

## Notice of Meeting

### Council

Councillor Ms Merry (Mayor)  
Councillor Gbadebo (Deputy Mayor)  
Councillors Allen, Angell, Atkinson, Bhandari, Dr Barnard,  
Bettison OBE, D Birch, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Brown, Brunel-Walker,  
Dudley, Finch, Ms Gaw, Mrs L Gibson, MJ Gibson, Green,  
Mrs Hamilton, Harrison, Mrs Hayes MBE, Ms Hayes, Heydon,  
Mrs Ingham, Kennedy, Kirke, Leake, Mrs McKenzie, Mrs McKenzie-  
Boyle, McLean, Mrs Mattick, Mossom, Neil, Parker, Porter, Skinner,  
Temperton, Tullett, Turrell, Virgo and Wade



**Wednesday 21 April 2021, 7.30 - 9.00 pm**  
**Online only**

**Timothy Wheadon**  
Chief Executive

### Agenda

Item	Description	Page
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**The meeting will be opened with prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain**

1.	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	
2.	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>	5 - 20
	To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 22 February and 16 March 2021.	
3.	<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>	

### **EMERGENCY EVACUATION INSTRUCTIONS**

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4.	<b>Mayor's Announcements</b>	
5.	<b>Executive Report</b>	21 - 88
	To receive the Leader's report on the work of the Executive since the Council meeting held on 22 February 2021.  Council is asked to resolve a recommendation in respect of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Initial Site Development Plan - Market Street</b></li> </ul>	
6.	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report</b>	89 - 106
	To receive an update on progress made in respect of the operation and development of Overview and Scrutiny in Bracknell Forest during 2019 - 21.	
7.	<b>Champions' Annual Report</b>	107 - 132
	To receive a report on the activities and outcomes of the Council's Champions 2020 - 21.	
8.	<b>Councillor Development Annual Report</b>	133 - 140
	To note the Councillor Development Annual Report 2020 - 21.	
9.	<b>Question Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 10</b>	
	<u>By Councillor Temperton to Councillor Harrison, Executive Member for Culture, Delivery and Public Protection</u>  Despite more and more volunteers regularly picking litter, deserving our thanks and our gratitude, what more can be done to reduce the increase in the amount of litter?	
10.	<b>Motions Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 11</b>	
	<u>Motion 04/2020 moved by Councillor Temperton and seconded by Councillor Neil</u>  I ask the Council to call upon the Executive to initiate the conversion of road verges and roundabouts to wildflower meadows wherever possible.  <u>Motion 05/2020 moved by Councillor Dudley and seconded by Councillor Brown</u>  That this Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Acknowledges that sprinklers and other Automatic Fire Suppression Systems (AFSS) save lives, protect property, reduce the impact of fire on the environment, reduce interruption to business and improve safety for individuals in the community in general and firefighters. In recognising these benefits support the National Fire Chief's Council position on sprinklers by writing to Central</li> </ul>	

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	<p>Government to express support for the creation of a legal requirement to fit sprinklers or AFSS in buildings.</p> <p>ii) Commits to installation of sprinklers or other AFSS within its own building stock when planning for and constructing new buildings or as a retrofitted solution when undertaking major refurbishments of existing buildings.</p> <p>iii) Through building regulations, promotes and supports the installation of sprinklers or other AFSS for all new or refurbished buildings and particularly those that present the most significant risk to the public and firefighters.</p>	
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Sound recording, photographing, filming and use of social media is permitted. Please contact Kirsty Hunt, 01344 353108, [kirsty.hunt@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:kirsty.hunt@bracknell-forest.gov.uk), so that any special arrangements can be made.

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**COUNCIL  
24 FEBRUARY 2021  
7.30 - 9.20 PM**

**Present:**

Councillors Ms Merry (Mayor), Gbadebo (Deputy Mayor), Allen, Atkinson, Bhandari, Dr Barnard, Bettison OBE, D Birch, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Brown, Brunel-Walker, Dudley, Finch, Ms Gaw, Mrs L Gibson, MJ Gibson, Mrs Hamilton, Harrison, Mrs Hayes MBE, Ms Hayes, Heydon, Mrs Ingham, Kennedy, Kirke, Leake, Mrs McKenzie, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, McLean, Mrs Mattick, Mossom, Neil, Porter, Skinner, Temperton, Tullett, Turrell, Virgo and Wade

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Angell, Green and Parker

**45. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 January 2021 be approved, and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

**46. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**47. Mayor's Announcements**

Funeral for Freeman of the Borough and former Councillor Jim Finnie

The Mayor reported that it had been a privilege to attend the funeral of James (Jim) Finnie, the Freeman of the Borough, past Mayor, former Conservative Borough Council colleague and Crowthorne Parish councillor. The Mayor was aware that many people attended the service virtually and looked forward to being able to celebrate his contribution to the Borough when Covid-restrictions allowed. The online condolence messages had been shared with his family.

Thank you messages

The Mayor advised that due to the challenges of Covid it had not been possible to carry out the usual civic engagements which were often an opportunity to say 'thank you' to residents and organisations. The Mayor announced that the Mayor's Office was keen to participate in any community events and meetings that were being run virtually or future events that were being planned.

Mayor's Charity Online Auction

The Mayor announced that she would be running an online auction in support of her chosen charities: Soldiers Sailors Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA Berkshire) and the British Forces Foundation (BFF). She reflected how service personnel had been helping in the pandemic from testing to building Nightingale Hospitals. The Mayor asked for support for these charities by pledging an item for the auction or placing a bid.

### Census 2021 – 21 March 2021

The Mayor reminded everyone present that the Census was being held on 21 March 2021. She advised that letters were being sent to each household with a unique access code to enable the census to be completed online, although paper copies would be available.

### Executive Member for the Environment

Councillor Mrs Hayes MBE, Executive Member for the Environment was pleased to remind everyone that food waste recycling was being launched in the borough on 1 March 2021. The fleet of new food waste collection vehicles had been named following a competition to come up with food related names. Over 1,700 residents voted and the winners were: The Food Dude, Binderella, Truck Norris, Hank Marvin and Dame Foodie Dench. Actress Dame Judi Dench sent a video message thanking the Council for naming one of its food waste trucks in her honour.

### Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning

Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning was proud to report that the transformation of Braccan Walk youth hub was now complete. The ground floor of a car park had been transformed into a modern and colourful youth centre for young people in Bracknell Forest. He concluded that he was looking forward to welcoming young people when restrictions allowed.

Councillor Dr Barnard paid tribute to the hard work of the borough's schools through the pandemic and preparing for the reopening of schools from 8 March 2021. He recognised Rachel Morgan, Assistant Director of Education, who was leaving the Council, for her contribution to improving school performance with more schools now rated good and outstanding, developing good relationship with schools and a child-focused approach to education.

### Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Health and Housing

Councillor Birch, Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Health and Housing advised the meeting of the Young Health Champions programme which was being run in secondary schools. He was proud that the initiative aimed to give young people the skills, knowledge and confidence to act as peer mentors by teaching young people about managing their own health and wellbeing and how to promote health campaigns to their peers. The project had been short-listed for the Children and Young People Now Award.

### Fundraising for Careleavers

The Mayor was pleased to announce that £780 had been raised by Councillor Ms Hayes' fundraising collection from councillors.

## 48. **Executive Report**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bettison OBE, presented his report on the work of the Executive since that reported at the Council meeting on 13 January 2021. The Executive had met twice on 26 January and 9 February 2021.

The Leader highlighted the following matters that had been considered:

- Digital & ICT & Customer Experience Strategies 2021 – 2024 had been approved and were intrinsically linked. The strategies put the customer first with a recognised irreversible trend towards digital and the Council was increasing its migration to cloud-based technology.
- CCTV Deployment & RIPA (Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act) had been updated.
- Revised Local Development scheme agreed which set out the work programme and timetable for Local Plan and Joint Minerals & Waste Plan:
  - Local Plan to be considered by Executive in March
  - Pre-submission consultation March – May
  - Full Council to consider submission in June 2021
- School Places & Capacity Plan covering until 2025 would reduce surplus capacity in primary schools and facilitate transformation work to support special needs.
- Climate Change Strategy was agreed. As an early signatory to Nottingham Declaration in 2007 the Council had an overall objective to become carbon neutral by 2050 in line with Government Policy. The Strategy included 41 separate key projects and an Advisory Group to support the Executive Member was being established.
- Urgent action had been undertaken to procure Lateral Flow Community Testing. A proposal was submitted on 21 January for 15,000 people, twice weekly, based on up to 9 locations with eligibility focussed on those who have to leave home to work. The scheme was operational by 3 February 2021 currently across four centres with another opening next week.
- Vehicle Emissions & Air Quality agreement to enforce 1986 Regulations relating to vehicle idling in Air Quality Management Areas would focus on engagement before enforcement and give power to adopt enforcement where necessary.
- Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report had been received. There were five findings of “fault” from the Council’s millions of interactions during the year.
- Appropriation of land at Coopers Hill had been agreed to support the regeneration of the town centre. There had been a technical approach to remove development risk and positive discussions with HCA continue on the covenant.

Councillor Temperton asked whether schools could be involved in designing the promotional material to reduce vehicle emissions and improve air quality. Councillor Bettison OBE agreed that this was a helpful suggestion as it was good practice to get young people involved in such projects so that they can help raise awareness to their own parents.

Councillor Temperton asked whether the Climate Change Strategy could be placed in a prominent position on the Council’s website to reflect that it is the core of the Council’s decisions. Councillor Bettison OBE agreed that in all communications, where appropriate, climate change would be central and remain visible.

Councillor Temperton stated that the previous year's school plans plan predicted numbers were more accurate than ever before so queried what had changed in the process. Councillor Dr Barnard replied to this compliment that no algorithm was behind the predictions but the hard work of the officer team to create a modelling tool to assess the data available.

Councillors Bettison OBE advised, in response to Councillor Ms Brown's question, that officers from the Public Protection Partnership would undertake air quality testing and would approach people in cars to explain what they were doing and how reducing emissions would improve air quality. He hoped that educating residents would assist in developing support for these improvements.

#### 49. **Financial Plans and Revenue Budgets 2021/22**

The Council considered the report by the Borough Treasurer which set out the financial plans and revenue budgets for the financial year 2021/22 and the supporting information which presented the Council's spending plans for 2021/22 and detailed budgets for the General Fund and Capital Programme.

Councillor Heydon gave a comprehensive budget speech placing particular focus on the following matters:

- He observed that the past 11 months had forced everyone to adapt to new ways of doing things:
  - the vast majority of staff worked effectively from home since last March, continuing to deliver services, with minimal disruption
  - working closely with voluntary sector partners the Council provided extra front-line support to some of the most vulnerable people in society
  - working with colleagues in Health the Council had commissioned block contracts with care homes to ensure that hospitals were not overwhelmed by patients
  - the Council facilitated the distribution of Government grants to businesses
- He stated that the Council's response to Covid closely followed Government guidance throughout whether closing services or setting up new ones when required such as local testing and vaccination programmes. This response was immediate and focussed on doing the right thing for Bracknell Forest residents and businesses without knowing the potential financial implications. These significant levels of additional costs this year would be covered through support from Government, both directly and indirectly through Health.
- He reported that the extension to grant support to local authorities for Covid-related costs was announced after the publication of draft budget proposals for consultation.
- He described the budget proposals for 2021/22 as "Covid-sensitive" as it was recognised that the human, economic and financial impacts of Covid would not end on 31 March 2021.
- He explained that external funding would be utilised for Highways schemes and school maintenance projects. Investment in a number of projects at Birch Hill, Holly Spring and the Pines would expand local provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- He explained that rebuilding the Council's commercial depot was the largest project in the capital programme as it was no longer fit for purpose despite renovation work. A third of the existing site would be used for redevelopment to help cover redevelopment costs.
- He reassured residents that none of the £3m savings proposed to help mitigate against cost pressures would result in service reductions.



- He explained that the additional one-off grants provided by the Government would be used to create a one-off funding package to:
  - invest in the town centre economies and protect local jobs;
  - work with voluntary and statutory partners to respond to the growing issue of mental health;
  - reduce council tax bills for lowest income households by £150; and
  - continue to fund important welfare support initiatives for families in crisis.
- He reported that funding was being set aside to support carbon reduction initiatives.
- He reflected that on average, Bracknell Forest schools would receive a 3.8% increase in per pupil funding and funding for the High Needs Block was set to increase by 8%. However the costs continued to increase at a much higher rate, meaning that the deficit on the High Needs Block was increasing. This was a national problem faced by many councils.
- He concluded that although there was the option of increasing Council Tax by 4.99% in 21/22 it was considered an appropriate balance between the short-term and longer-term considerations to propose an increase of 3.49%. This comprised of 1.99% as a general increase and 1.5% for the social care precept, to help fund the additional social care costs incurred supporting the most vulnerable residents. This would represent an additional 91 pence per week for an average Band D property. Lower income households receiving council tax support would also see a £150 reduction in their bills.

Councillor Temperton, Leader of the Opposition responded to the proposed budget.

On the proposition of Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance, seconded by Councillor Bettison OBE the recommendation as set out in the agenda was moved.

As required by legislation a recorded vote was taken on the motion and the voting was as follows:

FOR (36): Councillors Allen, Atkinson, Dr Barnard, Bettison OBE, Bhandari, D Birch, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Brunel-Walker, Dudley, Finch, Ms Gaw, Gbadebo, Mrs Gibson, M J Gibson, Mrs Hamilton, Harrison, Mrs Hayes MBE, Ms Hayes, Heydon, Mrs Ingham, Mrs Kennedy, Kirke, Leake, Mrs Mattick, Mrs McKenzie, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, McLean, Ms Merry, Mossom, Porter, Skinner, Tullett, Turrell and Wade

ABSTAIN (3): Brown, Neil and Temperton

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

## 2.1 Capital Programme 2021/22 - 2023/24

- i) General Fund capital funding of £12.221m for 2021/22 in respect of those schemes listed on pages 174 to 176 to be agreed;
- ii) The inclusion of £5.363 of expenditure to be externally funded (including £1.524m of S106 funding) as outlined in the summary report for Council (page 169) and included on pages 174 to 176;
- iii) That those schemes that attract external grant funding be agreed for inclusion within the 2021/22 capital programme at the level of funding received.
- iv) Capital schemes that require external funding can only proceed once the Council is certain of receiving the grant; and

- v) The inclusion of an additional budget of £1m for 'Invest to Save' schemes be agreed.

## 2.2 Revenue Budget 2021/22

- i) The budget proposals set out in Table 1 (page 4) of the summary report for Council, subject to the changes identified in sections 3.2 (pages 4 to 5), 3.3 (pages 5 to 7), 3.5 (page 8), 3.8 (page 9), 4.3 (pages 11 to 13), 5.3 (pages 17 to 18), 8.2 (page 20) and 8.3 (page 20) of the report, be agreed;
- ii) Fees and charges as set out in Annexe G (pages 95 to 160) be approved;
- iii) A provision for inflation of £1.200m be approved;
- iv) The commitment budget as set out in Annexe A be approved (pages 23 to 24);
- v) That the Council should make additional funding available for distribution to schools through the local funding formula at the level set out in section 4.1 (page 9) of the summary report for Council subject to any minor amendments made by the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning following the receipt of definitive funding allocations for Early Years and High Needs pupils;
- vi) A general contingency totalling £2.250m and a Covid-19 specific contingency of £3.417m be included, uses of which are authorised by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Director: Resources in accordance with the delegations included in the Council's constitution;
  - (a) Subject to the above, the revised draft budget proposals be agreed;
  - (b) A contribution of £0.001m (after allowing for additional interest from the use of balances) be made from revenue balances to support revenue expenditure;
- vii) Total net expenditure (after use of balances) of £74.085m (page 21), be approved;
- viii) The Council's Council Tax requirement, excluding Parish Council precepts, be set at £66.826m;
- ix) The Council Tax for the Council's services for each Valuation Band be set as follows:

Band	Tax Level Relative to Band D	£
A	6/9	935.46
B	7/9	1091.37
C	8/9	1247.28
D	9/9	1403.19
E	11/9	1715.01
F	13/9	2026.83
G	15/9	2338.65
H	18/9	2806.38

At the meeting on 09 February 2021 the Executive recommended the 2021/22 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and noted that strategy together with the Prudential Indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement were matters which the Council needed to approve.

- xii) The Council approves the following indicators, limits, strategies and policies included in Annexe E (pages 59 to 84):

- The Prudential Indicators and Limits for 2021/22 to 2023/24 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 2021/22 to 2023/24 and Treasury Management Limits on Activity contained in Annexe E(iv);

xiii) The formal Council Tax Resolution contained in section 3 be approved.

### 3 Council Tax Resolution

3.1 That the recommendations of the Executive outlined in sections 2.1 and 2.2 be agreed.

3.2 That it be noted that the amounts calculated for the year 2021/22 in accordance with Section 67 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 are:

(a) **47,624 TAX BASE FOR THE WHOLE COUNCIL AREA**  
*being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as amended, as its council tax base for the year*

(b) **TAX BASE FOR PART OF THE COUNCIL'S AREA  
 EACH PARISH AREA**

Binfield	4,393
Bracknell	20,182
Crowthorne	3,022
Sandhurst	7,992
Warfield	5,153
Winkfield	6,882

*being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 6 of the Regulations, as amended, as the amounts of its council tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate*

3.3 That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2021/22 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 as amended (the Act), noting that Bracknell Town Council's (BTC) precept is subject to confirmation by BTC on 16 February:

(a) £318,988,697 **TOTAL EXPENDITURE INCLUDING GENERAL FUND, PARISH PRECEPTS AND THE COUNCIL'S SHARE OF ANY DEFICIT ON THE COLLECTION FUND**

*being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act*

(b) £248,441,320 **TOTAL INCOME INCLUDING GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AND THE COUNCIL'S SHARE OF ANY SURPLUS ON THE COLLECTION FUND**

*being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act*

(c) £70,547,377 **BOROUGH AND PARISH PRECEPTS NET EXPENDITURE TO BE FINANCED FROM COUNCIL TAX**

*being the amount by which the aggregate at 3.3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3.3(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its council tax requirement for the year*

(d) £1,481.34 **AVERAGE BAND "D" COUNCIL TAX FOR WHOLE BOROUGH**

*being the amount at 3.3(c) above, divided by the amount at 3.2(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (including Parish precepts)*

(e) £3,721,856 **PARISH PRECEPTS**

*being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act*

(f) £1,403.19 **BOROUGH COUNCIL TAX FOR BAND "D" PROPERTIES**

*being the amount at 3.3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3.3(e) above by the amount at 3.2(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year if there were an area of the Borough to which no special item relates*

(g) Part of the Council's area	<b>BOROUGH AND PARISH COUNCIL TAX FOR EACH PARISH FOR BAND "D"</b>
	<b>£</b>
Binfield	1,456.52
Bracknell	1,495.85
Crowthorne	1,485.65
Sandhurst	1,477.95
Warfield	1,446.23
Winkfield	1,482.97

*being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 3.3(f) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 3.2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate*

(h) Part of the Council's area **BOROUGH AND PARISH COUNCIL TAX IN EACH PARISH FOR EACH VALUATION BAND**

<b>Parish</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Binfield	971.01	1,132.85	1,294.68	1,456.52	1,780.19	2,103.86	2,427.53	2,913.04
Bracknell	997.23	1,163.44	1,329.64	1,495.85	1,828.26	2,160.67	2,493.08	2,991.70
Crowthorne	990.43	1,155.51	1,320.58	1,485.65	1,815.79	2,145.94	2,476.08	2,971.30
Sandhurst	985.30	1,149.52	1,313.73	1,477.95	1,806.38	2,134.82	2,463.25	2,955.90
Warfield	964.15	1,124.85	1,285.54	1,446.23	1,767.61	2,089.00	2,410.38	2,892.46
Winkfield	988.65	1,153.42	1,318.20	1,482.97	1,812.52	2,142.07	2,471.62	2,965.94

*being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 3.3(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands*

- 3.4 That it be noted that for the year 2021/22 the Police and Crime Panel have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council regarding the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley, in accordance with Section 40 of the Act, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley	154.19	179.88	205.58	231.28	282.68	334.07	385.47	462.56

- 3.5 That it be noted that for the year 2021/22 the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, subject to confirmation by the Fire Authority on 17 February, in accordance with Section 40 of the Act, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	45.97	53.63	61.29	68.95	84.27	99.59	114.92	137.90

- 3.6 That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 3.3(h), 3.4 and 3.5 above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Act, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of council tax for the year 2021/22 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Parish	(a) Part of the Council's area		TOTAL COUNCIL TAX FOR EACH VALUATION BAND					
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Binfield	1,171.17	1,366.36	1,561.55	1,756.75	2,147.14	2,537.52	2,927.92	3,513.50
Bracknell	1,197.39	1,396.95	1,596.51	1,796.08	2,195.21	2,594.33	2,993.47	3,592.16
Crowthorne	1,190.59	1,389.02	1,587.45	1,785.88	2,182.74	2,579.60	2,976.47	3,571.76
Sandhurst	1,185.46	1,383.03	1,580.60	1,778.18	2,173.33	2,568.48	2,963.64	3,556.36
Warfield	1,164.31	1,358.3	1,552.4	1,746.46	2,134.56	2,522.66	2,910.77	3,492.92
Winkfield	1,188.81	1,386.9 6 3	1,585.0 1 7	1,783.20	2,179.47	2,575.73	2,972.01	3,566.40

50. **Question Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 10**

Councillor Temperton asked Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance the following published question:

*The COVID winter Grant is now being used for supporting residents' utility bills and the food voucher/ parcels for our vulnerable children whilst home-learning.*

*The £500 Isolation Grant is available to support those on low incomes having to self-isolate after a positive COVID test.*

*How long are the current funds able to sustain the support needed?*

In response Councillor Heydon stated that there was not a simple response as this was covered by two areas the mandatory Test and Trace Self-Isolation Payments and discretionary payments. Both elements were funded until the end of March and it was not possible to anticipate how much funding would be needed so there were other covid welfare funds that could be provided as necessary. He added there was also the COVID Winter Support Grant which was agreed in early December. The grant aims to support families struggling with the costs of food, utilities and other essentials as a result of the pandemic and the Council was on track to issue the full amount of the grant with additional promotion ongoing.

Councillor Heydon concluded that it had just been announced that funding for the Test and Trace Self-Isolation Payments would be extended until 30 June and funding for discretionary payments would be available until 30 June.

Councillor Temperton sought clarification in her supplementary question of whether support would be provided for food vouchers for the borough's vulnerable children required to self-isolate. Councillor Heydon explained that the government had announced that the holiday activities and food programme would be expanded across the whole of England in 2021 with funding will support local authorities to coordinate free holiday provision, including healthy food and enriching activities.

Councillor Dr Barnard added that if children are self-isolating at home during term time they would be provided with free school meal vouchers and additional support would be available for the family for utility bills and discretionary costs. He concluded that the imminent Chancellors' budget announcement was likely to include further measures to support for children, families and vulnerable people.

**CHAIRMAN**

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**COUNCIL**  
**16 MARCH 2021**  
**6.00 - 7.12 PM**



**Present:**

Councillors Ms Merry (Mayor), Gbadebo (Deputy Mayor), Allen, Angell, Atkinson, Bhandari, Dr Barnard, Bettison OBE, D Birch, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Brown, Brunel-Walker, Dudley, Finch, Ms Gaw, Mrs L Gibson, MJ Gibson, Mrs Hamilton, Harrison, Mrs Hayes MBE, Ms Hayes, Heydon, Mrs Ingham, Kennedy, Kirke, Leake, Mrs McKenzie, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, McLean, Mrs Mattick, Mossom, Neil, Porter, Skinner, Temperton, Tullett, Turrell, Virgo and Wade

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Green and Parker

**51. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Harrison declared an affected interest in agenda item 3 by virtue of his lodger being an employee of Syngenta and having sought legal advice would take part in the debate and vote.

Councillor Atkinson declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in agenda item 3 by virtue of his employer, WiredScore UK Limited, being engaged in discussions with a developer of the proposed Syngenta site and therefore left the meeting before commencement of the item.

Councillor Dr Barnard declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in agenda item 3 by virtue of his employer, Thermo Fisher Scientific, having global business relationships with Syngenta and therefore left the meeting before commencement of the item.

**52. Submission of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan**

Having declared disclosable pecuniary interests Councillors Atkinson and Dr Barnard left the meeting before the item commenced.

The Council considered a report seeking approval to submit the Pre Submission Bracknell Forest Local Plan, Policies Map and all supporting documents to the Secretary of State for independent examination by an appointed Inspector who would be requested to recommend any main modifications to the submitted Plan, in the event that they were considered necessary to make the Plan sound.

Andrew Hunter, Director: Place, Planning and Regeneration advised the meeting that the Plan before council was the final version of the plan which had been shaped, by consultations, evidence and national guidance, it aimed to meet needs for Bracknell Forest's existing and future populations up until 2037 and provide the council with an up to date Local Plan against which development proposal in the borough would be assessed. The first part of the Plan dealt with the strategic policies which would apply across the Borough and included the site allocations for regeneration, growth, development, and enhancement. The second part dealt with the more detailed policies generally applied to planning applications when they were being considered by the council.

The key changes to the Plan since the last public consultation included:

- An update to the housing figures required over 15 year life of the Plan
- Detailed changes to the 20 plan allocations set out in policy LP4, this included updating site capacities in the light of evidence and consultation responses
- Site specific policies for the larger more complex allocations, including Jealott's Hill, Beaufort Park, Derby Fields and the addition of the Peel Centre for mixed use, residential led development.
- There had been reduction in the new homes proposed for the new garden community at the Jealott's Hill site reducing the allocation to 2000 new homes alongside the development of a new science park. The area to be removed from the Greenbelt had been reduced. The publicly accessible open space surrounding the development would be left within the Green Belt. A small Gypsy and Travellers site had been added to the allocation and would provide for 8 additional pitches to meet needs. The proposal for a secondary school had been removed as existing borough facilities would be able to meet needs.
- The Affordable Housing Policy had been updated to meet needs and issues of viability and seek to secure 35% affordable housing on all qualifying sites.

The Plan was supported by a number of technical studies, assessments and background studies which made up the extensive evidence base for the plan which would be available for the purposes of the local plan examination.

In response to Councillors' questions the Director made the following points:

- The proposed allocation of 2,000 new homes on the Jealott's Hill site were integral to the delivery of the whole plan to meet housing need.
- The final version of the plan included the sites selected from those submitted in earlier consultation stages for consideration.
- The Plan as set out meets the need by delivering 614 houses per year but if the Jealott's Hill site was not included then the Plan would be short by 1350 homes and alternative site for housing development would need to be found.
- The allocation at Jealott's Hill was a mixed development of 2000 homes with additional employment space to create an agrotech science park for the borough.
- The assessment for taking land out of the green belt within the Local Plan context was about demonstrating exceptional circumstances. An additional report on the Jealott's Hill allocation had been prepared to set these out and would be available as part of the consultation.

In moving the recommendations Councillor Turrell, Executive Member for Planning and Transport thanked all the residents who had commented on the Local Plan so far, encouraged participation in the submission consultation and thanked the Planning policy team officers for their work on the comprehensive plan.

Proposed by Councillor Turrell, Executive Member for Planning and Transport, seconded by Councillor Bettison OBE it was

**RESOLVED** that

- i) the Pre-Submission Bracknell Forest Local Plan, Policies Map and all supporting documents for formal submission to the Secretary of State for independent examination by an appointed Inspector be approved; and,

- ii) the appointed Inspector be requested to recommend any main modifications to the submitted Plan that are considered necessary to make the Plan sound.

**CHAIR**

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To: **COUNCIL**  
**21 April 2021**

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## **EXECUTIVE REPORT TO COUNCIL** **The Leader**

### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 Since the Council meeting on 24 February 2021, the Executive has met once, on the 16 March 2021. This report summarises decisions taken by reference to the relevant portfolio within which they fall.
- 1.2 Updated Forward Plans are published every Friday and can be viewed online at [www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk). Full details on the decisions taken by individual portfolio holders can also be accessed online through the Council's website.

### **2 RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **Council is asked to consider the recommendations set out at paragraph 5.5.1.**

### **3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The reasons for recommendations are set out in the supporting information and in the reports considered by the Executive.

### **4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 Alternative options are discussed in the relevant individual reports considered by the Executive.

### **5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

#### **Children, Young People and Learning**

#### **5.1 Apprenticeship Review**

- 5.1.2 The Executive received the findings of the Education, Skills and Growth Overview & Scrutiny Panel's review into Apprenticeships and agreed the following recommendations:

- To work with Apprenticeship pathway providers to ensure our young people aged between 16-21 have the best opportunities and outcomes.
- To adopt an Apprenticeship policy which sets out expectations around pay, terms and conditions and that the Education, Skills and Growth Panel is consulted on the draft policy and for this to be completed by December 2021 to coronavirus capacity limitations.
- That Apprenticeships are promoted externally and internally by producing a promotional video which highlights the benefit of becoming an apprentice, growing

businesses, and supporting the economy by March 2022 to coronavirus capacity limitations.

- That the current Apprenticeship webpages are reviewed, and the content updated to include more information, links to job vacancy websites and information about what to expect from an apprenticeship by December 2021 to coronavirus capacity limitations.
- That it is investigated whether it would be possible to facilitate a mentoring scheme between large businesses and small/medium businesses to encourage more apprenticeship opportunities by March 2022 to coronavirus capacity limitations.
- That ongoing partnerships are developed across Berkshire to provide a united gateway of support and guidance to businesses enabling them to take better advantage of the apprenticeship levy.

- 5.1.3 The Education, Skills and Growth Overview & Scrutiny Panel was commissioned to undertake a review into Apprenticeships as part of the Overview and Scrutiny work programme. This review activity was undertaken from November 2020 until January 2021 and witnesses were consulted during this time. A survey was also sent to local business, apprentices, and schools to gain wider feedback. The methodology undertaken, findings and recommendations were endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 17 February 2021.

## **Council Strategy & Community Cohesion**

### **5.2 Procurement Plan for South Central Independent Fostering Agency Framework 2022**

- 5.2.1 The Executive agreed the recommendations contained in the Strategic Procurement Plan, that Bracknell Forest Council enter into a partnership agreement (the Partnership) with 15 LA's where Southampton City Council will be the lead procuring authority for the procurement of a new framework for IFA provision (4 year term commencing on April 2022). It was anticipated that the total expenditure by the Council through the South-Central framework will be between £800,000 and £1,000,000 per annum, giving a maximum total for the four years of £4,000,000. Approval of this Strategic Procurement Plan would therefore authorise that all future call offs from this Framework that did not exceed £4,000,000 over the term of the framework.

## **Culture, Delivery and Public Protection**

### **5.3 Strategic Procurement Plans for MS Teams Telephony and the Core Network**

- 5.3.1 The Executive agreed that the Council access the approved frameworks, detailed in the Strategic Procurement Plans for MS Teams Telephony and the Core Network, to undertake a mini competition to select appropriate solutions and expert support for the implementations

### **5.4 Support package for Everyone Active**

- 5.4.1 In order to protect the Council's leisure services from the effects of the latest lockdown, the Executive agreed that Everyone Active be granted a management fee break for the period from April to June 2021 (inclusive of Government Income Support funding which has been confirmed for the same period). It was also agreed that Council will underwrite the estimated losses and costs for Everyone Active for

the period April 2021 to June 2021 with the actual sum to be calculated on an “open book” basis. That approach allows for flexibility as and when leisure services are allowed to operate, ensuring the support is only provided when the Council’s leisure facilities are not generating income. The Executive also agreed to review the situation every three months starting in May 2021 for the remainder of the financial year. Should further financial support for future quarters be required this will be presented at these reviews.

## **Economic Development and Regeneration**

### **5.5 Initial site development Plan - Market Street**

**5.5.1 The Executive recommended to Council approval of the proposed Site Development Plan for Market Street, including land drawdown where conditions have been met as set out in confidential Annex B in the Executive agenda and to make available the Council’s equal share of funding needed to undertake this development up to a peak requirement of £15.4m.**

5.5.2 The Executive agreed that the Borough Solicitor be authorised to appropriate the land at Market Street edged red on the plan for planning purposes under Section 122(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, when a planning consent is in place.

## **6 NOTIFICATION OF APPOINTMENTS MADE BY THE LEADER**

6.1 The Leader delegated the responsibility for selecting polling places for the forthcoming elections on Thursday 6 May 2021 to the Chief Executive, Timothy Wheadon.

6.2 The Leader agreed that due to the conflict of interest that the Executive Member for Planning and Transport had in regard to the Bracknell Neighbourhood Plan, the decision to go to referendum would be delegated to the Leader.

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

### Borough Solicitor

7.1 The Borough Solicitor’s comments have been addressed in the reports to the Executive.

### Director: Resources

7.2 The Director: Resources’ comments have been addressed in the reports to the Executive.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

7.3 Equalities issues, where appropriate, have been addressed in the reports to the Executive.

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

7.4 Any strategic risks have been identified in the reports to the Executive.

## Background Papers

Executive Agenda – 16 March 2021

Contact for further information

Hannah Stevenson, Delivery - 01344 352308

[Hannah.stevenson@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Hannah.stevenson@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)



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To: **Council**  
**21 April 2021**

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## **Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019-21** **Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission**

### **1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The Council's Constitution requires the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to submit an annual report to the Council on overview and scrutiny activities and their outcomes. The attached report informs members of progress made in respect of the operation and development of overview and scrutiny in Bracknell Forest during 2019-21. The Commission recommends that Council adopts the report.

### **2 Recommendation**

- 2.1 **That the 2019-21 annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission be adopted**

### **3 Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1 To meet the requirements of the Constitution.

### **4 Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 Not applicable.

### **5 Supporting Information**

- 5.1 The activities of overview and scrutiny in 2019-21 are summarised in the annual report at Appendix A. The outcomes of individual reviews are reflected in the report.
- 5.2 Overview and scrutiny has established a structure that allows activity to better align with the themes of the Council Plan. The function has established and delivered against a work programme that supports the council objectives over the period. The Commission has carried out research and made recommendations to support the council's climate change targets and has scrutinised the budget and monitored the performance of all council departments through the Council Plan Overview Report.
- 5.3 Overview and scrutiny will continue to embed the positive changes that support effective contribution to the Council Plan, with particular focus on regaining momentum following a pause due to the pandemic. The Commission will continue to develop its programme management role to deliver the work programme in line with council objectives and available resources.

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

Legal Advice

- 6.1 The Scrutiny function has an important role to play in providing local accountability and transparency in decision-making. It was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 primarily to serve as a check and balance on Executive powers. Subsequent legislation has conferred on Councils the responsibility for scrutinising local NHS Trusts, the work of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, and other partners, such as the Environment Agency. It sits alongside the Council's Standards regime in delivering the accountability that constitutes one of the Seven Principles of Public Life.

#### Financial Advice

- 6.2 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

#### Statutory Scrutiny Officer

- 6.3 The annual report highlights the work of the council's Overview and Scrutiny Commission and panels and the outcomes of this work. Overview and scrutiny has exercised its functions in order to support the development of policy within the council, to scrutinise the council's financial proposals and to improve services the council and its partners provide with the overarching objective of seeking to benefit local communities. At this time of considerable disruption, the strength of scrutiny is its focus on the long-term development of the council and how the council can meet its communities' needs.

#### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 Throughout all scrutiny activity members are reminded to consider what equality impacts there may be, and review activities are delivered in a way that avoids barriers to wider involvement e.g. timing of review activity, length of reviews and access to information. As part of the scoping process for each review an initial equalities screening will be more explicitly undertaken and a full equalities impact assessment undertaken if required.

#### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 Effective scrutiny is important to the successful functioning of local democracy by securing the efficient delivery of council services and driving improvements. A robust work programme is essential in order to ensure that overview and scrutiny activity contributes successfully to the work of the council. Poor scrutiny can be indicative of wider governance, leadership and/or service failure.

#### Climate Change Implications

- 6.6 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to:  
Have no impact on emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>.

The reasons the Council believes that this will have no impact on emissions is that there is no direct link between the recommendations in this report and carbon emissions. Each individual review will assess the impact of climate change, including carbon emissions with details provided in the review scope.

#### Background Papers

None

#### Contact for further information

Councillor Robert Angell, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Commission  
Robert.angell@bracknell-forest.gov.uk



# Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report



2019 - 2021

## Foreword from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, Councillor Robert Angell



This report covers May 2019 to March 2021, a period of significant change for the overview and scrutiny (O&S) function within Bracknell Forest Council.

The early period focussed on implementing positive changes to the way we conduct scrutiny,

drawing on a Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) 'healthcheck' in December 2018. Scrutiny is now centred around the themes of the Council Plan, ensuring we direct our efforts into areas that will contribute to the effective delivery of the council's objectives. The section on O&S at Bracknell Forest Council at the end of this report describes what this means for our structure and activities.

We also reviewed the role and purpose of O&S to better reflect the Government's statutory guidance on O&S and the recent council reorganisation. This led to a comprehensive work programme spanning the four-year administration. The work programme was developed in consultation with the Executive, senior council officers and O&S panel chairs and was agreed at the O&S Commission meeting in November 2019.

As with the revised structure, the new work programme aligns with the Council Plan objectives and sets a clear path for O&S to have a positive impact. Work programme activities gained momentum but were paused in March 2020 when the national health pandemic required a cross-council response, meaning changes to priorities and a focus on staff arrangements to deliver them.

The Commission continued to meet but formal panel scrutiny activity was paused. With experience of the pandemic, the Commission revised the work programme in September 2020

to reflect the impact and the recovery process for some services. The programme acknowledges revised priorities and timescales, the need to update some review scopes and new ways of working in some areas.

2020-21 presents an ongoing challenge to work with services to maintain a deliverable O&S programme whilst responding to changes in their capacity due to Covid activities. The Commission and panel chairs recognise the new pressures on services and are keen to manage them carefully by refocussing reviews to support service activity. I must take this opportunity to thank the officers and staff who have maintained a high level of support for the O&S activity in difficult times.

The pandemic has also offered opportunities and the O&S function has delivered several quality reviews using remote meetings. All of the chairs have recognised that remote meetings enable experts to attend more easily and have the ongoing potential to increase the diversity of witnesses.

As well as sponsoring the panel activities and scrutinising the budget, the Commission also took the lead on O&S's response to tackling climate change, which is described later in this report.

O&S benefits from a wide range of experience and viewpoints, and the Commission welcomes input from residents and local organisations via its public participation scheme. I would like to see this used more frequently so increased publicity will be a feature of the coming year to attract wider opinions on the council's performance.



## Introduction from Kevin Gibbs, Statutory Scrutiny Officer



Overview and Scrutiny is an important function of Bracknell Forest Council. Its legal powers and duties are set out in the Local Government Act 2000 which created separate Executive and Overview and Scrutiny functions within councils. This legislation also details

the role and duties of Statutory Scrutiny Officer :

- To promote the role of the authority's overview and scrutiny committee(s);
- To provide support to the authority's O&S function and to local councillors;
- To provide guidance to members and officers of the council in relation to O&S's functions.

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer is an important role. It must ensure that scrutiny is taken seriously by members and officers and, in so doing, ensure that the council has effective governance arrangements.

Bracknell Forest Council has assigned the Statutory Scrutiny Officer role to the Executive Director of Delivery, to ensure that the role has a high profile within the corporate organisation, plus the Executive and the wider member community. It is vital that members have the same confidence in the advice given to them in this role as with any of the other statutory posts, such as Monitoring Officer and s151 Finance Officer (Director of Resources).

The powers of the Overview and Scrutiny function are wider than the services provided by the council. A good and effective Overview and Scrutiny function may investigate any issue which "affects the area or the area's inhabitants". This can and does include other partner organisations, in particular local NHS bodies, the community safety partnership and other public / 3rd sector organisations. Such bodies are under various obligations to respond or have regard to the

recommendations of the Commission and its Panels.

It is therefore important that the Statutory Scrutiny Officer is a senior Officer as, from time to time, questions and concerns will arise about the operation of the scrutiny function, and an official will need to make a determination about what the law says and how this should be applied to that particular situation. Members and officers, both working in scrutiny and in other roles, need to understand how the Statutory Scrutiny Officer, Head of Democratic & Registration Services and the Monitoring Officer are empowered to exercise these functions and provide advice in these circumstances. In carrying out this statutory role, there is a need to have a nuanced and meaningful understanding of the scrutiny function in order to accurately make judgments about its operation when disagreements or other issues arise.

Following the council reorganisation in 2019, Bracknell Forest Council's implementation of the role is in line with the recommendations of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee report, Effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees. This Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019 – 2021 discharges the duty of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer to "...make regular reports to Full Council on the state of scrutiny, explicitly identifying any areas of weakness that require improvement and the work carried out by the Statutory Scrutiny Officer to rectify them".

Council will be aware that on 27th November 2019, Council noted the decision of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission on 5 November 2019 to implement revised arrangements to discharge the overview & scrutiny function (Appendix A). Council also noted the Commission Chairman's encouragement for all non-Executive members to get involved in future overview and scrutiny activity. To guide member involvement in the function, a four-year work programme was developed tracking the themes within the new Council Plan.

I am pleased to report to Council that this report demonstrates that these changes to the function have been highly effective and the function is meeting the highest standards.

This report details the extensive programme of reviews of council services. Reviews have also been undertaken on external organisations, including Thames Valley Police, registered

providers of social housing and contracted service providers.

In support of these reviews, a broad range of witnesses have given evidence to the Panels and Commission. These have included a number of organisations, tenant representative groups, community groups, campaigning groups, service users, academics and individual members of the public. Trade groups and those representing industry have shared insights and learning, putting the Panels and the Commission in the best possible position to use this intelligence to frame their reviews and produce insightful recommendations.

The Commission has undertaken pre-decision scrutiny on the budget, the IT strategy, the Customer Experience Strategy and extensive work was undertaken on the Climate Change strategy.

Scrutiny's role in in-year performance and finance monitoring sits alongside the audit function of the authority. Corporate performance management was undertaken with quarterly reviews of the

Corporate Performance Overview Report (CPOR), with all Executive Members having been reviewed in public session of the Commission over the municipal year.

It is worth highlighting to Council that the impact of the Covid-19 global pandemic required the work programme to be reschedule a number of times. The resources assigned to the function have also been spread much more thinly as, initially, the resources needed to mount a remote public meeting were four times that required for a face to face public meeting. However, even with the pause in Commission and Panel meetings in April - May 2020, the end of year will see that the Panels and Commission have exceeded the number of meetings scheduled and will have delivered more review reports than has been the case in the last 3 years.

The support to members for the provision of policy and research support, plus organising and administering meetings, has been set at 86 hours per week since 2018-19. Pre-Covid the 86 hours were delivered by three staff:

<b>Governance &amp; Scrutiny Officer</b>	<b>Governance &amp; Scrutiny Officer</b>	<b>Governance &amp; Scrutiny Manager</b>
<b>1 full time equivalent (FTE)</b>	<b>1 FTE</b>	<b>0.32 FTE</b>

Interim Covid arrangements are in place and the 86 hours are currently delivered by four people:

<b>Governance &amp; Scrutiny Officer</b>	<b>Governance &amp; Scrutiny Officer</b>	<b>Governance &amp; Scrutiny Officer</b>	<b>Governance &amp; Scrutiny Manager</b>
<b>0.75 FTE</b>	<b>0.65 FTE</b>	<b>0.6 FTE</b>	<b>0.32 FTE</b>

<b>Commission</b>		
<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21 to date</b>
5 meetings held No review activity	6 meetings held Climate Change review commenced	9 meetings held (1 scheduled for April) 3 reviews completed – recommendations to Executive
2 over 2 hrs	2 over 2 hrs	8 over 2 hours
Average 1.5 hrs each	Average 1:40 hrs each	Average 2:20 hrs each
<b>Total = 7:55 hrs</b>	<b>Total = 9:45 hrs</b>	<b>Total = 20:20 hrs so far</b>

<b>Panels</b>		
<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21 to date</b>
16 meetings held across 4 panels	14 panel meetings held across 3 panels	25 review meetings held across 3 panels
3 reviews – no recommendations generated	2 reviews completed – recommendations to Executive 1 review almost complete – on hold	1 review complete – recommendations to Executive 2 reviews close to completion 3 reviews in early stages of pre-review preparation

I am therefore content that the function has adequate resources and that service departments are contributing sufficiently to reviews to ensure these are effective.

Below is my review of the effectiveness of the Panel and Commission, in terms of meeting hours and reports completed.

**Kevin Gibbs**

**Executive Director: Delivery (acting as Statutory Scrutiny Officer)**

## Overview and scrutiny at Bracknell Forest Council

Overview and scrutiny is structured with an overarching O&S Commission and three O&S panels, as described below.

### Overview and Scrutiny Commission

**Membership:**

Councillor Angell (Chair), Councillor Virgo (Vice-chair)

Councillors Mrs Birch, Brossard, Gbadebo, Mrs Mattick, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, McLean, Mossom, Porter, Temperton, Tullett

**Responsibilities:**

- Create a focussed work programme to ensure scrutiny activity contributes effectively to the Council Plan objectives
- Continually manage the work programme to ensure the best use of resources, accommodating any necessary extensions or urgent short-term issues
- Act as sponsor for panels as they undertake deep dive reviews or support policy development
- Consider the recommendations from panels' scrutiny activity and, where they are supported, refer to the appropriate decision-maker
- Scrutinise the council's budget proposals
- Hold the Executive to account for council performance according to the Corporate Performance Overview Report
- Carry out the council's crime and disorder responsibilities and strategic health responsibilities.
- Manage call in (the process to scrutinise Executive decisions).
- Review the policy framework.

## Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Chair: Councillor Mrs Gill Birch



All the panel members work well together, and I would like to thank them all for their help and support during 2019-2021.

This period has been one of many challenges and new ways of working, not least adopting a theme-based approach to our

scrutiny which allows activity to align more closely to the council's objectives. The coronavirus pandemic impacted on our capacity to carry out scrutiny. Some activities took longer to complete and the four-year work programme has been realigned to account for this necessary pause in activities.

One delayed activity was the care leavers review which was finally endorsed by the Executive in September 2020. The five recommendations were accepted by the Executive and the panel recognised all the good work already in place to support care leavers. Specifically, it was pleasing to see that the council was prioritising the leaving care services to provide support to young people in their transition to independent living. It is vital that members recognise our responsibility as corporate parents and the need to ensure there is sufficient support in terms of housing, education, jobs, and accommodation for care leavers.

The recommendations from the care leavers review are due to be monitored at the O&S Commission meeting in May 2021 to evaluate progress on outcomes.

The apprenticeship review began in November 2020 and completed in January 2021. It followed directly on from the care leavers review as post-16 apprenticeship opportunities for our care leavers and young people are extremely important, especially with the current challenges of the coronavirus pandemic. This review looked at the new government incentives, barriers to undertaking an apprenticeship, employing apprentices and the range of apprenticeship opportunities.

The review findings were endorsed by the Executive in March 2021 and all recommendations were accepted. When implemented, the recommendations will improve the apprenticeship information for both providers and potential apprentices and will increase partnership working across providers and with the council.

The review demonstrated how well the council works with partners and how positive everyone is about promoting apprenticeships. It was interesting to find out that we have 55 apprentices across the borough with ages ranging from post-16 to late fifties..

The next review is the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This has already been scoped and is commencing in April. The review will look at the mechanisms that govern CIL funding and spend as well as reviewing how parish councils and Bracknell Forest council have used CIL funding to stimulate local growth, with particular reference to communication and including residents in decision making.



(L-R) Councillor Brossard, Councillor Mrs Birch and Councillor Temperton with the fitness equipment at Holly House (taken in 2019)

## Findings and observations

- The new shorter report focuses on outcomes by presenting the review recommendations at the beginning. This has been well received and is the preferred format.
- The themed approach has facilitated reviews across departments which has enabled the review of broader topics and helped form policies.
- The reviews have attracted wider participation from members. The apprenticeship review was carried out by ten councillors and three Executive members.
- Due to the coronavirus pandemic, virtual ways of working were established. These allowed relevant witnesses to attend regardless of location, which contributed to high quality reviews. This way of working is efficient and should be continued.
- Although the panel has concluded two excellent reviews, there is a desire to increase our scrutiny focus by making greater use of the performance dashboard .
- The panel has only discussed and decided priorities on one occasion (in June). It would be more effective to have at least one more meeting at the end of the period to evaluate the work done.
- Members who work full-time have found it difficult to attend daytime reviews. Having panel meetings in the evening keeps them in touch and provides an opportunity to contribute to reviews.
- The one-day review was too long and intense. In future, short format reviews should aim for two half days.
- Ideally, meetings should be a maximum of two hours long to maintain focus and engagement.





## Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chair: Councillor John Porter



The objective of the panel changed at the start of the new term. The panel will still scrutinise how each service item has been delivered and whether it met its key objectives, and will also now input into reviews of upcoming contracts, initiatives and plans.

This welcome change

increases the influence of scrutiny and allows councillors to make a greater contribution on behalf of residents.

In this period, the panel concluded the findings of the LED lighting review, confirming that the new lighting delivers cost savings for the council and reduces our carbon footprint.

The next review looked at additional burial space within the Borough as the crematorium is running out of space. Having visited various sites and listened to evidence from officers and experts, the panel recommended to the Executive a suitable site for testing. If the testing is successful this site has the potential to support burials in the area for 25 years. The report also identified a second phase to this review - to understand what other burial options could be offered to residents that would increase the number of burials possible as well as increasing choice.

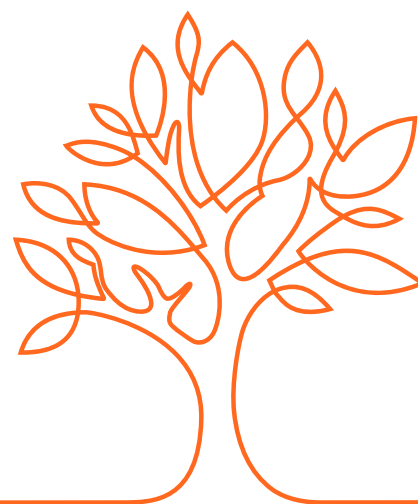
In April 2020, the panel had intended to look at introducing food waste to Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and flats but this was delayed due to Covid-19. I am pleased to report that this review is now starting and I look forward to recommending some key considerations for a successful implementation.

The panel has now looked at registered providers of social housing. The aim of the review was to identify opportunities for providers to foster community wellbeing and assist in individual health and wellbeing outcomes within Bracknell Forest. The review also looked at the service provision for residents to understand how it impacts them and identify any opportunities to improve. The panel spoke to registered providers, tenants, housing officers and the Public Protection Partnership, and made several recommendations designed to improve understanding and speed up processes for the benefit of residents. The recommendations will be considered by the Commission in April and, if endorsed, are due to be reviewed by the Executive in late April.

Registered providers was the panel's first review following the pause due to the pandemic. Covid-19 has demonstrated how important the security of social housing is and the influence that registered providers can have on building and supporting communities.

### Observations

During lockdown it was necessary to conduct the registered providers review remotely. The review has not suffered as a result and has probably benefitted as we had more people contribute due to not having to travel vast distances to assist us with the review. My view on future reviews and scrutiny is to have virtual meetings when any contributor has a long journey or other difficulties attending in person. The panel could decide whether it is preferable to have a physical or virtual meeting with officers.



## Wellbeing and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Chair: Councillor  
Malcolm Tullett



This has been a very unusual and difficult year, dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic and emergency arrangements. However, the panel has discussed and consulted on two work programme topics, while continuing to review the priorities identified by members of the public, outside

organisations, panel members and council officers in a joint workshop in 2019.

### **Healthy eating, activity and exercise**

Although the panel interviewed relevant officers and third-party providers, the first wave of the pandemic forced this review to be halted. Regrettably, it has still not restarted as the officers and organisations involved are either focused on the pandemic response or have closed, respectively. We particularly needed to speak with Officers working with schools, especially regarding the attendance of students at out of school sports clubs and the reasons why others did not attend.

When the situation eases sufficiently, we will review the draft findings to understand where they fit with the current situation and any plans. Officers from Public Health, Children's and School's Services, together with leisure service providers will all need to be invited to give evidence, again.

### **Social isolation and loneliness**

Following the first lockdown, the council's corporate management team commissioned a Community Impact Assessment to understand how residents in Bracknell Forest have been

affected by the virus and the restrictions. Together with the findings of a residents' survey and the Frimley Healthcare Foundation Trust Integrated Care System patient review, the subject of social isolation and loneliness became a high priority for review.

Officers from public health and adult social care had to prioritise our Covid-19 response so, with the approval of the O&S Commission, the panel reviewed the findings of the three reports. Several organisations also expressed a desire to get involved.

The panel heard evidence from carers, carers support groups, faith groups, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust, Community Mental Health Trust and councillors representing self-help groups and day centres. We also heard from the Older Person's Community Champion.

The panel considered the issue of digital inclusion and invited the Assistant Director: Customer Experience, Digital and ICT to take part in the review. Her involvement proved pivotal to the review outcomes, which focus on the need for the Health and Wellbeing Board to prioritise social isolation and loneliness to ensure a holistic approach to statutory, voluntary and charity sector projects. The recommendations include a 'One Stop Shop' for signposting services, and the development of digital solutions to underpin improvements. A scrutiny review into mental health services provision in the borough is also recommended. All of the recommendations from this review will be considered at the Commission in April.

### **Blue Badge scheme**

The O&S Commission agreed that the panel should scrutinise the issue of awarding blue badges in Bracknell Forest, immediately after the completion of the social isolation and loneliness review.

The requirement for scrutiny arose following several complaints to councillors and a local newspaper article highlighting a discrepancy in allocation outcomes between Bracknell Forest Council and other local authorities. The article suggested poor performance from the council in relation to applicants with hidden disabilities. The O&S Commission agreed that, notwithstanding a broadly clean bill of health from the Local

Authority Ombudsman in relation to the process, the underlying reasons for the difference in outcomes need to be understood.

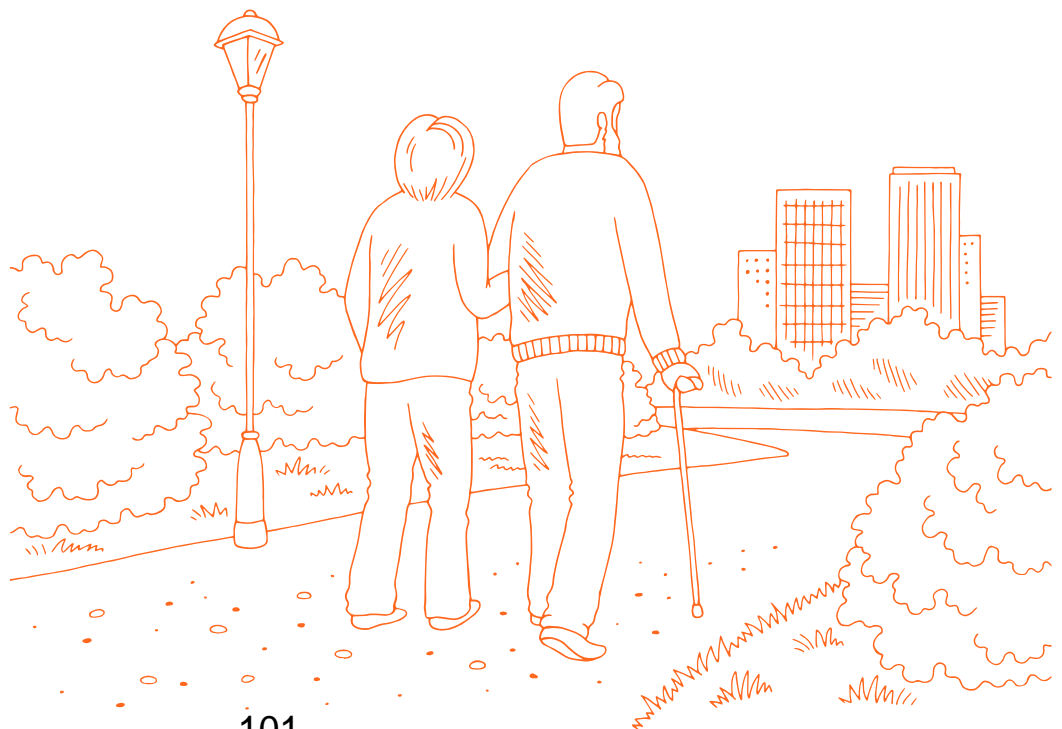
This review is in the planning phase with the scrutiny work being carried out in April.

## Observations

The big difficulty this year has been trying to involve the most relevant senior officers and partner organisations when they are leading the Covid-19 response.

In the past, undertaking scrutiny via evening meetings at Times Square may have been a barrier for some participants. Moving to online meetings has meant some meetings have been held at different times (daytime or early evening). This has suited some participants, but not all, and is a change from which we have learned.

In general, remote meetings have allowed a wider range of members and witnesses to attend as there is no need to travel and it is easier to attend for short segments. Reviews are best when there is participation from many outside parties sharing experience that is relevant to the scope. Wide participation also helps outcomes as participants support and implement the agreed recommendations. The practice of remote meetings should be embraced and next year, if regulations allow, meetings could be on a blended face-to-face and remote basis.



## Climate change O&S Commission Vice-chair: Councillor Tony Virgo



In support of this, the council hosted a climate change market place in March 2020 where council officers and external partners showcased the projects making a sustainable difference to council services. The Commission workshop that followed identified a number of projects to

be considered in the developing strategy. Several O&S members subsequently took action over the summer, carrying out individual research into areas from air quality to schools infrastructure to water dispensers.

On 2 December, the Commission reviewed this research and further discussed climate change with external experts. The resulting suggestions were presented to Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director Delivery, who is coordinating the council's overall strategy. The Commission endorsed the draft strategy and recommended that an advisory group be set up to focus on driving the strategy forward and to coordinate the expertise amongst parish councillors, action groups and experts in the field. The meeting also commissioned a review into the opportunities to use community leadership to harness the collective contributions required from residents to fight climate change.

The focus on climate change continues and, in February, the Commission proposed eight members to be part of a cross-party advisory panel for climate change being set up by the Executive.

**I would like to thank all the members who have made strong contributions to our climate change response over this period for their continued commitment to making a real difference in the fight against climate change.**



## Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel

### Panel membership:

Councillor Mrs Birch (Chair), Councillor Brossard (Vice-chair)

Councillors Ms Gaw, Mrs Hamilton, Gbadebo, Ms Hayes, Ms Merry, Skinner, Temperton

Parent governor representatives (voting): Mark Glanville, Tracey Wright

### Strategic themes:

Education and skills

Economic resilience

## Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

### Panel membership:

Councillor Porter (Chair), Mrs McKenzie-Boyle (Vice-chair)

Councillors Angell, Brossard, Brown, Ms Gaw, Mrs Ingham, Kennedy, Kirke

### Strategic themes:

Communities

Protecting and enhancing our environment

## Wellbeing and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Panel

### Panel membership:

Councillor Tullett (Chair), Councillor Mrs Mattick (Vice-chair)

Councillors Allen, Atkinson, Bhandari, Brossard, Finch, M J Gibson, Mrs L Gibson, McLean, Skinner, Temperton

### Strategic themes:

Caring for you and your family

Value for money

Each panel is responsible for two themes from the Council Plan. By aligning activity areas with strategic themes, O&S can focus on topics that closely support the council's objectives over the four-year administration period.

These arrangements recognise that scrutiny is most effective when operating the task and finish group model rather than as sub-committee. Panels work flexibly to carry out focussed enquiries and deep dive reviews across a wide range of topics in support of the council's objectives. Panels meet as required to deliver the work programme rather than on a pre-agreed fixed cycle.

The format is also flexible, and activities range from a single scrutiny panel meeting on an issue to a three - six month focussed review. In addition to the core panel membership, all non-Executive members can take part in any review work. This enables the O&S function to tap into the skills and knowledge of members across a wide variety of topics. It also means that councillors who need to balance external responsibilities can be involved effectively based on their availability, interests and knowledge.

This approach recognises the importance of non-Executive members' involvement in policy development and pre-decision input and scrutiny, ensuring that scrutiny not only provides challenge but also actively contributes to the work of the council.

## Getting involved

Overview and scrutiny activities benefit from a wide range of knowledge, experience and viewpoints and the Commission is keen to encourage wider participation. Review recommendations help shape the services we deliver for residents. Here are some insights from officers about what they gained from recent reviews.

**"I've been invited to contribute to a couple of O&S reviews this year. Although they can be challenging, the sessions are always valuable and make me and my team think. Panels are keen to look at technology and understand how the council can use it to improve the lives of residents and make services more efficient. They ask relevant questions and give insights we may not have considered before which helps us all achieve a better outcome."**

Bobby Mulheir, Assistant Director: Customer Experience, Digital and ICT

**"The timing of the O & S review into apprenticeships coincided with the pandemic. It gave us the opportunity to share how we had adapted our services to continue providing effective support to children and young people, as well as to factually present the challenges we were experiencing. The resulting findings and recommendations are closely linked to the Education and Improvement strategy and will support the strategic priorities of the department."**

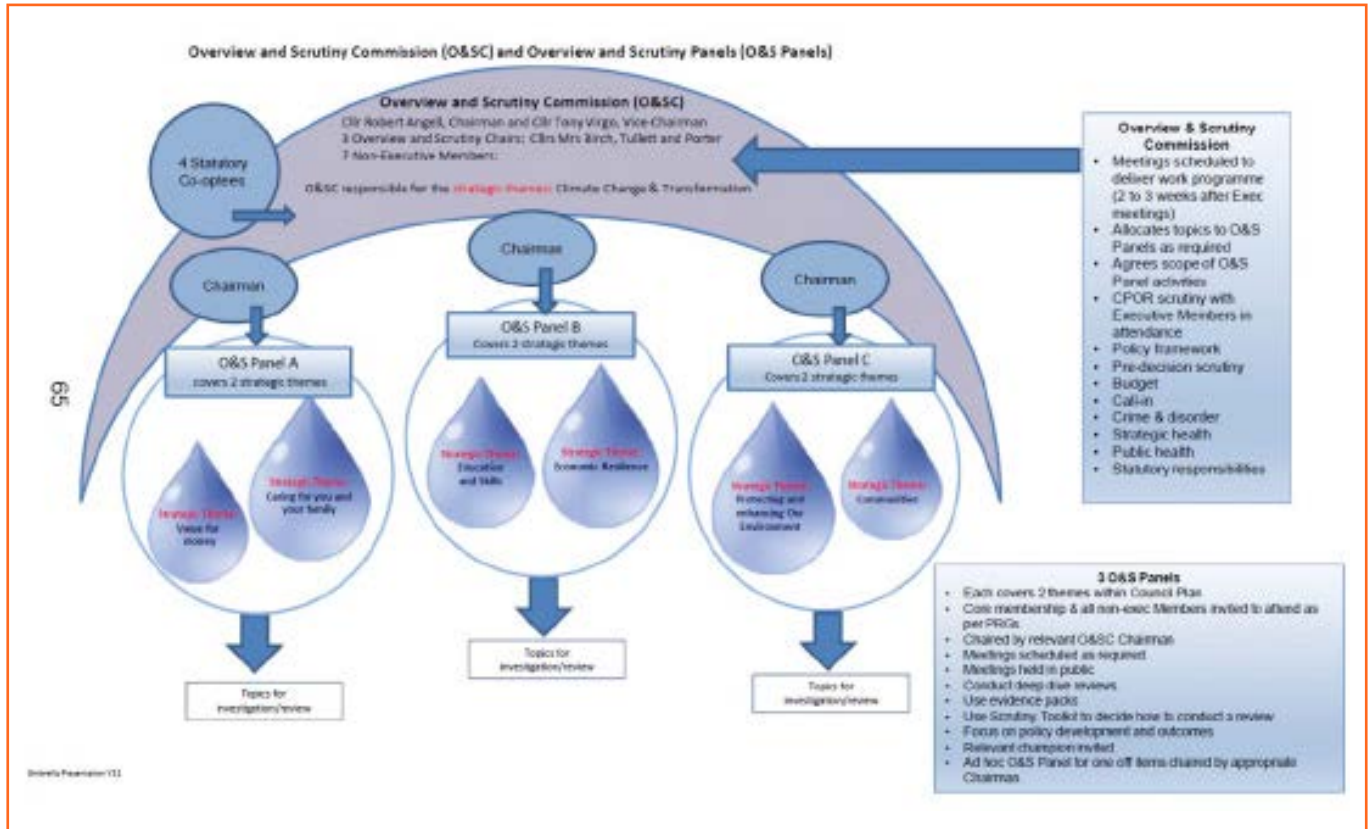
Kashif Nawaz, Head of Children's Support Services

Find out more about the overview and scrutiny work programme. If you would like to be involved in future activities contact [committee@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:committee@bracknell-forest.gov.uk).



## Appendix A

### Revised overview and scrutiny arrangements, in place since November 2019







**TO: Council**  
**21 April 2021**

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**CHAMPIONS' ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**  
**Executive Director: Delivery – Democratic and Registration Services**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The attached Annual Report appraises all Members of the work undertaken by the Council's four Champions during the year 2020-21. The report informs Members of activities and their outcomes.
- 1.2 As part of the Council's Constitution one of the Champions' key tasks is to submit an annual report on work undertaken throughout the year for consideration by the Council.

## **2.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 2.1 At its discretion, the Council may, from time to time, designate Champions from amongst Councillors who are not Members of the Executive. The Council currently has five Champions:
- Commuters' Champion - Councillor Nigel Atkinson
  - Large Business Champion – Councillor Ankur Shiv Bhandari
  - Small Business Champion - Councillor Bob Wade
  - Older People's Champion - Councillor Moira Gaw
  - Voluntary Sector Champion - Councillor Mike Gibson
- 2.2 The role and function of a Council Champion is to act as a positive focus for the local community at elected member level in respect of the relevant section of the community or range of activities designated by the Council. This is to ensure that full consideration is given to the impact of Council activities and decisions upon the section of the community or range of activities.
- 2.3 The key tasks of Council Champions are to:
- (a) To make contact with local organisations concerned with the designated section of the community or range of activities and to establish effective and regular consultation arrangements with those organisations.
  - (b) To represent the views of such organisations to Officers, the Council, the Executive, Overview and Scrutiny Panels and other Committees, on all relevant aspects of the Council's activities.
  - (c) To act as an advocate on behalf of the relevant section of the community or range of activities within the Council as an organisation and to the wider community.
  - (d) To become familiar with the needs and priorities of the relevant section of the community, or range of activities concerned, and to weigh up interests expressed in order to provide sound advice on the implications of alternative courses of action.

- (e) To feedback decisions of the Borough Council and to explain the Council's position on specific issues of concern to relevant organisations and to individuals involved.
- (f) To publish an annual report on work undertaken over each year for consideration by the Council.
- (g) To appoint Panels to support their work where this would not overlap with other established liaison or consultative mechanisms, in line with the requirements of the Council's constitution.

### **3.0 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 3.1 The role of Council Champion is to ensure that full consideration is given to the impact of Council activities and decisions upon the section of the community or range of activities which they represent.

### **4.0 STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

- 4.1 None relevant to this report.

#### Background Papers

None.

#### Contact for further information

Ann Moore, Head of Democratic and Registration Services – 01344 352260  
[ann.moore@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:ann.moore@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)



## **Champions' Annual Report**

**2020-2021**

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The purpose of this report is to appraise all Members of the work and progress undertaken by the Council’s Champions during the year 2020-2021. These reports cover the period May 2020 to May 2021. With the continual changes in Covid, these reports do not necessarily reflect the current Covid impact.

The report informs Members of activities and their outcomes and outlines proposed future activities.

# Small Business Champion

## Councillor Bob Wade



### 1.0 The Business Environment

The coronavirus outbreak has forced organisations to re-evaluate how contact centres are operated; how employees deliver relevant customer experiences; where they work; and how digital channels can be used to support business continuity through the crisis and beyond.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has forever changed our experiences as customers, employees and residents. Our attitudes and behaviours are changing as a result. The crisis is fundamentally changing how and what consumers buy and is accelerating immense structural changes in the consumer goods industry.

With these emerging new behaviours, organisations have an opportunity to accelerate the move to digital commerce, by expanding existing offerings and creating new lines of service to capture new marketplace opportunities and digital customer segments.

Immediate action is needed to address short-term liquidity challenges, but also to solve for costs, profitability and generate funding to invest in new opportunities. Many are faced with plummeting sales and revenue and increased costs. Interventions to adapt may require investments in key technologies, processes and people. For some, liquidity has become a matter of survival.

In the middle of all of this, is post-Brexit! One impact on UK businesses of leaving the EU, has been a shrinkage in workforce. Since the referendum, the UK has seen a 70% decrease in net EU migration. This is especially problematic because, until now, positive net migration has made up for an ageing homegrown workforce coupled with a reluctance for the UK workforce to do certain seasonal jobs.

All in all, the next few years will be extremely challenging and there will be significant changes in the business, charitable sectors, and the additional National Health Service challenges, including future pandemic services/vaccinations.

The impact of having to live with the Covid virus (and others?) together with the teething problems of post Brexit and forging new trading alliances; coupled with the e-commerce and taxing issues; **will keep small businesses hands full!!**

### 2.0 The High Street

Nobody needs reminding that 2020 wreaked havoc on retail, but the grand shake-up has spawned some invaluable ideas giving rise to new trends, tactics and innovations. The High Street must now move towards a “community centre” environment – a place to go, not just to shop.

Many anchor stores have already suffered with John Lewis set to make 18 (of 47) store closures after falling to its first ever annual loss in 175 years - dramatically affecting their supply chains. They also plan to introduce JL-branded areas into their Waitrose supermarkets. JL online shopping now accounts for 75% of sales compared to 42% pre-pandemic.

Work needs to be done to create “destination” shopping locations to encourage us to continue to physically shop. There is a need to build models for imaginative shopping areas that cater for the needs of the 21st century consumer who want more than just stores open 9-5.

There is a need to make shopping an immersive experience that people want to visit and share on social media; bringing all this together to create a future retail experience which combines the best of online and physical retail.

Much more emphasis will be put on retailers who can offer an experience with added value. People now want more out of their shopping experiences. High streets that can offer an “all round experience” should do well.

Unfortunately, the high streets that cannot offer a broader experience will not be able to compete with online shopping - if you can get it cheaper online, why leave the house?

Taxing online sales will not stop this on-line trend from continuing its current upward trajectory. This challenge must be recognised by all traders working together and taking advantage of other agencies and local councils in promoting their local assets.

The need to re-invent our high streets becomes more urgent every day. The future vision of The Lexicon continues to progress. The refurbishment of Princess Square and the development of The Deck continues.

The new affordable homes, shops, leisure and health facilities are one step closer as BFC announced its development partner to take forward the town centre’s next phase of regeneration focusing on key areas adjacent to the main Lexicon retail area.



### **3.0 Working from Home (WFH)**

Many firms have announced plans to allow at least part-time remote work in the post-pandemic world. However, hybrid work has its limitations. WFH workers can have less opportunity to chat with colleagues and bosses, and some research shows people in an office get promoted more frequently than remote workers.

Certain groups can be more affected than others including introverts, who can find it harder to be vocal in remote meetings, and people with care responsibilities whose careers can be impacted by being less visible. Homeworkers miss out on the post-meeting huddles when many real decisions can get made.

However, WFH is here to stay. The future landscape is going to change with this new working culture. Many companies have opted to reduce their office space, and some have completely moved to a WFH model. These changes will affect the future culture in the workplace. It must be remembered that it is not always easier to perform duties from home. The challenge is to create a healthy organisation for the future.

#### **4.0 Mental Health Issues**

The past 12 months have been tumultuous. As we continue to adapt to a new “virtual” WFH environment, many have found themselves at an emotional crossroads with increasing rates of anxiety, depression, impatience and potential burnout.

Clearly, the need for positive mental health is essential to guarantee consistent enthusiasm for growth and high levels of natural energy and passion, as well as high levels of engagement.

Whilst business used to be founded on performance and pay, it is suggested that there is now a third critical criteria for success – purpose. There is a need to promote the organisation’s purpose relevant to the individuals working within it. This culture must value open and focused listening and feedback, repeatedly asking team members of all levels the question, “How can I help?” and making expert advice and support easily and confidentially available to staff, if required. Feedback and commentary from staff must lead to action.

#### **5.0 Prompt Payment to SMCs**

Large business chiefs have been told they must pay SMC suppliers within 30 days as the government seeks to strengthen the Prompt Payment Code and offer support to cash-strapped small businesses. Almost 3,000 firms have signed the code — a voluntary but widely adhered to pledge introduced in 2008 — but many small firms still complain of payment delays. The Federation of Small Businesses estimates around 50,000 small companies have gone under annually because of late payments. This is particularly challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **6.0 The Labour Market**

Last year saw big shifts in the labour market as the pandemic rapidly changed our habits. Areas of job growth were often linked to this with e-commerce, customer service, coaching, creative freelancing and healthcare among the sectors where hiring rose. Hiring for e-commerce roles was up 143% on 2019 as online shopping rapidly expanded. The highest growth was between April to October 2020.

Healthcare support staff, including roles such as carers, saw hiring double, with the majority being women. Construction saw strong growth too, as did finance. Of the 15 fastest growing job categories, finance had the most working from home openings.

#### **7.0 Directors of Small-Limited Companies**

Some 2+ million small-limited companies have been excluded from any of the Treasury COVID-19 support schemes. Directors have not been eligible for the self-employment income support scheme. Many do not qualify for small business grants, as they are not in commercial premises.

Although the bounce-back loan scheme is available to some, many do not see taking on large debt in such an uncertain business landscape, as a realistic option.

Furlough is a Catch-22 for company directors. Unpredictable cashflow means their salaries are low, so the scheme does not cover their living expenses. And if they furlough, they are not allowed to work on saving the business!



The Treasury is being lobbied by many parties to adopt the policy proposal for the Director's Income Support Scheme (DISS). Encompassing a Limited Companies corporation tax rebate; convert Bounce-Back Loans to Grants; increase the discretionary grant fund allocated to local authorities; to allow furlough for all Limited Company directors to continue to work to support their businesses and extend Business Support Grants to all small businesses. To date HMG have not responded.

## **8.0 SME borrowing**

Almost half of the UK's small and medium-sized businesses sought external financing in 2020 because of the pandemic, lifting total outstanding bank debt to £213 billion.

British Business Bank's annual SME finance report found 43% of companies received funding from financial institutions as well as government-backed emergency loans and grants, compared to 13% in 2019. Another survey revealed a third of business owners expected to shrink over the next 12 months echoing Bank of England predictions that £22b may never be repaid.

BFC has throughout the past year delivered on all the government financial support schemes (over £10M).

## **9.0 South Hill Park (SHP)**

Since the Government announcement regarding the road map for when venues can re-open, SHP has been busy planning a summer season of courses and workshops, indoor and outdoor entertainment, and cinema screenings.

SHP has thanked everyone for the kind wishes and support over the past months. The response to their fundraising campaign has been fantastic, raising over £320K. Even in tough times there is amazing community support.

## **10.0 BFC Support for the Business Sector**

The Council has focused its support in two broad areas:

- Coronavirus response measures
- Advice, guidance and information

### **Coronavirus response measures:**

From the first Lockdown in March 2020, the Council has devised and implemented a series of measures to manage the initial closure of non-essential businesses and services through the following actions:

- Signage, barriers, hand sanitizers and marshalling of retail centres.
- Distribution of Covid risk information to enable businesses.
- Operational adjustments to car parks and associated facilities.
- Support for outbreak management through our Public Health and Environmental Health functions.
- Online briefings and webinars to assist safe reopening and return to work.

### Advice, guidance and information:

- Worked closely with the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and TV Chambers of Commerce to share and disseminate key information and advice in relation to grants, furlough schemes etc.
- Thames Valley Berkshire Business Growth Hub provides the direct B2B advice and support on the Council's behalf.
- Collaboration with the Bracknell Business Improvement District (BID) to disseminate information and react to specific business queries.
- The Council undertook two business surveys in 2020 covering business infrastructure and skills. Both surveys have been published and widely shared to help inform the recovery and renewal strategies.
- The impact of COVID-19 on Bracknell Forest businesses, how to boost the local economy and aspirations for the borough through the Economic & Skills Development Partnership (ESDP).

### 11.0 Economic & Skills Development Partnership

Bracknell Forest **Economic & Skills Development Partnership** facilitates and promotes the continued economic development of Bracknell Forest.



#### The ESDP Event - Securing Bracknell Forest's Business Future:

Late last year, 45 delegates from Bracknell Forest businesses and Bracknell Forest Council were joined by the MP James Sunderland in an on-line discussion on securing Bracknell Forest's business future as it recovers from the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Despite the pandemic, 76% of Bracknell Forest's enterprises are still trading, with 28% of businesses benefiting from the government's Furlough Scheme, and around half of company employees working from home.

### 12.0 Bracknell Investment Group



Amongst the projects under development, the Bracknell Investment Group (BID) area will be looking at developing the green infrastructure within the business area and that, while a Business Plan is in place, there is flexibility to address any issues arising.

Thames Valley Police had allocated 2 PCSOs to cover the BID area, and that a Police 'base' is to be established within the area.

In response to questions relating to COVID-19, it was stated that the collection of the BID Levy is unaffected by the recent government business rates relief schemes as payment is statutory.

Bracknell BID has continued to publish its series of weekly 'E-News' bulletins for BID area organisations and others who find them useful. The E-News bulletins provide information about the BID and give guidance on where businesses can find information about government support in recovering from the COVID-19 Pandemic.

News about the Bracknell BID can be found at: <https://bracknellbid.co.uk/about-bracknell-bid/bracknell-bid-news/>

### **13.0 Networking**

During the past year, networking has essentially been through virtual meetings. Despite some “Zoom/Teams” fatigue and the use of social media, SMEs have been maintaining their contacts on a very regular basis.

As Small Business Champion, it has been challenging to keep on top of the business environment; ensuring that the council services are understood and delivered to SMEs, particularly in retail.

### **14.0 Conclusion**

Britain’s economy contracted by 10% in 2020, its biggest slump in 300 years, with a 4% dip projected in the first three months of 2021.

Although current inflation is low, there is an undercurrent of increasing costs. The Care sector is finding the need to increase their fees well above inflation.

Struggles within the UK’s retail sector are not limited to high street shops, as a combination of high demand and shipping cost issues is causing shortages in many imported goods and services.

Businesses need to be constantly innovating to match market changes and changes in technology. Understandably, SME business owners are busy with the day-to-day issues, but they must think about potential changes and contemplate the future.

In future, some companies will remain 100% remote, while some are considering a hybrid approach and of course some companies want everyone back. Whatever way companies move forward, there will be obstacles as people navigate the next phase of this Covid driven WFH environment. In addition, hybrid workforces, where staff split days between going to the office and working remotely, could create inequalities.

The one theme spanning the whole pandemic is the **resilience** shown throughout the business and community environments. During this time there has been remarkably high levels of creativeness, innovation, health care and social awareness. For example, the creation of so many vaccines within a year (rather than 10) is incredible.

Despite the setbacks of Covid and Brexit, hopefully the future will reflect the UK’s ability to rise to the challenges and those less fortunate will be supported by us all.

**Councillor Bob Wade**

[bob.wade@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:bob.wade@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

## Commuter Champion

### Councillor Nigel Atkinson



#### Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about significant changes for both commuters and public transport operators in the last 12 months and for me, this has been the first year for many years, where working from home has replaced my regular train commute. The Government message to public transport users over most of the last year has been to avoid using public transport and travel by other means. Train patronage dropped to circa 95% below pre-pandemic levels in late March/April 2020 and train and bus timetables have had to be modified at short notice to react to the national lockdowns.

We have effectively seen the renationalisation of the railways, with both our train operating companies (TOC) Great Western Railway (GWR) and South Western Railway (SWR) operating under Government short term 'Emergency Measures Agreements' (EMA), where the Government has taken on franchise commercial risks. GWR's franchise will operate under an EMA until at least 26 June 2021 and the Department for Transport (DfT) has stated that it intends to commence discussions with the TOCs including GWR, to transition to new directly awarded contracts for the longer term. SWR is currently operating under a Government 'Emergency Recovery Measures Agreement', which succeeded the EMAs. This will expire at the end of March 2021 when SWR's franchise will become a management contract. Control of the franchise and nearly all commercial risk will pass to the Department for Transport, with this agreement in place until at least 1 April 2023.

So, what does all of this mean for Bracknell Forest residents who are intending to resume commuting by train after the end of this second lockdown? First Group's Chief Executive Matthew Gregory said: *'We welcome this agreement, which marks a further evolution of the contractual framework for our SWR train operating company, both in the context of providing resilient services throughout the coronavirus pandemic and also a more sustainable long-term approach.'*

*'These new directly awarded management contracts will focus on passengers and operational performance, with a more appropriate balance of risk and reward. We look forward to working constructively with the DfT to make this a reality, and to use our expertise and understanding of the needs of our customers to deliver improvements that we know passengers want.'*

It is too early to tell what effect these new operating regimes will have for commuters, but we have seen recent significant improvements in train punctuality, albeit with a much-reduced timetable, and there has been a marked improvement in the cleanliness of trains.

A key issue for rail commuters when they return to work, is the ticketing structure that will be in place post lockdown that takes account of hybrid working, where commuters may work from home 2 to 3 days per week.

I have been Lobbying James Sunderland MP for Government clarification on this, and the Government has recently announced that it has written to all TOCs to ask that they begin immediate work on developing a flexible season ticket, which will be able to be used two to three times per week at discounted prices. The current intention is that these will be introduced from June 2021, when lockdown restrictions are due to end.

Government taking control of the rail franchises as a result of the pandemic, has made it harder to engage with GWR and SWR on investment opportunities that will benefit our residents. I have made some progress with GWR on this, as outlined in Section 1 below.

Buses have suffered a similar fate to trains in lockdown, with a similar Government message to avoid travelling on buses wherever possible. This has applied to Reading Buses, owner of Courtney Buses and operator of the Green Line routes 702/703. The Government has recently announced a significant £3bn 'bus revolution' investment across England, which will result in passengers benefiting from more frequent, reliable, easier to use and cheaper bus services. This is discussed in more detail in Section 3.

## 1.0 Great Western Railway (GWR)

The new trains for journeys through Crowthorne and Sandhurst Stations that I mentioned in last year's report, have still not entered into service. I have been asking GWR for updates on the introduction of these trains on a regular basis. COVID-19 related issues have been given as the reason for the delay, particularly in relation to driver training. The first unit, has though, been delivered to Reading Depot (see photo below). Discussions with David Strunz, Assistant Regional Development Manager at GWR continue in terms of BFC being invited to a launch event for these trains, which as I reported last year, are being rebuilt from former London commuter trains. They will be bi-mode diesel and electric, using the third rail electrical power supply for part of the Reading to Redhill and Gatwick journeys. This is a welcome move from an environmental and sustainability perspective, as they will be replacing diesel only trains. However, it is important that these 'new' trains are of an equivalent standard to brand-new trains being introduced elsewhere, so that our commuters enjoy the same benefits as on lines with brand new trains.



I attended a site visit to Crowthorne Station with Stuart Jefferies, BFC Transport Strategy Manager and David Strunz on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020, to investigate opportunities to improve the parking at this station and reduce commuter on-street parking in local roads. As part of the new Local Plan, the development of the adjacent Derby Fields site will provide an opportunity to increase the size of the existing station car park and refresh and improve the cycle parking facilities to make these more attractive.

At Sandhurst Station, I have been in discussion with David Strunz about providing more cycle storage capacity. This station has limited parking facilities and so any increase in cycle storage would relieve pressure on commuter parking in local streets. This station is not easy to find an affordable workable and secure solution, but we are continuing to investigate options.

I attended a GWR Stakeholder Conference on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

## 2.0 South Western Railway (SWR)



In last year's report, I covered the then extensive and prolonged guard strike throughout December 2020 and significant losses that SWR announced in January 2020. At that time, questions were being raised about the continuing ability of SWR to operate its franchise and that nationalisation may be likely, with the Government taking over this franchise train services.

As I outlined in my overview, that is effectively what has happened, albeit as a result of the pandemic. At least this might now provide a period of stability for the SWR franchise, although similar challenges exist as with GWR for investment funding, now that the TOCs are Government controlled. These factors have made it difficult to engage with SWR, but commuters still face the same issues and so it is important that we continue to lobby SWR to ensure the best possible outcomes for our commuters and other train users.

The new Class 701 trains that were due to be introduced last year have also not entered service. Again, COVID-19 issues and manpower shortages at Bombardier, the train manufacturer have been cited by SWR as the reason for delay. Recent discussions with David Wilby, SWR Regional Development Manager have indicated that Summer 2021 is the current SWR forecast date for their introduction. A SWR launch ceremony for this £1bn fleet was held on 14 October 2020, where it was announced that these trains would be branded as 'Arterio'. On a more positive note, some of these units have now arrived on the SWR network and are currently undergoing testing and driver training.



I have continued to lobby to ensure that these new Arterio trains will be suitable for journey times of an hour or more on the Bracknell to Waterloo railway line, with sufficient seat legroom and fold down tables at seats, to allow commuters to work on their laptops on the train. I raised this concern again at the SWR Stakeholder meeting on 5 November 2020, but didn't receive a very positive reply from SWR's Managing Director, Mark Hopwood. These trains will serve a number of different inner and outer suburban routes and it seems that their design has focused on high-capacity inner suburban routes in terms of seat pitch and lack of at seat fold-down table. I will, however, continue to lobby for train carriage layouts that meet Bracknell Forest commuter needs.

Last year, SWR offered me the opportunity to visit the Bombardier factory in Derby where these new trains are being manufactured, to see the seating configuration. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, this visit which was originally scheduled for February 2020, has not taken place yet. It is more likely that with the delivery of several train units to the SWR Wimbledon depot, this visit will take place there.

### **3.0 Buses – £3bn 'bus revolution'**

On 15 March 2021, the Prime Minister launched a £3bn 'bus revolution' strategy aimed at providing passengers across England with more frequent, reliable, easier to use and cheaper bus services. This is aimed at driving increased bus patronage as the second lockdown ends and passengers need reassuring that bus use is safe post pandemic. This announcement also included reference to 4,000 new British-built electric or hydrogen buses that the Government announced last year.

BFC is planning to initiate mini videos to show residents that local buses offer a quality environment, with Wi-Fi available on many buses. With many commuters not planning to return to work on a full-time basis, driving up bus patronage will be challenging, hence the focus on marketing the bus routes in as positive a light as possible.

How the post COVID-19 and Government investment will impact the Courtney Bus routes operated by Reading Buses is too soon to know, but I will continue to monitor this and hopefully, a meeting can be arranged with Reading Buses for later in the year.

Whilst the introduction of electric buses in Bracknell Forest would be welcome and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) funding may be available for this, there are still challenges in securing this funding, particularly where other operators would see investment in Reading Buses as giving preferential treatment to one operator.

#### 4.0 Courtney Buses and White Bus



Local operator Courtney buses is slowly being rebranded as Thames Valley Buses, following the takeover by Reading Buses. Services have been impacted over the last year due to COVID-19, with patronage down and bus frequencies reduced. However, with the schools reopened on 8 March 2021, all Courtney services are now operating to their normal timetables.

As a result of BFC financial pressures, funding to support bus routes that are not commercially viable has unfortunately, been reduced recently. This has resulted in a number of service reductions, the most significant of which is the loss of the 6-day a week service 162/162A connecting Ascot, Winkfield and Winkfield Row to Bracknell town centre. Whilst the replacement 299 service operating on a reduced frequency on Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays offers a means for Northern Parish residents shopping in Bracknell Town Centre to continue to use the bus, there is no longer a viable means for the small number of regular commuters and secondary students who previously used this route, to travel by bus.

White Bus service X94 introduced last year, linking Ascot Heatherwood and Frimley Park Hospitals continues to operate. COVID-19 has impacted this route like many others, but as lockdown ends, it is hoped that this route will continue to operate, linking these two hospitals together.

#### 5.0 Active Travel

As lockdown measures ease, the Government is promoting 'Active Travel', with £175m of funding announced in November 2020 to support cycling and walking. This would include in connection with commuter journeys.

This Government initiative is aimed at reducing road traffic and reallocating road space for active travel use. In other words, creating cycle lanes on existing roads. Bracknell Forest is fortunate to already have an extensive segregated cycle route network which cyclists perceive to be safer than sharing the road with vehicles. Notwithstanding this, opportunities will be sought to try to benefit from any Government funding available for suitable schemes.

#### 6.0 Berkshire Local Transport Body and the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

I am a nominated substitute on the Berkshire Local Transport Body and the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), and attended meetings in March, June and November 2020, and March 2021. This body provides funding from a multi-million-pound devolved Government transport budget. Recent and ongoing Bracknell Forest highway



projects that have benefited from this funding include the A322 Downshire Way dualling and the ongoing A3095 improvements.

Funding is being secured for further improvements on the A322 Bagshot Road to improve capacity at the Sports Centre Roundabout.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank BFC Highways and Transport officers for their continued help, advice and support to me in the role of Commuter Champion over the last 12 months.

**Councillor Nigel Atkinson**

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# Older People's Champion

## Councillor Moira Gaw



### Overview

For the year to the end of March 2021, the principal focus has been on supporting older people along with the services and local interests they rely on, throughout the pandemic and beyond.

### 1.0 Vaccination Programme

The two Covid 19 vaccine sites in Bracknell have responded in line with both national timelines and guidance.

The majority of Bracknell residents aged 50 and over, as well as those residing in local care homes and those who are housebound or qualify in terms of being high-risk, an eligible frontline health or social care worker, have a high-risk condition, learning disability or the main carer for someone at high-risk from coronavirus have received their first dose of vaccine in line with the Joint Committees on Vaccination and immunisation guidelines. This is superb news for older people in Bracknell Forest and all made possible by local GP's, nurses, pharmacists, and paramedics as well as the army of local volunteers who have played a pivotal role in ensuring that both sites run smoothly.

### 2.0 Mayoral Support



I have been fortunate to be able to collaborate with the Mayor of Bracknell Forest, Councillor Ash Merry, with several Lockdown projects. A fantastic virtual Tea Party was held with the residents of Astbury Manor to celebrate V.J. day. This provided a good opportunity to explain the Mayoral Role and to show the Civic Regalia and hear some of the stories from residents who experienced V.J. day. It was also a very appropriate opportunity to thank the staff and residents virtually for their continued resilience and optimism.

### 3.0 Older Persons Day

The 1<sup>ST</sup> of October is Older Persons Day. A day recognised as an opportunity to acknowledge and appreciate the extraordinary contributions and achievements of older people. This year the day was recognised by a bespoke message delivered by the Mayor of Bracknell Forest for each older resident. It was a message of both hope for better times ahead, and grateful thanks for the continuing sacrifice and contribution made by older people in Bracknell Forest. The lights in Times Square turned deep pink to mark the occasion.

### 4.0 New Dementia Care Centre

Working in partnership with the local NHS to deliver a state of the art, 66 bed dementia care centre at Heathlands in Wildridings, remains a priority and is still on target for the operational date at the end of 2021. Work is progressing on this exciting new venture which will see the joint working model reflect the future care and nursing home provision in the Borough.

## 5.0 Age Concern Bracknell Forest

The well supported Age Concern facility in Crown Wood has had to remain closed to daily guests during the pandemic but the trustees have taken the opportunity to ensure the facilities are upgraded to meet the demands of life post pandemic. Included in their new unit is a bespoke cinema which can cater for all tastes in movies from musicals to westerns. I am looking forward to having a preview before the doors open again.



This unit was also able to support elderly people and their families over the Christmas period with non-perishable food packages complete with contact free collection.

At the AGM I learned of the new plans which include making the facilities at the Age Concern Unit in Crown Wood, available to other users who have a similar vision. The Wednesday Club which offers bespoke entertainment for older people also hopes to restart. This support club is held in Priestwood Community Centre.

## 6.0 Men's Sheds



The Men's Shed initiative has been very successful around the country and focusses attention in the main, on opportunities for men to mix with like minded contemporaries in a safe environment. The model created, allows for men to meet in a workshop environment where a common interest in making and crafting items for the local community is the focus. Men's Sheds are community spaces for men to connect, converse and create. The activities are often similar to those of garden sheds, but for groups of men to enjoy together. They help reduce loneliness and isolation, but most importantly, they are fun. Winkfield and Crowthorne Parish Councils have been actively assisting in the search for a facility to host a Mens Shed in Bracknell Forest.

## 7.0 Health and Wellbeing

Bracknell Forest has recognised the challenges the pandemic presented to Care Homes across the borough and the impact the virus and associated restrictions is having on care home residents, their families and front-line staff across health and social care. Joint working between the Council and its partners to build and maintain local care homes resilience is strong and will continue as the journey towards recovery and renewal progresses.

Full details can be found by following the link:

<https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/coronavirus-information-and-support/council-services/health-and-social-care-service-updates>

The Bracknell Forest "Help Yourself" community web site, is designed to help connect people to information, activities, and services to stay independent and well, is popular. The online community map provides details of 450+ community groups and activities:

<http://health.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/>

The principal interface between the community and the Council is by way of the Customer Services Team. The team is conscious that older people can need more help and to this end, the following is a brief outline of provision available:

If you set up an online account - <https://myaccount.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/> you can log enquiries, and track progress. You can also view your council tax account through here.

## 8.0 Businesses

It has been one of my priorities to ensure that all older residents are aware of opportunities to support businesses that provide discounts for them. This is a lengthy job and Winkfield Parish Council is nearing completion of the list of businesses operating within. All local businesses that provide a discounted service for older residents will be listed, from cafes to car washes, and from photo copiers to picture framers. This will serve a twofold purpose of providing businesses with a captive market and residents with opportunities to buy from businesses that serve them best. Crowthorne Parish Council are currently undertaking a similar exercise. The aim is that a Parish Community Directory will be created which can be rolled out at other Parish and Town Councils in the Borough. This facilitates easier updating of new provisions and services moving forwards.



Pictured is the Mayor of Bracknell Forest, Councillor Ash Merry at Oaktree Garden Centre. Older residents of the Borough can enjoy a discounted service every Wednesday.

## 9.0 Funding

During the Pandemic, much of the support network for the older community has had to close its doors. It has been a privilege to be able to direct different services to sources of possible funding to keep services abreast of what can be accessed. This has been directed via Parish Councils, the National Lottery Community Fund, Insulation grants and funding for homes, the Co-op local community fund and with the support of Involve, our local charity that helps and supports other charities and community groups in different ways. This has ensured that services for older people remain ready to open as soon as permitted. Other sources of funding for older people that have been promoted recently are: The Allen Lane Foundation, Charles Hayward Foundation, the Masonic Charitable Foundation, the Grocers Hall, and the Community Fund.

The Good Causes blue bin scheme is available for all residents to collect points to support different endeavours within the Borough. Older people from the Charters Short Mat Bowls Club which was started over 24 years ago and has members aged from 65 to 89, has recently benefitted from the scheme. Keeping the club running means a lot to them. Other organisations representing older people who have benefitted from the Good Causes Scheme are: Age Concern Bracknell Forest, Wednesday Welcome Club, Coats, and the Sandhurst Day centre. The £1000 tri-monthly sponsorship is split between three good causes.

## **10.0 Isolation and Loneliness Review**

There is no agreed definition of “loneliness”. One explanation of loneliness is that it is a painful feeling that occurs when there is a gap, or a mismatch, between the number and quality of social relationships and connections that we have, and those we would like. The Wellbeing and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Panel conducted a review of isolation and loneliness, which I was fortunate to contribute to, and found that although the problem is widespread and affects all demographics, older people are suffering disproportionately particularly where they are cut off from the digital world. One of the recommendations moving forward, is to provide intuitive and assisted technology in conjunction with up-skilling in the relevant community age groups, which will benefit residents by informing them directly of available services and resources.

## **11.0 Circular Walks**

As an extension of the very popular circular walk in Sandhurst, a pilot scheme was led by Winkfield Parish Council. The aim was to encourage residents to follow a measurable health route sited at Ascot Jubilee. Other circular walks are planned for Asher Park and Allsmoor. The key messages delivered were that walking briskly for 10 minutes counts as exercise, being active is good for your mind and body and only 30 minutes a day of walking alleviates depression. This has proved popular, particularly with older residents who are not able to walk very long distances and affords a safe exercise medium while also providing some challenge. When the current restrictions are lifted, there will be opportunities to roll this programme out throughout the Borough where appropriate.

## **12.0 Older Drivers Forum**

Working in partnership with Thames Valley Alert and Thames Valley Police, the Older Drivers Forum has hosted two free webinars, aimed at helping and advising older drivers and their families and friends, on using the roads safely in order to drive safer for longer. Older motorists have a wealth of experience, confidence, and tolerance however, sight, hearing, reaction time and judgement of speed and distance may not be as sharp as it once was. The Older Drivers Forum is about keeping mature motorists on the road safely for longer. Building on the success of the webinars in November 2020, more places were allocated to accommodate all interested parties. Expert speakers were on hand to answer a range of questions posed by participants which encouraged and improved confidence on key areas such as night driving and tackling roundabouts.

## **13.0 Big Bingo**

Research has found that playing Bingo has multiple health benefits for older people. Improving listening skills and short-term memory skills. It also promotes socialisation, a key aspect of a happy and healthy lifestyle.

Plans are at an advanced stage (pandemic permitting) to host a Big Bingo event in the Lexicon, so that residents can celebrate with the older community of Bracknell Forest.

Thank you to both colleagues, officers and the many community groups who have helped with support and good advice during the year, the contributions have been very much appreciated. I am looking forward to both the challenges and the opportunities in the next year.

**Councillor Moira Gaw**

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# Large Business Champion

## Councillor Ankur Shiv Bhandari



### 1.0 The Large Business Focus

This is my first report as the Large Business Champion. I wish to start this by highlighting the reasoning behind an additional focus, separately on Large Businesses in the Bracknell Borough.

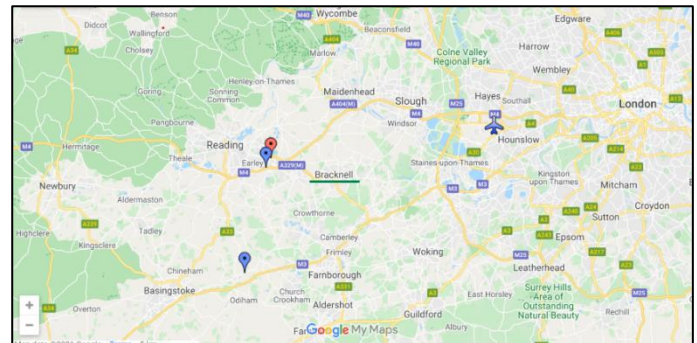
Historically, the business champion report has focused on the overall business scenario in the borough. However, now there is a distinction to focus on small and large businesses separately whilst at the same time, realising synergies where possible for both the categories. A business is classified as a large business if it has more than 250 employees. We are fortunate in our borough to have some fantastic large businesses such as Fujitsu, Waitrose, Panasonic, Boehringer Ingelheim, Syngenta, to name a few. The focus on large businesses is to ensure that our large businesses can get all the support they might need from the council and to attract new large businesses to the borough.

This last year has been challenging for almost everyone on many fronts, including our large businesses. This report will touch upon some of those challenges, but my report is primarily forward-looking. For this report, I will focus on the businesses that have a corporate presence in the borough of Bracknell Forest.

### 2.0 The Bracknell Advantage

Bracknell offers distinct advantages for large businesses to prosper in the borough. Some of the key benefits are:

- Proximity to a strong road network infrastructure with robust access to both M4 and M3 motorways.
- Proximity to Heathrow airport.
- Proximity to London and ease of access through road, rail and bus networks.
- Access to a strong talent pool due to its location.
- A preferred place to stay for employees supported by beautiful green parks and countryside, robust education provision for school children and a good IT infrastructure.
- 85.9% (68,200) of Bracknell Forest's working age population is economically active compared to an average of 82% of those in the South East and 79% in Great Britain.
- Bracknell Forest has a highly skilled work force with 42.7% of its' workforce being educated to NVQ level 4 (degree level) and above. This is marginally lower than the South East figure of 43.3% but higher than Great Britain's at 40.3%.
- Excellent infrastructure with a recently renovated town centre for which phase 2 was completed in 2017. When the Lexicon opened, the development included:



- 70 new retail and food and beverage outlets, including two 80,000 sq. ft stores housing Fenwick and Marks and Spencer, and a 12-screen cinema.
  - 3,800 spaces were provided in new or upgraded car parks.
  - 8 core buildings and 6 place-making squares for events and activities.
  - £6.5 million extra investment in the highway infrastructure from Bracknell Forest Council.
- Bracknell Forest also fares well in the latest iteration of the English Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019) where it ranks as the 284<sup>th</sup> least deprived area out of 317 local authorities.

### 3.0 The Journey so far

Bracknell has been home to many large businesses for several years including Panasonic, Waitrose, Fujitsu, Syngenta, Boehringer Ingelheim etc. However, we have also lost some big businesses or had their presence significantly curtailed such as Vodafone, BMW, Dell, HP etc. This highlights the need for effort to ensure both retention of existing large businesses and to attract new ones. Business needs change and we as a council need to see how best we can continue to support these changes. The renewed focus of Bracknell Forest Council to support large business will support this journey more strongly moving forward.



**syngenta** support these changes. The renewed focus of Bracknell Forest Council to support large business will support this journey more strongly moving forward.

### 4.0 Challenges and opportunities from Brexit

Brexit has opened many doors for businesses all over the country and large businesses in Bracknell have a distinct advantage to capitalise on this opportunity. This of course also comes with some challenges as any change brings. In collaboration with the Thames Valley Berkshire Business Growth Hub and Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Bracknell Forest Council is providing relevant information and support to our businesses. Some details can be viewed here:

- [Brexit Update Bulletin from Berkshire Growth Hub \(mailchi.mp\)](#)
- [One-to-one Brexit Advice & Support — Thames Valley Berkshire Business Growth Hub \(berkshirebusinesshub.co.uk\)](#)
- [Thames Valley Berkshire LEP Recovery and Renewal Plan-compressed.pdf](#)




[Home](#) > [The council and democracy](#) > [Brexit](#)



## Brexit

The UK has now left the EU and the transition period has ended.

You can check what you may need to do to adapt by answering the questions on the [Brexit checker](#).

### 5.0 Challenges and opportunities from the pandemic

The entire COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the overall physical, social, and economic wellbeing of Bracknell Forest large businesses. Although the impact has been largely detrimental, there are some opportunities that have emerged from it as well, such as:



- Increased comfort levels with flexible ways of working.
- Putting a spotlight back on the importance of science.
- Realisation of the importance of the growth of manufacturing and other non-retail sectors for a robust economy.

I am sure these factors will feed into the decision making of the future for many large businesses. From a council's point of view as well, these factors will provide input to future decision making. An example is the decision to move forward with the creation of a futuristic science park at the Syngenta Jealott's Hill site which has the potential to put Bracknell on the global scientific research map.

For now, the council in collaboration with its various partners, continues to provide support to businesses on managing the COVID-19 situation. Some details can be viewed here:

[Coronavirus: Advice for Businesses — Thames Valley Berkshire Business Growth Hub \(berkshirebusinesshub.co.uk\)](https://www.berkshirebusinesshub.co.uk/coronavirus-advice-for-businesses)

**Councillor Ankur Shiv Bhandari**  
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# Voluntary Sector Champion

## Councillor Mike Gibson



### Overview

Only a short while ago, last year's report was amid the pandemic and we were hoping that by this time the worst had been got through. Typing this in the middle of lockdown waiting for the first easing measures to come through I am wondering where we will be when the next report comes out. Volunteering and community spirit have been at the heart of surviving the necessary strictures that have been placed upon us. The vaccine roll out, again staffed by many volunteers in the organisation and management on maintaining a flow through of our residents, is just one of the many ways volunteers have been used to help deal with the pandemic. I know that Councillors have been volunteering in this capacity and my thanks go out to them.

### 1.0 Volunteering

There are many ways to volunteer and recently, given the need to self-isolate, I have had to look for other ways to help. Zoom and similar platforms have been an excellent way to keep in touch it also has allowed people greater accessibility to volunteer to engage and participate in groups that have previously not been able to offer such opportunities. For example, the Conservative Disability Group, of which I am a trustee, had 36 attendees at our AGM last month. Many of whom would not have been able to attend if the meeting was held on a face-to-face basis. We also hold weekly meetings where individuals have volunteered their time to talk about their experiences and relevant issues. I hope to be running such an event in the not too distant future.

<https://www.conservativedisabilitygroup.com/>

### 2.0 Music

I have been volunteering to MC musical concerts for "Live to your Living room" for artists such as Nancy Kerr and James Fagan. This has been with hundreds of audience members from all over the world and I recommend you have a look at the website:

<https://livetoyourlivingroom.com/>

Through volunteering to help I'm going to be hosting a shanty session "Forebitter or Worse" for the Oxford Folk Weekend 12 April which you will be disappointed to have missed before this report is presented to Full Council. Still there are valuable lessons to pass on the arts in Bracknell and beyond.

### 3.0 involve



involve have been doing their usual sterling work and I was very pleased to see that the Bracknell Town Council Mayor for 2020/21, Cllr Michael Titheridge has selected involve as the Charity to support during his mayoral year.

Involve have set up the Bracknell Volunteer Pool for those who want to be able to help out and volunteer within the community when they can, but who don't necessarily have the time to settle into a permanent, regular role.

<https://involve.community/volunteering/pool/>



I am sorry that the Chief Executive officer, Philip Cook, has moved on to pastures new. Those on the Council that have worked with Philip will know what a fantastic impact he has made in Bracknell since joining involve. His replacement, another Philip, Philip Bell, is already in situ and I look forward to working with him in the coming year.



As a gentle reminder for any of you who aren't on the reading list and to find out more about what involve does, and to sign up to get regular updates and hear news about the voluntary sector in Bracknell Forest, then just click here: <http://involve.community/newsletters/>

#### **4.0 CAB**

With the merging of Citizens Advice, Bracknell with Windsor and Maidenhead we are also losing Chief Executive Tina Stevenson to Reading. The merger will not be making any cuts and will be in a stronger position to serve their local communities.

I attended the recent AGM and I am assured of the continuing good work that the CAB carry out.

#### **5.0 Council and future work**

There has been some work continuing within the council such as the Loneliness and Isolation review under Cllr Malcolm Tullett, which has included looking at the voluntary sector within it as part of its review. Participation in this excellent review has triggered my desire to make a further review on the impact of Covid, specifically on the Voluntary Sector.

With the resources of the Council being targeted at where they are most needed, I have decided to set up a working group on the effects, both good and bad, Covid has had on the Voluntary Sector once the resources are available to achieve this. I have spoken to the deputy leader Cllr Dale Birch and agreed to look at this further and to be most effective, we need to be looking at it post Covid.

When resources are available, I will be setting up a group to look not only at where Covid has impacted on the Voluntary Sector, which we need to support, but also where new opportunities have arisen. It is important to recognise that where changes have been made, some have been for the better and it is important that we do not lose sight of these either.

There has been a massive increase in volunteering, and it will be important to harness this as a power to the good. Access for the disabled, older people, and the vulnerable has increased hugely using virtual platforms, as I have mentioned earlier. Whilst I do not intend to ignore where problems have arisen, it will be important to see the whole picture.

#### **6.0 Conclusion**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers in Bracknell Forest. Volunteering has a far-reaching impact on people's lives. I would encourage anybody to volunteer if they have a few hours a month to spare. It is very rewarding. Councillors are essentially volunteering so I commend this annual report to all of you again with my thanks. Here is a final link to involve if you know of someone who wants to get involved. <https://bracknellforestgetinvolved.org.uk/>

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To: Council  
21 April 2021

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## **Councillor Development Annual Report Executive Director of Delivery – Democratic and Registration Services**

### **1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To present to Council an overview of activity which has been completed to support councillor's development in 2020 – 2021.

### **2 Recommendation**

- 2.1 **That the councillor development annual report 2020 – 2021 be noted.**

### **3 Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1 Under the current strategy, councillors receive an annual report each year on the progress of member learning and development. This report details the progress made under each guiding principle and has a particular focus on learning undertaken to adapt to working in a pandemic.

### **4 Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 None. The development activities have been carried out in line with the Councillor Development Strategy 2020 – 2024.

### **5 Supporting Information**

- 5.1 The Councillor Development Strategy was developed by the Member Development Charter Steering Group in 2020. The Steering Group have reviewed the Strategy and determined it remains robust and relevant, so no amendments have been proposed.
- 5.2 The Councillor Development Strategy has 5 main principles which shape the member development programme and supporting activities:
- continuing to build on established activity
  - recognise the requirements of the councillor role and deliver training and support that is tailored to that role
  - ensure that content is engaging, relevant, up to date and pitched at an appropriate level
  - use a diverse and flexible range of delivery methods and
  - capitalise on opportunities to work with others.

## **6 Consultation and Other Considerations**

### Legal Advice

- 6.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

### Financial Advice

- 6.2 The costs associated with the Councillor development work detailed in the annual report 2020/21 have been contained within the 2020/21 budgets for approved conferences (£9248) and member training (£7,190).

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 An Equalities Impact Assessment initial screening has been completed and is attached at Appendix B.

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 Councillors have a pivotal role in taking forward the Council's objectives, therefore effective councillor development is essential to ensure that councillors enhance their knowledge, capabilities, networks and experiences and learn new skills. Without it there is a risk that the Council will not be as well placed to deliver its objectives.

### Climate Change Implications

- 6.6 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to:

Reduce emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>

The reasons the Council believes that this will reduce emissions is because training has been carried out remotely, therefore reducing the journey's taken by car and public transport to attend training in person.

### Background Papers

Member development annual report 2020 – 2021

### Contact for further information

Emma Young, Governance & Scrutiny Officer - 01344 352269

Emma.young@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

# Member Development 2020-2021

## What have we done?

### Continue to build on established activity & deliver tailored training opportunities

Member development aims to provide councillors with a range of learning opportunities; From a firm foundation of key skills to more specialist training depending on interests, the needs of residents and any additional responsibilities.

GDPR has been a particular focus as members have adapted to less reliance on paper records. Learning opportunities and support have included; cyber security training, top tips and information guides.

Equality and Diversity is another focus and the creation of the Member Equalities Working Group shows how important it is for everyone to feel included in everything we do.

## Use a diverse and flexible range of delivery methods



Remote meetings and lock down measures have meant council business has to be conducted differently. Councillors and Officers have had to adapt quickly and embraced the new challenge being presented. Although many people have missed the face to face contact, there have been some benefits to the new ways of working. These have included:

Training sessions have been recorded so councillors can catch up at a convenient time

Teams meetings mean that Councillors can log in from home, cutting down on travelling time

Teams has also been a useful way of Councillors contacting officers

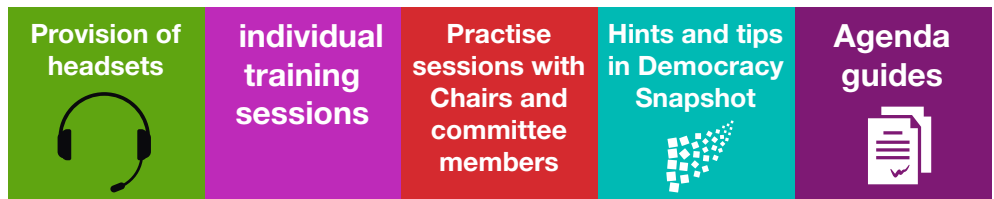
## Capitalise on opportunities to work with others

Partnership working opportunities have been more challenging this year as many of our partners were busy responding to residents needs and co-ordinating volunteers in response to the pandemic. We had a number of training opportunities provided by the LGA are available and have included a selection of E-learning modules from LGA and webinars. Webinar topics included:

- Digital inclusion and connectivity
- Taxi Licencing
- Social care and shielding vulnerable people

## Remote meetings

Councillors have been supported to develop new skills with support offered including:



Members were quickly up and running with the first online planning meeting on 23 April 20 just one month after lockdown started.

**“Member development has had to adapt, the swift implementation of remote meetings was an opportunity for learning. The delivery of events over webinar with recordings available has made sessions more accessible to more people especially when provided without additional cost” - Cllr Nick Allen**

## Democracy goes digital

Democratic engagement has been more important than ever as residents have looked to Community Leaders in times of uncertainty. Councillors have engaged with residents this year by:

- Leaders Blog published regularly on the website
- Local outbreak engagement forum
- Access to public meetings through the BFC You Tube Channel

## Mayoralty

The Mayor of Bracknell Forest Councillor Ash Merry, has connected with residents. Mayoral events in recent years have involved hand shaking, photo opportunities and sharing mince pies have been replaced with zoom calls, filming short videos, virtual meetings and socially distanced ribbon cutting. Despite many events being postponed or cancelled, the Mayor has attended events including a winter wonderland at Coppid Beach hotel and met 'Covid Ambassadors' at the Lexicon.



980 Twitter followers

Over 50 Tweets to residents

23 engagements

Online remembrance service

Online citizenship ceremonies

### Adapting to Covid-19 ways of working: one year on

- Twice weekly briefings with Chief Executive
- Total 77 meetings
- Average attendance of over 30 members

#### Support provided:

- Additional IT equipment including Headsets, development of an online meeting etiquette and practise remote meetings with committees.

## Democracy Snapshot



52 Issues

#### Topics included:

- IT Tips,
- Latest pandemic information
- Updates from partner organisations including Thames Valley Police, Involve and the Public Protection partnership.
- Important dates,
- Overview and Scrutiny Review updates
- Training opportunities
- Meetings list
- Ward alerts.

101 weekly recipients with average readership of 75%.

### Member Development in numbers:

10 Approved Conferences

21 Additional Conferences

3 Councillor development sessions

5 Training or information sessions

Councillors attended a total of 143 sessions an average of 3 each.

£285 per councillor spent on training and approved and additional conferences (not including Officer time)

### Councillor Blogs:

Councillors blogs were launched in December 2020 and so far we have published submissions from The Mayor, Councillor Ash Merry to wish staff Members a Merry Christmas. Councillor Pauline McKenzie on 'How volunteering enriched my life' which gave a wonderful insight into the hard work being undertaken at Sandhurst day centre and Councillor Ian Kirke's discussion with a mother whose Son has Downs Syndrome and his success playing rugby. If you would like to submit a blog, please contact Emma Young.

**BLOG**

**What's next?** The SEE Charter accreditation process for Member Development will start in 2021 which will involve providing evidence and interviewing members about their development opportunities. Watch for further information in Democracy Snapshot soon

**Look out for! New ways of delivering training and information sessions including briefing videos from Officers and updates to our intranet pages.**

## Initial Equalities Screening Record Form

<b>Date of Screening:</b> 31/03/2021	<b>Directorate:</b> Delivery	<b>Section:</b> Member Services	
<b>1. Activity to be assessed</b>	Member Development activity which includes training, support and engagement with residents.		
<b>2. What is the activity?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy/strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Review <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change		
<b>3. Is it a new or existing activity?</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New		
<b>4. Officer responsible for the screening</b>	Emma Young, Governance and Scrutiny Officer		
<b>5. Who are the members of the screening team?</b>	Emma Young		
<b>6. What is the purpose of the activity?</b>	To report to the Council the progress of learning and development activity completed in the last year.		
<b>7. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?</b>	Elected Members		
<b>Protected Characteristics</b>	<b>Please tick yes or no</b>	<b>Is there an impact?</b>	<b>What evidence do you have to support this?</b>
<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>	N	No impact identified.	The development activities will not impact racial equality but, should have an overall positive impact on all groups through widening learning opportunities.
<b>9. Racial equality</b>	N	No impact identified.	The development activities will not impact racial equality but, should have an overall positive impact on all groups through widening learning opportunities.
<b>10. Gender equality</b>	N	No impact identified	The development activities will not impact gender equality but, should have an overall positive impact on all groups through widening learning opportunities.
<b>11. Sexual orientation equality</b>	N	No impact identified.	The development activities will not impact sexual orientation equality but, should have an overall positive impact on all groups through widening learning opportunities.

<b>12. Gender re-assignment</b>		<b>N</b>	No impact identified.	The development activities will not impact on gender reassignment equality but, should have an overall positive impact on all groups through widening learning opportunities.
<b>13. Age equality</b>		<b>N</b>	No impact identified	The development activities will not impact age equality but, should have an overall positive impact on all groups through widening learning opportunities.
<b>14. Religion and belief equality</b>		<b>N</b>	No impact identified	The development activities will not impact any religious beliefs.
<b>15. Pregnancy and maternity equality</b>		<b>N</b>	No impact identified.	The development activities will not impact Pregnancy and maternity equality but, should have an overall positive impact on all groups through widening learning opportunities.
<b>16. Marriage and civil partnership equality</b>		<b>N</b>	No impact identified	The recommendations will have no impact on marriage or civil partnerships.
<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>	None identified.			
<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>		<b>N</b>	Learning and development activities are aimed at increasing equality for all members by giving them the tools and skills they need to complete their role.	
<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			



22. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?		N	This Equality Impact Assessment has been completed retrospectively.	
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>	
It is not expected that these development activities will affect any particular group.	April 2021	Kirsty Hunt	The annual report is received by Council	
24. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?	Democratic and registration services			
25. Please list the current actions undertaken to advance equality or examples of good practice identified as part of the screening?				
26. Assistant director's signature.	Signature:	<div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"> <b>APPROVED</b>  <i>By AnnMo at 12:51 pm, Apr 13, 2021</i> </div>	Date:	

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