

**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND
COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
PANEL
18 JUNE 2019
7.37 - 9.35 PM**



Present:

Councillors Porter (Chairman), Mrs McKenzie-Boyle (Vice-Chairman), Angell, Brossard, Brown, Ms Gaw, Mrs Ingham and Kirke

Co-opted Member Present:

Councillor Parker

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Kennedy

Executive Members Present:

Councillor Mrs Hayes MBE, Executive Member for the Environment

Councillor Turrell, Executive Member for Planning and Transport

Councillor Harrison, Executive Member for Culture, Community and Public Protection

Also Present:

Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery

Damian James, Assistant Director: Contracts

Neil Matthews, Head of Highways and Transport

Louise Watkins, Operational Support Manager, Contracts

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Porter be elected Chairman of the Panel for the Municipal year 2019/20.

2. Appointment of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor McKenzie-Boyle be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Panel for the Municipal year 2019/20.

3. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel held on 3 July 2019 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

4. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest relating to any items on the agenda, nor any indication that Members would be participating under the party whip.

5. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

6. Public Participation

No submissions had been made by members of the public under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

7. Directorate Overview

Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery, Damian James, Assistant Director: Contracts and Neil Matthews, Head of Highways and Transport provided members with an overview of the teams that fed into the Panel.

8. LED Lighting Task and Finish Group Update

The Chairman of the LED Lighting Task and Finish Group, Cllr Porter, informed members the report would take the form of a short video. All members involved in the LED Lighting Task and Finish Group would be invited to be part of the video which would be made available to members and to the public via social media.

9. Houses in Multiple Occupation Task and Finish Group Update

The Chairman of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Task and Finish Group, Cllr Brossard, informed members the report would take the form of an animation with a voice over. It would be available to members and via social media once completed.

10. Parking Strategy

Damian James, Assistant Director: Contracts informed members the Chairman had requested a new reporting format from officers designed to generate debate. The report had a number of questions throughout the report to allow scrutiny Members to help shape the Parking Strategy which would be put forward to the Executive for decision.

It was explained that Bracknell Forest Council was responsible for parking enforcement under the Traffic Management Act 2004. Members were being asked to discuss the new Parking Strategy which would run 2019-2024 and the Strategy would inform the new contract for parking which was due to expire next year and last up to eight years. The objective of the new Parking Strategy was to enforce parking fairly and encourage off street parking.

Members asked for the following points to be taken into account in relation to the Strategy:

Question 1.1 'Is wholly outsourcing parking enforcement to SABA (formerly known as Indigo) the right model in the future?'

- Consider using Section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002 to address nuisance parkers.
- The definition of nuisance parking needed to be clearer in the Strategy. E.g. parking on pavements and walkways.
- Data highlighting areas density of parking problems around the Borough should be included in the Strategy.
- Clarification of the proportion of parking fines issued but not collected would be useful.
- Action should be given to consider how the Council worked with external partners, such as Silva Homes. E.g. identification of grass verges big enough to turn over to parking without detriment to the green space.

- Asses training for parking enforcement staff, especially around enforcement of the Blue Badge scheme.
- Consider subterranean parking and other options, particularly in new developments and community hubs, where space is precious.
- The Council should work more closely with DVLC on enforcement.

Question 1.2 'What are the Panel's views for cost v quality?

- The Strategy needs to take account of a perceived reduction in customer service if people do not see parking enforcement officers on the street.
- Use of new technologies was good because it would 'free up' parking enforcement officers in town and enable them to work out of town more often.
- Have a contingency of extra resources, (currently 17) should occasion require.
- The Strategy should analyse data about whether people were having difficulties using ANPR or other technologies.

Question 1.3 'What is the Panel's view on the use of technology in improving the customer's experience?'

- The Strategy should take into account the different parking pressures in different areas, i.e. residential v business needs and future proof according to build density in different areas.
- Cashless system not appropriate at this point in time as a number of residents still used cash although it was recognised this had a cost impact in terms of collecting cash from pay points.
- Offer as wide a range of payment options as possible including cash, debit/credit card, online portal and apps.
- Build in flexibility to incorporate new technologies as they come on stream during the life of the contract.
- Find a mechanism for keeping abreast of people's changing habits in terms of parking (i.e. how to charge your car if staying in a restaurant for a long time) and methods of payment.
- Look at the potential for businesses to pay for their customers parking i.e. allowing them to purchase validator machines.

Question 1.4 'What is the Panel's view on the Resident's Parking scheme and the potential future for it?'

- Residents should have additional opportunities to opt into the Resident Parking Scheme.
- Recognise one solution does not fit all.
- Review scheme across the Borough for patchiness i.e. consider new developments and roads which were previously not offered it as an option such as the road in between Faircross and Friendship Way, dependent on need.
- Foster a closer working relationship with Silva Homes to assess use of their assets and promote an increase in car parking spaces as well as electric parking spaces.
- Continue to support the Resident Parking Scheme and look into expanding it, although it was recognised this would have cost implications for the Council because the scheme was not self -funding.
- Seek the specific views of Members with the Resident Parking scheme in their wards as they knew what the issues were and what residents complained about most.

- Consider if it would be appropriate to offer people on a low income a discount although it was recognised this may be difficult to enforce if people were not appropriately using the parking resources they already had i.e. garages used as storage.
- Clarify the reason for the Resident Parking Scheme and promote to residents as it was brought in to protect residents from external parking and was not a panacea to all parking issues, so should only apply to those who would benefit from it.

Members raised the following points outside the scope of the Parking Strategy but related to parking generally:

- Members queried the demand for electrical charging units at car parks in the Borough and were informed spaces were well used and additional spaces were added when capacity was reached. Inevitably, it was tricky to judge how many spaces were needed and officers recognised some people were concerned about availability of electric charging points.
- Members were informed new parking standards adopted in 2016 included requiring new developments to have electric charging points and the Council was encouraging operators of community spaces and large retailers, such as supermarkets, to have parking spaces for electric cars. However, the Council was not able to enforce private companies to accommodate parking spaces for electric cars. It was agreed officers should look into developing parking standards for community hubs.
- Given the impact of parking on climate change, Members asked if it would be possible to stop issuing paper parking tickets?
- There was a query over the current contract provider's capacity in their pound to allow for removal of vehicles.
- Consider incentives for town centre workers and residents to use public transport.
- Members requested more information about how many parking permits had been issued and the amount of revenue received from the scheme.

11. **Quarterly Service Report (QSR)**

It was agreed that due to questions being submitted on the day officers would respond to the questions following the meeting and answers would be published with the minutes

12. **Executive Forward Plan**

Members received and noted the scheduled Key and Non-Key Executive Decisions relating to Environment, Culture and Communities.

CHAIRMAN

Minute Item 11

The following questions from members were received in relation to Item No 11 Quarterly Service Reports. Response to a further three questions will be published shortly.

Parks and Countryside – volunteers continue to thrive (1,585) but where exactly are they active doing their coppicing, right of way improvements and horticulture work etc? It would be good to know so we can praise them in a targeted way.

The work of our volunteers is across so many of our sites and is so integrated to the way the Rangers and Heritage Parks teams operate that it is impossible to describe exactly. Examples of recent sites include: Snaprails for a site tidy, Wildmoor Heath vegetation clearance, Englemere Pond reed cutting, Bill Hill and Frog Copse holly reduction. This represents a tiny percentage of the work completed.

Do we have a specific date yet for the start of Princess Square refurbishment and development of The Deck?

The start date is Summer 2019.

Green flag inspection took place in May, do we have the results yet? If not, when will they be available?

Results are due to be announced on 16th July this year.

How high a risk is our commercial property investment strategy and can more detail be provided so we can carefully monitor its progress?

The risk is considered by the Executive Commercial Property Committee and Cllr Heydon is the Chairman who can provide more detail.

Has the Berkshire Filming Office had any filming requests since 6th March launch?

Several per week and rising. Many are just investigating the options available at this stage, but some good conversations have already been held with major film producers.

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