PCPA to refuse to make the Neighbourhood Plan. It would also expose the Council to legal challenge and attendant costs.
9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Executive Director: Place, Planning & Regeneration
10. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
12 December 2023	20 December 2023

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I117818
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1. **TITLE:** Personal Budgets Policy

2. **SERVICE AREA:** People

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the revised Personal Budgets Policy. Providing a Personal Budget where requested is a duty the council must meet as set out in the SEND Code of Practice 2015.

4 **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that:

- i. The Executive Approve the revised Personal Budgets Policy including the revisions outlined in section 1.2 of the report.
- ii. The Revised Personal Budgets Policy be published and implemented December 2023.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

1. In accordance with the SEND Code of Practice January 2015: Local authorities must provide information on Personal Budgets as part of the Local Offer. This should include a policy on Personal Budgets that sets out a description of the services across education, health and social care that currently lend themselves to the use of Personal Budgets, how that funding will be made available, and clear and simple statements of eligibility criteria and the decision-making processes.
2. Personal Budgets are optional for the child's parent or the young person but local authorities are under a duty to prepare a budget when requested. Local authorities must provide information about organisations that may be able to provide advice and assistance to help parents and young people to make informed decisions about Personal Budgets.
3. The child's parent or the young person has a right to request a Personal Budget, when the local authority has completed an EHC needs assessment and confirmed that it will prepare an EHC Plan. They may also request a Personal Budget during a statutory review of an existing EHC Plan.
4. Personal Budgets should reflect the holistic nature of an EHC Plan and can include funding for special educational, health and social care provision. They should be designed to secure the provision and outcomes specified in the EHC Plan.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

As this is a legal requirement alternative options have not been considered.

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

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

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
12 December 2023	20 December 2023

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I116168
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1. **TITLE:** Serious Violence Strategy 2024-2027

2. **SERVICE AREA:** People

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To endorse the Bracknell Forest Serious Violence Strategy 2024 and governance arrangements for implementation of the strategy.

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that:

- i. The Bracknell Forest Serious Violence Strategy 2024-2027 be endorsed.
- ii. A more detailed Action Plan be compiled which will be subject to review and approval by the Executive Director together with the portfolio holder Cllr Iskandar Jefferies.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 introduced a Serious Violence Duty on specified authorities within a local government area. As part of the Duty, a strategy is required to be prepared, publicised and implemented:

'In order to prepare and implement a strategy for exercising their functions to prevent and reduce serious violence in the area, the partnership must collectively develop a strategy which should outline the multi-agency response that the partnership will take to address the drivers identified in the strategic needs assessment'.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

No alternative options have been considered for the following reasons:

- The Duty is laid down in law
- This first Serious Violence Strategy for Bracknell Forest is a commitment to work effectively across organisational and professional boundaries to deliver a truly multi-agency approach. It is vital that relevant services work together, share information and target interventions effectively.
- Serious violence reduction and prevention is a multi-agency process which is best co-ordinated through a strategy
- Serious violence has a devastating impact on lives of victims and families, instils fear within communities and is extremely costly to society.

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

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

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
12 December 2023	20 December 2023

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I116732
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1. **TITLE:** Community Support: Winter Update

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

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To present the updated financial hardship plan, having reviewed this ahead of winter cost of living pressures and to align with emerging priorities.

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that:

- i. The updated financial hardship action plan is endorsed (appendix A of the report).
- ii. The COMF spending plan is agreed (appendix B of the report).

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

1. In 2022, the council recognised a need for a strategic, sustainable, and preventative approach to supporting residents who may be at risk of, or experiencing, financial hardship. Support throughout this period has been facilitated in large part by one off government grant funding and the development of a financial hardship action plan. Since 2022, there has been a consistent period of high inflation on items such as domestic fuel and food. This emphasises a need to review the plan content for continued relevance, particularly ensuring the priorities are appropriate for the upcoming winter period.
2. More broadly, there also continues to be a lasting impact from the pandemic on health and wellbeing for communities across the borough. Local research was conducted exploring the impact of COVID during 2023, which has supported the identification of key areas of focus. The council seeks to identify opportunities to support community development and resilience. Specific funding has been identified from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) to support programmes that address these challenges these are set out in appendix B.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

The review of community support process has considered a range of issues related to the pandemic and the cost-of-living. As part of the process of developing these recommendations, some issues were out of the scope of the action plan or grant funding conditions as this is a ring-fenced time limited grant provided by the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities OHID. Some elements of health and hardship are also outside of the influence of the council and are therefore not recommended

for inclusion in the updated hardship action plan or COMF funded activities in appendix C.

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

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

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
12 December 2023	20 December 2023

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I117962
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1. **TITLE:** Safety Valve Programme Plan
2. **SERVICE AREA:** Chief Executive's Office
3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To endorse the Council's initial Safety Valve proposal for submission to the Department for Education (DfE) and recommend submission to full Council of the final proposal, amended as necessary to reflect DfE feedback.

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

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- i. Approves the Council's initial Safety Valve proposal detailed in confidential Annex B of the report for submission to the Department for Education by 15 December 2023.
- ii. Delegates authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to amend the initial proposal if necessary in response to feedback from the Department for Education prior to a final Safety Valve proposal being presented to the Council meeting on 10 January 2024.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

1. The Council was invited by the Department for Education (DfE) to participate in its Safety Valve Intervention Programme 2023/24 in July (the invitation letter to the Chief Executive is attached as Annex A). The Safety Valve programme aims to agree a package of reforms to local education systems for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) through which the systems will become financially sustainable within the level of grant provided by the Department for Education, while improving the experiences of children and young people. Bracknell Forest is one of five authorities invited to participate in the programme this year, due to its large and rising deficit.
2. Participation in the programme can secure access to additional capital funding for new local provision and a material financial contribution from the DfE towards the accumulated Dedicated School Grant (DSG) deficit, should proposals for reform submitted by the Council be accepted. A significant financial commitment is also required from the Council, both to secure delivery of the proposed programme of activity and to write off the remainder of the accumulated deficit not funded by the DfE. At the time of this report's publication, discussions are continuing between Council officers and the DfE's Safety Valve team on these details, which will be distributed for Councillors' consideration in confidential Annex B in advance of the Executive's meeting.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The Council could choose not to participate in the Safety Valve programme. This is not recommended since it would mean that responsibility for funding the DSG deficit would rest entirely with Bracknell Forest Council, with no financial contribution available from the DfE. In addition, the Council would be less likely to receive additional capital funding to support local provision, since priority is given to applications from Safety Valve authorities. While some local authorities with Education responsibilities have not yet participated in the Safety Valve programme, all will face a significant financial challenge if they are in a deficit position when the temporary override enabling deficits to be carried forward is removed, which will inevitably happen at some point. Should an authority face a situation where its total reserves are insufficient to cover the accumulated deficit at that point, the authority would be forced into declaring a section 114 notice, since it would at that point be unable to fund its known liabilities. Bracknell Forest is not currently in this position, but its rapidly rising DSG deficit that is expected to reach a minimum of £45m even with significant mitigations identified and implemented risks triggering that situation in the next few years.

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

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

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
12 December 2023	20 December 2023

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I116743
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1. **TITLE:** Building Maintenance and Repairs Services Contract

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Delivery

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To seek approval of the strategic procurement plan to commence with a procurement process to commission a new contractor to undertake the building maintenance and reactive repairs contract

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that the Executive approves the Strategic Procurement Plan set out in Appendix A of the report to tender the services for a single organisation to provide 24 hour Building Maintenance and Reactive Repairs Services for the Councils corporate stock and buy back schools.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

1. Contract Standing Orders

The value of this agreement will exceed the relevant PCR threshold. The Contract Standing Orders explain that a contract of such value is required to go to a formal tendering process to ensure value for money and compliance with current legislation. This is to ensure a fair and non-discriminatory competitive process, and equal treatment of all potential suppliers and contractors.

2. It is a requirement of the contract standing orders that the executive approve any strategic procurement plan with a value more than £1m. This decision seeks approval for the procurement process.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

1. Framework options were explored however, none were a suitable match.

2. Partnerships with neighbouring authorities were considered, however, it was found that the closest authorities had different methods of operation or used DLO's (direct labour organisations) making them unsuitable. An Inter Authority Agreement would also need to be put in place which could take a year to complete.

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

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

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
12 December 2023	20 December 2023

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I117867
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1. **TITLE:** Neutral Agency Vendor and Specialist Recruitment Provider Procurement

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Resources

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To agree to the commencement of procurement of a neutral agency vendor to provide temporary workers, a special specialist provider to provide permanent recruitment and a specialist provider of both temporary and permanent social care to directly follow on from the termination of the current neutral agency vendor contract, which terminates on 31 March 2025. The new contract will be effective from 1 April 2025.

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that the Executive approve the re-procurement of a neutral vendor contract to provide the Council with agency staff in accordance with the strategic procurement plan attached as Appendix A to the report.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

The Council spends in excess of £7M a year on agency staff, of which on-contract spend through Matrix currently accounts for between 65 and 70% of the total spend. Whilst generally successful, the contract with Matrix (and any neutral vendor) will have gaps in their ability to provide all the Council's agency worker needs due to the specialist nature of some roles.

It is recommended that procurement is split into three Lots to address the current issues with recruiting specialist social care and education roles under a neutral agency vendor arrangement. It is intended that this approach will reduce the overall costs to the council through more on-contract spending and higher levels of fulfilment thus improving compliance and governance around agency worker recruitment.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

1. Procure software but manage the service internally. This is a significant change, though it has been done elsewhere.
2. Collaboration with neighbouring authorities to create greater economies of scale, but this would require neighbouring authorities to be undertaking procurement at the same time as Bracknell.
3. Re-procurement of a single neutral agency vendor for all agency worker recruitment, which is our current arrangement.

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

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

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
12 December 2023	20 December 2023

To: **The Executive**
23 January 2024

Council Plan Overview Report Chief Executive

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform the Executive of the performance of the council over the second quarter of the 2023/24 financial year (July-September 2023).

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 **To note the performance of the council over the period from July-September 2023 highlighted in the Overview Report in Annex A, this includes any recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny in Annex B.**

3 Reasons for Recommendation

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

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 None applicable.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The council's performance management framework requires the preparation of Quarterly Service Reports (QSRs) by each department. These QSRs provide an update of progress and performance against departmental Service Plans and are published on the intranet.
- 5.2 The QSRs have been combined into the Council Plan Overview Report (CPOR), which brings together the progress and performance of the council as a whole. The CPOR enables the Corporate Management Team and the Councillors to review performance, highlight any exceptions and note any remedial actions that may be necessary, either from under-performing or over-performing services, across the range of council activities. The current CPOR report reflects the outgoing Council Plan. Reporting on the new plan will commence for Q1 (April – June) 2024.
- 5.3 The CPOR performance information is also reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny. This process enables all Members to be involved in performance management. Any recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission are included within the report for the Executive to consider.
- 5.4 The CPOR for the second quarter (July-September 2023) is shown in Annex A.
- 5.5 Key achievements during quarter two have included:
- Multiple 'Summer of Fun' events took place across the borough, celebrating diverse communities and community cohesion. Events included Bracknell Forest Community Day, Yellow Brick Road event, Summer Treasure Hunt and Paws in the Park.
 - Launch of the borough's first Great Wellness Exchange and happiness drop-in sessions. A new outdoor gym has been opened at The Parks and 'Cycle September' was a success.

- The new Binfield Health and Community Hub has been completed including the relocated Binfield Surgery and the team is now working with Binfield Parish Council to put in place arrangements for their management and operation of the community centre.
- The Inaugural Climate Change Summit took place over two days in July and was very well attended. Following the summit, the annual report on the delivery of the Climate Change Strategy was completed which highlighted the good progress being made.
- A new migration team went live enabling improved forecasting and management of the strategic risks, as well as coordinated and consistent support and advice for all migrants arriving in the borough.

5.6 There also continue to be challenges the council is working to resolve:

- There continues to be substantial financial pressures with a risk of an overspend at year end. This is an improved position compared to Q1, but the focus on containing costs within originally approved budget remains across all directorates. Extensive work has been underway during Q2 related to developing the budget for 2024/25, this will continue throughout Q3.
- Children’s Social Care caseloads remain high due to a variety of reasons including resource challenges and the impact of Covid. The team continue to work with children and families directly to identify appropriate support.
- There is continued increase in demand and complexity across Adult Social Care including rising costs of residential and nursing placements and changing demographics. Change and transformation activity continues across the service to ensure that ways of working are in keeping with future changes and focus on efficiency.
- Difficulties in recruiting and retaining roles also remains, especially in social care and legal services. This is a focus of the new business change programme.
- Bracknell Regeneration Partnership (BRP) took the decision to stop the development of The Deck in its current form due to viability issues. It is exploring alternative options and meanwhile uses for the site.

6 Advice Received from Statutory and Other Officers

Legal Advice

6.1 There are no specific legal implications relevant to this report.

Financial Advice

6.2 There are no specific finance implications relevant to this report. Key budget information is included in section two.

Other Consultation Responses

6.3 None specific

Equalities Impact Assessment

6.4 This report does not require an equalities impact assessment as this is a management reporting tool.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

6.5 There are no specific strategic risk implications relevant to this report.

Climate Change and Ecological Implications

6.6 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to have no impact on emissions of CO₂ or ecological considerations. The reasons the Council believes that this will have no impact are that this is a management reporting tool.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

6.7 There are no specific health and wellbeing implications relevant to this report.

Background Papers

[All performance reports \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

QSR – Chief Executive Office – Quarter 2 2023-24

QSR – People Directorate – Quarter 2 2023-24

QSR – Delivery Directorate – Quarter 2 2023-24

QSR – Resources Directorate – Quarter 2 2023-24

QSR – Place Planning & Regeneration Directorate – Quarter 2 2023-24

Contact for further information

Katie Flint, Chief Executive's Office - 01344 352217

Katie.flint@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Annex A – Council Plan Overview Report

[Attached as a separate document]

Annex B – Overview and Scrutiny Commission review

Council Plan Annex – Scrutiny report

Date of Overview and Scrutiny Commission 30 November 2023	
Having reviewed the CPOR, the Commission had no recommendations for the Executive arising from the review of this quarter.	Officer response Not applicable as no recommendations made.
Summary of key points of discussion A number of questions were asked, and comprehensive responses were given by the Chief Executive. It was agreed a briefing note would be circulated to all Councillors following the meeting setting out the ambition for the London Road site in response to a question about the high-level application under strategic theme 'Protecting and enhancing our environment, action 5.02.03.	



COUNCIL PLAN OVERVIEW REPORT






Q2 2023 - 24
July – September 2023

Chief Executive:
Susan Halliwell

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Key

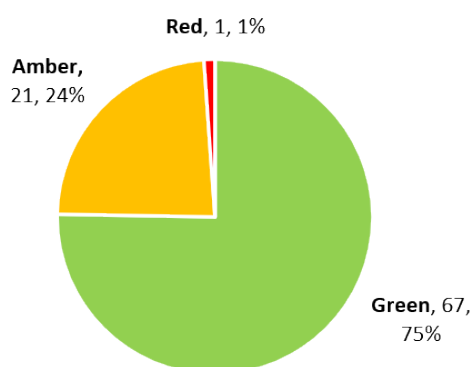
	Performance is very good
	Performance is causing concern
	Performance is weak
n/a	RAG rating not applicable
	Missing data
	Missing target

Section 1: Chief Executive's Commentary

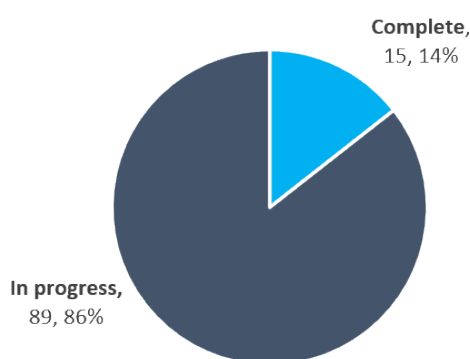
Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out an overview of the council's performance for the second quarter of 2023/24 (July - September 2023). It reports on the progress of delivering the commitments set out in the Council Plan. The purpose is to formally provide the Executive with a high-level summary of key achievements, and to highlight areas where performance was not matching targets or expectations, along with any remedial action that is being taken. It complements the detailed directorate Quarterly Service Reports (QSRs).
- 1.2 The current CPOR report reflects the outgoing Council Plan. Reporting on the new plan will commence for Q1 (April – June) 2024.
- 1.3 This is the second quarterly report of the 2023/24 financial year and at the end of the second quarter there were 104 actions to be reported. Of these, 15 are complete (14%). Of the 89 actions, in progress:
- 67 actions are green (75%)
 - 21 actions are amber (24%)
 - 1 actions is red (1%)

Action status at Q2 2023/24

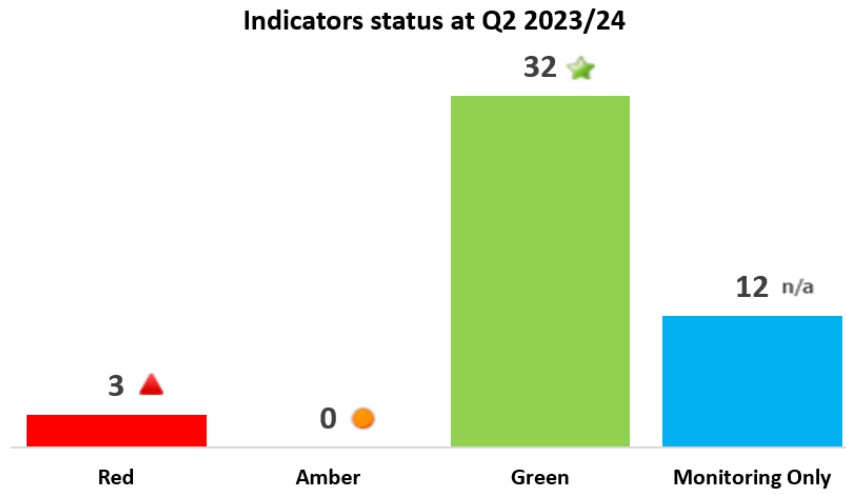


Action progress at Q2 2023/24



- 1.4 Section three of this report contains information on the performance indicators across the council for each of the strategic themes. Indicators have continued to be included in this quarter's CPOR, however as the majority of these were established at the start of the council plan period, in 2019, some are no longer particularly relevant to measuring the current priorities. For Q2, there were 47 indicators presented. The status for the key indicators in the Council Plan in the second quarter is:
- 32 are green (68%)
 - 0 are amber
 - 3 are red (6%)

12 indicators (26%) have no target set as they are for monitoring only, these provide intelligence about specific trends, but where a directional target may not be appropriate. There were four annual indicators under Education and Skills reported in the Q1 report that are not due to be reported at Q2 and therefore not included.



1.5 The full suite of performance indicators is being reviewed as part of the next Council Plan development.

Overview of Q2 and highlights



Multiple 'Summer of Fun' events celebrating diverse communities and community cohesion



Transfer of Bucklers Park community hub in Crowthorne to council ownership



New migration team launched to support all migrants arriving in the borough



Borough's first Great Wellness Exchange and happiness drop-in sessions launched



New outdoor gym with a range of equipment opened at The Parks



'Cycle September' achieved a 20% increase in participation vs. 2022



Binfield Health and Community Hub completed inc. relocated Binfield Surgery



Car park improvements at Horseshoe Lake completed



Inaugural Climate Change Summit took place in July

Challenges identified and being addressed



Continued threat of overspend for rest of year. This has improved since Q1, and focus on managing costs within original budget remains a priority



Children's Social Care caseloads remain high. Reasons include resource challenges and Covid impact. Work is continuing with families directly to identify appropriate support



Continued limited availability of special educational needs provision and increasing costs of placements. Addressing this will be a focus of the Safety Valve programme



Continued increase in demand and complexity across Adult Social Care including rising costs of residential and nursing placements and changing demographics



Difficulties continue in recruiting and retaining roles, especially in social care and legal. This is a focus of the new business change programme



Bracknell Regeneration Partnership decision to stop development of The Deck in its current form due to viability issues. Alternatives are being considered, the council will work with investors



Preparation during Q2 has focused on the 2024/25 budget. This has highlighted further financial pressure which will be further explored during the continued process in Q3 and Q4.

Section 2: Budget Position

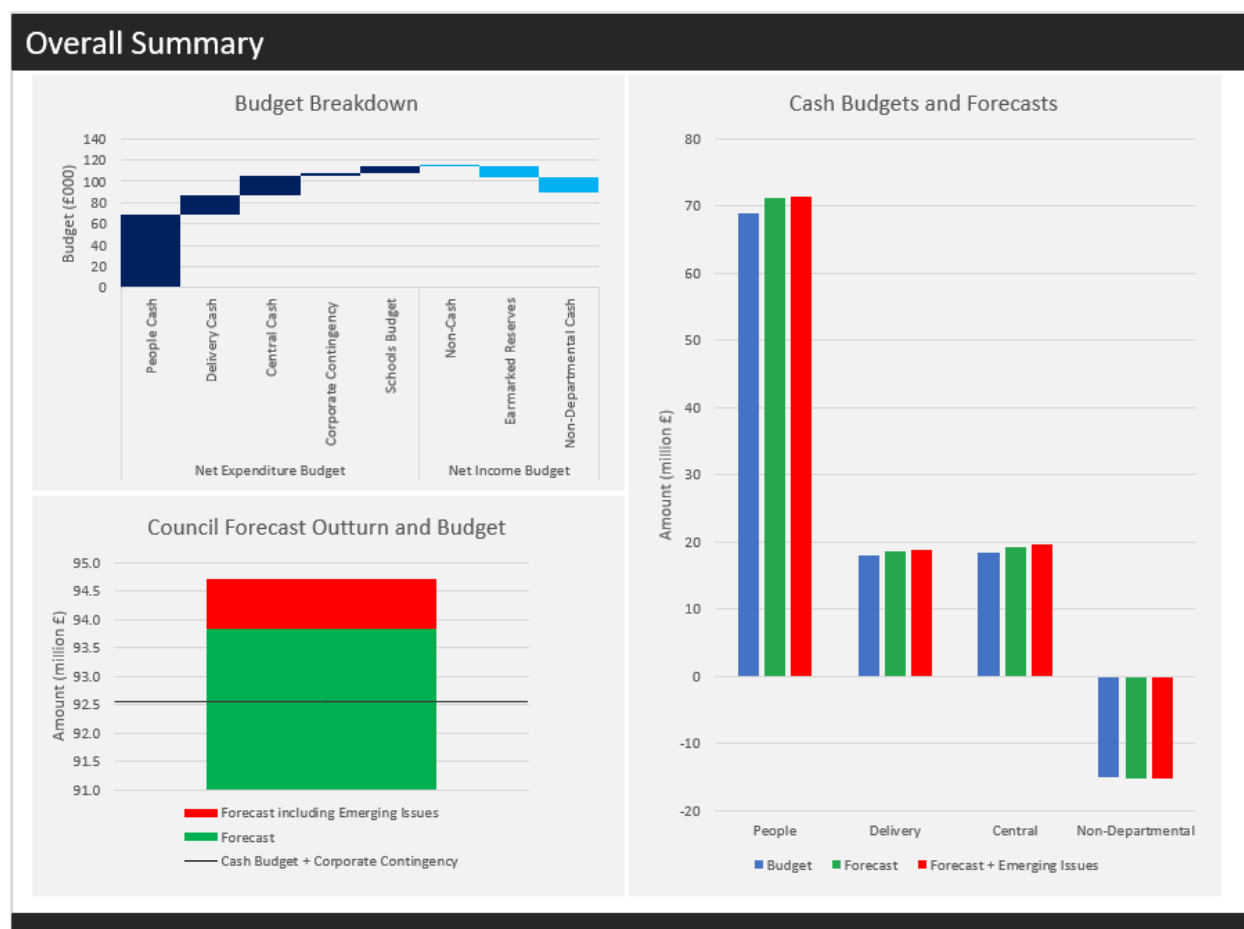
Revenue budget monitoring

The monthly monitoring returns are set out in detail in each directorate's Quarterly Service Report (QSR). The information provided for the quarter two financial position is based on data presented to the Corporate Management Team in October.

The returns provided by all directorates include a forecast variance plus any Emerging Issues. Across the Council, variances have been identified indicating expenditure above the approved budget (£1.278m), after taking into account the balance on the Corporate Contingency (£2.261m). Once Emerging Issues are included, the overspend increases to £1.702m. This is a significant improvement on the position reported verbally to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission by the Executive Director, Resources when presenting the Q1 CPOR, although it excludes the impact of the 2023/24 pay award, which has been confirmed in Q3 and will be included in more recent updates. The current offer would exceed the 4% built into the budget by approximately £0.5m.

There is the option of using part of the £1.5m balance on the Council's Inflation Reserve to meet this additional cost. At this point, however, the Corporate Management Team is focused on containing all costs within the originally approved budget, to protect the Council's future financial position. Consequently, the potential overspend to be addressed over the remainder of the year is in the range of £1.8m to £2.2m.

Key information around directorate variances being reported follows.



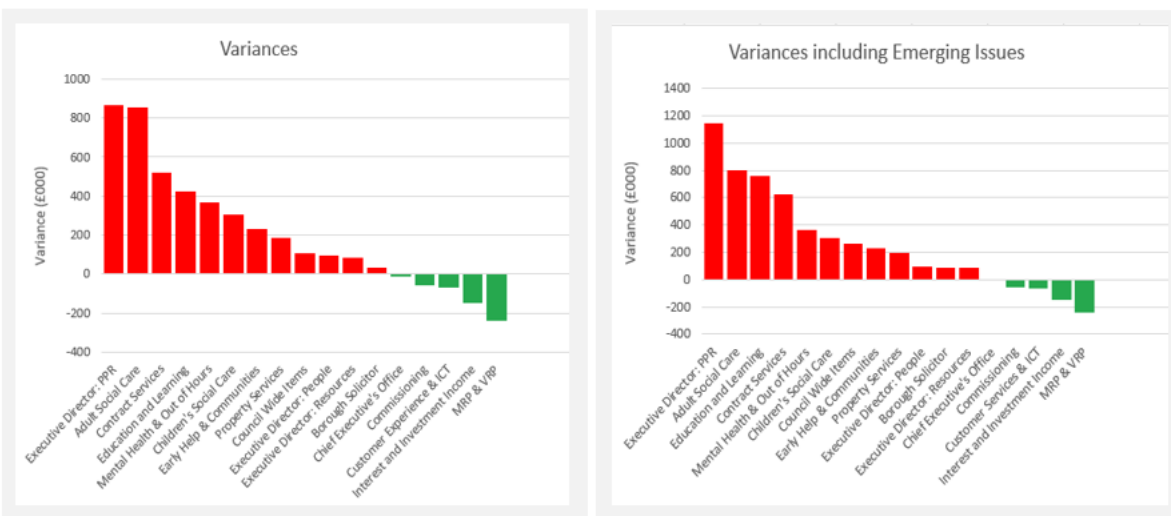
Summary – Assistant Director Level

	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	657	867	1,183	1,143
Director: Resources	6,515	71	6,586	52	82	52	82
Chief Executive's Office	1,952	88	2,040	-15	-15	-9	-9
CENTRAL	17,093	1,264	18,357	694	934	1,226	1,216
Executive Director of Delivery	230	-4	226	0	0	0	0
Assistant Director: Customer Services & ICT	12,308	-3,294	9,014	-68	-68	-68	-68
Assistant Director: Property Services	-4,774	184	-4,590	185	185	195	195
Borough Solicitor	699	8	707	50	35	100	85
Head of Democratic & Registration Services	1,976	94	2,070	0	0	0	0
Assistant Director: Contract Services	10,245	258	10,503	485	520	585	620
DELIVERY	20,684	-2,754	17,930	652	672	812	832
Executive Director of People	1,681	11	1,692	83	97	83	97
Education and Learning	2,542	3,452	5,994	467	426	467	756
Children's Social Care	19,927	86	20,013	832	303	832	303
Contribution to Costs from Schools Budget	-468	0	-468	-7	-7	-7	-7
Commissioning	2,957	-91	2,866	-90	-56	-90	-56
Adult Social Care	20,818	140	20,958	1,216	857	1,374	799
Mental Health & Out of Hours	13,097	109	13,206	345	366	345	366
Early Help & Communities	4,783	-114	4,669	369	232	369	232
PEOPLE	65,337	3,593	68,930	3,215	2,218	3,373	2,490

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	-150	-150	-150	-150
Minimum & Voluntary Revenue Provisions	2,465	61	2,526	-240	-240	-240	-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	-285	-285	-125	-125
TOTAL	88,399	1,844	90,243	4,276	3,539	5,286	4,413
CORPORATE CONTINGENCY	2,750	-429	2,321	-2,261	-2,261	-2,261	-2,711
TOTAL	91,149	1,415	92,564	2,015	1,278	3,025	1,702
EARMARKED RESERVES	-8,482	-1,415	-9,897	0	0	0	0
OVERALL TOTAL	82,667	0	82,667	2,015	1,278	3,025	1,702
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



Cash Budget Summary – New Variances and Emerging Issues

The variances reported by directorates indicate expenditure above the approved budget (£1.278m), after taking into account the balance on the Corporate Contingency (£2.261m). Once Emerging Issues are included the potential overspend increases to £1.702m. This is an improvement of £0.737m on reported variances and £1.323m including Emerging Issues since last month.

CENTRAL

Significant Variances

Place, Planning and Regeneration

- The position on Development Control income continues to deteriorate and therefore £0.220m of the £0.440m additional pressure previously shown as an Emerging Issue has been moved to a reported variance. This increases the reported pressure to £0.550m.
- Within Reactive Maintenance, a reduction in the under spend due to a further allocation from the Commuted Sums reserve (-£0.110m) partly offset by an increase in the overspend on contracted costs (£0.020m).
- Based on income received to the end of August, the Look Out is currently projecting a net underachievement of income of £0.245m, £0.200m of which relates to catering. This is an increase of £0.110m compared to last month.

Resources

- Income received from Academies for HR services is projected to be under budget (£0.030m).

Significant Emerging Issues

Place, Planning and Regeneration

- The position on Development Control income continues to deteriorate and therefore £0.220m of the £0.440m additional pressure previously shown as an Emerging Issue has been moved to a reported variance (-£0.220m).

DELIVERY

Significant Variances

- An increase in the overspend on the Waste PFI primarily relating to a reduction in recycle income and the finalisation of tonnages relating to previous periods (£0.105m).
- Based on the latest data there will be underspends on the grounds maintenance (-£0.015m) and street cleansing (-£0.015m) contracted services costs.
- Additional income generated from Brown Bins (-£0.040m) and S106 arrangements in Legal Services (-£0.015m).

Significant Emerging issues

- No movement.

Cash Budget Summary – New Variances and Emerging Issues

The variances reported by directorates indicate expenditure above the approved budget (£1.278m), after taking into account the balance on the Corporate Contingency (£2.261m). Once Emerging Issues are included the potential overspend increases to £1.702m. This is an improvement of £0.737m on reported variances and £1.323m including Emerging Issues since last month.

PEOPLE

Significant Variances

- The forecast overspend on CLA placement costs (excluding care leavers and asylum seekers) has reduced by £0.495m to £0.103m. Most of the change arises from significant cost reductions on 4 high-cost packages.
- Adult Social Care - A favourable movement primarily resulting from the use of Market Sustainability & Improvement – Workforce Fund grant to meet pressures (-£0.374m).
- Mental Health - within CMHTOA client costs an increase in the adverse variance, primarily relating to Nursing over 65 and a net increase in placements (£0.209m), partly offset by the use of Market Sustainability & Improvement – Workforce Fund grant to meet pressures (-£0.176m).
- Early Help and Communities - An improvement in the overall position due to a decrease in the overspend on Housing management and Property (a reduction in property fees and an increase in income of -£0.111m) and an improvement in the Welfare Benefits position (-£0.026m).

Significant Emerging issues

- Responsibility for Fleet Management and Home to School Transport has transferred to the People Directorate. Initial calculations for the new academic year indicate a potential transport pressure of £0.330m.
- The potential loss of income from Health relating to s116 discharges from hospital has been reduced by £0.453m to £0.185m and that for Continuing Health Care funding has increased by £0.035m to £0.485 (-£0.418m).
- There are several sources of funding being explored to meet Adult Social Care pressures some of which have been updated this month:
 - All the additional Market Sustainability & Improvement – Workforce Fund grant received this year has now been used to reduce the overspend in report variances (-£0.550m). This reduces the Emerging Issue by £0.368m which assumed that only 2/3rds would be available;
 - It has now been assumed that all the £0.500m of inflation uplift funding can be applied to pressures rather than the 2/3rds previously included (-£0.167m).

Cash Budget Summary – New Variances and Emerging Issues

The variances reported by directorates indicate expenditure above the approved budget (£1.278m), after taking into account the balance on the Corporate Contingency (£2.261m). Once Emerging Issues are included the potential overspend increases to £1.702m. This is an improvement of £0.737m on reported variances and £1.323m including Emerging Issues since last month.

NON DEPARTMENTAL

Significant Variances and Emerging Issues

- Nothing new to report

CONTINGENCY

Significant Emerging Issues

- The new contract prices for gas and electricity with effect from 1 April 2023 have been applied to the updated volumes of energy consumption at the various council sites. A few queries are still being investigated but the saving is projected to be of the order of £0.450m. These are ring fenced budgets and therefore the saving, once confirmed, will be transferred to the Contingency Fund and declared as an underspend.

Section 3: Strategic Themes

Value for money

Action	30/09/2023				
	Stage	Percentage Complete	Due Date	Status	Current Update
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1.01.02 Spending is within the approved budget for this year	In Progress	30%	31/03/2024	▲	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 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. Corrective action is being taken to ensure a balanced position by the end of the year.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1.01.05 Facilitate the successful delivery of existing business change projects	In Progress	75%	31/03/2024	★	Projects are on track to be completed and closed by the end of November. Transition planning underway.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1.01.07 Ensure Business Change Savings are validated and achieved	In Progress	38%	31/03/2024	●	Approximately £0.210m of the £0.450m saving relating to the outcome focused reviews within Adult Social Care has been achieved.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1.01.09 Develop a new corporate business change programme.	In Progress	60%	31/12/2023	★	The new change programme has been developed as an internal enabler of the Council Plan to ensure the council is fit for the future. The new programmes of activity are being scoped and the programme will be adopted in November alongside the Council Plan by the Executive and Full Council.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1.02.02 Identify and engage low income households	In Progress	95%	31/03/2024	★	Additional actions were undertaken May - August 2023 resulting in over £30,000 of additional benefits, discounts and grants for households in Bracknell.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1.02.03 Review Workforce and Organisational Development Strategy	In Progress	75%	31/12/2023	★	The recruitment challenges faces the Council continue in a number of areas. Opportunities to explore apprenticeships to address some of these are being progressed including within the Planning Department and in social care/occupational therapy. The Leadership and Management programme is being rolled out and the staff recognition schemes are being reviewed.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1.02.06 Deploy Recruitment and Retention Strategy	In Progress	60%	31/03/2024	★	The new business change programme for Retention and Recruitment will create a greater focus across the Council and an updated strategy.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1.02.16 Deliver the action plan of the Customer Experience Strategy	In Progress	45%	31/03/2024	★	A survey to better understand visitor/customer contacts at the Time Square Reception and Community Hub areas was completed in July. The data is now being used to help inform the service design of these areas. Work continues to finalise the implementation of a visitor management system to be used at the Time Square Reception, the system will support the check-in arrangements for those visitors with pre-arranged meetings. Facilitated web-chat, via Customer Services, to support on-line interactions on the BFC website, is active on several of the web pages. A programme of work to now add automated web assistants has resulted in the web pages for waste and recycling using the automated assistants to support on-line enquiries. Over the coming months the automated assistants will be extended to other web pages. As part of the Netcall Liberty suite of products for supporting customer interactions, a module for managing emails is being implemented in Customer Services. This will result in emails being managed in a more systematic way.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1.02.17 Deliver the Digital and ICT Strategy	In Progress	71%	31/03/2024	★	Work continues improve cyber security as part of work sponsored by Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. We have begun adoption of more Microsoft security technology, including Windows Hello and Multi-Factor Authentication. We continue to optimise and adjust our Azure environment to support service needs whilst minimising costs. Continual improvement remains at the heart of our delivery with developments for out of the box deployments to reduce set up and handover times of equipment for new staff.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1.02.18 Implement adult social care Client Financial Management system for deputyship	Completed	100%	31/08/2023	✔	The module went live in August 23. Staff are now working on inputting the client data and will then focus on adopting the financial reconciliation process as part of business as usual.






<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1.02.20 Progress the implementation of Adult Social Care online financial assessment	In Progress	98%	31/12/2023	★	The option to complete financial assessments on line is now in place. Review of the initial launch of this will be undertaken to take on board and reflect feedback prior to the completion of this activity.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1.02.21 Implement adult social care Customer Portal for online referral and initial needs assessment	In Progress	95%	31/12/2023	★	The Adult Social Care Customer Portal will go live on the 10 October with an online referral. Frontline staff are currently being trained. Future development of the portal will be detailed for Phase 2.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1.03.01 Appraisal of Asset Management Plan	In Progress	75%	31/03/2024	★	Proposed asset management plan is in draft form for consultation.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1.03.03 Review of Council's Commercial Property Assets	In Progress	75%	31/03/2024	★	The Council's commercial and investment continue to perform well and the number of properties remain less than 3%
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1.03.05 Redevelop Commercial Centre	In Progress	60%	31/03/2024	★	Phase 1 works to create the new office block and 3 workshops completed. The works to create the new carpark and demolition all the building on the site under Phase 2 are schedule to commence in October and completed in March 2024.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1.04.05 To develop and work on the council's Asset Management Plan	In Progress	50%	31/03/2024	★	The Council Asset Management Plan is in drafted and currently being reviewed

Quarterly Indicators	30/09/2023			
	Last Quarter	This Quarter	Current Target	RAG
> L051 % of council tax collected	28.4%	54.9%	56.5%	★
> L053 % of Business Rates collected in year	45.6%	73.8%	59.5%	★
L257 Number of complaints received	156	127		n/a
> L261 Level of staff sickness absence	1.66	1.50		n/a
L391 % of vacant posts temporarily filled with agency staff	35%	30%	30%	★
L392 % of agency workers council wide	10%	10%	5%	▲
L395 Number of self-service transactions processed via customer account	19,774	22,479	21,250	★
L418 Customer visits to Time Square	0	8,404		n/a

Note: L418 no data recorded for Q1, a new automatic counter was installed at the beginning of July to provide data from Q2 onward.

Economic resilience

Action	30/09/2023				
	Stage	Due Date	Percentage Complete	Status	Comment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.01.01 Progress to adoption of the Local Plan targeted for 2023	In Progress	31/03/2024	88%	★	Consultation on the Main Modifications is expected to commence in late October and run for 6 weeks to early/mid December. Adoption anticipated Spring 2024.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.01.02 Develop a Supplementary Planning Document in relation to Affordable Housing supply	In Progress	31/03/2024	20%	●	No change. This work is unable to progress currently, whilst awaiting further modifications to the Local Plan. Recruitment to the vacant housing enabling officer post will probably be required in order to take this forward.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.02.02 Work on development of The Deck and the sustained viability of Town Centre	In Progress	31/03/2024	30%	●	The Deck scheme is not proceeding due to market conditions and commercial viability. Bracknell Regeneration Partnership (BRP) is exploring alternative options and meanwhile uses for the site.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.02.03 Develop an Arts, Heritage and Culture Strategy	In Progress	31/03/2024	85%	●	The strategy is in its final draft and will be ready for submission for approval late September 2023.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.02.04 Complete the initial work to develop a new Central library for the borough	Completed	31/03/2024	100%	✔	The new Central Library is on hold, pending progress on the Deck Project. As the objective was to create an initial scheme in estimate, and this has been done, this action has now been marked complete.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.02.05 Develop Masterplans for the Southern and Eastern Gateway sites in Bracknell Town Centre	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	●	Plans continue to be developed with with the addition of the High Street Car Park site being included within the documents. It is anticipated that the masterplans will be consulted on early in 2024.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.02.06 Review JV Business Plan	In Progress	31/03/2024	0%	★	JV Business plan is due for full Council March 2024.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.02.07 Ensure necessary approvals are in place to deliver the Coopers Hill and Market Street sites	In Progress	31/12/2023	80%	★	First homes on Coopers Hill are complete and remaining build are progressing well to agreed milestones. Market street, sewer move is due for completion by end September 2023 and build is progressing to agreed milestone dates.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.02.08 Complete options appraisal for future of High Street Car Park site	In Progress	31/12/2023	75%	★	A number of options are currently being considered for the High Street Car Park site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.03.01 Develop a strategy for governor recruitment through the governance reference group	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	★	For this quarter, as at 30.9.23, there are currently 86 governor vacancies, a 20% vacancy rate including all maintained schools and academies in BFC who purchase the Governor Services SLA (35 schools in total). This term our advertising and social media campaigns have focused on the webinar we are running with Governors for Schools on 18th October. We will be sharing the benefits of being a school governor and how the role can boost your own personal development as well as the lives of children across Bracknell Forest. Adverts have appeared in Town & Country magazine and extra, as well as across all social media platforms.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.04.02 Deliver the work programme set out by the Economic Skills and Development Partnership	In Progress	31/03/2024	75%	★	Economic Skills and Development Partnership (ESDP) actively supporting the preparation of a new economic strategy and skills hub. Autumn event combined with main ESDP meeting on 17 October.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.04.03 Provide support for Local Economy	In Progress	31/03/2024	80%	★	The new economic strategy includes actions targeting support for neighborhood and local centres. Asset review underway to identify opportunities to support local centres.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.04.05 Prepare and publish a borough-wide Economic Strategy	In Progress	31/03/2024	75%	★	Strategy is now drafted and is ready for agreement by the Executive for public consultation.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.05.05 Commission a feasibility analysis for the Business Improvement District	In Progress	31/03/2024	25%	●	Bracknell Business Improvement District (BID) leading the selection process. Specification issued to prospective suppliers. The study is due to commence by the end of 2023.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.05.07 Support the Bracknell Improvement District	In Progress	31/03/2024	90%	★	Billing complete and further reminder notices sent at request of BIDS board.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.06.02 Establish a pilot for a retail pop-up scheme	Completed	30/09/2023	100%	✔	Craft COOP successfully established and launched
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.06.03 Fund the further development of Thames Valley Berkshire Growth Hub	Completed	30/09/2023	100%	✔	UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation used to deliver start-up and high-growth programme.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.07.05 Highway improvements for sustainable travel	Completed	30/09/2023	100%		Further meetings have been held with Active Travel England who have been invited to Bracknell to walk and cycle round various sites and discuss future provision through the Active Travel Fund. Discussions will also be held with a wider group to share best practice ideas for promoting walking and cycling as we begin preparing for our new Local Transport Plan.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.07.06 Implement Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan	In Progress	31/03/2024	35%		The latest Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) was adopted in 2022. The principles of the plan have been integrated into the planned capital maintenance work programmes delivered by the Highways & Transport Division. Annual government grant funding for highway maintenance has been static for some years and so the impact of inflation and past under-investment is creating a challenge for local authorities in delivering their HIAMPs effectively.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.07.07 Secure grants for transport and infrastructure	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%		Government grants for Integrated Transport and Highway Maintenance have been fully allocated across the Highways and Transport work programme for 2023/24. Further grants have been provisionally allocated (subject to bid submissions) for Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure, the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Active Travel initiatives.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.08.02 Infrastructure Funding Statement	In Progress	31/03/2024	71%		The Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) for year 2022/23 is currently under production and does not (by regulation) need to be published until the end of the following calendar year, so in this case for the IFS 2022/23 by 31 December 2023. the IFS 2022/23 is about 71% completed so is well on track for compliance.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2.08.03 Completion of S106 planning agreements	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%		Seven Section 106 agreements have been completed during this period, this is around the average.

Quarterly Indicators	30/09/2023			
	Last Quarter	This Quarter	Current Target	RAG
L241 Income from CIL receipts	£1,222,707	£936,663		n/a
L268 % of working age people who are unemployed	2.9%	3.3%		n/a
L269 % of working age population in employment	81.9%	80.9%		n/a
L271 % of borough covered by superfast broadband	98.6	98.0	99.0	★
L284 Number of homes given planning permission	197	9		n/a
> L286 % of planning appeals dismissed	67%	100%	66%	★
> L356 % of major planning applications determined within timescales	100%	89%	85%	★
> L357 % of minor planning applications determined within timescales	84%	96%	90%	★
> L358 % of other planning applications determined within timescales	91%	85%	90%	★
L442 Vacancies on school governing boards	17%	20%	18%	★

Education and skills

Action	30/09/2023				
	Stage	Due Date	Percentage Complete	Status	Comment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.01.02 Schools estate is maintained to a good standard	In Progress	31/03/2024	90%	★	Schools projects are 90% complete with minor works to be carried out during October half term.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.02.02 Support for schools with standards and effectiveness partners	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	★	Standards and Effectiveness Partners (STEPS) continued to work with 24 schools across the first part of the autumn term. Support and challenge focussed on an evaluation of outcomes in 2022, an evaluation of school development planning, and joint activity with leaders to evaluate the quality of education in each school. The STEPs team is now fully staffed and able to offer a comprehensive programme of training in addition to the termly visits included in the SLA. The four schools of concern who are subject to a Standards Monitoring Board have been provided with additional support from the STEPs, and are all making sufficient progress.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.02.03 Promote best practice in schools	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	★	At the end of the summer term, teachers in Year 2 and Year 6 took part in cluster moderation meetings to complement statutory moderation, providing an opportunity to share practice and improve assessment at statutory end of key stages. Two (Early Years Foundation Stage) EYFS network meetings took place at the end of the summer term, and included the sharing of best practice case studies both nationally and locally. A full programme of network meetings is planned for the autumn term focusing on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Pupil Premium Grant (PPG), English, mathematics, EYFS, school sport and RE. The SEND Peer Review Programme has been an excellent opportunity for sharing practice, with 23 schools taking part. Each school is currently planning a 1-1 coaching session with one of the two nationally recognised SEND specialists. A number of articles have been shared via the schools' newsletter including best practice showcased within the new Department of Education (DfE) Reading Framework, and details of the national subject associations.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.02.04 Retain good School Ofsted ratings	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	★	The proportion of schools judged to be good or better now stands at 97%. The only school inspected since June is College Hall Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) which was judged to be inadequate in July. The school was issued with a Declaration of Concern by the local authority in January 2023, and is subject to significant additional local authority support. All other schools remain good.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.03.01 Establish an education sub-group of the ESDP	Completed	30/09/2023	100%	✔	Economic Skills & Development Partnership (ESDP) sub group has met to progress key projects including Skills & Training Hub as part of UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.04.03 Undertake a comprehensive review of all youth services	Completed	31/03/2024	100%	✔	The youth review is complete and recommendations are being considered by Department Management Team. The youth strategy will be going to consultation imminently.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.04.04 Review Youth Justice Services	In Progress	31/03/2024	51%	★	The Youth Justice Strategy is completed in accordance with the National Youth Justice Framework and is progressing to sign off. The service has engaged with the Youth Service review to consider any future alignments and that review is now out for circulation. The self assessment action plan continues to progress.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.05.01 Continue to increase the number of apprenticeship roles throughout the council	In Progress	31/03/2024	80%	★	Apprenticeships are being offered in Planning, which is an area where traditionally posts have been hard to fill with two apprenticeship opportunities being provided. The new teaching apprenticeship is supporting three unqualified teachers to attain qualified teacher status. Additionally, three entry level apprentices aged between 16 and 18 are undertaking Level 2 or 3 programmes to support teaching and learning in the classroom teaching and learning in the classroom. The use of the apprenticeship levy to develop our existing employees into hard to fill posts also continues to be success with two Social Care and one Occupational Therapy degree apprenticeship being funded through the levy from September 2023. This is the first time we have offered the Occupational Therapy apprenticeship, which is a 4-year degree course. It is hoped that this is successful and can be repeated in 2024.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.05.02 Effectively use the apprenticeship levy	In Progress	31/03/2024	70%	●	Whilst the number of apprenticeships are increasing through the Council, including the number who have already successfully achieved their qualifications, the level of spend against the levy means that we still have some way to go to ensure true value for money.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.05.09 Support school leaders to recruit and effectively manage their workforce	In Progress	31/03/2024	60%	★	The work to support the primary teaching pool has provided 20 newly qualified teachers across our schools. Apprenticeships will provide qualified teachers and qualified support staff.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.06.01 Support the efficacy of early years professionals	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	★	<p>The data from EYFS assessments Good Level of Development (GLD) from last academic year is once again higher than national average in Bracknell Forest with 70% children achieving the desired outcomes. Schools are demonstrating a consistent improvement in these outcomes year on year with a 1.9% increase on 2021/2022 data. These assessments are a culmination of achievements not only from their first year at school, but also from the high-quality provision they receive from nurseries, pre-schools and childminders, who give children such a strong foundation to their learning. This year seven schools have bought into the early years Service Level Agreement (SLA). A further four schools have bought in support visits or requested bespoke early years training from the Standards Team. A busy schedule of events has been planned for the year including four network meetings, a moderation meeting and a conference with two national experts presenting workshops on science and woodwork in early years classrooms.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.07.01 Support care leavers to access education, training or employment	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	★	<p>At the end of September 2023, 42 of all 91 care leavers were Not in Education, Employment or Training or NEET (46.15%). 65 of the 91 care leavers are aged 19, 20 and 21 - 33 of the care leavers in this age bracket are NEET (50.76%). Of the 33 NEET 19–21-year-olds, 15 of these are NEET due to Illness or disability and 4 are NEET due to Pregnancy/Parenting, leaving 18 able to access education, employment or training (EET). Support to become EET is provided as an additional service through the Virtual School and Elevate in partnership with the Leaving Care Service including, a monthly newsletter, weekly Careers, Information, Advice and Guidance appointments at Braccan Walk on Thursday's and the Look Ahead sites on Tuesdays.</p> <p>The John Lewis Partnership (JLP) are also providing support to care leavers - including the Work Ready programmes; sessions for drop-ins and tours as well as work experience for their Warehouse and other work experience opportunities. The JLP are also exploring apprenticeship opportunities for care experienced young people.</p> <p>Additionally, we have been running NEET projects for young people which have proven to be effective - the aim will be to continue to provide this level of NEET support whilst undertaking procurement. Other support in relation to providing maths and English tuition and employability sessions is also being considered.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.08.01 Establish a culture of high expectations for all children	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	★	<p>Inclusion continues to be a very high priority for the Standards and Effectiveness Team. The first of the SENDCo newsletters for this year has been distributed to all SENDCos directly and to the wider community via the Education and Learning newsletter. This edition focused on our SEND Review Programme and the planned upcoming 1-1 coaching sessions for the 24 schools engaged in the programme and the third engagement days on the 3 November. Other areas of focus include an update from the SEND Statutory services, adaptive teaching, the role of the SENDCo in developing teacher practice, as well as signpost to the new SEND Strategy, and other programmes and resources for schools.</p> <p>A SEND & Inclusion Group has been developed incorporating members of the Education and Learning (E&L) and Early Help services to ensure a robust programme of inclusion training is in place that reflects the need within schools and that focus on the SEND Strategy, E&L Strategy and the Written Statement of Action (WSOA).</p> <p>The SENDCo Forum and Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) Network are in their planning phases and will include focus on key new guidance and evidence-based research.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.08.02 Support transition to next stage of learning	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	●	<p>Response to the first year of the working party was slightly disappointing, with only two out of the six schools taking part carrying out the full planned activity. Actions to relaunch this piece of work are planned for the latter part of the autumn term. There is now a valuable and transferable body of research that has been conducted and this can be utilised to create a spring board for the future plan. A questionnaire for pupils in year 6 was drawn up and this can be used toward the end of this academic year. A year 7 questionnaire has been drafted and this could be rolled out across the secondary schools in the autumn term (2023), with the permission of headteachers. The results from this would then be used as a base to formulate the next phase.</p> <p>Initial discussions have been undertaken to improve transition for SEND pupils into Reception from early years settings. This project is currently being scoped as part of the Delivering Better Value project. Another possible course of action is to garner support from the all-through setting, and multi-academy trust settings where there are primary and secondary schools.</p>

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.08.04 Develop SEND Improvement Plan	In Progress	31/12/2023	69%	●	78 out of the 113 actions in the written statement have been completed. The third quarter monitoring report was submitted to the September Executive meeting following the formal monitoring meeting with DFE and NHS England. The integrated therapies report for the procurement of specialist integrated therapies across East Berkshire was agreed at Executive in September. The Bucklers Park site was formally agreed for us to build the new independent free Autistic Spectrum Condition school.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.08.05 Complete review of Home to School Transport Services	Completed	30/09/2023	100%	✔	Review completed, as reported at end of Q1.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.08.06 Co-produce a strategy for all social work services	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	●	A number of co-production sessions have taken place with the Parent Carer Forum (PCF) which have been fruitful, and there is a partially drafted strategy, however the PCF have requested that we reach out further to other stakeholders, e.g. SENCOs and FSAs within school settings. Discussion is taking place with regard to extending the deadline for sign off of this document.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.08.07 Co-produce a SEND strategy.	Completed	30/09/2023	100%	✔	The SEND strategy 2023-2026 has now been completed and published as part of our Local Offer. It was co-produced with parents and our partners, including schools, health colleagues and social care.

Quarterly Indicators	30/09/2023			
	Last Quarter	This Quarter	Current Target	RAG
L196 Number of school children engaged with science through a visit to The Look Out Discovery Centre	130	52	50	★
L205 % of EHCPs issued within 20 week statutory timeframe	45%	42%	50%	★
L206 Number of new EHCPs issued	55	71	0	n/a
L394 % of staff that have undertaken apprenticeship training	2.8%	3.6%		★
L402 % of care leavers aged 19-21 years who are NEET	63%	51%	25%	▲
L403 % of care leavers aged 19-21 years who are in touch with LA	96%	95%	89%	★
> L139 % of all schools rated good or better	100%	97%	95%	★
> L139 % of maintained primary schools rated good or better	100%	100%	100%	★
> L139 % of maintained secondary schools rated good or better	100%	50%	100%	▲
> L139 % of academy primary schools rated good or better	100%	100%	100%	★
> L139 % of academy secondary schools rated good or better	100%	100%	100%	★

Note: There were four annual indicators reported at Q1 that are not due to be reported in this Q2 report and are therefore not included here.

L139 – there are two maintained secondary schools in the borough, which means if one school does not meet the good or outstanding target, this significantly skews the data for this measure.

Caring for you and your family

Action	30/09/2023				
	Stage	Due Date	Percentage Complete	Status	Comment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.01.01 Increase participation in sports, leisure and cultural activities	In Progress	31/03/2024	80%	★	The next steps in the process will be driven via the new Sports and Leisure strategy. In the meantime, works to the Bracknell Leisure Centre are on going, with new sports being added to the estate, replacing the car wash with new exciting new sport pitch
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.01.02 Implement and monitor the key actions set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy	In Progress	31/03/2024	95%	★	Progress against each priority and the 51 actions were presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) on 6 September. The strategy is a 4 year strategy and actions are spread across the 4 year period. Of the 51 actions, 8 are completed, 21 are on track, (green 56.8%) 7 are delayed (13.7% amber) , 2 are at risk (4% red) and 13 are not due to start this year. The actions that are delayed (amber) have been aligned to other areas of work, so the dates have been amended. They are not at risk of not being delivered. The at risk (red) projects are based on Pan Berkshire Suicide Prevention work and re-establishment of the Health Protection Forum. The risk and any changes required to the plan will be reported to the HWB in December for approval
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.01.04 Deliver the financial hardship action plan	In Progress	31/03/2024	77%	★	The delivery of the action plan is a cross-council effort, with a range of teams involved in leading the actions. A total of 45 actions were committed to the action plan. Of these, 18 have been completed, 17 are currently in progress and on-track, four are in progress but behind schedule and six have not commenced. In addition to this, a campaign for 100 days of extended financial hardship support has been completed this quarter. A review of the action plan is currently underway to assess the progress and ensure appropriate actions in place for residents ahead of winter. The updated plan will be presented to Executive in November.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.01.05 Deliver the pilot first phase of "Thriving Communities" programme	In Progress	31/03/2024	30%	●	The briefing of key stakeholders on the programme was completed this quarter. The focus now is on the recruitment into programme roles and organising a community engagement event with organisations in the pilot area.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.01.06 Develop a CYP(Children and Young People) Plan	Completed	31/03/2024	100%	✔	CYP Plan is now complete. An action plan has been adopted by the CYP Partnership Board and agreed by leads for each priority action. This will now become routine business of the Board as highlight reports updates on strategic actions will be provided in each meeting from November onwards. A performance dashboard will track progress of key indicators of success.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.01.07 Develop People Strategy	In Progress	31/03/2024	60%	●	Work has progressed to align the development of the people strategy with the emerging council plan. Priorities are in development.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.03.01 Develop the annual integrated health and care plan for Bracknell Forest.	Completed	31/03/2024	100%	✔	The Health & Care plan has now been drafted and will be presented for consideration at the Bracknell Forest Place Committee during October 2023. This follows collaboration between council officers and colleagues from the Integrated Care Board.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.06.03 Facilitate the delivery of new Community Hub in Warfield	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	●	The design study has been completed. Supporting Warfield Parish Council to finalise their business case for operating the hub. Further work to do to complete the estimated cost plan and agree the funding strategy in partnership with Warfield Parish Council as well as other strands of the feasibility work relating to land ownership.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.06.04 Facilitate new Bucklers Park Community Hub	In Progress	31/03/2024	75%	★	The new operator for the hub will be Age Concern Bracknell Forest. The agreement of the lease and a mobilisation activity is underway. The hub was transferred to the council's ownership in September.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.06.05 Finalising management arrangements for Binfield Community Hub	In Progress	31/03/2024	75%	★	Good progress being made in finalising the lease for the community centre with Binfield Parish Council. The lease should be completed early in Q3 with a period of mobilisation before the community centre is opened.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.06.13 Support the set-up of new community facilities and services	In Progress	31/03/2024	75%	★	Bridgewell has had it's Business Case confirmed as viable and work on the specification has commenced. A procurement model for Warfield has been proposed, but a lot of preparatory work (e.g. the completion of a development agreement with the Parish Council) must be completed before the procurement can commence. The Warfield procurement is anticipated to commence at the end of 2023

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.07.01 Family hub services expansion and development of multi-disciplinary teams	In Progress	31/12/2023	95%	★	<p>Early Help (EH) are currently working with partners via working party groups to achieve the following from the EHSG, strategy and plan. Partnership KPI's measures, Shared Practice and Workforce Development, Supporting Families Programme Development Group, Review feedback mechanisms and/or formalised processes for engagement with service users across the partnership, develops a common understanding of the thresholds of need, contextual and transitional safeguarding and to ensure that services have a range of information, advice and guidance is available in multiple social and web-based media platforms. These will be progressed once membership has been confirmed following the next EHPN meeting on October 2023.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.10.03 Relaunch social prescribing and primary prevention programmes	In Progress	30/09/2023	98%	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the last 12 months the social prescribers worked with over 200 clients and carried out approximately 3,000 interactions with clients (face to face, virtual and phone). Each full-time prescriber works with around 30 clients at any one time (part time around 18 clients). • Social prescribers have regular presence in frontline organisations where cross referrals can be made for residents who would benefit from the service, for example Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) Citizens Advice and community centres. • Social prescribers gather soft intelligence from residents about needs and barriers experienced by some of our most vulnerable, older residents. This has been particularly important in the Covid recovery period and to assist with understanding the gaps in provision of support locally. • They set up groups such as the mobility group for people with mobility issues to meet regularly, arts and crafts groups and encourage clients to join the walks and other physical activity groups to increase social interactions and keep well. • The social prescribers have been working to target the relatively deprived wards; a high proportion of referrals have recently come from residents in the Great Hollands area. <p>What is the impact of the service?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of the case management data demonstrates a range of outcomes achieved for clients through their engagement with the service: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ An improvement in wellbeing for most clients (85%) following their engagement with a social prescriber (MyCAW wellbeing assessment). ◦ 63% of clients saw an improvement to their overall wellbeing (MyCAW measure of wellbeing and loneliness combined). ◦ Over one third of clients reported an improvement to their loneliness score by 30%. ◦ Average satisfaction with the service was 86%. • Furthermore, comments from clients also showed the following outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Self-reported increase in self-esteem and confidence, sense of control and empowerment. ◦ Greater awareness of local services and support that can be accessed. ◦ Improvements in psychological or mental wellbeing, and positive mood. ◦ Self-reported improvements in physical health and a healthier lifestyle. ◦ Increases in sociability, communication skills and making social connections. ◦ Reduction in social isolation and loneliness, support for those who are marginalised. ◦ Improvements in motivation and meaning in life, providing hope and optimism about the future. ◦ Acquisition of learning, new interests and skills including artistic skill. ◦ Being outside and more in touch with the natural environment and green open space.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.11.02 Schools service level agreement for PE	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	★	<p>The last quarter has been predominately reporting to national partners and planning phase. The academic year 23/24 has been planned and the start of term has been well received by schools. A well-attended subject leader meeting to set out the years priorities and talk through the recent national announcements and strategies has taken place. With only a small window of the school term available, the delivery aspect has still been successful by widening plans and offering broader opportunities sooner to schools. This academic year is very much about stabilising our popular offer.</p>

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.11.03 Develop a Sports and Leisure strategy for the borough.	In Progress	31/03/2024	40%	★	Strategic Leisure have been appointed as consultants to support developing the sports & Leisure strategy. We have worked with them over the last few months to pull together a plan and final specification. Consultation begins on the 25th September. A Snapshot video has been produced which gives an overview of the project and communication has started.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.11.04 Develop a programme for the replacement of the Bracknell Leisure Centre and assets	In Progress	31/03/2024	0%	★	Any replacement programme will come from the development of the sports and leisure strategy. This work is currently underway.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.12.02 Delivery capital improvements for open spaces	In Progress	31/03/2024	25%	★	Capital projects progressed as planned, including completion of Horseshoe Lake parking and storage works, tennis court resurface at Westmorland Park, and funding issued to parish / town councils for work at The Elms and Fernbank Road.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.12.03 Promoting Active Travel	Completed	30/09/2023	100%	★	'Dr Bike' events, where people can get their cycles checked over by trained mechanics and have basic improvements made, were held in both July and September for staff in BID organisations in the Southern and Western business areas. Two further Dr Bikes were held in September for residents in the Forest Park and Winkfield/North Ascot areas when close to 30 cycles were seen. Also at these events the expansion of the Eco Rewards scheme to include walking and cycling routes on the approaches to Martins Heron rail station was promoted. The events were very popular with all who attended and generated lots of positive social media posts. Council officers attended six of the Summer of Fun events coordinated by the parish and town councils to promote walking and cycling, and representatives from Eco Rewards also attended. Officers spoke to many residents, handing out cycle maps and giving advice and support to allow more people to make active choices. At several of the events partners from Avanti set up cycle obstacle courses for children to practise their skill. 'Cycle September', a month-long challenge to encourage people to ride as much as possible and log their rides to win prizes and help their employers top leader-boards, was widely promoted. Seventeen local workplaces took part in the challenge and over 1,800 cycle trips were recorded – a 20% increase on the same event last year. New pedestrian crossing facilities outside Owlsmoor Primary and Edgbarrow Secondary Schools were installed over the summer holidays. These facilities will provide safe crossing points and encourage more walking journeys to school. Officers are preparing a bid to secure £78,000 of Active Travel England funding to build two further crossings on the approaches to Brakenhale secondary school and King's Academy Binfield.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.13.01 Coordinate and lead on the work of the Bracknell Forest Civilian Military Partnership	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	★	Further work has been undertaken with the Royal Military Academy's (RMAS) Station Staff Officer to update the partnership's terms of reference and action plan. The new BFC Armed Forces Champion has been appointed and an initial introductory meeting planned at RMAS for Q3.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4.13.03 Support the delivery of a Berkshire Civilian Military Partnership	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	★	Further meetings of the Berkshire Armed Forces Officer leads have taken place to update the partnership's membership and action plan. These will be reviewed at next meeting of the Berkshire Civilian Military Partnership taking place on the 4 October where a new Chair for the partnership will also be appointed.

Monthly Indicators	30/09/2023			
	Last Month	This Month	Current Target	RAG
> L346 Average caseload for Family Safeguarding Model	18	16	16	★
> L385 Rate per 10k of children on Child Protection Plans	48.2	40.2	43.0	n/a
> L386 Rate per 10k of Children Looked After	55.7	53.5	50.0	n/a

Quarterly Indicators	30/09/2023			
	Last Quarter	This Quarter	Current Target	RAG
L003 Number of visits to leisure facilities managed by Everyone Active	334,424	378,717	325,000	★
L005 Number of visits by customers under the active communities or health and well-being programme	2,217	1,297	625	★
L404 Number of children and young people visits to leisure facilities managed by Everyone Active	102,181	141,647	92,500	★
L405 Number of older people visits to leisure facilities managed by Everyone Active	21,156	23,263	20,750	★
L412 Number per 100,000 of first-time entrants to criminal justice system	29.8	29.8		n/a
L414 % of children who achieve a BMI Z-score reduction	0%	0%	0%	★
L415 % of smokers who have quit at 4 weeks in the quarter (co-verified)	52%	52%	30%	★
L416 % of smokers who have quit at 4 weeks in the year to date (co-verified)	66%	66%	30%	★
L436 Number of visits by customers with a disability to leisure facilities managed Everyone Active	4,056	1,297	875	★
L446 Impact of Social Prescribing as a primary prevention programme on reducing loneliness	84	60	30	★

Note: Data for L415 & L416 is provided by an external agency, after the CPOR report is published. Therefore, data for Q2 reflects the latest available data (Q1).

Protecting and enhancing our environment

Action	30/09/2023				
	Stage	Due Date	Percentage Complete	Status	Comment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.01.05 To work with the Town and Parish Councils to effectively manage the land assets	In Progress	31/03/2024	75%	★	Birch Hill toilets have now been transferred to the Town Council.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.01.07 Establish management partnership arrangements with The Land Trust	In Progress	31/03/2024	80%	★	Successful ongoing partnership arrangements, including progress to link Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG) partnership operation with opening of Community Hub.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.02.01 Green development of our waste collection services	In Progress	31/03/2024	60%	★	95% of the borough's flats have now been assessed to see if they meet the criteria for food waste collection. Completing the assessments has been the main focus through the last 3 months. At the end of quarter 2 just over 1000 flats have food waste collections.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.02.02 Educate, enable and encourage residents to maximise their recycling	In Progress	31/03/2024	80%	★	Quarter 2 is the busiest quarter of the year for community events, the waste and recycling team attended the eight Summer of Fun events that are run across the borough by the Town and Parish Councils. The team have an activity for children to participate in that encourages them to put the right waste in the right bin and the team are on hand to help and advise residents on minimising waste and increasing recycling. On 30th September a recycling and reuse event was held, small electricals and clothing were collected for reuse and recycling, a total of 2.2 tonnes of electricals and 895kg of clothing was collected. Correct recycling and reducing the wrong items in the blue recycling bins is an ongoing focus, the collection crews are vigilant in checking blue bins before emptying and if bins do contain the wrong items they won't be emptied and an information tag is left on the bin. If the misuse of the recycling bin persists then the residents of the property will be contacted by the Waste and Recycling Officers.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.02.03 Implement the Strong's Heath / London Road facilities in line with Climate Change Strategy	In Progress	31/03/2024	41%	●	The design phase is in progress. Pre-planning application advice has been received and currently in evaluation. Changes to the proposed scheme will be needed before being submitted to the Planning authority for agreement to the scheme
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.03.01 Implement parking bay schemes	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	★	The residential parking improvement schemes for 2023/24 are progressing through to the Planning Application stage and, subject to approval, will be programmed for construction.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.05.02 Progress phase two Transformation enhancements of The Look Out	In Progress	03/03/2024	25%	★	Work to progress landlord discussions continued as fully as possible.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.06.01 Climate Change Action Plan and Strategy	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	●	The Annual Report was presented at September's council. A climate change summit took place in July at which community representatives were received and will now form the new Joint Community Board (JCB). A Councillor summary issue has been issued, detailing actions taken over the last 12 months. All other objectives are being delivered in line with strategy objectives.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.06.07 Improve energy efficiency for low income households	In Progress	31/03/2024	59%	●	The outcomes from both central government funded home improvement schemes - Local Authority Delivery phase 2 (LAD2) and Sustainable Warmth are now known. The former scheme assisted 5 home owners with a total of approximately £13,000 worth of funding; the latter assisted 29 home owners with a total of approximately £285,000 worth of funding. Part of the Sustainable Warmth scheme targeted off gas-grid dwellings specifically - the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG). Any homes potentially identified to benefit from HUG funding have been rolled forwards for potential inclusion in the next stage (HUG2), with public promotion of that scheme expected during Q3. The Public Health funded Warm, Safe and Well scheme saw a further two householders benefit during Q2. The scheme is currently closed to new enquiries whilst the climate change and sustainable living team go through the process of contacting all residents who expressed initial interest in the scheme in an effort to spend the remaining funding. The processes for identifying potential residents to benefit from either Energy Company Obligation phase 4 (ECO4) or Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS) funding are complex. The council has published a Statement of Intent outlining eligibility criteria and is in the process of trying to simplify signposting our residents towards potential works via either of these routes.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.06.08 Identify suitable alternative low carbon highway construction materials	Completed	30/09/2023	100%	✔	The 2023 summer carriageway re-surfacing programme will use warm mix surfacing materials (as opposed to hot) which reduces the carbon footprint. Joint work with our highways contractor Ringway is underway to identify further low carbon materials which can be practically included within routine work highway programmes from 2024/25 onwards. A recent joint workshop has set out a series of related tasks to support this work.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.06.09 Implement the "Greening our energy" asset management programme	In Progress	31/03/2024	80%	★	To date 6 out of the 8 greening works projects complete. The remaining 2 projects are currently on site and due to be completed in early Jan. The project to replace the lighting in The Avenue Car Park with LED light fittings is schedule to commence in mid October and to be completed in March 2024.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.06.10 Review procurement approaches to climate change, social value and alternative funding routes	In Progress	29/03/2024	10%	●	A National Management Trainee has been assigned to support the development of BFC social value targets. This will involve consultation with officers, the community and a working group of Members. Confirmation of the Policy and BFC targets will be done at the January session of the Governance & Audit Committee, with organisational training in Q4.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.07.04 Install Electric Vehicle chargepoints	In Progress	31/03/2024	90%	★	32 Electric Vehicle public charging points were identified for installation in 2022/23 (within community car parks) following a successful bid for Government grant funding. The final installations are due imminently. Further provisional government funding has been allocated to local authorities for 2024/25 and market testing is underway to identify candidate sites within the borough.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.07.06 Reduce staff car usage and promote green travel initiatives	In Progress	31/03/2024	10%	●	The opportunities for green travel initiatives are still be reviewed as part of the climate change work

Note: There are five annual indicators for this theme that are due to be reported in the Q4 report.

Communities

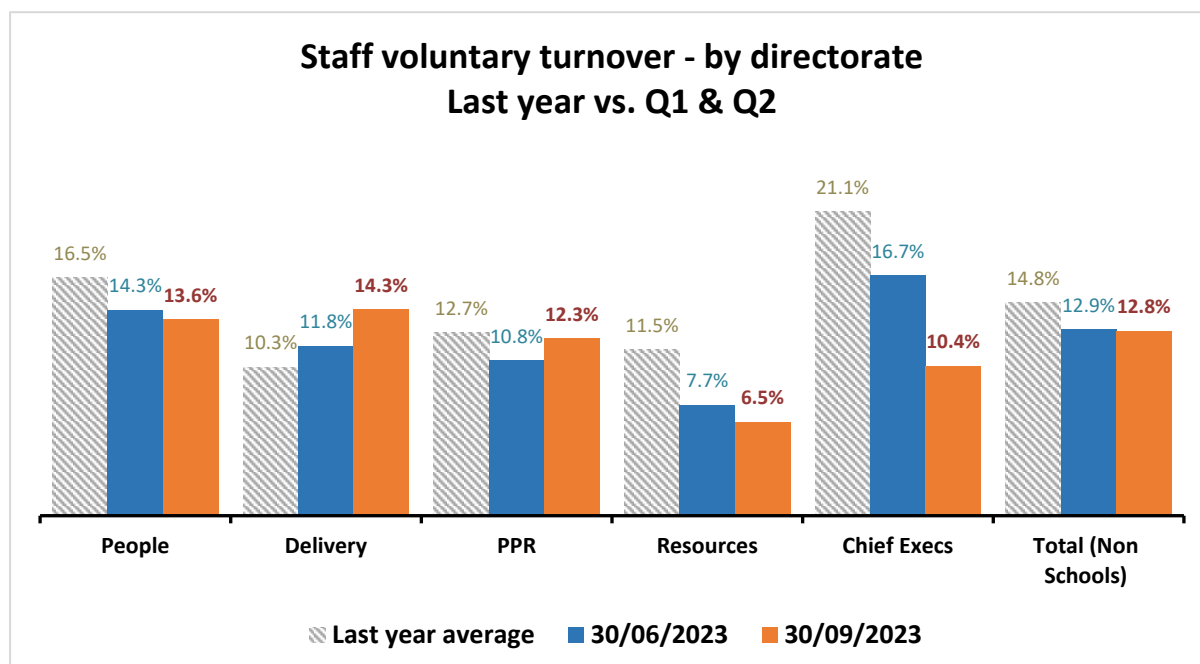
Action	30/09/2023				
	Stage	Due Date	Percentage Complete	Status	Comment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6.01.01 Undertake health check and action plan for retail centres	In Progress	31/03/2024	25%	★	Linked to draft economic strategy - action plan to measure health of retail centres. Monitoring to be in place by Q4 2023/24.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6.02.01 Support for Community Associations	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	★	Ongoing advice and guidance is provided to the community centres and support provided to community associations with governance, finance issues, lease renewals and recruitment of volunteers. The Engagement Team continues to liaise with Property Services and other service areas to resolve specific community centre issues. Regular on going site visits are undertaken with Community Associations Network meetings held quarterly.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6.02.03 Develop the offer in Libraries to support the Adults and Children's agendas	In Progress	31/03/2024	85%	★	The Library Service is working in partnership with Children's Services to support the Dolly Parton Imagination Library scheme for children from low income families. We are also working with the Financial Hardship team to offer support to low income families by offering free basic skills and IT tuition in partnership with the Good Things Foundation, by offering free tablets for loan. The Library Service is also now a designated National Databank, offering free data sim cards to eligible clients who are unable to pay for data access or mobile phone calls.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6.03.06 Develop harm in the community strategy	In Progress	31/03/2024	53%	★	Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) are now leading on the next stage of the serious youth violence strategy that is being over seen by the serious youth violence strategic group.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6.03.07 Review and publicly consult on the 2023 Community Safety Partnership priorities	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	●	The full Strategic Needs Assessment of crime and disorder has been paused while the statutory Serious Violence Duty is prioritised. It is due to be completed by 31 March 2024 at which stage partners and residents will be consulted on priorities for the 2024-2027 period.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6.03.09 Develop a Serious Violence and Exploitation Strategy and Delivery Plan	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	●	The Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment (SV SNA) is nearing completion and a first draft of the SV Strategy is due to be completed on 16 October. Partnership and Council-approval will begin on 19 October.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6.04.01 Support the development of South Hill Park Trust's Arts and Culture offer.	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	★	The Executive Director is now the client for South Hill Park Trust Board and an active member of the Board (Observer status). Capital works have been authorised for the site and the council is working with the Trust on upgrading their heading and cooling systems
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6.07.01 To provide property support for the initial phases of development of Opladen Way	In Progress	31/03/2024	30%	★	First stage of the procurement complete and 3 organisations selected to be invited to submit a tender. Full Planning application submitted on the 6 Sept and detailed design currently being prepared. Project currently on programme
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6.07.03 Make arrangements to secure the closure of Downshire Homes Ltd	In Progress	31/03/2024	85%	★	The Executive approved the proposed approach to effecting the closure of Downshire Homes Limited and transferring its property assets to the council on 17 October. The process is expected to take around 6 months to complete.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6.09.02 Develop new allocations policy	In Progress	31/03/2024	75%	★	A paper due to be presented to the Executive in November.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6.10.04 Increase community groups supporting the half marathon	Completed	30/06/2023	100%	✔	The May event went ahead as planned with a number of community groups providing support to the race around the course. The event was very successful although a lessons learnt meeting has already taken place to identify improvements for next year.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6.10.07 Cultural events in Bracknell Town Centre	Completed	30/09/2023	100%	✔	The Bracknell Community Day event was staged in Bond Square in July along with a programme of summer events successfully delivered including a South Hill Park collaboration 'Yellow Brick Road' in August with more than 1,800+ and the annual Summer Proms in August.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6.10.08 Support community engagement with and integration of displaced people who arrive in borough	In Progress	31/03/2024	85%	★	The Migration Team are now sitting within Early Help and Communities. The service are working to ensure that they are providing support to all displaced people arriving into the borough. There are actions added to the SEND written statement of action regarding SEN support Migration children. Now that the team have moved into Early Help we are working to ensure that there is a robust partnership offer for Migration families as they integrate into BF. A specialist youth group and family sessions have been arranged and have taken place as part of their integration.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.019 Support maintenance of high levels of cohesion and the integration of our diverse communities.	In Progress	31/03/2024	50%	★	The Community Cohesion and Engagement Partnership has continued to meet quarterly and considered a range of community issues and the Hate Crime Action Plan. Work has started in planning next year's community day and Pride event with a focus on co producing the events jointly with communities. Voluntary Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) groups and local businesses. Engagement continues with a range of local community groups both through formal meetings and on going engagement to inform and support the council's activities in understanding and supporting local communities.

Quarterly Indicators	30/09/2023			
	Last Quarter	This Quarter	Current Target	RAG
L185 Overall crime	2,058	2,077		n/a
L406 Number of visits to libraries	79,381	169,892	55,000	★
L421 Number of community events held in libraries	494	885	350	★
L422 Number of educational events held in libraries	126	174	100	★
L425 % of homelessness preventions	58%	57%	58%	★

Section 4: Corporate Health

Summary of People

Staff Voluntary Turnover

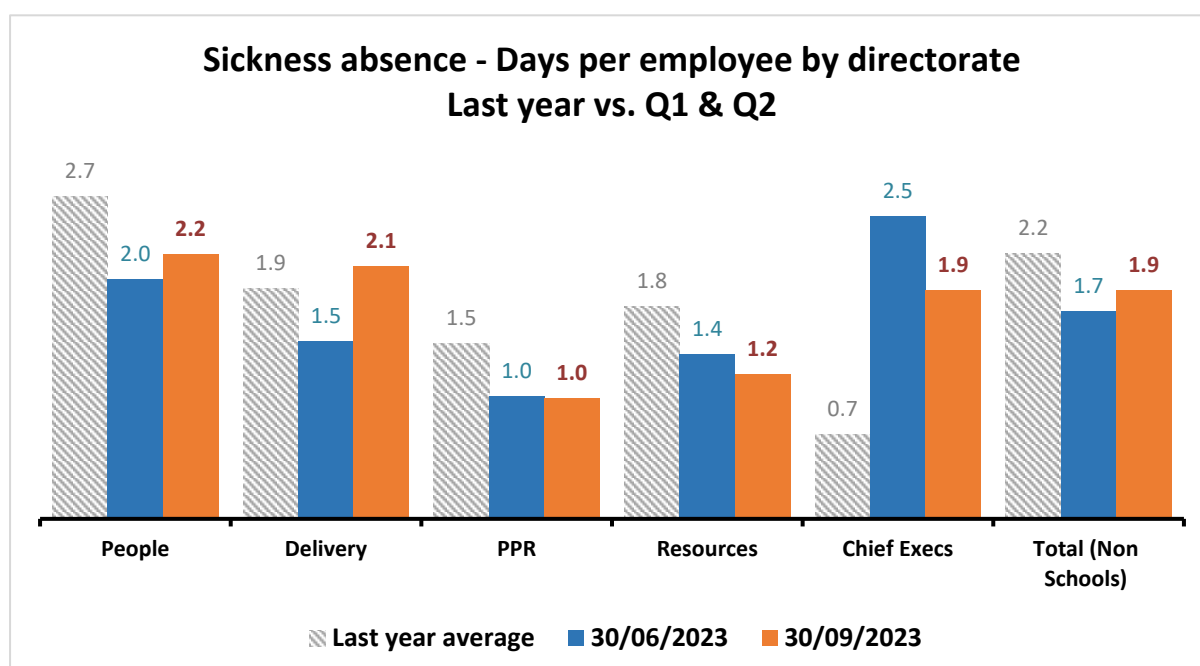


Comparator data	%
Total voluntary turnover for BFC, 22/23:	14.5
Average voluntary turnover rate UK public sector 2021:	8.8
Average Local Government England voluntary turnover 2020:	10

(Source: XpertHR Labour Turnover Rates 2022 and LGA Workforce Survey 2021)

Staff Sickness

Department	Q2 2023/24 Days per employee	2022/23 Actual Average days per employee	2023/24 Estimated Annual average days per employee
People	2.2	10.65	8.25
Delivery	2.1	7.64	7.2
PPR	1.0	5.3	3.99
Resources	1.2	6.97	4.88
Chief Executive's Office	1.9	2.49	9.02
Total staff sickness excl. maintained schools	1.9	8.61	7.18



Comparator data	All employees, average days sickness absence per employee
Bracknell Forest Council (excl. Schools) 22/23	8.61
Public Sector employers 2021	6.4

(Source: ONS Sickness absence in the UK labour market)

People

Absence has increased since last quarter with the number of days lost going up by 11%. Long-term sickness equates to 56% of the total absence this quarter which is slightly up on last quarter. There were 26 members of staff off long-term during the quarter, 16 of which have since returned to work.

Figures still suggest a lower absence rate overall for 2023-24.

Delivery

There has been a significant increase in the number of days lost this quarter compared to last quarter. The number of days lost has increased by approximately 45%.

Long-term sickness equates to 45% of the total absence this quarter, this is slightly lower than last quarter showing the increase is mainly among short-term absences. There were six members of staff off long-term during the quarter, four of whom have since returned to work.

Place, Planning and Regeneration

Absence this quarter is very similar to last quarter.

Long-term sickness equates to approximately 43% of the absence this quarter. There were less than five* members of staff were off long-term during the quarter and none have yet returned.

Resources

Absence has decreased slightly since last quarter. The number of days lost is approximately 12% lower than last quarter.

Long-term sickness equates to approximately 75% of the absence this quarter. There were less than five* members of staff off long-term during the quarter, one of whom has returned to work.

Chief Executive's Office

Absence has decreased since last quarter. The number of days lost has decreased by approximately 25%.

Long-term sickness equates to 72% of the absence this quarter. There were less than five* members of staff off long-term during the quarter, one of whom has returned to work.

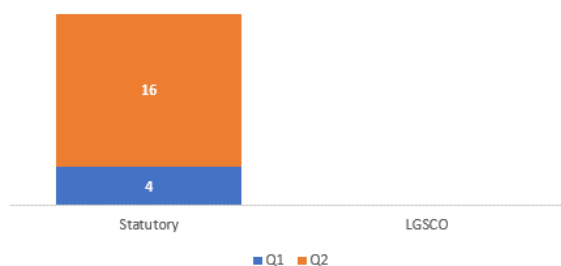
**supressed due to small number*

Summary of Complaints

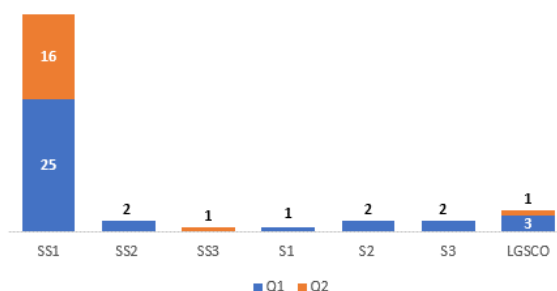
Key –

Q1 – Quarter one	Q2 – Quarter two	YTD – Year to Date
SS1 – Statutory stage one	SS2 – Statutory stage two	SS3 – Statutory Stage three
S1 – Stage one	S2 – Stage two	S3 – Stage three
LGSCO - Local Government Ombudsman and Social Care Ombudsman		
DVH - discrimination, harassment or victimisation complaints		

People: Adult Services



People: Children Services



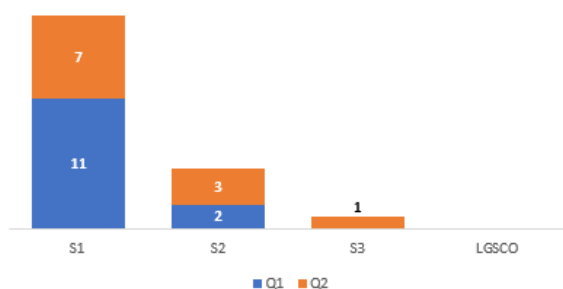
Year to date

- Fully upheld – 2
- Partially upheld – 7
- Not upheld – 6
- No finding - 1
- In progress – 4
- Onto next stage – 0
- No investigation – 0
- Premature complaint - 0

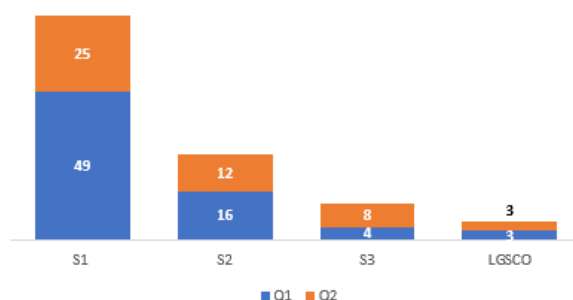
Year to date

- Fully upheld – 2
- Partially upheld – 17
- Not upheld – 18
- No finding - 3
- In progress – 9
- Onto next stage – 3
- No investigation – 1
- Premature complaint - 0

People: Housing



People: Education & Learning

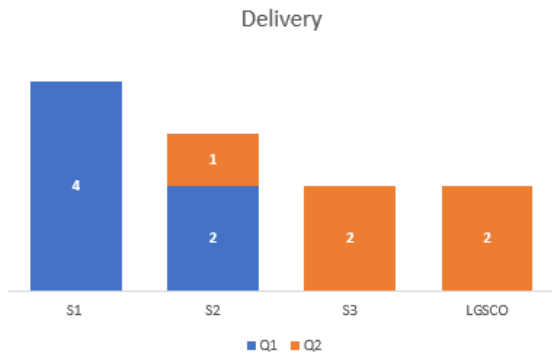


Year to date

- Fully upheld – 0
- Partially upheld – 8
- Not upheld – 6
- No finding - 2
- In progress – 3
- Onto next stage – 5
- No investigation – 0
- Premature complaint - 0

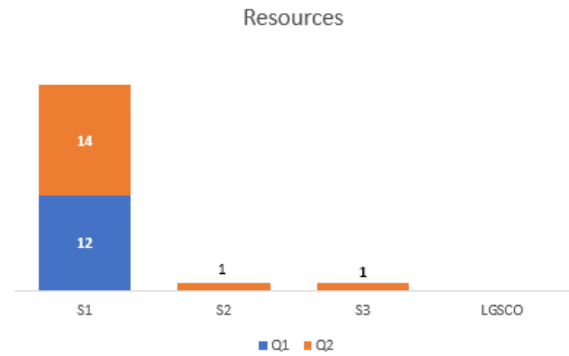
Year to date

- Fully upheld – 36
- Partially upheld – 34
- Not upheld – 12
- No finding - 5
- In progress – 19
- Onto next stage – 12
- No investigation – 0
- Premature complaint - 2



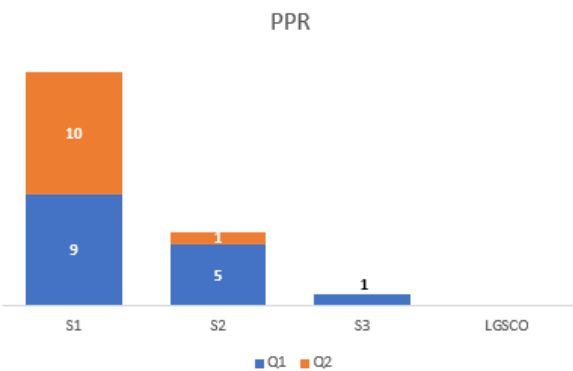
Year to date

- Fully upheld – 1
- Partially upheld – 0
- Not upheld – 7
- No finding - 0
- In progress – 2
- Onto next stage - 0
- No investigation – 0
- Premature complaint - 1



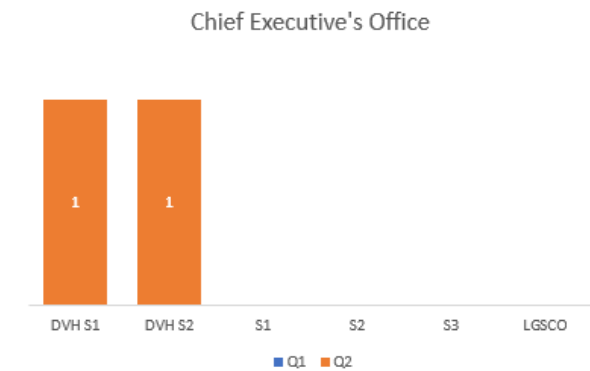
Year to date

- Fully upheld – 27
- Partially upheld – 1
- Not upheld – 0
- No finding - 0
- In progress – 0
- Onto next stage - 0
- No investigation – 0
- Premature complaint - 0



Year to date

- Fully upheld – 2
- Partially upheld – 8
- Not upheld – 12
- No finding - 0
- In progress – 3
- Onto next stage - 1
- No investigation – 0
- Premature complaint - 0



Year to date

- Fully upheld – 0
- Partially upheld – 1
- Not upheld – 0
- No finding - 0
- In progress – 1
- Onto next stage - 0
- No investigation – 0
- Premature complaint - 0

Note: The Chief Executive's Office is not normally included within the complaints reporting due to the minimal frequency of complaints received, however data is included for Q2 due to a complaint being received, and subsequently escalated.

Learning from complaints

The majority of upheld and partially upheld complaints are related to Education & Learning (70), Resources (28) and Childrens' Services (19). The main themes of these cases are timeliness, decisions and outcomes, and communication. Reflection and learning from complaints takes place regularly within services. To provide greater visibility, additional detail related to the volumes and themes of learning points and associated actions will be reported from Q3.

Strategic Risks and Audits

The Strategic Risk Register was reviewed at the Strategic Risk Management Group (SRMG) and Corporate Management Team on 17th August and 6th September respectively before being presented for feedback at the Governance and Audit Committee on 20th September. This was the new Register created following the CMT Away Day on 20th February and following further discussion at CMT and SRMG it concluded that the following 7 risks to be included:

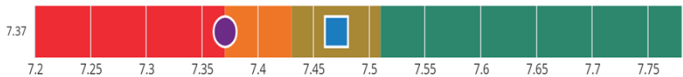

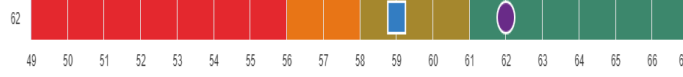

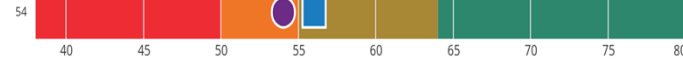
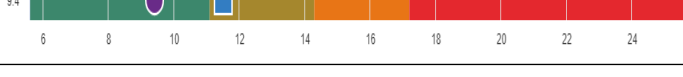


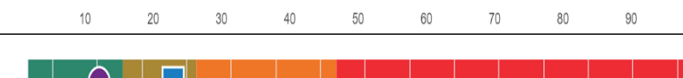

- Financial sustainability
- Impact of pressures on local health system
- Climate change net zero
- Cyber
- Local economy
- Demand management
- Staffing recruitment and retention

The full Register can be seen in the papers for the Governance Audit Committee on 20th September on the Council's public website [Agenda for Governance & Audit Committee on Wednesday, 20 September 2023, 7.30 pm \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/agenda-for-governance-and-audit-committee-on-wednesday-20-september-2023-7.30-pm) which also includes the Head of Audit and Risk Management's Interim Report summarising the outcome of audits for the by year to date.



Section 5: Community Health

There are several indicators available to benchmark council performance on by using [LG Inform](#). In particular, it can be useful to compare performance with CIPFA neighbours which represent a group of authorities with similar characteristics. Therefore, this comparison is used along with the English authority average. The purpose of including the community health data is to provide wider context for assessing the performance of delivering the Council Plan priorities and to further support decision making and planning. The needs and patterns within the community will affect the delivery of council services and achievement of the priorities. It also may suggest where new areas of focus are needed.

Bracknell Forest (Quantiles of All English unitary authorities)

Bracknell Forest (Quantiles of All English unitary authorities)	
Average happiness rating 2021/22 Mean	
Average life satisfaction rating 2021/22 Mean	
% of pupils meeting the expected standard at KS2 in reading, writing and maths 2022/23 (academic) % *updated since COPR Q1	
Second or subsequent child protection plans (%) 2021/22 %	
% 19 to 21 year old care leavers in education, employment or training 2021/22 %	
% of population aged 16-65 on Universal Credit Sep 2023 % *updated since COPR Q1	
Employment rate (%) 2023 Q1 (12 months ending) %	
Rate of births of new enterprises 2021 Enterprises per 10,000 people	
% Ultrafast broadband availability 2023 %	
Total recorded offences (excluding fraud) (per 1,000 population) 2023 Q1 (12 months ending) Crimes per 1000 people	

Key:

 Bracknell Forest Council  Mean for Bracknell Forest CIPFA nearest neighbours



To: **Executive**
23rd January 2024

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

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034, vision, objectives, and the action plan.

2 Recommendation(s)

2.1 Executive is asked to:

(i) to note the consultation responses and the suggested amendments to the strategy,

(ii) approve the Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034 and action plan,

(iii) endorse the repositioning of the Bracknell Forest Economic & Skills Development Partnership to the Bracknell Forest Economic Partnership as set out in paragraphs 5.12-5.15

3 Reasons for Recommendation(S)

- 3.1 To establish an economic strategy and action plan to support a thriving and connected economy.

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 residents, employers, businesses, skills, and training providers, and through working with neighbouring local authorities/government agencies.
- 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. 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.

- 5.3 In 2023, the Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership was appointed in a consultancy role to support the preparation of the new strategy and action plan. The initial stages included targeted engagement with key stakeholders involving business sectors, the Economic & Skills Development Partnership, Bracknell Business Improvement District, internal services and councillors through briefings and workshops.
- 5.4 The strategy 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. The objectives of the Economic Strategy 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 foreign direct investment 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, 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.
- 5.5 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.
 - 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.
- 5.6 In October 2023, the Executive approved the draft economic strategy for public consultation. Through the online portal, targeted events and meetings with business groups, local communities, and residents, an extensive consultation has taken place building on the earlier input and technical evidence and analysis. The formal consultation has resulted in a further 25 responses and detailed comments. The consultation finished on 6th December 2023.

Consultation summary

5.7 Attached as Appendix 1 is a summary of the responses received through the portal together with more detailed responses from the stakeholders, and business representative organisations: The response to the consultation questions are as follows:

- *By 2034, Bracknell Forest is a growing and resilient economy that matches the best in Berkshire. It 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 have the skills to succeed.*
89% Agree, 11% disagree or don't know.
- The Economic Strategy has identified four main themes. These are:
 - *Economic performance:*
 - *Business competitiveness*
 - *People, work, and wellbeing*
 - *Place, climate change, infrastructure, and connectivity*

88% agree, 12% disagree or no response.

Strategy actions

- Economic performance actions; **81% agree, 19% disagree or don't know.**
- Business competitiveness actions; **85% agree, 15% disagree or don't know.**
- People, work, and wellbeing actions; **81% agree, 19% disagree or don't know.**
- Place, climate change, infrastructure, and connectivity actions; **77% agree, 23% disagree or don't know.**

Proposed changes to the Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034. Appendices 2,3,4

5.8 Reflecting upon the responses and comments received, the following changes have been made to the strategy and action plan:

- Lobbying for enhanced rail and public transport services to support inward investment and accessibility.
- Stronger emphasis for small and medium sized enterprises to access business support.
- Reflect the breadth of business types and sectors and associated skills in line with the local attainment levels.
- Highlight the specialist research and development clusters present in the borough.
- Prioritise the thematic priorities in the full strategy document.

Strategy delivery and monitoring

5.9 Currently the established mechanisms in place to deliver economic development across the borough and the region, are through the ESDP, the Bracknell Business Improvement District and the principal business organisations including Bracknell Regeneration Partnership (The Lexicon) Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Business and other public sector agencies.

- 5.10 The adoption of the Economic Strategy represents a step change in the commitment towards a thriving and connected economy and the opportunity to shape the existing arrangements. The council through its economic development service will coordinate and lead significant elements of the thematic priorities and actions. Equally, where appropriate other partners such as the BID, Thames Valley Chamber and sector leads will be better placed to deliver the actions.
- 5.11 Attached as appendix 5 is an action plan delivery programme to be prioritised in the first twelve months based on the challenges and opportunities presently identified.

Bracknell Forest Economic Partnership (BFEP)

- 5.12 Currently, the Bracknell Forest Economic & Skills Development Partnership has provided the voice for business to engage with and through the council and has successfully supported key outcomes such as the creation of the Bracknell BID, business surveys and employer engagement. The proposal is to reconfigure the ESDP to become an entity with a role to provide oversight for the strategy and the action plan delivery. The BFEB would review and promote the strategy actions and build consensus and support. Act as an advocate for Bracknell Forest's economy.
- 5.13 The composition of the BFEP would include:
- key business/employer representatives reflecting the composition of businesses in the borough. Large (250+ employees), medium (50-249 employees) and small (up to 49 employees) business reps
 - Skills and training providers at school and further/higher education level
 - Resident representation through elected members (Bracknell Forest member for economic development and regeneration, Member of Parliament, Parish/Town councils)
 - Bracknell Business Improvement District
 - BRP/The Lexicon
 - Business representative organisations- Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Business, others
 - Public sector/government departments
- 5.14 The BFEP would be independently co-chaired by a business representative and a skills sector representative receiving quarterly progress reports. In parallel, the economic development team will prepare service plan performance updates to feed into the departmental service plans and the council plan. An annual review and forward look will be prepared for consideration by the council and the BFEP.
- 5.15 Subject to the Executive's agreement to this approach it is intended to establish the BFEP in the first quarter 2024/25.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 That there no specific legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 Whilst there are no direct additional financial implications arising from this report, 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 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 have been assessed in relation to health and wellbeing considerations.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 Consultation responses

Appendix 2 Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034 Summary

Appendix 3 Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy Action Plan

Appendix 4 Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034

Appendix 5 Action plan delivery programme

Contact for further information

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Bracknell Forest economic strategy 2024-2034 consultation schedule December 2023

Strategy theme/detail	Comment/issue	Response/changes
<p>Our vision</p> <p>By 2034, Bracknell Forest is a growing and resilient economy that matches the best in Berkshire. It 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 have the skills to succeed.</p> <p>26 responses received</p> <p>88.5% agree 11.5% disagree or don't know</p>	<p>1. High quality businesses? Should it not be a spectrum of businesses that support local, regional, and national needs? It seems like you are being a bit exclusive and Tory. Same on "secure jobs for those with skills to succeed". Don't we want secure jobs for our skilled and unskilled Labour force. The retail and leisure economy in Bracknell rely on our relatively unskilled workforce and our town centre needs them. The vision doesn't feel inclusive or representative of Bracknell.</p>	<p><i>The strategy and action plan acknowledge and encompass the full range of employ opportunities and skills needs within the Bracknell economy. The Action Plan, P.W.W.2 will be reworded to reflect the breath of skills and jobs underpinning Bracknell's economy.</i></p>
	<p>2. Bracknell Forest has gone from a town of light industry and IT (once being compared to Silicon Valley) to a town of service industries and outlets. This leaves it totally vulnerable to economic fluctuations. To be specific, main employers used to include Ferranti, Racal, Oracle, the Met Office, the RAF staff college and libraries. All have left Bracknell or are downsizing or using volunteers.</p>	<p><i>The Strategy recognises the continuous change in business types and sizes in response to the wider economic opportunities. The Southern and Western businesses areas are home to a significant range of companies.</i></p>
	<p>3. The direct link to London was meant to be a major attraction but has been beset by problems so that car traffic is increasing to that of a motorway along the Bagshot Road. Indeed, the phrase driving to net zero seems more appropriate than ever. Currently the station is flooded and coaches to London are infrequent often every 2 hours if there is a problem with the rail service. Businesses who need to use the post office often find it has closed early due to 'staff shortages'. When it moved to Smiths from a dedicated office, we were told it was going to be a much better service, but it is much worse. Not least because staff need to cash up before Smiths closes at 5.30pm.</p>	<p><i>The emerging Local Transport Plan 4 will assess the current and future transport and accessibility demands for the borough taking into account the wider economic factors.</i></p>

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	<p>4. There is a raft of closed outlets since the Pandemic including Whittards, Den of Bracca, EE, and the Cornish knitwear shop. One of the two cinemas came close to shutting There is a national component in some of these but it again underlines the danger of being over optimistic about prospects and retail saving the day.</p>	<p><i>The Lexicon continues to be a vibrant retail destination with very few vacant units. The council is bringing forward masterplans for two key areas in the town centre with the potential to expand the range of uses to meet future needs.</i></p>
<p>The Economic Strategy has identified four main themes.</p> <p>88% agree 8% disagree 4% no response</p>	<p>These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic performance: • Business competitiveness • People, work, and wellbeing • Place, climate change, infrastructure, and connectivity 	
<p>Economic performance actions</p> <p>81% agree 15% disagree (4 comments) 4% don't know</p>	<p>1. I don't see any mention of our much-needed trades. Our declining retail sector isn't mentioned. The town centre won't sustain itself through magic and needs to be fostered and nurtured to ensure the impact of the regeneration is not lost.</p>	<p><i>The full consultation draft – people, work and wellbeing explores the range of jobs in construction, manufacturing transport and agricultural sectors and the changing demands for jobs in these sectors. P.W.W.3.</i></p>
	<p>2. I agree with the statements, but they do not go far enough. Knowledge-based businesses need readily available skills and that's where you need to focus, on links with schools, colleges, universities.</p>	<p><i>Noted</i></p>
	<p>3. Bracknell looks dirty and uncared for. It needs a tidy up, rubbish removed from verges, pathways cut back and leaves swept up so you can walk on them. Why are we doing nothing about the rubbish being thrown everywhere, electric scooters being ridden at speed on paths and roads and people openly smoking drugs? It should be a nice place to live it seems to be on a very fast downward spiral which is a shame after all the investment in the new town centre.</p>	<p><i>Noted. Partnership across the private and public sector landlords and agencies including Thames Valley Police and Bracknell Regeneration Partnership and Bracknell Forest Council is working to manage the physical, and social fabric of the town centre.</i></p>

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	<p>4. Not all of them we don't need more managers in businesses who do not look after people who work on the front line of the businesses. There needs to be more training and apprenticeships that are STEM related. Too many businesses are only taking on business administration apprentices. This will not grow the local economy and make it more productive. Do not waste money on glossy brochures and this just increases the carbon footprint. Include more businesses in the Bracknell Business Improvement District (BID). There are businesses just outside of this area that could take part and make a difference.</p>	<p><i>Noted. The strategy recognises the need to expand the skills within our resident community to match the employment opportunities now and over the life of the strategy.</i> <i>The strategy represents the whole of Bracknell Forest including Crowthorne, Sandhurst and the smaller commercial areas.</i></p>
<p>Business competitiveness actions</p> <p>84.5% agree 11.5% disagree (3 comments) 4% don't know</p>	<p>1. Let's not jump of the film bandwagon! What do we have (it's our neighbouring authorities). Has the remainder of the Town centre regeneration been forgotten? The Bus station, The Deck, Fitzwilliam House.</p>	<p><i>The Strategy technical annex and full report identify the existence of businesses supporting the creative industries, post-production, construction and catering services. The objectives in the scorecard and action plan, B.C.4 and 5 build on the existing local business activity.</i></p>
	<p>2. Need to add more about skills.</p>	<p><i>Noted</i></p>
	<p>3. Until you get the basics right and encourage education, hard work, and aspiration you can't move on.</p>	<p><i>Noted</i></p>
<p>People, work and wellbeing actions</p> <p>81% agree 15% disagree (4 comments) 4% don't know</p>	<p>1. I absolutely agree with all the actions, but you also need to target the development of skills before employment, in schools, colleges and universities</p>	<p><i>Noted. The strategy recognises the need to expand the skills within our resident community and the importance of engaging with local education providers.</i></p>
	<p>2. Although I agree with their principle, there will also be some residents who are hard workers but will never gain higher grades. We need for them inhouse training in the industries that are struggling. For example in the care industry as an overall agency and COS are the main fillers, whereas this could be done locally. Fifty per cent then continue onto nursing.</p>	<p><i>Noted. The importance of in work training is recognised in the strategy in helping improve the employment and wellbeing of all residents.</i></p>

	<p>3. Greater engagement with the local schools to demonstrate the opportunities that are available locally to them and promote all routes to employment particularly through apprenticeships and the uptake of new technical vocational qualifications by the schools to encourage young people to stay and train and earn locally.</p>	<p><i>Noted. Greater engagement with education providers and local Bracknell Forest businesses to encourage residents to access local employment opportunities.</i></p>
	<p>4. Only STEM apprenticeships should be encouraged. Business administration should not need to be an apprenticeship. We are training people in the wrong skills. If we have a workforce in Bracknell with the demanded skills, businesses will want to move here. However, if people can't afford a home to live in, we will never keep these necessary skills. Most businesses are management heavy and when there is a financial strain it is usually the skilled people who are let go of and their work outsourced out of the area or abroad.</p>	<p><i>Noted.</i></p>
<p>Place, climate change, infrastructure, and connectivity actions</p> <p>77% agree 19% disagree (5 comments) 4% don't know</p>	<p>1. I agree with all points but more is needed on transport. Reliance on the car is much too high, and that is because there is little viable alternative.</p>	<p><i>Noted</i></p>
	<p>2. Nowhere near enough focus on renewables. Bracknell has many large commercial buildings on which solar PV could be installed. There are also an increasing number of data centres being built from which waste heat should be harvested.</p>	<p><i>The Council recognises the significant contribution to be made by employers and companies to support the transition towards net zero and is working closely with key stakeholders through the Climate Change Strategy <u>Climate change Bracknell Forest Council (bracknell-forest.gov.uk)</u> P.C.C.I.C.2 in the full stagy and action plan supports these objectives.</i></p>
	<p>3. Once again in principle, but from the start the planning officers should ensure that each development is as eco-friendly as it can be. Workers need to be able to get into Bracknell and sadly we have a very poor bus service, limited cycle lanes. At the moment people are buying here as it is cheaper than London and then work in the Capital as pay is too low, this is NHS as well Business support must be a priority to ensure growth. The growth hub has helped me significantly,</p>	<p><i>Noted</i></p>

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	4. The current housing stock is not encouraging people to stay in Bracknell Forest.	<i>Increased supply of new homes will help to maintain and improve affordability. Local Plan allocations and opportunities to attract people to Bracknell town centre can help to counteract population ageing and sustain the town centre.</i>
	5. This sound great but until you get the basics right, starting with education, pride in yourself and your environment how is this going to be implemented?	<i>Noted</i>
Missing actions	Action to increase renewable energy installations on commercial buildings and reduce waste heat through re-use.	<i>Changes to national building regulations and the requirements of the EPC standards will drive waste reduction and greater energy management.</i>
	Business support must be a priority to ensure growth. The growth hub has helped me significantly,	<i>Noted. The Council through this strategy is supporting the Berkshire Growth Hub and the UK Shared prosperity Fund investment plan.</i>
	House builders need to provide housing for all to purchase. Many people cannot afford to get on the housing ladder, and I don't see anything in the plan to encourage that. If this was tackled, the skills gap would reduce as people would be encouraged to stay in Bracknell Forest	<i>Noted and referred to above</i>
	Education. Sense of pride. Work ethic. The basics seem to be missing and I don't know what plans are in place to address this. The town is declining year on year and the council and police don't seem to be addressing this.	<i>The economic strategy sits alongside the Bracknell Forest Council Plan 2024-2027, endorsing the vision for the borough where we put residents first, working together to grow sustainable, resilient, and inclusive communities.</i>
	More wind power farms & Utilisation of pumped hydro possibilities.	<i>Noted</i>
	There needs to be a lot more focus on renewables at commercial premises. There is a huge amount of commercial roof space in Bracknell on which solar panels should be installed to help Bracknell work towards net zero.	<i>Noted, see above</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is essential that engagement with local shops and businesses in all the retails areas of Crowthorne (High Street, Station Parade, Sandhurst Road, and Church Street) are factored into the strategy to ensure their viability. • Ensure that the engagement and strategy is not Bracknell Town/Lexicon centric. • Crowthorne Parish Council actively supports its twice weekly Market which again is supported not only by residents but provides a low-cost opportunity for local 'cottage/home' 	<p><i>Noted and reflected in the strategy and action plan P.W.W. 2 and the production of a local industrial strategy to encompass the smaller commercial locations.</i></p> <p><i>Continue to actively support local retail initiatives building on the programmes introduced during the Covid pandemic and through the UK Shared</i></p>

	<p>bakery, craft and traditional market type businesses to 'launch'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The location of the market, just off the main High Street, enables people to travel by foot, cycle or bus; ensuring it also serves the sustainability/environmental agenda as well as economic strategic objectives. • Local residents can shop at the market without travelling by car; therefore, proving the perfect climate friendly place for locals to buy locally produced foods and crafts. • Parking should be factored into the strategy. Crowthorne has free parking and therefore make the high street shops and market even more attractive. • Local knowledge especially as demonstrated by Crowthorne Parish Council is essential to build Bracknell Forest wide sustainability for businesses and shops and provide a wider strategic objective. Such knowledge should be tapped, and the Parish Council is willing to share experience. Crowthorne is the only High Street outside the Lexicon. 	<p><i>Prosperity Fund investment plan, Noted</i></p> <p><i>Noted</i></p> <p><i>Noted</i></p> <p><i>Create a pan Bracknell Economic Partnership with parish and town council representation to harness local knowledge and commitment.</i></p>
Other comments	<p>Promote the employment and training of local people. Many who work here especially in the public sector don't live in Bracknell. We need to understand why so many tech firms are relocating to places like Green Park on the other side of Reading. Yet Bracknell new town was originally built as a place where workers and their work were within walking distance as far back as the 50s.</p>	<p><i>Noted. Referenced above.</i></p> <p><i>Developing a broader understanding of the economic ecosystem sits within the strategy and Local Industrial Strategy.</i></p>
	<p>Find the businesses in the area that manage knowledge, such as member-based businesses as they are utilized by businesses all over the country and overseas. They will likely put Bracknell on the map to a greater extent.</p>	<p><i>This is identified as a Thematic Priority, place promotion and destination management.</i></p>
	<p>I would be interested to see the underpasses between the town centre and the southern business area made safer to encourage walking to and from work even in winter due to the regeneration of market street meaning an increase in domestic residential areas in the town centre and the likelihood of people living and working locally and reducing the need to drive such short distances.</p>	<p><i>Noted. This sits within the council accessibility objectives and the strategy action plan P.CC.I.C.4 and 5</i></p>
	<p>I would like to know what level of investment is required by the Council (+/- Central Government) to implement such a strategy and, running parallel to this, what is considered a success with regards to return on investment.</p>	<p><i>The Action Plan will be delivered by the council's economic development service in conjunction with public and private sector partners, the Bracknell Business Improvement District, business</i></p>

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	<p>It would be good to know what we feel success will look like with regards to a set of measurables not just RoI.</p>	<p><i>representative organisations and key employers. The strategy vision aims to place Bracknell's economy at the same or greater level of neighbouring economies based on Gross Domestic Product, employment, and skills attainment.</i></p>
	<p>I also feel that the strategy could capitalise more on the fact that we have very good schools in the area. I don't know the exact statistics or how this is measured nationally, but I get the impression we have students with better key stage 5 attainment than elsewhere, and these are students that we want to come back to Bracknell ideally after completing university, not when they are having children or retiring, when their net contribution to the economy will be less. I wonder if this is achieved through improving the cultural appeal of Bracknell?</p>	<p><i>The Berkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan endorses and aligns with the need to make the most of the attainment levels in Bracknell.</i></p> <p><i>The action plan identifies to connections with further and higher education providers.</i></p>
	<p>The economy strategy sounds positive but until you improve the basics, I can't see how it works. Walk around Bracknell, see the vandalism and rubbish. Jump at the cars driving way above the speed limit with blowing exhausts and dodge the electric scooters when you are on a narrow pathway. Smell the drugs as you are walking into town and then think if would invest your money here. It seems very sad that there would be a lower than average skills level in Bracknell and education needs to be looked at. There is no point running management training if the basic skills and desire to succeed are not already there. Hopefully good managers can visit schools and excite them about the opportunity to have a great career along the M4 corridor. We live in an area with exciting companies, British as well as global and we really need to build a desire to work for these companies and have a pride in what we do and where we live. We should be inundated with people and companies moving here as geographically it is a great location, with a lovely town centre so why has it been allowed to decline like this! My five-year plan is to move away from the area.</p>	<p><i>Noted</i></p> <p><i>Reference above</i></p> <p><i>Initiatives including Learning to Work, Adviza, Pathways and Ways into Work actively support training and employment opportunities.</i></p>
	<p>There needs to be more focus on training/retraining disabled and older people. Once they are out of the workforce, they have difficulty gaining employment even though they are highly skilled. There needs to be more made from a person's skillset and not just the ability to talk the talk. Too many people with great skills are left without work because the jobs go to the overly confident who often only know how to talk. We also need to encourage neurodiversity and make the most of the talents of neurodivergent people.</p>	<p><i>The Action Plan recognises the value of residents in all regards and promotes the Employment Forum and supported internships to assist younger people and adults with pathways to work.</i></p>

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	<p>The Action Plan lists over 20 'Priorities for action' against the four contributory factors. There is a need to move at pace with many of these actions, especially those that need additional investment in funding and personnel.</p> <p>Partnering with the BID, the ESDP and the Chamber of Commerce would increase the available resource and effort, as would taking full advantage of government funding aimed at achieving business growth, increasing skills and implementing climate change action.</p>	<p><i>Noted.</i></p> <p><i>The strategy action plan draws upon a close collaboration with key stakeholders and will form a central plank of the delivery programme</i></p>
	<p>The ESDP would welcome a 'prioritisation of the priorities', perhaps through the development of an Investment Plan linked to the strategy, such that local authority resource and funding can be used effectively; acknowledging that whilst there are pressures on local authorities to reduce costs, this is not an area where this should be done.</p>	<p><i>These headline thematic priorities will be relocated in the full strategy document</i></p>
	<p>Prioritisation should therefore be given to delivering on-going projects as well as those that will quickly stimulate business growth and investment. The ESDP suggests that the following actions be taken forward as a priority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivering the Bracknell Forest Skills and Training Hub which is currently an on-going UK Prosperity Fund project – addressing people, work, and wellbeing actions; • engaging with commercial agents, landlords and developers to promote Bracknell Forest – addressing climate change, infrastructure and connectivity needs; • targeting business support and company relationship building, nurturing of small companies and increasing business start-up support – increasing business competitiveness; and • commitment and support for the renewal of the BID – a Headline Thematic Priority. 	<p><i>Noted</i></p>
	<p>There is little mention of public transport provision, or transport in general, in the report and there is no mention of the local authority's existing or new Local Transport Plan in the list of other strategies and plans having a direct bearing on the economic strategy. The need for better bus provision and more frequent train services to and from Bracknell station are still important, despite the difficulties that local authorities and operators now face in achieving this. There either needs to be a specific priority action on public transport or an explanation as to why they are seen as not important to Bracknell Forest's future economic growth. This also applies to cycling and walking provision.</p>	<p><i>The strategy will reference the links to the emerging LTP and the regional transport provisions including the links to London, Reading and Heathrow.</i></p>

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	<p>SMEs are an extremely important part of Bracknell Forest's growth, especially if some of the large overseas corporates leave the area. Whilst SMEs are included in the Action Plan under the economic performance, and people, work, and wellbeing scorecard summaries, there needs to be a single stronger action for addressing the need to support SMEs, including making Bracknell Forest a 'home' for SMEs, including start-ups. The action should aim to allocate greater resources to the delivery of the needs of SMEs.</p>	<p><i>Noted and will be highlighted in the action plan</i></p>
	<p>It is recommended that monitoring be enhanced through the formation of Steering Group comprising representatives from the business community, the local authority, and other stakeholders, such as Chamber of commerce, ESDP, Education Providers, the BID, LSIP and transport operators.</p>	<p><i>Noted. To be aligned with the reshaping of the ESDP to provide oversight for the strategy action plan</i></p>
	<p>. The future direction for Bracknell Forest's economy on which business can focus needs, however, to be drawn from the Action Plan and channelled into a more succinct message that can easily be understood and communicated to stakeholders</p>	<p><i>This is reflected in the thematic priority, place promotion and destination management.</i></p>
	<p>We are pleased, therefore, to see that the BID is included as a priority in the Headline Thematic Priorities given in in Section 13 of the Summary Report, which states: 'the role and standing of the BID are recognised as critical to the future success of the local economy'. It is then stated that the 'strategy will actively support the BID to deliver its business plan and to secure another term'.</p>	<p><i>Noted</i></p>
	<p>The Economic Strategy forms an important way forward for ensuring Bracknell Forest's continued economic prosperity. The BID would be pleased to discuss how we can assist in delivering the strategy, both in terms of supporting the delivery of activities that form the Action Plan and in meeting the BID's own objectives.</p>	<p><i>Noted</i></p>
	<p>As part of the comments, there is a need, we believe, to highlight the importance that the delivery of the sustainable growth sought by the Economic Strategy is not stifled by restrictive planning policies. Such policies have the potential to dissuade investment, including by foreign owned companies who see the wider Berkshire area, because of its proximity to London Heathrow, as an attractive location. Investors welcome certainty, with clear long-term ambition, where planning regimes and the delivery of infrastructure support their ambitions. We must also encourage and ensure we are planning for economic development and have policies, that enable faster and more positive responses to changes</p>	<p><i>This will be added to the action plan B.C. 1-2</i></p>

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	in business circumstances and investment opportunities.	
	Contained in the draft Economic Strategy are references to, in the Introduction, a “business-friendly planning environment” and an “enterprise-friendly planning regime” at paragraph 7.1. Within the draft Action Plan there is a lack of clarity as to how these aspirations to establish a planning regime in Bracknell Forest to foster economic growth will be implemented. There needs to be clarity of the type which the TVCC is proposing through amendments to the Bracknell Forest Local Plan Main Modifications to create a more favourable planning policy context at the Jealott’s Hill International Research Centre as part of our response to the draft Economic Strategy.	<i>Noted and reflected within the emerging Local Plan</i>
	The draft Economic Strategy at E.P.3 references Bracknell Forest’s knowledge economy being smaller than that of the comparator areas and neighbouring local authorities and appears to be less resilient. There is some degree of specialisation mentioned indicating the presence of nascent clusters (e.g., High-end TV and Film, Scientific Research and Development (R&D) and health and life sciences). There is a recognition that these clusters are not necessarily peculiar to Bracknell Forest and extend across neighbouring local authorities across Berkshire and the Thames Valley and of course nationwide in the context of shaping the UK economy as a science and technology super power.	<i>Noted and highlighted in the action plan</i>
	Therefore, there needs to be greater clarity in the Economic Strategy as to how current or new planning policies will be used to provide the right conditions to encourage more productive, knowledge economy/high productivity businesses to either locate or stay in Bracknell Forest (E.P.2.3). In part, this can be achieved by engaging with companies, such as Syngenta, and developers to enable more provision of light industrial space and space suitable for high tech and creative digital businesses in the specialised sectors, such as the R&D opportunity at Jealott’s Hill. There is a clear link to having a Local Plan which takes a proactive approach to fostering investment in economic development and creating a positive planning policy context for Jealott’s Hill (P.CC.I.C.1.3). This is why TVCC is supportive of modifications to the emerging Local Plan in favour of greater flexibility to foster economic growth at Jealott’s Hill.	<i>Noted</i>
	We support the vision for the overall Economic Strategy, and the four main strategic themes (Economic Performance, Business Competitiveness, People, work and wellbeing, Place, Climate Change, Infrastructure and Connectivity) seek to deliver a balance between	<i>Noted</i>

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	<p>delivering the right strategic themes for Bracknell. The mix of housing in the appropriate locations and securing sustainable economic growth linked to ensure we have the resilient infrastructure (water, electricity, gas, telecommunications, road, rail, etc) in place to support the future needs of the resident and business community. For example, how are the local authority engaging, strategically, with the appropriate authorities to secure the required future power (esp. electricity) needs for its existing business community and to those sight that will attract new investors? This is not a unique issue, for Bracknell Forest, but one that needs addressing. TVCC has previously consulted on this and we refer you back to our previous response here: 12_09_2019_ Bracknell Forest Council Local Plan Consultation & Jealott's Hill (Section 6.5 and Policy LP 7)</p>	
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BRACKNELL FOREST ECONOMIC STRATEGY



2024

2034

Summary January 2024

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 status 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 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 Foreign Direct Investment 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. The strategy will actively support enhanced public transport connectivity between Bracknell, London, and Heathrow airport.

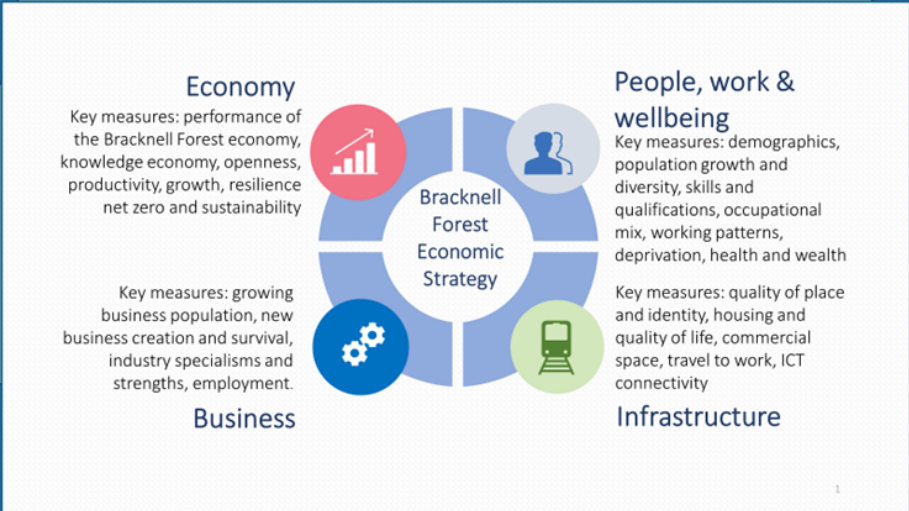
8. Our approach

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: 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”.*



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”.*

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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) Ensure Bracknell Forest is an attractive location for businesses
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 lower.	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.

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 such as the Growth Hub to target business support on SMEs in the most important sectors to retain and grow in Bracknell Forest e.g. <i>ICT, Professional, Scientific & Technical</i> . Create a pan Bracknell Economic Partnership with parish and town council representation to harness local knowledge and commitment. Continue to support local retail initiatives through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan.
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. Draw on the knowledge of local partners such as the Parish Councils to understand the town centre economies.
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 and address any issues e.g. recruitment, planning. Ensure planning regime supports business growth and retention through Bracknell Forest Local Plan Nurture SMEs 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, particularly SMEs, working with other local authorities nearby in the digital creative industry locations.
B.C.6. Tourism and Hospitality	No. of day and overnight visitors.	Bracknell Forest has mainly day visitor tourism and, for overnights stays, business tourism which is mostly in 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





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 local authority 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 significantly lower at NVQL4+ and NVQL3+ than the comparator areas, and 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 these 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. Bracknell Forest performs well on skilled trades.	Work with employers and trade bodies to ensure trades have up to date skills and promote apprenticeships. Work with the Employment Forum to ensure all are supported e.g. through supported internships to assist younger people and adults with pathways to work.
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	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.


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 at least in the short term 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.	Engage with commercial agents to monitor demand. . 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 in knowledge economy businesses may hinder future progress towards a cleaner economy. 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. The Council to promote energy efficiency through its supply chains and relationships with business.
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	Although home working has increased in Bracknell Forest, residents have lower rates of working at or near home than in the comparator areas and higher rates of travel to work further away. Although this is typical of places with high proportions 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 .	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.


10. 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,</p>


	<p>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>
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Climate Change and Drive to Net Zero	
	<p>In September 2023 Bracknell Forest Council agreed a climate change motion. We have resolved to review, broaden and accelerate its Climate Change Strategy, and to commit to achieve net-zero CO2 emissions as close to 2030 as possible. 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.</p>

11. Delivery Mechanisms

Delivery Mechanisms	
	<p>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.</p>

12. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and Reporting Outputs and Outcomes	
	<p>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.</p>

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BRACKNELL FOREST
ECONOMIC STRATEGY
ACTION PLAN

2024

2034



Action Plan
January 2024

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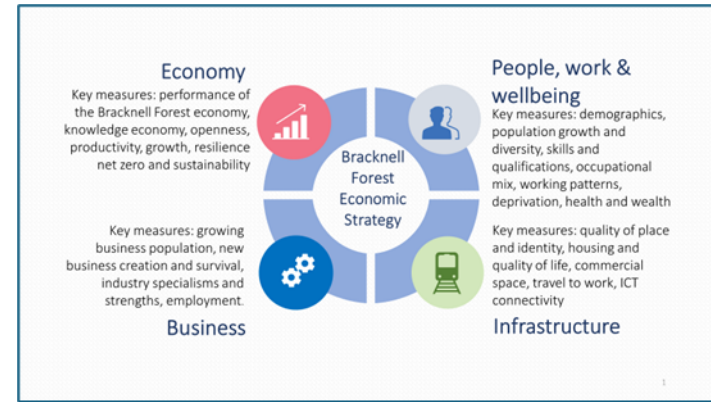


Figure 1 The balanced scorecard for the Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy

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).
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.

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.

Glossary of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Term
AL	Activate Learning
BGH	Berkshire Growth Hub
BID	Bracknell Business Improvement District
BPB	Berkshire Prosperity Board
DBT	Department of Business and Trade
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
EN	Enterprise Nation
ESPD	Economic and Skills Development Partnership
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FEA	The Bracknell Forest Functional Economic Area
FSB	Federation of Small Business
GDHI	General Disposable Household Income
GVA	Gross Value Added
HBS	Henley Business School
ICT	Information and communications technology
KE	Knowledge economy
LAA	Local Authority Area
LSIP	Learning and Skills Investment Plan
LVEP	Local Visitor Economy Partnership
MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
ONS	Office for National Statistics
R&D	Research and Development
TSE	Tourism South East
TVC	Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce
VE	Visit England
WAP	Working Age Population

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 enterprise 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) BGH, Banks, TVC /FSB, 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	
	E.p.1.4 Seek to ensure Bracknell Forest is an attractive location for businesses through a business-friendly planning environment		

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 BGH/ HBS/ESDP/ALTVC, FSB/Central Government/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 KE businesses matches best in FEA by 2030

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, BGH / LAAs in the FEA HBS /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, though 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 / /ESDP/BPB
	E.P.4.2. Promote the benefits of locating in Bracknell Forest and work with Department for Business and Trade (DBT) and the Berkshire Prosperity Board to land more FDI projects. Creating up to date promotional material that can be supplied to Businesses and Government agencies	Commence Jan 2024	

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 LAAs in the FEA 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 on SMEs in the most important sectors 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/ BGH
	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 Functional Economic Area). 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	
	B.C.1.3. Create a pan Bracknell Forest economic partnership with parish and town council representation to harness local knowledge and commitment	Autumn 2024	
	B.C.1.4. Continue to support local retail initiatives through the UK Shared Prosperity Investment Plan	Ongoing	

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 FEA

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 Bracknell 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

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 Berkshire Growth Hub, Chambers, FSB and external bodies such as Enterprise Nation. Monitor central Government start-up initiatives. Commercial sponsors such as banks and tech companies e.g. Google Garage. Draw on the knowledge of the town and parish councils to understand local economies. (See also: E.P.1.2. & E.P.1.3. & P.CC.I.C.4.2.)	April 2025 onward	Regeneration /Comms/BGH /Bracknell BID/ESDP/EN and 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 percentages 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 /Communications team/Bracknell BID
	B.C.3.2. Through the business liaison programme of active engagement continue to build relationships with large companies to understand and address 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 SMEs 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.
	B.C.3.4. Continue to ensure that the local planning regime supports business growth and retention through the Bracknell Forest Local Plan		

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 FEA 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.</i> and <i>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	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration/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, particularly SMEs, 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 / BGH/ LAAs in the FEA /HBS /Berkshire Film Office

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/TSE/Hotels/ESDP
	B.C.6.2. Carry out risk analysis for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events (MICE) sector and work with accommodation/venue providers to explore alternative market segments and marketing opportunities.	By April 2026	

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. & Percentage 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 /Bracknell 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 skill, 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 Local Skills and Investment Plan) and other skills providers, to support training and opportunities to match the broad range of jobs, including retail and hospitality sectors.	Ongoing	Bracknell Forest Skills lead/ ESDP/ HBS/ colleges/training providers / AL/Universities.
	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	

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, other neighbouring centres. 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. It will also be important to support the retail and hospitality sectors.</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 Retail and hospitality	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/TVC /Bracknell BID

Indicator	Priority action	Timescale	Lead officer/key partners
	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/Bracknell BID

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. Bracknell Forest performs well on skilled trades.	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	Bracknell Forest skills lead/ESDP/training providers/DWP/Bracknell BID
	P.W.W.4.2. Work with employers and trade bodies to ensure trades have up to date skills and promote apprenticeships.		
	P.W.W.4.3. Continue to work with the Employers to ensure all groups are able to be supported e.g. through supported internships to assist younger people and adults with pathways to work		

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	Bracknell Forest skills lead/ESDP/training providers /AL

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	Gross Disposable Household \income (GDHI)in Bracknell Forest increases by more than inflation year-on-year

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, at least in the short term, 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. 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.		
	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 in knowledge economy businesses 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	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration
	P.CC.I.C.2.2 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	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration (/Comms/ Planning/transport providers
	P.C.C.I.C.2.3 The Council to promote energy efficiency through its relationships with businesses		

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: Housing	P.CC.I.C.3.1 Monitor the potential conversion of employment space to Permitted Development.	Commence April 2024	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration (/Comms (/Planning
	P.CC.I.C.3.2. Promote the benefits of Bracknell Forest as a place to live and work. Destination management prospectus produced.		

Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric
P.CC.I.C.4: Working patterns	Although home working has increased, Bracknell Forest residents have lower rates of working at or near home and higher rates of travelling to work further away than in the comparator areas. Although this is typical of areas like Bracknell with higher 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.	Percentage 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	Head of Economic Development and regeneration key employers. / BGH/BID/Comms
	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	

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	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration /Comms

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BRACKNELL FOREST ECONOMIC STRATEGY

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2024

2034

Economic Strategy
January 2024



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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.

113 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.

The Economic Strategy aims to ensure the future prosperity and competitiveness of Bracknell through delivering the right strategic balance of business growth underpinned by factors such as the right mix of employment space and housing in the appropriate locations, resilient infrastructure and also education, skills and community support, in place to support the future needs of the resident and business community. Often these factors lie within the scope of other strategies and plans, both Bracknell Forest's and those of its partners. The role of the Economic Strategy is to identify areas for direct action and also

interdependencies with other-activities and measures related to the underpinning factors.



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*

The Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan will be delivered by the Council's economic development service in conjunction with public and private sector partners. Working with the BID, the ESDP and the Chamber of Commerce will increase the available resource and effort, as would taking full advantage of government funding aimed at achieving business growth, increasing skills and implementing climate change action. The vision aims to place Bracknell's economy at the same or greater level of neighbouring economies based on Gross Domestic Product, employment, and skills attainment.



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, specifically the factors that enable businesses and the economy to succeed and grow and that are able to be influenced at local level: i.e. access to skilled people, business support and the business environment as well as high quality infrastructure including employment space and ICT. Growth cannot be at any cost; the climate emergency means that supporting green and clean growth will be vital. The contribution of business towards net zero is therefore in scope. Workforce skills are in scope, but education is not directly in scope, although the need for dialogue between business and education and training providers is highlighted. Transport is not in scope as it is the subject of a separate Local Transport Plan with the opportunity to actively encourage new and improved infrastructure to support the economic environment. However, the economic strategy will actively support enhanced public transport connectivity between Bracknell, London and Heathrow airport. Community cohesion is covered in the Bracknell Forest Council Plan.

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, now adopted *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 2022-2026

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.

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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

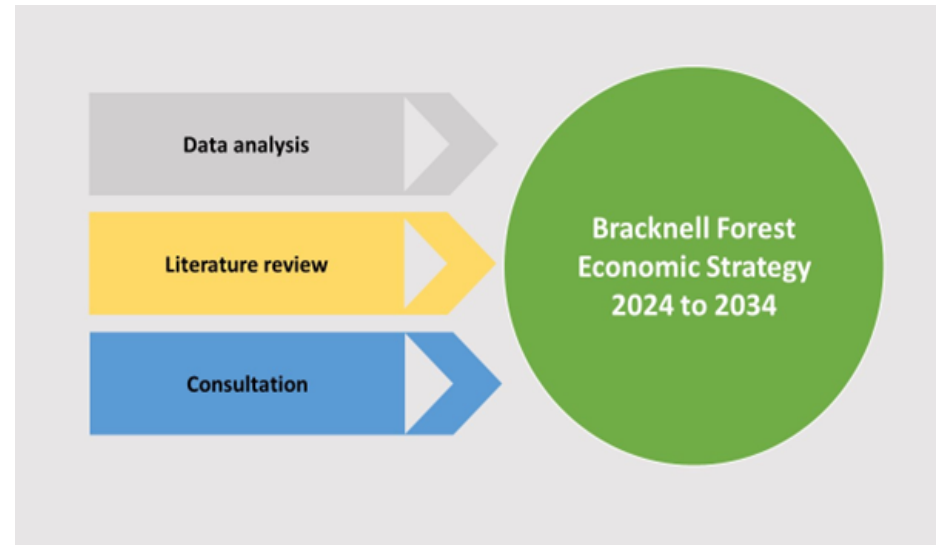


Figure 4: The inputs to the Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034

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**

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

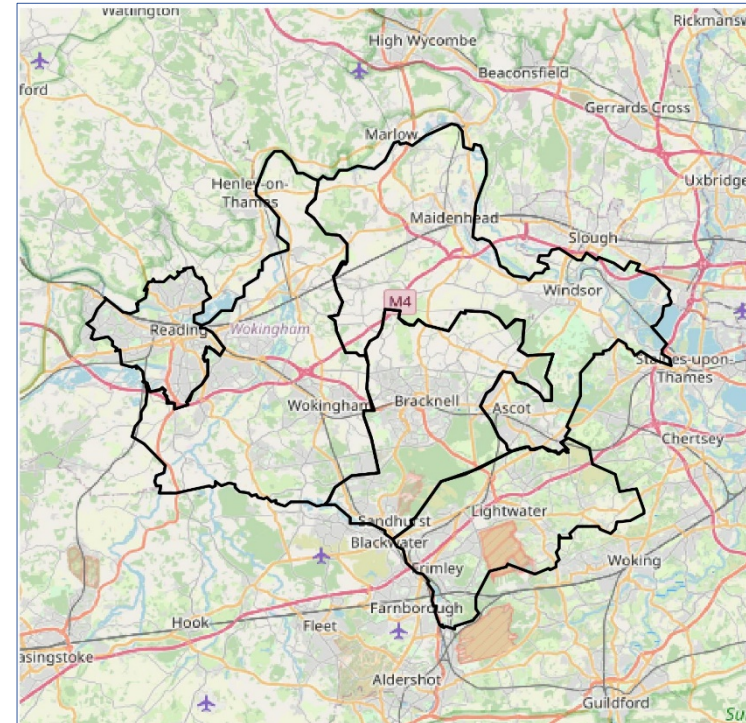


Figure 5: The LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA

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.

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.

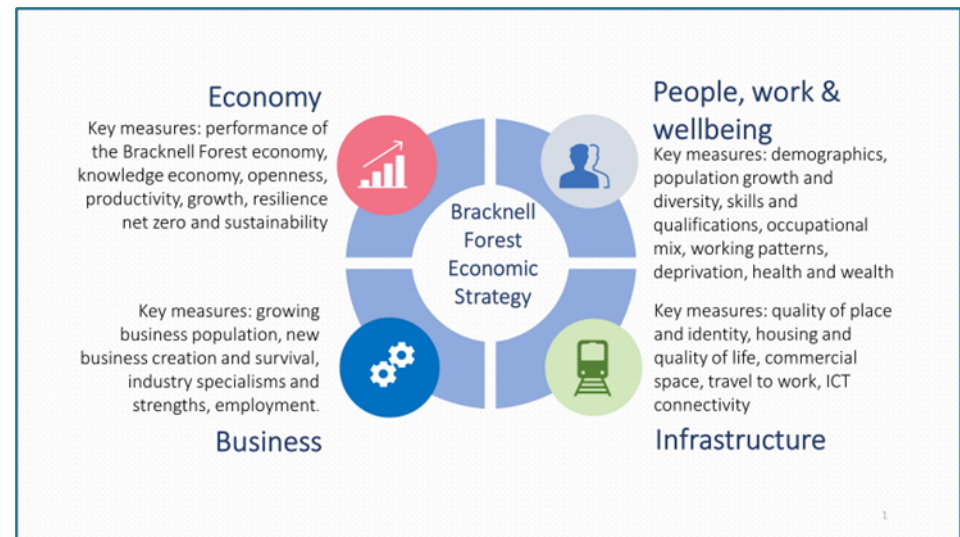


Figure 6: The balanced scorecard for the Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy

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:

- 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.
- 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, 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*

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.

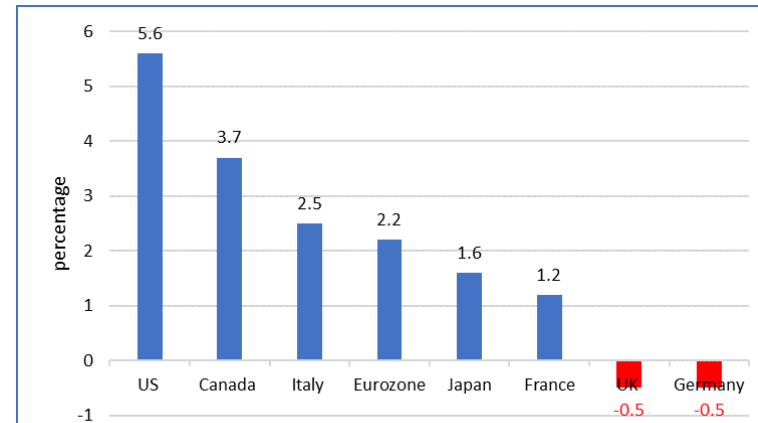


Figure 8 Percentage change in real GDP in G7, Q1 2023 compared to Q4 2019

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*:

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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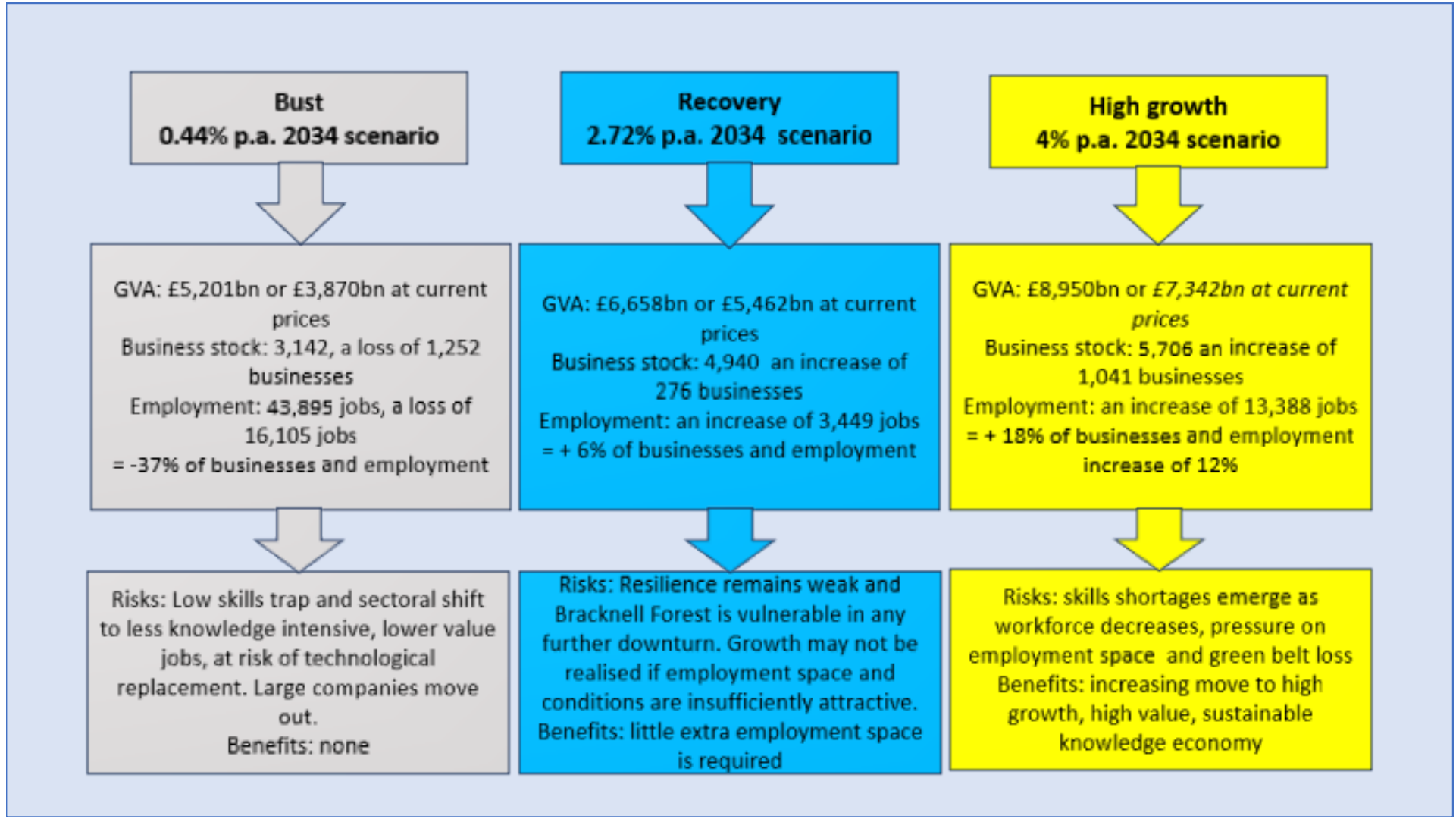


Figure 10: The three scenarios for the Bracknell Forest Economy over the lifetime of the Economic Strategy 2024-2034

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.

123 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."

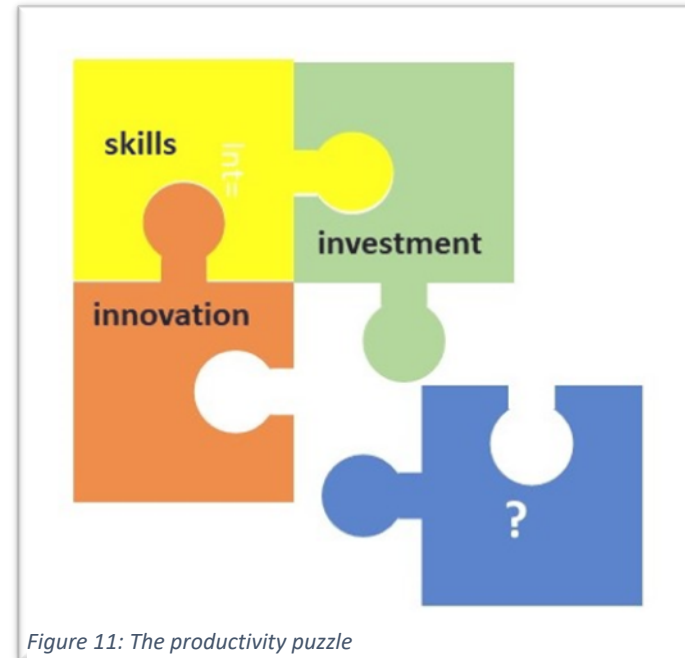


Figure 11: The productivity puzzle

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*

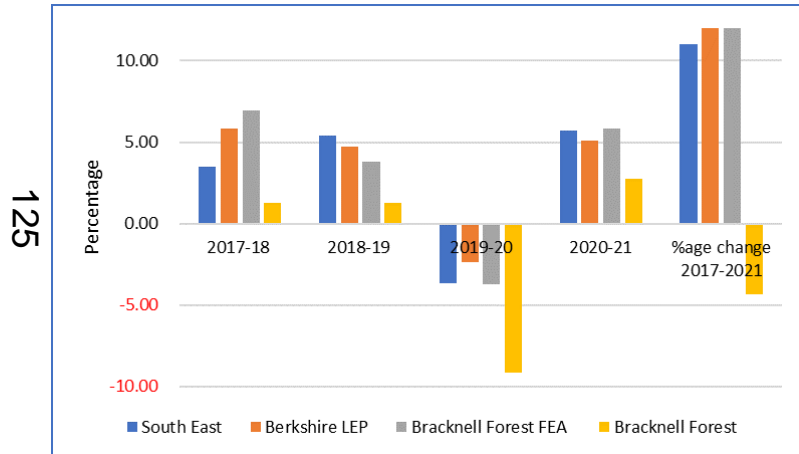


Figure 12: Percentage change in GVA in Bracknell Forest and the comparators between 2017 and 2021 and total change 2017-21

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.

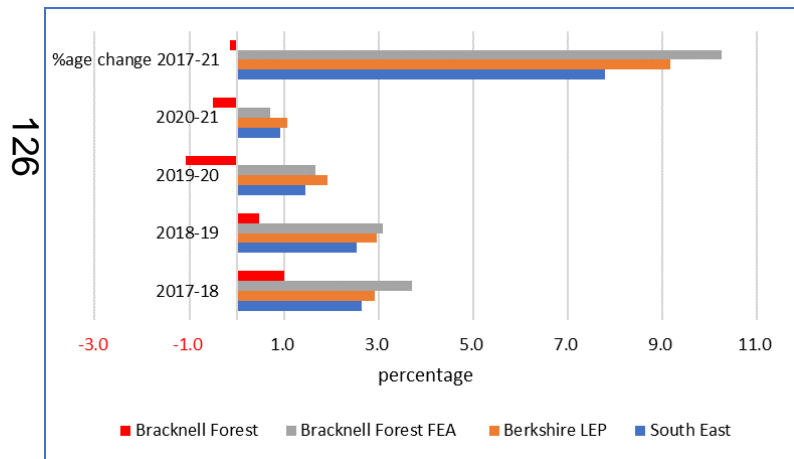


Figure 13: Percentage change in GVA per filled job in Bracknell Forest and the comparators between 2017 and 2021 and total change 2017-21
 Source: ONS Regional gross value added (at current prices, balanced method)

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 14*

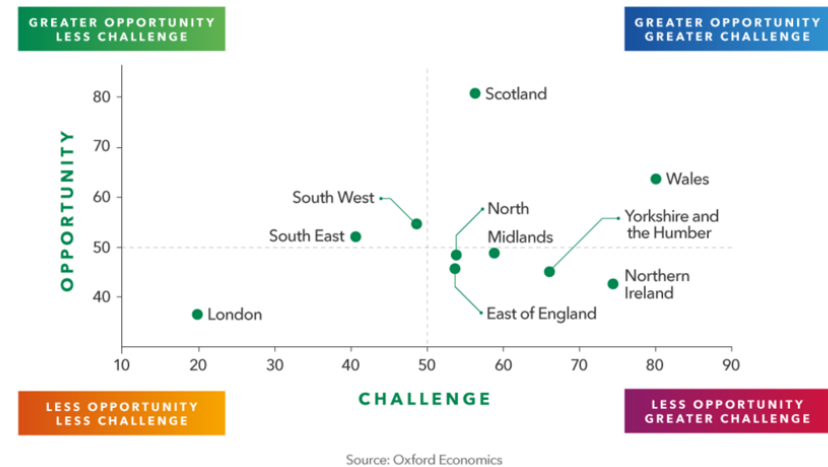


Figure 14: Green Growth Index, The scoring range is from zero to 100, with 0 indicating the least opportunity for green growth and 100 indicating the most opportunity. Source: Oxford Economics/Lloyds Banking Group

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. *Figure 15*

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.

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.

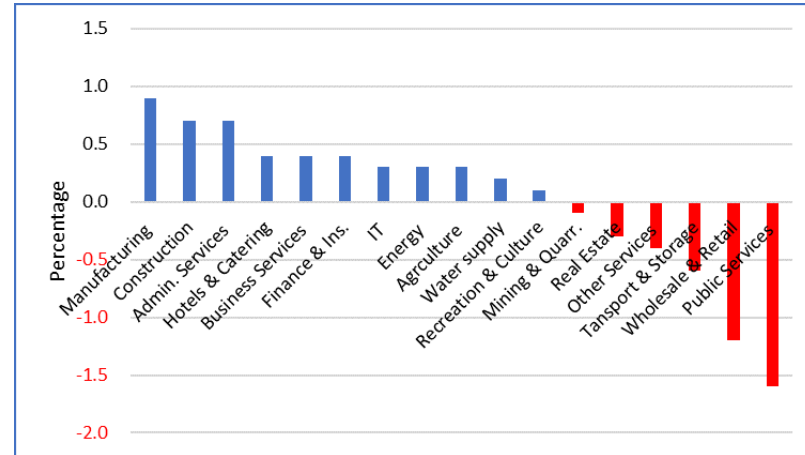


Figure 15: Contributions to total growth in output per hour worked by industry relative to the 2019 average

Source: ONS Productivity Overview 2022

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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.

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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 16*

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,

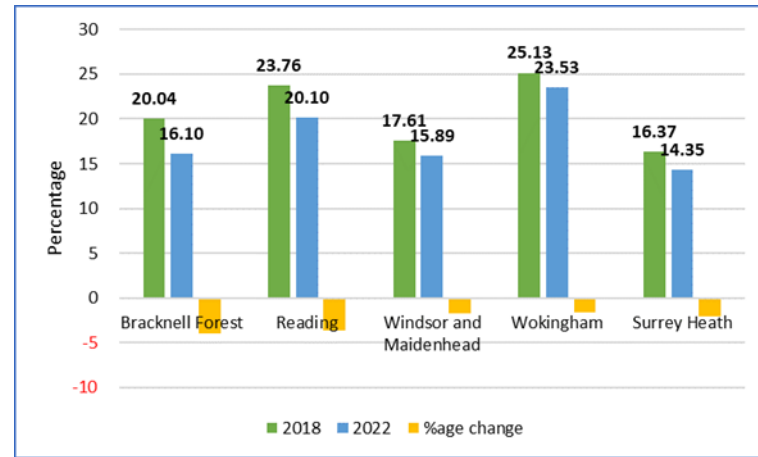


Figure 16: Change in knowledge economy businesses as a percentage of all businesses between 2018 and 2022 in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA

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

Specialisation

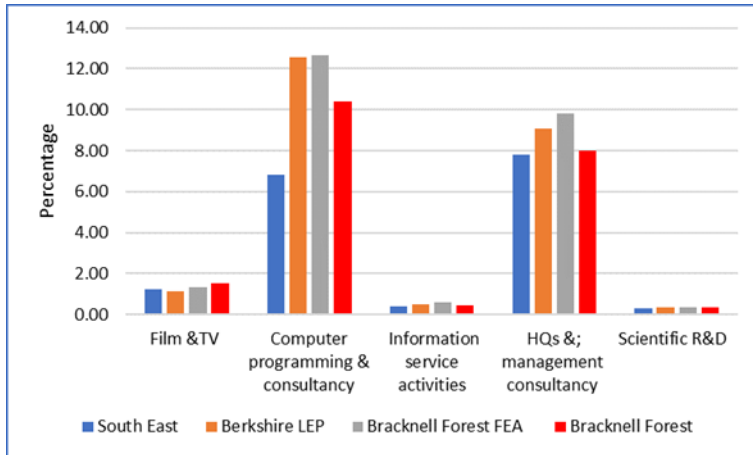


Figure 17: Business in high employment LQ industries in Bracknell Forest and the comparator areas as a percentage of all businesses in 2022
 Source: ONS UK Business Counts (enterprises by 2 digit SIC)

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 17*

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 18*

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.

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

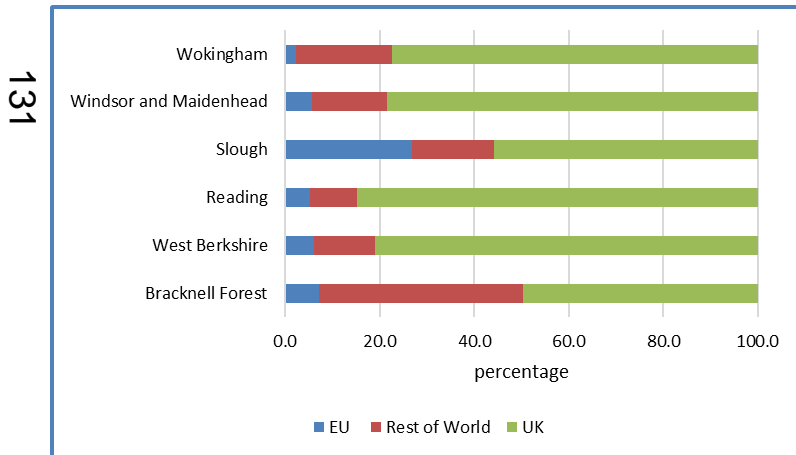


Figure 18: Percentage of total employment by EU, rest of world and UK firms in the LAAs in the Berkshire LEP area 2020

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) Ensure Bracknell Forest is an attractive location for businesses
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 lower.	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 19*

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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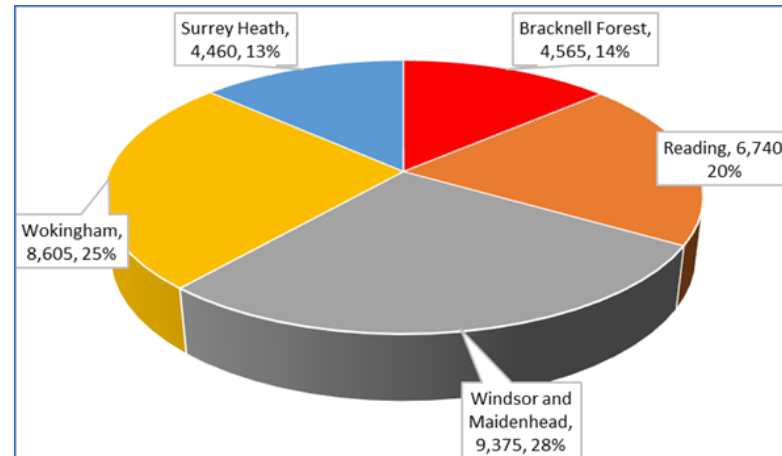


Figure 19: Numerical and percentage (rounded) share of total businesses in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA in 2022

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 20*

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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)

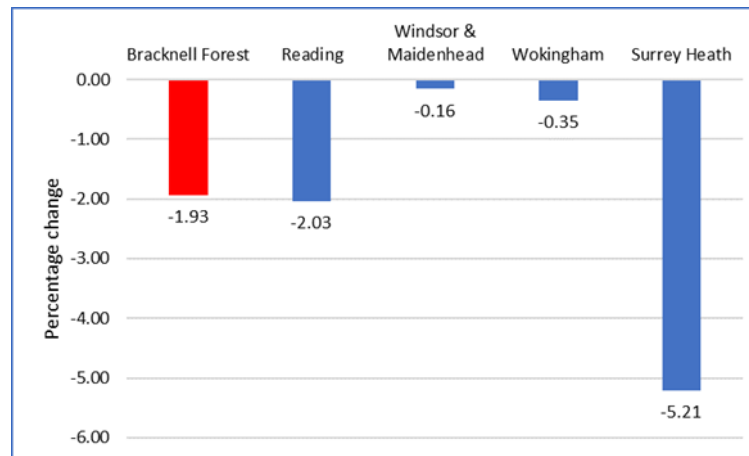


Figure 20: Percentage change in stock of enterprises in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA 2018-2022

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

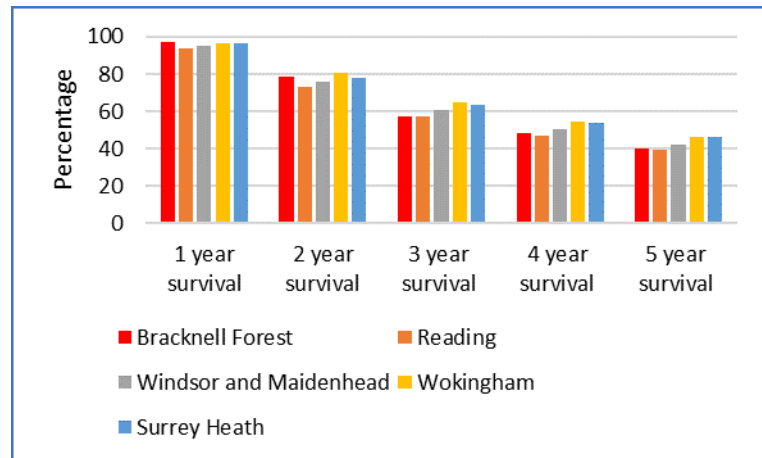


Figure 21: Survival rates for businesses born in 2016 in Bracknell Forest and the LAAs in the FEA
 Source: ONS Business demography

Bracknell Forest, which tends 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 21

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 22*

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*

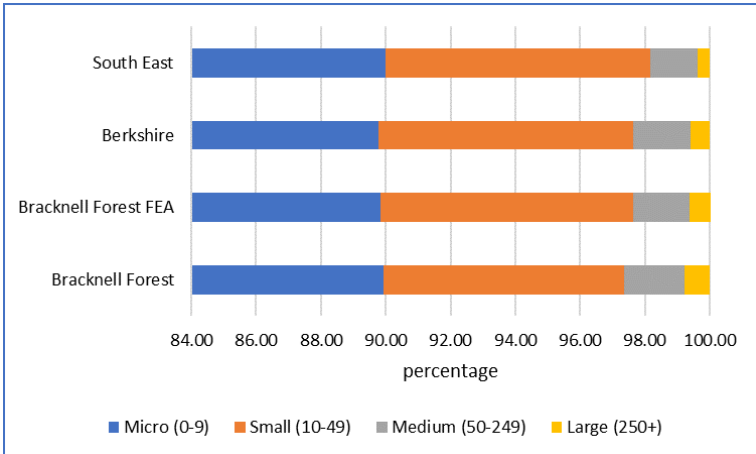


Figure 22: Percentage of businesses by employment size in the comparator areas 2022
 Source: ONS UK Business Counts enterprises by industry and employment size band

	<£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 23*

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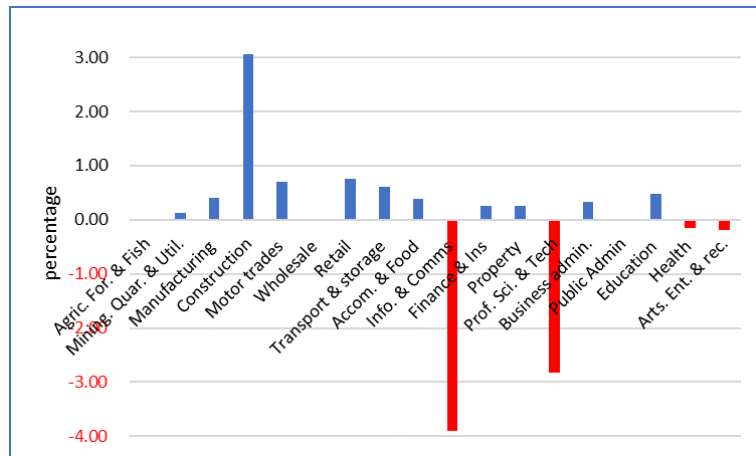


Figure 23: Change in percentage of businesses by industry in Bracknell Forest between 2018 and 2022

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 24.*

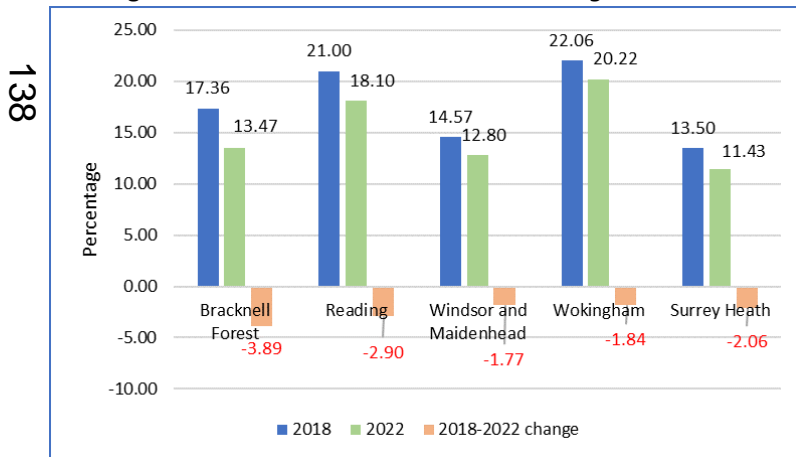


Figure 24: ICT businesses as a percentage of all businesses in the LAAs In the Bracknell Forest FEA 2018 -2022

¹¹.

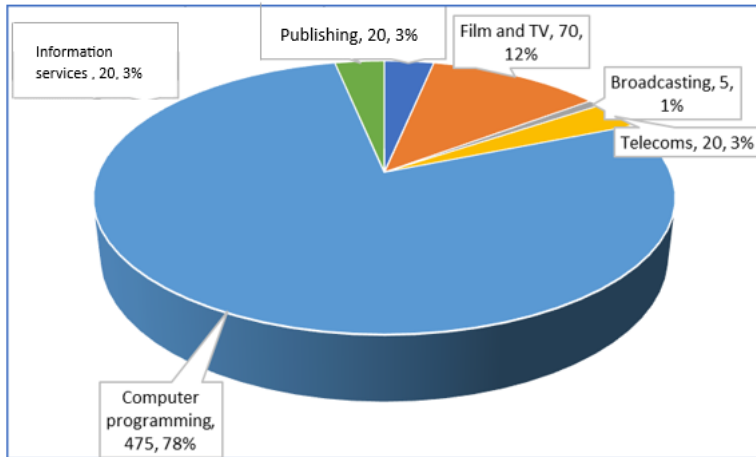


Figure 25: ICT subsectors as a percentage of ICT businesses in Bracknell Forest in 2022
Source: ONS UK Business Counts (enterprises)

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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 25*

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 Look Out 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 such as the Growth Hub to target business support on SMEs in the most important sectors to retain and grow in Bracknell Forest e.g. <i>ICT, Professional, Scientific & Technical</i> . Create a pan Bracknell Economic Partnership with parish and town council representation to harness local knowledge and commitment. Continue to support local retail initiatives through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan.
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. Draw on the knowledge of local partners such as the Parish Councils to understand the town centre economies.
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 and address any issues e.g. recruitment, planning,.. Ensure planning regime supports business growth and retention through Bracknell Forest Local Plan Nurture SMEs 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, particularly SMEs, working with other local authorities nearby in the digital creative industry locations.
B.C.6. Tourism and Hospitality	No. of day and overnight visitors.	Bracknell Forest has mainly day visitor tourism and, for overnights stays, business tourism which is mostly in 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 wellbeing 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.

142 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 27*

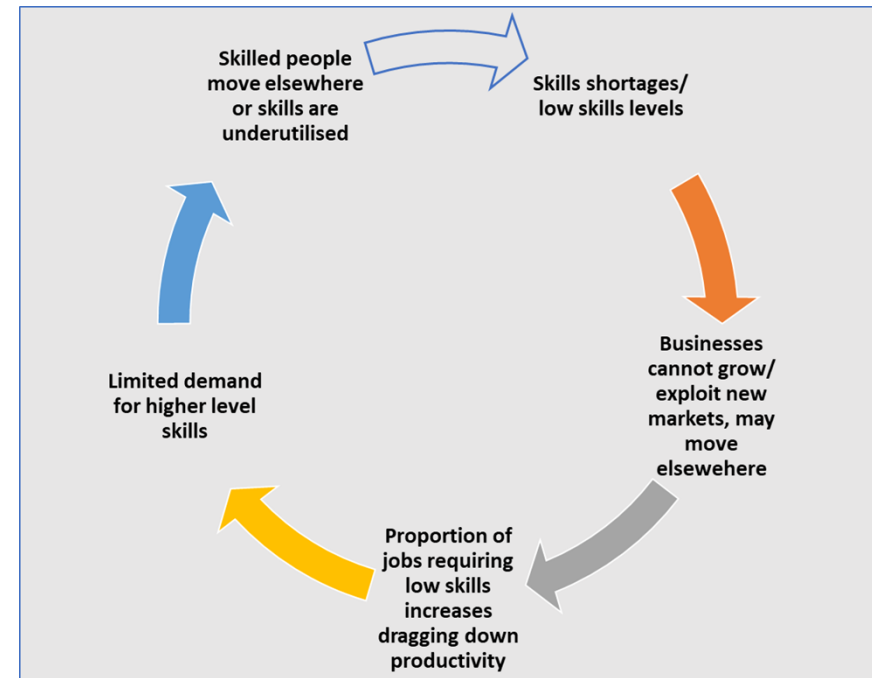


Figure 27: The low skills trap

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 wellbeing.

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.

143 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 28*



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 29*

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%.

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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. This is in spite of Bracknell’s relatively high attainment rates in schools. It will be important to align with the Berkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan to make the most of the attainment levels in Bracknell.

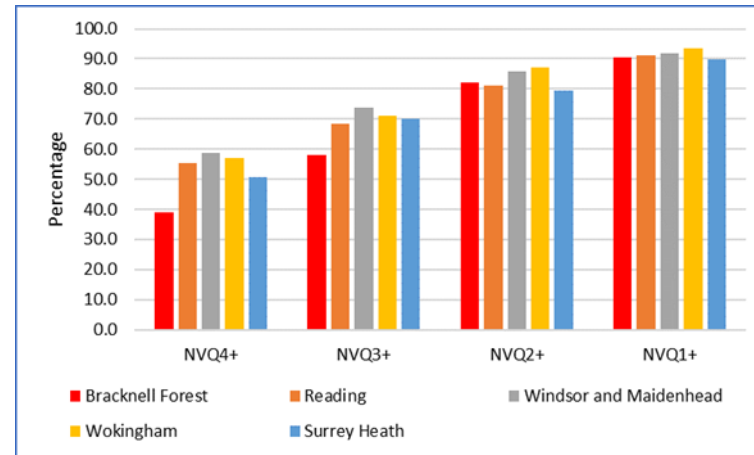


Figure 29: Percentage of working age resident population qualified at levels NVQ4+, NVQ3+, NVQ2+ and NVQ1+ in 2021 in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA
Source: ONS Annual Population Survey

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 30*

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.

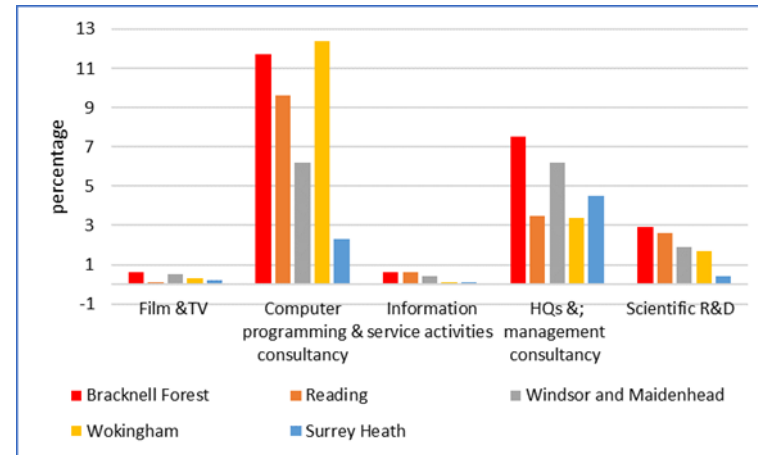


Figure 30: Percentage of total employment by specialism in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA 2021
 Source: Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) (2 digit SIC)

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 31*

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.

147 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.

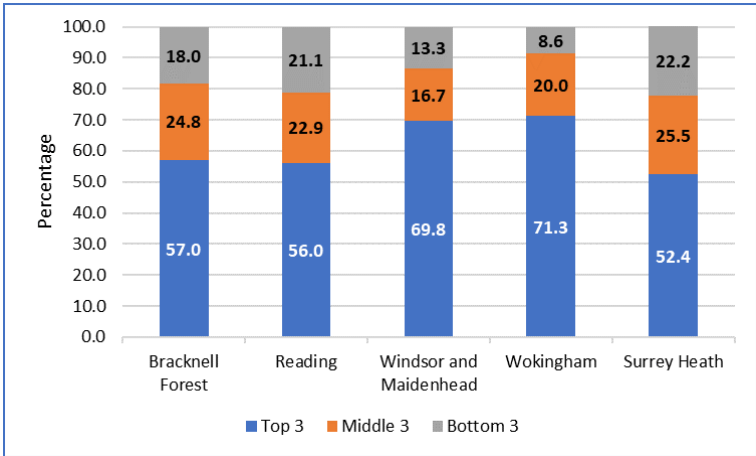


Figure 31: Percentage of residents in employment by occupational group in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA 2021
 Source: ONS Annual Population Survey

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 32*

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.

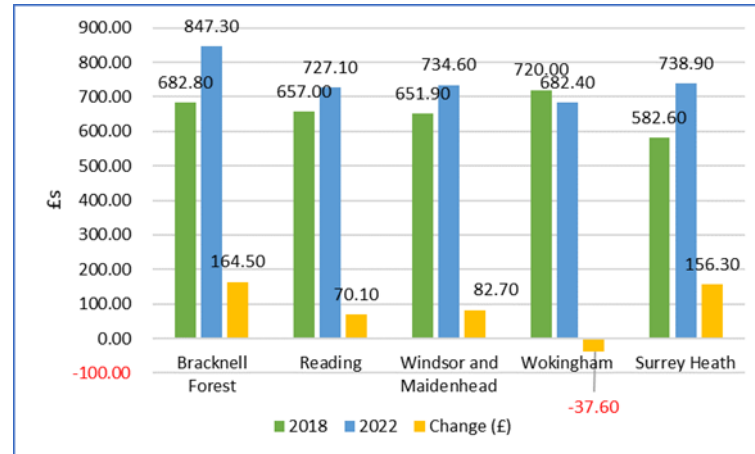


Figure 32: Workplace gross median weekly wages in £s in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA and change in £s between 2018 and 2022

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 local authority 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 significantly lower at NVQL4+ and NVQL3+ than the comparator areas, and 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 these 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. Bracknell Forest performs well on skilled trades.	Work with employers and trade bodies to ensure trades have up to date skills and promote apprenticeships. Work with the Employment Forum to ensure all are supported e.g. through supported internships to assist younger people and adults with pathways to work.
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	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.



Figure 33: South Hill Park

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.

In the event of oversupply, Permitted Development Rights (PDR) can bring 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 the short term. 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.

The most recent update of evidence for the Local Plan¹⁵ indicates that ongoing loss of office space may make meeting future need difficult over the lifetime of the plan to 2037, even though the original assessment of need indicated a surplus in the proposed allocations. It will be very important not to constrain economic growth through undersupply, and careful monitoring of trends such as changes in working patterns will be vital.

¹⁵ <https://consult.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/file/6093331>

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.



In terms of retail space, The Lexicon development has enabled Bracknell Forest

Figure 34 Generic workspace image courtesy of Jopwell

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, subject to planning constraints.

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 35*

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 giving a high priority to 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. The Council recognises the significant contribution to be made by companies to support the transition to net zero and is working closely with stakeholders¹⁶.

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, including more energy efficient buildings, and accelerating the drive to net-zero.

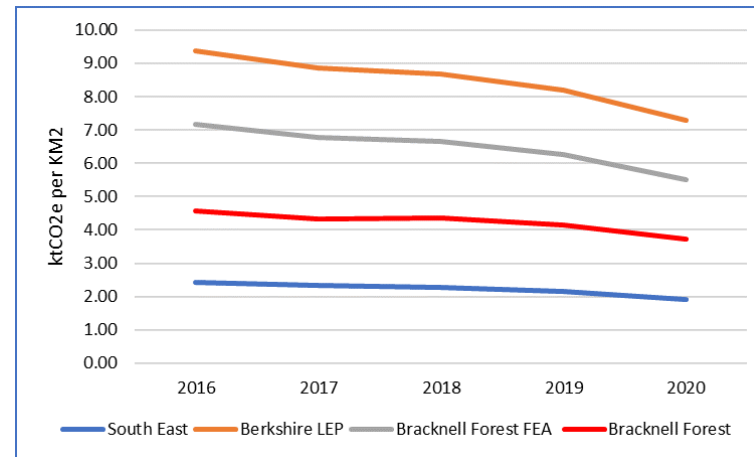


Figure 35: Greenhouse gas emissions per KM2 (kt CO₂) in Bracknell Forest and in the comparator areas in 2022

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

¹⁶ [Climate change | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

P.CC.I.C.3. Housing

Bracknell Forest has an increasing and ageing population and constraints on land availability, including Green Belt, Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Areas and the 400m zone of influence, Special Areas of Conservation and flooding (from all sources - not just fluvial associated with flood plains). 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 so that no loss of Green Belt land is envisaged in the Local Plan.. 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 36*

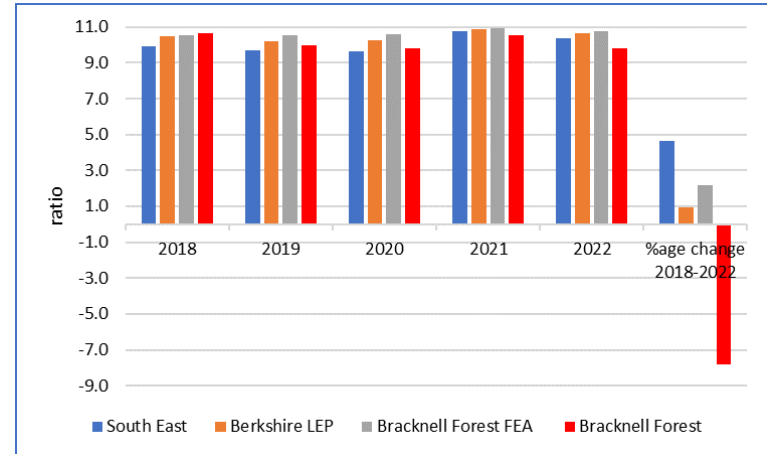


Figure 36: Ratio of median house price to median gross annual residence based earnings in Bracknell Forest and the comparator areas 2018 to 2022 and over all change

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 37

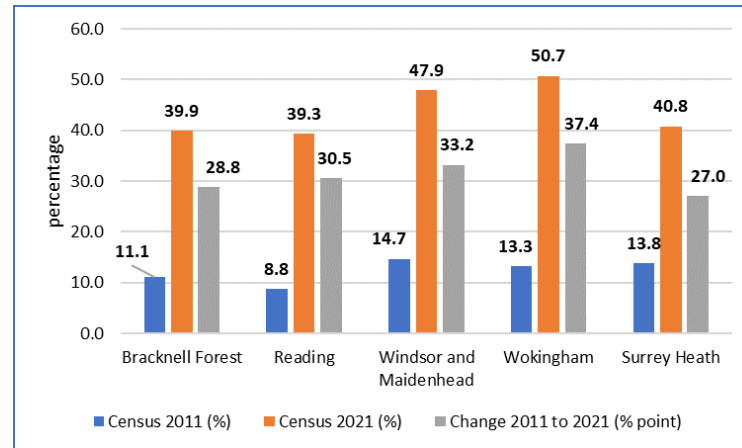


Figure 37: Percentage of those who work at or mainly from home in 2011 and 2021 and percentage change in the LAAs in Bracknell Forest FEA

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 38*

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.

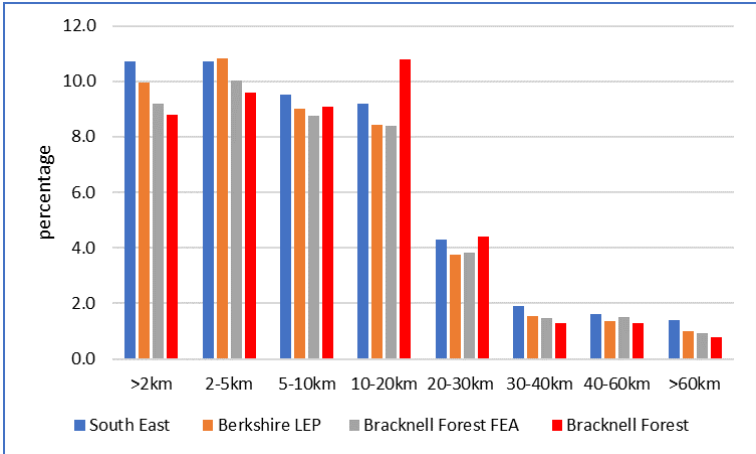


Figure 38: Distance travelled to work as a percentage of those in employment aged 16-64 in Bracknell Forest and the comparator areas
 Source: ONS Census 2021

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 39*

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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.

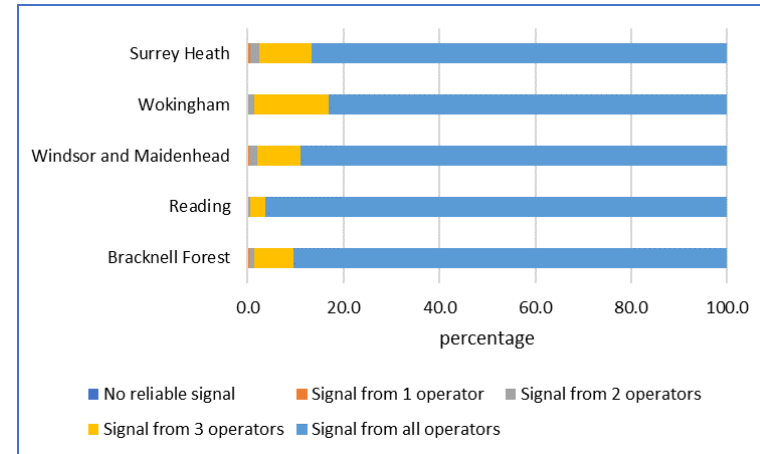


Figure 39: 4G availability: percentage of premises in the LAAs in the Bracknell Forest FEA with: No reliable signal, signal from 1/2/3 operators, signal from all operators in 2022

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 at least in the short term 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.	Engage with commercial agents to monitor demand. . 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 in knowledge economy businesses may hinder future progress towards a cleaner economy. 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. The Council to promote energy efficiency through its supply chains and relationships with business.
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	Although home working has increased in Bracknell Forest, residents have lower rates of working at or near home than in the comparator areas and higher rates of travel to work further away. Although this is typical of places with high proportions 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 .	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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8. Headline Thematic Priorities

Economic and Skills Development Partnership (ESDP)



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.

Bracknell Business Improvement District (BID)



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.

Business Liaison and Account Management



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.


Place Promotion and Destination Management



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


	<p>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>
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Climate Change and Drive to Net Zero

	<p>In September 2023 Bracknell Forest Council agreed a climate change motion. We have resolved to review, broaden and accelerate its Climate Change Strategy, and to commit to achieve net-zero CO2 emissions as close to 2030 as possible. 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.</p>
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9. Delivery Mechanisms

<p>Delivery Mechanisms</p>	
	<p>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.</p>

10. 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.

ENDS

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	Resource/Cost
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	
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer / partners	Notes	Resource/Cost
Ongoing	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.)	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	Sign up to press releases and newsletters Innovate UK More Structured approach, more regular - more out there to make connections with.	Economic Development team
Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric	Resource/Cost
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. Warehousing, 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	
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer / partners	Notes	Resource/Cost
Begin April 2024	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.)		Bracknell Forest Skills and Training Hub	UKSPF / ESDP / BFC Economic Development team
Ongoing	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.)	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration Berkshire Growth Hub/ Henley Business School/RHUL/ESDP/ Activate Learning Thames Valley Chamber, FSB Central Govt, others	Business liaison programme. A regular date each month with Cllr Paul Bidwell and Sue Halliwell / Andrew Hunter. The aim to see 12 – 20 businesses per annum. 1 Hour meetings at business location if time allows, alternatively via Microsoft Teams	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration & Economic Development Officer. Lead member and corporate management representative
Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric	Resource/Cost
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. Film & TV, Scientific R&D. 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	
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer / partners	Notes	Resource/Cost
April 2024 to March 2025	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.	Head Of Economic Development and Regeneration Berkshire Growth Hub/ LAAs in the FEA/Henley Business School/ESDP/ others	Data sources: LEP/DWP/ Fedap/ Berkshire Observatory/Higher Education research	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration & Economic Development Officer
Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric	Resource/Cost
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.	
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer/ partners	Notes	Resource/Cost
Begin April 2024	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.		Tracking available data sources - HM Government and LEP sources.	Economic Development Officer
Commence Jan 2024	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	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration/ Comms/ DBT / Berkshire Prosperity Board /ESDP	Promotional material for Bracknell Forests local economy. Highlight existing businesses with case studies on the benefits of locating in Bracknell.	BFC Communications and Marketing. Potential production costs up to £3,000

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	Resource/Cost	
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		
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer / partners	Notes		
From April 2024	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)	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration/ Berkshire Growth Hub	Focussed support by way of tailored workshops. Networking events for particular sectors.	Berkshire Growth Hub. Head of Economic Development and Regeneration and Economic Development Officer. Event/venue costs and promotion etc. Up to £5,000	
From Jan 2024	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.		Regular monitoring of ONS data, Berkshire Observatory. Data sources to be confirmed, potentially LEP and HM Government.	dictated data source cost up to £3,000	
Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric	Resource/Cost	
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		
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer / partners	Notes		
April to October 2024	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.)	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration /Comms Growth Hub/ BID/ESDP others	Work with Bracknell Forest businesses on supply chains. Compile database of businesses in the borough.	BFC Economic Development Team	
Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric	Resource/Cost	
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.		
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer / partners	Notes		
From April 2024	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.)	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration /Comms/BID Some outsourcing maybe required.	Produce a register of businesses outlining likely risks or changing circumstances		
From April 2024	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.)	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration /Comms/BID Some outsourcing maybe required.	Active business liaison programme	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration & Economic Development Officer.	
Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric	Resource/Cost	
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		
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer / partners	Notes		
Begin Industrial Strategy April 2024.	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 and Film & T.V. and Medical Devices</i> as well	BFC Economic Development and BFC Comms and potential outsourcing		BFC Economic Development Team £5,000	
Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric	Resource/Cost	
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	BFC Economic Development and BFC Communications Team and external sources	
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer / partners	Notes		
Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric	Resource/Cost	
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 at 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)		
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer/key partners	Notes		

£5,000

£3,000

£5,000

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	Resource/Cost	
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)		
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer/key partners	Notes		
Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric	Resource/Cost	
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 skill, 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		
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer/key partners	Notes		
Ongoing	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.	Bracknell Forest Skills lead/ ESDP/ Henley business school/ colleges/training providers / Activate Learning	ESDP - Employment & Skills sub group. LSIP/LSIF Bracknell Skills and Training		BFC Economic Development Team and UKSPF
Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric	Resource/Cost	
P.W.W.3: employment & employment specialisms	Bracknell Forest has seen a larger loss of jobs than the comparator areas over the recent period and is showing less labour market resilience. 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.	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		
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer/key partners	Notes		
Ongoing	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.)	Bracknell Forest skills lead/ESDP/Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (LSIP)	Local and regional data sources		BFC Economic Development Team
Ongoing	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.)	Bracknell Forest skills lead/ESDP/training providers	Bracknell Skills and Training Hub, LSIP, Apprenticeship promotion. ESDP E&S sub group		BFC Economic Development Team
Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric	Resource/Cost	
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		
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer/key partners	Notes		
Ongoing	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.	BF skills lead/ESDP/training providers/ DWP	Work experience, connections in with schools. Use business liaison to connect into local schools. Careers leads in schools - UKSPF		BFC Economic Development Team and lead member and senior BFC management representatives.
Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric	Resource/Cost	
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		
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer/key partners	Notes		
Ongoing	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)	BF skills lead/ESDP/training providers /Activate Learning	Links to P.W.W.4.1		BFC Economic Development Team and training/skills providers.
Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric	Resource/Cost	
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		
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer/key partners	Notes		

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	Resource/Cost
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	
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer/key partners	Notes	
Ongoing	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.	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration/Comms/Commercial property agents/landlords/ developers/ESDP/Bracknell BID	Engagement with landlords - gather information about Bracknell Forest businesses. Business liaison programme.	
	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.	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration/Comms/Commercial property agents/landlords/ developers/ESDP/Bracknell BID	Local commercial agents. Build relationships with employers/landlords and landlord agents. BFC Property team	
	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.	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration/Comms/Commercial property agents/landlords/ developers/ESDP/Bracknell BID	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration & Economic Development Officer time.	
	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.	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration/Comms/Commercial property agents/landlords/ developers/ESDP/Bracknell BID	Promotional material for Bracknell Forest. BFC Communications and Marketing. Potential production costs.	
Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric	Resource/Cost
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	
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer/key partners	Notes	
Ongoing	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.	HEDR/Comms/Planning/transport providers	BFC Economic Development Team and BFC Climate Change Team	
Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric	Resource/Cost
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	
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer/key partners	Notes	
Commence April 2024	P.CC.I.C.3.1 Monitor the potential conversion of employment space to Permitted Development.	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration /Comms/Planning	Annual local plan monitoring	
	P.CC.I.C.3.2. Promote the benefits of Bracknell Forest as a place to live and work. Destination management prospectus produced.	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration /Comms/Planning	BFC Economic Development and Communications and Marketing Teams	
Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric	Resource/Cost
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	
Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer/key partners	Notes	
From April 2024	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.	HEDR/key employers. / Growth hub/ BID/Comms	Berkshire Opportunites - promote to local businesses	
From April 2024	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.		Berkshire Innovation & Enterprise Hub, Easthampstead Works	
Indicator	Current state	Target State	Metric	Resource/Cost
P.CC.I.C.5: ICT infrastructure	Currently, Bracknell Forest's performance on broadband and mobile availability is among the best. Support Berkshire Digital Infrastructure Group	Leading position.	Full Fibre/5G availability.	

Timescale	Priority action	Lead officer/key partners	Notes	
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To: **EXECUTIVE**
23rd January 2024

STRATEGIC PROCUREMENT PLAN – SOUTH CENTRAL CHILDREN’S RESIDENTIAL FRAMEWORK 2024

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: PEOPLE

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek approval of the Strategic Procurement Plan for the South Central Children’s Residential Framework 2024. Approval of the Strategic Procurement Plan includes agreement to:
- Sign the Partnership agreement which confirms that Bracknell Forest Council will continue to be a member of the next South Central Children’s Residential Framework which starts in October 2024 and will last for up to 8 years (4 + 2 + 2 year contract)
 - The procurement process which will be led by Southampton City Council
 - Any call offs made on the Framework by BFC which do not exceed £40,000,000 over the 8 years of the framework agreement
 - The Frameworks proposed approach to uplifts for the new framework and BFC’s recommended position

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Executive agrees to the recommendations contained in the Strategic Procurement Plan:
- 2.1.1 That BFC enter into a partnership agreement (the Partnership) with 20 local authorities’ where Southampton City Council will be the lead procuring authority for the procurement of a new framework for children’s residential provision (4 + 2 + 2 year contract commencing in October 2024).
- 2.1.2. It is anticipated that the total expenditure by the Council through the South Central Children’s Residential framework will be between £3,500,000 and £4,000,000 per annum, giving an estimated total expenditure for the initial four year term of £16,000,000. Approval of this Strategic Procurement Plan therefore authorises all future call offs from this Framework up to £16,000,000 for the initial 4 year term of the framework, and up to a maximum of £40,000,000 for the total 4 + 2 + 2 year term of the framework.
- 2.1.3. That at the Framework Board Meeting on the 12th December 2024, BFC votes for the following uplift approach for the new Framework recognising that a quorate (50%) decision needs to be reached which may be slightly different from BFC’s preferred position:
- Placements on the current residential framework will be uplifted in line with new framework placements
 - Uplifts will be given annually at the start of the financial year from the second year of the framework onwards. This means providers will be eligible for their first uplift in April 2026 and every April thereafter

- Uplifts should be determined by Consumer Price Index including owner occupiers housing costs (CPIH) average for the year with a cap applied
- The cap should be set at a maximum of 7-8%
- Uplifts will apply to both existing and new placements

3 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The Strategic Procurement Plan provides detailed reasons for the above recommendations. To summarise, the reasons for the recommendations are:
- 3.2 **To help meet our statutory duties** - As a local Authority, our primary duty is to (provided for in section 22(3) of the Children Act 1989) safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children. Commissioning services from the residential providers on this framework, complies with the functions, duties and powers of this Act and is one way that the Council ensures that it commissions a range of placement types to meet needs. In line with the Children and Social Work Act 2017 the Council must fulfil a number of key principles in how it carries out its duties as a corporate parent for its population of Looked After Children. Securing a range of high - quality accommodation for our Children and Young People is critical to our ongoing support to children in helping them achieve their independence and ambitions.
- 3.3 As of 30th September 2023, BFC had 149 looked after children. There is only one children's residential provider with homes in Bracknell Forest (a specialist provider of care for boys and young males who have displayed sexually harmful behaviour). There is also a shortage of children's residential homes in neighbouring local authorities. Bracknell Forest Council prefers to utilise In House Foster Carer's where possible for Looked After Children. However, where a child has particularly complex needs which cannot be met by foster carer's, a residential placement may be required. BFC prefers to find residential placements using the childrens residential framework but when this isn't possible the Placements Officer spot purchases residential placements.
- 3.4 **Usage and spend** - Over the last 2 years, operational teams have shared some challenges in identifying framework placements for children – however data shows that usage of the framework has been increasing year on year. The total cost to be part of the South Central Children's Residential Framework for the 6 financial years to date has been £26,130.41. For the new framework there is an estimated one-off upfront procurement cost of £3-4K and an estimated annual management fee of £4,500 - £6K which is relatively low.
- 3.5 The Council has taken an active role in developing its in- house fostering provision and focus on step down from residential provision over recent years. However, for some children with complex needs residential provision will be required.
- 3.6 **Market management and engagement and choice** – As a small unitary being part of a framework with other local authorities, increases the Council's influence in a highly challenging residential Market.
- 3.7 **Compliance and best practice** - The Competition and Markets Authority report published in March 2022 noted that working together can make local authorities more effective and that collaborative procurement strategies can strengthen the bargaining position of local authorities. Significant spot purchasing does not align with Procurement regulations and so there is a clear need for the council to operate within requirements.

- 3.8 **Quality, Procurement and Contract Management functions** provided by Southampton City Council help reduce the workload and risk for the Council. There are set contract terms that providers must abide by.
- 3.9 **A clearer, more transparent uplift process which meets the needs of member local authorities and providers** - In recent years providers have increasingly left the framework due to a lack of inflationary uplifts which has led to member local authorities having to make more expensive placements with spot providers (and spot placements with providers who had moved off framework). The new process will hold prices for the first 18 months and thereafter there will be an annual uplift process. The recommended approach balances what will likely be acceptable to the market with minimising the impact of uplifts for as long as possible for member local authorities.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 The Alternative Options are outlined in more detail in the Strategic Procurement Plan:
- 4.2 **Do Nothing (do not re-join the current framework)** – spot purchase all residential placements. Prior to joining the framework in 2018, the Council previously spot purchased all its residential placements and it is widely recognised that this approach isn't usually effective or offers value for money and does not meet procurement regulations.
- 4.3 **To join a different Residential Framework** - other residential frameworks/dynamic purchasing vehicles were identified, however none of the other arrangements offer a better geographic fit than the South Central Children's Residential Framework or equivalent value for money.
- 4.4 **To lead our own residential framework** - this would provide a compliant route to market but given the relatively low number of children's residential placements that the Council commissions, such a tender would be unlikely to attract a great deal of interest.
- 4.5 **To block purchase residential provision with a local provider** – this is an option that is also being considered as a future commissioning approach in partnership with a neighbouring local authority. However, this needs to be in conjunction with membership of the Children's Residential framework as having access to framework providers would still be required to meet demand.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The government has recently published the 'Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation Children's Social Care Reform 2023'. This strategy and consultation document highlighted significant and systemic issues in the children's residential care sector, including a lack of placements of the right kind, in the right places, meaning that children are not consistently getting access to care and accommodation that meets their needs.
- 5.2 The Council has been a partner in the South Central Children's Residential Framework since November 2018, the current framework ends on 30th September 2024. The lead partner of the current framework is Southampton City Council, and

the Contract Management function is led by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council. For the new framework, Southampton City Council will be both the lead partner and the contract management function. For 2022/2023, the overall framework spend per annum with providers was £246.54 million. The framework currently re-opens every year so that more providers can join the framework, however for the new framework it will be open all year round with quarterly evaluation panels to enable more providers to join.

- 5.3 Over the last 2 years, operational teams have shared some challenges in identifying framework placements for children – however data shows that usage of the framework has been increasing year on year. In 2021/22, there was a significant reduction of spot placements, with many spot placements ending with children either stepping down to Independent Fostering Agency placements or moving on to Supported Accommodation provision, this figure had remained similar in 2022/23. As a recent snapshot, at the end of October 2023, BFC had 18 children in residential placements – 11 in spot placements and 7 in framework placements. A recent cost analysis by the Framework revealed that spot purchased placements made by framework members since October 2022 are higher, on average, than on framework placements (26% higher) with more variation of cost with spot placements.
- 5.4 For the current framework, providers prices are fixed for the Framework Agreement Term with providers able to re-submit their prices for new placements during the annual opening of the framework. Unfortunately for the last 2 years framework members have not been able to reach agreement over whether uplifts should additionally be given to framework providers for existing placements due to the exceptionally challenging financial pressures. This has led to some framework members paying different prices and some providers leaving the framework. Feedback from providers is clear that if there isn't a pre-agreed enforceable uplift process in place, they will not join the new framework. A framework cost benchmarking exercise showed that if framework providers had been paid an inflationary uplift annually and stayed on the framework, prices would still have been less expensive for local authorities than if they had moved to spot placements. The new framework has designed a transparent and coherent uplift process that all member local authorities can sign up to and that hopefully will also be acceptable to the market so that the framework stays current. This process is currently being agreed by member local authorities.
- 5.5 Southampton City Council (SCC) will lead the procurement process. SCC will issue a Prior Information Notice in March 2024, the Invitation to Tender will be published in April and bids will be evaluated in July. Contract Award will be in September 2024 ready for the new contract to start on the 1st October 2024.
- 5.6 An estimated one off upfront procurement cost of £3-4K and an estimated annual management fee of £4,500 - £6K is required for membership based on BFC 2022/2023 framework utilisation rates and all partner local authorities continuing to be part of the framework. Each local authority's framework annual management fee is based on a fixed core cost and a variable cost to reflect how many placements it has with the framework each year. The higher the number of placements the higher the contribution from that Local Authority.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Contracts & Procurement Lawyer

- 6.1 The proposed procurement will be compliant with the Council's Standing Orders and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The Procurement Advice in relation to the timeline is noted.

Finance Business Partner

- 6.2 The budget requirement for all care and accommodation costs for looked after children is considered each year as part of the normal budget setting process. The procurement process of the proposed contract demonstrates a value for money approach on often high cost and complex placements and is considered the best option for these clients.

Head of Corporate Procurement

- 6.3 Due to the structure of this market and the control exhibited by providers within it, as well as legislative direction, local authorities need to work in partnership arrangements as has been set out in order to deliver the best outcomes for the children and young people they support. The Council has been a member of the partnership that Southampton City Council has led for a number of years.

When commissioning through a partnership such as this the overall contract value must be calculated on the basis of the value of all partners, hence the high value which places this contract Above Threshold and the full Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (subject to the light touch regime) apply. As the lead authority Southampton will be acting as an agent to conduct the procurement on behalf of Bracknell Forest Council and the other partners.

The proposed route to market is both compliant with the Regulations and is the option most likely to produce the stable, more cost-effective service with a more transparent uplift process, especially considering the power providers are able to leverage in this market. However, the timeline proposed by Southampton, whilst achievable, is highly ambitious for a contract of this complexity and involving this many local authorities.

Ideally the publication date of April 2024 would be brought forward, though it is recognised that this is not likely to be possible due to the complexity of the requirement and the number of partner authorities. The commissioner is advised to monitor and work with Southampton closely in order to ensure the timeline is achieved.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 An Initial Equalities Screening Record Form has been completed for this requirement and is attached to the Strategic Procurement Plan. The screening determined that a full Equality Impact Assessment was not required.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 **Continued low availability of residential placements** – finding placements on the current residential framework has been increasingly difficult in recent years and nationally there is a shortage of residential placements to meet need. In a

challenging market the Council needs as many placement finding tools as possible to try to find good quality placements for our children and young people.

- 6.6 **Pricing/Uplift challenges** – there have been an increasing number of uplift requests for the last 2 years for residential and Independent Fostering Agency placements, both on and off framework. The new framework has designed a transparent and coherent uplift process that all member local authorities can sign up to and that is also acceptable to the market so that the framework stays current. Strategic Commissioning has been working with the framework and local authority members to ensure that an uplift policy and process is developed which fulfils this aim.

Background Papers

Strategic Procurement Plan – South Central Children’s Residential Framework 2024

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