

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
9 JULY 2015
7.30 - 9.40 PM**



Present:

Councillors Leake (Chairman), Angell (Vice-Chairman), Allen, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Finnie, Harrison, Mrs McCracken, Phillips, Porter and King OBE (Substitute)
Mr R Briscoe (Parent Governor Representative)

In Attendance:

Councillor McCracken
Councillor Heydon
Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview and Scrutiny
Ian Boswell, Community Safety Manager
Deputy Chief Constable John Campbell, Thames Valley Police
CI Dave Gilbert, Thames Valley Police
Amanda Roden, Democratic Services Officer
Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services
Timothy Wheadon, Chief Executive

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs Angell, Mrs Mattick and Mrs Temperton

4. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

The Panel noted the attendance of the following substitute member:

Councillor King for Councillor Mrs Mattick

5. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission meetings held on 19 March 2015 and 27 May 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor Mrs Birch declared an interest as the spouse of the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing. Councillor Mrs McCracken declared an interest as the spouse of the Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection. There were no indications that Members would be participating under the party whip.

7. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

8. **Public Participation**

There were no submissions from members of the public in accordance with the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

9. **Community Safety**

Tim Wheadon, Chairman of the Community Safety Partnership, said that the Partnership had another successful year in 2014-15. Ian Boswell, Community Safety Manager, gave a presentation on the Bracknell Forest Community Safety Partnership performance during 2014-15. It was Ian's last attendance at the Overview and Scrutiny Commission as he was due to retire in August.

John Campbell, Deputy Chief Constable, and Dave Gilbert, Chief Inspector, of Thames Valley Police were present at the meeting for this item.

Within the Bracknell Forest Council Priorities, the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) came under Priority Four: 'create a borough where people are, and feel, safe' and the Medium Term Objective 8: 'Work with the police and other partners to ensure Bracknell Forest remains a safe place'.

The CSP met four times a year and was Chaired by the Chief Executive of Bracknell Forest Council. CSP Statutory Members included the Local Authority, Police, Fire Service, Clinical Commissioning Group, National Probation Service / Community Rehabilitation Companies. Other members included Housing Associations, Public Health, Chamber of Commerce, RMA (Royal Military Academy), Victim Support, Town Councils and Parishes, and the Office of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner. The Partnership worked closely with the Office of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner.

The CSP received £56,250 Community Safety Grant from the Police & Crime Commissioner in 2014/15, but the funding for the CSP for 2015/16 was £30,100. The Community Safety Team was comprised of 5 FTE posts which included the Community Safety Manager. The Community Safety Team also worked very closely with the Bracknell Police Community Safety Team which comprised: ASB police officer, Alert Administrator (formerly Ring Master) and Police Schools Officer.

Themes included Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour. Priorities included Burglary Dwelling, Domestic Abuse, Drug Offences, Internet-Related Crime, Non-Rape Sexual Offences, Robbery of Personal Property, Vehicle Offences, Violence Against the Person, Youth Crime Prevention.

In 2006/07, there were 9,481 victims and in 2014/15 there were 4,921 victims. There were 4,560 fewer victims in 2014/15 showing a decrease of 48% in all crime in Bracknell Forest.

In 2014/15 there was a 14% reduction in burglary dwelling (134 incidents), a 5.4% reduction in non-dwelling burglary (332 incidents), a 31% reduction in personal robbery (28 incidents), and a 33% reduction in vehicle crime (344 incidents).

In 2014/15, there were 1,080 incidents of Violence Against the Person, an increase of 20%. There were 118 incidents of Non-Rape Sexual Offences, an increase of 25%, and 714 incidents of Criminal Damage, an increase of 6%. Reasons why included celebrity trials, an increased confidence to report and historical reports (NSPCC reported sex offences against children had increased by a third); the HMIC review of

reporting processes; and a new question in relation to rape on the DASH (domestic abuse, stalking and harassment) form.

Anti-Social Behaviour reported on CADIS showed 5674 incidents in 2014/15, which was a decrease of 21.4 %. Thames Valley Police data showed 1469 incidents in 2013/14 and 1410 incidents in 2014/15, which was a decrease of 4%. Thames Valley Police Public Order Offences showed a 34.2% decrease during the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015. The Local Policing Area had 102 offences which was the lowest number in the Thames Valley area.

In the Fear of Crime Survey 2012, 60% of respondents were 'not very worried or not at all worried about being a victim of crime'. In the Bracknell Forest Residents Survey 2012, when asked 'What do you most like about living in the Borough?' residents responded: parks & open spaces, access to nature, and the low level of crime. In the Bracknell Forest Residents Survey 2014, 'Low Level of Crime' came fifth out of 24 indicators when asked 'What do you like best about living in the Borough?'.

CSP Priorities for 2015/16 included: Serious Violence: Violence Against the Person and Sexual Offences; Protection of Vulnerable People: Domestic Abuse, Internet-Related Crime & Abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation, and Preventing Violent Extremism; Drug Offences; Youth Crime Prevention; Acquisitive Crime: Burglary Dwelling, and Shoplifting; and Anti-Social Behaviour.

Domestic abuse (DA) work included DASC (Domestic Abuse Service Co-ordination), DAPS (Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Service), Berkshire Women's Aid, DA Co-ordinator (shared post with RBWM), DA Training (various levels aimed at the workforce), and PICADA (programme for children affected by DA).

Preventing violent extremism was covered under the Counter Terrorism & Security Act 2015 and included risk assessment, a Prevent Steering Group, an Action Plan, a Channel Panel, and awareness training with staff, schools and partners.

The vision was that everyone had the right to be free from being a victim of crime and ASB, to feel safe and to choose their own lifestyle. Everyone also had the responsibility to take reasonable steps to avoid becoming a victim of crime, not to cause harassment or distress to others and to respect differences in others.

John Campbell commented that it had been another successful year for Bracknell Forest in terms of performance in relation to crime. There was a strong Partnership and relationship between Bracknell Forest Council and Thames Valley Police. There was good policing analysis, prevention, targeting vulnerability, work in relation to cyber activity, and an increase in the complexity of crimes. The shift away from acquisitive crime towards vulnerability and sexualisation mirrored the national picture. Sexual crimes were largely undertaken in the domestic home and under-reported. There was a need to understand threats.

In response to Members' questions, the following points were made:

- HMIC had given TVP a good assessment of crime recording practice, and TVP had responded by making further improvements, for example, in routinely recording all reported crimes, even if they were found later not to be crimes, and requiring the record to be updated.
- Internet and cyber activity was covered in all local authority schools. Domestic abuse was covered in primary schools and sexting was covered in secondary schools.

- Each phone call regarding an anti-social behaviour incident was treated as a separate incident, even if there were several calls regarding the same family, for instance. This was classed by the Home Office as environmental or personal anti-social behaviour.
- The savings of at least £22 million which needed to be made by Thames Valley Police over the next few years would be considered carefully. The budgeting process would be looked at along with structure but operational areas such as neighbourhood policing would remain and be the last areas to be affected.
- Child protection issues were overseen by the Local Safeguarding Children Board and all partners were aware of the reporting process.
- There were some organised crime groups nationally which damaged and disrupted communities and there tended to be a link to drugs or alcohol but this depended upon the profile of the groups at any one time. Police worked closely with the Council's Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) and a new scheme was being trialled involving GPS tagging. Health provision for people who abused drugs and alcohol was mixed and people who took drugs and alcohol often had a chaotic lifestyle. There was a reliance on agencies to have a joined up approach. Children could be subject to child protection as a result, and child sexual exploitation could involve sedation or using drugs as rewards.
- Some crimes recorded last year involved people being charged in this year's figures.
- Domestic abuse incident figures relating to 'domestic incident non-crime' could involve a fight but no crime.
- Thought had been given to combining back office functions and common elements of emergency services such as control rooms. The Fire Service did not receive a large number of calls, whereas the Police and Ambulance Service received millions of calls per year. There was a need to have similar IT systems.
- CI Gilbert invited members to attend TVP's Ward walks and the daily management meeting.

The Chairman thanked John for the interesting visit to Kidlington in 2014, and the offer to visit Kidlington again, and thanked John Campbell and Dave Gilbert for attending the meeting.

The Chairman thanked Ian Boswell for his contributions over the years and thanked the Community Safety Team, and wished Ian a happy retirement.

10. **Introductory Briefing and Service Plan 2015/16**

Councillor McCracken, Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services & Public Protection gave a presentation on the strategic overview for the Corporate Services Department, his priorities over the next four years, the differences which were to be achieved, and goals for 2015/16, which were subject to on-going consideration by the Council's leadership.

Corporate Services Portfolio responsibilities included ICT, Legal, Democratic & Registration Services, Human Resources, Customer & Revenue Services, and Community Engagement and Equalities. Also include in this Portfolio was Communications and Marketing and Community Safety.

ICT were responsible for ensuring that there was a technology framework capable of supporting the aspirations of the authority. The ICT strategy covered the development

needed to underpin the corporate and departmental service plans, medium term objectives and priorities as well as the ongoing development/ maintenance of policies and standards for the use of ICT equipment and services.

Legal were responsible for all the Council's legal work whether it was contentious (did not necessarily involve litigation) or non-contentious. The Information Compliance Team sat within the Non-Contentious team.

Democratic & Registration Services were responsible for all aspects of the democratic and registration process, this embraced: full administrative support, including the Mayoral Office research and report writing, preparing all agendas and minutes, and supporting a range of other inter-departmental and inter-agency bodies such as Bracknell Forest Partnership, and other partner organisations.

Other aspects included Electoral registration, the management of elections, and the registration of births, deaths and marriages. Nationality Checking Service (checking an applicant's Home Office application form), certifying their documents and sending everything to the Home Office. The Registration Service also offered a range of ceremonies including: Weddings, Civil Partnerships, Commitment Ceremonies, Renewal of Vows, Naming Ceremonies, and Citizenship Ceremonies.

Customer & Revenue Services were responsible for the following primary functions:

- being the first point of contact with the council, from appointments to register the birth of a baby, to waste collection.(operations team);
- for the billing and collection of council tax and business rates (revenue team);
- for the public website and the intranet (Digital team);
- Implementation of the Customer Contact and Digital Online strategies.

The Communications and Marketing team was responsible for internal and external communications support to all departments, staff and councillors; publication of Forest Views and Town & Country, corporate messages and leading the council's press office; corporate branding; and leading on the Council's corporate social media sites including Facebook and Twitter.

Achievements over the past four years included:

- Successful implementation of 360 degree reviews;
- Achieved PSN accreditation;
- Transfer from Novell to Microsoft environment;
- On-going legal work on Blue Mountain, Court of Protection, Employment Tribunal and SEN cases;
- >£1million debt collection achieved by Legal Services;
- Achieved "Civic Office of the Year" award for Mayor's Office;
- Relocation of Registrars to Time Square.

An Overarching Priority was for Bracknell Forest Council to "Continue to enhance our services to residents" by enhancing our digital inclusion offering; working with our partners to keep Bracknell Forest one of the lowest crime/safest places in the Thames Valley; providing a first class, efficient, service to members; staying abreast of IT opportunities, implementing where practical and beneficial; and ensuring that we stay legal, decent and honest.

Priorities for 2015-16 included: support for business such as the Business & Enterprise Website; Business Relief Scheme; support for Bracknell Town Centre, especially deployment of technology; Community Hubs in Crowthorne, Warfield and Binfield; improved mobile working - members and staff; and support for members –

induction, training, and briefing. Development of Digital First Strategy: online citizen portal; easier for residents to transact online; reporting, booking, paying; improve website and microsites.

The Director of Corporate Services provided an introductory briefing in respect of the Department's objectives, also those of the Chief Executive's Office, which were described in the Service Plans.

Corporate Services Functions included the provision of some front facing services within these areas. All services existed to support the functions and services provided by the organisation. All services were part of the 'core' function or fixed element of any organisation. Size and scope was dependent on the size, services and functions of the organisation but would have to exist in some form whatever the organisation looked like.

Corporate Services objectives for 2015-16:

- To deliver the budget for 2015-16 and develop a savings plan for the next 4 years;
- Support from Corporate Services would be required to enable other changes across the Council;
- To implement the Customer Contact Strategy which involved Digital First, moving services to more cost effective channels; implement Customer Relationship Management (CRM); and the All Services Hub;
- Staff Engagement;
- Improve the Council's approach to efficiency;
- Develop community engagement;
- Asset Management including a review of all Council buildings and land;
- Support the regeneration of Bracknell Town Centre;
- Support local economic development;
- Continue to reduce levels of crime.

The existing Service Plan was due to run until the end of September 2015 and then new objectives would be agreed.

In response to Members' questions, the following points were made:

- The target was to answer the telephone in Customer Services within 20 seconds but this was not always realistic and this target would be taken out of next year's service plan. Customer satisfaction remained at high levels. Resources would be put into the Digital Strategy, and included instead would be the call abandonment rate (monitoring the length of time a person was held on the telephone line).
- There were different views and figures from staff in each Directorate of the Council in relation to feeling well informed. A reward and recognition group was being established to assist with this.
- Information requested frequently via Freedom of Information (FOI) was published onto the Council's website but the Council received some very specific requests for information and not many repeat requests.

11. **Quarterly Service Reports (QSRs)**

The Commission noted the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the Quarterly Service Reports for the fourth quarter of 2014/15 (January to March) relating to the Chief Executive's Office and the Corporate Services Department.

12. **Corporate Performance Overview Report**

The Commission considered the Chief Executive's Corporate Performance Overview Report for the fourth quarter of 2014/15 (January to March).

There was good performance across the board and work had begun on the northern retail quarter of the town centre as part of the town centre regeneration. Many parents were getting one of their three preferences for school places, and the Council was good at tax recovery. There were a small number of areas where performance did not match plans. The number of affordable homes delivered fell below target and there was an increasing number of homeless people, which had an impact on homelessness figures.

In response to Members' questions, the following points were made:

- There was a national focus on volunteering as the shortage of volunteers was a national issue. A Council survey had been stratified and focused on the right numbers of people in different age groups, whereas previous surveys had been completed by a dominance of older people in the population. There had been changes in the voluntary sector, such as Involve, and local factors could have affected the result.
- Further information could be sought on whether services were any closer to meeting the 26 week time frame for Special Educational Needs (SEN) Assessments.
- Bracknell Forest was a small authority and small numbers made a big difference in terms of percentages in relation to performance indicator figures.
- The Housing Department in the Council was thought to be very proactive in helping people into the private rented sector and worked closely with people to help them from temporary to permanent accommodation. Further information could be requested from the Chief Officer: Housing, Simon Hendy.
- Staff sickness in the Chief Executive's Office at 22.22% related to possibly 2 positions including one staff member on long term sick.

13. **Report on the Review of Business Rates and Discretionary Relief**

The Commission considered and accepted the response by the Executive to the Overview and Scrutiny report resulting from the review of Business Rates and Discretionary Relief by a Working Group of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

The Executive had met and agreed this response which involved a slightly changed scheme for business rate relief. It was hoped that the scheme would help small businesses to grow.

14. **Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions Relating to Corporate Issues**

The Commission noted the forthcoming Key and Non-Key Decisions of a corporate nature.

15. **Overview & Scrutiny Progress Report**

The Commission noted the bi-annual Progress Report of the Assistant Chief Executive on Overview and Scrutiny activity over the period December 2014 to May 2015 and local and national developments in Overview and Scrutiny.

16. **Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme**

The Commission considered its Work Programme for 2015/16. The Commission received an update on the establishment of Working Groups by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, approving any changes needed to the currently agreed Work Programme.

The Homelessness Working Group from the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel had made a start after consulting the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

The Environment, Culture & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel had three subjects to consider for its working groups: parks and open spaces, planning procedure and enforcement, and houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs). The aim was to start on the Planning Working Group as soon as possible.

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel would reflect on possible subjects for Working Groups and then make a decision on this.

The Children, Young People and Learning Panel had commenced a review of Child Sexual Exploitation.

The Commission agreed to:

- i. Establish a Working Group to contribute to the review of the Council's Medium Term Objectives, and how performance was reported and reviewed. Councillors Allen, Harrison, Leake, Finnie and Angell volunteered to be part of this Working Group. Work on this would need to start in early August 2015.
- ii. Establish a Working Group to make an input to the draft Economic Development Strategy. Further information would be circulated, and It was suggested that other Members of the Council might be interested to take part in this Working Group.

CHAIRMAN