

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
26 JANUARY 2012
7.30 - 10.30 PM**



Present:

Councillors Leake (Chairman), Angell (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Angell, Mrs Birch, Ms Brown, Harrison, Heydon, McLean, Turrell, Virgo and Worrall (Substitute)

Mrs Carol Murray, Parent Governor Representative

Executive Members Present:

Councillor McCracken and Ward

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Finnie and Ms Whitbread

Mr D Moss, Church Representative

Ms S Cauchi, Parent Governor Representative

In Attendance:

Councillor Baily

Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview & Scrutiny

Victor Nicholls, Assistant Chief executive

Alan Nash, Borough Treasurer

Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services

45. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that, subject to the amendment to Minute 42 the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 24 November 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising

Minute 41: *Economic Skills Development Partnership*: The Head of Overview and Scrutiny confirmed that a list of the Group's membership had been sent to Members on 12 December.

Minute 42: *Executive Forward Plan, 1029705: Asset Management Plan*: First sentence to be amended to read: 'A question was raised on the Asset Management Plan which was of a technical nature.'

46. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor Mrs Birch declared a personal interest as the partner of the Executive Member: Adult Services, Health & Housing.

47. Appointment of Parent Governor Representative

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Carol Murray to the meeting and said he was delighted that she would be joining the membership of the Commission, having been formally appointed by Full Council. The Commission agreed that Mrs Murray be appointed to the Children, Young People and Learning Overview & Scrutiny Panel for a term of office of four years.

48. Public Participation

There were no items submitted under the Public Participation Scheme.

49. The Council's Budget Consultation

The Commission considered the Council's draft budget proposals for 2012/13, the following points were made:

- The Borough Treasurer informed members that virements were used to accommodate changes that arose in the financial year. A Virement Scheme was detailed in the Constitution and all virements were considered carefully. The Executive Member for Finance, Assets and Resources assured members that he monitored virements carefully. Monitoring of all virements was also carried out by the Council's Corporate Management Team.
- The Borough Treasurer reported that at the end of February the funds held by the Icelandic bank would be remitted to the Council in a variety of currencies, including Icelandic Krónur.

a) Corporate Services Department

- The Director of Corporate Services reported that the Depot had lost income in the last year and had become less occupied; it was also likely that the level of rent secured would be lower in future years.
- Every area of the Department had contributed to savings, in addition Corporate Services was the only department that had made savings year on year and had not had any growth.
- In response to members' queries, the Director of Corporate Services reassured members that the budget would be constantly under review to see if efficiencies or savings could further be made.
- The Director of Corporate Services reported that at present the Customer Services Contact Centre aimed to respond to calls within five rings. There would be a reduction in the staffing of the contact centre and use of the upgraded telephony system to provide automated call transfers. It was noted that following a national benchmarking exercise, the Council's response times were above average.
- The Director of Corporate Services stated that she would seek clarification from the Borough Solicitor around fees paid for Section 106 Agreements and report back to members.
- The Director of Corporate Services agreed to provide members with details around what was included in street indexes as described on page 39.
- The Director of Corporate Services referred to page 63, the Capital Programme and stated that a member's survey around IT was currently underway, it was clear that some investment in members' IT was necessary. The CRM system was in need of upgrade and a new system was required for Asset Management. In addition, at the Great Hollands Community Centre there was a room at the back of the

building which could be used by the community if it was made into a useable space.

- The Director of Corporate Services stated that the power generator as detailed on page 66 would provide uninterrupted power supply for the Council's IT systems and officers had been able to persuade power suppliers that the Council should be considered as a priority user as the Council supported vulnerable people.
- The Director of Corporate Services assured members that the most competitive price for replacing laptops would be sought.
- The general principle is that services to schools are charged for in a cost-neutral manner.
- The contingency budget is held centrally. The contingency required depended on inflation and various other factors, and it was proposed to be held at the same level as in 2011-12.

b) Chief Executive's Office

- The Assistant Chief Executive reported that there had been many changes to the way the Office operated, a performance post had been deleted and an Economic Development Officer was to be recruited. Recruitment to the vacancy of Head of Performance and Partnerships was underway, at a lower salary level than previously. Overall there had been a significant reduction in the size of the team. An Economic Development Officer was required to undertake some of the priority work of the Council such as work with the Economic Skills Partnership, focus on inward investment and retaining businesses.
- Town and Parish councils in Bracknell Forest were not being asked to contribute match funding for the Broadband initiative.

c) The Chairmen of each of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels provided feedback on their Panels' consideration of the budget proposals.

- It was noted that car parking charges would be introduced at Coral Reef and the Look Out.
- Members noted that the main town centre library was in need of upgrade in addition to the recently completed re-roofing, and measures to increase footfall in the library were necessary. The outside look of the building needed to be improved, this had been raised with the Director, and there were funding implications.
- The distinction between services provided by volunteers, and by voluntary sector providers was noted.

The Commission agreed that the draft budget be recommended to the Executive, alongside the comments made above.

50. **Executive Forward Plan**

Forthcoming items on the Executive Forward Plan of a corporate nature were considered by the Commission.

In response to members' queries:

- The Borough Treasurer explained that the Internal Audit Service had been mainly outsourced for some years, being the most cost-effective solution.
- The Borough Treasurer reported on 29 February 2012, this year's Council budget was due to be agreed. From April 2012, the annual process would

begin of considering the budget for 2013-14 and subsequent years. It was necessary to consider the medium term as well as the short term.

- The Director of Corporate Services reported that it was not yet known the level of revenue savings that would be achieved from the Postal Service Procurement Plan.

51. **Quarterly Service Reports (QSR) and Service Plans 2011/12**

The Assistant Chief Executive made the following points on the Chief Executive's Office Quarterly Service Report and Service Plan and in response to members' queries:

- The Assistant Chief Executive gave further details on the two amber performance indicators and the one red performance indicator. The Bracknell Forest Partnership Community Engagement Strategy was progressing well with the exception of one of the actions around encouraging equality of employment.
- In terms of the red indicator under reviewing the CCTV system, the current expensive system had ceased to be used from the end of October and testing had begun on a new system of mobile re-deployable cameras to be purchased in stages to provide a more flexible use of CCTV in Bracknell town centre.
- It was confirmed that parish councils had been given access to CADIS reports.
- It was reported that the Chief Executive's Office was a small team and five staff had left in the last 12 months, reflecting the staff turnover detailed in the report.
- With reference to page 105 of the agenda papers, it was reported that the red performance indicators were largely as a result of crime which tended to increase during the summer months. There was also more reporting of domestic abuse, which was a positive outcome.

The Director of Corporate Services made the following points in relation to the Corporate Services Quarterly Service Report and Service Plan and in response to members' queries:

- It was noted that 207 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests had been received in the last quarter, the Director of Corporate Services reported that costings of officer time in processing these request was being undertaken at present. It was reported that FOI results were reported to the Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection in the first instance and also to the Executive. Members requested that they also be copied into these spreadsheets and officer responses. The Director of Corporate Services also agreed to provide members with a recently published national study on FOI's, as well as to ask the Council's Information Officer to send Members the latest annual summary of FOI's which included a breakdown of who was making requests in terms of residents/commercial organisations.
- The Director of Corporate Services reported that the Department had some of the lowest sickness rates across the Council.
- In terms of an amber indicator against the percentage of invoices paid within 30 days, the Director of Corporate Services reported that the system for paying invoices had been upgraded, this was a substantial change and had

affected performance, teething problems with the new system had now been resolved.

- It was reported that population turnover in the Borough was partly as a result of military families/personnel on tours of duty, and the large proportion of international companies in the Borough often offering contract work.

52. **Corporate Performance Overview Report (CPOR)**

The Commission considered the Chief Executive's Corporate Performance Overview Report for quarter 2 (July to September) of the 2011/12 financial year.

The Assistant Chief Executive made the following points:

- In response to members' queries, the Assistant Chief Executive stated that he would consult the Director of Children, Young People and Learning on the below average Early Years Foundation results detailed on pages 113/114 and report back to members.
- It was reported that car park provision in the town centre was continually reviewed, Quintiles had been a big user of car parking in the town centre however since they had left the Borough, car parking provision was more widely available. Car parking was priced as competitively as possible. Car parking provision in the town centre needed to tie in with the work of the Bracknell Regeneration Partnership.
- The Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that he would arrange to provide a note on what was being done to improve performance on litter and detritus, as detailed on page 114.

53. **Berkshire Superfast Broadband Project**

The Commission considered an information report on super-fast Broadband by the Assistant Chief Executive. The Commission hoped that the provision of super-fast Broadband would be progressed as detailed in the report.

54. **Working Groups Update**

The Commission noted the progress achieved to date by the Commission's working groups.

The Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection reported that the Executive had endorsed the recommendations of the working group on Neighbourhood Engagement however there had been no appetite among Town and Parish councils to take on the responsibility of community centres.

The Chairman reported that the Executive had formally asked the Commission to set up a working group to consider the Community Infrastructure Levy, which would have a Council wide impact. The following members volunteered to participate in this working group: Cllrs; Leake, Worrall, Heydon, Harrison, Mrs Birch, Virgo and Angell. The Chairman stated that he would get back to members on the membership of this group, and would consider how best to gain an input from the Parish and Town councils. It was noted that the working group would have a substantial workload and would need to meet very soon and regularly.

55. **Updates from Panel Chairmen**

Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Turrell reported that a petition had been submitted at the last meeting under the Public Participation Scheme around the future of Ladybank. The concerns of the petitioners were noted and the person who presented the petition had felt that it had been of value to attend the meeting and present the petition. The budget was also considered by the Panel.

Children, Young People & Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Mrs Birch reported that at the last meeting of the Panel, public and press had attended. The working group on the Common Assessment Framework had just concluded their work and their recommendations had been endorsed by the Panel and submitted to the Executive Member. A short review on school meals had also just been completed. A working group on school governance was due to begin work.

Environment, Culture & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Councillor McLean (Vice-Chairman) reported that the Panel was progressing well against its work programme.

Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Virgo reported that the Panel was due to meet in the following week and that Phillip Lee MP was due to attend to talk about health and his vision. Working groups were progressing, albeit some had been delayed as a result of legislation not being finalised.

56. **2012/13 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme**

Commission members suggested the following items for inclusion in the work programme for 2012/13:

- Scrutiny of various spending programmes eg, Local Transport Plan
- Review of procurement procedures
- Review of officers' delegated powers

The Chairman stated that he would liaise with the Head of Overview and Scrutiny on how much could be achieved within the limited resource available and time constraints. Members would then be asked to prioritise and volunteers would be sought. It was agreed that all members should be invited to participate in the Commission's working groups with the exception of Executive members.

57. **Dates of Future Meetings**

The Commission noted the dates of future meetings as:

29 March 2012
3 May 2012
12 July 2012
13 September 2012
22 November 2012
31 January 2013
28 March 2013
2 May 2013

All meetings to be held at 7.30pm.

CHAIRMAN