

## Notice of Meeting

### Executive

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

**Tuesday 6 February 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.	<b>Apologies</b>	
2.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
	<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.	<b>Minutes</b>	5 - 14
	To consider and approve the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 23 January 2024.	
4.	<b>Urgent Items of Business</b>	
	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.	<b>Capital Programme 2024/25</b>	15 - 36
	To recommend to Council the annual budget.	

### **EMERGENCY EVACUATION INSTRUCTIONS**

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	<b>Reporting:</b> Stuart McKellar, Executive Director: Resources	
6.	<b>Revenue Budget 2024/25</b>	37 - 160
	To recommend to Council the annual budget <b>Reporting:</b> Stuart McKellar, Executive Director: Resources	
7.	<b>Creation of a Joint Committee – Berkshire Prosperity Board</b>	161 - 182
	To agree the creation of a Joint Committee with the six Berkshire Unitary Authorities, for the purposes of driving Economic Prosperity <b>Reporting:</b> Andrew Hunter, Executive Director: Place, Planning & Regeneration	
8.	<b>Youth Services Strategy Public Consultation</b>	183 - 220
	Approval to go out to public consultation on the Youth Services Strategy 2024 – 2027.  Bracknell Forest Council and its partners recognise the need for a clear strategic vision to drive and shape our youth service provision. It is vital that we undertake a public consultation to provide opportunities for feedback to those who will benefit from or who have a stake in youth services in Bracknell Forest. This will ensure that the strategy is supported by our young people, partners and the wider community. The Youth Service is a priority for the Labour Executive as outlined in their 2023 manifesto.  In addition, Bracknell Forest Council has a duty to secure sufficient youth services in the borough. Statutory guidance for local authorities on providing youth services, related to Section 507B of the Education Act (1996), as amended by the Education and Inspections Act (2006), places a duty on local authorities to 'so far as reasonably practicable,' secure for qualifying young persons in the authority's area access to sufficient educational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities, and, efficient recreational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities.  <b>Reporting:</b> Grainne Siggins, Executive Director: People	

### **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Agenda item 9 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 9 which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:*

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

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9.	<b>Design and Construction Multi Disciplinary Consultancy Services Contract</b>	221 - 246
	To approve the strategy procurement plan to tender the appointment of an organisation to provide multi disciplinary consultancy services <b>Reporting:</b> Kamay Toor, Assistant Director: Property Services	

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: 29 January 2024

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**EXECUTIVE**  
**23 JANUARY 2024**  
**5.30 - 5.48 PM**



**Present:**

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

**Present Virtually:**

Councillor Wright

**58. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**59. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive on 12 December 2023 together with the accompanying decision records be confirmed as a correct record.

**60. 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:

**61. Quarter two Council Plan Overview Report**

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

**62. Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034**

**RESOLVED** that

- i. the consultation responses and the suggested amendments to the Strategy are noted.
- ii. the Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034 and action plan is approved.
- iii. 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 of the Executive Director's report is endorsed.

**63. Procurement Plan for the Children's Residential Framework 2024**

**RESOLVED** that the Executive agrees to the recommendations contained in the Strategic Procurement Plan:

- i. 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).
- ii. 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.
- iii. 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.

**CHAIR**

**Bracknell Forest Council  
Record of Decision**

<b>Work Programme Reference</b>	<b>I114714</b>
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1. **TITLE:** Quarter two Council Plan Overview Report

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

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

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

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

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

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

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

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

None applicable.

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

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

<b>Date Decision Made</b>	<b>Final Day of Call-in Period</b>
23 January 2024	31 January 2024

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**Bracknell Forest Council  
Record of Decision**

<b>Work Programme Reference</b>	<b>I118280</b>
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1. **TITLE:** Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034

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

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To approve the draft Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034.

4 **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

**RESOLVED** that

- i. the consultation responses and the suggested amendments to the Strategy are noted.
- ii. the Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034 and action plan is approved.
- iii. 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 of the Executive Director's report is endorsed.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

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

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

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.

9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Executive Director: Place, Planning & Regeneration

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

<b>Date Decision Made</b>	<b>Final Day of Call-in Period</b>
23 January 2024	31 January 2024

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**Bracknell Forest Council  
Record of Decision**

<b>Work Programme Reference</b>	<b>I118615</b>
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1. **TITLE:** Procurement Plan for the Children’s Residential Framework 2024

2. **SERVICE AREA:** People

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

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.

4 **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

**RESOLVED** that the Executive agrees to the recommendations contained in the Strategic Procurement Plan:

- i. 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).
- ii. 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.
- iii. 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

## 7. REASON FOR DECISION

1. The Strategic Procurement Plan provides detailed reasons for the above recommendations. To summarise, the reasons for the recommendations are:
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. 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.
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.
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.
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.
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.

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.

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.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

1. The Alternative Options are outlined in more detail in the Strategic Procurement Plan:
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.
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. **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.
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.

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

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

<b>Date Decision Made</b>	<b>Final Day of Call-in Period</b>
23 January 2024	31 January 2024

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**TO: THE EXECUTIVE  
06 FEBRUARY 2024**

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## **CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/2025 - 2026/2027 (Executive Director: Resources)**

### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 As part of the Council's financial and policy planning process, the Executive issued draft Capital Programme proposals for 2024/25 – 2026/27 for consultation on 12 December 2023. The main focus was departmental spending needs for 2024/25, although future years' schemes do also form an important part of the programme. This report sets out the final proposed capital programme, following the consultation exercise, for consideration by the Executive prior to submission to the Council on 28th February 2024. The revenue implications of the recommendations in this report are reflected in the subsequent report on the Council's revenue budget proposals. Any revisions to the proposals put forward for each service would also need to be reflected in the revenue budget report.

### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Executive:**

#### **2.1 Recommends to the Council**

- a) General Fund Capital Programme of £13.016m for 2024/25 in respect of those schemes listed in Annexes A – D, of which £8.462m be funded from Council resources.**
- b) Approves the inclusion of £4.554m of expenditure to be externally funded (including £0.380m of S106 funding) as outlined in paragraph 5.20.**
- c) That those schemes that attract external grant funding are included within the Capital Programme at the level of funding received.**
- d) Agrees that capital schemes that require external funding can only proceed once the Council has received confirmation that the grant will be awarded.**
- e) The inclusion of an additional budget of £1m for Invest to Save schemes.**

### **3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

### **4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 The alternative options are considered in the report.

### **5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

## **Capital Resources**

- 5.1 Each year the Council agrees a programme of capital schemes. In the past these schemes have been funded from these main sources:
- the Council's capital receipts
  - Government Grants
  - other external contributions
  - internal and external borrowing
- 5.2 Draft capital programme proposals for 2024/25 to 2026/27 were agreed for consultation by the Executive at its December meeting. Detailed responses from the consultation are included in the revenue budget report elsewhere on this meeting's agenda. In relation to the draft capital programme, there has been very strong support for the proposed £5m investment in highways and a majority of respondents were in favour of investing in leisure facilities and suicide prevention measures. No changes to the published draft capital programme proposals are therefore proposed, although an additional item that has arisen separately to the consultation is raised for consideration in paragraph 5.4 below.
- 5.3 The Council's total usable capital receipts at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 were zero. This reflects the Council's normal practice of using all receipts in the year in which they are received to minimise the need for external borrowing.
- 5.4 Since the draft capital programme was approved for consultation the Council has received a one-off sum in final settlement of the VAT shelter scheme signed at the time of the Housing Transfer in 2008. The intention behind this scheme was to maximise the funding available to maintain and enhance the Council's housing stock that was transferred at that time to Silva's predecessor Bracknell Forest Homes, while recognising that the scheme would be time limited. A final settlement with Silva Homes was agreed in January 2024 and a sum of £1.343m has now been received. The agreement states that it is to be used by the Council to invest in initiatives and projects that are aligned with the strategic priorities of both the Council and Silva, within the local authority area.
- 5.5 In line with the VAT scheme's original intent, it is proposed that this sum be committed over the next 10 years starting in 2024/25 (£0.134m per annum) to supplement the Council's existing Housing Repairs capital budget to fund additional capital repairs and enhancements. The focus of the programme will remain on the modernisation of properties to maintain a Decent Standard with the balance of activity concentrating on property components e.g., kitchens, bathrooms, electrical installations and heating systems including to improve energy efficiency.
- 5.6 The proposed capital programme for 2024/25 has been developed on the assumption that it will be funded by a combination of government grants, other external contributions, capital receipts and borrowing only if required. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions and some small miscellaneous property sales should enable £2.0m of the capital programme to be funded from receipts. Internal resources will be used in the first instance and borrowing from external sources (e.g. the PWLB) will be used when necessary.
- 5.7 In addition, the funding approach adopted for the Coopers Hill development being taken forward by the Bracknell Forest Cambium Partnership will result in a development loan repayment to the Council of £2.4m and a capital receipt of £0.3m representing the land value both being received during 2024/25. With the former



having already been funded from use of the Council's reserves on a one-off basis, there will be no external loan to repay and therefore both of those sums will comprise additional one-off capital receipts that can be used to help fund the capital programme. However, this is a one-off arrangement and will not be repeated in future years.

- 5.8 The financing costs associated with the General Fund Capital Programme have been provided for in the Council's revenue budget plans which also appear on tonight's agenda.

#### **Invest-to-Save**

- 5.9 The Council has for many years allocated £1m each year within its capital programme proposals to be available to fund capital investment in schemes that will make a return either through revenue savings or income generation, at least equal to the cost of the financing. This has proved successful in recent years. The key criteria used to assess proposals to access this funding is that the investment needs to recover the cost of the financing (i.e. repay the amount and the interest associated with the borrowing) over time. This recognises that many initiatives, including some related to climate change, will have an element of future cost savings. Given that by definition such schemes can have at worst, a neutral impact on the Council's finances, their approval is delegated to the Chief Executive. There will be opportunities where a mix of funding could be utilised where the total savings do not cover the full costs, meaning that a mix of Invest-to-Save and other funding sources can be used to achieve the level of investment needed to support policy initiatives. Where such schemes would increase the Council's long-term indebtedness, they will be referred to the Executive for approval.

#### **New Schemes**

- 5.10 Within the general financial framework outlined above, Service Departments have considered new schemes for inclusion within the Council's Capital Programme for 2024/25 – 2026/27. Given that both capital and revenue resources are under pressure, each Department has evaluated and prioritised proposed schemes into broad categories in line with the Council's agreed Asset Management Plan approach. Having done this, only the very highest priority schemes and programmes are being recommended for inclusion in the Capital Programme.

#### **Other Unavoidable & Committed schemes**

- 5.11 This category covers schemes which must proceed to ensure that the Council is not left open to legal sanction and includes items relating to health and safety issues, new legislation etc. Committed schemes also include those that have been started as part of the 2023/24 Capital Programme – major schemes started in 2023/24 which have not yet completed will be carried forward as per normal capital expenditure rules. Also included within this category are those schemes that were previously funded from the General Fund Revenue Account, but which by their nature could be legitimately capitalised, thereby reducing pressure on the revenue budget. Schemes in this category form the first call on the available capital resources.

#### **Maintenance (Improvements and capitalised repairs)**

- 5.12 The figures below are based on the information held in the Building Groups' property management system as of August 2023. The Council's overall maintenance liability remains in the region of £18m (see table below). In line with the policy adopted in previous years the Asset Management Board (AMB) has considered only those works that fall within categories 1C and 1D. Given the financial constraints on both the revenue and capital budgets an allocation of £1.84m is recommended to address the most pressing 1C & 1D priorities.

## Maintenance Backlog

		£ (000)	£ (000)
Schools	<b>Priority 1C &amp; 1D</b>	<b>1,567</b>	
	Priority 2C & 2D	7,545	9,112
Corporate Properties	<b>Priority 1C &amp; 1D</b>	<b>3,319</b>	
	Priority 2C & 2D	5,244	8,563
Total		<b>17,675</b>	

- 5.13 There are remaining Landlord liabilities left with the Council with regard to the Leisure sites and based on updated condition surveys these works are necessary in order for the Council to fulfil these responsibilities. The table below summarises the key investment areas for planned maintenance in 2024/25, with details provided in Annex E.

Service	£
Community	65,000
Corporate Buildings	1,055,000
Culture	95,000
Leisure	435,000
Library	135,000
People	55,000
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,840,000</b>

- 5.14 Some works, whilst urgent, cannot be legitimately capitalised and must be met from a revenue budget. An overall allowance of £200,000 is available to meet these liabilities; however this will not be sufficient to meet the level of works that continue to be identified within the 1C and 1D categories considered to be of a revenue nature. It is becoming clear that there is a diminishing proportion of the 1C and 1D works that can be legitimately met from the capital budget. Unless additional revenue funds are identified then the level of outstanding works will increase. These combined bids will go some way to addressing the most urgent works within the estimated backlog identified above, with the potential to resolve some of the works currently prioritised as 1C and 1D. However, other essential, albeit slightly lower priority, works will still remain. The implications of failing to maintain buildings are progressive deterioration leading to building closures, health & safety problems, service delivery impacts and reduced property values.

### Schools

- 5.15 Identified planned maintenance for 2024/25 will be drawn from building condition surveys carried out by the Council's Managing Partner Atkins Ltd and there is approximately £1.6m of Priority 1 (Urgent) planned maintenance works in schools on the current building condition surveys. Capital funding for planned maintenance is allocated for schools, but non school buildings (Youth Service, Childrens Social Care, Adult Learning and Early Years) form part of the Council-Wide programme. The Asset Management Board recommends the Council-Wide programme of works, and the Schools Planned Works Programme Board recommends the programme of works for schools.

5.16 A Schools Planned Works Programme of £1.324m is being put forward based on the level of grant expected to be received from DfE. This includes Planned Maintenance, Fire Safety, Asbestos and Legionella works which is normally funded from DfE Schools Capital Maintenance Grant. The programme of works will be matched to the available budget.

**ICT Schemes**

5.17 The Council will be required to invest in technology and IT infrastructure over the coming years as exiting hardware and infrastructure becomes obsolete. The two key areas requiring funding in 2024/25 are hardware and Infrastructure assets. More details on specific areas of spend are laid out in the Annexes.

**Rolling programmes**

5.18 These programmes cover more than one year and give a degree of certainty for forward planning schemes to improve service delivery. They make an important contribution towards the Council’s established Asset Management Plans.

**Other Desirable Schemes**

5.19 In addition to the schemes identified in the above categories, each service has requested funding for other high priority schemes that meet the needs and objectives of their service. The net cost of schemes which attract partial external funding are included in the schemes put forward.

**Capital Programme 2024/25 – 2026/27**

5.20 A summary of the cost of new schemes proposed by Departments is set out in the table below and in Annex A. A detailed list of suggested schemes within the draft capital programme, together with a brief description of each project, for each service is included in Annexes B – D. Total requested Council funding for schemes amounts to £8.462m.

<b>Capital Programme 2024/25-2026/27</b>				
<b>Annex</b>	<b>Service Area</b>	<b>2024/25 £000</b>	<b>2025/26 £000</b>	<b>2026/27 £000</b>
B	Delivery	3,937	2,062	490
C	People	1,924	1,829	384
D	Central Directorates	7,155	6,110	6,110
	<b>Total Capital Programme</b>	<b>13,016</b>	<b>10,001</b>	<b>6,984</b>
	less Externally Funded schemes	4,554	4,675	3,230
	<b>Council Funded Programme</b>	<b>8,462</b>	<b>5,326</b>	<b>3,754</b>

**Externally Funded Schemes**

5.21 A number of external funding sources are also available to fund schemes within the capital programme. External support has been identified from two main sources:

### Government Grants

A number of capital schemes attract specific grants. It is proposed that all such schemes should be included in the capital programme at the level of external funding that is available.

A significant element of the grant-funded capital programme relates to the planned investment in Schools. The schools investment programme included in this report reflects the highest priority schemes identified by the People Department and the Education Capital Programme Board. A second key constituent of capital grant funding relates to the Highway Maintenance and the Integrated Transport Block totalling £2.85m for 2024/25.

### Section 106 (£0.380m)

Each year the Council enters into a number of agreements under Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 by which developers make a contribution towards the cost of providing facilities and infrastructure that may be required as a result of their development. Usually, the monies are given for work in a particular area and/or for specific projects

Officers have identified a number of schemes that could be funded from Section 106 funds in 2024/25, where funding becomes available. These are summarised below

<b>Department</b>	<b>Schemes</b>	<b>Budget</b>
		<i>£000</i>
Central	Local Transport Plan Schemes	100
Central	SANG	280
	<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>

### **On-going Revenue Costs**

- 5.22 There are £57k revenue costs associated with the schemes proposed for inclusion within the 2024/25 Capital Programme. These are reflected in the Revenue Budget report that follows on the agenda.

### **Funding Options**

- 5.23 The Council introduced Community Infrastructure Levy, a charge that local authorities can impose on new developments to help fund the infrastructure needed to support them, in April 2015. It is difficult to estimate the potential amount of CIL that will be generated as this will depend on the delivery of additional housing development in the Borough, which is largely outside of the control of the authority. However, based on the economic climate, the most recent housing trajectory estimates and knowledge of development schemes that will come forward in the next 18 months, it is estimated that £2m is an appropriate assumption. This is a more conservative estimate than in previous years.
- 5.24 The proposed capital programme for 2024/25 has been developed, therefore, on the assumption that it will be funded by a combination of approximately £2m of capital receipts (CIL and other miscellaneous property disposals), Government grants, other external contributions and borrowing. The financing costs associated with the Capital Programme have been provided for in the Council's revenue budget plans.
- 5.25 In addition, the funding approach adopted for the Coopers Hill development being taken forward by the Bracknell Forest Cambium Partnership will result in a development loan repayment to the Council of £2.4m and a capital receipt of £0.3m representing the land value both being received during 2024/25. With the former having already been funded from use of the Council's reserves on a one-off basis, there will be no external loan to repay and therefore both of those sums will

comprise additional one-off capital receipts that can be used to help fund the capital programme. However, this is a one-off arrangement and will not be repeated in future years.

- 5.26 Any capital expenditure approved over, and above capital receipts and external contributions will require the Council to borrow externally. The timing of this will depend on the level of surplus cash held by the Council which will be used in the first instance to fund the Capital Programme commitments. Any external borrowing will require a sum to be set aside as a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) for debt repayment in addition to an interest charge, depending on the maturity of the loan. Current long-term borrowing rates are approximately 6% reflecting a steep rise in the cost of borrowing over the last 18 months.
- 5.27 Based on an internally funded Capital Programme of £3.762m (after taking account of potential capital receipts), and with long-term interest costs at 5.7%, the interest cost in 2024/25 would amount to £106k, and £212k in a full year. The MRP charge reflects the life of individual assets that are being funded – the charge is not payable until the year after the assets come into being. The MRP charge in relation to the capital programme for 2024/25 is estimated to be £0.08m and will be charged from 2025/26.
- 5.28 Following the introduction of the Prudential Borrowing regime local authorities are able to determine the level of their own capital expenditure with regard only to affordability on the revenue account. In practice this represents the amount of borrowing they can afford to finance and will necessitate taking a medium-term view of revenue income streams and capital investment needs.
- 5.29 To achieve its aim of ensuring that capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable, the Local Government Act requires all local authorities to set and keep under review a series of prudential indicators included in the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. The Capital Programme recommended in this report can be sustained and is within the prudential guidelines. Full Council will need to agree the prudential indicators for 2024/25 to 2026/27 in February 2024, alongside its consideration of the specific budget proposals for 2024/25 and the Council's medium-term financial prospects.
- 5.30 If any amendments are made to the capital programme, the revenue consequences will need to be adjusted accordingly. Executive Members will therefore need to consider the impact of the capital programme as part of the final revenue budget decisions. Members will need to carefully balance the level of the Capital Programme in future years against other revenue budget pressures and a thorough review, including the prioritisation of those schemes planned for 2025/26 onwards, will need to be undertaken during next summer.

## **6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

### Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The authorisation for incurring capital expenditure by local authorities is contained in the legislation covering the service areas. Controls on capital expenditure are contained in the Local Government Act 2003 and regulations made thereunder.

### Executive Director: Resources

- 6.2 The financial implications are contained within the report.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 The Council's final budget proposals will potentially impact on all areas of the community. A detailed consultation process was undertaken in order to provide individuals and groups with the opportunity to comment on the draft proposals. This will ensure that in making final recommendations, the Executive can be made aware of the views of a broad section of residents and service users. Where necessary, impact assessments on specific schemes within the capital programme will be undertaken before work commences.

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 The most significant risk facing the Council is the impact of the capital programme on the revenue budget. The scale of the Council's Capital Programme for 2024/25 will impact upon the revenue budget and will itself be subject to consultation over the coming weeks. All new spending on services will need to be funded from new capital receipts or borrowing. The generation of capital receipts in future years may mitigate the impact on the revenue budget, but as the timing and scale of these receipts is uncertain their impact is unlikely to be significant.
- 6.5 There are also a range of risks that are common to all capital projects which include:
- Tender prices exceeding the budget
  - Planning issues and potential delays
  - Uncertainty of external funding
  - Building delays due to unavailability of materials or inclement weather
  - Availability of staff with appropriate skills to implement schemes
- 6.6 These can be managed through the use of appropriate professional officers and following best practice in project management techniques. The report also identifies the risk associated with the shortfall in maintenance expenditure compared to that identified by the latest condition surveys. With only those highest priorities receiving funding in 2024/25, there will be a further build up in the maintenance backlog and a risk that the deterioration in Council assets will hamper the ability to deliver good services.

### Climate Change and Ecological Impacts

- 6.7 The recommendations in Section 2 above will have no immediate impact on emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>. In general terms improvements to current assets and the construction of new facilities using modern designs and construction techniques are expected to have positive climate change implications.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 See the General Fund Revenue Budget 2024/25 report on tonight's agenda outlining the results of the budget consultation.

### Background Papers

None

### Contact for further information

Stuart McKellar – 01344 352180

[stuart.mckellar@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:stuart.mckellar@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

Calvin Orr – 01344 352125

[calvin.orr@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:calvin.orr@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

**CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/2025-2026/27  
BY DIRECTORATE**

	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	TOTAL £000
<b>Delivery</b>	3,937	2,062	490	6,489
<b>People</b>	1,924	1,829	384	4,137
<b>Central Directorates</b>	7,155	6,110	6,110	19,375
<b>Total Capital Programme</b>	<u>13,016</u>	<u>10,001</u>	<u>6,984</u>	<u>30,001</u>
<b>External Funding</b>	4,554	4,675	3,230	12,459
<b>Council Funding</b>	<u>8,462</u>	<u>5,326</u>	<u>3,754</u>	<u>17,542</u>

## CAPITAL PROGRAMME - DELIVERY

		2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	TOTAL £000
<b>Committed</b>					
Warfield Memorial Ground Enhancements		-	250	-	250
Capitalisation of Project Management costs		300	300	300	900
London Road Landfill Works		100	-	-	100
Berkshire Records Office		60	-	-	60
Surface Car Parks		200	-	-	200
		<b>660</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>1,510</b>
<b>Unavoidable</b>					
No Schemes		-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-
<b>Maintenance</b>					
Buildings Planned Maintenance Programme	1	1,689	151	-	1,840
		<b>1,689</b>	<b>151</b>	-	<b>1,840</b>
			-	-	
<b>Rolling Programme / Other Desirable</b>					
IT Schemes - Hardware Replacement	2	300	420	-	720
IT Schemes - Infrastructure	3	110	250	-	360
Braccan Chapel	4	36	-	-	36
Surface Car Parks	5	41	134	-	175
BLC Flood Defence and Pool Lining	6	381	-	-	381
Coral Reef Backwash	7	97	-	-	97
Coral Reef Replacement Pumps	8	58	-	-	58
Cemetery Extension	9	75	367	-	442
Equipment Downshire Golf Complex	10	40	40	40	120
Feasibility Studies	11	150	150	150	450
Suicide Prevention Measures	12	300	-	-	300
		<b>1,588</b>	<b>1,361</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>3,139</b>
<b>TOTAL REQUEST FOR COUNCIL FUNDING</b>		<b>3,937</b>	<b>2,062</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>6,489</b>
<b>External Funding</b>					
No Schemes		-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL EXTERNAL FUNDING</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME</b>		<b>3,937</b>	<b>2,062</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>6,489</b>



## 2024/25 Capital Programme

### Summary of New Schemes funded from Council Funds

#### DELIVERY DIRECTORATE

##### **01. Buildings Planned Maintenance Programme (£1.689m)**

Buildings planned maintenance is an annual programme of repairs and maintenance to the Councils' building stock and associated assets. It encompasses a wide range of activities, but typically includes the repair or replacement of elements of building fabric, fixtures or fittings that are worn, obsolete or otherwise damaged. The purpose of the work is to maintain the Councils' buildings to a sufficient standard to provide a safe and appropriate environment from which various services can operate from. The works included in the programme are identified through a series of condition surveys, which are undertaken on our behalf by external engineers and surveyors. A full list of works is attached.

##### **02. Hardware Replacement (£0.300m)**

Several legacy end user devices were bought through separate projects without considering the future replacement needs. This leads to a lack of ICT budget to deal with problems and replace outdated or damaged equipment, especially when the business areas bought their own items in the past.

Previous capital investment focused on updating old laptops instead of a continuous plan of replacing all user end point devices that can be adjusted and updated every year. This request proposes to cover laptops, PC's, monitors, docks, and tablets to ensure the IT estate is adequate to meet the needs of the Council.

##### **03. ICT Infrastructure (£0.110m)**

It has been identified that the current Time Square network cabling needs to be replaced to maximise the speeds that the new switches can deliver which will turn the 1GB connection in to a 20GB connection. In addition, IT services is regularly requested to carry out surveys and installations for sites outside of Time Square which have never been within previous scope for refresh and upgrade relating to infrastructure. Switches and Wi-Fi access points become end of life at which point they are no longer supported and become a risk to the organisation if they fail or become inconsistent in their performance. Whilst the Network team have tried to future proof investment as much as possible the reality is that changes to occupation of a building and surrounding environments can hugely impact on the performance and longevity of these networking items.

##### **04. Braccan Chapel (£0.036m)**

Other local sites have had recent refurbishment and it is essential that the Council maintains its chapels in good decorative order as it has to compete for business. Following the construction of the new chapel in 2018 – the Wellington – it highlights the age of the Braccan chapel which is 50+ years. Modern chapels feature both energy efficient lighting integrated with natural lighting which complement the increasingly important audio-visual elements of funeral services. The Braccan has limited natural lighting and the current artificial lighting is neither energy efficient, cheap to maintain, or complimentary to the AV screens within the chapel – often casting reflective lights directly across the images on screen. The proposed renovations would reduce the direct artificial glare and reduce

running/maintenance costs. In addition, the increasing diversity of the local population is resulting in an increase in multi-faith ceremonies, several of which entail funeral service traditions which involve the scattering of decorative powders thereby lending themselves better to hard flooring areas than carpeted ones.

#### **05. Surface car park resurfacing (£0.041m)**

The Council has 26 surface car park sites across the borough which it manages as a mixture of fee-paying sites as well as small free car parks often located around neighbourhood centres. These sites are monitored and a reactive maintenance budget of £15k allows for pothole repair, patching and relining. Patching repairs only work for so long until such time as the surface completely deteriorates and then full replanning, resurfacing, and relining are required.

A request was submitted for a resurfacing programme for £400k in 23/24. £200k was made available for 23/24 for resurfacing at Albert Road, Bracknell Leisure Centre Athletics track and Great Hollands car park. These were the sites of most significant need and cost and therefore needed to be done first. The remainder of the request to be rolled into 24/25.

As the 23/24 projects have commenced and requoted (quotes are only valid for a minimum time period) the allocated costs of £200,000 have been deemed to be insufficient and an additional £25,000 has had to be vired from another capital project. Despite contingencies being included the cost of materials has risen dramatically and over and above the allocated contingencies. This request is to complete the original projects in scope and to commit an additional £134,000 in 2025/26 to finish all the sites of most significant need.

#### **06. Bracknell Leisure Centre (BLC) – Flood Defence and Pool Lining (£0.381m)**

The pools at BLC opened in 1973 so are now 50 years old. The expected life span of the pipe material is 30 years, and as such the age of the pool the pipes are currently nearing twice the recommended age. The scum channels around the main pool at BLC are not sealed and leak on to the pipework and pool tank structure in the plant room below. This is causing rusting to some of the structure of the pool tanks and the brackets that support the pipes. This rusting has caused damage to the pipe works and has required emergency repairs. Whilst emergency repair works can be managed this proposal is to install a pipework flood defence system to reduce the risk of significant pipework failure and protect the pool assets over the remaining 9 years of the contract. The flood defence system is an actuated valve system at a cost of £170,000, this is automatic system that seals the pool in the event of a leak.

In addition to the above the proposal also includes for pool relining on the learner, training and competition pools. The condition of the pool tiles is such that they are showing significant discolouration, not due lack of cleaning/maintenance but due to rust which is coming through the tiles. There has been an increase in customer dissatisfaction and due to an increase in water clarity it is more noticeable. Due to the number of new leisure sites around the areas there is an increase in local competition. Retiling is not considered financially viable, therefore the suggestion is to reline the pool floors and walls using a pool liner with felt underlay, this comes with a 15 year guarantee.

This closure and down-time resulting from these works will create a revenue loss of £57,000 that will be added as a pressure in the 2024/25 Revenue Budget.

#### **07. Coral Reef Backwash (£0.097m)**

The design capacity of the Coral reef pool plant is ~650 Cubic metres of water per hour. As the filters start to clog from filtering out the various contaminants this flowrate declines which can eventually lead to problem with water cleanliness and the air quality in the pool hall. As the usage of Coral reef has changed over the years and pool hall environment concerns have been raised (via customer feedback and EHO visits) it has become increasingly difficult to maintain the pool filters in a clean condition. To date significant investment has been made to try to improve the pool hall atmospheric conditions. The ideal time to backwash the filters (the process of cleaning them) is in the early hours of the morning as it takes several hours for the filters to reach peak performance. The team can only backwash one filter every half hour due to constraints of an underground holding tank and replacing the water used in each backwash. With a need to have 6 clean filters each morning this would require starting to backwash at 3am. This raises issues with respect to operational working times (currently the site is none operational at this time), lone working and antisocial hours which have not been part of the normal operation since opening. This proposal is to invest in plant that would enable the automation of this process. There would be several benefits including ensuring filters are in the best possible condition, more efficient and intelligent operation of the plan and potential future energy savings.

#### **08. Coral Reef Replacement Pumps (£0.058m)**

Coral Reef Waterworld utilises belt driven primary heating pumps which were replaced in 2023/24. Existing secondary heating pumps are near to end of life, uneconomical and inefficient to run and maintain. Under the contractual split of responsibilities this element of mechanical service replacement falls to the Council to replace. The project would include new secondary heating pumps, electrical and mechanical installation, commissioning, system adjustment, sensors, and consumables. New pumps would have a lifespan of 20 years and would provide significant emergency savings and reduced CO2 emissions. Failure to replace could mean the site is exposed to high levels of risk and potential for closure if there is a pump failure. Loss of income costs would exceed project costs.

#### **09. Cemetery Extension (£0.075m 2024/25, £0.367m 2025/26)**

This request supports a change of the use of the land at Downshire Golf Course currently used as a "Pitch & Putt" to expand the burial provision at Easthampstead Park Cemetery. The council anticipates having no further burial space after the end of 2024. No longer providing burial provision potentially impacts negatively on several faiths as there are certain faiths, for whom burial is the only permitted option.

Once existing burial space runs out the cemetery will lose all 'new' burials income, whilst retaining the necessity and costs to continue to maintain the grounds. This would create an additional annual revenue pressure of circa £169,000. Were additional burial space to be provided it is estimated to guarantee another 25 years' worth of new burials income, extending the current roughly revenue-neutral situation.

The land at Downshire Golf Course has been identified as a potential solution for a cemetery extension and significant work has gone in to identifying its suitability for use as a cemetery and the implications arising from a change of land use. The site also benefits from being immediately adjacent to the existing cemetery with its associated chapel and parking making it an ideal location due to its proximity to these facilities, in addition to benefitting from the onsite staff presence. The project would entail an access road from the current cemetery to the land, coupled with the creation of a supporting network of road/pathways to serve as a new cemetery. The bulk of the existing landscape would remain largely unchanged save for the removal / levelling-off of any golf course bunkers. There will be a need for the provision of running water and electricity, but there are no plans for any additional buildings or parking.

Draft cemetery layout plans have been drawn up by our appointed consultants which indicate the council can expect project construction costs to be £442,000 allowing for inflation and contingency. The construction of a cemetery is best suited to the Spring/Summer months and given the anticipated timescales required to reach the point at which construction could begin it is currently envisaged that the project build would commence in March 2025.

#### **10. Equipment Replacement – Downshire Golf Course (0.040m)**

Downshire golf course is managed on behalf of the council by Everyone Active, and the contract details a split responsibility in terms of equipment provision. In essence, equipment previously funded from the revenue budget remains the responsibility of Everyone Active, and equipment previously provided through the council's capital programme remains the council's responsibility as it was concluded that this would result in lower long-term costs for the council and a better revenue return through the contract.

The budget required is £40k on a rolling annual programme which is required to replace existing machinery which is ageing, and ensure new machinery is available to enable the golf course to be suitably maintained. The investment in 2024/25 will see the replacement of two older tractors with a more efficient and modern one.

#### **11. 2023/24 Feasibilities (£0.150m)**

It is often the case that a scheme arises and must either be funded from a separate budget as a stop gap measure, or the project is delayed pending approval of a budget for the scheme. It is often not viable to wait up to a year pending approval of budgets to understand the viability of a scheme that has been requested by a department within the council. It is proposed that a figure of £150,000 is budgeted to allow for the various non education feasibilities that are proposed in 2024/25, which will also assist with cost certainty for any future capital bids for larger projects.

#### **12. Suicide Prevention Measures (£0.300m)**

There is a need to review suicide prevention measures at the Council's multi-storey car parks. The designs of the car parks are such that they need to be open and accessible for ventilation and whilst suicide risk has not changed over the years, it would appear the prevalence of incidents and attempts has increased over the recent years. Some mitigation measures have been implemented to date including working with the Samaritans to provide training for frontline staff and to display crisis signage. There is a Parliamentary Bill at early stages which, if successful, calls for all multi-story car parks to increase the minimum required height of guarding and implement 24-hour staffing.

Further work will be undertaken over the coming months to identify measures to reduce the risk at the Council's properties that represent the highest risk. This may include physical changes to structures but also measures to address other factors that contribute to the inherent risks of tall properties. A package of measures will be identified within the budget allocation.

## CAPITAL PROGRAMME - PEOPLE

		2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	TOTAL £000
<b>Committed</b>					
No Schemes		-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-
<b>Unavoidable</b>					
No Schemes		-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-
<b>Rolling Programme / Other Desirable</b>					
<b>Non-Schools</b>					
Housing Planned Maintenance	13	384	384	384	1,152
Waymead Air Conditioning	14	115	-	-	115
Waymead Refurbishment	15	24	-	-	24
<b>Departmental Bids:</b>					
College Hall Security	16	20	-	-	20
Larchwood	17	57	-	-	57
<b>Total</b>		<b>600</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>1,368</b>
<b>TOTAL REQUEST FOR COUNCIL FUNDING</b>		<b>600</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>1,368</b>
<b>External Funding - Other</b>					
<b>Non-Schools</b>					
No Schemes		-	-	-	-
<b>Schools</b>					
DfE Grant: Schools Capital Maintenance	24	1,324	147	-	1,471
DfE Grant: Basic Needs Grant	24	-	1,298	-	1,298
DfE Grant: Devolved Formula Capital	24	<i>tba</i>	<i>tba</i>	<i>tba</i>	-
		<b>1,324</b>	<b>1,445</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,769</b>
<b>TOTAL EXTERNAL FUNDING</b>		<b>1,324</b>	<b>1,445</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,769</b>
<b>TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME</b>		<b>1,924</b>	<b>1,829</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>4,137</b>

## **2024/25 Capital Programme**

### **Summary of New Schemes funded from Council Funds**

#### **PEOPLE DIRECTORATE**

#### **13. Housing Capital Programme (£0.384m)**

Housing planned maintenance is an annual programme of repairs and maintenance to the Councils' housing stock. It encompasses a wide range of activities, but typically includes the repair or replacement of elements of building fabric, mechanical and electrical items, fixtures or fittings that are worn, obsolete or otherwise damaged. The purpose of the work is to improve and maintain the Councils' housing stock to a decent standard to provide a safe and appropriate environment for our residents to reside in and deliver the priorities set out in the Housing and Welfare Service Plan.

The works included in the current programme were identified through a series of Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and property condition surveys, which were undertaken on our behalf by external engineers and surveyors during 2019/20 on a five-year programme. The focus of the programme will remain on the modernisation of properties to maintain a Decent Standard with the balance of activity over the next twelve months concentrating on property components e.g., kitchens, bathrooms, electrical installations and heating systems. This will in future be replaced on a fixed life cycle.

The projected costs include an allowance for a higher-than-normal uplift for construction inflation and to introduce energy saving measures as part of overall project to improve thermal comfort and reduce fuel poverty supporting Health and Wellbeing. The budget has been increased from £0.250m in the draft budget proposals to reflect funding of £1.343m received from Silva Homes in January 2024 related to the VAT arrangement entered into when the Council's Housing Stock was transferred in 2008, which is to be released for capital repairs and improvements over the next 10 years.

#### **14. Waymead Airconditioning (£0.115m)**

Waymead Short Term Care is a registered CQC Green rated service that provides respite services for up to 5 guests per night with its adjoining Day Care providing up to 10 plus guests per day. The demand for respite care and day services for people with Learning Disabilities & Autism is very high in Bracknell Forest. This service is the only provision within Bracknell and surrounding boroughs. To supplement the demand for respite and day care services, the Council commissions private providers at high costs.

The rise in temperatures over the past few years have resulted in unprecedented heat and humidity levels and this trend is expected to continue. Heatwave Level 3/4 warnings, which means that temperatures are very likely to rise to levels that increase the risk of ill health among vulnerable people like those in Waymead, is now a reality. The previous use of fans to alleviate the heat is no longer viable.

The extreme heat experienced in recent years poses a high risk to all the guests of Waymead and staff and have impacted heavily on the running of services. In some cases, services had to be cancelled or relocated to other locations. The ability to add air conditioning (AC) to the Waymead Services is essential for the future of the day and respite services meeting registration requirements effectively. The request is based on a feasibility study on the inclusion of an air conditioning solution at Waymead

which confirmed that it was possible to safely install AC at Waymead Services at a cost of around £115k. The installation will provide comfort cooling to 12 areas including bedrooms, the Day Centre and other regularly used areas of the building.

#### **15. Waymead Refurbishment (£0.024m)**

This related request to the works on Waymead is for the purchase and installation of a new bath which is needed in Room 3 and ancillary refurbishment. This specialist bath is no longer fit-for-purpose and due to its age cannot be repaired. The replacement is a highly versatile bathing system, ideal for patients with reduced posture control allowing easy patient access, and the high-low function prevents risk of caregiver back strain.

#### **16. College Hall – Site Security (£0.020m)**

The College Hall site is surrounded by 6ft high wooden fencing. Due to its age, the fence is rotting in places, and is easily damaged by students. Holes often appear, not only due to student damage but also due to animals digging under the fence to be able to cross the site. There have been several security incidents regarding access to the site due to the failure of the fencing. Given the vulnerability of the attending students, there is a significant safeguarding risk with the current perimeter fencing.

#### **17. Larchwood – Site Security (£0.057m)**

The perimeter fencing around Larchwood has been in situ since the unit was built. The fencing is standard wooden panels. The fencing needs replacement as it is no longer fit for purpose. The installation of an anti-climb fence would enable staff to focus on providing our children and young people a high-quality experience at Larchwood. This would also reduce the likelihood of staff having to use restraint and would facilitate staff to support our children and young people not only to have fun but to learn valuable life skills such as, self-regulation and risk identification whilst playing in the Larchwood garden. The external door entry system and access to office spaces is another area of identified risk, the current systems have become outdated and no longer fit for purpose. On three occasions children have been able to use their body size to override the current system and open the doors. The current open access arrangements necessitate a high staff ratio which could potentially be reduced through the addition of fob entry systems, enabling the support of additional children and young people dependent on their needs.

## CAPITAL PROGRAMME - CENTRAL DIRECTORATE

		2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	TOTAL £000
<b>Committed</b>					
No Schemes		-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-
<b>Unavoidable</b>					
No Schemes		-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-
<b>Maintenance</b>					
Council Funded Highways Maintenance	18	1,700	1,700	1,700	5,100
Council Funded Highways Maintenance - Additional Bid	19	2,000	1,000	1,000	4,000
		<b>3,700</b>	<b>2,700</b>	<b>2,700</b>	<b>9,100</b>
<b>Rolling Programme / Other Desirable</b>					
Play Areas	20	80	80	80	240
Shepherd Meadows Footbridge	21	55	-	-	55
Flood Alleviation	22	90	100	100	290
		<b>225</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>585</b>
<b>TOTAL REQUEST FOR COUNCIL FUNDING</b>		<b>3,925</b>	<b>2,880</b>	<b>2,880</b>	<b>9,685</b>
<b>External Funding</b>					
Highways Maintenance		1,888	1,888	1,888	5,664
Highways Maintenance - Incentive Element		236	236	236	708
Integrated Transport & Maintenance		726	726	726	2,178
Section 106 Schemes (LTP)		100	100	100	300
SANGS (Section 106)		280	280	280	840
		<b>3,230</b>	<b>3,230</b>	<b>3,230</b>	<b>9,690</b>
<b>TOTAL EXTERNAL FUNDING</b>		<b>3,230</b>	<b>3,230</b>	<b>3,230</b>	<b>9,690</b>
<b>TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME</b>		<b>7,155</b>	<b>6,110</b>	<b>6,110</b>	<b>19,375</b>



## 2024/25 Capital Programme

### Summary of New Schemes funded from Council Funds

#### CENTRAL DIRECTORATE

#### 18. Council Funded Highways Maintenance (£1.700m)

The adopted Local Transport Plan sets out the Council's strategy for capital investment in Highways and Transport infrastructure. The Highway Maintenance programme continues to focus on the integrity of a wide range of highway assets including carriageways, highway structures, drainage and street lighting. Nationally, local authorities are managing the implications of a background decline in overall network condition due to the long-standing fall in Government grant funding for highway maintenance. Increasing material costs due to industry inflation over the past 5 years has further impacted.

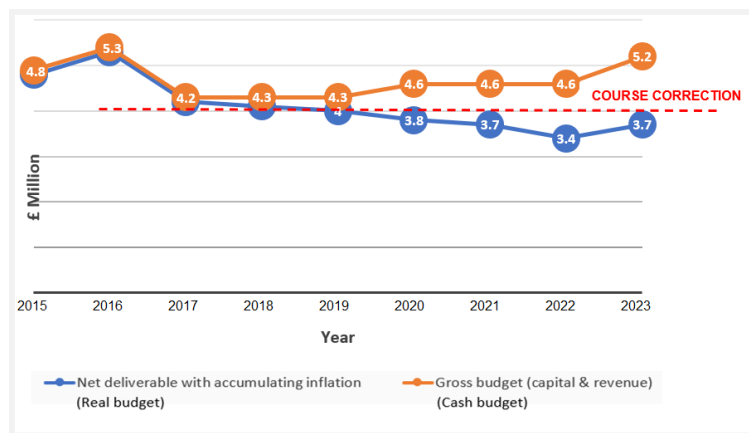
New town inheritance places an additional challenge in managing large scale asset maintenance and replacement within 'new town' areas where significant elements of highway infrastructure reach intervention points at around the same time and can be up to 60 years old.

Many significant maintenance projects are now beyond financial reach, and the residential highway network is necessarily a lower priority for intervention unless a public risk is identified. Increasing highway claims are expected due to reducing condition levels, particularly carriageways and footways.

The recently adopted Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) sets out the Council's strategic approach to managing the long-term maintenance of its highway assets over the coming 5-year period. The Department for Transport consider HIAMPs to be the benchmark for demonstrating an efficient and responsible approach to managing planned highway maintenance. Asset condition surveys, data and modelling will identify and prioritise planned highway maintenance activities and projects.

#### 19. Council Funded Highways Maintenance (£2.000m)

The allocation of £1.7m per annum from Borough capital in 2023/24 has broadly enabled a 'course correction' (see red line). However, ongoing high levels of inflation are likely to threaten this position.



Regardless, within the next 5 years there are sizeable, planned maintenance projects that remain beyond financial reach. To accommodate these within the existing programme budget would require a

redirection of funding from other core maintenance activities which would effectively cancel out the benefit of the 2023/24 budget uplift.

These projects are listed below:

Asset	Work	Cost (£000's)
A3095 Mill Lane	Street lighting cable replacement	500
A329 Berkshire Way	Resurfacing	350
A322 Bagshot Road	Resurfacing (3 phases)	2,400
Station Roundabout	Resurface/waterproof deck	500
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3750</b>

Furthermore, general carriageway condition is deteriorating at an accelerating rate. As mentioned, this is a national challenge faced by all authorities. The impact of extreme weather, as experienced last winter, creates a significant challenge in addressing potholes and avoiding insurance claims. Many roads now require full resurfacing but given the limited funding available this is reserved for the worst cases, or where asset life can be extended. This necessity leads to significant plugging and patching of defects with limited success. Therefore, a further increase in Borough capital funding towards highway maintenance is sought from 2024/25. Three options have been evaluated and summarised below. A modified Option A will add an additional £2m to the budget in 2024/25 with a commitment to a funding of £1m in each of the proceeding 4 years.

	Impact of additional 5 year funding					
	Additional annual programme funding (£000's)	Key asset projects delivered	Additional annual funding towards carriageway resurfacing (average £000's)	Total annual funding towards carriageway resurfacing (average £000's)	% outstanding carriageway resurfacing delivered over 5 years (from current data)	Rate of carriageway deterioration
<b>Option A</b>	2,000	Yes	1,730	3,730 [87% inc. from current]	75%	Stabilising
<b>Option B</b>	1,500	Yes	1,230	3,230 [62% inc. from current]	65%	Slowing
<b>Option C</b>	1,000	Yes	730	2,730 [37% inc. from current]	55%	Slowing
Existing	0	No	0	2,000	40%	Accelerating

Planned capital investment toward highway maintenance avoids an otherwise unmanaged reactive response which is typically less efficient in time and money, alongside the unexpected disruption to the travelling public. Revenue budgets will always be necessary to resolve defects of an unexpected and urgent nature but the current insufficient capital investment, particularly in carriageway resurfacing, is generating an increasingly disproportionate burden on revenue budgets. In parallel, insurance claims due to carriageway defects are increasing which introduces further resource pressures and exposure to risk.

## **20. Play Areas (£0.080m)**

There are currently 30 equipped play areas that are owned and managed by Bracknell Forest Council, largely provided through the planning process as part of land transfers or secured through S106 agreements. Many of these play areas are now old and inevitably the equipment is reaching the end of its lifespan. Council play areas are maintained by the Parks & Countryside service with costs assigned to the revenue budgets, as a result of ongoing repairs and pre-emptive maintenance works.

Capital support is required on a rolling programme to refurbish the sites as the equipment eventually reaches the point it is beyond economical repair. The historic frequency is for the renewal of one play area per year under the capital programme, choosing the site most in need of the work on an annual basis. This puts all sites on a programme of renewal once every 30 years.

The priorities for 2024/25 programme have identified Chaucer Woods in Crowthorne as the site most in need of refurbishment. The proposed project includes the safer surface replacement, renewal of equipment beyond economical repair and the change of emphasis to a younger target market of 4-to-7 year-olds.

## **21. Shepherd Meadows Footbridge (£0.055m)**

It is estimated the bridge was originally installed over 30 years ago. The bridge forms a popular well used link to Sandhurst via Shepherd Meadows and is part of a Public Right-Of-Way on the southern side of the Blackwater (Hampshire) which passes through to Blackwater shops and Blackwater train station.

During a routine inspection of the bridge the main load bearing timbers were identified with rot. A structural report was commissioned and carried out by Atkins contractor on behalf of the Council. The report concluded that the bridge was structurally compromised. According to the structural engineer's report, it is highly likely to be unfeasible to repair this footbridge, from both the financial and technical perspectives. They recommend the timber bridge deck is completely replaced.

## **22. Flood Alleviation (£0.090m)**

Parks and Countryside manage over 100 open spaces, many of which contain water bodies including wetlands, ponds, streams, and rivers. The features vary in appearance from very natural, to the more formal lakes and ponds, but all provide essential services including flood alleviation functions, as well as being a rich biodiverse habitat. Some watercourses are relatively new having been delivered through the planning process, however many are much older, dating to the creation of the original housing infrastructure of Bracknell as a new town and work is required to prevent the watercourses from becoming blocked or silted up.

As landowners the council are responsible to "let water flow naturally" and any blockages or silting up which may cause flooding upstream must be dealt with. This project aims to highlight the work required and commence a rolling programme of maintenance and enhancements to water features on council land. Benefits will include the better functioning of balancing ponds, improved local biodiversity, increased resident satisfaction and long-term reduced costs to the Council. The initial schemes to be progressed over the next 3 years include Snaprails Pond, Harvest Hill Pond and Manor Farm Ditch.

## 2024/25 Capital Maintenance Programme

Service	Site	Works	Description	Cos
Corporate Buildings	Depot Sheds	Various Works	Roof replacement, the roller shutters, fire alarms, power & lighting, and partitioning	£330,000
Corporate Buildings	Time Square	Heating replacement	Replace 2no boilers in basement boiler plant room with more efficient heating system.	£105,000
Corporate Buildings	Time Square	Flue replacement	Replace boiler flues in basement Boiler Plant Room.	£65,000
Culture	South Hill Park Arts Centre	Replace ventilation unit	Replace air handling unit in Second floor roof space	£60,000
People	Larchwood	Boiler replacement	Replace gas boilers in boiler room	£55,000
Community	Willows CC	Boiler replacement	Replace gas boilers in boiler room	£65,000
Corporate Buildings	Great Hollands	Gas upgrade to run 2nd boiler	Essential works	£45,000
Leisure	The Lookout	Landlord Repairs for external repairs	Essential repairs to building.	£55,000
Corporate Buildings	11-14, 15-18 Priestwood Square	Fire Stopping works	Essential works	£45,000
Corporate Buildings	Yoevil Road	Roof replacement	Replacement of pitched roof - essential works.	£330,000
Corporate Buildings	6 Priestwood	Internal refurbishment of communal areas	Essential works	£25,000
Leisure	Look Out (The)	Replace sanitary fittings	Refurbish toilet facility	£75,000
Leisure	Westmorland Park Pavilion	LED lighting upgrade	Replace external lighting generally.	£45,000
Library	Sandhurst Library	Boiler replacement	Boiler room - 1no Keston C40 boilers reached end of its life and needs replacing including allowance for asbestos R&D survey	£45,000
Library	Whitegrove Library	Replace ventilation	Replace AHU	£40,000
Leisure	Look Out (The)	Replace external rubber surface	Renew rubber play surface 1m fall height	£35,000
Corporate Buildings	7 Portman Close	Window upgrade	Upgrade single glazed windows into double glazed	£35,000
Corporate Buildings	7 Portman Close	Lighting upgrade	Replace lighting with LEDs	£30,000
Culture	South Hill Park Arts Centre	Replace air conditioning	Air conditioning systems are R22 and over 20+ years old.	£35,000
Library	Birch Hill Library	Electrical Services - Lighting	Replace fluorescent lighting generally with LEDs	£25,000
Corporate Buildings	Magistrates Court	Thermal Improvements	Thermal Improvements	£45,000
Library	Crowthorne Library	Lighting upgrade	Replace lighting with LEDs	£25,000
Leisure	Coral Reef	Landlord Repairs	Essential Landlord Repairs	£75,000
Leisure	Bracknell Learning Centre	Landlord Repairs	Essential Landlord Repairs	£75,000
Leisure	Downshire Golf Club	Landlord Repairs	Essential Landlord Repairs	£75,000
			<b>Total Expenditure ---&gt;</b>	<b>£1,840,000</b>

**TO: THE EXECUTIVE**  
**DATE: 06 FEBRUARY 2024**

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**GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25**  
**(Executive Director: Resources)**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 As part of the Council's financial and policy planning process, the Executive agreed draft revenue budget proposals for 2024/25 as the basis for consultation on 12 December 2023.
- 1.2 Over the course of the last two months a number of issues have become clearer, in particular the details of the Local Government Financial Settlement which was announced on 18 December. This report therefore builds on the draft budget proposals agreed by the Executive in December and sets out the Executive's final budget proposals for 2024/25. Once determined, these will be submitted to the Council for consideration on 21 February 2024.
- 1.3 The recommendations of this report are, in part, dependent upon proposals to be considered elsewhere on this agenda in respect of the Capital Programme 2024/25 - 2026/27. Changes to the proposals included within that report may therefore necessitate revisions to the 2024/25 General Fund revenue budget proposals set out below. Should this happen a short adjournment of the meeting might be required.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **That the Executive, in recommending to Council a budget and Council Tax level for 2024/25 notes that the figures in this report do not include the impact of any changes to local government funding announced since the provisional local government finance settlement was published on 18th December 2023 and that the final local government finance settlement is expected to be announced during the week starting 5th February. Recognising the potential impact of any further announcements on the budget proposals included in this report, the Executive approves that the Executive Director: Resources be authorised to adjust the general grant figures in this report as necessary with a compensating change to the level of reserves used to support the budget, while any further changes to specific grants are to be matched by equal adjustments to budgeted expenditure for those services, with no net budget impact.**

**Subject to any adjustments required to enact recommendation 2.1, that the Executive:**

- 2.2 **Agrees the provision for inflation of £4.507m (section 8.2);**
- 2.3 **Approves a further council tax discount funded by Bracknell Forest Council in 2024/25 of £75 for working age households receiving council tax support as summarised in paragraph 8.3.1a);**
- 2.4 **Confirms its support for the draft budget proposals as set out in the report**

presented to the Executive’s meeting in December 2023, subject to the revisions in section 8.3.1b) to 8.3.1k) and those decisions to be taken elsewhere on this agenda on the capital programme;

- 2.5 Agrees the additional budget proposals as set out in Annexe A and Annexe D and in sections 6.2 (Revenue Support Grant), 6.3 (specific grants), 6.4 (business rates), 7.3 (collection fund) , 8.2 (inflation) and 8.3 (updated pressures & savings);
- 2.6 Agrees that the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning approves the detailed budget allocations for High Needs pupils and Early Years provisions, up to the estimated level of available resources;
- 2.7 Includes a general contingency totalling £4.000m (section 10.7) use of which is to be authorised by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Executive Director: Resources in accordance with the delegations included in the Council’s constitution;
- 2.8 Approves the proposed Net Revenue Budget including the contribution of £>.>>>m from the Future Funding Reserve (including £>.>>>m additional interest from the use of balances) to support revenue expenditure, as set out in Annexe G;
- 2.9 Recommends a >.>>% increase in the Council Tax for the Council’s services and that the Council Tax requirement, excluding Parish and Town Council precepts, be set as £>>.>>>m;
- 2.10 Recommends that the Council Tax for the Council’s services and that each Valuation Band is set as follows:

Band	Tax Level Relative to Band D	£
A	6/9	>>>>.>>
B	7/9	>>>>.>>
C	8/9	>>>>.>>
D	9/9	>>>>.>>
E	11/9	>>>>.>>
F	13/9	>>>>.>>
G	15/9	>>>>.>>
H	18/9	>>>>.>>

- 2.11 Recommends that the Council approves the following indicators, limits, strategies and policies included in Annexe E:
  - The Prudential Indicators and Limits for 2024/25 to 2026/27 contained within Annexe E(i);
  - The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy contained within Annexe E(ii);
  - The Treasury Management Strategy Statement, and the Treasury Prudential Indicators contained in Annexe E(iii);
  - The Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator in Annexe E(iii);
  - The Investment Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27 and Treasury Management Limits on Activity contained in Annexe E(iv).

**2.12 Recommends to Council that the following additional Council Tax premiums be applied from 1 April 2025:**

- **A 100% premium for properties which have been empty and unfurnished for longer than one year (rather than 2 years as currently) and;**
- **A 100% premium for second homes.**

**2.13 Approves the virements relating to the 2023/24 budget as set out in Annexe H and recommends those that are over £0.100m for approval by Council.**

### **3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

**3.1 The recommendations are designed to enable the Executive to propose a revenue budget and Council Tax level for approval by Council on 21 February 2024.**

### **4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

**4.1 Background information relating to the options considered is included in the report.**

### **5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

#### Basis of Draft Budget Proposals

- 5.1** At its meeting on 12 December 2023, the Executive considered the expected overall position facing the Council in setting a budget for 2024/25. At the time the Executive agenda was published, the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement had not been announced. The budget proposals were therefore based on high level information included in the Government's Autumn Statements which were published on 17 November 2022 and the 22 November 2023.
- 5.2** As the Autumn Statements did not include details of funding at individual council level, assumptions were made in the draft budget proposals on how additional funding for social care and any New Homes Bonus would be allocated. Other specific grants were assumed to be unchanged from 2023/24. In this broad context, the Executive published its draft budget proposals, which were open for public consultation for a six week period.
- 5.3** In the face of significant pressures on Local Government expenditure and grant funding, the scope to invest in new service provision is severely restricted. Many of the pressures accommodated in the budget package are, however, unavoidable as they relate to current levels of demand or legislation changes.
- 5.4** As in previous years, economies have focused as far as possible on increasing efficiency, income generation, reducing central and departmental support and business change rather than reducing front line services.
- 5.5** The draft budget proposals, which reflect the priorities in the Council Plan and included a suggested approach for inflation, are summarised in Table 1. The starting point is the Commitment budget, which represents a rolling base budget adjusted only for the impact of any previously agreed policy or financial commitments.

**Table 1: Draft Budget Proposals**

Directorate	Commitment Budget (CB )	Reverse transfer from Future Funding Reserve	Reverse transfer from Future Funding Reserve	Capital programme	Inflation	Service Pressures / Economies <sup>1</sup>	Business Rates Income	Specific Grant Assumptions	Draft Budget 2024/25
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Central	22,258	0	0	0	0	280	0	0	22,538
Delivery	15,210	0	0	0	0	422	0	0	15,632
People	99,834	0	0	0	0	-16	0	-1,251	98,567
Non Departmental / Council Wide	-47,100	4,480	3,590	163	5,280	-521	500	300	-33,308
<b>Total</b>	<b>90,202</b>	<b>4,480</b>	<b>3,590</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>5,280</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>-951</b>	<b>103,429</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes an increase in Contingency of £0.250m.

## 6 Local Government Finance Settlement

### 6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 The Provisional Settlement was published on 18 December 2023 and yet again covered one year only. This confirmed that funding in a number of areas would be maintained or increased in 2024/25 and also provided details at council level of additional funding announced as part of the Autumn Statements and the Policy Statement issued on 5 December 2023. The final settlement has still to be published and is expected to be announced by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in early February.
- 6.1.2 Funding from central government is currently received through a share of Business Rates, Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Specific Grants. The provisional settlement delivers additional grant of -£0.554m compared to the expectation at the time of the draft budget proposals, with further details provided below.
- 6.1.3 Following the consultation on the Provisional Settlement, the Government has announced that an additional £500m will be provided in the Final Settlement to support social care pressures. The funding will be distributed through the Social Care Grant, which is ringfenced for adult and children's social care. A ministerial statement issued by the Secretary of State on 24 January expects councils to invest in areas that help place children's social care services on a sustainable financial footing, whilst being mindful of the level of adult social care provision. This includes investment in expanding family help and targeted early intervention, expanding kinship care, boosting the number of foster carers, and supporting Home to School Transport.
- 6.1.4 Assuming the new funding is allocated using the Adult Social Care Relative Needs Formula, the Council's share is estimated to be -£0.754m. It has been assumed that expenditure budgets will be increased to match the additional funding and therefore



there will be no net impact on the budget proposals.

- 6.1.5 DLUHC will also now require councils to submit productivity plans by the summer recess “setting out how they will improve service performance and reduce wasteful expenditure to ensure every area is making best use of taxpayers’ money”. The Government intends that these will be reviewed by an expert panel and monitored to inform future settlements. Further details will follow in the Final Settlement.
- 6.1.6 An increase in the Funding Guarantee to 4% (ensuring that all authorities see a minimum increase in Core Spending Power of 4%, before local decisions on council tax), announced at the same time, is not expected to have any additional impact on the Council. There are, however, often small adjustments to general grants in the final settlement that would affect the overall budget position. It is proposed that any such adjustments are compensated for by a matching change to the proposed use of reserves to help fund the budget.
- 6.2 Revenue Support Grant (RSG)
  - 6.2.1 The provisional settlement confirmed that RSG would be increased in line with the September increase in the Consumer Price Index (6.62%). RSG will therefore increase by -£0.142m to -£2.291m which is a net increase of -£0.100m compared to the assumption made in the draft proposals.
- 6.3 Specific Grants
  - 6.3.1 The provisional settlement confirmed additional grant funding nationally of £692m for social care. Most of this additional funding will be allocated using the adult social care relative needs formula, while £80 million will be used to equalise the variation in yield from the adult social care precept and a further £80 million in equalisation against the adult social care precept will be paid from elsewhere in the settlement, as with last year. The Council’s share of the increase is -£0.802m which is -£0.121m more than assumed in the draft budget proposals. Social care funding in total will now be -£5.665m in 2024/25.
  - 6.3.2 As expected, an additional £400m will be distributed to support hospital discharges into care settings, split 50:50 between Local Government and Health. This grant funding will be distributed using the existing improved Better Care Fund (iBCF) grant shares and will need to be pooled as part of the Better Care Fund. Based on the 2023/24 allocations it was assumed in the draft budget proposals that this would increase the Adult Social Care (ASC) Discharge Fund by -£0.143m. The actual increase was £0.001m less than expected, bringing the total Discharge Fund to £0.356m.
  - 6.3.3 An additional £283m has been allocated to help support capacity and discharge. This was announced in the 2022 Autumn Statement and based on the 2023/24 allocations the draft budget proposals assumed that the ASC Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF) would increase by -£0.427m. However, the Government has decided to combine this funding with £205 million of MSIF – Workforce Funding, the second year allocation of a separate two-year fund announced in July 2023. Although the latter was initially time limited, the fact that it has now been incorporated into the settlement increases the chance that it will continue into 2025/26. The actual increase in funding is therefore -£0.736m, which is -£0.309m more than assumed in the draft proposals.
  - 6.3.4 The iBCF will retain the same distribution and quantum as in 2023/24 (-£1.525m)

which is the position assumed in the draft budget proposals.

- 6.3.5 In December, it was assumed that the Services Grant would remain unchanged. However, the Policy Statement indicated that there would be some reduction in the grant in 2024/25. The provisional settlement confirmed that although the distribution methodology has been maintained the grant has been substantially reduced to fund other parts of the settlement. In addition, the government intends to hold back a proportion of the Services Grant as contingency to cover any unexpected movements, such as adjustments to New Homes Bonus allocations. For Bracknell Forest, Services Grant has been reduced by £0.574m to -£0.107m.
- 6.3.6 The provisional settlement confirmed that there would be a new round of New Homes Bonus (NHB) allocations for 2024/25 which would again be for one year only. The existing allocation mechanism has been maintained for a further year and the Council's allocation for 2024/25 will be -£0.495m. This is -£0.010m more than the allocation assumed in the draft budget proposals. It is likely that NHB will end after 2024/25, although the design of a replacement is no clearer than it was when the Government issued its consultation almost three years ago.
- 6.3.7 Public health grant is outside Core Spending Power and is announced separately from the settlement itself. Indicative Public Health grant allocations have already been announced with an increase in the allocation of only £0.062m to £4.594m (1.36%). The ring fence has been maintained so the impact on the budget is cost neutral.
- 6.3.8 Information on a number of smaller Specific Grants have yet to be received. Any changes in these grants will be managed within Directorate budgets and will therefore not impact on the overall budget proposals.
- 6.4 Business Rates Baseline
- 6.4.1 Another important stream of income for the Council is Business Rates, a proportion of which is retained locally following the introduction of the Business Rates Retention reforms in April 2013. The level of Business Rates changes each year due to inflationary increases (set by central government), periodic revaluations, the impact of appeals and local growth or decline as local businesses and economic conditions expand or contract.
- 6.4.2 The Government sets a baseline level of funding against which any growth or reduction is shared between local and central government. It has been confirmed this will be increased by -£0.938m or 5.37% (based on a blended rate for the increases in the small (0%) and standard (6.62%) Business Rates multipliers) to -£18.400m, an increase of -£0.589m compared to the income assumed in the draft budget proposals.

Table 2: Summary of Grant Changes From Draft Budget Expectations

	Expected Change	Actual Change	Variance
	£m	£m	£m
Revenue Support Grant	-0.042	-0.142	-0.100
Social Care Grant	-0.681	-0.802	-0.121
Discharge (Better Care Fund) Grant	-0.143	-0.142	0.001
ASC Market Sustainability Grant (now incorporating Workforce Fund)	-0.427	-0.736	-0.309
Services Grant	0.000	0.574	0.574
New Homes Bonus Grant	0.300	0.290	-0.010
Business Rates Baseline Grant	-0.349	-0.938	-0.589
<b>Total</b>	<b>-1.342</b>	<b>-1.896</b>	<b>-0.554</b>

## 6.5 Business Rates retention System

6.5.1 A national business rates revaluation took effect from 1 April 2023. This introduced changes to the amounts of business rates collectable in individual areas. To compensate for these changes, revaluation adjustments were made in the 2023/24 finance settlement to minimise the impact on any council's Business Rates resources. These adjustments were based on the best information available at the time, namely the Valuation Office Agency's (VOA) draft rateable value listing and the 2021/22 National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR3) return, which records the actual Business Rates performance for that year, for each individual Council.

6.5.2 In the 2024/25 provisional settlement the revaluation adjustment, which impacts on the Business Rates Baseline (BRB) and the tariff payable to Central Government, has been revisited and based on updated information. The calculation now uses the VOA's final rateable value listing as at the 3 April 2023 and the 2022/23 NNDR3 return. For a number of reasons, including a reduction in the total rateable value in the listing and a sizeable reduction in the Council's appeals provision in 2022/23 (as a consequence of a known property transferring to the Government's central ratings list), the revaluation adjustment has been increased substantially for Bracknell Forest. This has resulted in a reduced tariff payment to the Government and a lower levy rate (payable to the Government for any growth above baseline) for 2024/25 which is materially beneficial to the Council. There has also been a one-off adjustment to the tariff to reflect the difference between the original data used for 2023/24 and the more up to date data used for 2024/25.

6.5.3 The calculations described above have not been applied previously in the local government funding system, which was changed to accommodate the 2023 revaluation. The scale of this one-off adjustment that is backdated to 2023/24 (-£1.255m) was not anticipated in the Council's budget planning and will be reflected in the final outturn position for 2023/24 when the accounts are closed. It is proposed that this sum is transferred into the Business Rates Revaluation Reserve to help meet the 2023/24 Collection Fund deficit (see paragraph 6.5.7 below), meaning the impact on the outturn position will be cost neutral.

6.5.4 The 6.62% increase in the Standard Business Rates Multiplier in 2024/25 will also be beneficial to the Council next year but is partly offset by a reduction in the total

rateable value for the Council during 2023/24. This is due, in part, to a number of successful appeals by businesses situated in the Lexicon which have been backdated to its original opening.

- 6.5.5 The National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR1) return effectively sets the Council's budget for the Business Rates Retention Scheme and identifies the amount to be paid across to Central Government and the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority. It also identifies Section 31 grant receivable in relation to Business Rates. This is designed to cover the loss of income resulting from the capping or freezing of Business Rates increases in several previous years, the freezing of the Small Business Rates multiplier in 2024/25 and the impact of several Business Rate Reliefs. The completion of this return in mid-January has enabled the net impact of all these factors on the Council's budget to be calculated.
- 6.5.6 Business Rates growth above baseline and net of any levy payment to Central Government, which the Council is able to use to support the budget, has actually increased by -£0.644m compared to 2023/24. A £0.500m reduction was assumed in the draft budget proposals, so this represents a positive movement of £1.144m. In addition, Section 31 income is estimated to increase by -£0.469m to -£7.938m, primarily due to compensation for the Government's freezing of the Small Business Rates multiplier for a further year.
- 6.5.7 Against this increase in income for 2024/25, a large deficit of £3.721m is now projected on the Business Rates element of the Collection Fund for 2023/24, which needs to be funded in the 2024/25 budget. This partly relates to the successful appeals at the Lexicon against the 2017 listing which in most cases were backdated to 2017. As well as the in-year loss of income, a large number of outstanding appeals are also now expected to be successful and therefore the provision for appeals has had to be increased. The Council has set aside funding in its Business Rates Revaluation Reserve, which was set up to guard against the impact of any in-year Business Rates valuation adjustments. It is proposed that this reserve be used to fund the collection fund deficit, to avoid a negative impact on the 2024/25 budget.
- 6.6 Medium Term Financial Situation
- 6.6.1 The 2024/25 settlement covers one year only, and the current Spending Review (SR) period also comes to an end in 2024/25. There is therefore significant uncertainty in the medium term. Spending growth is likely to be much lower in the next SR period than it has been in recent years. Projected overall growth in public spending of 3.2% in real-terms translates into a real-terms cut of 1% for unprotected services like local government.
- 6.6.2 While the Government has signalled for many years that it would like to make fundamental changes to the current local government funding system, it confirmed in the December Policy Statement that the reforms would not take place in the current parliament. With a General Election likely in either Spring or Autumn 2024, allowing for consultations and review, it will be almost impossible for the reforms to be introduced before 2026/27. Future changes that will be revisited and most likely introduced at some point include a business rates reset, implementation of the, still to be completed, Fair Funding review and the merger of existing grants including RSG and most likely the Public Health Grant into the revised baseline.
- 6.6.3 The outcome of these deliberations is impossible to determine, although it will almost certainly have a significant long-term detrimental impact on the funding of the Council. This is a key strategic risk, with the uncertainty detailed above hindering

meaningful medium term financial planning at a time when demand pressures are increasing significantly, and inflation and interest rates remain high.

- 6.6.4 The impact of these factors will be a greater reliance on Council Tax income as an on-going source of funding to support essential front-line services. The current level of Council Tax in Bracknell Forest is one of the lowest of any Unitary Authority in England. While a high level of increase in any year is unlikely to be welcomed by residents, for many years the Council's financial plans have assumed the maximum level of increase permitted is applied. This is in line with Government assumptions and provides the greatest level of protection possible for essential services in the period from 2024/25.
- 6.6.5 Given the scale of the predicted £6.9m budget gap identified in December's draft budget report, it will be necessary to draw a significant sum from the Council's accumulated reserves to meet its legal obligation to set a balanced budget. The level of reserves held means that this is possible in the short to medium-term, however the Council's future financial strategy needs to ensure that spending is brought in line with available recurring resources in the years ahead. This will inevitably necessitate service prioritisation in addition to a continued focus on operational efficiencies and business change.

## **7 Council Tax and Collection Fund**

- 7.1 The Council Tax Base for 2024/25 has been calculated as 49,694 Band D equivalents which at current levels would generate total income of -£76.497m in 2024/25.
- 7.2 The Government limits Council Tax increases by requiring councils to hold a local referendum for any increases equal to or in excess of a threshold percentage which is included in the Local Government Financial Settlement. The Government has set a core referendum limit of 3% plus the option for councils with responsibility for adult social care, such as Bracknell Forest, to set an adult social care precept of up to a further 2%. Every 1% increase in Council Tax in Bracknell Forest would generate -£0.765m of additional income.
- 7.3 A small surplus will be generated on the Council Tax element of the Collection Fund in the current year, primarily due to an improvement in the final outturn position for 2022/23. The Council's share of this one-off surplus is £0.074m, which helps reduce the budget gap.

## **8 Developments since the Executive Meeting on 12 December 2023**

- 8.1 Consultation
- 8.1.1 The Executive's draft budget proposals have been subject to a process of public consultation since their publication in December. During the consultation period, the draft proposals have also been scrutinised by the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Commission. An extract from the minutes of the meeting is attached as Annexe B.
- 8.1.2 The Schools' Forum considered the Executive's proposals relating to the schools' element of the People's Directorate at its meeting on 11 January. The Forum recognised the financial difficulties facing Councils and expressed concern that as the centres of their communities, in supporting the most vulnerable families, further pressures will fall on schools to increase support. This will need to be managed within an average increase in per pupil funding of 1.4% which is likely to be

significantly below the level of cost pressures in 2024/25, with the council's proposals assuming a 3.5% increase for pay awards.

8.1.3 The draft budget proposals were published on the Council's website and emails were sent to business ratepayer representative groups drawing their attention to the consultation. 330 responses were received to the public consultation via the website (set out in Annexes C1 and C2) including a response from the Council's Conservative Group. This, plus a separate response from the Council's Liberal Democrat group are set out in Annexe C3. No responses were received from business ratepayers. The scale of the response to the consultation is significantly higher than in previous years and reflects Councillors' efforts to engage with local people through a series of budget consultation events at various locations across the Borough.

8.1.4 Responses were broadly supportive of most of the draft budget proposals, notably the additional investment in Highways included in the capital programme proposals. Concerns were, however, raised by a large number of respondents including the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on the following proposals;

- Removal of litter bins
- Reduced frequency of cutting grass verges in residential areas
- Dimming of street lights
- Development of community hub libraries through merging the leadership teams of Customer Services and Libraries, reducing supervisors from 6 to 4 and closure of the home library service.

8.1.5 In response to this feedback, Executive Councillors have agreed that the first two savings above that were included in the original draft budget package should be removed, adding £0.046m to the 2024/25 spending proposals (see section 8.3.1).

8.1.6 The Executive proposes to retain plans to dim street lights by 10%, recognising the positive environmental benefit this will achieve in response to the Council's declaration of a climate change and ecological emergency.

8.1.7 Comments received through the consultation on the Libraries proposal generally raised objections to closure of libraries, their move to an Open+ model only or to a reduced amount of community activity within libraries. None of those models of provision or scenarios are part of the Council's actual proposals, meaning those objections are misplaced. There were also a large number of concerns regarding removal of the home library service. It has been clarified that no change will be made in the coming year to this service, while discussions have commenced around a potential alternative replacement service involving community groups, while the proposals regarding staff changes will be re-phased.

## 8.2 Inflation

8.2.1 The Executive established a framework for calculating an appropriate inflation provision at its December meeting. Inflation allowances have now been finalised within this framework and total £4.507m, £0.773m less than the figure included in the draft budget proposals. A different approach has been taken to the inflation calculation for 2024/25, capping the amount provided for within directorate budgets to below the headline inflation rate in recognition of the overall pressure on the Council's budget. This has the potential to create some financial risk during the year, particularly if the recent reduction in inflation rates stalls, as happened in the January 2024 figures. This risk is considered in the recommendation regarding the

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level of corporate contingency in paragraph 10.7 below The directorate analysis is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Inflation Allocations

<b>Directorate</b>	<b>2024/25 £'000</b>
Central	461
Delivery	560
People (excluding schools)	3,486
Non Departmental / Council Wide	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,507</b>

8.2.2 Inflation on schools' expenditure is provided for within the Dedicated Schools Budget expenditure, which is funded mainly by the Dedicated Schools Grant, with an additional top up from the Council (section 9.1).

8.3 Other Revisions to the Draft Budget Proposals

8.3.1 As outlined above, in the two months since the Executive published the draft budget proposals more information has inevitably become available. The suggested amendments to the draft budget proposals are set out in paragraphs a) to k) below, with the net impact being an increase in the net revenue budget for 2024/25 (£0.370m). These changes have been reflected in the full budget proposals set out in Annexe D and the Commitment Budget (Annexe A).

a) Central: Resources (Revenues) - Council Tax Bills

To support the most vulnerable households with their Council Tax bills, the Council has decided to continue to provide £75 of council tax support to low income working age households (£0.245m), to be funded from the Covid-19 earmarked reserve, following the approach taken in the 2023/24 budget.

b) Central: Place Planning and Regeneration – Planning System upgrade

This pressure will now be funded from the Transformation Reserve (-£0.140m).

c) Central: Place Planning and Regeneration – The Look Out

This pressure has been revised downwards to reflect the latest income performance (-£0.100m).

d) Delivery – Grounds Maintenance/Street Cleansing

Removal of the savings relating to reductions in verge cutting (£0.046m) and the number of litter bins (a £0.030m impact in 2025/26).

e) People – Social Care Costs

Due to changes in the number and cost of placements since the December report, the Social Care pressures and savings have been updated to reflect the impact in 2024/25 of existing placements (Adults £0.214m and Children's £0.056m).

f) People – Contribution to Council Statutory Education Services

The Dedicated Schools Grant includes funding to contribute to the cost of the Council's statutory and regulatory education functions. As part of the Block

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Transfer proposal to release additional funding for education for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in the Council's agreed approach to the Safety Valve Intervention Programme, a reduced sum will be available to support the Council's budget (£0.265m)

- g) People – Education and Learning Services  
To offset the loss of income from statutory and regulatory education services at item f) a review is to be undertaken to identify areas for cost reduction with effect from September 2024. A consultation on the final proposals will then be undertaken with schools if required (-£0.186m with the balance delivered in 2025/26).
- h) People – Special Education Needs (SEN) Team Restructure  
Revised estimate of the additional cost of the restructure to put in place a robust staffing structure to deliver improvements in SEND services (£0.100m).
- i) Home to School Transport / Fleet  
An increase in the initial draft budget pressure, reflecting the most up to date information (£0.105m).
- j) Non-departmental / Council Wide – Interest  
An increase in the Commitment Budget following Council's approval of a supplementary capital approval for the purchase of an additional waste truck in 2023/24 (£0.010m).
- k) Non-departmental / Council Wide – earmarked reserves  
Transfer from the Covid-19 Reserve to fund the £75 reduction in Council Tax bills for working age households in receipt of Council Tax support (-£0.245m) at item a).

8.3.2 The Executive is asked to support the changes above and confirm that there are no further changes to the draft budget proposals that they wish to make following representations made during the consultation period.

## 9 Other Budget Issues

### 9.1 Schools Budget

9.1.1 Whilst spending on the Schools Budget is generally funded by the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and therefore outside of the Council's funding responsibilities, councils retain a legal duty to set the overall level of the Schools Budget. In deciding the relevant amount, councils must plan to spend at least to the level of estimated DSG.

9.1.2 The DSG comprises 4 funding Blocks, each with a separate calculation of funding and intended purpose; the Schools Block (SB); the Central School Services Block (CSSB); the High Needs Block (HNB); and the Early Years Block (EYB). The SB and CSSB directly support mainstream schools and are generally delegated to governors. The HNB and EYB are centrally managed by councils with most of the funding ultimately being paid directly to providers, including schools. The HNB supports pupils whose educational needs are above £10,000 with the EYB mainly funding the cost of the free entitlement to childcare and early years education for 2, 3 and 4 year olds which will be expanded and extended to include children from 9 months old.

9.1.3 To date, under powers delegated through the December budget report, the



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Executive Member has agreed funding for the SB of £96.308m and a CSSB of £0.848m. These amounts represent the estimated level of DSG funding, with the detailed budget decisions matching those previously approved by the Schools Forum. The HNB and EYB will be considered by the Executive Member for Children, Young People in March with current estimates indicating income after HNB deductions of -£24.288m and -£15.150m respectively. In support of the Safety Valve funding proposals, the Schools Forum supported the transfer of £0.823m of SB and £0.140m of CSSB DSG to the HNB which is subject to approval of the Secretary of State for Education. Therefore, at this stage, total DSG income for 2024/25 is estimated at -£136,594m.

- 9.1.4 In respect of the HNB, the Executive will be aware that the amount of DSG income received is insufficient to fund the forecast costs which for 2023/24 amounted to a forecast £7.166m overspend for the year. This primarily arises from underfunding of current commitments with further increases in costs expected as the numbers of pupils requiring support and the complexity of need increase as well as general inflationary pressures. The Safety Valve programme estimates that the forecast overspending in 2024/25 will reduce to £6.483m.
- 9.1.5 This deficit will be balanced in the Council's budget by a charge to the DSG Adjustment Account as it will need to be met funded over the medium term. A contribution from the DSG Adjustment Account of £7.166m is already reflected in the base budget. A reduction in contribution of £0.683m will therefore be required which has been reflected in the Commitment Budget.
- 9.1.6 Setting the overall level of the Schools Budget and the operation of the funding formula that distributes the money to schools is a statutory council function. Agreeing how much is centrally managed by the Council is a decision for the Schools Forum. To meet DfE deadlines, council statutory decisions around the Schools Budget are delegated by the Full Executive to the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning. Recommendation 2.5 sets the parameters for the formal decision to be made. The Executive Member also endorses the decisions of the Schools Forum when these are undertaken in its statutory decision making role.
- 9.1.7 The only immediate implication of the Council's approved Safety Valve proposal, that is currently being considered by the Department for Education, relates to the Block Transfer referred to in paragraphs 8.3.1 f) and g) above. Should the proposal be agreed, it will be necessary to set aside funding for the Council's contribution to the predicted accumulated deficit on the dedicated schools grant in a new earmarked reserve. This will be done as part of the closure of the current year's accounts.
- 9.2 Pensions
- 9.2.1 Accounting standards on the treatment of pension costs (IAS19) require the inclusion within the total cost of services of a charge that represents the economic benefits of pensions accrued by employees. To simplify the presentation of the budget proposals the IAS19 adjustment has not been incorporated at this stage, although it will be included in the supporting information to the Council meeting on 21 February. This will not impact upon the Council's net overall budget or the level of Council Tax.
- 9.3 Investments
- 9.3.1 The Council has long-term borrowings; however, its level of internal resources has enabled the Council to avoid any new long-term external borrowing since 2018. The historically high interest rates will benefit the Council if it can continue to rely on internal

resources to fund its Capital Programme and offers the potential for higher investment returns in the short-term. However, this must be offset against the much higher cost of borrowing that the Council will increasingly face. The option of using internal working-capital and reserves has diminished and there is the requirement to re-finance part of its PWLB debt in November 2024.

- 9.3.2 In its latest monetary policy meeting on 13 December, the Bank of England left interest rates unchanged at 5.25%. In terms of the current market view, pricing suggests that rates will be on hold for some months to come, with easing in the latter half of the financial year.
- 9.3.3 The 2024/25 Treasury Management Report attached as Annexe E re-affirms the strategy adopted by the Executive in December 2016 that governs the amount, duration and credit worthiness of institutions that the authority will place investments with during 2024/25. As such the Council will only place deposits with the most highly rated UK Banks and Building Societies, alongside the part-nationalised UK Banks, up to a limit of £7m and for a maximum period of 364 days (for part-nationalised UK Banks). Additionally, the Council will be able to invest up to £10m with AAA Money Market Funds and other UK Local Authorities and an unlimited amount through the Government Debt Office Management Deposit Facility. The Annual Investment Strategy is shown in part (iv) of Annex E. Following the review by the Governance and Audit Committee on the 24 January 2024, the Treasury Management Strategy remains unchanged from that consulted on in December.
- 9.3.4 The Local Government Act 2003 introduced a revised framework for capital expenditure and financing, underpinned by CIPFA's Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. The Code requires the Council to set a number of prudential indicators and limits relating to affordability, capital investment and treasury management. They are included at Annexe E (i) and within the Treasury Management Strategy Statement at Annexe E (iii).
- 9.3.5 The capital programme is being considered separately on tonight's agenda and proposes Council funded capital expenditure of £8.462m and an externally funded programme (including self-funding schemes) of £4.544m for 2024/25. After allowing for projected receipts of approximately £5.2m (including CIL) in 2024/25, and carry forwards, the additional revenue costs will be £0.163m in 2024/25 and £0.295m in 2025/26. These figures have now been reflected in the Commitment Budget (with £0.057m of the total now being allocated to Delivery for the revenue impact of the closure of the Leisure Centre) and the impact on 2024/25 is unchanged from the draft budget proposals. Costs will need to be revised at the meeting if the Executive decides on a different level of capital spending.
- 9.3.6 The Council is required to pay off an element of the accumulated General Fund capital spend each year through a revenue charge (the Minimum Revenue Provision or MRP), although it is also allowed to undertake additional voluntary payments. The regulations issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities (DLUHC) require full Council to approve an MRP Policy in advance of each year. The Council is therefore recommended to approve the MRP Policy set out in Annexe E (ii) to the Treasury Management Strategy. The MRP policy has been drawn up to ensure the Council makes prudent provision for the repayment of borrowings (in accordance with the Regulations) and at the same time minimises the impact on the Council's revenue budget. The Government is currently consulting on proposed changes to MRP guidance, the result of which may require changes to the Council's MRP policy in future years, although the extent of such changes is not currently known.

9.3.7 As capital expenditure is incurred which cannot be immediately financed through capital receipts or grant, the Council's borrowing need (its Capital Financing Requirement) and its MRP will increase. The Council also needs to make a charge to revenue for "internal borrowing".

9.3.8 The draft budget proposals included an estimate of £2.944m for the Minimum Revenue Provision required to be made in 2024/25. The figures have been reviewed based on the latest capital projections and MRP remains unchanged. The actual charge made in 2024/25 will be based on applying the approved MRP policy to actual capital expenditure and funding decisions.

#### 9.4 Capital Charges

9.4.1 Capital charges are made to service directorates in respect of the assets used in providing services and are equivalent to a charge for depreciation. The depreciation charges are included in the base budget figures and are important as they represent the opportunity cost to the Council of owning non-current assets. They must therefore be considered as part of the overall cost of service delivery, particularly when comparisons are made with other organisations. It is also important that these costs should be recognised when setting the level of fees and charges.

9.4.2 Capital charges do, however, represent accounting entries and not cash expenditure. The Council is therefore able to reverse the impact of these charges "below the line", i.e. outside service directorate costs, thereby reducing the net revenue budget whilst not directly affecting the overall cost of each individual service. This means that the charges do not affect the level of Council Tax. The capital charges in 2024/25 total £15.511m which is an increase of £0.858m compared to the current year and primarily relates to the completion of a number of major highways schemes. There will be no impact on the charge to the General Fund which is based on the MRP not depreciation.

9.4.3 Changes to capital charges do affect internal services recharges (see below). Changes to these have not been incorporated into the budget proposals in this report at this stage, although they will be included in the supporting information to the Council meeting on 21 February.

#### 9.5 Internal Services Recharges

9.5.1 Members' decisions on the capital programme may affect capital charges and this will determine the overall cost of services in 2024/25. Due to their corporate nature, some services do not relate to a single service directorate, e.g. finance, IT, building surveyors, health and safety advisers etc. The budgets for these services are changed only by the specific proposals impacting on the directorates responsible for providing them (Central & Delivery). However, all such costs must be charged to the services that receive support from them.

9.5.2 The impact of changes in recharges for internal services is entirely neutral across the Council as a whole, since the associated budgets are also transferred to the services receiving them. The overall level of recharges is dependent upon the Executive's budget proposals being approved.

### **10 Statement by the Executive Director: Resources**

10.1 Under the Local Government Act 2003, the Executive Director: Resources (as the

Council's Section 151 Officer) must report to Members each year at the time they are considering the budget and Council Tax on:

- a) The robustness of estimates; and
- b) The adequacy of reserves.

In addition, CIPFA guidance on Local Authority Reserves and Balances states that a statement reporting on the annual review of earmarked reserves should be made to Council at the same time as the budget. The statement should list the various earmarked reserves, the purpose for which they are held and provide advice on the appropriate level.

Robustness of estimates

- 10.2 The annual statement on the robustness of the estimates formalises the detailed risk assessments that are undertaken throughout the year and which are a standard part of the budget preparations and are included in the Council's Strategic Risk Register.

This identifies a number of key risk areas including:

- significant pressures on the Council's ability to balance its finances whilst maintaining satisfactory service standards;
- the impact of pressures on the local health system on joint areas of work;
- changes in the local economy resulting from changes to working practices, relocation of businesses and the local skills mix;
- the impact of the use of long term locums and agency workers for key posts, loss of experienced staff and labour market pressures on finances and business resilience;
- the impact of demand led services and the need to plan for and respond to future and in-year demographic changes, changes in the market for services, levels of need and any associated financial pressures;
- delivery of an IT Strategy and digital infrastructure that meets business needs, compliance, information accuracy, data protection, greater reliance on end users and the threat of cyber-attacks;
- delivery of the Council's climate change action plan to meet environmental objectives and climate change targets and the ability to influence overall emissions in the Borough;
- Delivery of a safety valve programme which will return the Schools Budget to a balanced position and meet any cumulative deficit within the timescales required by the Department for Education.

- 10.3 The budget includes resources sufficient to enable the Council to monitor these key risks and where possible to minimise their effects on services in accordance with the strategic risk action plans. Specific risk reduction measures that are in place include the following:

- Budget Setting Process
  - Production and regular monitoring of a robust medium-term financial strategy.
  - Regular analysis of budgets to identify legislative, demographic, essential and desirable service pressures / enhancements.
  - Detailed consideration of budgets by officers and Members to identify potential budget proposals.
  - Robust scrutiny of budget proposals prior to final agreement.

- Ensuring adequacy and appropriateness of earmarked reserves, both for the immediately following and future years.
- Budget Monitoring
  - Robust system of budgetary control with regular reporting to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and through the Quarterly Service Reports (QSRs).
  - Exception reports to the Executive.
  - Regular review of the Councils’ budget monitoring arrangements by both internal and external audit to ensure they remain fit for purpose.
  - Taking corrective action where necessary during the year to ensure the budget is delivered.
  - Specific regular review by Finance Business Partners of particularly volatile budget areas.

10.4 The Executive Director: Resources receives regular updates from Finance Business Partners on the largest and most volatile budget areas which could place the overall budget most at risk and makes arrangements to report these through the regular monthly budget monitoring process. The most significant risks in the 2024/25 budget have been identified as the following:

- **Safety Valve Programme** – balancing the Schools Budget within the timeframe required by the Department for Education and financing the cumulative deficit.
- **Demographics** – the number of “demand” led adult and child client placements, the rising cost and numbers of looked after children, increasing support pressures resulting from people living longer, the impact of new housing developments and changing service provision of social care encouraging people to seek support;
- **Income** - specifically in Leisure, Planning and Building Control Fees, Car Parks, Commercial Property, Land Charges and Continuing Health Care funding. Significant income streams are reliant on customer demand and physical infrastructure remaining operational, placing a heavy reliance on planned and reactive maintenance being adequate;
- **Major schemes / initiatives** – progress with the Town Centre redevelopment, Joint Venture, Waste Management PFI and the implementation of savings proposals;
- **Inflation** – the provision is based on estimates of inflationary pressures at the current time, although the full impact is not included in all directorate budgets. While the Government predicts that the rate of inflation will continue to fall quickly during 2024, this cannot be guaranteed;
- **Treasury Management** – return on investments and additional borrowing are affected by cash flow and the level of the Bank rate.
- **Uninsured losses** – the Council’s insurances cover foreseeable risks. However, some risks are uninsurable, including former County Council self-insured liabilities and mandatory excesses;
- **Contractual Issues** – disputes, contract inflation (in particular rates for care providers which are increasing due to rising demand and reducing supply) and renewal of major contracts;
- **Legislative Changes** – difficulty in identifying the financial and non-financial impacts and whether any future burdens will be fully funded;
- **Independent external providers** – changes in provision by independent service providers may result in increased costs to the Council;
- **Service interdependencies** – the potential impact of service reductions in one area on the demand for other services provided by the Council;

- **External inspections** –any improvements identified through external inspection;
- **Safeguarding** – failure to adequately safeguard vulnerable people could result in cost pressures.

10.5 The probability of some of the above risks occurring is high. However, it is unlikely that all will occur at the same time. The measures in place, set out in paragraph 10.3, lead the Executive Director: Resources and CMT to conclude that the budget proposals have been developed in a sound framework and are therefore robust. However, it needs to be recognised that not all adverse financial issues can be foreseen looking almost fifteen months ahead, e.g. the impact of changes in demand led services or severe weather conditions. It is therefore prudent to include, as in previous years, contingency sums within the budget proposals.

#### Contingencies

10.6 In setting the budget for 2023/24, the level of General Contingency was increased to £2.750m. Within the draft budget proposals for 2024/25 the Contingency was increased to £3.000m, although it was recognised that this would need to be reviewed.

10.7 The Executive Director: Resources, Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team have reflected upon the outlook for the economy, the impact of demographic changes, current market conditions for social care services and the resulting pressures on services and other risks regarding the proposed budget. Considering all the significant risks to the budget, in particular the volatility of changes in social care costs, an increase of £1.000m in the General Contingency to £4.000m is now felt to be appropriate. The increase is shown as a Council Wide pressure in Annexe D.

#### Earmarked Reserves

10.8 Earmarked Reserves are sums of money which have been set aside for specific purposes. These are excluded from general balances available to support revenue or capital expenditure. The Council had £77.601m in Earmarked Reserves at the start of 2023/24 which were approved by the Executive in July 2023. The Executive Director: Resources has undertaken a review of existing earmarked reserves and Annexe F sets out each reserve considered, some of which are to be used in support of the 2024/25 budget. The Executive Director: Resources will review again the earmarked reserves considering the changing risks facing the Council as part of the 2023/24 closedown process and any changes will be presented to the Executive and the Governance and Audit Committee as part of the closure of the accounts. Paragraph 9.1.7 sets out the implication of the Council's Safety Valve proposals on the presentation of earmarked reserves.

## 11 Net Revenue Budget

11.1 Tables 4a and 4b summarise the budget changes for each directorate, assuming that all items outlined above and detailed in Annexes A to F are agreed, but before changes to capital charges, pension costs and internal services recharges are incorporated within service directorate budgets.

**Table 4a: Summary of budget changes**

	<b>Inflation (Section 8.2)</b>	<b>Revisions to draft budget proposals (Sections 6.4, 8.3, 9.1 and 10.7)</b>	<b>Changes to Specific Grants (Section 6.3)</b>	<b>Total Changes Identified</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Central	461	5	0	466
Delivery	560	103	0	663
People (excluding schools)	3,486	-129	-429	2,928
Non Departmental / Council Wide	-5,280	-3,943	564	-8,659
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>-773</b>	<b>-3,964</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>-4,602</b>

**Table 4b: Non Departmental / Council Wide – revisions to draft proposals and grant adjustments included in Table 4a**

<b>Non Departmental / Council Wide</b>	<b>Revisions to draft budget proposals &amp; specific grants</b>
	<b>£'000</b>
Grant adjustments (paragraph 6.3)	
New Homes Bonus	-10
Services Grant	574
Changes in Business Rates Growth, S31 income projections and levy payment (6.4.7)	-1,613
Additional movements in earmarked reserves (6.4.8 and 8.3.1)	-3,966
Changes in MRP, Interest and other revenue consequences of capital (8.3.1 and 9.1.3)	-47
DSG Adjustment Account (9.1.5)	683
Change in Contingency (10.7)	1,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>-3,379</b>

- 11.2 These figures are added to the draft proposals to produce a final budget proposal for each directorate. This is summarised in Table 5.

**Table 5: Draft Budget Proposal 2024/25**

<b>Department</b>	<b>2024/25 Draft Proposals (Table 1)</b>	<b>Changes Identified (Table 3a)</b>	<b>Revised Budget Proposals</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Central	22,538	466	23,004
Delivery	15,632	663	16,295
People (excluding schools)	98,567	2,928	101,495
Non Departmental / Council Wide	-33,308	-8,659	-41,967
<b>Total</b>	<b>103,429</b>	<b>-4,602</b>	<b>98,827</b>

11.3 The Net Revenue Budget in 2024/25 if the Executive agreed all proposals would be £98.827m before allowing for additional interest resulting from use of balances (dependant on decisions but currently estimated to be £0.038m). This compares with income of -£93.541m from Revenue Support Grant (-£2.291m), Business Rates baseline funding (-£18.400m), Council Tax at 2023/24 levels (-£76.497m), Collection Fund – Business Rates deficit (£3.721m) and the Collection Fund – Council Tax surplus (-£0.074m). The Net Revenue Budget is therefore now £5.324m above the level of income for 2024/25.

## 12 Funding the Budget Proposals

12.1 Members can choose to adopt any or all of the following approaches in order to bridge the remaining gap:

- an increase in Council Tax;
- an appropriate contribution from the Council's revenue reserves, bearing in mind the Medium Term financial position;
- identifying further expenditure reductions.

### 12.2 Council Tax Increase

12.2.1 Each 1% increase in Council Tax in 2024/25 will generate approximately -£0.765m of additional revenue towards the budget gap. The maximum amount the Council is permitted to increase Council Tax by is 4.99%.

12.2.2 In determining the Council Tax level for 2024/25, Members are reminded that this report proposes to reduce the financial burden for working age households receiving council tax support by making available a locally funded council tax discount of £75.

### 12.3 Use of Balances

12.3.1 The Council needs to maintain reserves to aid cash flow and to protect itself from fluctuations in actual expenditure and income. An allowance for cash flow is reasonably easy to calculate. However, an allowance for variations against planned expenditure is more difficult.

12.3.2 In deciding the level of any contribution from balances, the Executive will wish to have regard to the level of balances available. The Council's General Fund balance will be £11.08m as of 31 March 2024, if spending in the current year remains within the approved budget. The latest forecast for the current year's position is a potential overspend of under £0.5m. With two months of the year remaining and the spending controls introduced earlier in the year remaining in place, this gives a positive indication that expenditure by the year end is likely to be close to the approved budget.

Table 6: General Balances as at 31 March 2024

General Fund as at 01 April 2023	£m 11.08
Planned use in 2023/24	0.00
<b>TOTAL Estimated General Balances</b>	<b>11.08</b>



12.3.3 In addition, the Council will have £16.3m in the Future Funding Reserve as at 31 March 2024, which has been deliberately established in recent years to help manage the anticipated impact of national funding changes. It would therefore be most appropriate to make use of the Future Funding Reserve to bridge any budget gaps in the next few years, before drawing on General Balances.

12.3.4 There is therefore a degree of flexibility determining the approach to balancing the 2024/25 budget from the current position. However, these resources are one-off and it is therefore important when considering the use of reserves to not only consider the current year's budget but also future years' pressures. In that respect, Council Tax income represents by far the most significant on-going funding source available to secure delivery of essential services into the long-term.

### **13 Preceptors' Requirements**

13.1 The Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel met on the 26 January 2024 to determine the 2024/25 budget for the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner (TVPCC). The proposed increase of £13 (5.1%) for a Band D property, from £256.28 to £269.28, was approved. The Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) will not determine its budget and precept for 2024/25 until 15 February. The tax for a Band D property for RBFA in 2023/24 was £78.95. The Parish and Town Councils have yet to set their precepts for 2024/25. These totalled £4.008m in 2023/24 with an average tax of £82.20 for a Band D property. All precepts will be reported to the Council meeting on 21 February 2024.

### **14 Summary of Matters for Decision**

14.1 Annexe G outlines the Council's Council Tax Requirement based on the draft budget proposals. The outcome of the Executive's deliberations will be recommended to the Council meeting on 21 February regarding the budget and Council Tax level for 2024/25. These will be incorporated in the formal Council Tax resolution required by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended. However, the following matters need to be determined at this stage to allow the Executive to recommend a budget to the Council for 2024/25:

- a) confirmation of the draft budget proposals, taking account of issues raised during the consultation period and revisions identified to reflect current information (sections 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 7.3, 8.2, 8.3, 9.1, and 11.2), set out in detail in Annexes A, D and G;
- b) confirmation of the impact of changes in investments and investment rates on the budget (section 9.3);
- c) the level of the corporate contingency (section 10.7);
- d) the level of Council Tax increase (section 12.2);
- e) subject to (a) to (d) above and decisions considered elsewhere on the agenda, to determine the appropriate level of revenue reserves to be retained and the consequent use of balances to support the budget in 2024/25 (section 12.3).
  - o As outlined above, dependent upon the decisions made by the Executive concerning these issues, it may be necessary to adjourn the meeting to enable officers to calculate the appropriate figures to include in the recommendations.
  - o A detailed budget book will be prepared during March exemplifying the budget at

the level of detail required to support the scheme of virement.

**15 Council Tax Premiums on Empty Homes and Second Homes**

- 15.1 In the Government's May 2022 Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, further discretionary Council Tax premium options on empty properties and second homes were proposed. The Government wants to encourage all billing authorities to adopt Council Tax premiums on empty properties with a view to incentivising property owners to bring those properties back into use.
- 15.2 Through the Bill it is the Government's decision to reduce the minimum period for the implementation of a premium for empty homes from two years to one year; and allow Councils to introduce a premium of up to 100% in respect of a dwelling that is not someone's main home (commonly referred to as a second home). If the Council wishes to adopt any changes arising from the Bill, it is required to make a resolution confirming its requirements by no later than 31 March 2024 as 12 months' notice is required for the implementation of changes.
- 15.3 Bracknell Forest currently has 231 properties classed as empty and unfurnished for more than two years. It is estimated that reducing the qualifying period from two to one year could potentially generate around £0.400m in extra Council Tax income for the Council (it would also benefit other preceptors). The amount will vary depending on how owners react to the premium – if it releases some homes for use, the benefit would be a mixture of financial and non-financial.
- 15.4 Bracknell Forest currently has 78 properties classed as second homes. A 100% premium on these would generate around £0.125m in extra Council Tax income for the Council and would also benefit other preceptors. Again, the amount will vary depending on how owners react to the premium and benefits could be a mixture of financial and non-financial.
- 15.5 A decision to introduce these premiums would need to be taken by Council in February alongside the 2024/25 budget proposals, based on a recommendation from the Executive. Two recommendations have therefore been added to this report.

**16 Budget Monitoring - Virement Requests**

- 16.1 A virement is the transfer of resources between two budgets but it does not increase the overall budget approved by the Council. Financial Regulations require formal approval by the Executive of any virement between £0.050m and £0.100m and of virements between directorates of any amount. Full Council approval is required for virements over £0.100m. A number of virements have been made since the December Executive meeting which require the approval of the Executive. These have been previously reported to the Corporate Management Team who recommends them to the Executive for approval. They have been included in the Quarterly Service Reports. Details of the virements are set out in Annexe H.

**17 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

Borough Solicitor

- 17.1 In carrying out all of its functions, including the setting of the budget, the Council must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010. That duty requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:-

## Unrestricted

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by the Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a "relevant protected characteristic" and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

"Relevant protected characteristics" are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. As to (b) above due regard has to be had in particular to the need to:-

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

The Equality Impact Assessments annexed to this report have been prepared in order to assist the Council to meet the Equality Duty in considering the budget.

### Executive Director: Resources

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

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 17.3 The Council's budget proposals impact on a wide range of services. A detailed consultation was undertaken on the draft budget proposals published in December to provide individuals and groups the opportunity to provide comments.
- 17.4 Equality impact assessments are attached at Annexe I.

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 17.5 The Director: Resources' Statement in Section 10 sets out the key risks facing the Council's budget and the arrangements in place to manage these risks, including maintaining an appropriate level of reserves and contingency.

### Climate Change Implications

- 17.6 There are no implications arising from the proposals in this report, which are recommending budget proposals to Council.

## **18 CONSULTATION**

- 18.1 Details of the consultation process and responses received are included in section 8.1.

Unrestricted

Contacts for further information

Stuart McKellar – 01344 352180 [Stuart.mckellar@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Stuart.mckellar@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

Arthur Parker – 01344 352158 [Arthur.parker@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Arthur.parker@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

## Commitment Budget 2024/25 to 2026/27

	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
<b>Central</b>				
Approved Budget	17,093	17,207	17,104	17,097
Residents Survey		39	-39	
Local Development Framework		45	14	-90
External Auditor Fees		183	18	
Revenues - Additional £75 Ctax payment to households on LCTS		-270		
Revenues - Additional £25 payment met from the Local Council Tax Support Fund		-129		
Revenues - Local Council Tax Support Fund (Grant funding)		129		
Bracknell Town Centre Events Programme		-100		
Net Inter Departmental Virements	114			
<b>Central Departments Adjusted Budget</b>	<b>17,207</b>	<b>17,104</b>	<b>17,097</b>	<b>17,007</b>
<b>Delivery</b>				
Approved Budget	20,684	17,585	17,401	17,469
Waste Disposal PFI		50	83	65
Greening Waste Collection Arrangements		-15	-15	-15
Borough Elections		-120		
ICT - Business Change Programme		-150		
Invest to Save - Carbon Reduction Initiatives		-6		
Revenue impact of 2024/25 Capital Programme - Leisure Centre		57		
Net Inter Departmental Virements	-3,099			
<b>Delivery Adjusted Budget</b>	<b>17,585</b>	<b>17,401</b>	<b>17,469</b>	<b>17,519</b>
<b>People</b>				
Approved Budget	72,503	75,746	75,100	75,080
Suitability surveys		20	-20	
Schools Budget - High Needs deficit to be charged to the Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account		-683		
Enhanced Foster Care Pilot		86		
Invest to Save - Carbon Reduction Initiatives		-26		
Housing and Welfare Officer		-43		
Net Inter Departmental Virements	3,243			
<b>People Adjusted Budget</b>	<b>75,746</b>	<b>75,100</b>	<b>75,080</b>	<b>75,080</b>
<b>Total Service Departments</b>	<b>110,538</b>	<b>109,605</b>	<b>109,646</b>	<b>109,606</b>
<b>Non-Departmental / Council Wide</b>				
Approved Budget	-20,993	-21,251	-19,230	-18,870
Minimum and Voluntary Revenue Provision		417	71	137
Increase in employers Pension Fund contributions		420	183	200
2023/24 Capital Programme - (Full Year Effect) Interest		111		60
2023/24 Use of Balances (Full Year Effect) - Interest		111		
2024/25 Capital Programme - Interest		106	106	
Schools Budget - High Needs deficit to be charged to the Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account		683		
Earmarked Reserves - Revenues		270		
Earmarked Reserves - Bracknell Town Centre Events Programme		100		
Earmarked Reserves - Housing and Welfare Officer		43		
Downshire Homes Limited - Transfer of Housing Stock		-240		
Net Inter Departmental Virements	-258			
<b>Non-Departmental / Council Wide Adjusted Budget</b>	<b>-21,251</b>	<b>-19,230</b>	<b>-18,870</b>	<b>-18,473</b>
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>89,287</b>	<b>90,375</b>	<b>90,776</b>	<b>91,133</b>
<b>Change in commitment budget</b>		<b>1,088</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>357</b>

For management purposes budgets are controlled on a cash basis. The following figures which are used for public reports represent the cost of services including recharges and capital charges:

	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
Central	22,361	22,258	22,251	22,161
Delivery	15,452	15,268	15,336	15,386
People	99,796	99,150	99,130	99,130
Non-Departmental / Council Wide	-48,322	-46,301	-45,941	-45,544
	89,287	90,375	90,776	91,133

#### Movements

Central  
Delivery  
People  
Non Departmental/Council Wide

	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
Central	-103	-7	-90
Delivery	-184	68	50
People	-646	-20	0
Non Departmental/Council Wide	2,021	360	397
	1,088	401	357

**EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
MEETING HELD ON THE 11 JANUARY 2024**

**42. Budget Consultation**

The Leader of the Council - Councillor Mary Temperton, the Chief Executive - Susan Halliwell and the Executive Director: Resources - Stuart McKellar provided an overview of the draft capital and revenue budgets 2024/25. Details were also provided about the budget consultation this year which had included Councillors attending 'surgeries' to consult the public. 135 responses had been received so far. This was thought to be a much larger response than usual and face to face meetings with residents had also provided a good opportunity for Councillors to challenge misinformation, especially about a proposal to merge the library service with customer services, which was not planned. It was noted there had been a huge investment in the library infrastructure over the past few years. Other ways of engaging residents with the budget consultation process in the future were discussed, including the use of personas. For example, a persona could be created for someone who was a library service user and questions and answers about 'how might changes to the library service affect me' could be posed and answered to help people relate to the budget.

Broad questions about the budget were raised including the amount of money raised from service charges within the Councils' discretion. Councillors were informed it was the intention of the Council to increase fees by 5% across the board although this would vary according to the market. An estimated income of an additional £2.1million was expected through fees and charges. Councillors queried the amount of funding the Council would receive from business rates and Mr McKellar explained about the complexity of the Business Rates Retention System. A loss of business rates from, primarily the Lexicon businesses, had resulted in a £4million deficit in the business rates for the current year. Also, central government would be introducing a different rates multiplier for small business rate payers, compared to standard business rate payers, which meant it was difficult to calculate the impact but the approximate £4million deficit, which was forecast in the collection budget this year, had impacted the overall budget for 2024/25. Mitigations were being considered including the use of reserve monies.

A number of questions were asked regarding the capital part of the budget including the maintenance of Council buildings in the borough. Councillors also asked a broad range of questions on the revenue part of the budget including investment in repairing potholes; cutting grass verges; changes to waste disposal; dimming of streetlights; changes to Forestcare service provision; the number of people using the mobile library and its impact environmentally, value for money in regard to leisure service contracts; investment in continuing professional development for staff and lessons learnt regarding the write off of unrecoverable rent arrears.

Following a discussion four recommendations were proposed by Councillor McLean be put forward to the Executive for consideration as part of the budget consultation exercise and were seconded by the Chair, Councillor Pickering.

**Recommendations:**

- 1) To reconsider dimming streetlights; not cutting grass verges as frequently and reducing the number of litter bins available around the borough.
- 2) To consider providing additional funding to maintain, and potentially increase, CCTV to deter fly tipping in the borough.
- 3) To make an agreement with Silva Homes to allow for a consistent approach to the cutting of grass verges throughout the borough.
- 4) To adopt a set of representative 'personas' to better explain to residents the impact of the proposals in future budget consultations.

It was noted Councillor Haffegée did not agree with all of the proposed recommendations. Therefore, this has been noted as a formal objection to recommendation 1.

It was noted the members of the Conservative Group would be submitting a separate response to the Council in relation to the draft budget.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Mary Temperton, committed to ensuring the Executive would give full consideration to the four recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.



**RESOLVED** that the four recommendations be sent to the Executive to consider at its meeting on 23 January.

# Annexe C1 – On-Line Consultation Responses



# Report Settings Summary

Event	<b>Budget Consultation 2024 - 2025</b>
Total Responses	<b>330</b>
Total Respondents	<b>1</b>
Questions	<i>Custom selection (see Table Of Contents)</i>
Filter	<i>(none)</i>
Pivot	<i>(none)</i>
Document Name	
Created on	2024-01-29 09:28:53
Created by	Mrs Anna Glover

98

**Table .1**

<b>Question 1</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Question 2</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Question 3</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Question 4</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Question 5</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Question 6</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Question 7</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Question 8</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Question 9</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Question 10</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Question 11</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Question 12</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Comments</b> .....	<b>15</b>

# Question 1

Question responses: **305 (92.42%)**

1. I support the council investing a further £5m in local road improvements over the next four years, doubling the amount of council funded work, to provide a better surface, reduce potholes and reduce spending in the longer term.

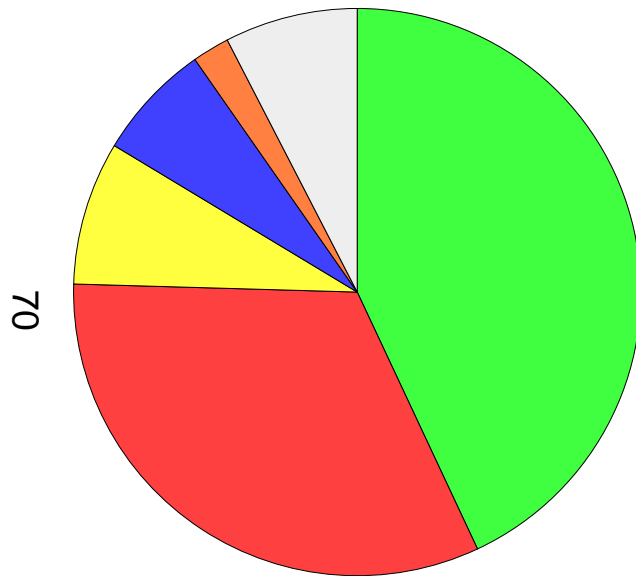


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
Strongly agree	43.03%	46.56%	142
Agree	32.42%	35.08%	107
Neutral / No Opinion	8.18%	8.85%	27
Disagree	6.67%	7.21%	22
Strongly Disagree	2.12%	2.30%	7
[No Response]	7.58%	--	25
Total	100.00%	100.00%	330

Table .2

## Question 2

Question responses: **309 (93.64%)**

2. I support the council's proposed reorganisation of its library and customer service teams and closure of the home library service, to enable more services, including blue badges and bus passes, to be provided in local facilities, with a saving of £200,000 over the next two years. Please note, this proposal does not include any reduction in the number of libraries, their opening hours or the activities they provide for the community.

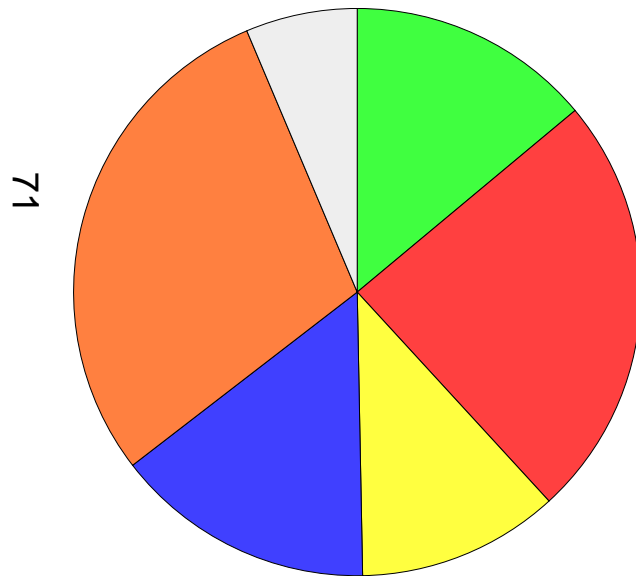


Table .1

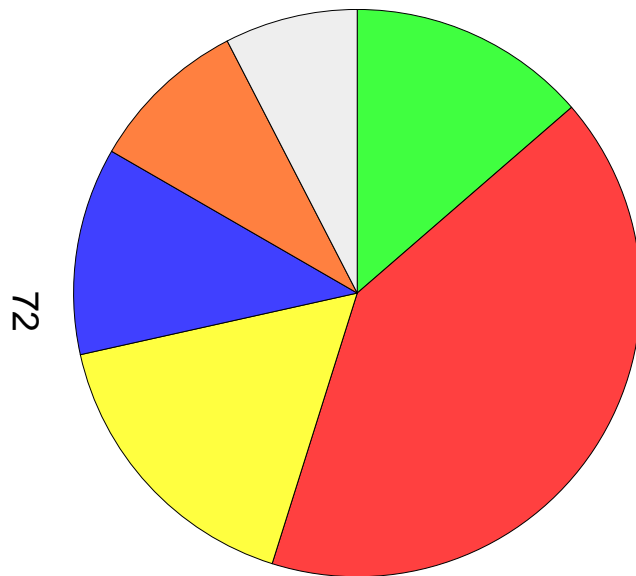
	% Total	% Answer	Count
Strongly Agree	13.94%	14.89%	46
Agree	24.24%	25.89%	80
Neutral / No opinion	11.52%	12.30%	38
Disagree	14.85%	15.86%	49
Strongly Disagree	29.09%	31.07%	96
[No Response]	6.36%	--	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>330</b>

Table .2

# Question 3

Question responses: **305 (92.42%)**

3. I support the council investing in its leisure facilities, including essential maintenance of the pools at Coral Reef and Bracknell Leisure Centre and repairing equipment at Downshire Golf Course at a combined cost of £576,000.



**Table .1**

	<b>% Total</b>	<b>% Answer</b>	<b>Count</b>
Strongly agree	13.64%	14.75%	45
Agree	41.21%	44.59%	136
Neutral / No opinion	16.67%	18.03%	55
Disagree	11.82%	12.79%	39
Strongly Disagree	9.09%	9.84%	30
[No Response]	7.58%	--	25
Total	100.00%	100.00%	330

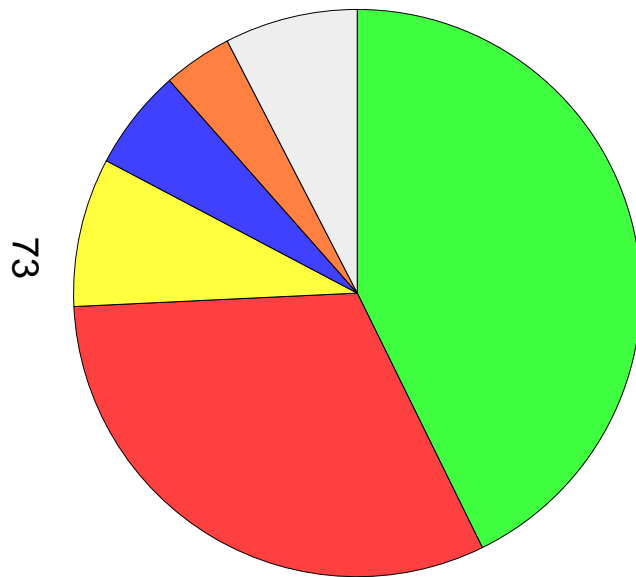
**Table .2**



# Question 4

Question responses: **305 (92.42%)**

4. I agree with the council maintaining the current level of spending on social care services, to support the most vulnerable people in our community.



**Table .1**

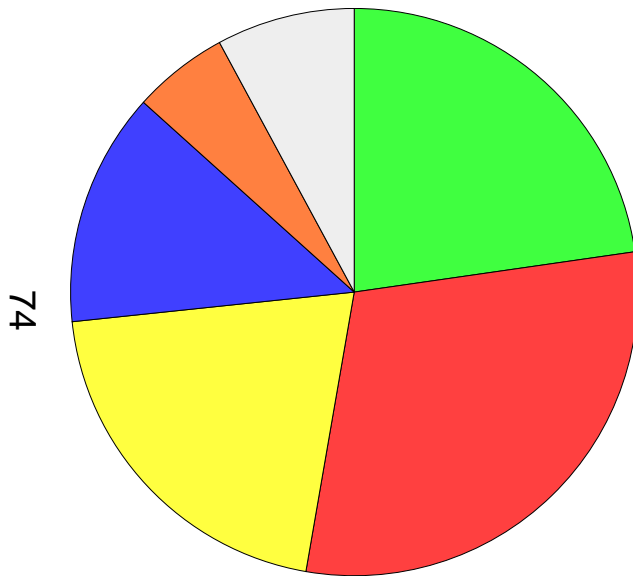
	<b>% Total</b>	<b>% Answer</b>	<b>Count</b>
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Strongly agree	42.73%	46.23%	141
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Agree	31.52%	34.10%	104
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Neutral / No Opinion	8.48%	9.18%	28
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Disagree	5.76%	6.23%	19
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Strongly Disagree	3.94%	4.26%	13
<span style="color: grey;">■</span> [No Response]	7.58%	--	25
Total	100.00%	100.00%	330

**Table .2**

# Question 5

Question responses: **304 (92.12%)**

5. I support the council investing £300,000 in specific suicide prevention measures in high-risk locations. Please see section 12 of the Final annex document for more information



**Table .1**

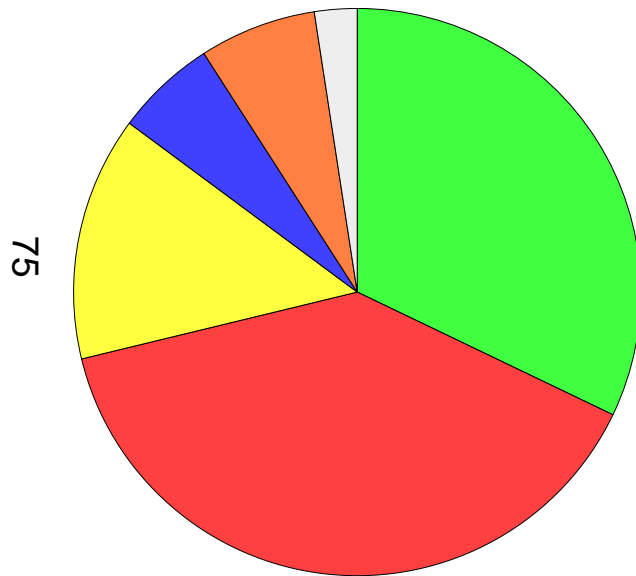
	<b>% Total</b>	<b>% Answer</b>	<b>Count</b>
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Strongly Agree	22.73%	24.67%	75
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Agree	30.00%	32.57%	99
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Neutral / No opinion	20.61%	22.37%	68
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Disagree	13.33%	14.47%	44
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Strongly Disagree	5.45%	5.92%	18
<span style="color: grey;">■</span> [No Response]	7.88%	--	26
Total	100.00%	100.00%	330

**Table .2**

# Question 6

Question responses: **322 (97.58%)**

6. I believe the council should support the borough's lowest income households by continuing to offer council tax reductions in 2024/25?



**Table .1**

	<b>% Total</b>	<b>% Answer</b>	<b>Count</b>
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Strongly agree	32.12%	32.92%	106
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Agree	39.09%	40.06%	129
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Neutral / No Opinion	13.94%	14.29%	46
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Disagree	5.76%	5.90%	19
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Strongly Disagree	6.67%	6.83%	22
<span style="color: grey;">■</span> [No Response]	2.42%	--	8
Total	100.00%	100.00%	330

**Table .2**

# Question 7

Question responses: **320 (96.97%)**

7. I support the council's proposals to reduce its carbon emissions and increase biodiversity in the borough by dimming streetlights by 10 per cent, retaining current bus subsidies by using grant funding, introducing council staff car parking charges, and reducing grass cutting of verges and weed killing, together saving £326,000.

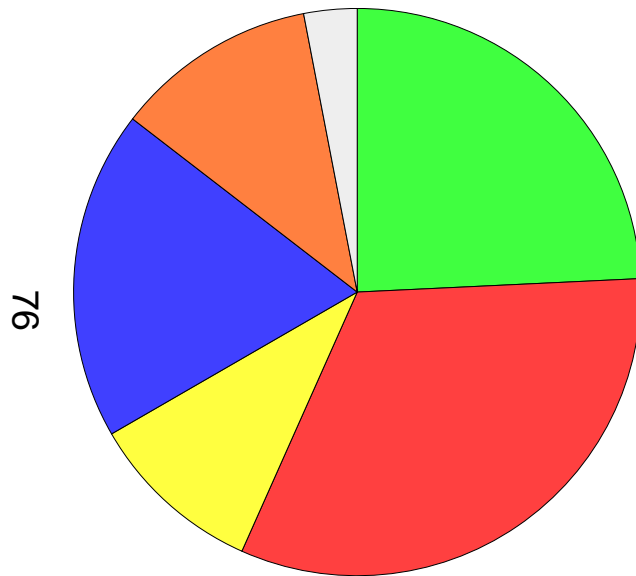


Table .1

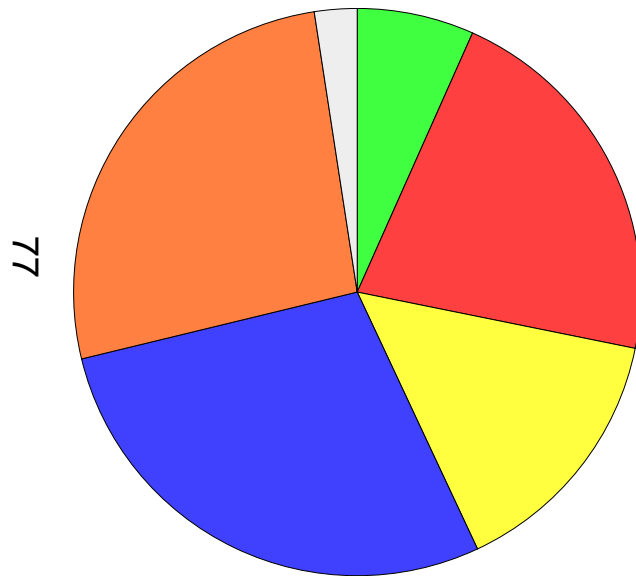
	% Total	% Answer	Count
Strongly agree	24.24%	25.00%	80
Agree	32.42%	33.44%	107
Neutral / No Opinion	10.00%	10.31%	33
Disagree	18.79%	19.38%	62
Strongly Disagree	11.52%	11.88%	38
[No Response]	3.03%	--	10
Total	100.00%	100.00%	330

Table .2

# Question 8

Question responses: **322 (97.58%)**

8. I support the plan to reduce the number of public waste bins from 900 to around 500 to match the current need across the borough.



**Table .1**

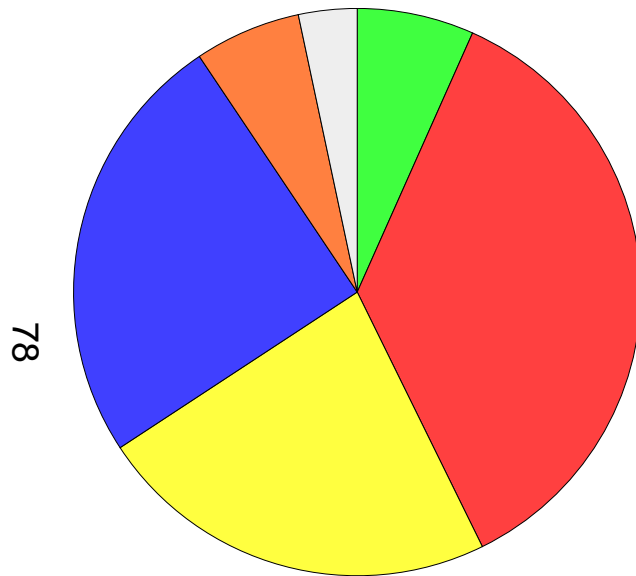
	<b>% Total</b>	<b>% Answer</b>	<b>Count</b>
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Strongly Agree	6.67%	6.83%	22
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Agree	21.52%	22.05%	71
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Neutral / No Opinion	14.85%	15.22%	49
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Disagree	28.18%	28.88%	93
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Strongly Disagree	26.36%	27.02%	87
<span style="color: grey;">■</span> [No Response]	2.42%	--	8
Total	100.00%	100.00%	330

**Table .2**

# Question 9

Question responses: **319 (96.67%)**

9. To what extent do you agree with the proposed efficiency savings?



**Table .1**

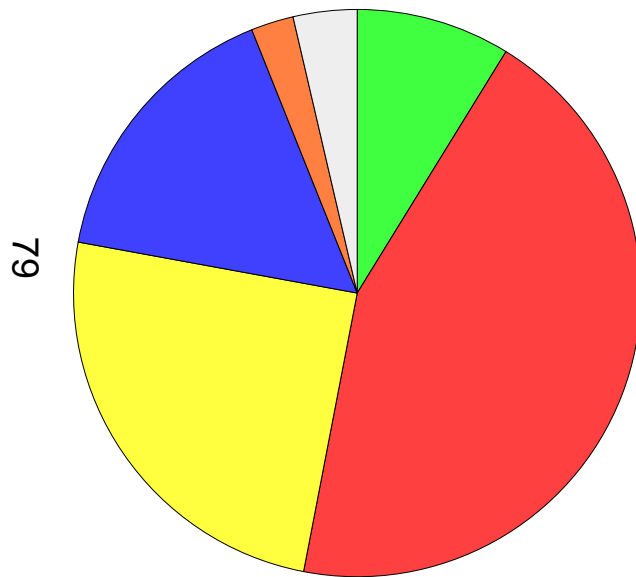
	<b>% Total</b>	<b>% Answer</b>	<b>Count</b>
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Strongly Agree	6.67%	6.90%	22
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Agree	36.06%	37.30%	119
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Neutral / No opinion	23.03%	23.82%	76
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Disagree	24.85%	25.71%	82
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Strongly Disagree	6.06%	6.27%	20
<span style="color: grey;">■</span> [No Response]	3.33%	--	11
Total	100.00%	100.00%	330

**Table .2**

# Question 10

Question responses: **318 (96.36%)**

10. To what extent do you agree with the council's proposals to increase expenditure in specific areas?



**Table .1**

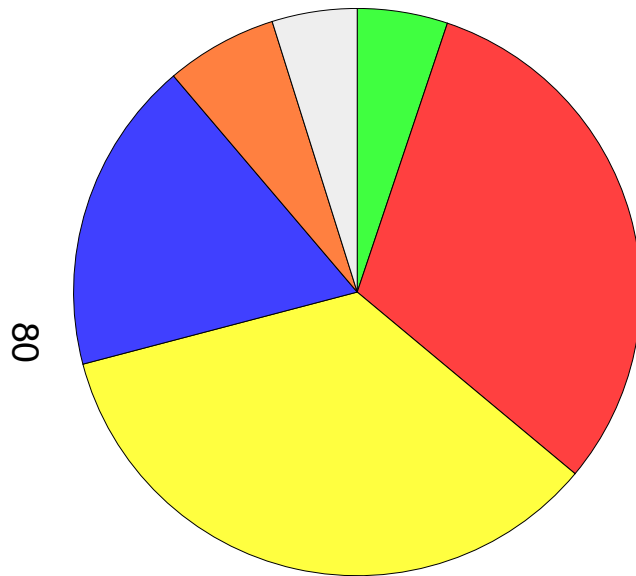
	<b>% Total</b>	<b>% Answer</b>	<b>Count</b>
Strongly Agree	8.79%	9.12%	29
Agree	44.24%	45.91%	146
Neutral / No Opinion	24.85%	25.79%	82
Disagree	16.06%	16.67%	53
Strongly Disagree	2.42%	2.52%	8
[No Response]	3.64%	--	12
Total	100.00%	100.00%	330

**Table .2**

# Question 11

Question responses: **314 (95.15%)**

11. To what extent do you agree with the council's proposed fees and charges?



**Table .1**

	<b>% Total</b>	<b>% Answer</b>	<b>Count</b>
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Strongly Agree	5.15%	5.41%	17
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Agree	30.91%	32.48%	102
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Neutral / No opinion	34.85%	36.62%	115
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Disagree	17.88%	18.79%	59
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Strongly Disagree	6.36%	6.69%	21
<span style="color: grey;">■</span> [No Response]	4.85%	--	16
Total	100.00%	100.00%	330

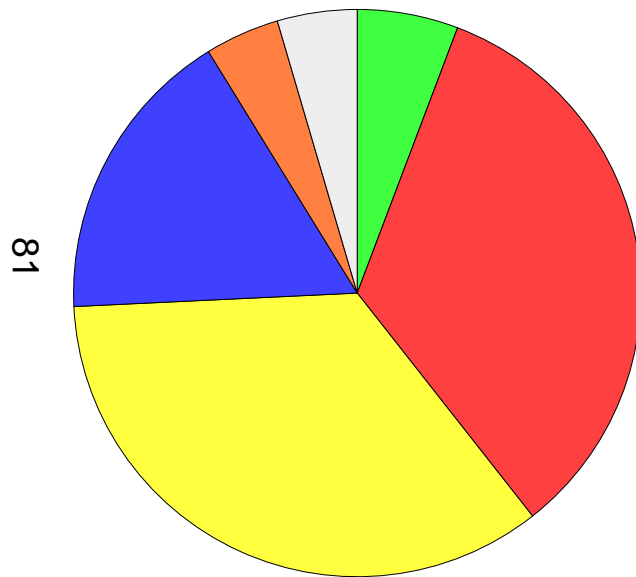
**Table .2**



# Question 12

Question responses: **315 (95.45%)**

12. To what extent do you agree with the council's capital spending proposals?



**Table .1**

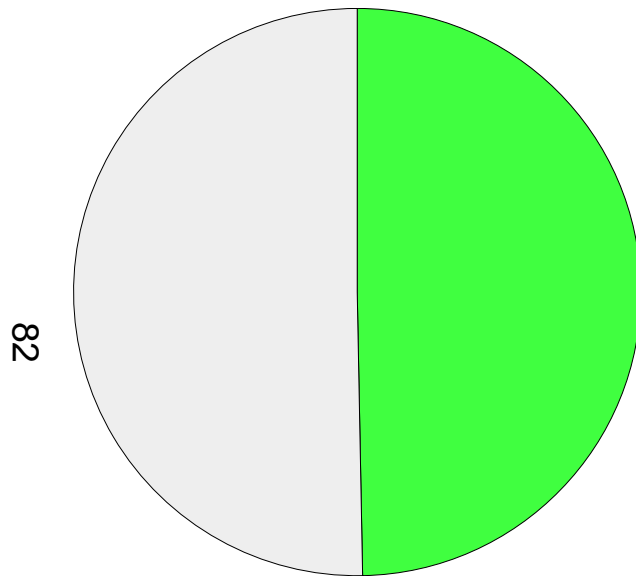
	<b>% Total</b>	<b>% Answer</b>	<b>Count</b>
Strongly Agree	5.76%	6.03%	19
Agree	33.64%	35.24%	111
Neutral / No Opinion	34.85%	36.51%	115
Disagree	16.97%	17.78%	56
Strongly Disagree	4.24%	4.44%	14
[No Response]	4.55%	--	15
Total	100.00%	100.00%	330

**Table .2**



# Comments

Question responses: **164 (49.70%)**

Do you have any comments that you would like to add?



**Table .1**

	<b>% Total</b>	<b>% Answer</b>	<b>Count</b>
 [Responses]	49.70%	100.00%	164
 [No Response]	50.30%	--	166
Total	100.00%	100.00%	330

**Table .2**

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To obtain a copy in an alternative format please telephone 01344 352000

### Nepali

यस प्रचारको सक्षेप वा सार निचोड चाहिं दिइने छ, ठूलो अक्षरमा, ब्रेल वा क्यासेट सूनको लागी । अरु भाषाको नक्कल पनि हासिल गर्न सकिने छ । कृपया सम्पर्क गर्नुहोला ०१३४४ ३५२००० ।

### Tagalog

Mga buod/ mga hango ng dokumentong ito ay makukuha sa malaking letra, limbag ng mga bulag o audio kasette. Mga kopya sa ibat-ibang wika ay inyo ring makakamtan. Makipag-alam sa 01344 352000

### Urdu

اس دستاویز کے خلاصے یا مختصر متن جلی حروف، بریل لکھائی یا پھر آڈیو کیسٹ پر ریکارڈ شدہ صورت میں فراہم کئے جا سکتے ہیں۔ دیگر زبانوں میں اس کی کاپی بھی حاصل کی جا سکتی ہے۔  
اس کے لیے براہ مہربانی ٹیلیفون نمبر 01344 352000 پر رابطہ کریں۔

### Polish

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### Portuguese

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## Comments

I don't

stop increasing the size of Bracknell Forest. The population and housing areas are large enough and GP surgeries are at their limit.

We need to find a way to fund SEND. No child should be left behind.

I believe that we should be helping the poorest families in Bracknell and those needing social care.

I feel strongly that libraries should be protected, staffed and available for community use. There should be toilet facilities within libraries as they are frequented by young children and elderly users. Libraries represent far more than just a place for borrowing books. Potholes need to be addressed - they can cause (fatal) accidents and drivers face expensive repair costs for suspension in addition to the effect of so many speed humps.

Didn't see anything about reduction in over inflated salaries of the council leadership based on clearly not delivering their objectives? Could save more money thru a 10% reduction in all salaries over £70k p.a.

Making the cuts to our libraries is unacceptable and will adversely affect a huge number of disadvantaged people in our community. I appreciate that cuts need to be made, but please leave the libraries alone.

We need to keep cutting grass verges and trees back. Footpath space can be very limited in areas where foliage is allowed to overgrow. We do not want long grass in urban areas as this will encourage vermin and mess.

Street lighting is inadequate for walking on pavements as there is no longer any radial light.

Dimming this even further will reduce the safety of walking and in my case lead to greater use of the car.

To add to Point 1: I'd like to see enhanced pedestrian and cycle facilities around Bracknell, such as parallel zebras, dedicated cycle tracks, utilising the Lexicon with cycle facilities there and increasing pedestrian safety.

Nothing further to add

I believe the council should know how important the library system is in Bracknell. I use the Whitegrove library frequently. Reading is necessary to all ages

Based on the Central Government's policy of denying adequate resources to Local Authorities to carry out their responsibilities to residents, it was inevitable that hard decisions would have to be made in order to protect the most vulnerable in our society. I believe the proposals outlined by the Council will do that.

I understand the need to re-prioritise spending but am uncomfortable with removal of the home library service. Those that need it most are less likely to have digital access as an alternative. I think a different delivery model should be considered rather than complete removal of service.

Why do you always target the Libraries? Leave our Libraries and the excellent staff alone. They are a lifeline for many of us. We don't want Customer Services taking over Libraries, nor the faceless Open+ alternative.

Access to books and PCs along with paid staff to support users is essential expand current provision please

## Comments

There has been no detailed description of the proposed changes to libraries . What are they? How might they impact the daily community support that libraries provide for the whole age range within our local areas? The last changes reduced community support in several local areas with their libraries having a contract key access only for users over 16yrs of age. I would strongly disapprove of any decision to extend this practice. Secondly; how does the council plan to improve social support? Again, no details have been given. With the reduced face to face access in Times Square, those in great need are in the position of 'managing affairs on their own' when they have little or no means and little knowledge of how to access strong and timely support when they most need it. I have always believed that the council's main duties are to provide for the health and safety of their community. Lack of government funding is an enormous problem to resolve, but main duties should not be made to give way to plans that are outwardly more appealing and perhaps easier for councillors to accept.

Nothing in budget about impact on council tax. In the current cost of living crisis, the council should be reducing the burden on residents, for example by cutting down on optional extras like leisure facilities, and downsizing management overheads.

Having seen workmen mending potholes in my area I think some more training needs to be done in order to save these repairs needing to be repaired again. Stamping on a lump of tarmac to flatten it and then "shoving" it in the hole does not look very professional On the subject of stopping the library home delivery, I strongly disagree with this proposal. Not everyone has the ability to go online or access ebooks, nor do they want to. I know my elderly mother wouldn't want to. This is a vital service for elderly and/or disabled residents and it is not just giving them access to proper books, but also gives them the chance to talk to the people who bring the books to their homes, in what could be a very isolated life if they live alone

If you cut the home library service you discriminate against the most vulnerable and isolated in the area. Concentrate on the needs of your most vulnerable and strengthen your voluntary sector massively.

Labour in charge and no change! Socialists complaining about central Government redistributing wealth from the "rich southerners" to their northern heartlands really is quite funny. Saying you're not going to cut the verges to encourage biodiversity is also a joke. Take a look around the town, this has been going on for years and what have we got? The town looks awful and is infested with rats. Turning down the street lights is another joke. The new lights offer pools of light amongst a sea of darkness. The town is already much less safe for those out after dark than it was 30 years ago.

Na

2. Why enable more services? Stop them 3. Let the leisure facilities pay for themselves or close them - why should we subsidise a golf course only used by a fraction of the population? 7. As long as its in areas where it wont matter, uncut grass in some areas makes the location look unkempt 8. Nope, if you remove the bins it will cause more issues with littering and fly-tipping.

The Home Library Service is a valuable service for those who are unable to visit libraries, its withdrawal will have an adverse effect on an already vulnerable group.

It is essential that all libraries remain open especially those with thriving social events where people can meet on a regular basis. One reason why libraries are not well supported is because they all open at "odd" hours and people are confused as to when they are open. It would be better if instead of a whole day all libraries were open each morning or afternoon without any evening openings.

More time and money should be put towards education for our young people!

Comments

Helping the most vulnerable should always be the priority. These proposals do just that.

Libraries - Why is the Home library service to go when it is run by volunteers? If the van cost is the problem could it not use another way to deliver , eg The Ark . If individuals could order a book, volunteers who deliver eg prescriptions could deliver the books. The street lighting proposals .Do they refer to all evening or just to after midnight like we discussed?

If you invested more into education you wouldn't have the issues you have today

There needs to be a strong environment plan, in order to be able to tackle climate change and support biodiversity. The use of glyphosate should be banned altogether, in line with many other councils nationwide

Social care needs more funding, not the same amount. The impact on lives that they have is immense and makes for huge savings in the long run of the people that they look after become productive members of society.

I feel the role of local and central government has got to big and needs to have less involvement on most areas of our lives.

Please do not remove the home library service, there are a lot of elderly folk that rely on this service, somebody visiting with books gives them support in their twilight years. Libraries going in to open plus mode would be a downward step, the technology in my experience is not reliable, also a lot of the folk that use these libraries are not tech savvy, please consider keeping a few more libraries staffed

What the Council does is a lot. The area I live in , Great Hollands, Is well served

As an avid user of Libraries, I attended 2 public meetings during last Library review where we were assured by the former director and senior Tory councillor that they were investing to save Libraries. Clearly we were lied to! Shame on this Council and a Labour Administration for even allowing another cut to Libraries to be considered. How about looking at the corporate centre for a change?

Look at direction street lamps face to maximise light, even reduced light, onto pathways

Whilst I understand the Council needs to make savings it should not be at the expense of valuable community services which the Library provides. Re structuring the service to subsume libraries within customer services will be detrimental to the essential provisions libraries provide; libraries are not simply places where books can be borrowed they are focal centers of the community providing cultural events, social interaction, groups, a warm place to stay with friendly staff who listen and support and so much more. Open+ is not the answer this will only discriminate the elderly, children under 16 and the socially disadvantaged. Areas of deprivation, and there are a number within Bracknell Forest need the libraries for internet access and support in completing online services; it is very short sighted to assume everyone has internet access, the difference in educational standards of children who did not have it after Covid19 was very apparent, do you want to be responsible for disadvantaging them further when as a Council you promise to be inclusive? And don't forget during Covid19 library staff were still working and implementing a new system to get books to customers who were isolating. Before deciding the fate of the library I suggest you familiarise yourselves with Bracknell Forest libraries so that you can make a fully informed decision rather than one based simply on budgets and savings and follow your 'always learning' policy.

I think that council should concentrate heavily on the projects that will have a very positive impacts with immense benefits to the residents of BF.

Question 7 has multiple parts and should be split so as to enable an answer to each part separately.

Comments

I like the fact that the budget aims to minimise impact on those in most need of support. It is beyond unfortunate that local councils are suffering due to the failures of Central Government and the repeated reductions of financial support.

Please keep the library home service as many elderly people are so reliant on it  
Libraries need professional staff. Libraries are not customer service centers, yes they are customer-facing, but they are a neutral space and offer cultural events, which many are unable to access elsewhere. They offer a variety of clubs and meeting spaces for the disadvantaged, the elderly, young people and children/parents. Many vulnerable residents use the service and it is one of the few places they feel safe.

Home Library is surely essential to those residents who cannot leave their homes.

Social cares spending needs to increase. Improvements to leisure facilities should come from fees not taxes. Reducing bins will increase litter. Litter has become a big issue in recent years. I no longer see frequent litter pickers since covid times.

The council should look at the salary structure of the upper most management. Bracknell Residents require value for money and I personally dont think we get it. The council should look inwardly first before any venture.

I think we have enough problems with litter and overflowing bins without reducing the number of the bins.

I consider it a big mistake to attack the library services funding (Q2) whilst providing additional funding for services that should be self-funding (Q3). Q7 includes areas some of which I agree with, others I don't.

Please use some highly skilled Bracknell resident specialised in Finance to advise on the budget if possible.

The council needs to spend more money in looking after green areas especially grass verges and road pot holes. Also look to getting people back to work rather than give low income families more money and not encouraging them to work . Do more to support working class families where both partners are working but still struggle with bills and expensive. Help residents in sandhurst exercise with outside exercise machines who can't afford gym fees. Plenty of spaces at the memorial park

The library is underfunded & understaffed and therefore asking the highly skilled librarians to take on more duties is not going to work. I place the highest value to all library staff who work tirelessly with the public. They do far more than just hand out books. The devil is in the detail and combining 'Customer Services' with 'Library Services' is short sighted and it is obvious that there is no understanding of their true value to the people of Bracknell.

## Comments

I am unhappy that the library home delivery service is being cut as the amount of elderly people who are housebound at home owing to ill health and old age is growing, many housebound people suffer from loneliness and this is one of the few services that go to people in their homes. This cut to libraries may affect well-being of a larger proportion of the population of Bracknell - if it leads to a decline in library service - especially including people who use the home delivery service who may also be at risk of depression, loneliness. Libraries are important for well-being and education - they are an important resource that is accessible to all in Bracknell Forest regardless of people's level of income. These cuts could lead to a downward spiral where the quality of the service will be impacted. Bracknell has a very good library provision which should be shielded from cuts where possible. Although I appreciate the need for suicide prevention measures in high risk areas - £300,000 is a huge amount of money being spent - and there is not clear information about what measures this money is being spent on as there are many tall buildings in Bracknell as everywhere.

Agree with everything apart from litter bins....

Overall, I agree with the outlined budget plan and understand the need for cutbacks in certain areas. However, I strongly disagree with the changes you have suggested for the local libraries. Our Sandhurst library is a vital part of our community, not only for the obvious reading element, but the fact it provides key support and social events to the whole community. We regularly attend the baby and toddler groups which have proved so beneficial for parents and allow us to network, especially being new parents, and have really helped the development of our son. I also know the other weekly sessions/events they offer play an important part to many people of all ages in the local area. If the plan is that the libraries become 'unmanned' these brilliant groups can't continue. There is also the safety aspect if anyone with a library card can enter with no staff on site or not having staff to help when needed.

The broadest shoulders should support the most vulnerable. So I think more should be taken from pensioners to support others.

By combining multiple activity change proposals in one question (four times) you will get misleading results as its yes for some and no for others and the result is that the answer is not true form some issues in the question. Also puts people off completing the questions at all because they are in doubt on what the balance of the answer should be. Even a sixth option of yes and no, does not solve that problem

Tough decisions must be made now in order to protect the future

I strongly disagree with the proposals for library reorganisation and cuts. I volunteer at Sandhurst library and I have witnessed first-hand its importance as a vital hub of the community. The library staff provide support to the community in innumerable ways and it would be detrimental to the whole community if it were to be made open access only.

Reducing the number of bins will result in rubbish littering our streets. Encouraging foxes and rats as well as making littering acceptable behaviour

Lighting should not be reduced in high risk areas - underpasses etc. Libraries provide much more than book loans. They are a center for many different generations to interact, both with staff and other users. Whilst the Open system is very useful its not feasible to replace the general staffed opening hours. Often doors do not work and people need some sort of help. This cut should not be made.



Comments

I think it is very wrong to propose spending cuts in the areas of Libraries and regarding public waste bins. Reducing Library services has an enormous impact on Senior Citizens and Children in the borrow, and I cannot support cuts or reorganisation that will lead to a restriction of Services to these vulnerable groups. Reducing public waste bins might lead to even more littering than currently happening, so I cannot see how a reduction of public waste bins could have a positive effect on the quality of life in Bracknell Forest.

Please do not close the local libraries?!!

I think it is wrong to cut services like the library when there is very little communal areas in the borough

I think reducing the funding and support for local libraries and home libraries is a disgusting option. As a teacher and English lead within the borough, I realise how fundamental libraries are to some families as their main access to books, films and support via their community classes. I think it is appalling to remove these opportunities for others in order to be able to fill a pothole in a road. Absolutely disgraceful and clearly shows how underrated and under appreciated public libraries are via Bracknell forest. Literally placing education and peoples' progression and self development as less important than filling in a pothole. Appalling.

The questions were too broad - dimming streetlights by 10 per cent, retaining current bus subsidies by using grant funding, introducing council staff car parking charges, and reducing grass cutting of verges and weed killing, together saving £326,000. - each of these options requires separate feedback. questions 9-12 do not have enough detail to provide a proper response.

Get rid of council building that is 90% empty most of the time. Cut the wages of the bigwigs

Don't close Sandhurst Library. It serves the community very well across all ages. We need local services, not combined ones which mean we have to travel by car or bus. The savings in no way justify this action. The people of Sandhurst deserve More services, not less.

Absolutely appreciate the circumstances every council is faces as a result of historic misspending. I think this is a fair and reasonable for the people living in Bracknell.

1. Please don't close Sandhurst library, as it's a community asset that is vital both for educating children and for providing a safe and welcoming place for elderly / lonely / vulnerable people. 2. Money could be saved by abolishing non-essentials such as the mayor & their office, 'free' events like fireworks and community days, social media communications, PR, mollycoddling of supposedly disadvantaged groups, and overpaid executives & consultants.

I feel it is a real shame that Sandhurst library is facing cuts whereas money is being spent on downshire golf course, which could just have higher charges set for the people who use the golf course rather than allow my children to access books at their local library

Appreciate all the work that goes into these decisions

I do not think that the council should cut the library service in any way at all. I cannot see the point in electing a Labour administration if all they do is to behave in the same way that the Tories would have anyway!

The Library needs to be kept open as a hug for people to meet for the groups that go on. Also it needs to have toilet facilities added. Years ago there was public toilets outside the library but these were knocked down. Such a shame. If u are going to talks events people need a loo. This is an urgent priority please.

## Comments

Question 7 is ridiculous including as it does a number of proposals some of which I strongly agree with (dimming street lighting) and one which I disagree with - subdividing buses. I firmly believe that the whole bus situation needs looking at by independent specialists. I watch buses go past my house day in and day out and 90% of the time they have under 5 passengers on them. Many have just the one person on them and that's the driver! Ludicrous. What a waste of money. And NOT environmentally friendly.

are probably among the most physically incapacitated members of society . This might be a drastic reduction in support for lifelong learning and recreational reading. The other library proposal seems reasonable. Verge and grass cutting . Much of BFC looks overgrown and unkempt - the grass cutting is necessary and should not be reduced. Many road signs are obscured by overgrown bushes / trees. The Revenue Budget pdf ( 18 page version ) includes bullet point 7.2 noting that the assessment needs to be done by 15.1.2022 ( presumably this should be 2024 ). In the long form version ( 123 pages ) Annex E (iii) shows that Net Treasury Borrowing has gone up from £ 64.225 m as at 31.3.23 to £ 84.55 m at 31.10.23. This is a £ 20 million increase in just 7 months . What is the current figure and why has this debt risen so rapidly ? Also why does BFC need a £ 270 million borrowing limit ? The library event in Sandhurst today was most interesting in respect of the issues discussed but many of these proposals are very marginal in the context of the overall gross spending by BFC.

Item 2 - I'm in agreement with the proposed changes to the reorganisation, but NOT to the closure of the home library service. Item 7 - I'm NOT in agreement with council staff car parking charges. "Weed" killing should be abolished completely. One person's "weed" in another creature's food and shelter. Verge cutting could easily be reduced further to once or twice a year. Far too many areas are cut whilst in full bloom, killing off vital food for insects. It must be remembered that we NEED nature. We are part of it. The more we destroy nature, the more we destroy ourselves. Item 8 - There's too much litter now. Just how much worse would it be by removing almost 1/2 the public bins? You already rely heavily on a small band of council tax paying, dedicated volunteer litter pickers. This would increase the need for these wonderful "Wombles". I notice that there is nothing in the budget with regard to sewerage works. More and more houses are being built, but every one is linked to the current sewerage system, which is already over capacity.

I am happy with all these proposals

Questions 1 through 8 are good, and provide background details within each question, although Q7 provides too wide of a range of options and should be split. Questions 8 through 12 don't have any background, and without having the proposals to hand seem vague and are difficult to answer (i.e. Q10, what are the specific areas of expenditure being referred to?). Maybe expanding the question or having an info button for more background text would be handy. This would be especially useful when completing this survey on a mobile phone. However, it is great that you have this consultation and that we can have a say.

Libraries already offer disabled bus passes and blue badge applications. They don't need to merge with Customer Services to do that. This is just a feeble excuse to cut a much valued Library Service by stealth. Please leave our Library Service as it is - this is what we pay our Council Tax for.

Closing the Home Library Service will impact on the most lonely and vulnerable old people in society. I received home deliveries of books during lockdown and it kept me going. This proposal is an absolute disgrace.

Dimming street lights, drive to net zero, biodiversity are all no brainers. But, charging relatively low paid workers to park at work is not a great move unless a threshold is considered.

I would like to see more information directed at residents regarding recycling, waste management and other environmental issues. Also commence the building of much needed affordable environmentally friendly homes

**Comments**

Maintaining current facilities at Sandhurst Library must be a priority. We need to maintain literacy and community involvement or the beating heart of Sandhurst will be lost forever, and the town would lose a wonderful resource.

Libraries are an essential part of community life and should stay open and staffed. They are not just about books but are social warm places for the vulnerable, elderly, teenagers and children. The home library service is essential to people who are housebound and who have been dedicated library users. Bus passes have long been provided by libraries so this is not new. Older people struggle with technology so staff are required in all the libraries to help them.

I feel the Home Library Service is important to vulnerable people for their well-being, giving some human contact as well as leisure activity. It should be advertised more fully including by GP surgeries. I also feel Library Services need management at as high a level as possible- it is a professional specialism. Unqualified Library staff, who are often women, need a career structure- I would be sorry to see the supervisor posts reduced.

Better access to mental health rather than barriers People don't just work 9-5 so dimming lights is dangerous Don't get rid of the bins more money will be needed to clean up

Closing the Home Library Service and saving £100,000 a year is a drop in the ocean. This is a much needed service. There are better ways to save money.

Can the information being given out to residents be in a more accessible format that people of all levels can understand and questions refer back to the information source. I trust efficiency savings are going to be made across all levels within the council? As the cuts seem to always effect the services at the ground level.

I am a pensioner living in Sandhurst and feel outside the main orbit of the Bracknell-centric council facilities and activities. The one jewel in the crown for me is the Sandhurst library which I use extensively and which I walk to as one of my main forms of exercise. Any downgrading of the current status quo will feel like the abandonment of my needs and of Sandhurst in general.

I don't think the cut proposals have been thought through enough. By saving money for example "new proposals for libraries" eg stopping home delivery service, the long term effect will be more loneliness and depression in housebound people resulting in more cost for home care. If librarians take on the social services roles, how can information revealed between librarian and enquirer remain completely confidential ?

Libraries are so vital to help support children and care givers. Less bins will mean more people dumping rubbish on the street. Work smart not hard. Don't let Bracknell look like other areas with overgrown grass areas and rubbish everywhere! Please keep on top of green areas and rubbish

## Comments

but has been a backward step. The lanterns used provide a different light pattern to the old sodium lamps. The old ones provided a pool of light which linked with the pool from adjacent lamps. The LED lamps dont causing dark areas and shadows. A lamp opposite a junction lit all the way across the road. The new ones dont. We have one streelight in our close to illuminate the turning area. The new LED lamp doesnt cover the same area. The old lamps lit behind the column as well as in front. The new ones just light in front. What effect will dimming them by 10% have? I assume that each lamppost will need to be visited to adjust the setting, if so how does this cost balance with possible energy savings? I raised it when they were being introduce and I know Mary discussed the issue but the Tories wouldnt budge and we now have inferior streetlighting. Secondly parking. there are a few clauses in the Highway Code regarding parking such as no parking on pavements, and parking near junctions. In Beedon Drive we have multioccupancy houses or families who's children are still living at home and they all have cars. They end up parking half on the pavement and near junctions blocking sight lines creating danger spots. there is one resident who moved in around 6 months ago who has two large 4WD's, two large cars and a Transit van. The van is parked in the road opposite the house removing parking for residents. and visitors. the police can issue fines if they consider it to be dangerous but they are already stretched. Can the offences be publicised with warnings of possible fines. In Great Hollands a parking company fines drivers if they park in garage areas so is it possible to do something about inconsiderate parking on pavements. My wife is partially sighted and struggles with these cars. A neighbour has to take her pushchair in to the road to get past them. Thanks

Don't shut the libraries!!! So many families, children, elderly rely on them on a daily basis. Groups like Rhymetime provides a special place for children to learn and grow, along with giving mothers and carers a place to meet others. Elderly people rely on libraries for interaction, a space to feel safe and somewhere to keep their brains going. DON'T SHUT THE LIBRARIES!!! This is a response on behalf of the Conservative Group. Overall the budget is good. We understand the need to increase the Council Tax by the maximum allowable given the additional pressures. However, we do question a few of the savings, namely: Street Lighting - p18 A 10% blanket dimming is not acceptable. Any dimming needs to be restricted to hours where it will have the least effect on residents. We need to ensure that the light levels are high enough to maintain safety. Grounds Maintenance - p19 - Residential verge cuts Reducing the cut frequency to every 4 - 6 weeks is folly. In that time grass can grow to waist height. This will reduce sight lines for traffic at junctions. It will also lead to a significant increase in complaints about how untidy the borough looks. Grounds Maintenance - p19 - Litter bin reduction. It would be useful to see some empirical data on the use of the waste bins to back this up. Most humans are inherently lazy and will not go searching for a litter bin. Many will just discard the litter if there is no bin in the immediate vicinity. This will just lead to an increase in the overall level of litter in the borough. Libraries - P20 - Home library service This is a lifeline for many of our most vulnerable residents who are housebound. Cutting this service will lead to an increase in both physical and mental health issues. It would be useful to know how many residents this will affect. If the intention is to have the Home Library service run by the voluntary sector, then strongly suggest that we do not include figures for savings until such a time as we know that this change is committed. In addition to the above, we would request that a one off contribution of £20k be included in the budget to fund purchase of CCTV for fly tipping enforcement as an invest to save.

Pleased more is being spent on rd maintenance, but wonder if £5m is enough to bring rds across the borough up to scratch, for example College Rd is in a poor state of repair and has been for years and it is one of many which need extensive work.rather than patching. In terms of overall savings, has a full review been undertaken of the staffing structure of council and could savings be made there rather than front line services. le at AD level and above.

## Comments

Priorities need to be set in regards to upkeep of parks and public areas that are free to use for all regardless of your income. Some parks have become dumping grounds for dog poo and fly tipping and the equipment is not to a good standard but you employ people to check these parks and nothing is done to repair these areas.

It is clear that the council is under budgetary pressure and that is largely down to the mismanagement of this country by the central conservative government over more than a decade. I'm not sure I can afford to pay more council tax (well over a month of my salary every year) but I'm not sure what the answers are as we need to invest in the things you have described to make this a good place to live. The dimming of street lights concerns me greatly from a women's safety point of view as the switch to energy efficient bulbs has already made things much darker...

Only invest in upgraded sports facilities and additional road repairs when you can afford to, and not at the expense of other services. You need to spend the money to benefit everybody in the authority not just those who can afford a car or to join the gym or golf club. Street lighting is already limited and removing bins will just create a litter and rubbish problem that will either attract vermin, create a mess and cost to clear up.

I agree with the proposed / continued work detailed in Q7 but do not think lighting should be reduced due to health and safety concerns. My other concerns are regarding plans to stop printing some resources as this is likely to affect those without access to digital technology or those who cannot easily access it. The at home library service should be assessed to find out who is using it before it is stood down. It may be those most vulnerable who are using it and could have a big impact if that is the case.

Q3. I support the council investing in its leisure facilities, including essential maintenance of the pools at Coral Reef and Bracknell Leisure Centre - everyone active were brought in to manage these sites and to make them profitable to their own gain, therefore they should be contributing to regular maintenance of the sites as they are the only ones to benefit financially. Q7 -support the council's proposals to reduce its carbon emissions and increase biodiversity - the principle is sound however the question is loading with both favourable and unfavourable proposals and there the survey results will be inaccurate. Q8. I support the plan to reduce the number of public waste bins from 900 to around 500 to match the current need across the borough. - this is only achievable if bins are emptied on a more regular schedule, as is not the case with a number of the existing bins.

No more roadworks PLEASE unless absolutely necessary!!!! Since Covid there hasn't been a single day where I have driven around the borough and not been delayed by roadworks. Providing the maths are correct re public bins then I support this in the hope that it won't bring more rubbish to our streets. I think money in social care should be increased. Your plan does not appear to take into account our aging community. This is much more important to me than reducing carbon emissions. I understand you need to balance the books but public services are more important than roadworks! By cancelling the library home service and increasing blue badge passes etc you are assuming that our older generation and disabled community all have cars or the ability to catch public transport. That is naive and discriminatory in my view.

I strongly urge the council to maintain the current library services. This is an invaluable service to all ages in the community, young and old.

Capitalisation of Project Management costs seems inappropriate as they are not tied into any capital programme

Don't close the libraries

## Comments

I think the number of bins should be increases as, for example, in Binfield there is often rubbish spilling over the bin near the charity shop. Or make sure all bins have a recycling section and maybe educate people not to drop litter on the ground.

number 11 I have opted for neutral as I don't know what fees and charges are being referred to.  
number 7 - I totally disagree with this, we already have very very dim lighting in Ringmead/Trevelyan/Tawfield areas and to reduce it any further is a crime/safety/accident risk. Also in number 7 the further reduction in grass cutting for verges etc. is a step too far. The area which was once nice and well kept is already beginning to look scruffy further reductions in this area will only encourage a 'lack of pride' in the area which often leads to a general decline in the area.

With the size of saving being sought reductions of waste bins, dimming the lights by 10% and cancellation of the Home Library service seems to be too little to meet the savings required. In every organisation the staff tend to be the biggest cost. Is there scope to reduce management levels to make greater savings and implement more efficient ways of working.

You can not close the library it is absolutely essential not only for children it is also place to go for elderly

Council tax has to be reduced they are extortionate rates!!!

A £200k cut to library staffing is a cut, however you try to dress it up. I feel sorry for the staff who've worked so hard to make the service what it is. As for telling us that getting rid of the senior staff won't have any impact just proves how clueless the decision makers in this Council actually are.

Will the removal of rubbish bins mean that the remaining bins will be emptied more frequently?

The making of street lighting dimmer is reckless. Already the lighting is dim & we, as well several of our friends & neighbours cannot drive at night. A good idea to let verges grow longer

The Home Library Service has long been a lifeline for vulnerable people, those who are not digitally literate and the visually impaired. The dedicated staff at Bracknell Library staff take the time to speak to HLS customers and research which reading materials they will enjoy. This is a regular part of the customers' routines and they rely on this essential interaction. Volunteers are a valuable part of the library service, but by the very nature of the contract, there is no commitment. It is also incredibly hard to find volunteers with the necessary skills and dedication to replace those staff who consider helping these vulnerable adults their vocation. By moving the HLS to the voluntary sector, you are not only undermining the valuable role of the experienced and dedicated staff, but you are removing vulnerable adults' fundamental right to literacy.

The documents attached, which it is assumed to form the basis for this consultation, would take significant time to review and understand. However, have the following comments: Consultation Point 8: There is too much litter in general, the reduction of bins will only make it worse. Also, how does the council verify that tasks require inspection, such as mis-use of disabled parking slots, dropping litter, etc. are effectively being carried out. How many fines etc. have been issued.

Don't agree with dimming of lights (already too many dark places for a woman to walk alone at night) or removing bins (they are already overflowing everywhere)

## Comments

Bins are an issue. Can't reduce these further as will cause issue. We see already a borough that recycle well but things like stretching bin pick ups to 3 weekly is causing a lot of strain. Highly agree with ecological efficiencies, but dimming streetlights could cause issues when there are already attacks and violence taking place. Maybe dim them but increase in underpasses? Libraries are a sanctuary to some so funding can't be cut there but agree that services need to be looked at

The reduction in mowing of verges etc needs to be carefully planned so that longer grass etc does not obstruct drivers view of pedestrians nor hide pedestrians from general sight leaving them vulnerable to assault or criminality. I disagree with the reduction in bins this will increase waste, people do not take home their litter and then there will be clear up costs. I agree with parking fees for staff, I work for a local authority we have to pay... I also think it's time to relook at council tax reductions in lower income homes, if they can afford SKY TV packages etc they can afford their responsibilities like every one else. I work in statutory children's services so I agree you maintain spending as long as that doesn't mean that not having an up lift will lead to any cut backs...

The council needs to invest in the environment and community in which everyone lives to enable the safety of the environment to keep the public bins cleaner and empty them regularly. It's an absolute disgrace when at peak times the bins are overflowing with rubbish. Fly tipping in and around Bracknell is at it's highest and the amount of foxes and animals due to more houses been erected are finding new ways to hunt for food. It's a chain reaction and removing more will only make matters worse. collection of public bins and litter picking depends on good people doing their bit for the environment this fails to amaze me at how your budget doesn't cover the cost of this clear up process when it impacts environment, community, health and cleanliness of where people live. All about state of mind if more rubbish is added onto the street it impacts on how humans behave and think it's an absolute disgrace this one area that is already lacking your going to make it worse and not improvements made. I feel your missing the point by taking away further bins , your going to add to the already issue that we the public have to live with every day

Disagree strongly with reduction in litter bins. Will create more litter. False economy.

With the amount of new houses being built in the area you should have a significant increase in revenue from council tax to help with costs Also the amount of time the roads are being dug up even weeks after a new layer has just been layed is a massive cause of pot holes , try cordinating it better maybe

More litter cleaning please

The amount of money made from car parking alone, the cost is ludicrous if you only need to go to one shop, should be free for 30 minutes means there must be better ways of saving money than reducing waste bins, there is enough litter on the ground already without encouraging some people to just throw litter on the floor

If you are going to reduce the number of public waste bins, replace the smaller bins with larger ones. We have a tremendous number of 'litter louts' in Bracknell, especially on school routes!

There needs to be more bins for litter & dog poo & these need to be emptied at least weekly, also there need to employ people to actual litter pick / clear fly tipping as Great Holland's & surrounding areas the litter & rubbish is quite frankly shocking. Also people think its acceptable to open they gates & dump they rubbish in council land it would be good if the council gave them a month to move it or add a fine to there council tax.

Comments

If a library supervisor goes then open access hours will be increased at some libraries. I'd hope open/ staffed hours could impact on all libraries not just the ones whose supervisor goes. Who will do the work they currently do? I'd like to congratulate Mary and her team for their openness and hard work. Savings have to be made. Customer service staff in libraries is a great idea. No figure seems to be put on the savings made from home based workers and office based workers moving to libraries versus losing library staff and the home library service. Are customer support staff also facing redundancy?

More cheap electric Installations please . Wind or Solar . More electrical points for car charging too

Stop wasting tax payer money and effort on ridiculous net zero goals when people are struggling to put food on the table, heat their homes and book doctors appointments. You need to ensure the wellbeing of the towns residents is met before chipping away at pet projects.

Libraries are a life line to many people. To cut the home library service for housebound residents will be unforgivable. Glad that there is not going to be a reduction in the number of libraries but to cut staffing levels is wrong you can't rely on volunteers to run the libraries successfully.

I think this plan is okay but I cannot see how we can afford the most important expenses, ie social care. We need to save more money by perhaps reducing the number of highly paid council staff by implementing a reorganisation of the council, removing unnecessary management levels and implementing efficiency and productivity plans.

Wherever possible the council should endeavour to maintain and enhance services for residents

Why invest so much on roads and leisure but only maintain social care which is much more important. Taking away the Home Library Service is such a small saving but a much needed service. I'm sure you can save money in other ways.

I have had to endure the displeasure of living in Bracknell for four years now, a massive mistake settling here. What I find astounding is the amount of litter on our streets and in our parks, it is disgusting; it is by far the worst place I have ever lived and that includes the six months I spent in Afghanistan, and now you propose to reduce the number of bins to cut costs... well shame on you BFC, shame on you. Whilst still on the point of litter and refuse, your policy of collecting green bins once every three weeks is outrageous and wholly unrealistic, where our neighbours in the Royal Borough have theirs collected weekly and also their glass collected to boot. You have done nothing as a council to promote hospitality other than sell us false promises, if we want to enjoy a night out more often than not we find ourselves in Windsor, Ascot or Wokingham. Do I feel I am get value for money from BFC? No not at all, can't wait to leave and relocate. On a final note, £300,000 on suicide prevention measures is woefully insufficient, it's just enough for BFC to brag that they are actively doing something to tick a box that happens to be in vogue but that is about all it can achieve... good luck!

Too much investment on roads and leisure

Concerned about the changes to library services and car parking charges for staff, bad for moral



## Comments

Closing the home library service will isolate and disadvantage some of the most vulnerable people in the borough. Saying that they can access e-books is disingenuous as the majority of the people using the service are elderly and cannot use tablets etc. Also although you say that you will not be closing any libraries, there are rumours that some of them will be unstaffed permanently, which means that children will not be allowed in without parents, and many other people who do not have this open plus access granted will not be able to use them.

In my opinion the questions are leading, for instance Q2 I believe almost everyone would strongly agree with saving £200,000 but also like better library services, where is the Open+ at the central library. Q3 I believe almost everyone would strongly agree with investing in council assets, Q4 I believe almost everyone would strongly agree with supporting social care, Q5, I believe almost everyone would strongly agree with spending to reduce suicide at high risk locations. However is the money, enough? too much? Reference to section 12 of final annex doc. is a write off request. Q6 I believe almost everyone would strongly agree with supporting the lowest income households, Q7 I believe almost everyone would strongly agree with reducing carbon emissions but people walking the footpaths at night would like the reassurance of a lit path You probably get my point now this consultation appears to be after a certain result.

How many clients currently benefit from the Library's housebound reader service and how will they be served if it is axed? Moving more customer services out into the local libraries could be a good thing but only if staffing levels and access are maintained.

Reduction in bins will result in more litter and an increased spend on litter picking. Dimmed lights will make people feel unsafe when walking at night.

Even with the current number of bins, most are overflowing. Reducing the number will only increase the amount of waste dumped at the roadside.

1) How much money is going to be wasted on those so called asylum seekers? 2) How much money is going to be wasted on chucking pride down peoples throats and putting on an unnecessary event in June? 3) How much money is going to be spent on putting on an event to celebrate being straight? 4) How much money is going to be spent on muting prayer speakers in and around the Bracknell refuse centre, of which affects nearby business' when they struggle to hear people on the telephone?

## Comments

Firstly, you have not done this consultation well. It isn't hard to summarise the 4 different pdfs (1 of which is around 123 pages long) into clear bullet points which when clicked on will take the user to the specific part in the documents relating to it. People are not gonna sit reading a 100+ document, so please, next time, actually make it accessible to everyone. Also, you could actually be more public about this consultation instead of quietly releasing it over xmas period and not really posting much about it until the last minute. You have social media and the ability to print off posters to hang in places...use it. As someone who has suffered from anxiety and loneliness at times, I find the proposed closure of the Home Library Service to be an absolute disgrace and reckless behaviour. Gordon is fantastic with the users of HLS and you would be essentially pushing yourself off a cliff by closing it down. It is an incredibly key service. You will deny access to so many people. If you actually cared about mental health, you wouldn't close it down. On top of that, the library service is already short staffed and you want the workers to now handle customer service issues. This abhorrent amount of extra workload will lead to staff morale going down SIGNIFICANTLY, mental health issues rising amongst staff members and a library service will be considered 2nd hand. In your impact part, you stated that the main impact is customers unable to use the kiosks due to lack of IT skills. Again, it is disgraceful and extremely reckless to underestimate the huge social wellbeing impact that the library service has on the public. Moving 6 libraries into open+ will cause havoc across the system. Nothing will get done as well as it has been. The kiosks don't accept the new 10p and £2 coins and sometimes others so how will people be able to pay for fines and reservations etc. Sometimes the account will be blocked and with no staff member available to remove that blocking, they are unable to use the service. Open+ breaks continuously. [continues below]

system work. Binfield library had doors not working for around a month. I feel like I have so much more that I could say but I've honestly got to get ready for the day. Long story short, if you actually gave 1 dam about the library service, you wouldn't be suggesting these proposals. But then again, if you did 1 ounce of research beforehand, you would have known about that already and we wouldn't be here. Shameful. I understand that the budget is tight and cuts have to be made, but this is wrong. Anyways, overall its clear to see that you are simply out of your depth when it comes to the handling of this consultation and how a library service actually runs because both Mary and Kevin are clearly not communicating with each other well. I also did not feel listened to at the budget consultation meeting I went to. Infact, very much dismissed by a certain councillor who very condescendingly dismissed a point that I was about to make before I even had the chance to finish making my point. Their behaviour could also be considered as unconstitutional. Hopefully everyone will be reminded to think before they speak. Hopefully roads wil improve. Binfield is a pothole nightmare so that investment is good. And I like the stuff regarding the environment. Just need to do as much as possible.

No but I appreciate the effort to involve us in decisions and the opportunity to contribute to discussions. The explanation of what influences the Council's decisions and what pot is used for what work is also appreciated.

2. Libraries - Will volunteers be asked to fulfil responsibilities that qualified librarians/supervisors now carry out? I feel that would be unfair on the volunteers and may result in their leaving the service. 4. Social care - I ticked neutral because I dont know whether the amount being spent at the moment is adequate or not. Other neutral choices are because I dont feel I know enough about the savings/proposed expenditure.

Point 7 has too many options. I DO MOT agree with.lighrs being dimmed on oath ways but reducing some road light lateral night whete there are no path ways. Put in solar resources to.light the roads. It doesn't feel safe at night with them dimmed and in bad weather its poor visibility driving to

Home library service is great and perfect for older and disabled members of the community

Comments

More Support should be available for SEND children through council

Such a massive guessing game to produce this budget for consultation!!

Concerns that local Binfield library will be closed. It is well used by the children and adults in the area and will be a loss for the community

Please keep libraries as they are, particularly the smaller ones. They're a lifeline. Please also remember households who ask for no help, or wouldn't receive help even if they did, who by necessity have to live frugally.

Having worked as a volunteer in Crowthorne library for many years I strongly disagree with the introduction of Open Plus as we provide assistance all the time to vulnerable elderly members and indeed promote early learning for our local children by way of craft events, stories, and summer Reading challenges all of which both the Princess of Wales and HM Queen Camilla via the media support. These are not possible if you introduce Open Plus,

More money for kinship

Many difficult choices

investment should be made in social care not maintained

Item 7 includes too many items. No offer is made to suggest alternatives. The council claims to be hard up but keeps advertising high paid support jobs. The focus needs to be on the front of service not the back office.

Why weren't the residents of Bracknell given the opportunity to discuss the change of use of the John Nike Leisure centre site. Is there enough for teenagers to do now and in the future? The ozone isn't a replacement or an alternative to full sized ice.

Why isn't everyone active not paying out for the replacement parts and upgrades

Use volunteers for the library home service. I would be happy to help in this role.

I realise when money is tight difficult decisions have to be made, but the library service is an important resource, not only providing access to books and information but also a meeting place for support and community groups to meet. Mary Templeton advised at the Great Hollands meeting that it was not planned to close any libraries and that is very good news and I hope the reorganisation will still ensure sufficient staffing to enable the libraries are able to continue run effectively. Having recently become a library volunteer myself, I wonder if it would be possible to consider using volunteers to help with the home library service as this must provide a lifeline for our most vulnerable members.

Figures for Library services in Annexe D are incorrect which makes one wonder about other figures quoted which are not as easy for a resident to check. In interests of road safety retain cutting of grass on roundabouts so as not to restrict vision for those in lower vehicles.

## Comments

Avoid cuts to care budgets for those most vulnerable in our society and hit hardest by the cost of living increase. I appreciate any life lost is a disaster for those close - however can the suicide prevention be put into resources EARLY interventions than carpark final stage determinants. There is more and more reliance on volunteers to fill gaps. How to encourage, to give people purpose and involvement, while being co-ordinated to ensure safety and quality of 'service'. Ensure people play to their passion. How to 'reward' volunteers and make it easy, e.g. reduced parking, a drinks voucher or reduce membership / access to the area they volunteer.

Leading questions and misleading Structure of the questions. Not giving a true account of the pitcher.

We need to maintain the level of grass cutting and on verges . Improve weed clearing not stop it , stopping weeding is a false economy as footpaths and roads look a mess and the weeds break up the surfaces , which will cost more in end . keep waste bins as people will just drop it on the floor . we needs to keep our area clean & tidy other wise the area looks run down and uncared for & this will increase fly tipping, vandalism & litter & burglaries as it will look like a dump which I one cares for ..we pay a fortune in council tax ..where is it a as ll going ? If it is not enough can you look to cutting council costs in house & on admin & areas where money is being wasted ...if it is not enough ask the Gov ... for more money ..they are giving all our money away to other countries and wasting it on projects that never get finished ..where budgets keep increasing every year without any consultation with the public ...billions going on wars in other countries , when we cannot get doctors appt. Hospitals. Or roads repaired & all our trains on strike ..the gov have priorities wrong ..spend these billions on our infrastructure then councils would not be looking at getting rid of litter bins & stopping weeding

seems typical of opaqueness of consultation. Finally found in Executive papers in December. Whilst of concern has this really been costed and checked as value for money. No information on movements against previous years makes it difficult to comment without more meaningful detail. Heading information refers to 'Have your Say@ closing 23.59 23rd January. The survey introduction refers 'you have until 24th January. Conflicting basic information - this has confused a number of residents. This consultation is so difficult to follow as to devalue the consultation as a pointless exercise. Has there been any consideration given to Libraries and Community Centres. 9 Libraries and 16 (?) Community Centres - redundancy and duplication? A summary of statutory and discretionary services would be helpful. The SEND/high needs deficit does not appear to be addressed more clearly. Hasn't the government already passed this deficit back to BFC adding to financial pressures. The adjustment in Business Rates and Valuations is difficult to establish where this pressure impacts the budget - I understand this is a significant reduction in revenue (and will HMG share the deficit).

It seems that more encouragement should be given to volunteers for litter picking and the home library service. Please keep Sandhurst library as it is as it is a life saviour to many vulnerable people locally and the staff have a very approachable manner and are extremely helpful and supportive. Use of the toilet facility would be welcome or a toilet facility reinstated which could be accessed by using a credit card to avoid vandalism.

CENTRAL - CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE

Description Impact	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
<p><b>Chief Executive's Office</b> Termination of the Improvement and Efficiency Enterprise (iESE), Local Government Association Inform Plus and Localis subscriptions.</p>	-12	0	0
<p><b>Policy &amp; Performance</b> Termination of In-Phase contract. ICT support may be required in developing a Microsoft based alternative solution during 2024/25.</p>	0	0	-18
<p><b>Communications</b> Reduce to one re-branded edition of a printed residents' magazine (currently known as Town &amp; Country) per year, from two, and continue to increase resident engagement with digital news/ emails.  Some impact on customers who do not engage with digital platforms. Focus on actions that mitigate the reduction to 1 hard copy edition.</p>	-10	0	0
<p><b>Engagement and Equalities</b> Stop consultation with residents through the satisfaction survey that is conducted every 3 years.  Service teams will need to look for other ways to consult with residents on their opinions and satisfaction with services.</p>	-39	0	0
<p><b>PA Support</b> Review PA support council wide and requirements in the context of digital transformation and increased self-service. The figure assumes a 20% reduction in PA support based on changing requirements.</p>	0	0	-91
<p><b>Engagement &amp; Equalities</b>  Increase to the Involve Core Grant to support their free Funding Advisor/Grant Writer service for Bracknell Forest's voluntary, community and non-profit organisations and groups. This funding is matched by Wokingham Borough Council enabling a Funding Advisor role over 5 days.</p>	6	0	0
<p><b>Policy and Performance</b>  The In Phase contract value has increased above the budget available since the procurement was completed in 2023. The licence allows use of the performance management software, which enables the corporate reporting of essential performance information reported to residents and councillors quarterly.</p>	5	0	0

<b>Description Impact</b>	<b>2024/25 £'000</b>	<b>2025/26 £'000</b>	<b>2026/27 £'000</b>
<b>Policy and Performance</b>  Cost of corporate performance reporting system migration, enabling investment to support the migration of our corporate performance reporting system from InPhase to a more cost-effective Microsoft alternative utilising Power BI and SharePoint lists.	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>CENTRAL - CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE TOTAL</b>	<b>-35</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-109</b>

CENTRAL – RESOURCES

Description Impact	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
<p><b>Audit</b> Removal of the budget for contractors to undertake internal audits to offset the pressure on staffing costs relating to the creation of an in-house team.</p> <p>There will be no budget remaining to support delivery of internal audits by external contractors, although a pressure has been submitted to request temporary provision during the transition to a fully internal team.</p>	-61	0	0
<p><b>Human Resources</b> Restructure including the move of the Payroll team into HR to streamline operational arrangements and enable the deletion of a vacant post.</p>	-73	0	0
<p><b>Organisational Development</b> Reduction in centralised training budgets, remaining budgets will be managed to ensure service critical training is received.</p>	-25	0	0
<p><b>Devolved Staffing Budget</b> Increase of the managed vacancy factor (MVF). To achieve the increased MVF vacancies will need to be held for longer which may impact on service and support provide.</p>	-39	0	0
<p><b>Finance</b> Deletion of one vacant Apprentice post. There will still be five apprentice posts across the directorate.</p> <p>Workload will be spread amongst existing staff which may result in delays or a reduction in support to services. Could also impact on succession planning within the team.</p>	-33	0	0
<p><b>Finance</b> Reduction in various supplies and services budgets.</p>	-10	0	0
<p><b>Revenue – Council Tax</b> Reduction in income budget to better reflect recent income received. Council Tax costs recovered through court judgements have been consistently below budgeted income since 2020, when courts were not sitting.</p>	25	0	0
<p><b>HR - Occupational Health</b> The budget for Occupational Health services is held centrally and managed on behalf of the organisation by the Human Resources and Organisational Development team.</p>	33	2	0

**REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS**

**Annexe D**

<b>Description Impact</b>	<b>2024/25 £'000</b>	<b>2025/26 £'000</b>	<b>2026/27 £'000</b>
<p>The annual cost for the Counselling Service provided by VIVUP exceeds the £0.008m budget by £0.023m. There is also an annual cost of £0.002m for eye tests, for which there is no specific budget.</p> <p>The Occupational Health contract is due for renewal in July 2024. Early market indications are that costs will increase by around 10% resulting in a pressure of approximately £0.010m.</p>			
<p><b>Internal Audit</b></p> <p>Creation of In-House audit team, see saving proposal that offsets additional costs.</p> <p>Two apprentices have been appointed, taking the level of staff employed temporarily above the agreed establishment, while they undertake professional training.</p>	<b>61</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<p><b>Internal Audit</b></p> <p>Making available budget provision to procure some external resources to help deliver the Internal Audit programme while the apprentices undertake training and develop skills to be able to undertake audit work.</p>	<b>25</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-25</b>
<p><b>Technical Accountancy</b></p> <p>The small in-house team that manages the Council's core financial system Agresso requires external specialist support to maintain and develop the financial system. The need for this may reduce when the system is hosted by Agresso directly, which is set to become their only available model from the end of 2024. Cloud hosting costs in this environment are currently unknown but are likely to be more expensive than purchasing the specialist external support as proposed.</p>	<b>50</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<p><b>HR/Payroll</b></p> <p>An extension is currently being negotiated with Midland Software, whose product is used for HR and Payroll.</p>	<b>25</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>ADDITIONAL PROPOSALS SINCE DECEMBER</b>			
<p><b>Revenues</b></p> <p>Payments to households in receipt of Council Tax support will be continued for a further year. The Council will fund a £75 discount from its Covid-19 Reserve to working age claimants.</p>	<b>245</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>CENTRAL – RESOURCES TOTAL</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>-25</b>



## CENTRAL – PLACE, PLANNING &amp; REGENERATION

Description Impact	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
<b>Transportation Planning</b> Reduction in supplies and services budgets in line with prior years expenditure.	-20	0	0
<b>Traffic Signals</b> Terminate the Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC) system service payment to Reading Borough Council and establish local Bracknell Forest Council control.	-10	-15	0
<b>Traffic</b> Income budget to reflect a net administration fee for works of 15%	-25	0	0
<b>Transport Strategy</b> Allocation of Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure and Bus Service Improvement Plan grants received from the Department of Transport to support Bracknell Forest Council staff resourcing (as intended by the grant allocations). Future year grant allocations not yet known for 2025/26 or 2026/27.	-150	TBC	TBC
<b>Devolved Staffing Budget</b> Increase of the managed vacancy factor (MVF), To achieve the increased MVF vacancies will need to be held for longer which may impact on service and support provide.	-56	0	0
<b>Concessionary Fares</b> Revert to reimbursing operators for actual pass holder trips (not to pre-Covid levels). New supported bus contracts already include this change (i.e., reimbursement of actual pass holder trips) from 1st August 2023.	-75	0	0
<b>Building Control</b> Remove the dangerous structures 24/7/365 standby rota. No saving but will reduce overall spend of Building Control which is outside of the Devolved Staffing Budget.  Any dangerous structures in the borough will be inspected by the Council Mon-Fri 9am-5pm only. Residents will need to obtain their own advice and solutions to protect health, safety and welfare of the public should an incident occur out of hours. The responsibility to resolve dangers posed by dangerous structures rests with the owner of the structure, with enforcement powers resting with the Council under Sections 77 and 78 of the Building Act 1984 if necessary.  In line with Building Regulations the service operates a full cost recovery model which incorporates corporate recharges. The service currently cannot generate sufficient income to cover its	0	0	0

Description Impact	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
costs and is therefore reporting a deficit. The proposed saving will reduce the overall costs working towards the required break-even position. The net budget must be zero, so this saving cannot result in an expenditure budget change without a reduction in income budget.			
<p><b>S278/38 fee income</b> Increased use of the reserve for two years - can be revisited for future years.</p> <p>This reserve fund has been static at approximately £1.4m and whilst some long-term draw down is already built into existing savings trajectories there is scope to make further use of the balance.</p>	-300	0	300
<p><b>Commuted Sums</b> Increased use of the reserve for two years.</p> <p>This reserve fund is approximately £0,800m and whilst some long-term draw down is already built into existing savings trajectories there is scope to make further use of the balance.</p>	-50	0	50
<p><b>Town Centre</b> Reduction in various supplies and services budgets</p>	-10	0	0
<p><b>Town centre</b> Additional TV screen advertising income.</p>	-13	0	0
<p><b>Street Lighting</b> Apply a 10% dimming on current street lighting levels to save an estimated 134,014 kWh of energy per annum, contributing to a reduction in Carbon emissions across the borough.</p>	-55	0	0
<p><b>Public Bus Subsidies</b> Use Bus Service Improvement Plan grant funding to support bus services until the end of the contract period (Aug 2026).</p>	-145	0	95
<p><b>S278/38 fee income</b> Benchmarking against other local authorities suggests that there is scope to increase the fee charge to 13% (from 10%) calculated against the value of the developer's highway works.</p>	-13	0	0
<p><b>The Look Out</b></p> <p>Under recovery of income to meet current income target for the site as a whole.</p> <p>Additional capital investment and changes in charges may see The Look Out increase income, but this will not be until at least 2025/26.</p>	135	0	0

Description Impact	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
<b>Land Charges - Non Chargeable Account</b>			
Reduction in income budget due to LLC1 income targets not being achieved for several years.	10	0	0
<b>Traffic - Monitoring Street Works</b>			
Reduction in income budget as increased target over time has exceeded recovery opportunities.	50	0	0
<b>Planning - Development Management</b>			
Reduction in the income target as the budget is not being achieved.	720	-320	0
The pressure is based on an extrapolation of the income received so far in 2023/24, taking into account fee increases of between 25% and 35% (depending on application type).			
<b>Parks &amp; Countryside</b>			
Reduction in income budget due to Licensing income targets not being achieved.	30	0	0
<b>Parks &amp; Countryside - Tree Service</b>			
In order to maintain public safety, an increase in regular monitoring of and works to trees within the Borough.	25	0	0
<b>Public Transport Strategy</b>			
Income target not achievable as the purchase of the Bracknell Forest Council modelling service by developers has continued to decline.	20	0	0
<b>SANG Drawdown</b>			
Due to a slowdown in receipts, the current drawdown to support budgets is unsustainable and needs to be reduced.	0	200	0
<b>Planning - Development Management</b>			
An increase in the budget for appeal costs awarded against the Council. Appeals costs exceed the current budget as a result of Committee decisions.	29	0	0
<b>CENTRAL – PLACE, PLANNING &amp; REGENERATION TOTAL</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>-135</b>	<b>445</b>

DELIVERY

Description Impact	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
<b>Office Accommodation</b> Due to underspends in previous years, budgets will be reduced for the shredding contract (£0.005m), print room reprographics (£0.050m) and Courier vehicle charges (£0.008m)	-63	0	0
<b>Office Accommodation</b> The purchase of a piece of equipment will enable a saving to be achieved by bringing in-house an element of the bulk printing contract.	-5	0	0
<b>Office Accommodation</b> If the centralised stationery budget is removed in its entirety, thus discouraging unnecessary purchases, a saving of £0.022m can be achieved. In addition, if all meeting refreshments are stopped, a saving of £0.014m can be achieved.	-36	0	0
<b>Office Accommodation</b> Restructure within the facilities team to reduce the team by 1.0 Full Time Equivalent. Options are currently being reviewed as the facilities team now support Binfield and Bucklers Park community hubs. An alternative option considered involves using vacant hours from members of staff having recently reduced their hours to offset this saving.	-27	0	0
<b>Leisure</b> Additional management fee to be received from Everyone Active in relation to the Bracknell Leisure Centre refurbishment project and Coral Reef gift shop project.	-125	0	0
<b>Waste Collection</b> A new truck is to be purchased to enable the garden waste collection service to be provided to all those who have expressed an interest and to maintain the service for those customers already signed up. This saving will increase the income target accordingly.	-75	0	0
<b>Grounds Maintenance/Street Cleansing</b> Reduce weed killing from 3 sprays per annum to 2 (£0.030m).	-30	0	0
<b>Grounds Maintenance/Street Cleansing</b> Change the specification for the town centre cleansing operation. This will reduce staff from 4 to 2 and means cover will only be provided 5 days a week (Mon-Fri).	-46	-4	0
<b>Grounds Maintenance</b> Reduction in the budget for the Landscape recovery fund.	-15	0	0
<b>Car Parking</b> Introduce staff parking charges for all staff, including senior officers, at Time Square and Braccan Walk.	-50	0	0

Description Impact	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
<b>Car Parking</b> A reduction in the level of maintenance carried out at the car parks can produce a saving of £0.010m.	-10	0	0
<b>Car Parking</b> With the closure of High Street Car Park, some of the expenditure budgets will no longer be required. This will be dependent on the site being removed from the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) business rates valuation list. <i>This is partially offset by the pressure relating to the loss of income in relation to this site.</i>	-123	0	0
<b>Electoral and Registration Services</b> An increase in the income target for marriages is suggested due to overachievement in previous years (£0.023m), a reduction in the refreshments budget for registration services (£0.001m), a review of staffing across the two areas to create shared posts to reduce staffing while maintaining resilience (£0.25m), and a reduction in supplies and services within Electoral Services due to underspends in previous year (£0.001m)	-50	0	0
<b>Members and Mayoralty</b> Small reductions in budgets across various supplies and services due to underspends in the previous year (£0.005m) and a reduction in conference fees (£0.005m) within Member Services so that attendance will be at approved conferences only.	-10	0	0
<b>Committee Services/Scrutiny</b> Increase the income target for School Admissions appeals due to overachievement in previous years and reduce the printing budget (£0.001m) and delete a vacant post within Committee/Scrutiny (£0.030m).	-31	0	0
<b>Legal Services</b> Increases in the income targets for S106 legal fees (£0.015m) and School's SLA's (£0.003m) due to overachievement in previous years. In addition, reduce the seminar costs budget (£0.001m) due to underspends in previous years.	-19	0	0
<b>Libraries/Customer Services</b> Review of the Libraries and Customer Services management structures. Note that phasing of the proposal has been amended in light of consultation feedback.  Phase one of the programme of developing community hub libraries will be merging the leadership teams of Customer Services and Libraries. The saving will be from the reduction of one Head of Service in Q1 and the number of supervisors from 6 to 4 (2FTE + 2 phones) in Q3 2024/25, while promoting the availability of library sites for community use. Year 2 savings will come from a review of the Home Library Service to identify alternative delivery options.	-113	-88	0

Description Impact	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
<p><b>Democratic &amp; Registration Services</b> A new post is required to support the opposition political groups following the May 2023 election and the change in administration. Due to the increased size and mix of opposition, it is now necessary to have a post that can support them.</p>	22	0	0
<p><b>Waste Disposal</b> Budget increase to match the anticipated spend on the Waste Disposal PFI arrangement.</p>	962	0	0
<p><b>Waste Collection/Recycling</b> Ongoing revenue costs relating to the purchase of a new waste collection vehicle. These costs are partially offset by a corresponding saving relating to Brown Bin income, and also an increase in the fees and charges from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.</p>	130	0	0
<p><b>Leisure</b> Due to the aging buildings, the reactive maintenance budget has been overspent consistently over the last few years. This pressure increases the budget to the anticipated level of expenditure required.</p>	40	0	0
<p><b>Car Parking</b> Due to the closure of High Street Car Park, a proportion of the income generated at this site will be lost. It is expected that some income will be retained at other town centre car parks, so this pressure will reduce down the income target accordingly. (Links to the corresponding saving relating to expenditure budgets at High Street Car Park).</p>	50	0	0
<p><b>Office Accommodation</b> Previous savings relating to the letting out of Time Square have not been achieved. This pressure therefore reduces the income target. Possible options for the use of this space are being considered.</p>	92	0	0
<p><b>DELIVERY TOTAL</b></p>	468	-92	0

## PEOPLE

Description Impact	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
<b>Adult Social Care - Promoting Independence</b> Our new way of working (The Target Operating Model) has been developed with a focus on building independence for adults through early intervention and prevention to ensure people achieve their optimum level of independence. This is being achieved by providing effective information, advice and guidance, the use of equipment and Assistive Technology and rehabilitation / reablement. It will also look at supporting people within friendship groups and activities to improve outcomes.	-948	-458	0
<b>Adult Social Care-Managing the Market</b> Review of provider market unit costs with a view to achieving efficiencies and effectively managing cost.	-300	0	0
<b>Adult Social Care- Maximising external grants</b> The service is supported by a range of grants The objective of this approach will facilitate timely discharge from hospital and maximising independence through a focus of returning home rather than entering residential or nursing care which is much more expensive. The objective will be achieved through focusing an increased level of Better Care Funding to support this process.	-500	0	0
<b>Housing Temporary Accommodation</b> Rental income from additional units purchased through the Local Authority Housing Fund.	-85	-85	-131
<b>Children Looked After</b> Practice continues to see the number of Children Looked After reducing. The average for the last 2 years has reduced to 114 placements compared to 121 over the last 4 years. Current data, which is high cost, volatile and subject to change at short notice, projects a net saving against accommodation and care provision, plus a range of related support services.	-334	0	0
<b>Public Law Outline Assessments (pre court process)</b> Costs have reduced and this is expected to be permanent.	-24	0	0
<b>School Places, Property and Admissions</b> Due to underspends in previous years, it is proposed to remove the budget for the fees for brought in-services.	-13	0	0
<b>Standards and Effectiveness</b> Reduction in capacity can be managed as schools that convert to an academy are no longer supported.	-34	-24	0
<b>PRC / Dismissal Cost</b> Former teacher pension liabilities continue to reduce as a result of mortality rates with no new commitments being made.	-54	-30	-30

<b>Description Impact</b>	<b>2024/25 £'000</b>	<b>2025/26 £'000</b>	<b>2026/27 £'000</b>
<p><b>Early Years Services</b> Government reforms of the early years entitlements will result in significantly more income being received. This enables more grant to be applied to council funded expenditure where this is incurred to support providers. This will need to be reviewed for subsequent years once longer term government plans are confirmed.</p>	<b>-253</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>0</b>
<p><b>Adult Social Care Costs</b> This pressure represents the current cost of care packages and population data on the increase in population and therefore the likely increases in number requiring Social Care particularly in the over 65s cohort. It also includes an estimate of the costs arising from young people turning 18 and transferring into Adult Social Care.</p>	<b>2,304</b>	<b>1,685</b>	<b>1,084</b>
<p><b>Housing and Welfare</b> Updating of Software systems.</p>	<b>37</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>
<p><b>Welfare Service</b> Creation of Financial Inclusion Service The team currently delivering financial hardship advice and support are funded by one off grants and previously allocated hardship funds. It is currently unclear whether any such funding will be made available by the Government in 2024/25.  A proposal has been made to provide £0.100m of funding next year from the Community Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) grant, which will enable a service to be maintained for a further 12 months, although at a reduced level than the current offer.</p>	<b>0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0</b>
<p><b>Special Education Needs (SEN) Team: Restructure</b> This is a provisional estimate subject to an on-going Business Case which considers demand pressures and statutory timescales. It will also consider the need to make permanent a number of posts that are currently funded on a time limited, temporary basis.</p>	<b>200</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<p><b>Early Help Youth Service Review</b> Provision of an educational youth programme for young people with mild to moderate SEND from year 9, in line with preparing for adulthood, to age 25, offering a series of life skills workshops alongside enrichment activities.</p>	<b>0</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>0</b>
<p><b>Home to School Transport / Fleet</b> An initial estimate of likely costs of providing pupil transport requirements in accordance with the provisions of Council policy. The increasing numbers of SEND pupils, in particular, indicates a cost pressure.</p>	<b>255</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>



Description Impact	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
<b>Children's Social Care - Section 17 Payments.</b> There has been an increase in demand and complexity of assessed need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their family settings.	50	0	0
<b>Children's Social Care - Preplacement support</b> Additional staffing support to enable placements to be stable and safe and reduce risks of escalation to residential.	40	0	0
<b>Children's Specialist Support Team - Direct Payments Budget.</b> This is a growing client group with a 15% increase in demand for social care support from the team since June 2020. Direct payments are part of the offer that enables children with disabilities to remain at home.	35	0	0
<b>Children's Social Care - Foster Panel.</b> Increased number of foster panels, undertaken by independent assessors. It relates to improved practice so that all foster home reviews return to panel every three years.	17	0	0
<b>Children's Social Care - Support to Mosaic Interface.</b> Ongoing maintenance of the interface by The Access Group, enabling the business improvements associated with using the financial module.	8	0	0
<b>Funding contribution from maintained schools</b> For statutory education related services. Income to support statutory education related duties is automatically lost from schools that convert to an academy.	25	25	25
<b>Historic commitments in the Schools block</b> A range of defined services that support vulnerable young people are currently jointly funded by the Council and the grant funded Schools Budget. Funding is being reduced which increases the element met by the Council.	33	26	21
<b>ADDITIONAL PROPOSALS SINCE DECEMBER</b>			
<b>Contribution to Council Statutory Education services</b> The Dedicated Schools Grant includes funding to contribute to the cost of the Council's statutory and regulatory education functions. As part of the Safety Valve proposal, the majority of this funding will in future be transferred to the High Needs Block to support the overall financial support package.	265	0	0
<b>Education and Learning Services</b> To offset this loss of income from Council statutory and regulatory education services a review is to be undertaken to identify areas for cost reduction. This includes Standards and Effectiveness, Business Support, Early Years, School Property, Places and Admissions and NEETs (not in education, employment, or	-186	-79	0

**REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS**

**Annexe D**

<b>Description Impact</b>	<b>2024/25 £'000</b>	<b>2025/26 £'000</b>	<b>2026/27 £'000</b>
training) provision. A consultation on final proposals will then be undertaken with schools if required.			
<b>PEOPLE TOTAL</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>1,470</b>	<b>994</b>

COUNCIL WIDE

Description Impact	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
<p><b>Levying Bodies</b> The budget relating to Magistrates Courts Loan Charges has been underspent in previous years. This budget relates to the revenue cost of capital expenditure incurred while Magistrates Courts Committees were still the responsibility of Local Government. This responsibility ended in 2005.</p>	-2	0	0
<p><b>Financial Adjustments</b> Used for write-on/offers and annual adjustments to the bad debt provision for council wide debts. Spend has been quite volatile but the trend over the last few years suggests the budget can be reduced.</p>	-9	0	0
<p><b>Car Mileage Claims</b> The budgets relating to Car Mileage Claims have been underspent for several years. This saving will be allocated across directorates.</p>	-180	0	0
<p><b>Business Change Programme - Neighbourhood Assets and Regeneration / Climate Change</b> Significantly reduce operating costs and generate income by taking a strategic planned approach to analysing and rationalising our property estate. Ensure an efficient and suitable property portfolio that suits the requirements of service delivery and minimises underutilisation.  Complementing and informing the Council's Borough-wide climate change and net zero activities, provide a clear focus on our internal work to drive at pace the Council's adaption to climate change and deliver reductions in our own carbon emissions and those from our supply chain and commissioned services.</p>	-250	-200	-250
<p><b>Business Change Programme – Digital Efficiency</b> Focus on delivering efficient, sustainable, innovative, digital-enabled customer focussed services. Simplify and rationalise systems and data storage to maximise efficiencies and deliver better value from data insight.</p>	-250	-300	-450
<p><b>Business Change Programme – Workforce Retention and Recruitment</b> Build a thriving, diverse and engaged workforce that drives our organisational effectiveness. Be known for attracting, nurturing and retaining exceptional talent. Through this, increase the number of permanent, core employees and enable reliance on agency workers to be reduced. This will mitigate current pressures / overspends on staffing budgets but not initially enable budget reductions.</p>	0	TBD	TBD

**REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS**

**Annexe D**

<b>Description Impact</b>	<b>2024/25 £'000</b>	<b>2025/26 £'000</b>	<b>2026/27 £'000</b>
<b>Business Change Programme – Programme costs</b> Alternative funding of programme sponsors, and part of the support service costs included in the flexible use of capital receipts strategy.	<b>-100</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Corporate Wide Items</b> A saving was built into the 2023/24 budget relating to the review of essential car user allowances across the Council. The review never took resulting in a pressure in 2023/24. This saving is no longer achievable.	<b>20</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Corporate Contingency</b> The Contingency has been increased from £2.75m to £4m to reflect the increases in financial risks to the budget. The appropriate level will be kept under review between now and February.	<b>1,250</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>ADDITIONAL PROPOSALS SINCE DECEMBER</b>			
<b>Earmarked Reserves</b> Transfer from the Covid-19 Reserve to fund a £75 reduction in Council tax bills for working age households in receipt of Council Tax support.	<b>-245</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>COUNCIL WIDE TOTAL</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>-500</b>	<b>-700</b>

## TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT

- 1.1 The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council to “have regard to” the Prudential Code and to set Prudential Indicators for the next three years to ensure that the Council’s capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable.
- 1.2 The Council is required to operate a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that this cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. Surplus monies are invested in low-risk counterparties or instruments commensurate with the Council’s low risk appetite, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return.
- 1.3 The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council’s capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning, to ensure that the Council can meet its capital spending obligations. This management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short-term loans, or using longer-term cash flow surpluses. On occasion, when it is prudent and economic, any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.
- 1.4 The contribution the treasury management function makes to the authority is critical, as the balance of debt and investment operations ensure liquidity or the ability to meet spending commitments as they fall due, either on day-to-day revenue or for larger capital projects. The treasury operations will see a balance of the interest costs of debt and the investment income arising from cash deposits affecting the available budget. Since cash balances generally result from reserves and balances, it is paramount to ensure adequate security of the sums invested, as a loss of principal will in effect result in a loss to the General Fund Balance.
- 1.5 CIPFA defines treasury management as:
- “The management of the local authority’s borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.”*

### Capital Strategy

- 1.6 The CIPFA 2021 Prudential and Treasury Management Codes require all local authorities to prepare a Capital Strategy report which will provide the following: -
- a high-level long-term overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services
  - an overview of how the associated risk is managed
  - the implications for future financial sustainability
- 1.7 The aim of the strategy is to ensure that all the Authority’s elected members fully understand the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting Capital Strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite.
- 1.8 The Council published its Capital Strategy in 2019. It has been reviewed by officers and will be updated for 2024/25 to be reviewed by Governance and Audit Committee before being published. If any non-treasury investment sustains a loss

during the final accounts and audit process, the strategy and revenue implications will be reported through the same procedure as the capital strategy.

### **Treasury Management reporting**

- 1.9 The Authority is currently required to receive and approve, as a minimum, three main treasury reports each year, which incorporate a variety of policies, estimates and actuals.
- a. **Prudential and treasury indicators and treasury strategy** (this report) - The first, and most important report is forward looking and covers: -
    - the capital plans, (including prudential indicators)
    - a minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy, (how residual capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time)
    - the Treasury Management Strategy, (how the investments and borrowings are to be organised), including treasury indicators; and
    - an Annual Investment Strategy, (the parameters on how investments are to be managed)
  - b. **A mid-year treasury management report** – This is primarily a progress report and will update members on the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary, and whether any policies require revision. In addition, this Authority will receive quarterly update reports.
  - c. **An annual treasury report** – This is a backward-looking review document and provides details of a selection of actual prudential and treasury indicators and actual treasury operations compared to the estimates within the strategy.
- 1.10 The above reports are required to be adequately scrutinised before being recommended to the Council. This role is undertaken by the Governance and Audit Committee.
- 1.11 CIPFA published the revised Codes on 20th December 2021 and stated that revisions need to be included in the reporting framework from the 2023/24 financial year. This Authority, therefore, has to have regard to these Codes of Practice when it prepares the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy, and also related reports during the financial year, which are taken to Full Council for approval.
- 1.12 The Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25 covers two main areas which meet the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, DLUHC Investment Guidance, DLUHC MRP Guidance, the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code:

#### **Capital issues**

- the capital expenditure plans and the associated prudential indicators;
- the minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy.

#### **Treasury management issues**

- the current treasury position;
- treasury indicators which limit the treasury risk and activities of the Council;
- prospects for interest rates;
- the borrowing strategy;

- policy on borrowing in advance of need;
- debt rescheduling;
- the investment strategy;
- creditworthiness policy; and
- the policy on use of external service providers.

1.13 The CIPFA Treasury Management Code requires the responsible officer to ensure that members with responsibility for treasury management receive adequate training in treasury management. This especially applies to members responsible for scrutiny.

1.14 Furthermore, pages 47 and 48 of the Code state that they expect “all organisations to have a formal and comprehensive knowledge and skills or training policy for the effective acquisition and retention of treasury management knowledge and skills for those responsible for management, delivery, governance and decision making.

## The Capital Prudential Indicators 2024/25 – 2026/27

The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council to adopt the CIPFA Prudential Code and produce prudential indicators. Each indicator either summarises the expected capital activity or introduces limits upon that activity and reflects the outcome of the Council's underlying capital appraisal systems. Within this overall prudential framework there is an impact on the Council's treasury management activity – as it will directly impact on borrowing or investment activity and as such the Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25 to 2026/27 complements these indicators.

The Council's capital expenditure plans are the key driver of treasury management activity. The output of the capital expenditure plans is reflected in the prudential indicators, which are designed to assist members' overview and confirm capital expenditure plans.

### The Capital Expenditure Plans

The Council's capital expenditure plans are summarised below, and this forms the first of the prudential indicators. A certain level of capital expenditure is grant supported by the Government; any decisions by the Council to spend above this level will be considered unsupported capital expenditure. This capital expenditure needs to have regard to:

- Service objectives (e.g. strategic planning);
- Stewardship of assets (e.g. asset management planning);
- Value for money (e.g. option appraisal);
- Prudence and sustainability (e.g. implications for external borrowing and whole life costing);
- Affordability (e.g. implications for the council tax);
- Practicality (e.g. the achievability of the forward plan).

The revenue consequences of capital expenditure, particularly the unsupported capital expenditure, will need to be paid for from the Council's own resources. This capital expenditure can be paid for immediately (by applying capital resources such as capital receipts, capital grants, or revenue resources), but if these resources are insufficient any residual capital expenditure will add to the Council's borrowing need.

The key risks to the plans are that the level of Government support has been estimated and is therefore maybe subject to change. Similarly some estimates for other sources of funding, such as capital receipts, may also be subject to change over this timescale. For instance anticipated asset sales may be postponed due to external factors such as the impact of the wider economy.

The Council is asked to approve the summary capital expenditure projections below.



<b>Capital Expenditure</b>	<b>2024/25 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2025/26 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2026/27 Estimate £000</b>
Capital Expenditure	12,882	9,867	6,850
Commercial Activities	0	0	0
<b>Financed by:</b>			
Capital receipts	5,200	2,200	2,000
Capital grants & Contributions	4,554	4,675	3,230
<b>Net financing need</b>	<b>3,128</b>	<b>2,992</b>	<b>1,620</b>

### **The Council's Borrowing Need (the Capital Financing Requirement)**

The second prudential indicator is the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The CFR is simply the total outstanding capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for from either revenue or capital resources. It is essentially a measure of the Council's underlying borrowing need. The capital expenditure above which has not immediately been paid for will increase the CFR. Due to the nature of some of the capital expenditure identified above (ie grant), an element will be immediately impaired or will not qualify as capital expenditure for CFR purposes. As such the net financing figure above may differ from that used in the CFR calculation. The CFR does not increase indefinitely, as the minimum revenue provision (MRP) is a statutory annual revenue charge which broadly reduces the indebtedness in line with each assets life, and so charges the economic consumption of capital assets as they are used.

The Council is asked to approve the CFR projections below:

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	Estimate £m	Estimate £m	Estimate £m	Estimate £m
<b>Capital Financing Requirement</b>				
CFR – services	145.469	155.529	163.491	164.097
CFR - Commercial activities/ non-financial investments	84.055	82.984	81.887	80.765
<b>Total CFR</b>	<b>229.524</b>	<b>238.513</b>	<b>245.378</b>	<b>244.862</b>
<b>Movement in CFR</b>	<b>9.452</b>	<b>8.989</b>	<b>6.865</b>	<b>-0.516</b>
<b>Movement in CFR represented by</b>				
Net financing need for the year (above)	6.659	5.505	3.257	-4.325
Less MRP and other financing movements	2.793	3.484	3.608	3.808
<b>Movement in CFR</b>	<b>9.452</b>	<b>8.989</b>	<b>6.865</b>	<b>-0.516</b>

The net financing need for the year includes expenditure related to budgets approved in prior years in addition to the new capital expenditure approved in 2024/25.

Regulations have been issued which require full Council to approve an MRP Statement in advance of each year. The Council is recommended to approve the MRP Statement attached in Annex E(ii)

### **Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement**

Under Regulation 27 of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003, where the Authority has financed capital expenditure by borrowing it is required to make a provision each year through a revenue charge (MRP).

The Authority is required to calculate a prudent provision of MRP which ensures that the outstanding debt liability is repaid over a period that is reasonably commensurate with that over which the capital expenditure provides benefits. The MRP Guidance (2018) gives four ready-made options for calculating MRP, but the Authority can use any other reasonable basis that it can justify as prudent.

The MRP policy statement requires full council approval (or closest equivalent level) in advance of each financial year. As such the Council is recommended to approve the following MRP Statement

- For capital expenditure incurred before 1 April 2008 or which in the future will be Supported Capital Expenditure, the MRP policy will be:

**Based on CFR** – MRP will be based on the CFR. This option provides for an approximate 4% reduction in the borrowing need (CFR) each year.

- From 1 April 2008 for all unsupported borrowing (including PFI and finance leases but excluding CPIS expenditure) the MRP policy will be:

**Asset life method** - MRP will be based on the annuity basis, in accordance with the regulations. Repayments included in annual PFI, or finance leases are applied as MRP.

There will be a presumption that capital receipts will be allocated to the appropriate assets in relation to the constraints of the medium-term financial strategy.

Capital expenditure incurred during 2024/25 will not be subject to an MRP charge until 2025/26, or in the year after the asset becomes operational.

## TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT

The Treasury Management service is an important part of the overall financial management of the Council's affairs. The prudential indicators in Annex E(i) consider the affordability and impact of capital expenditure decisions and set out the Council's overall capital framework. The Treasury Management service considers the effective funding of these decisions. Together they form part of the process which ensures the Council meets its balanced budget requirement under the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

The Council's treasury activities are strictly regulated by statutory requirements and a professional code of practice - 2011 revised CIPFA Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes ("the CIPFA TM Code"). This Council has adopted the revised Code.

As a result of adopting the Code the Council also adopted a Treasury Policy Statement. This adoption is the requirement of one of the prudential indicators.

The Code of Practice requires an annual strategy to be reported to Council outlining the expected treasury activity for the forthcoming 3 years. A key requirement of this report is to explain both the risks, and the management of the risks, associated with the treasury service. A further treasury report is produced after the year-end to report on actual activity for the year, and a new requirement of the revision of the Code of Practice is that there is a mid-year monitoring report.

This strategy covers:

- The Council's debt and investment projections;
- The Council's estimates and limits on future debt levels;
- The expected movement in interest rates;
- The Council's borrowing and investment strategies;
- Treasury performance indicators;
- Specific limits on treasury activities;

### Debt and Investment Projections 2024/25 – 2026/27

The borrowing requirement comprises the expected movement in the CFR and any maturing debt which will need to be re-financed.

	2024/25 Estimated	2025/26 Estimated	2026/27 Estimated
<b>External Debt</b>			
Debt at 31 March	£100m	£110m	£100m
<b>Investments</b>			
Investments at 31 March	£15m	£15m	£15m

### Current Portfolio

The overall treasury management portfolio as at 31 March 2023 and for the position as at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023 are shown below for both borrowing and investments

	Actual	Actual	Current	Current
	31/03/23	31/03/23	31/10/23	31/10/23
<b>Treasury Investments</b>	£000	%	£000	%
Money Market Funds	15,775	100	10,450	100
<b>External Borrowing</b>	£000	%	£000	%
Local Authorities	0	0	15,000	0
PWLB	80,000	100	80,000	100
<b>Net Treasury Borrowing</b>	64,225		84,550	

### Limits to Borrowing Activity

Within the prudential indicators there are a number of key indicators to ensure the Council operates its activities within well defined limits. For the first of these the Council needs to ensure that its total borrowing net of any investments, does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2024/25 and the following two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years but ensures that borrowing is not undertaken for revenue purposes.

The Executive Director:Resources reports that the Council has complied with this prudential indicator in the current year and does not envisage difficulties for the future. This view takes into account current commitments, existing plans, and the proposals in this budget report.

### The Authorised Limit for External Debt

A further key prudential indicator represents a control on the overall level of borrowing. This represents a limit beyond which external debt is prohibited, and this limit needs to be set or revised by full Council. It reflects the level of external debt which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term.

The Council is asked to approve the following Authorised Limit:

Authorised limit	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate
Borrowing	£240m	£240m	£250m
Other long term liabilities	£20m	£20m	£20m
Total	£260m	£260m	£270m

### Operational Boundary for External Debt

The Authority is also recommended to approve the Operational Boundary for external debt for the same period. The proposed Operational Boundary is based on the same estimates as the Authorised Limit but reflects directly the estimate of the most likely but not worst case scenario, without the additional headroom included within the Authorised Limit to allow for unusual cash movements.

Operational Boundary	2024/25 Estimate	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate
Borrowing	£230m	£230m	£240m
Other long term liabilities	£20m	£20m	£20m
Total	£250m	£250m	£260m

### Borrowing in advance of need.

The Executive Director:Resources may do this under delegated power where, for instance, a sharp rise in interest rates is expected, and so borrowing early at fixed interest rates will be economically beneficial or meet budgetary constraints. Whilst the Executive Director:Resources will adopt a cautious approach to any such borrowing, where there is a clear business case for doing so borrowing may be undertaken to fund the approved capital programme or to fund future debt maturities. Risks associated with any advance borrowing activity will be subject to appraisal in advance and subsequent reporting through the mid-year or annual reporting mechanism.

### Expected Movement in Interest Rates

The Council's treasury advisor, Link Asset Services has provided the following forecast:

Date	BANK RATE	5yr PWLB	10yr PWLB	25yr PWLB	50yr PWLB
Dec-23	5.25	5.00	5.10	5.50	5.30
Mar-24	5.25	4.90	5.00	5.30	5.10
Jun-24	5.25	4.70	4.80	5.10	4.90
Sep-24	5.00	4.40	4.70	4.90	4.70
Dec-24	4.50	4.20	4.40	4.70	4.50
Mar-25	4.00	4.00	4.20	4.50	4.30
Jun-25	3.50	3.80	4.00	4.30	4.10
Sep-25	3.25	3.70	3.80	4.20	4.00

Whilst the Council is no longer debt-free the level of internal resources has enabled the Council to avoid any new external borrowing since 2018. However this position is no longer sustainable and additional external borrowing will be required in 2024/25 onwards.

The prolonged period of low global interest rates changed markedly from April 2022 onwards, with central banks around the world increasing rates. The first half of 2023/24 saw interest rates rise by a further 100bps, taking the Bank Rate from 4.25% to 5.25% and possibly the peak in the tightening cycle. Short- and Medium-term gilts remain elevated as inflation continually surprised on the upside. Whilst CPI Inflation has fallen from 8.7% in April to 4.7% in October, its lowest rate since February 2022, it is still significantly above the Bank of England target rate of 2.5%. Further, a cooling in labour market conditions has not led to any easing of wage growth, which is still rising at over 7%.

The registering of 0% GDP for Q3 suggests that underlying growth has lost momentum since earlier in the year. Some of the weakness in July was due to there being almost twice as many working days lost to strikes in July (281,000) than in June (160,000). But with output falling in 10 out of the 17 sectors, there is an air of underlying weakness.

As the growing drag from higher interest rates intensifies over the next six months, we think the economy will continue to lose momentum and soon fall into a mild recession. Strong labour demand, fast wage growth and government support have all supported household incomes over the past year. And with CPI inflation past its peak and expected to decline further, the economy has got through the cost-of-living crisis without recession. But even though the worst of the falls in real household disposable incomes are behind us, the phasing out of financial support packages provided by the government during the energy crisis means real incomes are unlikely to grow strongly. Higher interest rates will soon bite harder too. We expect the Bank of England to keep interest rates at the probable peak of 5.25% until the second half of 2024. Mortgage rates are likely to stay above 5.0% for around a year.

In its latest monetary policy meeting on 06 November, the Bank of England left interest rates unchanged at 5.25%. The vote to keep rates on hold was a split vote, 6-3. It is clear that some members of the MPC are still concerned about the stickiness of inflation.

In terms of current market view, pricing suggests that rates will be on hold for some months to come, with easing in the latter half of the financial year.

#### **Investment and borrowing rates**

- **Investment returns** are expected to remain stable in 2024/25. As noted above whilst CPI has started to retreat, prices are still increasing and wage inflation continues to act on the market. Whilst further rate hikes are unlikely the focus is on how long the Bank of England will retain rates at their current level.
- **Borrowing interest rates** fell to historically very low rates as a result of the COVID crisis and the quantitative easing operations of the Bank of England however the economic conditions highlighted above reflect a different path in borrowing rates is now in place. The policy of avoiding new borrowing by running down spare cash balances has served local authorities well over the last few years however current rates are significantly higher than the rates achieved by the Council in the borrowing undertaken between 2017 and 2019.

#### **Borrowing Strategy 2024/25**

The Council is currently maintaining an under-borrowed position. This means that the capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement), has not been fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow has been used as a temporary measure. This strategy was prudent when investment returns are low, however the ability to maintain this strategy is challenging as reserves and balances are depleted as part of the Council's budget strategy.

Against this background and the risks within the economic forecast, caution will be adopted with the 2024/25 treasury operations. The Executive Director:Resources will monitor interest rates in financial markets and adopt a pragmatic approach to changing circumstances:

- if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a sharp FALL in long and short term rates then any long term borrowings will be postponed, and potential rescheduling from fixed rate funding into short term borrowing will be considered.
- if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a much sharper RISE in long and short term rates than that currently forecast, perhaps arising from an increase in world economic activity or a further spikes in inflation risks, then the portfolio position will be re-appraised.

The current and short-term economic conditions place considerable challenges on the Council's treasury activities. There is a re-financing need in 2024/25 of PWLB loans taken out in 2017 at rates considerably higher than the original rate. However, with the projection above that interest rates should begin to fall in the second half of the financial year, short-term maturities may be favoured to optimise the Councils long-term borrowing costs. Any decisions will be reported to the Executive at the next available opportunity.

The Council will not borrow more than or in advance of its needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. Any decision to borrow in advance will be within forward approved Capital Financing Requirement estimates, and will be considered carefully to ensure that value for money can be demonstrated and that the Council can ensure the security of such funds.

### **Debt rescheduling**

In this period of uncertainty and historically wild swings in gilt prices over such a short period of time, there may be potential opportunities to generate savings by switching from long-term debt to short-term debt. However, these savings will need to be considered in the light of the current treasury position and the size of the cost of debt repayment (premiums incurred).

The reasons for any rescheduling to take place will include:

- the generation of cash savings and / or discounted cash flow savings;
- helping to fulfil the treasury strategy;
- enhance the balance of the portfolio (amend the maturity profile and/or the balance of volatility).

All rescheduling will be reported to the Executive, at the earliest meeting following its action.



## Investment Strategy 2024/25 – 2026/27

### Investment Policy

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and CIPFA have extended the meaning of ‘investments’ to include both financial and non-financial investments. This report deals solely with treasury (financial) investments, (as managed by the treasury management team). Non-financial investments, essentially the purchase of income yielding assets and service investments, are covered in the Capital Strategy

The Authority’s investment policy has regard to the following: -

- DLUHC’s Guidance on Local Government Investments (“the Guidance”)
- CIPFA Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes 2021 (“the Code”)
- CIPFA Treasury Management Guidance Notes 2021

The Council’s investment priorities will be security first, portfolio liquidity second and then yield, (return).

The above guidance from the DLUHC and CIPFA places a high priority on the management of risk. This Authority has adopted a prudent approach to managing risk and defines its risk appetite by the following means: -

1. Minimum acceptable **credit criteria** are applied in order to generate a list of highly creditworthy counterparties. This also enables diversification and thus avoidance of concentration risk. The key ratings used to monitor counterparties are the short term and long-term ratings.
2. Other information: ratings will not be the sole determinant of the quality of an institution; it is important to continually assess and monitor the financial sector on both a micro and macro basis and in relation to the economic and political environments in which institutions operate. The assessment will also take account of information that reflects the opinion of the markets. To achieve this consideration the Council will engage with its advisors to maintain a monitor on market pricing such as “credit default swaps” and overlay that information on top of the credit ratings.
3. Other information sources used will include the financial press, share price and other such information pertaining to the banking sector in order to establish the most robust scrutiny process on the suitability of potential investment counterparties.
4. This authority has defined the list of types of investment instruments that the treasury management team are authorised to use. There are two lists in appendix under the categories of ‘specified’ and ‘non-specified’ investments.
  - **Specified investments** are those with a high level of credit quality and subject to a maturity limit of one year.
  - **Non-specified investments** are those with less high credit quality, may be for periods in excess of one year, and/or are more complex instruments which require greater consideration by members and officers before being authorised for use.

5. Lending and transaction limits, (amounts and maturity), for each counterparty will be set through applying the matrix table shown under the Council's creditworthiness policy
6. This authority has engaged external consultants, (see paragraph 1.5), to provide expert advice on how to optimise an appropriate balance of security, liquidity and yield, given the risk appetite of this authority in the context of the expected level of cash balances and need for liquidity throughout the year.
7. All investments will be denominated in sterling.

### **Creditworthiness policy**

This Council applies the creditworthiness service provided by Link Asset Services. This service employs a sophisticated modelling approach utilising credit ratings from the three main credit rating agencies - Fitch, Moody's and Standard and Poor's. The credit ratings of counterparties are supplemented with the following overlays:

- credit watches and credit outlooks from credit rating agencies;
- CDS spreads to give early warning of likely changes in credit ratings;
- sovereign ratings to select counterparties from only the most creditworthy countries.

This modelling approach combines credit ratings, credit watches and credit outlooks in a weighted scoring system which is then combined with an overlay of CDS spreads for which the end product is a series of colour coded bands which indicate the relative creditworthiness of counterparties. These colour codes are used by the Council to determine the suggested duration for investments. The Council will therefore use counterparties within the following maturities .

Dark pink	5 years for Enhanced money market funds (EMMFs) with a credit score of 1.25
Light pink	5 years for Enhanced money market funds (EMMFs) with a credit score of 1.5
Blue	1 year (only applies to nationalised or semi nationalised UK Banks)
Orange	1 year
Red	6 months
Green	100 days
No colour	not to be used

Y	Pi1	Pi2	P	B	O	R	G	N/C
1	1.25	1.5	2	3	4	5	6	7
Up to 5yrs	Up to 5yrs	Up to 5yrs	Up to 2yrs	Up to 1yr	Up to 1yr	Up to 6mths	Up to 100days	No Colour

	Colour (and long term rating where applicable)	Money and/or % Limit	Time Limit
Banks	orange	£7m	1 yr
Banks – part nationalised	blue	£7m	1 yr
Banks	red	£7m	6 months
Banks	green	£7m	100 days
Banks	No colour	£0m	0 days
Debt Management Account Deposit Facility	AAA	£10m	6 months
Local authorities	n/a	£7m	1 yr
Money Market Funds (CNAV, LVNAV & VNAV)	AAA	£10m	liquid
Enhanced money market funds with a credit score of 1.25	Dark pink / AAA	£10m	liquid
Enhanced money market funds with a credit score of 1.5	Light pink / AAA	£10m	liquid

The creditworthiness service uses a wider array of information than just primary ratings and by using a risk weighted scoring system, does not give undue influence to just one agency's ratings.

Typically the minimum credit ratings criteria the Council use will be a short term rating (Fitch or equivalents) of short term rating F1, long term rating A-, viability rating of A-, and a support rating of 1. There may be occasions when the counterparty ratings from one rating agency are marginally lower than these ratings but may still be used. In these instances consideration will be given to the whole range of ratings available, or other topical market information, to support their use.

All credit ratings will be monitored in real time. The Council is alerted to changes to ratings of all three agencies through its use of our creditworthiness service.

- if a downgrade results in the counterparty / investment scheme no longer meeting the Council's minimum criteria, its further use as a new investment will be withdrawn immediately.
- in addition to the use of credit ratings the Council will be advised of information in movements in credit default swap spreads against the iTraxx benchmark and other market data on a weekly basis. Extreme market movements may result in downgrade of an institution or removal from the Council's lending list.

Sole reliance will not be placed on the use of this external service. In addition this Council will also use market data and market information, information on government support for banks and the credit ratings of that supporting government

In the normal course of the council's cash flow operations it is expected that both Specified and Non-specified investments will be utilised for the control of liquidity as both categories allow for short term investments.

The use of longer term instruments (greater than one year from inception to repayment) will fall in the Non-specified investment category. These instruments will only be used where the Council's liquidity requirements are safeguarded however the current investment limits for 2024/25 restrain all investments to less than 1 year. Any amendment to this strategy will require the credit-criteria to be amended to include a long-term rating. This will be addressed through the formal approval by Council of a revised Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy.

### **Country and Sector Considerations**

Due care will be taken to consider the country, group and sector exposure of the Council's investments. The current investment strategy limits all investments to UK Banks, Building Societies and Local Authorities, in addition to Sterling denominated AAA Money Market Funds.

### **Economic Investment Considerations**

Investments will be made with reference to the core balance and cash flow requirements and the outlook for short-term interest rates. The criteria for choosing counterparties set out above provides a sound approach to investment in "normal" market circumstances. Whilst Members are asked to approve this base criteria above, under the exceptional current market conditions the Executive Director:Resources may temporarily restrict further investment activity to those counterparties considered of higher credit quality than the minimum criteria set out for approval. These restrictions will remain in place until the banking system returns to "normal" conditions. Similarly the time periods for investments will be restricted.

Examples of these restrictions would be the greater use of the Debt Management Deposit Account Facility (a Government body which accepts local authority deposits), Money Market Funds, and strongly rated institutions. The credit criteria have been amended to reflect these facilities.

### **Treasury Management Limits on Activity**

There are four further treasury activity limits, which were previously prudential indicators. The purpose of these are to contain the activity of the treasury function within certain limits, thereby managing risk and reducing the impact of an adverse movement in interest rates. However if these are set to be too restrictive they will impair the opportunities to reduce costs/improve performance. The indicators are:

Upper limits on variable interest rate exposure – This identifies a maximum limit for variable interest rates based upon the debt position net of investments

Upper limits on fixed interest rate exposure – Similar to the previous indicator this covers a maximum limit on fixed interest rates.

Maturity structures of borrowing – These gross limits are set to reduce the Council's exposure to large fixed rate sums falling due for refinancing, and are required for upper and lower limits.

Total principal funds invested for greater than 364 days – These limits are set with regard to the Council’s liquidity requirements and are based on the availability of funds after each year-end. The Council is asked to approve the limits:

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
<b>Interest rate Exposures</b>			
	<b>Upper</b>	<b>Upper</b>	<b>Upper</b>
<b>Limits on fixed interest rates based on net debt</b>	£260m	£270m	£270m
<b>Limits on variable interest rates based on net debt</b>	£260m	£270m	£270m
<b>Maturity Structure of fixed interest rate borrowing 2017/18</b>			
	<b>Lower</b>	<b>Upper</b>	
Under 12 months	0%	100%	
12 months to 2 years	0%	100%	
2 years to 5 years	0%	100%	
5 years to 10 years	0%	100%	
10 years and above	0%	100%	
<b>Maximum principal sums invested &gt; 364 days</b>			
Principal sums invested > 364 days	£m 0	£m 0	£m 0

### Performance Indicators

The Code of Practice on Treasury Management requires the Council to set performance indicators to assess the adequacy of the treasury function over the year. These are distinct historic indicators, as opposed to the prudential indicators, which are predominantly forward looking. For 2024/25 the relevant benchmark will relate only to investments and will be the Sterling Overnight Index Average (SONIA). The results of these indicators will be reported in the Treasury Annual Report.

### Treasury Management Advisers

The Council uses Link Asset Services as its treasury management consultants. The Council recognises that responsibility for treasury management decision remains with the organisation at all times and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon our external service providers.

It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services in order to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Council will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented, and subject to regular review.

### Member and Officer Training

The increased Member consideration of treasury management matters and the need to ensure officers dealing with treasury management are trained and kept up to date requires a suitable training process for Members and officers. Following the nomination of the Governance and Audit Committee to examine and assess the effectiveness of the Treasury Management Strategy and Policies, initial training was provided and additional training has been undertaken as necessary. Officer training is carried out in accordance with best practice and outlined in TMP 10 Training and Qualifications to ensure that all staff involved in the Treasury Management function are fully equipped to undertake the duties and responsibilities allocated to them.

**SPECIFIED INVESTMENTS**

*All investments listed below must be sterling-denominated.*

Investment	Share/ Loan Capital?	Repayable/ Redeemable within 12 months?	Security / Minimum Credit Rating **	Circumstance of use	Maximum period
<b>Debt Management Agency Deposit Facility*</b> (DMADF) * this facility is at present available for investments up to 6 months	No	Yes	Govt-backed	In-house	364 Days
<b>Term deposits</b> with the UK government or with Local Authority (including Parish Councils) in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland with maturities up to 364 Days	No	Yes	High security although LAs not credit rated.	In-house and by external fund managers subject to the guidelines and parameters agreed with them	364 Days
<b>Term deposits</b> with credit-rated deposit takers (banks and building societies), including callable deposits, with maturities up to 364 Days	No	Yes	<i>As per list of approved Counterparties</i>	In-house and by external fund managers subject to the guidelines and parameters agreed with them	364 Days
<b>Certificates of Deposit</b> issued by credit-rated deposit takers (banks and building societies) : up to 364 Days.  <i>Custodial arrangement required prior to purchase</i>	No	Yes	<i>As per list of approved Counterparties</i>	To be used by external fund managers only subject to the guidelines and parameters agreed with them	364 Days
<b>Gilts</b> : up to 364 Days	No	Yes	Govt-backed	To be used by external fund managers only subject to the guidelines and parameters agreed with them	364 Days

Investment	Share/ Loan Capital?	Repayable/ Redeemable within 12 months?	Security / Minimum Credit Rating **	Circumstance of use	Maximum period
<b>Money Market Funds</b> CNAV, LVNAV, and VNAV <i>These funds do not have any maturity date</i>	No	Yes	<i>AAA Rating by Fitch, Moodys or S&amp;P</i>	In-house and by external fund managers subject to the guidelines and parameters agreed with them	The period of investment may not be determined at the outset but would be subject to cash flow and liquidity requirements
<b>Forward deals</b> with credit rated banks and building societies < 1 year (i.e. negotiated deal period plus period of deposit)	No	Yes	<i>As per list of approved Counterparties</i>	In-house and by external fund managers subject to the guidelines and parameters agreed with them. Tracking of all forward deals to be undertaken and recorded.	1 year in aggregate
<b>Commercial paper</b> <i>[short-term obligations (generally with a maximum life of 9 months) which are issued by banks, corporations and other issuers]</i>  <i>Custodial arrangement required prior to purchase</i>	No	Yes	<i>As per list of approved Counterparties</i>	To be used by external fund managers only subject to the guidelines and parameters agreed with them	9 months
<b>Treasury bills</b> <i>[Government debt security with a maturity less than one year and issued through a competitive bidding process at a discount to par value] Custodial arrangement required prior to purchase</i>	No	Yes	Govt-backed	To be used by external fund managers only subject to the guidelines and parameters agreed with them	1 year

## NON-SPECIFIED INVESTMENTS

***All investments listed below must be sterling-denominated.***

<u>Investment</u>	<u>(A) Why use it?</u> <u>(B) Associated risks?</u>	<u>Share/</u> <u>Loan</u> <u>Capital?</u>	<u>Repayable/</u> <u>Redeemable</u> <u>within 12</u> <u>months?</u>	<u>Security /</u> <u>Minimum credit</u> <u>rating **</u>	<u>Circumstance of</u> <u>use</u>	<u>Maximum</u> <u>maturity of</u> <u>investment</u>
Deposits with Authority's Banker where credit rating has dropped below minimum criteria	Where the Council's bank no longer meets the high credit rating criteria set out in the Investment Strategy the Council has little alternative but to continue using them, and in some instances it may be necessary to place deposits with them, these deposits should be of a very short duration thus limiting the Council to daylight exposure only (i.e. flow of funds in and out during the day, or overnight exposure).	No	Yes	n/a	In-House	364 Days
<b>Term deposits</b> with credit rated deposit takers (banks and building societies) with maturities greater than 1 year	(A) (i) Certainty of rate of return over period invested. (ii) No movement in capital value of deposit despite changes in interest rate environment. (B) (i) Illiquid : as a general rule, cannot be traded or repaid prior to maturity. (ii) Return will be lower if interest rates rise after making the investment. (iii) Credit risk : potential for greater deterioration in credit quality over longer period	No	No	<i>As per list of approved Counterparties</i>	In-house and by external fund managers subject to the guidelines and parameters agreed with them	5 Years
<b>Certificates of Deposit</b> with credit rated deposit takers (banks and building societies) with maturities greater than 1 year <i>Custodial arrangement required prior to purchase</i>	(A) (i) Although in theory tradable, are relatively illiquid. (B) (i) 'Market or interest rate risk' : Yield subject to movement during life of CD which could negatively impact on price of the CD.	No	Yes	<i>As per list of approved Counterparties</i>	To be used by external fund managers only subject to the guidelines and parameters agreed with them	5 years



<u>Investment</u>	<u>(A) Why use it?</u> <u>(B) Associated risks?</u>	<u>Share/</u> <u>Loan</u> <u>Capital?</u>	<u>Repayable/</u> <u>Redeemable</u> <u>within 12</u> <u>months?</u>	<u>Security /</u> <u>Minimum Credit</u> <u>Rating?</u>	<u>Circumstance of</u> <u>use</u>	<u>Maximum</u> <u>maturity of</u> <u>investment</u>
<b>Callable deposits</b> with credit rated deposit takers (banks and building societies) with maturities greater than 1 year	(A) (i) Enhanced income ~ Potentially higher return than using a term deposit with similar maturity.  (B) (i) Illiquid – only borrower has the right to pay back deposit; the lender does not have a similar call. (ii) period over which investment will actually be held is not known at the outset. (iii) Interest rate risk : borrower will not pay back deposit if interest rates rise after deposit is made.	No	No	<i>As per list of approved Counterparties</i>	In-house and by external fund managers subject to the guidelines and parameters agreed with them	<i>5 years</i>
<b>UK government gilts</b> with maturities in excess of 1 year  <i>Custodial arrangement required prior to purchase</i>	(A) (i) Excellent credit quality. (ii) Very Liquid. (iii) If held to maturity, known yield (rate of return) per annum ~ aids forward planning. (iv) If traded, potential for capital gain through appreciation in value (i.e. sold before maturity) (v) No currency risk  (B) (i) 'Market or interest rate risk' : Yield subject to movement during life of sovereign bond which could negatively impact on price of the bond i.e. potential for capital loss.	No	Yes	Govt backed	To be used by external fund managers only subject to the guidelines and parameters agreed with them	<i>10 years including but also including the 10 year benchmark gilt</i>

<b><u>Investment</u></b>	<b><u>(A) Why use it?</u> <u>(B) Associated risks?</u></b>	<b><u>Share/ Loan Capital?</u></b>	<b><u>Repayable/ Redeemable within 12 months?</u></b>	<b><u>Security / Minimum credit rating **</u></b>	<b><u>Circumstance of use</u></b>	<b><u>Maximum maturity of investment</u></b>
<b>Forward deposits</b> with credit rated banks and building societies for periods > 1 year (i.e. negotiated deal period plus period of deposit)	(A) (i) Known rate of return over period the monies are invested ~ aids forward planning.  (B) (i) Credit risk is over the whole period, not just when monies are actually invested. (ii) Cannot renege on making the investment if credit rating falls or interest rates rise in the interim period.	No	No	<i>As per list of approved Counterparties</i>	In-house and by external fund managers subject to the guidelines and parameters agreed with them. Tracking of all forward deals to be undertaken and recorded.	<i>5 years</i>
<b>Deposits with unrated deposit takers (banks and building societies) but with unconditional financial guarantee from HMG or credit-rated parent institution</b> : any maturity	(A) Credit standing of parent will determine ultimate extent of credit risk	No	Yes	<i>As per list of approved Counterparties</i>	In-house and by external fund managers subject to the guidelines and parameters agreed with them	<i>1 year</i>

## Reserves & Balances Policy Statement

As part of the financial planning process the Council will consider the establishment and maintenance of reserves and balances. In setting these, account is taken of the key assumptions underpinning the budget and financial strategy, together with the Council's financial management arrangements. Key factors considered include;

- Cash flow
- Assumptions on inflation and interest rates
- Level and timing of capital receipts
- Demand led pressures
- Planned economies
- Risk associated with major projects
- Availability of other funding (e.g. insurance)
- General financial climate

Reserves and Balances can be held for a number of purposes, as set out below. **Note that the implication on earmarked reserves of the Council's Safety Valve proposal is not yet included, pending consideration by the Department for Education.**

### General Balances

Balance	Purpose	Policy	Value
<b>General Fund</b>	Provides general contingency for unavoidable or unforeseen expenditure and to cushion against uneven cash flows and provides stability in longer term financial planning.	Policy based on a risk assessment of budget and medium term financial plans. Historically a sum equivalent to 5% of the net revenue budget (c.£4.5m) has been considered to be the minimum prudent level, though this needs to be kept under review as risks change.	March 21 £10.327m March 22 £11.346m March 23 £11.077m March 24 £11.077m March 25 £11.077m

**Earmarked Reserves**

Earmarked Reserves are sums of money which have been set aside for specific purposes. These are excluded from general balances available to support revenue or capital expenditure. The Council has the following earmarked reserves:

<b>Reserve</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Value</b>
<b>Insurance and other Uninsured Claims</b>	This provides cover for the excess payable on claims under the Council's insurance policies (self insurance). It also provides for any potential future claims not covered by existing policies, including contractual disputes and legal claims.	Needs to be at a level where the provision could sustain claims in excess of current claims history	March 21 £2.909m March 22 £3.096m March 23 £3.084m March 24 £3.084m March 25 £3.084m
<b>Budget Carry Forward</b>	Used to carry forward approved unspent monies to the following year.	Budget Carry Forwards are permitted only in accordance with the scheme set out in financial regulations.	March 21 £0.193m March 22 £1.035m March 23 £0.036m March 24 £0.000m March 25 £0.000m
<b>Cost of Structural Change</b>	The reserve gives an opportunity to fund the one-off additional costs arising from restructuring before the benefits are realised.	This reserve will be used to meet organisational wide and departmental restructures where there are demonstrable future benefits.	March 21 £2.929m March 22 £2.128m March 23 £2.096m March 24 £2.019m March 25 £1.719m
<b>Schools' Balances</b>	These funds are used to support future expenditure within the Dedicated Schools Block and include individual school balances.	Balances are permitted to be retained by Schools under the Schools Standards & Framework Act 1998. Policies are set and the reserves are managed by schools and the LEA has no practical control over the level of balances.	March 21 £2.141m March 22 £2.906m March 23 £2.307m March 24 £2.157m March 25 £1.557m

<b>Reserve</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Value</b>
<b>Discretionary School Carry Forwards</b>	The statutory requirement to carry forward school balances has been extended to cover those held for Pupil Referral Units and the Schools Specific Contingency as set out in the financial regulations.	As the Schools Budget is in an overall deficit position the balance on this earmarked reserve has been transferred to the Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account, a new unusable reserve, as required under the legislation for the financial years 2020/21 to 2025/26.	March 21 £0.000m March 22 £0.000m March 23 £0.000m March 24 £0.000m March 25 £0.000m
<b>Unused Schools Budget Balance</b>	The Schools Budget is a ring fenced account, fully funded by external grants, the most significant of which is the Dedicated Schools Grant. Any under or overspending remaining at the end of the financial year must be carried forward to the next year's Schools Budget and as such has no impact on the Council's overall level of balances.	As the Schools Budget is in an overall deficit position the balance on this earmarked reserve has been transferred to the Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account, a new unusable reserve, as required under the legislation for the financial years 2020/21 to 2025/26.	March 21 £0.000m March 22 £0.000m March 23 £0.000m March 24 £0.000m March 25 £0.000m
<b>SEN Resource Units</b>	An earmarked reserve set up in 2012/13 from the under spend on the Schools Budget to fund building adaptations required to develop SEN (special education needs) resource units.	As the Schools Budget is in an overall deficit position the balance on this earmarked reserve has been transferred to the Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account, an unusable reserve, as required under the legislation for the financial years 2020/21 to 2025/26.	March 21 £0.000m March 22 £0.000m March 23 £0.000m March 24 £0.000m March 25 £0.000m
<b>School Expansion Rates</b>	An earmarked reserve set up in 2013/14 from the under spend on the Schools Budget to help finance the increase in Business Rates arising from school expansions. School budgets are normally set on a provisional figure and the reserve will absorb the differences between provisional and actual figures.	As the Schools Budget is in an overall deficit position the balance on this earmarked reserve has been transferred to the Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account, a new unusable reserve, as required under the legislation for the financial years 2020/21 to 2025/26.	March 21 £0.000m March 22 £0.000m March 23 £0.000m March 24 £0.000m March 25 £0.000m
<b>School Diseconomy Costs</b>	An earmarked reserve set up in 2016/17 from the under spend on the Schools Budget to help finance the medium term cost pressure that will arise from new schools being built. These will	As the Schools Budget is in an overall deficit position the balance on this earmarked reserve has been transferred to the Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account, a new	March 21 £0.000m March 22 £0.000m March 23 £0.000m March 24 £0.000m

Reserve	Purpose	Policy	Value
	generally open with relatively low pupil numbers and will therefore need additional financial support until pupil numbers reach a viable level.	unusable reserve, as required under the legislation for the financial years 2020/21 to 2025/26.	March 25 £0.000m
<b>SEN Strategy Reserve</b>	An earmarked reserve set up in 2017/18 from the under spend on the Schools Budget to help finance the additional medium term costs arising from implementation of the SEN Strategy, assisting with the early implementation of change to improve the outcomes of children and to explore the potential for different models of alternative provision.	As the Schools Budget is in an overall deficit position the balance on this earmarked reserve has been transferred to the Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account, a new unusable reserve, as required under the legislation for the financial years 2020/21 to 2025/26.	March 21 £0.000m March 22 £0.000m March 23 £0.000m March 24 £0.000m March 25 £0.000m
<b>Repairs &amp; Renewals</b>	The Council has accumulated funding in an earmarked reserve from service charges paid by tenants at Longshot Lane, Forest Park and Liscombe.	The reserve is held in order to finance future improvement works thereby reducing pressure on maintenance budgets.	March 21 £0.046m March 22 £0.057m March 23 £0.054m March 24 £0.054m March 25 £0.054m
<b>Building Regulation Chargeable Account</b>	A statutory ring fenced account which over time must breakeven.	This reserve is held for specific accounting reasons. The funds in this reserve are ring fenced and cannot be used for any other purpose. The account is currently in deficit and therefore there is no balance on the reserve.	March 21 £0.000m March 22 £0.000m March 23 £0.000m March 24 £0.000m March 25 £0.000m
<b>Commutated Maintenance of Land</b>	Money is received and set aside for the ongoing maintenance of land transferred to the Council under Section 106 agreements.	The reserve will be used to cover the cost of maintaining land transferred to the Council under Section 106 agreements.	March 21 £1.636m March 22 £1.622m March 23 £1.532m March 24 £1.414m March 25 £1.214m
<b>S106 and Travel Plan Monitoring</b>	Money is received and set aside to cover the costs of monitoring developers' compliance with Section 106 agreements, including any travel plan requirements.	The reserve will be used to cover the cost of monitoring developers' compliance with Section 106 agreements, including any travel plan requirements.	March 21 £0.145m March 22 £0.145m March 23 £0.145m March 24 £0.145m

Reserve	Purpose	Policy	Value
			March 25 £0.115m
<b>Property Searches Chargeable Account</b>	A reserve created for a statutory ring fenced account which over time must breakeven.	This reserve is held for specific accounting reasons. The funds in this reserve are ring fenced and cannot be used for any other purpose.	March 21 £0.113m March 22 £0.143m March 23 £0.138m March 24 £0.141m March 25 £0.141m
<b>Transformation</b>	A reserve to support investment in service innovation and improvements.	The reserve will be used to meet the upfront costs of the Council's business change programme.	March 21 £3.370m March 22 £3.499m March 23 £3.234m March 24 £1.400m March 25 £0,600m
<b>Revenue Grants Unapplied</b>	A reserve to hold unspent revenue grants and contributions where there are no outstanding conditions.	The reserve will be used to match the grant income to the associated expenditure.	March 21 £14.747m March 22 £16.071m March 23 £16.681m March 24 £15.733m March 25 £14.333m
<b>School Masterplans and Feasibility Studies</b>	A reserve to meet the cost of masterplans and feasibility studies for schools expansion.	Any upfront costs incurred prior to a decision being taken to construct an asset may need to be met from revenue.	March 21 £0.330m March 22 £0.200m March 23 £0.200m March 24 £0.200m March 25 £0.200m
<b>Public Health</b>	Under the conditions of the Public Health grant, any under spend of the ring fenced grant can be carried over via a reserve into the next financial year.	The reserve will be used to fund Public Health priorities and projects.	March 21 £2.513m March 22 £2.642m March 23 £2.139m March 24 £1.028m March 25 £0.528m
<b>Better Care Fund</b>	A reserve to help meet the cost of Better Care Fund priorities and projects.	The reserve will be used to fund Better Care Fund priorities and projects.	March 21 £3.034m March 22 £5.511m March 23 £2.614m March 24 £1.684m

Reserve	Purpose	Policy	Value
			March 25 £0.600m
<b>Regeneration of Bracknell Town Centre</b>	A reserve to help meet the cost of Council funded Town Centre initiatives	The reserve will be used to fund Town Centre initiatives.	March 21 £6.038m March 22 £8.036m March 23 £6.931m March 24 £6.732m March 25 £6.582m
<b>London Rd Feasibility</b>	A reserve which will be used to meet professional fees regarding the London Road landfill site.	The reserve will be used to cover professional fees relating to the feasibility study. It now includes contributions from the other Berkshire Unitaries.	March 21 £0.212m March 22 £0.191m March 23 £0.180m March 24 £0.180m March 25 £0.180m
<b>Future Funding</b>	A reserve which will be used to smooth the impact of changes in Business Rates income and central government funding decisions.	The reserve will help to balance the revenue budget over the medium term.	March 21 £18.424m March 22 £18.424m March 23 £19.924m March 24 £16.334m March 25 £14.825m
<b>Dilapidations</b>	A reserve to hold funds from tenants for end-of-lease property repairs and reinstatements.	The reserve will be used to carry out repairs and reinstatements to commercial properties required before they can be re-let.	March 21 £0.045m March 22 £0.045m March 23 £0.045m March 24 £0.045m March 25 £0.045m
<b>Schools Support</b>	A reserve to recognise the reduced scope within the dedicated schools grant to provide temporary loans to schools in financial difficulties	To ensure that government policy changes do not impact on the ability to provide temporary loans to schools	March 21 £0.251m March 22 £0.251m March 23 £0.251m March 24 £0.000m March 25 £0.000m
<b>Waste PFI Excess Profits</b>	A reserve to hold excess profits payments by the contractor under the Waste PFI scheme.	Excess profits payments are potentially repayable, depending on future performance, and have therefore been placed in a reserve.	March 21 £0.164m March 22 £0.302m March 23 £0.302m March 24 £0.118m



Reserve	Purpose	Policy	Value
			March 25 £0.118m
<b>Feasibility Studies</b>	A reserve to provide revenue funding in the event that proposed capital schemes do not proceed beyond initial feasibility stage.	Any upfront costs incurred prior to a decision being taken to construct an asset may need to be met from revenue.	March 21 £0.394m March 22 £0.394m March 23 £0.394m March 24 £0.394m March 25 £0.394m
<b>CIL Administrative Costs</b>	Up to 5% of CIL income can be used to meet administrative costs. Income in excess of the budgeted administrative costs will be transferred into this reserve at year end to meet future costs of administering the scheme.	The reserve will be used to meet administrative costs of the scheme where insufficient CIL is received in year.	March 21 £0.298m March 22 £0.426m March 23 £0.625m March 24 £0.625m March 25 £0.625m
<b>Covid-19</b>	A reserve to hold revenue funding provided by Central Government to support the Covid-19 Pandemic.	The reserve will be used to match the grant income to the associated expenditure.	March 21 £2.289m March 22 £2.289m March 23 £1.952m March 24 £1.639m March 25 £1.394m
<b>Business Rates Revaluations</b>	A reserve to guard against the impact of in-year Business Rates valuation adjustments	The reserve will be used to meet the cost of any significant downward Business Rates valuations.	March 21 £7.500m March 22 £7.500m March 23 £6.260m March 24 £7.515m March 25 £3.794m
<b>Business Rates Reliefs</b>	A reserve to reflect the timing difference between the receipt of S31 grant relating to new Business Rates reliefs and the funding of the resulting deficit on the Collection Fund.	The reserve will be used to meet any Collection Fund deficits relating to Business Rates reliefs agreed by the Government after the budget is set. Funding will be provided from S31 grant received in the previous year.	March 21 £13.047m March 22 £6.875m March 23 £4.480m March 24 £0.000m March 25 £0.000m
<b>Street Works - Permit Scheme Reserve</b>	A reserve created for a statutory ring fenced account which over time must breakeven.	This reserve is held for specific accounting reasons. The funds in this reserve are ring	March 22 £0.098m March 23 £0.109m March 24 £0.019m

<b>Reserve</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Value</b>
		fenced and cannot be used for any other purpose.	March 25 £0.019m
<b>Inflation Reserve</b>	A reserve that recognises the budget was set using the much lower inflation rates applicable in September 2021.	The reserve will be used to meet the additional inflationary pressures that arise in 2022/23 and beyond.	March 22 £1.500m March 23 £1.500m March 24 £1.500m March 25 £1.500m
<b>Homebuyer Scheme Reserve</b>	A new reserve to recognise that households on the scheme are under more pressure from the costs of rising interest rates and high inflation and may be unable to comply with current and historic payment arrangements.	The reserve will be used to help fund outstanding payments.	March 23 £0.048m March 24 £0.048m March 25 £0.000m
<b>Street Works - Penalties Reserve</b>	A new reserve created from Highways Network Enforcement income to help develop transport facilities and services in the future.	It is a regulatory requirement that any excess income from Highway Network Enforcement is used to develop, safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities and services.	March 23 £0.194m March 24 £0.118m March 25 £0.118m
<b>Carbon Reduction Initiatives Reserve</b>	A new revolving invest to save reserve to support climate change / carbon reduction initiatives.	The reserve will be used to help meet the cost of new initiatives.	March 23 £0.145m March 24 £0.140m March 25 £0.134m
<b>Joint Venture Cashflow Reserve</b>	A new reserve to hold the interest accrued through the loan note agreement with Countryside Properties Limited.	The reserve will be released and used to meet costs or other initiatives once each redevelopment scheme is successfully completed.	March 24 £0.262m March 25 £0.262m

**Unusable Revenue Reserves**

Certain reserves are kept to manage the accounting processes and do not represent usable resources for the Council.

<b>Balance</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Value</b>
<b>Collection Fund Adjustment Account</b>	A reserve required to reflect Collection Fund changes included in the SORP 2009. The balance represents the difference between the Council Tax income included in the Income and Expenditure Account and the amount required by regulation to be credited to the General Fund.	This balance is held for specific accounting reasons.	March 21 -£11.378m March 22 -£6.247m March 23 -£6.542m March 24 -£3.300m March 25 -£3.300m
<b>Accumulated Absences Account</b>	A reserve which absorbs the differences that would otherwise arise on the General Fund Balance from accruing for compensated absences earned but not taken in the year (e.g. annual leave and flexi-time entitlement carried forward at 31 March). Statutory arrangements require that the impact on the General Fund Balance is neutralised by transfers to or from the Account.	This balance is held for specific accounting reasons.	March 21 -£6.182m March 22 -£6.009m March 23 -£6.855m March 24 -£6.855m March 25 -£6.855m
<b>Pensions</b>	Reflects the Council's share of the Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund's assets and liabilities. Contributions will be adjusted to ensure any projected deficit is funded.	This balance is held for specific accounting reasons.	March 21 -£354.422m March 22 -£314.696m March 23 -£97.622m March 24 -£97.622m March 25 -£97.622m
<b>Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account</b>	This is a new unusable reserve required under the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended by The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.	If the Schools Budget is in a deficit position for the financial years 2020/21 to 2025/26 the balance is held against this account per the new legislation	March 21 -£2.626m March 22 -£9.340m March 23 -£15.477m March 24 -£25.477m March 25 -£31.960m

**PROVISIONAL BUDGET SUMMARY STATEMENT**  
**Subject to amendment in the light of final budget decisions**

Line		2024/25	2023/24
		£'000	£'000
	<b>Bracknell Forest's Expenditure</b>		
1	Central	23,004	22,247
2	Delivery	16,295	18,729
3	People	101,495	96,375
4	Corporate Wide Items (to be allocated)	(960)	70
5	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>139,834</b>	<b>137,421</b>
6	<b>Non-Departmental Expenditure</b>		
7	Contingency provision	4,000	2,750
8	Debt Financing Costs (Minimum and Voluntary Revenue Provisions)	2,944	2,465
9	Levying Bodies	129	131
10	Interest	2,300	1,804
11	Pension Interest Cost & Administration Expenses	8,198	8,198
12	Other Services	214	223
13	Business Rates Growth	(11,674)	(10,561)
14	Contribution from Capital Resources	(200)	(200)
15	Capital Charges	(14,653)	(14,653)
16	Contribution from Pension Reserve	(21,162)	(21,162)
17	Contribution to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	<<<<<<	(8,482)
18	Contribution from DSG Adjustment Account	(6,483)	(7,166)
19	New Homes Bonus grant	(495)	(786)
20	Flood and Travel Related Grants	(14)	(14)
21	Services Grant	(107)	(681)
22	<b>Net Revenue Budget</b>	<b>&lt;&lt;&lt;&lt;&lt;&lt;</b>	<b>89,287</b>
23	Movement in General Fund Balances	0	0
24	<b>Net Revenue Budget after use of balances</b>	<b>&lt;&lt;&lt;&lt;&lt;&lt;</b>	<b>89,287</b>
25	Less - External Support		
26	Business Rates	(18,400)	(17,462)
27	Revenue Support Grant	(2,291)	(2,148)
28	Collection Fund Adjustment – Council Tax	(74)	396
29	Collection Fund Adjustment – Business Rates	3,721	4,980
30	<b>Bracknell Forest's Council Tax Requirement</b>	<b>&lt;&lt;&lt;&lt;&lt;&lt;</b>	<b>75,053</b>
31	<b>Collection Fund</b>		
32	Bracknell Forest's Requirement	<<<<<	75,053
33	divided by the Council Tax Base ('000)	49.694	48.756
34	<b>Council Tax at Band D (excluding Parishes)</b>		
35	Bracknell Forest	£<<<<<<<	£1,539.36

## Virements between Directorates

Total	Explanation
<p>£'000</p>	<p><b><u>Central</u></b></p> <p>-50 An amendment to the Section 106 SPA funding required to support the Parks &amp; Countryside service - agreed as part of the business change programme.</p> <p>-20 Funding transferred to Delivery to help meet the cost of the King's Coronation.</p> <p><b><u>Delivery</u></b></p> <p>20 Receipt of funding from Central to support the cost of the King's Coronation.</p> <p><b><u>Non Departmental / Council Wide</u></b></p> <p>50 An amendment to the Section 106 SPA funding required to support the Parks &amp; Countryside service - agreed as part of the business change programme.</p>
0	Total Virements

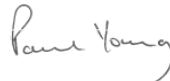
## Initial Equalities Screening Record Form

Date of Screening: 1 December 2023	Directorate: Resources	Section: HR/OD	
1. Activity to be assessed	Implementing Car Parking Charges from 1 April 2024		
2. What is the activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy/strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change		
3. Is it a new or existing activity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Existing		
4. Officer responsible for the screening	Paul Young		
5. Who are the members of the screening team?	Paul Young, Alison Beswick		
6. What is the purpose of the activity?	As 1.		
7. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?	The implementation of parking charges, after a long period where employees benefited from free car parking, supports the council's climate change aspirations whilst at the same time providing a low-cost car parking option for staff who use their personal vehicle to attend the workplace.		
Protected Characteristics	Please tick yes or no	Is there an impact?	What evidence do you have to support this?
8. Disability Equality – this can include physical, mental health, learning or sensory disabilities and includes conditions such as dementia as well as hearing or sight impairment.	N	No, employees with a declared disability will be given access to park at the TS car park and pay the same rate as all others parking in TS.	5.03% of employees have declared a disability. All employees with a declared disability who have requested parking at TS have been authorised to do so.  Whilst the parking charge at TS is higher at £10 for those staff on senior salaries than it is at Braccan Walk (£5) it is considered that the cost is still minimal so unlikely to have a significant impact on those staff with a declared disability.
9. Racial equality	N	No, the implementation of parking charges applies based on where employees park irrespective of their race/ethnicity.	The car parking charges are being applied based on the location of the car park and which pay structure staff are employed under. As such, there will be no detrimental impact on any member of staff with a protected characteristic.
10. Gender equality	N	No, the implementation of parking charges applies based on where employees park irrespective of their gender.	As 9. Above.

<b>11. Sexual orientation equality</b>		N	No, the implementation of parking charges applies based on where employees park irrespective of their sexual orientation.	As 9 above.
<b>12. Gender re-assignment</b>		N	No, the implementation of parking charges applies based on where employees park irrespective of whether there are undergoing gender reassignment.	As 9 above.
<b>13. Age equality</b>		N	No, the implementation of parking charges applies based on where employees park irrespective of their age.	As 9 above.
<b>14. Religion and belief equality</b>		N	No, the implementation of parking charges applies based on where employees park irrespective of their religion/belief.	As 9 above.
<b>15. Pregnancy and maternity equality</b>		N	No, the implementation of parking charges applies based on where employees park.	As 9 above. However, it should be noted that is an employee requests parking at TS due to mobility issues related to pregnancy they would likely be granted temporary access to the TS car park and thus pay the additional rate. As outlined in 8. Above this is not considered a significant impact on these staff members.
<b>16. Marriage and civil partnership equality</b>		N	No, the implementation of parking charges applies based on where employees park irrespective of their marital status.	As 9 above.
<b>17. Please give details of any other potential impacts on any other group (e.g. those on lower incomes/carers/ex-offenders, armed forces communities) and on promoting good community relations.</b>	<p>None anticipated. The implementation of a nominal payment for car parking is to support the Council's climate change aspirations not to generate significant income and the pricing structure reflects this.</p> <p>Whilst there is a higher charge for those staff who park in TS they can opt to park at Braccan Walk and pay a lower rate should they choose to do so. However, is should be noted that the charge for parking at TS is considered nominal in itself and it is not considered will have a significant financial impact on staff eligible to park there.</p>			
<b>18. If an adverse/negative impact has been identified can it be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or for any other reason?</b>	None identified.			
<b>19. If there is any difference in the impact of the activity when considered for each of the equality groups listed in 8 – 14 above; how significant is the</b>	None anticipated.			

difference in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?			
<b>20. Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination in relation to any of the Equality Duties?</b>		No	The implementation of parking charges is based on parking location and applied equally to all members of staff, except those on senior salaries.
<b>21. What further information or data is required to better understand the impact? Where and how can that information be obtained?</b>	None identified.		
<b>22. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?</b>		N	As there is no adverse impact expected a full EQiA is not required.
<b>23. If a full impact assessment is not required; what actions will you take to reduce or remove any potential differential/adverse impact, to further promote equality of opportunity through this activity or to obtain further information or data? Please complete the action plan in full, adding more rows as needed.</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Milestone/Success Criteria</b>
Respond to requests for parking at TS in relation to mobility/disability issues in a clear and consistent way, engaging with occupational health for to support the request as required.	On-going	Manager	Minimal number of complaints received.
<b>24. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?</b>	All business areas with employees who park in TS or Braccan Walk.		
<b>25. Please list the current actions undertaken to advance equality or examples of good practice identified as part of the screening?</b>	As 8-23		



<p>26. Assistant director's signature.</p>	<p> Signature                      Date: 1/12/23</p>
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## Initial Equalities Screening Record Form

Date of Screening: 21/11/23	Directorate: Chief Executive's Office		Section: Communications and Marketing
1. Activity to be assessed	<p>Reduction of Bracknell Forest Council's residents' magazine (currently called Town &amp; Country) from twice a year to once a year. It is proposed to send this out in printed format in the spring annually from 2024 to all households, with a digital copy available on the council's website.</p> <p>This would mean that the autumn/ winter edition is stopped. The magazine is currently delivered to around 50,000 households in spring and autumn/ winter. It is also available via an accessible PDF via the council's website.</p> <p>The reduction has been proposed as part of the council's budget setting process for 2024/25. It will save the council around £10,000 per annum in delivery and print costs.</p> <p>It also has environmental benefits – reducing the number of printed copies will reduce the council's carbon footprint. This is a main priority for the council as it moves towards net zero and outlined in the 2023-27 Council Plan.</p> <p>The council also produces a frequent digital residents' magazine called Town &amp; Country Extra (currently produced weekly), which is free to sign up to and available to all residents. This reduction will not impact that publication.</p>		
2. What is the activity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Review		
3. Is it a new or existing activity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Existing		
4. Officer responsible for the screening	Alayna Razzell		
5. Who are the members of the screening team?	Michelle Palmer, Harjit Hunjan.		
6. What is the purpose of the activity?	<p>The council's magazine gives an overview of important and/ or strategic messaging. It provides information on calls to action/ warning and informing activities/ actions, and sign posting to further information.</p> <p>Reducing the number of editions will not substantially change the type of information in the magazine.</p>		
7. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?	It is for all households but is especially important for those who are digitally excluded or do not engage with the council via other mediums.		
Protected Characteristics	Please tick yes or no	Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both?	What evidence do you have to support this? E.g. equality monitoring data, consultation results, customer satisfaction information etc Please add a narrative to justify your claims around impacts and describe the analysis and interpretation of

			If the impact is neutral, please give a reason.	evidence to support your conclusion as this will inform members decision making, include consultation results/satisfaction information/equality monitoring data
<b>8. Disability Equality – this can include physical, mental health, learning or sensory disabilities and includes conditions such as dementia as well as hearing or sight impairment.</b>	Y		Potentially it could impact on these groups if they rely on getting messages related to their protected characteristic/ services available to them and do not engage on other platforms.	There is an on-going programme of regular engagement with individual VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector) groups, through specific engagement events and via partnership forums to inform residents e.g., the Council's Disability Access Advisory Forum. Information is also shared with town and parish councils for distribution through their networks.
<b>9. Racial equality</b>		N	No disproportionate impact anticipated	
<b>10. Gender equality</b>		N	No disproportionate impact anticipated	
<b>11. Sexual orientation equality</b>		N	No disproportionate impact anticipated	
<b>12. Gender re-assignment</b>		N	No disproportionate impact anticipated	
<b>13. Age equality</b>	Y		Generally, older people are less likely to gain council information and signposting via online channels. Reducing the printed copy to once a year reduces their access to council information via one of their most preferred mediums.	33% of the borough's population are over 65+ age (census 2021) Town & Country residents' surveys have previously shown that the magazine is read most widely by people in older age brackets. Likewise, the council's social media survey showed that people in older age brackets were less likely to use that as a source of information. There is an on-going programme of regular engagement and information sharing with individual VCS groups representing, advocating for and providing services to older people.  Responses to BFC COVID -19 Residents' Survey (April 2021) indicated that 94% of residents used the internet; 98% of residents aged 18-34 are confident compared with 76% of residents aged 55 and over to access services online.
<b>14. Religion and belief equality</b>		N	No disproportionate impact anticipated	

15. Pregnancy and maternity equality		N	No disproportionate impact anticipated	
16. Marriage and civil partnership equality		N	No disproportionate impact anticipated	
17. Please give details of any other potential impacts on any other group (e.g. those on lower incomes/carers/ex-offenders, armed forces communities) and on promoting good community relations.	It could potentially impact on people on lower incomes if they are unable to access the internet as it reduces their access to information which will then be mostly available online. Cutting their access in half. Research suggests that there are few people in the borough within this category, but it cannot be ruled out completely. Free internet access is available through Bracknell Forest Council libraries.			
18. If an adverse/negative impact has been identified can it be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or for any other reason?	N/A			
19. If there is any difference in the impact of the activity when considered for each of the equality groups listed in 8 – 14 above; how significant is the difference in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?	Residents aged 55 and above are less likely to use the internet in general and access services online There are very few households without internet access or an electronic device in Bracknell Forest (no areas in highest three deciles of Multiple Deprivation Index 2021). So, barriers are more likely to be around digital skill and confidence. There is training available via libraries, the Open Learning Centre and the VCFS to support older people with digital inclusion to learn how to use computers and the internet and increase their confidence. Bracknell Forest library members can use the computers free of charge for at least 1 hour a day.			
20. Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination in relation to any of the Equality Duties?		N		
21. What further information or data is required to better understand the impact? Where and how can that information be obtained?	N/A			
22. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?		N	While this reduces access to information for some groups, it does not stop access as the magazine will still be published once a year. There is also information available in other printed formats like newspapers/ leaflets/ posters for certain services and projects.	

<b>23. If a full impact assessment is not required; what actions will you take to reduce or remove any potential differential/adverse impact, to further promote equality of opportunity through this activity or to obtain further information or data?</b> Please complete the action plan in full, adding more rows as needed.			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Milestone/Success Criteria</b>
Continue to focus on digital inclusion activities and projects working with service teams and the voluntary, community and faith sector.	Ongoing	Assistant Director CXO/Head of Community Engagement	Embed in digitalisation programme
Promote and further increase engagement and sign up to digital news from the council by residents.	April 2024 and ongoing.	Head of Communications	10% increase annually
Ensure that the annual hard copy edition of the council's magazine signposts to places with free internet access, digital inclusion training/activities and promotes sign up to digital news from the council.	April 2024 and ongoing.	Head of Communications	
<b>24. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?</b>	Communications and marketing business plan, CXO service plan		
<b>25. Please list the current actions undertaken to advance equality or examples of good practice identified as part of the screening?</b>	Free internet access and digital inclusion training in libraries and through adult learning at the Open Learning Centre. Funding provided to community groups to delivery training in digital skills.		
<b>26. Assistant Director/Director signature.</b>	A Thomas		28.11.2023

## Initial Equalities Screening Record Form

Date of Screening: 16/11/23	Directorate: Delivery	Section: Environmental Services	
1. Activity to be assessed	Changes to service provision on street cleansing and grounds maintenance		
2. What is the activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy/strategy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change		
3. Is it a new or existing activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Existing		
4. Officer responsible for the screening	Damian James		
5. Who are the members of the screening team?	Claire Pike and Damian James		
6. What is the purpose of the activity?	Changes to the street cleansing and grounds maintenance provision across the borough including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced weed spraying on the highway from 3 sprays per annum to 2 sprays</li> <li>• Realignment of litter bins, this will reduce the number of litter bins across the borough by approximately half – the current number of bins is just over 900.</li> <li>• Amend the town centre cleansing routine to reduce the team size to 2 operatives (from 4)</li> <li>• Change to residential verge cutting frequency to 4-6 weekly from 2-3 weekly</li> </ul>		
7. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?	Borough wide		
Protected Characteristics	<b>Please tick yes or no</b>	<b>Is there an impact?</b> What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.	<b>What evidence do you have to support this?</b> E.g equality monitoring data, consultation results, customer satisfaction information etc Please add a narrative to justify your claims around impacts and describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion as this will inform members decision making, include consultation results/satisfaction information/equality monitoring data
8. Disability Equality – this can include physical, mental health, learning or sensory disabilities and includes conditions such as dementia as well as hearing or sight impairment.		N Neutral – highway access for all and visibility will still be maintained, this includes footways, cycleways and roads. Litter bins will be provided in areas of high need; shopping areas, parks and town centre.	Highway safety will be unchanged. Litter bin frequency will be reduced meaning residents may need to travel further to find a litter bin or take their litter home. The availability of litter bins will be maintained in high flow areas.
9. Racial equality		N Neutral – as above	

10. Gender equality		N	Neutral – as above	
11. Sexual orientation equality		N	Neutral – as above	
12. Gender re-assignment		N	Neutral – as above	
13. Age equality	Y		Older residents may have to travel further to find a litter bin	There will be less frequent placement of litter bins across the Borough. The availability of litter bins will be maintained in high flow areas.
14. Religion and belief equality		N	Neutral – as above	
15. Pregnancy and maternity equality	Y		Pregnant residents may have to travel further to find a litter bin.	There will be less frequent placement of litter bins across the Borough. The availability of litter bins will be maintained in high flow areas.
16. Marriage and civil partnership equality		N	Neutral – as above	
17. Please give details of any other potential impacts on any other group (e.g. those on lower incomes/carers/ex-offenders, armed forces communities) and on promoting good community relations.	None			
18. If an adverse/negative impact has been identified can it be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or for any other reason?	NA			
19. If there is any difference in the impact of the activity when considered for each of the equality groups listed in 8 – 14 above; how significant is the difference in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?	The reduction of litter bins may mean that some individuals who may be less able might have to travel further to find a litter bin.			
20. Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination in relation to any of the Equality Duties?		N		

21. What further information or data is required to better understand the impact? Where and how can that information be obtained?	NA		
22. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?		N	Residents may need to travel further to find a public bin; there will remain approximately 450 bins across the borough.
23. If a full impact assessment is not required; what actions will you take to reduce or remove any potential differential/adverse impact, to further promote equality of opportunity through this activity or to obtain further information or data? Please complete the action plan in full, adding more rows as needed.			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Milestone/Success Criteria</b>
24. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?	These proposals will be in the consultation for the 24/25 budget		
25. Please list the current actions undertaken to advance equality or examples of good practice identified as part of the screening?			
26. Assistant Director/Director signature.	Signature: D.W.James		Date: 16 <sup>th</sup> November 2023



To: **Executive**  
**6<sup>th</sup> Feb 2024**

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## **Establishment of a Joint Committee – The Berkshire Prosperity Board Executive Director: Place Planning and Regeneration**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 This report seeks to establish a Joint Committee (to be known as the Berkshire Prosperity Board) to enable Berkshire Authorities, through collaboration, to benefit from:

- Working to a shared vision of inclusive, green and sustainable economic prosperity to address challenges and meet opportunities whilst retaining the sovereignty of each local authority.
- Presenting a strengthened case to Government and private investors for greater investment into strategic projects, service delivery and initiatives across Berkshire.
- Acting as a vehicle to commission the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and others to deliver core functions in response to the Government's review of Local Economic Partnerships.
- Having a stronger, collective voice in lobbying Government and other agencies. Taking a collaborative mindset in targeting external bodies effectively for the benefit of Berkshire
- Advantageously position Berkshire in readiness for potential devolution proposals to benefit from additional responsibilities and funding opportunities. Setting up a Berkshire that is better able to efficiently, seize future opportunities and adapt to challenges.
- Transforming Berkshire's productivity through, responsive, agile collaboration

### **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 Executive agree the establishment of a fully constituted Joint Committee (to be known as the Berkshire Prosperity Board) from May 2024 to deliver a Berkshire-wide vision for inclusive green and sustainable economic prosperity.
- 2.2 That the proposed constitution for the Joint Committee as set out in Appendix A - Functions and Procedure Rules for a Joint Committee, Appendix B - Responsibilities of the accountable body and Appendix C - Governance structure is approved subject to review by each member Council within 6 months.
- 2.3 That the Chief Executive be delegated to reach a legally binding agreement between the member Authorities setting out the supporting arrangements and responsibilities between the Authorities, particularly that between the Lead Authority, known as the Accountable Body and the other member Authorities and go through the relevant democratic process if required.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1 Developing a Joint Committee and sharing common goals across a functional economic area will provide Berkshire Authorities with exciting new opportunities for collaboration on economic development. Providing more flexibility and influence than a single council would have on its own. Helping local authorities speak with one voice to secure more funding from Government and other agencies and sources to help get key projects and initiatives off the ground.
- 3.2 In particular, Berkshire Authorities, through collaboration, will benefit from:
- Working together to a shared vision of inclusive and sustainable economic prosperity through working together to address challenges and meet opportunities whilst retaining the sovereignty of each Local authority.
  - Having a strengthened case to Government and private investors for funding and greater investment for strategic projects across Berkshire.
  - Acting as a vehicle to commission the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and others in response to the Government's review of Local Economic Partnerships.
  - Having a stronger, collective voice in lobbying Government and other agencies. Taking a collaborative mindset in targeting external bodies effectively for the benefit of Berkshire
  - Advantageously positioning Berkshire in readiness for potential devolution proposals to benefit from additional responsibilities and funding opportunities. Setting up a Berkshire that is better able to efficiently, seize future opportunities and adapt to challenges.
  - Working on six shared themes: health and inequalities, education and skills, affordable housing, sector development, strategic infrastructure and net zero.
  - Transform Berkshire's productivity through, responsive, agile collaboration.
- 3.3 The first official board would take place in April following the decision making for each of the six Unitary Council's to establish the Board. The Board would meet four times a year. Each Council would lead on one of the six themes, with Bracknell Forest leading on Climate Change, and assisting on the Affordable Housing theme.

### **4. Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 The main alternative approach is to continue to work on economic development in each unitary area as exists at the moment. This no change approach does not resolve matters relating to the functions passing to Local Authorities with the end of government LEP funding which takes place in April 2024. It also does not build a stronger voice for Berkshire and does not enable streamlined collective decision making.
- 4.2 the other main alternative option considered was to develop a Combined Authority/Mayoral Combined Authority, and seek a formal Devolution Deal. Berkshire Leaders have agreed not to pursue a directly elected Mayor.

### **5. Supporting Information**

- 5.1 Collectively Berkshire Leaders and Chief Executives have been meeting to consider the challenges and opportunities faced by the Berkshire economy and the implication

for residents. Leaders recognised that although, the Berkshire Economy is comparatively strong it faces a number of threats and has been experiencing declining productivity for several years. In order to respond to these challenges work has been undertaken by Berkshire Place Directors to explore options to create a vehicle to drive and deliver economic prosperity for Berkshire.

- 5.2 Initial discussions explored the option of a devolution deal with Government and how Berkshire might benefit from the financial and decision-making powers a deal might bring. Early on in the process it was recognised that Berkshire's chance of securing a significant devolution deal was limited. Berkshire is disadvantaged by both the Government's Levelling Up agenda and because of priority being given to Local Authority areas with a Combined Authority and/or a directly elected mayor. The Berkshire Leaders agreed not to pursue a directly elected mayor.
- 5.3 At the same time as this conversation began the Government announced that it would be ending Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) funding from the end of March 2024, therefore discussions have been ongoing as to the future of the Berkshire LEP as part of this process. Berkshire authorities also discussed the future partnership arrangements with the LEP, in light of Government plans to transfer local economic leadership and budgets back to local authorities.
- 5.4 As discussions progressed leaders recognised that the structure of six unitary authorities, which has provided so much benefit to the Berkshire area, could be harnessed to promote Berkshire collectively and overcome the disadvantage Berkshire has in comparison with other larger counties and metropolitan areas, that speak with a single voice. It was acknowledged that by working together Berkshire Authorities can benefit from greater scale, and with that, more influence and greater ability to develop solutions through collaboration.
- 5.5 Operating collaboratively will give Berkshire more bargaining power when negotiating for funds so that more investment is secured for key projects such as housing, transport, and skills. Collective lobbying will carry more weight and so help Berkshire secure better decisions from Government around. Shared problem solving will produce more efficient and effective outcomes than if authorities tackle problems individually.
- 5.6 Berkshire Leaders have stated their intention to develop a Joint Committee to help deliver this economic ambition.
- 5.7 Collectively the Leaders have identified a programme that will focus on six thematic workstreams deemed key to the local economy. Including, health and inequalities, education and skills, affordable housing, sector development, strategic infrastructure and net zero.

#### *Berkshire's Economy*

- 5.8 To date Berkshire is an economic success story – no other region in the UK has played a bigger role in driving the UK economy in recent decades. And as the UK's Silicon Valley, nowhere has the potential to add more value to UK plc. We have three diverse sub-regional economies and strengths in growth sectors of the future, innovative and international businesses, a highly skilled workforce, and are well connected to London and other highly productive markets.
- 5.9 Since 2008, our economy has experienced a financial crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic and the impacts of the war in Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war. We are facing

economic headwinds linked to changing trading relationships with Europe, labour market shortages and high inflation. Furthermore, as a region, we are disadvantaged when competing for Government's Levelling -Up Investment programme. We therefore cannot be complacent – our economy is mature, but growth is lower than in the past, and we are moving into a period of further economic uncertainty.

- 5.10 Some of our communities, however, have not been able to contribute to and benefit from Berkshire's economic success, and wage growth has not kept up with economic growth. Many of our residents, including some in Bracknell Forest are facing increasing living costs, high levels of deprivation and poor health outcomes. Economic inactivity remains elevated above our positive pre-Covid trajectory, exacerbating labour market pressures. Housing is a particular issue, with median house prices costing almost 11 times more than median earnings, acting as a constraint to recruiting and retaining graduate talent and people with the skills our economy needs.
- 5.11 The Berkshire economy is mature, but the strains of growth are showing. Many of the companies headquartered in Berkshire face re-investment decisions post Covid-19 and Brexit. It is clear that some of them are not as committed to a future in the UK as the six Unitary Councils would want.
- 5.12 There are many opportunities with growing industries such as the film industry in and around Reading University and Bray, but the need to act to secure Berkshire's long-term future is clearly evident. The development of the Joint Committee will allow the Berkshire Unitary Authorities to share and effect an economic vision to collectively address challenges and seize opportunities. Providing a greater voice, than each Council would have individually, helping to lobby Government and secure more finance from both public and private investors, and to be an attractive location for inward investment.

#### *Responding to changes to the Thames Valley LEP*

- 5.13 Government will cease funding Local Economic Partnerships from April 2024. The Government requires that the core functions currently carried out by LEPs to be transferred to Local Authorities in a bid to empower local leaders and communities. Local Authorities will receive the funding for and core responsibilities for delivering these functions from April 2024. These core functions are as follows:
- Economic Strategy and Planning - This function is needed in the future to continue to provide evidence bases, data, and a Berkshire-wide economic strategy so that collective action can be prioritised and needs-led.
  - Business Voice - This is a core function required by Government going forward in each functional economic area. This function is needed in the future to provide representation to embed a strong, independent, and diverse local business voice into local decision-making on economic development issues. New guidance how setting up a Business Board (which would form part of a joint committee's governance arrangements) is due to be released by Government.
  - Government Programme Delivery - This function is needed in the future to continue to monitor the final stages of government programmes at the Berkshire level and ensure compliance with programme guidelines.

- 5.14 Local Authorities will also be expected to take responsibility for commissioning the existing Growth Hubs and Skills Hubs.
- 5.15 Berkshire Leaders and the LEP have agreed that they want to continue working in partnership to support the Berkshire economy. The LEP will remain an independent company. Berkshire Leaders have agreed that funding received from Government for the core functions will be used to commission specialist organisations (such as TVB LEP) to deliver outcomes.
- 5.16 The development of a Berkshire Joint Committee with a nominated accountable body will allow Berkshire to accept funds from Government and together commission the core functions to address collective priorities.

#### *Devolution*

- 5.17 In the 2022 Levelling Up White Paper the government set out plans for encouraging local areas to apply for a devolution deal – called ‘County Deals’. These agreements devolve funding, additional responsibilities and decision making with a view to stimulating local economic growth.
- 5.18 Prior to the May 2023 local Elections, Berkshire Leaders submitted to Government an expression of interest in becoming a devolved Deal area, setting out the opportunities that Berkshire offers the national economy given the right support and investment.
- 5.19 Having a fully operational Joint Committee will strengthen Berkshire’s chances of being offered a Deal if Government decides to accelerate the devolution process in advance of the General Election. Although, as things currently stand, Berkshire will need to become a Combined Authority with limited concessions or a Mayoral Combined Authority to receive any significant investment from Government. However, with the likelihood of a general election Government may change its approach, therefore at this stage Devolution is not the driver to move forward with a Joint Prosperity Board.

#### *Constitution, Secretarial and Accountable body*

- 5.20 The Joint Committee’s role and purpose on behalf of the Partner Local Authorities relates to ensuring appropriate, effective and formal governance is in place for the purposes of delivering a Berkshire wide Vision for economic growth and advancing partner Local Authorities aspirations for greater economic prosperity.
- 5.21 Core members of the Committee include, Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, Slough Borough Council, The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council.
- 5.22 It is proposed that each local authority will decide whether a decision made at the Prosperity Board is a key decision and treat it according to the criteria within its own constitution. Voting on all decisions will be on a unanimous 100% basis.
- 5.23 The structure and constitution of the Joint Committee will need a decision to be approved through each of the participating Local Authority Democratic decision-making groups. Details of the draft Constitution and structure of the Joint Committee is contained in (Appendix A) along with responsibilities of the Accountable Body (Appendix B) and the Governance Structure (Appendix C).

- 5.24 One of the Authorities will take on the function of the Accountable Body. Bracknell Forest is likely to undertake the secretariate role, which is an extension of existing arrangements supporting Berkshire Leaders and Chief Executive meetings.

#### *Funding*

- 5.25 Collectively the six Unitary Council's will receive £240k to provide the key functions outlined of Economic Strategy and Planning, Business Voice and Government Programme Delivery.
- 5.26 It is envisaged that the total cost of the running the prosperity board in the first year will be in the region of £60K. In the first year the costs of managing the Berkshire Prosperity Board will be contained within existing budgets and using an element of grant funding such as the shared prosperity fund. The following principles will be applied the financial management of the Prosperity Board:
- Open book- transparently accounting for all costs including in-kind.
  - All costs will be shared equally by all participating unitary authorities and billed quarterly on estimate with final settlement on actuals after year end.
  - That all participating authorities have a suitable liability or indemnity arrangement to ensure risks is shared.

## **6. Consultation and Other Considerations**

### Legal Advice

- 6.1 The body of the report and its recommendations has been shared with, and agreed by, Members of the Berkshire Monitoring Officers Group ("the Group"). The constitutional documents of the Joint Committee will, as set out in the recommendations, be subject to further review and agreement by the Group prior to adoption. The proposals do not envisage the setting up of a statutory Economic Prosperity Board as such a body would exist as a separate corporate entity to each of the participant authorities. Instead a Joint Committee is proposed which can be set up under statutory powers namely, the Local Government Act 1972 in relation to non Executive functions and the Local Government Act 2000/ Local Authorities (Arrangements for the Discharge of Functions (England) Regulations 2000 in relation to Executive functions.
- 6.2 It is noted that a report recommending the implementation of the proposed arrangements will be presented to the appropriate decision making forums within each authority. The adoption of a joint committee, its terms of reference, procedure rules and membership are decisions reserved to meetings of full Council in each Authority. The broader decision relating to the collaborative arrangements will be reserved to each individual Cabinet/Executive
- 6.3 A legal agreement will be entered into between the participating authorities setting out their respective rights and responsibilities under the arrangement, and detailing the specific role of the Accountable body.
- 6.4 The latest draft was discussed at our monthly MO meeting today and I got the sense that others may want to update the recommendations including the following;  
Delegated authority to MO to make minor amendments to the joint committee constitution

### Financial Advice

- 6.5 The financial implications for the first year of the board are set out in para's 5.25 – 5.26 cost will be met from a mixture of internal budgets and the Shared Prosperity Fund, costs there after will be subject to review.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.6 None at this time.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.7 The Board proposes to look at inequalities as one of its themes, however the setting up of a joint Committee is not considered to require an impact assessment at this time.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.8 None

Climate Change and Ecological Impacts

- 6.9 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to reduce emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> across Berkshire considering opportunities to respond to Climate Change at a strategic level, creating impact by working at scale.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 6.10 Health and Inequalities form none of the themes to be covered by the Prosperity Board, these will be considered at a strategic Berkshire level.

Background Papers

Appendix A – Functions and Procedures for the Joint Committee

Appendix B – Role of The Accountable Body

Appendix C - The Governance Structure

Contact for further information

Andrew Hunter Executive Director: Place Planning and Regeneration

Place Planning and Regeneration - 01344 351907 [andrew.hunter@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.hunter@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

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### Functions and Procedure Rules for a Joint Committee

#### 1. Functions

The Joint Committee will discharge on behalf of the Participating Local Authorities the functions listed below related to promoting economic prosperity in Berkshire:

- 1.1** Develop a shared, Berkshire-wide vision for inclusive and sustainable economic prosperity, together with a set of practical thematic priorities, that addresses the strategic challenges and opportunities that the area faces.
- 1.2** Agree to and making funding applications and/or investment bids to external bodies, in relation to economic prosperity for the benefit of the Berkshire.
- 1.3** Provide direction to the nominated Local Authority acting as the Accountable Body on the allocation of any funding awards/government grants received to appropriate projects for the benefit of the geographical area of the participating local authorities, including, where applicable, approving the approach to the procurement to be undertaken by Accountable Body Local Authority
- 1.4** Represent the participating local authorities in discussions and negotiations with regional bodies, national bodies, central government inward investors and others on matters relating to investment and funding for the benefit of Berkshire.
- 1.5** Co-ordinate work across the six participating authorities and other Berkshire Committees, networks, and other statutory providers where this can help to promote inclusive and sustainable prosperity and the delivery of priorities across the six programme themes.
- 1.6** Representing the participating local authorities in discussions and negotiations with regional bodies, national bodies and central government on matters relating to economic prosperity for the benefit of the local government areas of the participating authorities.
- 1.7** Provide the appropriate governance, accountability, and delivery mechanisms for any future Government funding and programme support, that could arise from the integration of the LEP, from future growth funding, from UKSPF Berkshire Wide programmes and from any subsequent devolution funding.
- 1.8** Seek to influence and align government investment in Berkshire in order to boost economic growth within the local government areas of the participating authorities.
- 1.9** Agree and approve any additional governance structures as related to the Joint Committee, or any sub-Committees formed by the Joint Committee.
- 1.10** Invite representatives of key stakeholders such as business associations, government agencies, the further education sector, higher education sector, schools, voluntary sector, and health sector to engage with the business of the Joint Committee including by attending meetings and commenting on proposals and documents.

## **Appendix A: Functions and Procedure Rules for a Joint Committee v6**

### **2. Membership and Quorum**

- 2.1 The membership will comprise of six members with each participating Local authority appointing one person to sit on the Joint Committee as a voting member.
- 2.2 Each participating local authority will make a suitable appointment in accordance with its own constitutional requirements. It is anticipated that, where practicable, the leader of each participating local authority will be appointed to the Joint Committee.
- 2.3 Where a participating Local authority does not operate executive arrangements, the appointment of a voting member will be in accordance with the local authority's own procedures. It is envisaged that this will usually be one of its senior councillors.
- 2.4 In all cases, the appointed person must be an elected member (or their Deputy), of the council of the appointing participating local authority. Appointments will be made for a maximum period not extending beyond each member's remaining term of office as a councillor, and their membership of the Joint Committee will automatically cease if they cease to be an elected member of the appointing participating local authority.
- 2.5 Members of the Joint Committee are governed by the provisions of their own Council's Codes and Protocols including the Code of Conduct for Members and the rules on Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.
- 2.6 Each participating local authority will utilise existing mechanisms for substitution as laid down in their own Standing Orders. Continuity of attendance is encouraged.
- 2.7 Where a participating local authority wishes to withdraw from membership of the Joint Committee this must be indicated in writing to each of the Committee members. A six month notice period must be provided.
- 2.8 The quorum for the Joint Committee is **six** members. If the Joint Committee is not quorate it cannot transact any business. If there is no quorum at the time the meeting is due to begin, the start of the meeting will be delayed until a quorum is achieved. If no quorum is achieved after 30 minutes has elapsed, the Committee secretary will advise those present that no business can be transacted, and the meeting will be cancelled.
- 2.9 CEOs or their deputy will attend meetings in an advisory and supporting capacity.

### **3. Chair and Vice-Chair**

- 3.1 The Chair of the Joint Committee will be appointed for 12 months and will rotate in turn between the six participating local authorities.
- 3.2 Unless otherwise unanimously agreed by the Joint Committee, each participating local authority's appointed person will serve as chair for 12 months at a time. Where the incumbent Chair ceases to be a member of the Joint Committee, the individual appointed by the relevant local authority as a replacement will serve as Chair for the remainder of the 12 months as chair.

## **Appendix A: Functions and Procedure Rules for a Joint Committee v6**

- 3.3 The Joint Committee will also appoint a Vice-Chair from within its membership on an annual basis to preside in the absence of the Chair. This appointment will also rotate in a similar manner to the Chair.
- 3.4 At its first meeting, the Joint Committee will draw up the rotas for Chair and Vice-Chair respectively as well as the meeting schedule for the year.
- 3.5 Where neither the Chair nor Vice-Chair are in attendance, the Joint Committee will appoint a Chair to preside over the meeting where they are quorate.
- 3.6 In the event of any disagreement as the meaning or application of these Rules, the decision of the Chair shall be final.

### **4. Sub-Committees**

- 4.1 The Joint Committee may establish sub-committees to undertake elements of its work if required.
- 4.2 Any such sub-committee may not make a decision unless:
1. That decision has been delegated to it by the Joint Committee, and
  2. Such decisions are made unanimously as provided elsewhere in these Rules.

### **5. Delegation to officers**

- 5.1 The Joint Committee may delegate specific functions to officers of any of the participating local authorities.
- 5.2 Any such delegation may be subject to the requirement for the officer to consult with or obtain the prior agreement of an officer (or officers) of the other participating local authorities.
- 5.3 It may also be subject to the requirement for the officer with delegated authority to consult with the Chair of the Joint Committee and the Leaders of the one or more participating local authorities before exercising their delegated authority.

### **6. Administration**

- 6.1 Clerking support for the Joint Committee, and accommodation for meetings, will be managed in the first year by Bracknell Forest Council working with the Chair and Vice-Chair.
- 6.2 At its first meeting, the Joint Committee will agree the rotas for Chair and Vice-Chair respectively as well as the meeting schedule for the year.
- 6.3 In the first year, Authorities will where possible support the Joint Committee in kind by taking on responsibilities such as communications and clerking.

### **7. Financial matters**

## **Appendix A: Functions and Procedure Rules for a Joint Committee v6**

- 7.1 In the first year the costs of managing the Joint Committee will be contained within existing budgets and using an element of the shared prosperity fund. Beyond the first year, Council's will work within available budgets and funding sources.
- 7.2 When making a decision which has financial consequences, the Joint Committee will follow the relevant provisions of the Financial Procedure Rules of the Accountable Body Local Authority.
- 7.3 Where authorities are delegated funds to undertake work by the Prosperity Board, they follow their own contract procedure rules. Authorities will need to provide the accountable body with information to enable them to monitor that, spend is within budget and consistent with the outcomes required by the Prosperity Board.

### **8. Agenda management**

- 8.1 Subject to 8.2, all prospective items of business for the Joint Committee shall be agreed by a meeting of the Chief Executives of the participating local authorities or their authorised representatives.
- 8.2 It will be the responsibility of each report author to ensure that the impacts on all participating local authorities are fairly and accurately represented in the report. They may do this either by consulting with the monitoring officer and chief finance officer of each participating local authority or by some other appropriate method.
- 8.3 In pursuance of their statutory duties, the monitoring officer and/or the chief financial officer of any of the participating local authorities may include an item for consideration on the agenda of a meeting of the Joint Committee, and, may require that an extraordinary meeting be called to consider such items.
- 8.4 Each participating local authority operating executive arrangements will be responsible for considering whether it is necessary to treat prospective decisions as 'key- decisions' and follow any steps required by law such as inclusion in any Forward Plan. Each participating local authority operating a Committee system will apply its local non statutory procedures.

### **9. Meetings**

- 9.1 The Joint Committee will meet in-person, face to face quarterly and as required to fulfil its functions.
- 9.2 A programme of meetings at the start of each Municipal Year will be scheduled and included in the Calendar of Meetings for all participating local authorities.
- 9.3 Access to meetings and papers of the Joint Committee by the press and public is subject to Part 5A of the Local Government Act 1972 and to the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014.

## **Appendix A: Functions and Procedure Rules for a Joint Committee v6**

### **10. Notice of meetings**

- 10.1 On behalf of the Joint Committee, the Committee secretary will give notice to the public of the time and place of any meeting in accordance with Part 5A of the 1972 Act.
- 10.2 At least five clear working days in advance of a meeting the secretariate to the Joint Committee will publish the agenda via the website of secretariate's authority and provide the documentation and website link to the participating local authorities to enable the information to be published on each Participating Local authority's website. "Five Clear Days" does not include weekends or national holidays and excludes both the day of the meeting and the day on which the meeting is called.
- 10.3 The secretary to the Joint Committee will arrange for the copying and distribution of papers to all Members of the Committee.

### **11. Public participation**

- 11.1 Unless considering information classified as 'exempt' or 'confidential' under the 1972 Act, all meetings of the Joint Committee shall be held in public.
- 11.2 Public representations and questions are permitted at meetings of the Joint Committee. Notification must be given in advance of the meeting indicating by 12 noon on the last working day before the meeting the matter to be raised and the agenda item to which it relates. Representatives will be provided with a maximum of 3 minutes to address the Joint Committee.
- 11.3 The Chair shall have discretion to determine the number of speakers per agenda item and to extend the time allowed for addressing the Joint Committee.
- 11.4 Where the number of public representations exceed the time / number allowed, a written response will be provided or the representation deferred to the next meeting of the Joint Committee if appropriate.
- 11.5 The Joint Committee may also invite special representatives of stakeholders such as business associations, government agencies such as DWP or Jobcentre Plus, the further education sector, voluntary sector, and health sector to take an interest in the business of the Committee including by attending meetings and commenting on proposals and documents.
- 11.6 The Chair shall have discretion to regulate the behaviour of all individuals present at the meeting in the interests of the efficient conduct of the meeting.

### **12. Councillor participation**

- 12.1 Any elected member of any of the participating local authorities who is not a member of the Joint Committee may ask a question or address the Committee with the consent of the Chair.

## **Appendix A: Functions and Procedure Rules for a Joint Committee v6**

### **13. Business to be transacted**

- 13.1 Standing items for each meeting of the Joint Committee will include the following:
- Minutes of the Last Meeting
  - Apologies for absence
  - Declarations of Interest
  - Provision for public participation
  - Substantive items for consideration
- 13.2 The Chair may vary the order of business and take urgent items their discretion. The Chair should inform the Members of the Joint Committee prior to allowing the consideration of urgent items.
- 13.3 An item of business may not be considered at a meeting unless:
- (i) A copy of the agenda included the item (or a copy of the item) is open to inspection by the public for at least five clear days before the meeting; or
  - (ii) By reason of special circumstances which shall be specified in the minutes the Chair of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.
- 13.4 “Special circumstances” justifying an item being considered as a matter or urgency will relate to both why the decision could not be made at a meeting allowing the proper time for inspection by the public as well as why the item or report could not have been available for inspection for five clear days before the meeting.

### **14. Extraordinary meetings**

- 14.1 Arrangements may be made following consultation with Chair of the Joint Committee to call an extraordinary meeting of the Joint Committee. The Chair should inform the appointed Members prior to taking a decision to convene an extraordinary meeting.
- 14.2 The business of an extraordinary meeting shall be only that specified on the agenda.

### **15. Cancellation of meetings**

- 15.1 Meetings of the Joint Committee may, after consultation with the Chairman, be cancelled if there is insufficient business to transact or some other appropriate reason warranting cancellation. The date of meetings may be varied after consultation with the Chairman and appointed members of the Joint Committee, in the event that it is necessary for the efficient transaction of business.

### **16. Rules of debate**

- 16.1 The rules of debate in operation in the Chair’s authority shall apply.

## **Appendix A: Functions and Procedure Rules for a Joint Committee v6**

### **17. Request for determination of business**

- 17.1 Any member of the Joint Committee may request at any time that:
- The Joint Committee move to vote upon the current item of consideration.
  - The item be deferred to the next meeting.
  - The item be referred back to a meeting of the Chief Executives of the participating local authorities for further consideration
  - The meeting be adjourned.
- 17.2 The Joint Committee will then vote on the request.

### **18. Urgency procedure**

- 18.1 Where the Chair (following consultation with the appointed Members of the Joint Committee) is of the view that an urgent decision is required in respect of any matter within the Joint Committee's functions and that decision would not reasonably require the calling of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Joint Committee to consider it and it cannot wait until the next Ordinary Meeting of the Joint Committee, then they may request in writing the Chief Executive of each participating local authority (in line with pre-existing delegations in each local authority's Constitution) to take urgent action as is required within each of the constituent local authorities.

### **19. Voting**

- 19.1 It is proposed that each local authority will decide whether a decision made at the Prosperity Board is a key decision and treat it according to the criteria within its own constitution. .
- 19.2 Where a vote is required it will be on the basis of one vote per local authority member . The Chair will take the vote by show of hands.
- 19.3 Decisions shall be decided by a unanimous vote where all six Members or member deputies are present and agree.
- 19.4 Where, immediately after a vote is taken at a meeting, if any Member so requests, there shall be recorded in the minutes of the proceedings of that meeting whether the person cast his / her vote for or against the matter or whether he/ she abstained from voting.

### **20. Minutes**

- 20.1 At the next suitable meeting of the Joint Committee, the Chairman will move a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record. The meeting may only consider the accuracy of the minutes and cannot change or vary decisions taken at a previous meeting as a matter arising out of the minutes.
- 20.2 Once agreed, the Chairman will sign them.
- 20.3 There will be no item for the approval of minutes of an ordinary Joint Committee meeting on the agenda of an extraordinary meeting.

## **Appendix A: Functions and Procedure Rules for a Joint Committee v6**

### **21. Exclusion of the public and press**

- 21.1 Members of the public and press may only be excluded from a meeting of the Joint Committee either in accordance with the 1972 Act or in the event of disturbance.
- 22.2 A motion may be moved at any time for the exclusion of the public from the whole or any part of the proceedings. The motion shall specify by reference to Section 100(A) Local Government Act 1972 the reason for the exclusion in relation to each item of business for which it is proposed that the public be excluded. The public must be excluded from meetings whenever it is likely, in view of the nature of business to be transacted, or the nature of the proceedings that confidential information would be disclosed.
- 22.3 If there is a general disturbance making orderly business impossible, the Chairman may adjourn the meeting for as long as he/she thinks is necessary.
- 22.4 Background papers will be published as part of the Joint Committee agenda and be made available to the public via the website of each authority.

### **23. Overview and Scrutiny**

- 23.1 Decisions of the Joint Committee which relate to the executive functions of a participating local authority will need to be in accordance with each of the six local authority's own democratic scrutiny procedures for agreement before implementation.
- 23.2 Decisions of the Joint Committee which relate to the executive functions of a participating local authority will be subject to scrutiny and 'call -in' arrangements (or such other arrangements equivalent to call-in that any participating local authority operating a Committee system may have) as would apply locally to a decision made by that participating local authority acting alone
- 23.3 No decision should be implemented until such time as the call-in period has expired across all of the participating local authorities.
- 23.4 Where a decision is called in, arrangements will be made at the earliest opportunity within the participating local authority where the Call-In had taken place for it to be heard.
- 23.5 Any decision called in for scrutiny before it has been implemented shall not be implemented until such time as the call-in procedures of the participating local authority concerned have been concluded.

### **24. Access to minutes and papers after the meeting**

- 24.1 On behalf of the Joint Committee, the secretariate will make available copies of the following for six years after the meeting:



## **Appendix A: Functions and Procedure Rules for a Joint Committee v6**

- (i) the minutes of the meeting and records of decisions taken, together with reasons, for all meetings of the Joint Committee, excluding any part of the minutes of proceedings when the meeting was not open to the public or which disclose exempt or confidential information.
- (ii) the agenda for the meeting; and
- (iii) reports relating to items when the meeting was open to the public.

### **25. Dispute Resolution**

- 25.1 Where any dispute arises within the Joint Committee in connection with this arrangements, the Partners must use their best endeavours to resolve that dispute within the Joint Committee in accordance with the Terms of Reference.
- 25.2 Where any dispute is not resolved under Clause 25.1 on an informal basis, any participating member of the Joint Committee may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Joint Committee to attempt to resolve the dispute.
- 25.3 Where any dispute is not resolved under Clause 25.1 or 25.2, the Joint Committee can appoint an independent mediator to attempt to resolve the dispute. The cost of mediation will be borne in equal shares between parties involved in the dispute.
- 25.4 Where any dispute remains unresolved The Joint Committee will commission an independent review. The Joint Committee will abide by the independent review findings.
- 25.5 The cost will be borne in equal shares between parties involved in the dispute.

### **26. Amendment of these Rules**

- 26.1 These Rules shall be agreed by the Joint Committee at its first meeting. Any amendments shall be made by the Joint Committee, following consultation with the monitoring officers of the participating local authorities. Note that Rule 1 (Functions) may only be amended following a formal delegation from each of the participating local authorities.
- 26.2 These rules and arrangements shall be reviewed every 12 months at the start of the new Chair and Vice-Chair term.

### **27. Special Representatives**

The Functions and Procedure Rules for the Joint Committee set out that there will be a select number of 'special representatives' invited to attend meetings to 'influence' the work of the Committee as and when appropriate. These will be drawn from the following sectors and institutions: for example, Chamber of Commerce, LEP, emergency services, voluntary sector and businesses.

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### Responsibilities of the accountable body

#### 1. The accountable body

- 1.1 The accountable body is responsible for carrying out the finance functions and has oversight of governance, including providing legal and procurement services on behalf of the Joint Committee.
- 1.2 The accountable body ensures that decisions and activities of the Joint Committee conform with all relevant law, and that records and other evidence are maintained and managed in an appropriate manner including any documents (electronic or physical) relating to all funding received from Government or other public sources.
- 1.3 The accountable body should discharge its duty in line with the Local Government Finance Act 1988, section 114 requiring its Section 151 officer to report to all the participating authority's Leaders if there is or is likely to be unlawful expenditure or an unbalanced budget.
- 1.4 The accountable body must ensure that the Joint Committee must meet within 21 days to consider the report referred to in 1.6, and during that period the Prosperity Programme is prohibited from entering new arrangements that will cause money to be spent.
- 1.5 The accountable body should discharge its duty in line with The Local Government Act 1992 which requires financial reporting annually, to start in April and end in March, and meet the associated accounting obligations.
- 1.6 Where any grant is transferred to participating local authorities, the accountable body ensures this is done under a written agreement which reflects the grant requirements of the awarding body, clearly sets out ownership of responsibilities and makes adequate provisions for the protection of public funds (e.g. arrangements to suspend or claw back funding in the event of non-delivery or mismanagement)
- 1.7 The accountable body will co-ordinate participating local authorities in order to respond to any FOI/EIR requests made regarding the Joint Committee including the responsibilities of the accountable body.

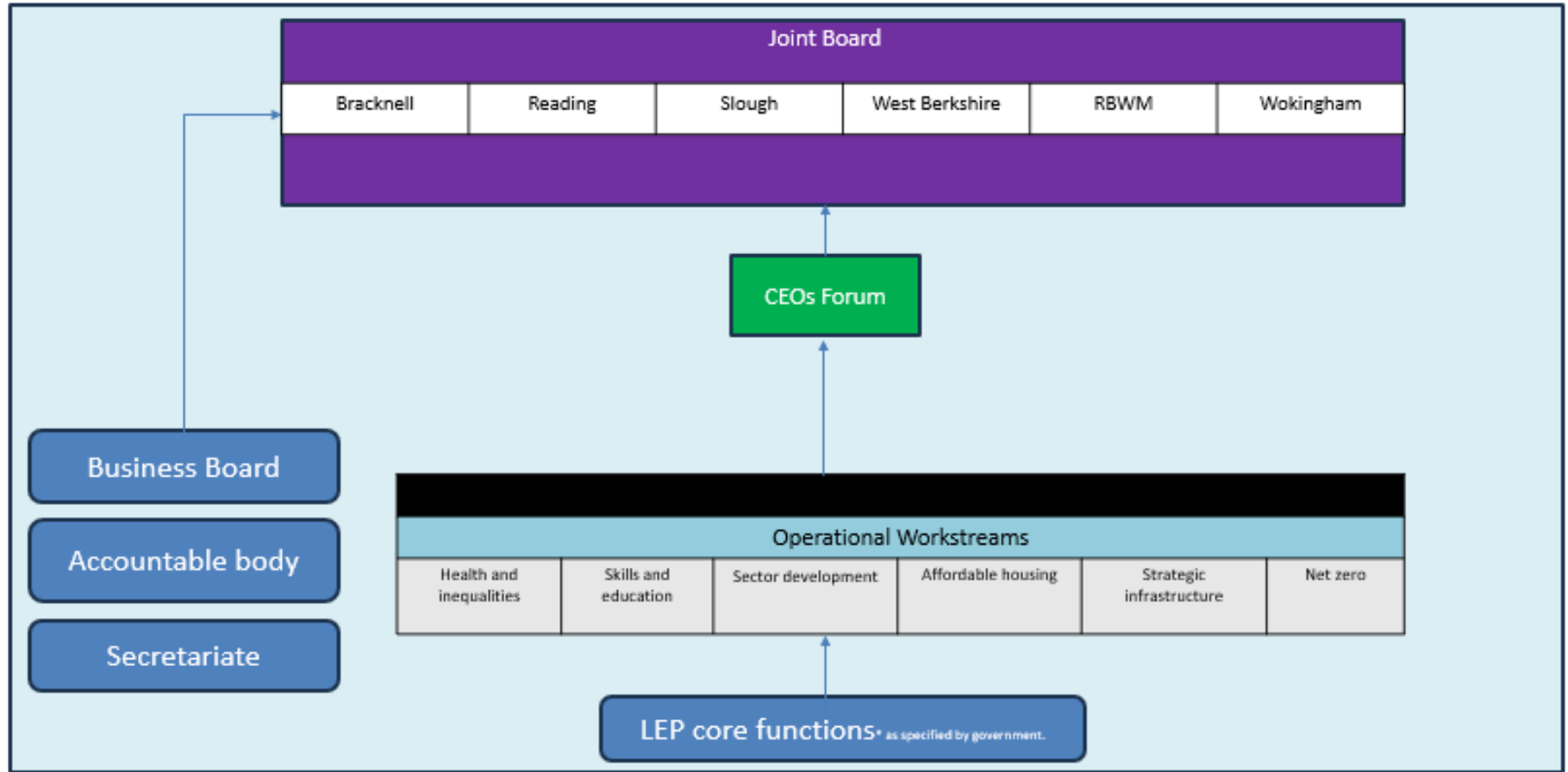
#### OPERATING PRINCIPLES

- 1.8 Open book- transparently accounting for all costs including in-kind.
- 1.9 All costs will be shared equally by all participating unitary authorities and billed quarterly on estimate with final settlement on actuals after year end.
- 1.10 That all participating authorities have a suitable liability or indemnity arrangement to ensure risks is shared.

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1. Governance arrangements

Proposed initial structure – Berkshire Prosperity Board



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To: **EXECUTIVE**  
**6<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

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## **APPROVAL TO UNDERTAKE A PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED YOUTH STRATEGY**

**Executive Director: People**

### **1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 A Youth Strategy has been developed for Bracknell Forest that sets out the strategic direction and priorities. The Youth Strategy supports the Council's Plan 2023 – 2027 ([Council Plan 2023 to 2027 | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/council-plan-2023-to-2027)), specifically the 'engaged and healthy communities'.
- 1.2 This report sets out the proposed youth strategy and the background to the development of this. The strategy provides a vision of youth services in Bracknell Forest. The intention is to undertake a public consultation and make any changes post this consultation with the aim of bringing a final version to the Executive for approval early in April / May 2024.

### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 **For the Executive to approve the draft strategy and agree that the final consultation plan will be agreed with Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning.**
- 2.2 **For the Executive to note the invitation to Members to join a dedicated session to provide feedback on the draft strategy.**
- 2.3 **For the Executive to note the intention to bring back a final strategy for Executive to approve following the consultation which will also include a detailed action plan.**

### **3 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 The proposed Youth Services Strategy 2024 – 2027 policy has been created following a comprehensive data analysis, consultation and feedback on the proposed draft and priorities included.
- 3.2 The proposed strategy supports the Council's plan to ensure engaged and healthy communities. Youth services is a political priority of the labour executive as outlined within their manifesto for the local elections in 2023.
- 3.3 Stakeholder consultation is an important part of the development of the youth strategy, enabling young people, families, members, key stakeholders, and wider residents to understand and comment on the proposed strategy.

### **4 Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 An alternative option would be not to develop a youth strategy. However, given that there is not currently a strategic document identifying and driving the shape of youth services locally, this is not an option.

### **5 Supporting Information**

- 5.1 Bracknell Forest Council and other Local Authorities across England and Wales have a statutory duty under Section 507B, Education Act 1996 to 'secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient provision of educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people, and to make sure young people have a say in the local offer'. This is often referred to as the 'Youth Service Duty'. This includes youth work and other provisions that:
- Connects young people with their communities,
  - Offers young people opportunities in safe environments to take part in a wide range of activities,
  - Supports the personal, social, and economic development of young people,
  - Improves young people's physical and mental health, and emotional wellbeing,
  - Raises young people's aspirations, builds their resilience, and informs their decision-making.
- 5.2 Wide discretion is given as to the way in which this duty is met, it may include direct provision as well as planning with others to provide the service and/or facilities. 'Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to Improve Young People's Wellbeing', published in June 2012 provides guidance for the local authorities.
- 5.3 In October 2020, the National Youth Agency (NYA) also published new guidance to support Local Authorities in their statutory duty to secure local services. This includes the meaningful engagement of young people to ensure access to quality youth services.

### Strategy Overview

- 5.4 The strategy proposes the following priority areas:
- We want to keep young people safe and intervene early to prevent and reduce harm.
  - We will support young people to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.
  - We will develop a multi-agency offer of support for Young Carers.
  - We will create more opportunities for young people to participate in democratic engagement across their communities.
  - We will invest in the workforce to support youth workers/professionals and develop pathway for young people to have a career in youth and early help work.

The table below summarises the priorities:

<b>Priority 1: We want to keep young people safe and intervene early to prevent and reduce harm.</b>	
<b>What did young people tell us?</b>	<b>What have we included in the strategy?</b>
Young people told us: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That they are worried about being exploited and what to talk to people they trust about how to keep safe and manage risk.</li> <li>• Moving around Bracknell Forest can feel unsafe, particularly when they must use underpasses.</li> </ul>	Increase the awareness of universal youth work activities, which may include youth clubs, groups and activities, amongst young people, families and professionals.  Providing one to one support for young people where there is an emerging risk of exploitation to support with safety planning,



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They worry about being bullied and would like to know who they can talk to for support.</li> </ul>	managing risks and exploring positive activities.
<b>Priority 2: We will support young people to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.</b>	
What did young people tell us?	What have we included in the strategy?
<p>Young people told us:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They would access to services to gain information, advice, and guidance on a range of issues include their mental health, sexual health, and general health.</li> <li>• They want a space to be young people and not feel judged.</li> <li>• Having groups to attend based on key issues that are concerned about e.g., mental health.</li> </ul>	<p>Work with young people and key stakeholders to provide access to information, advice, and guidance in a range of methods to ensure it is accessible for young people.</p> <p>Work with health colleagues to ensure sexual health support is accessible, appropriate and meets the needs of all young people in Bracknell Forest.</p> <p>Working with partners, develop a programme/schedule of group sessions across the borough to promote to young people and professionals working with young people.</p>
<b>Priority 3: We will develop a multi-agency offer of support for Young Carers.</b>	
What did young people tell us?	What have we included in the strategy?
<p>Young people told us:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That they are always clear on what support is available to Young Carers and how they can access the support.</li> <li>• That the council should have high expectation and champion Young Carers in everything the council does.</li> </ul>	<p>Review the current pathway to access support for young carers and ensure that this is promoted to encourage more young carers to access available support.</p> <p>Work with young carers to develop the wider offer of support, to ensure it meets their needs.</p>
<b>Priority 4: We will create more opportunities for young people to participate in democratic engagement activities across their communities.</b>	
What did young people tell us?	What have we included in the strategy?
<p>Young people told us:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are limited opportunities to get involved in the democratic process in Bracknell Forest.</li> <li>• They have ideas and views and want to contribute to decisions that affect them.</li> <li>• They want youth workers to share their expertise with other adults and for them outside (not schoolteachers) be in those environments to explore/discuss and inform young people.</li> </ul>	<p>Deliver the Youth Member of Parliament for Bracknell Forest through an election process across schools.</p> <p>Commitment to explore further opportunities for young people to engagement in the democratic process, working with elected members.</p>
<b>Priority 5: We will invest in the workforce to support youth workers/professional and develop pathways for young people to have a career in youth and early help work.</b>	
What did young people tell us?	What have we included in the strategy?
<p>Young people told us:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That youth workers/professionals who support them, understand them</li> </ul>	We want to ensure that professionals are supported to deliver the priorities of this

<p>and know how to talk to them. They feel respected and listened to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having access to youth workers/professionals who can help them with their worries and concerns is important to them.</li> </ul>	<p>strategy through high quality multi-agency training and development opportunities.</p> <p>Providing quality services for young people, is delivered through a knowledgeable and suitably qualified workforce.</p>
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## Consultation

5.5 A structured consultation plan has been developed including a combination of consultation methods providing opportunities for young people, families and key stakeholders including members, voluntary organisations, other statutory organisations to give their views on the proposed strategy. This includes the following elements:

- The consultation plan includes an online survey that individuals and organisations will be invited to complete; it is proposed to run the survey for a period of 4 weeks from 7<sup>th</sup> February until the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024.
- Members will be invited to a dedicated session to provide comments on the draft strategy.
- Consultation workshops – targeting young people, families, internal colleagues, and other groups of professionals.
- Invitation to key stakeholders to submit written comments by email.

See consultation plan in appendices.

5.8 In addition, a communications plan will be developed to ensure that the consultation is promoted widely to relevant Council services, Members, statutory and voluntary organisations, Registered Providers, health professionals, and advice agencies. This will include:

- Promoting the strategy and the online survey on the Council's website,
- Use of internal and external newsletters such as Forest Views,
- Targeted emails to key contacts and organisations that have an important role in representing the views of various cohorts.

5.9 Once the consultation is complete and the responses analysed, the proposed strategy will be finalised and presented to the earliest possible Executive with start date for the strategy being May 2024.

## 6 Other Considerations and Advice

### Financial Advice

6.1 The Executive Director: Resources is satisfied that no significant financial implications arise from undertaking the proposed consultation.

### Other Consultation Responses

6.2 As detailed in the report, a consultation plan will be developed to engage stakeholders, partners, Members, key service areas within the Council, applicants, and residents. Consultation events have taken place to support the creation and inform the strategy priorities and content.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 A priority of the Youth Strategy is to coordinate and increase universal youth provision across the borough. There should be no barriers for young people when accessing youth provision and the impact on equalities is positive.

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 There are no foreseen strategic risk management issues associated with this strategy.

### Climate Change Implications

- 6.5 The strategy is not expected to have any impact on emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>.

### Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 6.6 The health and wellbeing of young people across Bracknell Forest will be supported through a rich and diverse offer of support.

### Background Papers

Youth Strategy 2024 - 2027

Consultation Plan

Quick Guide to Strategy

### Contact for further information

Grainne Siggins, Executive Director: People

[Grainne.siggins@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Grainne.siggins@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

Audrey Johnson, Assistant Director Early Help & Communities

[audrey.johnson@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:audrey.johnson@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

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# **Youth Services Strategy**

**May 2024 – April 2027**

DRAFT

### **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the creation of this strategy, especially the young people who took the time to meet with us, influence and shape the final strategy.

### **Who is this strategy for?**

This strategy is for young people, members of the community, professionals working with young people, youth work organisations, voluntary and community partners and everyone who work to improve the outcomes for young people in Bracknell Forest.

### **Associated Strategies**

Bracknell Forest Council Plan 2023 – 2027, provides the overall ambition for what the council wishes to achieve for and with residents, businesses, and partners. The youth work strategy supports the following council ambition “*Children have quality education and opportunities to fulfil their potential*” and the measurement of “*increasing participation in universal youth service support*”.

The [Early Help Strategy 2023 – 2026](#) provides the framework for delivery of support and wider early help and prevention objectives are set out in the strategy.

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## **Foreword**

We are delighted to introduce the new youth services strategy for Bracknell Forest which supports our Children and Young People's Plan and Early Help Strategy. Bracknell Forest and its partners recognised the need for a clear strategy to support young people and have given their commitment to maximising the potential of this strategy.

Our vision for early help is that *"Bracknell Forest is a place where children, young people and their families feel safe, have access to high quality education and well-being services, giving them the opportunity to live healthy and empowered lives in their community"* (Early Help Strategy, 2023). The youth offer is a vital component of the early help, and this strategy provides the strategic vision for the next three years. It supports the partnerships ambitions for children, young people and their families in Bracknell Forest and is entwined with the Early Help Strategy.

We are grateful to young people, families and practitioners from across the Bracknell Forest, who supported us to develop this strategy, contributing their ideas and views through consultation events that have taken place over the last six months. Communities, parents, carers, and practitioners all brought their ambitions for the youth offer to these sessions. This strategy reflects the feedback we have received from young people, professionals, communities, and families.

We will provide dedicated support for young people; this will include universal and targeted youth work provision. We are providing counselling and family support and will continue to review our offer. This strategy is just the beginning; we know there is more to do across Bracknell Forest to empower young people and shift the balance to our work is led by young people. We are eager to move quickly, but we recognise that this will take time, however we believe that this is the right thing to do for young people in Bracknell Forest.

This strategy will allow young people to hold all of us, across Bracknell Forest, accountable for its delivery, we are committed to supporting this strategy and ensuring that every young person in Bracknell thrives.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the development of this strategy.

**Lead Member (Children's Services)**

**Executive Director – People (Director of Children's Services)**



## Youth Work in Bracknell Forest

The key focus of youth work is to *'enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential'* (National Youth Agency , 2023).

Youth work offers young people opportunities for learning that are educative, expressive, participative, inclusive, and empowering. It is not simply providing activities and safe spaces, youth work at its core supports the development and wellbeing of young people. The voluntary and third sector, education and the council all contribute to youth work provision. Youth work in Bracknell Forest is based on the voluntary engagement of young people as empowered partners. It starts at whatever point young people are in their lives, recognises and seeks to develop and realise their potential, and is committed to equality and inclusion.

Youth work helps young people to understand and explore their values, beliefs, responsibilities, and rights. In Bracknell Forest, youth work includes specialist and universal youth groups, gaining of accreditations, opportunities to participate in volunteering and wider participation and much more.

Youth works enables young people to develop their voice, influence, and participation not only in Bracknell Forest but wider. Young people's voice and influence in key decisions in Bracknell Forest is central to how we will provide and deliver youth work.

(National Youth Agency , 2023)

### Young people told us that the Youth Service was important to them because:

It gives us a safe place to go with friends and speak with a Youth Worker without a judgement.

You can access confidential advice and support, like the Sexual Health Clinics.

We can explore and discuss things that are important to us.

You can meet other young people and I like to get involved in the Youth Council as I want to make a difference.



## Why do we provide a Youth Offer?

Young people are Bracknell Forest's future, it is imperative that collectively we ensure that their growing up (adolescent years) in Bracknell is positive and rewarding. Investing in our youth work provision now, will support young people to become the best version of themselves and future adult residents of Bracknell Forest.

Bracknell Forest is not alone in experiencing challenges, but we know that we can overcome these when we work together as ONE community. The pandemic demonstrated the resilience of our communities and workforce in coming together to deliver successful outcomes for young people. We know that this does mean we need to comprise, challenge, be patient, and commit, but that is what we do well in Bracknell Forest!

We know that effective youth work contributes to supporting young people and helps them to transition into adulthood. We provide support to young people because we know it's the right thing to do, and we want every young person in Bracknell Forest to reach their full potential. It is helpful to consider the local and national context in which the support is provided.

### The Local Context

- The Children and Young People Plan, sets out the shared vision to keep children and young people safe, and ensure that they can thrive in Bracknell Forest. The plan sets out the strategic priorities for the partnership.
- The Early Help Strategy 2023 – 2025, developed by the local partnership and in conjunction with families sets out the vision for early help in Bracknell Forest and provides the ambitious framework for delivery.
- In 2019 the [Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment](#) was carried out and several priorities were identified including tackling exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults. The priorities are reviewed, and the plan is managed by the Steering Group.
- The [Youth Justice Plan](#) is currently being updated, the plan will set out the focus areas for the service, and work that will be undertaken to meet the priorities and highlight the key achievement and challenges.

### The National Context

- The [Independent Review of Children's Social Care 2022](#) advocates for a fundamental shift in the way children's social care responds to families who need help. A central recommendation of the review is to bring targeted early help and work undertaken at Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 together.
- There is a duty on local authorities to secure sufficient youth services in their area, related to Section 507B of the [Education Act \(1996\)](#), as amended by the Education and Inspections Act (2006), which sets government expectations for local authorities when securing services and activities for people aged 13 to 19.
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#) outlines the legislative requirements placed on individual services, making it clear what they must do to keep children safe. It seeks to emphasise that effective safeguarding can only be achieved when children are at the centre.
- The [National Youth Agency](#) is the national body for youth work, and the Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) for youth work in England. The NYA champions youth work at a national level, offers guidance, support, and training to the profession.

## What do we know?

- **National Census 2021 told us that:**
  - Bracknell Forest had an estimated population of 124,165, of which 49.5 per cent (61,460) are male and 50.5 per cent (62,705) female.
  - Approximately 30.3 per cent (37,633) of the population were aged 0-24 years.
  - The population of Bracknell Forest is projected to rise to 131,262 by 2043 a rise of 5.7 per cent (7,097) however, the 0-24 years age group is estimated to reduce by 1.9 per cent (2,454) which would equate to a population of 0-24 years of 26.8 per cent (35,179) overall.
  - The population of Bracknell Forest is predominately, circa 88-90 per cent White British, with the next largest ethnic group being Asian/ Asian British (5 per cent), followed by Black/African/Caribbean/Black British and mixed/multiple ethnic groups (2 per cent) respectively.
- **Other data told us:**
  - Over the last three years (2020 – 2023) the top 3 requests into the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub for young people over the ages of 11 were abuse or neglect, socially unacceptable behaviour, and family in acute stress.
  - The three top agencies/people referring into Early Help include Schools, Children's Social Care and Police (youth services received the most requests for support from schools and colleges).
  - There has been an increase in referrals to Early Help each year between 2020 and 2023. Referrals for early help have increased year on year, there has been a 1% increase in 2021/2022, and 13% increase in 2022/2023 from the previous year.
  - Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of young people attending both individual and universal youth work sessions have increased over the last three years. In the 2022-2023 the increase is over 1,600 young people.
  - Youthline, a confidential counselling service, supported more young people aged 11-15 years old, than any other age group

## What has everyone told us?

Our on-line survey and focused conversations with young people, families, professionals, and the wider community have influenced and shaped our mission and objectives in this strategy, below are the headlines from these.

### Online Survey

- ❖ Over 50% of those who completed the survey, had or were previously involved with youth services as a young person, family member or professional.
- ❖ They had been in contact with the youth service weekly/several times a week when they were being supported by a youth worker.
- ❖ Supporting young people's mental health, providing safe spaces for young people to go, and offering a range of opportunities to support young people's transition to adulthood were areas that people wanted the youth service to have a focus on. The priority areas identified were 'bullying, crime, and anti-social behaviour'.
- ❖ Young people told us that they wanted more opportunities to speak with youth workers about these areas without having to be referred to the service.
- ❖ The delivery of activities for young people should take place at youth clubs, community venues and schools.
- ❖ Activities should be available 7 days a week, and young people were clear that clubs should be available straight after school and into the evening.
- ❖ Specific groups such as Young Carers were important and services for them should be increased so more young people can access them.
- ❖ Young people and families did not want to tell their story repeatedly to different professionals and wanted more joint working across teams and the people helping them.

## Focused Conversations told us...

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### Young People

- A Youth Worker is someone they feel most comfortable speaking too and asking for advice from.
- That they worry about being bullied at school and within their communities.
- That having a place to go after school and at the weekends was important as some young people would like to go straight to a youth club after school while other young people wanted to go to an evening club.
- Specialist youth groups, such as Young Carers and LGBTQ+ were important as they provide a safe, welcome, and comfortable space to talk and be themselves.
- They would like more safe spaces to go to meet friends and socialise. They wanted more opportunities to volunteer and be involved in groups where they can influence decisions.



### Families

- That they would like to see more universal youth clubs and groups across Bracknell Forest for young people to access.
- That specialist youth groups have helped not only support young people but families.
- There should be a greater focus on offering groups and activities to young people with additional needs.
- Professionals should work together to support families.
- That online safety, risky behaviour (exploitation) and young people gaining a good education worried them.
- The promotion of the Youth Service was vital, and information should be easily accessible for young people and parents.



### Professionals

- Universal and targeted support was essential for young people they were supporting.
- That the workforce should have a range of skills and knowledge to support the various needs of young people. This should include professionally qualified youth workers.
- We need to enhance our offer of support to Young Carers.
- A specification of support provided by the Youth Service should be published so everyone is clear.
- A focus of the youth service should include delivering key interventions to young people to reduce the risks of exploitation.
- There should be more opportunities for young people's voices to be heard.
- The voluntary sector have lots of experience and skills, and already have an offer to young people.

## What do we want to achieve?

### Our Vision

That all young people in Bracknell Forest will have access to youth work services to ensure that their teenage years are enjoyable, and no young person is left behind.

### Our mission

That all young people in Bracknell Forest can be themselves, lead healthy lives, be safe, happy, and reach their true potential, and transition into adulthood positively.

Young people will benefit from high quality, responsive, and impartial youth work support. This will be through a high quality and responsive universal, targeted provision. Our workforce will be highly skilled, trained, competent, young person focused, and solution focused.

### Early Help Key Enablers

We believe that getting our key enablers right, will support our work with young people across Bracknell Forest and will give us the best chance of achieving the outcomes set out within the strategy for young people.

#### *Young People's Support*

- When we listen and hear the experiences, wishes and feelings of young people, we can truly support young people. The impact of parental support is one of the most important factors in helping young people to lead successful and fulfilling lives. For some young people this support will be provided by professionals who develop positive relationships and working with them to provide the tools and approaches they need to deal with problems when they arise.

#### *Positive activities*

- Providing universal safe spaces for young people to access support and activities for them to enjoy themselves, have fun and become resilient young adults.

#### *Building family resilience*

- Giving families the tools to manage problems for themselves and knowing how to seek support when they need it. Whole family working, working with the wider family network to help identify strengths and build on their resilience to manage issues they face successfully.

#### *Stronger Communities*

- Youth work provision within communities, working with the voluntary sector, will ensure that networks of professionals, families and young people can come together to discuss the issues and needs facing communities and encourage young people to develop solutions for themselves. Localised decisions are powerful for ensuring best outcomes for young people.

#### *Inclusion*

- We will ensure that young people feel welcome, secure, and comfortable and that they are able to celebrate who they are and their identity. We know that there is rich diversity in Bracknell Forest and we want to ensure that every young person is able to be themselves and reach their potential.

## Our Approach

Our support to young people and families is focused around our four components of successful practice. We know that we can deliver effective support if we work together and work within our framework.



### Voice of Young People & Families

We will...

- be flexible in our approach, and ensure we use a variety of tools to support young people and families.
- respond to your young people and family's diversity need.
- listen to learn and understand young people and families' experiences.
- learn from feedback and take actions to develop.
- explore strengths, identify areas of challenge, and support you to make changes.

### Right Conversations, Right Time

We will...

- ensure that we have a co-ordinated offer of support for young people, with clear pathways.
- support as early as possible to avoid worries and concerns escalating.
- have conversations that are solution-focused and are rooted in motivational interviewing.
- not make promises that we are not able to keep.
- respond to families and young people's needs in a timely way.
- provide effective, evidence-based support.

### Coordinated Support

We will...

- place the young person at the centre of our work.
- develop one plan that everyone works towards.
- embed the team around the young person approach and ensure the right person acts as the Lead Professional.
- build resilience in young people and their families by using a range of tools, and language in the home, schools, and other settings to reduce school and home breakdown, reducing harm, and increasing social inclusion. This will include working systemically with families, to recognise that each family is unique with individual parts influencing each other. Systemic practice will be underpinned by trauma informed and restorative practice.

### Behaviours and culture

We will...

- ensure that relationship-based practice is at the heart of how we work with each other, families, and young people.
- ensure that our behaviours match our values of respect and diversity.
- develop relationships with young people and families that are based on respect, trust, and honesty.
- ensure our workforce is skilled, competent, and confident, recognising the strengths of families and communities and works alongside them to build resilience.

## Young People Views

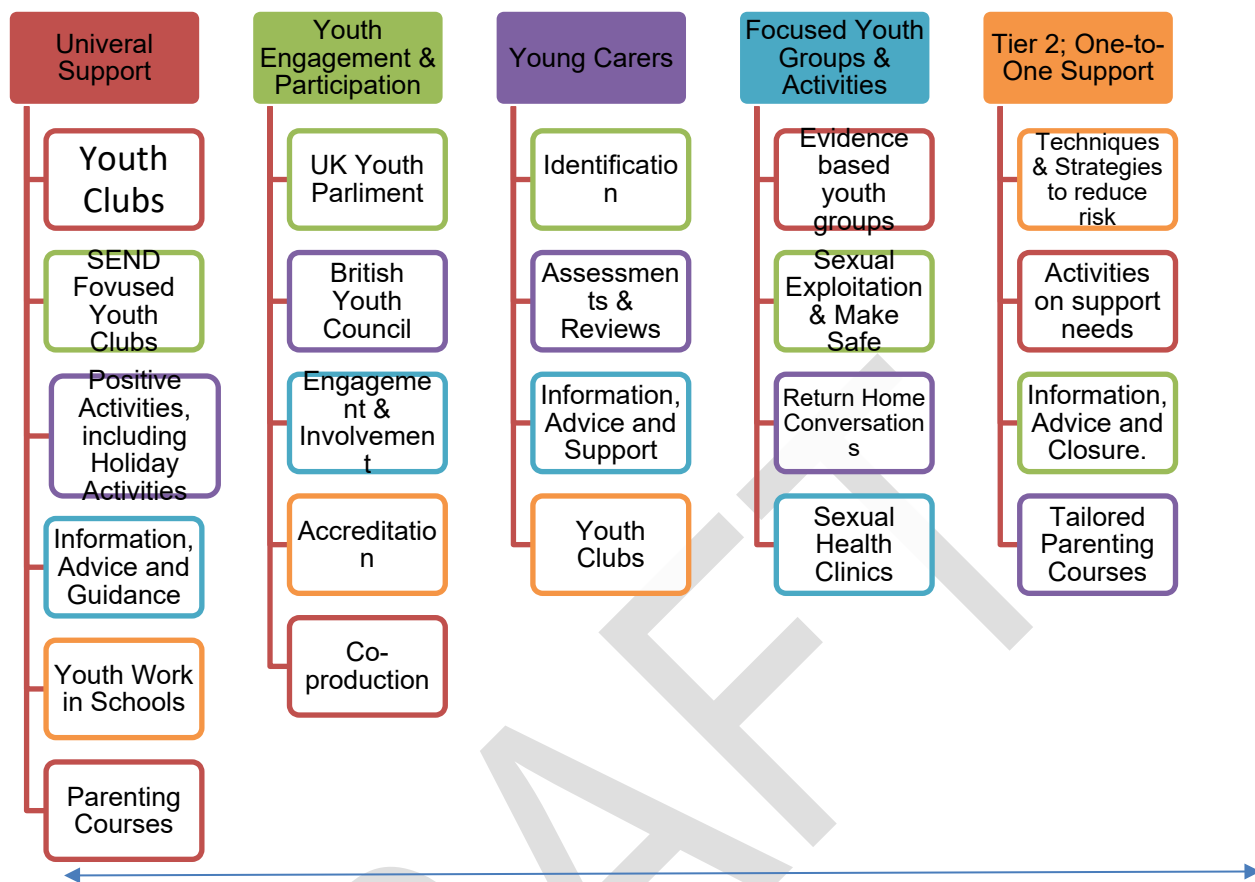
Young people told us what was important for them when working with professionals from across the partnership. We recognise that we can only deliver our objectives if we work in collaboration with young people.

Young people asked us to, and we have agreed to pledge to:

- Always champion and celebrate you!
- Treat you with respect, valuing you and your individuality.
- Give you a warm and friendly welcome to youth clubs and when we are working together.
- Provide the right support at the right time, without delay.
- Never judge you; we will listen to you and help you make choices.
- Work with you, putting you at the centre of our work, we want to hear about you and your needs.
- Always be honest with you; we will explain our decisions in a clear way.
- Be ambitious for you, giving you lots of support but also challenge you to step out of your comfort zone.
- Ensure that you are supported by a skilled, competent, knowledgeable, and friendly practitioner.



## Youth Services Offer (Universal, SEND & Targeted)



The provision includes a SEND Offer.

### Universal Offer

We know that the early prevention is critical if we are to support young people and their families respond and manage the problems that they are facing. Research by both the [University of Edinburgh](#) and [Youth & Policy](#) outlined the positive impact that youth clubs had on young people. This included supporting positive outcomes for health and wellbeing, contributing to education outcomes, employability, and self-development.

Youth clubs and groups will be available for all young people to attend to meet other young people, learn new things, volunteer or to speak with a member of the youth services for advice and support.

Parenting classes delivered by the youth service will support parent/carer's learn new skills, gain confidence, and connect with other parent/carer's who share similar challenges and goals. Parenting classes can also provide information and guidance on how to deal with specific issues that may arise during the different stages of child and young person's development.

Young people will be able to access information, advice, and guidance from the youth service whether this be in the community, school or at a youth centre. Professionals will be able to assist with accessing support and providing signposting information.

Working with partners, we will support all young people to make healthy choices and will ensure that education on key topics such as drugs, alcohol and smoking is provided. In

addition, we will ensure that young people have access to confidential and highly trained sexual health practitioners.

## **Targeted Youth Support**

Targeted youth support in Bracknell Forest consists of four main components which support young people and their families depending on their needs.

Our targeted work will focus on the following priority areas:

- Managing feelings and emotions,
- Building positive family relationships
- Support with attending education/training
- Self-esteem & confidence
- Healthy relationships
- Peer influence and decision making
- Support for emerging mental health needs (e.g., anxiety, low mood, self-harm)
- Substance mis/use education
- Understanding identity and diversity
- Exploitation awareness/prevention
- Online safety
- Preventing criminal/anti-social behaviours
- Support for parenting teenagers (1:1 & group programmes),

We will strengthen our offer of targeted provision to young people. We will continue to develop our targeted youth support offer to young people in Bracknell Forest. We know that targeted support is more than one-to-one intervention with a professional.

## Pathways to the Youth Services Offer

The pathways to access youth service in Bracknell Forest is dependent on individual needs. Young people and families can speak with any professional who will support a family to identify the presenting needs and through conversations, support can be provided, through accessing service directly or it may be appropriate to complete an early help assessment. Through the assessment, we can establish who is best to support the young person to address their concerns in a timely way, to prevent escalation and ensure a positive outcome.



## Our Five Priorities

Our five priorities will inform a detailed multi-agency action plan.

**We want to keep young people safe and intervene early to prevent and reduce harm.**

What are we going to do?	What outcome are we seeking?	How will we know we are making a difference?
<p>Increase the awareness of universal youth clubs across Bracknell Forest for all young people.</p> <p>Increase awareness of support for young people and their families, using data and intelligence to ensure we respond to emerging needs. This will include the use of equality, diversity, and inclusion data.</p> <p>Develop a clear offer of support around anti-bullying, which include targeted intervention and upskilling the early help workforce.</p> <p>Provide targeted 1:1 support session that bring together everyone who is supporting young people, through a team around the young person approach.</p>	<p>All young people and their families will feel better supported and have confidence to access youth work support.</p> <p>Families have a greater resilience, improved confidence, and capacity to recognise and respond to their own needs.</p> <p>Young people are safer from harm and have their needs met as early as possible.</p> <p>Families know how to access information, advice and guidance and receive seamless support from early help services.</p> <p>Young people's needs are met by a whole family approach, building the wider networks resilience to manage situations as they arise in the future.</p>	<p>Young people are regularly attending universal youth clubs and their feedback demonstrates the positive impact the sessions have on them.</p> <p>80% of young people who have accessed Youth Services report being happier and feeling safe.</p> <p>Youth services represent the communities they service.</p> <p>Increase young people's attendance at youth clubs over the last three years, benefiting from Youth Clubs and accessing support.</p> <p>A robust procedure for stepping young people up and down from/to social care/YJS/Make Safe to ensure young people receive appropriate support.</p>

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**We will support young people to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.**

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What are we going to do?	What outcome are we seeking?	How will we know we are making a difference?
<p>Help all young people and families recognise the importance of health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Work as a whole system, to ensure that young people and families are supported to achieve positive health and wellbeing, support cohorts of young people where there is an identified need.</p> <p>Increase information, advice, guidance provision for young people who are accessing sexual health support.</p> <p>Ensure all youth workers are trained to provide sexual health advice to young people.</p> <p>Provide opportunities and resources for young people to explore their identities and connect to their communities.</p>	<p>Young people and their families can access support early and respond to their health and wellbeing needs.</p> <p>Whole system processes are developed and understood by everyone supporting young people.</p> <p>Young people set out in their own plans the information and support they need in relation to making informed decisions.</p> <p>Young people have access to impartial and confidential information around their own health and wellbeing.</p> <p>A safe, inclusive, and welcoming Bracknell Forest to all people.</p>	<p>Provide sexual health clinics where all young people can access in safety, and their equality and diversity needs are met.</p> <p>Increased awareness and support for young people and families around wellbeing and mental health, with families feeling confident to meet needs.</p> <p>Working as a whole system to ensure support is provided through a single assessment and plan, reducing multiple requests/referrals.</p> <p>Deliver parenting courses to parents/carers of young people to support their confidence in parenting.</p>

**We will develop a multi-agency offer of support for Young Carers.**

What are we going to do?	What outcome are we seeking?	How will we know we are making a difference?
<p>Review how we identify and support young carers, so that we can ensure we are meeting their needs through accessible support.</p> <p>Undertake a diagnosis of the current support to Young Carers, so we can understand what else we need to do and reach out to local authorities and charities to help us develop and get this right.</p> <p>Create safe, welcoming, and fun sessions for Young Carers to access support and information.</p> <p>Completing an annual survey to young carers to hear about their experiences of support.</p>	<p>A simpler process for Young Carers who are asking for support, ensuring that support is provided in an accessible format.</p> <p>A focused and committed early help partnership, raising, and promoting the profile of Young Carers.</p> <p>Safe and confidential spaces for Young Carers to meet other Young Carers, to support, encourage and be connected.</p> <p>Bracknell Forest communities and services are supportive and Young Carer focused.</p>	<p>Young Carers are identified early, and the response is robust.</p> <p>An increase of Young Carers accessing specialist and universal Youth Clubs.</p> <p>A 50% increase in 'review' plans being created for Young Carers, ensuring that their needs are being meet.</p> <p>Annual survey results for young carers show an increase on satisfaction with the service and approach.</p>

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**We will create more opportunities for young people to participate in democratic engagement activities across their communities.**

What are we going to do?	What outcome are we seeking?	How will we know we are making a difference?
<p>Strengthen young people’s participation across the youth service and invest in approaches such as the UK Youth Parliament and British Youth Council.</p> <p>Run Member of Youth Parliament elections across Bracknell Forest.</p> <p>Involve young people and families in decision making process for the youth service e.g., Braccan Walk</p> <p>Work with communities, business, and charities to provide opportunities for young people to participate in volunteering.</p>	<p>More young people through their education settings are involved in the election of their Member of Youth Parliament.</p> <p>The Member of Youth Parliament is supported and has the resources to be able to undertake their responsibilities.</p> <p>A clear database of volunteering opportunities for young people and develop relationships with business and charities to increase volunteering opportunities.</p> <p>A youth service where young people make decisions.</p>	<p>Increase of young people volunteering year on year.</p> <p>The number of hours young people have volunteered year on year increases and young people report the benefits of volunteering.</p> <p>20% of all young people volunteering are supported to gain a formal accreditation for volunteering.</p> <p>Over 500 young people will vote for a Member of Youth Parliament in 2024-2025, rising by 12% by 2026 – 2027.</p> <p>By 2026-2027 20 young people will form the Youth Council for Bracknell Forest.</p>

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**We will invest in the workforce to support youth workers/professionals and develop pathways for young people to have a career in youth and early help work.**

What are we going to do?	What outcome are we seeking?	How will we know we are making a difference?
<p>Undertake a training needs analysis for the workforce across Bracknell Forest which informs future delivery of training.</p> <p>Provide training and education opportunities for practitioners, working with the voluntary and third sector to develop a high-quality training offer to the workforce.</p> <p>We will promote youth work as a career and explore opportunities for young people to take part in an apprenticeship in youth work.</p> <p>Develop talent within the borough by supporting residents and young people to volunteer in youth work in the borough.</p>	<p>A local training plan is produced and implemented informed by the training analysis.</p> <p>Consistent workforce that supports young people, who are suitably qualified.</p> <p>Co-produced training and delivery for the workforce and pooling of resources to maximum impact.</p> <p>Apprentices in youth work offered in Bracknell Forest for young people to enter the sector.</p> <p>Young people interesting in a career in working with young people are aware of youth work as a career.</p> <p>Volunteers support young people who are attending universal youth work provision.</p>	<p>Attendance of the workforce at training events and evaluation feedback. Young people feedback demonstrates that skill base of workforce makes a difference to them.</p> <p>Comprehensive training offer that is funded by all partners and is responsive current and developing needs.</p> <p>One apprenticeship post is appointed too across the borough during the lifetime of this strategy.</p> <p>Increase of young people taking youth work qualifications at all levels.</p> <p>At least 20 volunteers complete the agreed training and volunteer in youth work provision. Collectively providing over 200 hours of volunteering.</p>

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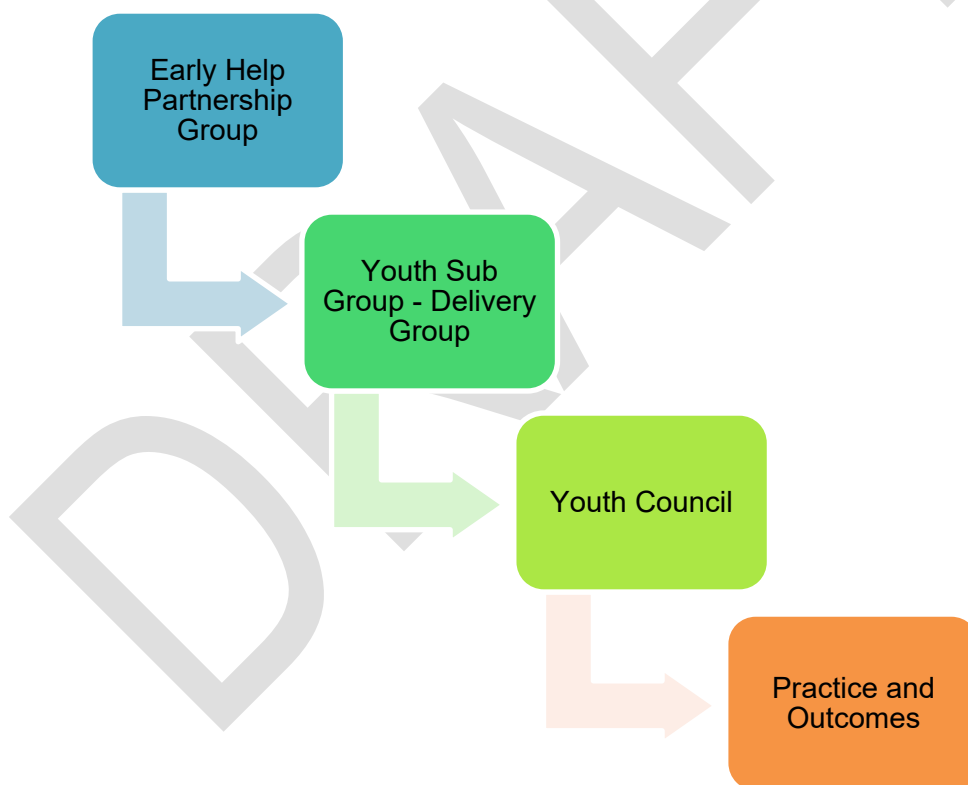
## Governance

To ensure that we are making progress on the priorities we have listed we need to ensure that we have a good framework of governance so that everyone can celebrate progress but also be held accountable too.

The Youth Service sits within Early Help & Resources in Bracknell Forest and the 'Early Help Partnership Group', which is made up of a range of partner agencies, which has partnership oversight. This group will be responsible for providing the strategic oversight of the strategy and support the Young People's Operational Delivery Group in affecting the required changes.

We will establish a 'Young People's Operational Delivery Group', that will be made of a range of partner agencies and young people, to ensure that the strategic aims of the strategy are translated into practice. This group will be responsible for the day-to-day operational implementation of the strategy.

We will work with young people to establish a 'Young People's Committee' so that we are able to consult, develop and co-produce with young people at the start.



## Performance Measurement, how will we further know that this strategy is making a difference?

Priority
We want to keep young people safe and intervene early to prevent and reduce harm.
We will support young people to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.
We will develop a multi-agency offer of support for Young Carers.
We will create more opportunities for young people to participate in democratic engagement across their communities.
Evidence
Early Help Scorecard
Youth Services Audit Activity Reports
Young People, Families and Communities feedback.
Overall Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Increase in the number of young people and families supported through a multi-agency early help plan.</li> <li>b) Increase in young people accessing identified information, advice, and guidance by attending universal Youth Clubs</li> <li>c) Improved school attendance for young people, with few absences relating to health and wellbeing needs.</li> <li>d) 80% of young people and families supported through early help report that the support/intervention they received made a positive difference to them and their family.</li> <li>e) A reduction in the number of young people being suspended or excluded from school.</li> <li>f) Increase in the number of young people and families making progress towards the goals in their early help plan, and positive scores on Outcome Star.</li> <li>g) Increase in the number of families who are satisfied with the support they receive.</li> </ul>

## **Glossary of Terms**

### **Young person-centred practice**

Working in a young person-centred way, places young people at the centre of the work in which they are actively participating and ensuring that individual needs, interests, and strengths are built upon. It also includes listening and taking account of young people's needs and wishes when decisions are being made and giving young people the opportunity to form their own view about what they want and need.

### **Trauma-informed practice**

Trauma-informed practice is a strengths-based approach, which seeks to understand and respond to the impact of trauma on people lives. This approach emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone and aims to empower individuals to re-establish control of their lives.

### **Strengths based approach.**

A strengths-based approach to working with young people is about 'how' we work, not 'what' work we do. A strength-based approach is a way of working that focuses on abilities, knowledge, and capacities rather than deficits. The approach recognises that young people are resilient and are capable of growth, learning and change.

### **Systemic practice**

Systemic practice is a way of working which focuses on people's relationship as a way of making sense of their experience. It doesn't consider the 'problem' to be inside a particular person, but that the 'problem' exists and is maintained in relationships between people.

### **Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP)**

An Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is a legal document that is established to describe the needs, detail the provision, and name an educational placement for a child or young person.

### **Early Help Assessment (EHA)**

An Early Help Assessment is an initial assessment and planning tool that facilitates and coordinates multiagency support. It helps everyone to look at the strengths and areas for support and focuses on what support might be required. The assessments focuses on everyone within the family.

### **Team Around the Family**

Is a meeting between a child, young person, their family, and the group of practitioners who are working with the family. The purpose of the Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) is to share information and to create a solution focused plan that will support the needs of the child, young person, and their family.

### **Lead Professional**

A lead professional is usually appointed when there are different services supporting a child, young person, or family. A lead professional acts as a single point of contact for the family and coordinates the package of support and monitors progress and achievements.

### **Interventions**

Intervention is about putting a particular service or plan in place to help a family get through their problems. An intervention will be short to medium term and will involve a plan for what happens when the intervention finishes. It could be something like attending a course or going through a specified programme of support.

### **Multi-agency**

When a team consists of professionals from more than one agency or more than one skill, they are known as being multi-agency or multidisciplinary.

**Outcome/Youth Star**

An evidence-based tool for measuring and supporting change when working with children and families.

**Partnerships**

Partnership is often about agencies working together with each other, but it can also be about agencies working together with families.

**Restorative practice**

While traditional methods of conflict solution start by seeking blame and administering punishment, restorative solutions start by seeking understanding. Restorative practice is a way of behaving rather than a theory or process. Restorative practice offers a chance to rebuild relationships that have been broken, giving everybody a chance to explain their actions and building solutions together for the future.

**Strategy**

A strategy is a high-level document outlining a vision for where we want to be and how we want to work.

**Whole Family Working**

Families being supported by early help, including youth services, will have one family plan which will be coordinated by one Lead Professional. In the context of the youth service this means, that a youth worker will deliver support as part the family plan or be a Lead Professional where appropriate.

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**End of Strategy**

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## **Youth Strategy Consultation – Consultation Plan. January 2024**

### **Why are we consulting?**

Bracknell Forest and its partners recognises the need for a clear strategy to support young people and we are consulting to ensure that everyone can provide feedback, offer suggestions, and inform the final youth services strategy.

In addition, Bracknell Forest Council has a duty to secure sufficient youth services in the borough. In 2020–21, the government set out to review the statutory guidance for local authorities on providing youth services, related to Section 507B of the Education Act (1996), as amended by the Education and Inspections Act (2006), which sets out the governments expectations for (upper tier) local authorities when securing services and activities for people aged 13 to 19, and those up to age 24 with learning difficulties, with the purpose of improving young people’s well-being.

The duty states that Bracknell Forest Council must, ‘so far as reasonably practicable,’ secure for qualifying young persons in the authority’s area access to:

- Sufficient educational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities, and,
- Sufficient recreational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities.

### **Who are we consulting?**

- Young people,
- Parents, carers, and families,
- The wider public,
- Council Members,
- Town and Parish Councils,
- Council services including but not limited to: Early Help, Children’s Services, Education, Housing, Adult Social Care, Youth Offending Service, Children’s Services, Public Health, Welfare and Community Safety
- Other statutory services including but not limited to: NHS Trust, Berkshire Primary Care, Police, Health, Drug and Alcohol, CMHT, Probation, Prison Service, and the DWP.
- Voluntary sector including but not limited to voluntary and third sector youth providers and Faith Groups.

### **What are we consulting on?**

The youth strategy proposes five key priority areas for focus over the lifetime of the youth services strategy. The strategy also provides a narrative of the data and consultation headlines and pathways to support.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Questions</b>
1. Priorities	To adopt the five priorities as part of the youth services strategy.	Do you agree with the priorities? Yes/No. If No, please explain why and provide any suggestions you may have.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We want to keep young people safe and intervene early to prevent and reduce harm.</li> <li>2. We will support young people to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.</li> <li>3. We will develop a multi-agency offer of support for Young Carers.</li> <li>4. We will create more opportunities for young people to participate in democratic engagement across their communities.</li> <li>5. We will invest in the workforce to support youth workers/professionals and develop pathways for young people to have a career in youth and early help work.</li> </ol> <p>We are asking these questions to help us understand if we have captured the right priorities and where we should focus our resource first.</p>	<p>Out of the five priorities, which priorities is most important to you. (Select one)</p> <p>Please explain why.</p> <p><i>(Why are we asking these questions?)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We will be confident that the priorities are correct following the analysis of the data and consultation work that has taken place.</i></li> <li>• <i>To ensure that resources are allocated in need order.)</i></li> </ul>
<p>2. Providing the right support at the right time.</p>	<p>To ensure the right support for young people is provided, at the right time and in the right way.</p>	<p>To what extent do you agree with the following statements, in relation to the strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strategy will enable support to be provided to young people at the right time, in the right place and in the right way.</li> <li>• It will support effective partnership working.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Agree</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Somewhat Agree</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Neither Agree nor Disagree</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Somewhere disagree.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Disagree</p> <p>Please explain the reason for your answer.</p>



		<p>The strategy seeks to be inclusive and sets out the vision that all young people should be able to access youth services provision. Do you agree with this statement?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Yes No Not sure</p> <p>If you answer is no or not sure, please outline what we could do better.</p> <p><i>(Why are we asking these questions?)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We will gain a position on stakeholders view on the inclusivity of the strategy and how inclusivity is embedded within the strategy.</i></li> <li>• <i>To gain an understanding on the effectiveness of the strategy in outlining the objectives.)</i></li> </ul>
<p>3. Access to youth services</p>	<p>Ensure that the pathways to accessing support is clear for young people, families, and key stakeholders.</p>	<p>As a result of the strategy, I am clearer as to how to access youth services support?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Yes No Not sure</p> <p>In addition to the Local Offer website (to be updated), do you believe it would be beneficial for a leaflet/information guide to be produced for young people?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Yes No</p> <p><i>(Why are we asking these questions?)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ensure that pathways in accessing support is clear, which will support an increase in participation in youth services activities.</i></li> <li>• <i>To ensure that services are promoting offers and interventions to reach more young people from all communities in Bracknell Forest)</i></li> </ul>

4. Working in partnership	To work with partners across the borough to support young people in Bracknell.	<p>Does the strategy reflect our commitment to partnership working to support positive outcomes for young people?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Yes No Not sure</p> <p>What further action do you feel we could take to strengthen partnership working?</p> <p>(For young people – how would you like professionals to work together to support you?)</p> <p><i>(Why are we asking these questions?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To enable the wider partnership to consider how effective the offer and interventions are and how they will impact the strategy priorities)</i></li> </ul>
6.	Overall views on the strategy	Please provide any further comments or suggestions that you have on this strategy and its implementation.

There will be an opportunity for respondents to provide any additional comments at the end of the survey.

#### Not included in the consultation

Some aspects of youth services are not subject to change as per the strategy and are not featured within the consultation document as they do not relate to the strategy content. Some areas below were considered and discussed during focused conversations.

Theme	Reason
Access to youth services	There are no proposed changes to who can access youth services, there remains both a universal and targeted offer for young people. The youth offer will be clear because of the strategy and its implementation.

Pathways to youth services	No significant change to pathways in accessing youth services, there will remain universal and targeted provision across the borough that young people can access. As a result of the strategy and its implementation that pathways will be clearer for young people and key stakeholders.
Supporting key groups	Youth services and voluntary sector will continue to provide targeted groups for key groups such as LGBTQI+, newly arrived young people and SEND. Provision for young carers is explicitly included as a priority area within the strategy. This will ensure the profile of key groups are raised across the borough.

**When will consultation take place?**

Once Executive has given approval, the consultation period is likely to be from the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2024 until the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

**Methods of consultation**

- Online consultation survey lasting for 4 weeks (paper versions available on request)
- Council Members session (to be booked)
- Schools and other key stakeholder session/workshop from February 7<sup>th</sup> onwards.
- One to one and group sessions with young people
- Early Help Forum Meeting session
- Targeted emails inviting comments via survey or email drop box.
- Meetings with key stakeholders on strategy affecting service users.

**Promotion of consultation**

A separate Communications Plan is being developed to ensure profile of consultation is raised. This will include promotion of Bracknell Forest Council’s social media accounts, activities at youth centres and within schools.

**Consultation resources to be prepared.**

Quick Guide

This will provide the background to and purpose of the consultation for the youth services strategy. This is the text to go on the website and other documents to introduce the consultation., why we are doing it and who we want to hear from. – Completed.

Consultation questions for the online survey – Completed.

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To: THE EXECUTIVE  
Date: 06 February 2024

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## **Design & Construction Multi-Disciplinary Consultancy Services Contract Executive Director: Delivery**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1. To seek approval for the appointment of a Design & Construction Multi-Disciplinary Consultancy Services Contract, to provide construction consultancy services call-off contract to aid the delivery of construction projects, routine condition surveys of the Councils property/asset portfolio. This will enable the Property, Education and other areas within the Council to use this approved supplier to assist when consultancy is required, at times when the in-house teams cannot provide support or does not have the expertise in house.

### **2. Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1. (a) That the Executive approves this Strategic Procurement Plan to tender the appointment of a Design & Construction Multi-Disciplinary Consultancy Services Contract.

(b) Approval of this Strategic Procurement Plan authorises:

- (i) a proposed contractual term for a duration of up to ten years with an initial period of five years and further 3 + 2 years based on key performance indicators of optional extensions with a contract value of £12m for 10-year contract.
- (ii) Design & Construction Multi-Disciplinary Consultancy Services Contract to be procured from a single provider.

- 2.2. That the Executive delegate authority to the Executive Director, Delivery and the Executive Member for Finance and Business Change to award the contract to the provider meeting the requirements of this contract.

### **2.3. Advertising**

The procurement process will be a restricted procedure. The value of this procurement is above the Public Contracts Regulations threshold for Services at £214,904 (such threshold is inclusive of VAT as of 01/01/24). The opportunity to tender will be advertised on the Find a Tender Services South East Business Portal and Contracts Finder.

- Expression of interest from the Design & Construction Support team will be shortlisted through a selection questionnaire (SQ) process, which will create a tender list of up to 5 organisations, who will then be invited to tender.
- Performance Specification and the contract documents will be prepared by Bracknell Forest Council.

## **2.4. Tender Evaluation**

The tenders will be evaluated, based on a 50/50 cost/quality split. The Design & Construction Support team will need to evidence they have proven experience with providing work to a similar size and value. This split allows for the contract to be awarded to the best all round bid for quality, rather than just cost alone, preventing a situation where the lowest tender may outweigh a poor-quality submission.

## **3. Reasons for Recommendation(s)**

- 3.1. 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 strategy.
- 3.2. The current Managing Partner framework expires on the 30 June 2025, therefore there is a requirement to commission an external organisation to provide Design & Construction Multi-Disciplinary Consultancy Services Contract to implement and manage the delivery of construction projects.

## **4. Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1. Consideration has been given to seeking consultants on an individual project basis, however when Bracknell Forest Council have undertaken this in the past, it has proven to be a lengthy process. Involving numerous organisations into our practice allows room for error, as the continuity and the knowledge of the Councils stock is lost. However, having a Design & Construction Support team commissioned on a fixed term contract, ensures information on procedures and condition of our buildings are kept up to date.
- 4.2. After consulting with other Berkshire Councils, we were informed that 3 of the Councils have inhouse consultancy staff and procure specialist support as and when required through a framework.
- 4.3. One Council had a professional services framework for Consultants on architectural and design services which ran for 4 years and covered Housing, Education and Corporate. This was procured through the Portal 'shortlisted' 6 consultant firms to be on 4 year Framework for which mini competitions were ran when projects came to fruition. Some projects were procured as design and build, some were separated and procured separately. These are then overseen by a large internal Construction Project Management team. However, we also use a Framework such as CCS/Fusion 21 for specific projects. This option would not be suitable for BFC due to there not being a large in-house team, holding the knowledge required.
- 4.4. One of the authorities has recently procured a contract, with 2 different organisations, with 1 providing pre-contract services and the other providing post-contract services. Due to a number of recent issues, this Authority is looking at alternative options. Team members moving from other authorities have tried this model, however it has caused conflict and contractual issues between consultants and would require significant resources to manage the contracts. There could also be issues regarding where negligence claims lay.

4.5. An option is to create an inhouse multi-disciplinary consultancy team to recruit a number of individuals, to design and manage projects lower than £0.5m, which would equate to approx. salary costs of £630k per annum, as shown in the table below. However, there would still need to be some input from an external organisation, to provide additional technical input, ie project management, public health engineers etc. as and when required for each of the projects.

4.6.

Discipline	Salary	Total Salary
Building Surveyor x 2	£60k	£120k
Electrical Engineer	£60k	£60k
Mechanical Engineer	£60k	£60k
Civil Engineer x2	£60k	£120k
Structural Engineer	£60k	£60k
CDM Advisor	£50k	£50k
Project Manager/Project Lead x 2	£80k	£160k
	Total	£630k

4.7. Furthermore, the ongoing difficulties in recruiting and retaining specialist engineers and surveyors, within the construction industry would undoubtedly result in a number of these roles remaining vacant and incur additional costs using agency staff. In practice, some specialisms listed would not warrant full-time roles and this would further exacerbate the challenges and reduce value for money. Therefore, internalisation of this service would not be a viable solution.

## 5. Supporting Information

### 5.1. Background

The Council requires an experienced consultancy organisation that can provide a range of specialist property and construction professional, managerial and administrative functions, including all the necessary admin support and resources, to provide strategic advice and to implement its capital programme.

This contract will run for a period of 5 years with the option to extend for a further 5 years to a maximum of 10 years, depending on the organisation meeting Key Performance Indicators. Beyond the initial 5 years, further extensions of 3 + 2 years shall be considered.

It is intended that the Design & Construction Support team shall report to the Assistant Director of Property for the delivery of the Education Capital Programme, Corporate Planned Maintenance Programme and one off Capital projects. The Design & Construction Support team are expected to programme manage a team in the delivery of these projects.

A soft market exercise has been completed with a total of 7 organisations expressing an interest to receive a Selection Questionnaire, once the project is live. The feedback received has been positive, with a number of organisations confirming in writing that the approach for the contract is appealing.

Services to be provided include:

- General strategic advice on Property related matters around the management of the Councils' estate.
- Construction advice relating to current and future projects, including over the interfaces between the Council and central government.
- The Design & Construction Support team will provide advice on the Councils' Estates Strategy including its Education Estates Strategy.
- The Design & Construction Support team will advise the Council on aspects of its Capital Programme including options appraisals and feasibility studies.
- The Design & Construction Support team will advise the Council on the property and construction aspects in updating and delivering the Councils' Medium-Term Objectives.
- Provide asset valuations in the recognised form including insurance, current market and asset register.
- Produce lifecycle costs in respect of existing buildings and proposed construction projects.
- Undertake development appraisals of sites where required to identify opportunities including feasibility and cost reporting of options.
- Any other property or construction related matters requiring strategic advice and guidance.

The Design & Construction Support team will provide a named Programme Lead who will perform this role for the duration of the contract. Continuity is essential to ensure smooth delivery of the programme. The named individual will be suitably qualified, trained, experienced and knowledgeable to manage the delivery of the Capital Programme. Qualifications to include a construction related degree, to be a chartered member of the RICS or CIOB, and to also be able to demonstrate the following skills:

- Programming
- Construction project management
- Identify constraints
- Balancing quality, time and cost for projects
- Management
- Monitoring
- Problem solving
- Decision making
- Intervention
- Finance

The programme lead is expected to be available for the exclusive use of Bracknell Forest Council for a minimum of two and half days per week, supported by their own appropriate admin resources as required. They will have access to supply chains and be able to bring together resources as required to deliver the programmes as outlined above.



## 5.2. Timescales

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Approximate Date</b>
Publish adverts in Find a Tender Services, South East Business Portal and Contracts Finder	End of February 2024
Receive SQ Response from Tenderers	Early April 2024
Evaluate SQ received	April / May 2024
ITT Issue	July 2024
ITT return	September 2024
Evaluate ITT return	Early November 2024
Prepare award report and sign off	February 2025
Contract Award	March 2025
Mobilisation Period	April 2025
Contract Start Date	Early June 2025
KPI review and agreement to extend if applicable for additional 5years	Early June 2030
Completion Date	Early June 2035

## 5.3. Contract Award

The award of contract will be approved via a report to the Executive Director of Delivery and the Executive Member for Finance and Business Change during March 2025

This will be a Key decision.

## 6. Consultation and Other Considerations

### Legal Advice

6.1. Shown in Appendix A.

### Financial Advice

6.2. Shown in Appendix A

### Other Consultation Responses

6.3. Strategic Procurement Group

### Equalities Impact Assessment

6.4. Shown in Appendix B

## Strategic Risk Management Issues

6.5.

Issue	Risk	Comment
Capital Cost Risk	Medium	Costs for construction professional has significantly increased during the past couple of years, these costs will need to be factored in the overall project costs going way.
Procurement Risk	LOW	The contract will be procured through a Find a Tender portal and one supplier will be appointed through formal process.
Programme Risk	LOW	BFC already has an agreement in place with the incumbent provider and this could be extended if there is a delay in procuring a new supplier.

## Climate Change and Ecological Impacts

6.6 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to have no impact on emissions of CO2 however, this will be considered once the design team have been commissioned and projects allocated during the early stage of the concept design development.

## Health & Wellbeing Considerations

6.7 Not applicable

## Background Papers

Appendix A – Confidential Strategic Procurement Plan

Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment

## Contact for further information

Kamay Toor Assistant Director: Property - 01344 355183

[Kamay.toor@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Kamay.toor@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

Alex Bennett: Head of Strategic Asset – 01344 352417

[Alex.bennett@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Alex.bennett@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

By virtue of  
Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive  
Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England)  
Regulations 2012.

Document is Restricted

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Initial Equalities Screening Record Form

Date of Screening:	Directorate: Delivery		Section: Property
1. Activity to be assessed	Please give full details of the activity Design & Construction Support for property and highways consultancy services		
2. What is the activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy/strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change		
3. Is it a new or existing activity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Existing		
4. Officer responsible for the screening	Alex Bennett		
5. Who are the members of the screening team?	Julian Munday		
6. What is the purpose of the activity?	Partnering with a Design & Construction Support team to provide property advise and management of the delivery of construction projects.		
7. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?	General Public		
Protected Characteristics	Please tick yes or no	<b>Is there an impact?</b> What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.	<b>What evidence do you have to support this?</b> E.g equality monitoring data, consultation results, customer satisfaction information etc Please add a narrative to justify your claims around impacts and describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion as this will inform members decision making, include consultation results/satisfaction information/equality monitoring data
<b>8. Disability Equality – this can include physical, mental health, learning or sensory disabilities and includes conditions such as dementia as well as hearing or sight impairment.</b>	Y	N  Work undertaken relates to a wide variety of projects. Some of which can effect publicly accessed buildings. Any and all building work shall comply with the Building Regulations where this applies, and it is expected that the designers shall have knowledge of this.  Where staff are employed by the appointed organisation, it is expected that they will hold a policy relating to employing people who have disabilities and ensuring that they are not disadvantaging individuals from employment.	Compliance and sign off of designs in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations  Equal opportunities employment policy to be provided and reviewed.

			Work shall be let to a contractor, and it is expected that as part of the tendering process, similar checks are made by the Design & Construction Support team to the contracting organisation.	Design & Construction Support team to check any contracting organisations equal opportunity policy, and how the project will not affect people who have a disability.
<b>9. Racial equality</b>	Y	N	<p>It is not expected that any project work will disadvantage people of a different racial background.</p> <p>Where staff is employed by the consult organisation, it is expected that they will hold a policy relating to employing people who have a different racial background and ensuring that they are not disadvantaging individuals from employment.</p> <p>Work shall be let to a contractor, and it is expected that as part of the tendering process, similar checks are made by the Design &amp; Construction Support team to the contracting organisation.</p>	<p>Design &amp; Construction Support team equal opportunities employment policy to be provided and reviewed.</p> <p>Design &amp; Construction Support team to check any contracting organisations equal opportunity policy, and how the project will not affect people of a different racial background.</p>
<b>10. Gender equality</b>	Y	N	<p>It is not expected that any project work will disadvantage people of a different gender. Work shall comply with the Building Regulations where applicable, which stipulates features such as adequate design of toilet facilities etc.</p> <p>Where staff are employed by the Design &amp; Construction Support team organisation, it is expected that they will hold a policy relating to gender equality and ensuring that they are not disadvantaging individuals from employment.</p> <p>Equal pay for individuals of different gender to also be checked. It is expected that the Design &amp; Construction Support team gender pay equality report to be provided and regularly reviewed.</p> <p>Work shall be let to a contractor, and it is expected that as part of the tendering process, similar checks are made by the Design &amp; Construction Support team to the contracting organisation.</p>	<p>Compliance and sign off of designs in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations</p> <p>Design &amp; Construction Support team equal opportunities employment policy to be provided and reviewed.</p> <p>Design &amp; Construction Support team equal pay report to be obtained, and regularly reviewed on a yearly basis.</p> <p>Design &amp; Construction Support team to check any contracting organisations equal opportunities policy and equal pay report, and how the project will not affect people of different genders.</p>
<b>11. Sexual orientation equality</b>	Y	N	It is not expected that any project work will disadvantage people of a different sexual orientation.	

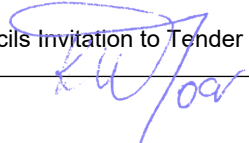
			<p>Where staff are employed by the Design &amp; Construction Support team organisation, it is expected that they will hold a policy relating to equal employment of people of a different sexual orientation, and how they ensure that they are not disadvantaging individuals from employment.</p> <p>Work shall be let to a contractor, and it is expected that as part of the tendering process, similar checks are made by the Design &amp; Construction Support team to the contracting organisation.</p>	<p>Design &amp; Construction Support team equal opportunities employment policy to be provided and reviewed.</p> <p>Design &amp; Construction Support team to check any contracting organisations equal opportunity policy, and how the project will not affect people of a different sexual orientation</p>
<b>12. Gender re-assignment</b>	Y	N	<p>Whilst its not a requirement of the building regulations to provide gender neutral facilities, it is expected that the Design &amp; Construction Support team are aware of this and to provide designs which do not discriminate against individuals. Design solutions to be reviewed.</p> <p>Where staff are employed by the Design &amp; Construction Support team organisation, it is expected that they will hold a policy relating to equal employment of people of different genders and ensuring that those who are re-assigning their gender are not disadvantaged from employment.</p> <p>Work shall be let to a contractor, and it is expected that as part of the tendering process, similar checks are made by the Design &amp; Construction Support team to the contracting organisation.</p>	<p>Design &amp; Construction Support team equal opportunities employment policy to be provided and reviewed.</p> <p>Design &amp; Construction Support team to check any contracting organisations equal opportunity policy, and how the project will not affect people of a different sexual orientation</p>
<b>13. Age equality</b>	Y	N	<p>It is expected that any design solutions provided by the Design &amp; Construction Support team will not disadvantage individuals due to their age. Whilst Part M of the Building Regulations relates mainly to disabilities, some of these are a result of age. Furthermore, it expected that the Design &amp; Construction Support team is aware of designing for individuals of different ages, old and young, and that they provide designs which do not discriminate against individuals. Design solutions to be reviewed.</p> <p>Where staff are employed by the Design &amp; Construction Support team organisation, it is expected that they will hold a policy relating to equal employment of people of different ages. This should</p>	<p>Designs to comply with Part M of the Building Regulations.</p> <p>Designs to be reviewed to ensure that they do not discriminate against an individuals age.</p> <p>Design &amp; Construction Support team equal opportunities employment policy to be provided and reviewed.</p>

			<p>include not only the continuing employment of individuals reaching towards retirement and the over 60s, but also providing training, mentoring and support for those leaving school or graduating from university. Safeguarding for under 18s on training should also be checked.</p> <p>Work shall be let to a contractor, and it is expected that as part of the tendering process, similar checks are made by the Design &amp; Construction Support team to the contracting organisation.</p>	<p>Design &amp; Construction Support team training policy for young individuals to be provided. This should also include safeguarding for under 18s</p> <p>It is expected the following checks are made of any contractor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equal opportunities policy to ensure age discrimination doesn't occur.</li> <li>• Training and apprenticeship policy</li> <li>• Safeguarding and risk assessments for under 18s and young people on site</li> </ul>
<b>14. Religion and belief equality</b>	Y	N	<p>It is not anticipated that the projects provided to the Design &amp; Construction Support team will have the opportunity to affect people of different religious backgrounds. However, it is expected that the Design &amp; Construction Support team is aware of this and to provide designs which do not discriminate against individuals. Design solutions to be reviewed.</p> <p>Where staff are employed by the Design &amp; Construction Support team organisation, it is expected that they will hold a policy relating to equal employment of people of different religious beliefs and ensuring that those are not disadvantaged from employment.</p> <p>It is expected that the Design &amp; Construction Support team will understand the requirements of different religions, such as prayers during normal working hours, and the wearing of traditional clothing which may impact upon the wearing of personal protective equipment on site. The Design &amp; Construction Support team is expected to have included this within their policy.</p> <p>Work shall be let to a contractor, and it is expected that as part of the tendering process, similar checks are made by the Design &amp; Construction Support team to the contracting organisation.</p>	<p>Designs to be reviewed.</p> <p>Design &amp; Construction Support team equal opportunities employment policy to be provided and reviewed.</p> <p>Design &amp; Construction Support team equal opportunities employment policy to be provided and reviewed.</p> <p>Design &amp; Construction Support team to hold a Risk Assessment and Method Statement where the use of PPE may not be possible due to a persons religious beliefs.</p> <p>Design &amp; Construction Support team to check any contracting organisations equal opportunity policy, and how the project will not affect people of a different religious beliefs</p>



<p><b>15. Pregnancy and maternity equality</b></p>	Y	N	<p>Please note that this should not just relate to pregnancy and maternity, but also paternity leave and adoption leave for both men and women.</p> <p>It is not anticipated that the projects provided to the Design &amp; Construction Support team will have the opportunity to affect people who are pregnant, as the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations should provide sufficient protection for these individuals. However, it is expected that the Design &amp; Construction Support team is aware of this and to provide designs which do not discriminate against individuals. Design solutions to be reviewed.</p> <p>Where staff are employed by the Design &amp; Construction Support team organisation, it is expected that they will hold a policy relating to maternity equality and ensuring that those are not disadvantaged from employment including safeguarding of employment during maternity at paternity leave.</p> <p>Work shall be let to a contractor, and it is expected that as part of the tendering process, similar checks are made by the Design &amp; Construction Support team to the contracting organisation.</p>	<p>Designs to comply with the Building Regulations</p> <p>Designs to be reviewed.</p> <p>Design &amp; Construction Support team maternity policy to be provided and reviewed.</p> <p>Design &amp; Construction Support team paternity and adoption leave to be provided and reviewed</p> <p>Design &amp; Construction Support team to request the contractors equal opportunities policy to be checked to ensure that maternity, paternity and adoption policies are in place.</p>
<p><b>16. Marriage and civil partnership equality</b></p>	Y	N	<p>It is not expected that the projects provide to the Design &amp; Construction Support team will disadvantage individuals from different partnership backgrounds.</p> <p>Where staff are employed by the Design &amp; Construction Support team organisation, it is expected that they will hold a policy confirming that individuals from different partnership backgrounds will not be disadvantaged and ensuring that those are not disadvantaged from employment.</p>	<p>Designs to be reviewed.</p> <p>Design &amp; Construction Support team equal opportunities employment policy to be provided and reviewed.</p>

			Work shall be let to a contractor, and it is expected that as part of the tendering process, similar checks are made by the Design & Construction Support team to the contracting organisation.	Design & Construction Support team to request the contractors equal opportunities policy to be checked to ensure that this is included within their policy.
<b>17. Please give details of any other potential impacts on any other group (e.g. those on lower incomes/carers/ex-offenders, armed forces communities) and on promoting good community relations.</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lower income could be protected to ensure that the Design &amp; Construction Support team provides a living wage for employees.</li> <li>Ex-offenders could be protected to ensure that this is included within the Design &amp; Construction Support team equal opportunities policy.</li> <li>Ex-offenders may find employment on construction projects, therefore this can be protected by ensuring that contractors do not discriminate against their employment, and how ex-offenders are supported in their role to prevent re-offending.</li> </ul>	
<b>18. If an adverse/negative impact has been identified can it be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or for any other reason?</b>			N/A	
<b>19. If there is any difference in the impact of the activity when considered for each of the equality groups listed in 8 – 14 above; how significant is the difference in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?</b>			N/A	
<b>20. Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination in relation to any of the Equality Duties?</b>	Y	N	This is because where construction works are being undertaken, this is controlled by the Building Regulation, and where employment is offered, this is protected by employment law. Therefore, equality policies should be generally available and in line with employment law.	
<b>21. What further information or data is required to better understand the impact? Where and how can that information be obtained?</b>			N/A – Data sources have been outlined above	
<b>22. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?</b>	Y	N	Please explain your decision. If you are not proceeding to a full equality impact assessment, make sure you have the evidence to justify this decision should you be challenged. <b>If you think you may need to produce a full equality impact assessment, please contact Abby Thomas.</b>	
<b>23. If a full impact assessment is not required; what actions will you take to reduce or remove any potential differential/adverse impact, to further promote equality of opportunity through this activity or to obtain further information or data? Please complete the action plan in full, adding more rows as needed.</b>				
<b>Action</b>		<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Milestone/Success Criteria</b>

<b>24. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design &amp; Construction Support team invitation to tender</li> </ul>		
<b>25. Please list the current actions undertaken to advance equality or examples of good practice identified as part of the screening?</b>	Please list Ensuring that the councils Invitation to Tender documentation to provide the requested information.		
<b>26. Assistant director's signature.</b>	Signature: 		Date: 03.01.24

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