

**EXECUTIVE
23 APRIL 2024
5.30 - 5.53 PM**



Present:

Councillors Bailey, Bidwell, Gillbe, Jefferies (Chair), Purnell and Wright

Present Virtually:

Councillors Temperton

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Neil

Election of Chair

RESOLVED that Councillor Jefferies be elected Chair of the Executive for this meeting.

83. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

84. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive on 19 March 2024 together with the accompanying decision records be confirmed as a correct record.

85. 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:

86. Development of a New Housing Allocations Policy

RESOLVED that

- i. the outcome of the consultation on proposed changes to the Council's Housing Allocation Policy is considered.
- ii. the proposed changes set out in this report and the new Housing Allocations Policy appended to this report is approved.
- iii. authority be Delegate to the Executive Director of People, in consultation with the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing, to make minor revisions to the Housing Allocation Policy, including changes required in

future statutory guidance, as considered necessary to give effect to the operation of the Policy.

87. Household Support Fund and Financial Hardship Action Plan

RESOLVED that

- i. the Household Support Fund (phase five) be distributed through:
 - a) Purchasing supermarket vouchers, or for opted schools to make equivalent arrangements, for children qualifying for Free School Meals in Bracknell Forest primary and secondary schools. Households will receive a £15 voucher per child per week of the holidays.
 - b) Enhancing the Local Welfare Scheme provision, to expand the support available via applications from households in need of emergency help, where assistance cannot be accessed elsewhere.
 - c) The provision of application-based grants to voluntary, community, and faith sector organisations to build capacity and extend the reach of support to residents.
 - d) Extending the incentivised debt support offer, where identified at-risk households with a housing benefit overpayment, or council tax arrears, are offered up to £1,000 to reduce their debt alongside attending a debt management session.
 - e) Additional discretionary payment to reduce the Council Tax liability to £0 for six months for those that receive 80% reduction in Council Tax due to being on the highest rate of disability benefit.
 - f) Should any funding remain unspent toward the end of the grant period, supermarket vouchers may be provided to properties identified in fuel poverty, particularly those who are in receipt of disability and/or carer benefits and/or EPC below E.
- ii. note the outcomes of the financial hardship action plan and the longer-term support available through business-as-usual services

88. Biodiversity Action Plan 2024-2029 – Consultation Approval

RESOLVED that the draft Bracknell Forest Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) 2024-2029 and supporting summary document as the basis for a 4-week public Consultation is approved.

89. Social Value Policy

RESOLVED that

- i. the adoption of the new Social Value Policy (attachment 1) under the Local Target methodology is approved.
- ii. the adoption of the Bracknell Forest Council Social Value Matrix (attachment 2), developed by the Bracknell Forest community is approved, to operate as the Council's current Local Targets under the Policy. The Matrix is not fixed

and the specific targets will be reviewed annually and adjusted to reflect the changing needs of the community.

CHAIR

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Bracknell Forest Council Record of Decision

Work Programme Reference	I120694
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1. **TITLE:** Development of a New Housing Allocations Policy

2. **SERVICE AREA:** People

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

Proposed changes to the housing allocation policy were presented to Executive in November 2023, along with a draft of the new policy and the rationale for the proposed changes. Executive gave its approval to launch a period of public consultation to enable residents, service providers and local organisations to give their views on the key proposals.

This report provides the findings and responses to the public consultation on the proposed new housing allocation policy

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

- i. the outcome of the consultation on proposed changes to the Council's Housing Allocation Policy is considered.
- ii. the proposed changes set out in this report and the new Housing Allocations Policy appended to this report is approved.
- iii. authority be Delegate to the Executive Director of People, in consultation with the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing, to make minor revisions to the Housing Allocation Policy, including changes required in future statutory guidance, as considered necessary to give effect to the operation of the Policy.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

1. The current housing allocation policy is over seven years old. A new policy is required to take account of legislative changes, to support the Council's homelessness and housing strategies, and to address shortfalls in housing supply against demand in Bracknell Forest.
2. A report was presented to Executive in November 2023 setting out the proposed changes to the current housing allocation policy. At that meeting Executive gave approval to commence consultation with a wide range of stakeholders to obtain their comments and feedback on the proposals.
3. This report summarises the consultation responses for each of the main proposed changes. These are set out in more detail in the attached consultation report. The proposed new housing allocation policy, which incorporates the changes, is also appended to this report. Its approval by Executive will enable the policy to be adopted

as Council policy.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The current policy is out of date and no longer reflects the housing needs of the residents of Bracknell Forest and those seeking housing assistance in the borough and so the option of doing nothing has not been considered.

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

10. DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
23 April 2024	1 May 2024

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I120639
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1. **TITLE:** Household Support Fund and Financial Hardship Action Plan

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Communities and Policy

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To seek approval of the process to distribute additional grant funding received as part of the Household Support Fund. To update on the final outcomes of the Financial Hardship Action Plan.

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

- i. the Household Support Fund (phase five) be distributed through:
 - a) Purchasing supermarket vouchers, or for opted schools to make equivalent arrangements, for children qualifying for Free School Meals in Bracknell Forest primary and secondary schools. Households will receive a £15 voucher per child per week of the holidays.
 - b) Enhancing the Local Welfare Scheme provision, to expand the support available via applications from households in need of emergency help, where assistance cannot be accessed elsewhere.
 - c) The provision of application-based grants to voluntary, community, and faith sector organisations to build capacity and extend the reach of support to residents.
 - d) Extending the incentivised debt support offer, where identified at-risk households with a housing benefit overpayment, or council tax arrears, are offered up to £1,000 to reduce their debt alongside attending a debt management session.
 - e) Additional discretionary payment to reduce the Council Tax liability to £0 for six months for those that receive 80% reduction in Council Tax due to being on the highest rate of disability benefit.
 - f) Should any funding remain unspent toward the end of the grant period, supermarket vouchers may be provided to properties identified in fuel poverty, particularly those who are in receipt of disability and/or carer benefits and/or EPC below E.
- ii. note the outcomes of the financial hardship action plan and the longer-term support available through business-as-usual services

7. REASON FOR DECISION

1. The Household Support Fund (HSF) is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), but local authorities must determine how it is spent within the scope of the guidance issued. The local authority is required by the DWP to create a local eligibility framework to disburse the funding.
2. Recommendations have been established based on learning from how the previous phases of the funding have used and continued assessment of local need.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The Financial Hardship Officers' Group and Members Welfare Advisory Panel have considered a range of options for spending the HSF. It was concluded that the other options would not be as effective as those recommended in terms of efficiently disbursing funds to those most in need, whilst keeping within the guidelines set out by DWP. The proposals follow the previously agreed mechanism in distributing preceding tranches of funding, accounting for the learning from these.

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

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

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
23 April 2024	1 May 2024

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I120554
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1. **TITLE:** Biodiversity Action Plan 2024-2029 – Consultation Approval

2. **SERVICE AREA:**

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To seek approval of the draft Bracknell Forest Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) 2024-2029 as the basis for a 4-week public consultation.

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that the draft Bracknell Forest Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) 2024-2029 and supporting summary document as the basis for a 4-week public Consultation is approved.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

1. The BAP forms part of the statutory duty for all public authorities to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
2. The recent Bracknell Forest Council declaration of a climate and biodiversity emergency reinforces the importance of action for biodiversity across the borough. The motion includes an item to “Revise the Biodiversity Action Plan to include audits of the state of nature in the borough and to highlight local biodiversity threats due to climate change” which has been taken into consideration in the revised plan.
3. The Bracknell Forest BAP demonstrates the commitment of the Council and local people to protecting and enhancing nature in the borough.
4. The draft plan for 2024-2029 builds upon the previous Biodiversity Action Plans. It is a partnership plan, having been co-produced with input from key stakeholders, including the Bracknell Forest Nature Partnership.
5. A full public consultation will allow the council to gather feedback more widely from anyone who lives in, works in or visits the borough. It will also allow those who have already contributed ideas to see how these have been incorporated into the draft plan and provide further feedback. Feedback will be used to refine and develop the final plan and a detailed action plan. The updated plan will then go to Executive with a recommendation to approve it.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

1. The alternative option is to rely entirely on external policies and strategies to help guide and shape the future support for our local biodiversity. This approach would not focus specifically on the needs of Bracknell Forest’s wildlife and residents. It may

reduce the opportunities to achieve the council's objectives.

2. There is also the alternative option to not go for wider public consultation on the draft BAP. To use the current copy of the plan, which has been created by wildlife specialists and key stakeholders, as the basis with which to present to Executive, with the recommendation it is approved. This would be a missed opportunity to engage communities in delivering wildlife action. There are many local residents and community groups with an interest in nature conservation. It would mean they would miss out on giving their views, and the plan would be published without their important input.
3. Wide-scale consultations are usually run for 6-weeks. The proposed 4-week length of the BAP consultation takes into account consultation that has already been undertaken with stakeholders. Consulting for too long will unnecessarily delay progression of the BAP.
9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Executive Director: Place, Planning & Regeneration
10. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
23 April 2024	1 May 2024

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I117694
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1. **TITLE:** Social Value Policy
2. **SERVICE AREA:** Resources
3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

The adoption of a Social Value Policy to be applied across all Council commissioning and procurement, in line with the Social Value Act

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

RESOLVED that

- i. the adoption of the new Social Value Policy (attachment 1) under the Local Target methodology is approved.
- ii. the adoption of the Bracknell Forest Council Social Value Matrix (attachment 2), developed by the Bracknell Forest community is approved, to operate as the Council's current Local Targets under the Policy. The Matrix is not fixed and the specific targets will be reviewed annually and adjusted to reflect the changing needs of the community.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

1. The Local Target methodology sets a broad range of targets that are reflective of the needs and goals of the local community. It should be noted that as per the Act, the community should be the primary driver behind these targets so they may not be reflective of the Council Plan or other officer or Member objectives.
2. These targets can be adjusted, so will remain reflective of the local community whilst it changes, but individual community consultation for every relevant contract will not be required.
3. Officers are not required to apply every target in the Matrix to every contract. Instead they select the 5 or 6 they believe are most relevant and appropriate to the contract they are commissioning and the market they are approaching. This balances flexibility to match the wide variety of contracts the Council commissions, and the need to give both officers and bidders some structure, process and guidance to deliver a complex requirement
4. The Local Target methodology will also give a framework to support the evaluation, monitoring and management of incredibly diverse social value offers – an area the Council has historically needed to improve.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

1. Two other methodologies for assessing social value outcomes were considered;
 - The national Themes, Outcomes & Measures (TOMs)
 - Commissioner Created
2. The TOMs were created by a private company, the Social Value Group, but have been adopted by the Local Government Association as national best practise. However;
 - As they are national they lack a lot of local nuance. Many Local Authorities using them find they get social value offers that don't reflect their local community, e.g. veteran employment in areas with a low veteran population.
 - They are inflexible, so it's possible to 'run out' of a social value TOM because your Local Authority has delivered on it, but it remains as a target and you continue to receive bids against it
 - They are very complex for both officers and bidders – there are 198 TOMs.
 - As they are based upon money they can lead to problematic bidder behaviours, e.g. offering payment in place of a social value commitment.
3. Commissioner Created was designed by Milton Keynes City Council. It gives a requirement that social value be included, but leaves the 'how' entirely within the hands of each commissioning officer. It can lead to incredibly creative and successful social value offers. However;
 - The lack of guidance and support often leaves both officers and bidders at a loss as to how to proceed.
 - Whilst it can support very innovative and creative offers, the majority will be basic and low impact, i.e. plant a small number of trees, employ 1 apprentice etc. These low level offers are also repeated again and again by the same bidders across multiple contracts
4. Neither the TOMs nor Commissioner Created models were selected due to the issues identified with each above.

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

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

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
23 April 2024	1 May 2024