



Corporate Performance Overview Report

1st Quarter: April-June 2008/09

Timothy Wheadon
Chief Executive

Overview of Council Performance

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out an overview of the Council's performance for the period April-June 2008. It complements the detailed quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports for the period produced by each Director, which are being circulated to Members in tandem with this overview report. The purpose of this report is to provide the Executive with a high-level summary of key achievements, and to highlight areas where performance is not matching targets or expectations, along with any remedial action that is being taken to address this.
- 1.2 With the introduction of Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), which replaced the Best Value performance regime from the beginning of Quarter 1, the format of Council Performance Management Reports has been amended to incorporate the new National Indicator Set on which CAA will largely be based. Because many of the National Indicators are new measures, however, and because outturns for a large majority of them will be reported directly by central government departments and agencies and not by the Council, work is still underway to identify those indicators for which robust actual or proxy data can be collected and which can therefore be reported on in future Performance Management Reports. For this reason it was agreed that reporting on Council (and Bracknell Forest Partnership) performance against the new indicators would be phased in from Quarter 2. Annex A of the present report therefore only covers performance against actions and risks, but will be expanded to include a number of National Indicators next quarter.
- 1.3 Following the introduction during Quarter 1 of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) basket of indicators on which Bracknell Forest Partnership has negotiated stretch targets with the Government, the current Departmental Service Plans, which contain the actions and risks on which Council Performance Management Reports are partially based, will be refreshed during Autumn 2008 to incorporate the action plans which departments are developing as a means of achieving those LAA targets for which the Council is primarily responsible within the Partnership.

2 Overview of Performance

- 2.1 The beginning of this quarter witnessed the implementation of the Council's new departmental structure, with the number of service departments being reduced from four to three (Corporate Services; Environment, Culture and Communities; and Social Care and Learning) in addition to the Chief Executive's Office. Despite the considerable challenges involved in this process, good progress has already been made in embedding the new structure, as is evidenced by the strong performance against actions in departmental service plans which has been achieved during this transitional period.
- 2.2 The departmental service plans for 2008/09 contain 294 detailed actions to be completed in support of the ten medium-term objectives which underpin the Council's five overarching priorities for 2008/09-2010/11. The four quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports show that 278 (94.6%) of these actions were on target to be completed by their due date this quarter (✓), whilst 11 (3.7%) were in need of some remedial action (✗). Any proposed remedial action is cited alongside the ✗ actions in Annex A.

3 Progress against Medium-Term Objectives

- 3.1 The first quarter of 2008/09 saw good overall progress towards achieving the Council's priorities, notwithstanding the short-term challenges created by the departmental restructuring. The following paragraphs highlight some areas of notable progress against the Council's medium-term objectives.

Medium-Term Objective 1: Build a Bracknell Town Centre that residents are proud of

- 3.2 The design of the Civic Hub has now been broadly finalised to RIBA Stage D, while designs for the new Jubilee Gardens are progressing well. Tripartite relocation agreements have been completed in respect of Thames Valley Police and the Royal British Legion. Work has continued within the new Town Centre Partnership to improve perceptions of Bracknell Town Centre and to keep it thriving during the regeneration. Overall, however, the impact of the "credit crunch" on the UK construction and property industry has been substantial and has been felt in a number of major developments in other regions. However, the thorough preparatory work completed over the last five years in Bracknell Forest puts the Bracknell Town Centre development in a relatively strong position. Officers are keeping in close contact with BRP and other Town Centre developers to establish the impact, if any, on delivering the Bracknell Town Centre regeneration, and high-level meetings are planned for early September to assess progress and plans.

Medium-Term Objective 2: Keep our parks, open spaces and leisure facilities accessible and attractive

- 3.3 The options appraisal for the management of the Council's major leisure facilities was completed during the quarter, concluding that the risks associated with outsourcing (principally to service quality) outweighed the potential financial benefits. The decision has consequently been taken to keep the management of all relevant facilities in-house. Meanwhile, Clinton's Hill was officially opened by Andrew MacKay MP during the quarter, and the nationwide 'Love Parks Week' included a number of events in Sandhurst. In addition, the Council received the excellent news that it had gained three awards from the 'Green Flag' scheme – for Lily Hill Park, Pope's Meadow and Shepherd's Meadows (jointly with Sandhurst Memorial Park / Town Council).

Medium-Term Objective 3: Promote sustainable housing and infrastructure development

- 3.4 The Council's efforts last year have recently resulted in a £659,000 Housing and Planning Delivery Grant, primarily in recognition of the Council's success in delivering the core strategy. A significant amount of work was carried out in Quarter 1 to ensure that relevant strategies are now fully aligned in terms of timetable, and the draft Housing Strategy, the Strategic Land Availability Assessment and the Housing Viability Study will be considered by the Executive in September. The impact of the nationwide economic downturn on housing delivery has been significant, but officers involved in Local Area Agreement negotiations with the Government Office successfully used the downturn to secure lower housing delivery targets for Bracknell Forest than had previously been provisionally agreed.

Medium-Term Objective 4: Keep Bracknell Forest clean and green

- 3.5 The Council's additional investment of £100,000 in the visual environment began to have a significant impact during the quarter, with neighbourhood centres and high-speed roads benefiting from a co-ordinated approach to cleansing, grounds maintenance and highway maintenance. The effect has in many cases been dramatic, and the Council has received positive feedback from the local community. The quarter also saw the introduction of a new, more proactive approach to tree management, including work aimed at ensuring the accuracy, reliability and legal robustness of the data the Council holds on the very large number of trees for which it is responsible.

Medium-Term Objective 5: Improve health and well being within the Borough

- 3.6 Officers have worked closely with the Berkshire East Primary Care Trust to promote the provision of a new "healthspace" in Bracknell. Discussions to ascertain whether a joint approach to the provision of new health facilities in the Borough would provide additional benefits to both partners gained pace during the quarter and are ongoing. Adult Social Care worked in partnership with Leisure Services to support people with a disability and older people to access sports and leisure facilities. Day centres and The Look In Café have promoted healthy eating by using locally grown fresh produce and ensuring people understand the benefits of healthy eating. Therapeutic activities, such as cooking, art and gardening, have also been made available.

Medium-Term Objective 6: Improve the outcomes for children and families through the Children and Young People's Plan

- 3.7 The Joint Area Review (JAR) Action Plan and the supplement to the Children and Young People's Plan were both submitted to Ofsted in good time. Many of the actions from the JAR Action Plan, which constitutes a detailed and comprehensive approach to the few areas for development identified by the JAR team, have already been completed, including the establishment of the Children in Care Council. Four schools underwent full Ofsted inspections during the quarter, with overall judgments ranging from "Satisfactory" to "Outstanding". The Fostering Service inspection resulted in an assessment grade of "Good", while a monitoring visit from the National Assessment Agency concluded that the Council's moderation procedures for Key Stage 1 assessments fulfilled statutory requirements, were well organised and included many strengths. Two major strategies, for tackling bullying and for developing support for parents in the Borough, were also published this quarter, following extensive consultation.

Medium-Term Objective 7: Seek to ensure that every residents feels included and able to access the services they need

- 3.8 Good progress has been made in developing the programme of work for completing Equality Impact Assessments, and work has begun on reviewing procurement activities in line with the Equality Standard. Work is underway on refreshing the Engagement Strategy, while Neighbourhood Action Group work has continued to focus on the priorities set following the neighbourhood consultation exercise last year; these priorities are due to be refreshed in the autumn. The tender process for identifying a single supplier for all future consultation services is progressing well.

Medium-Term Objective 8: Reduce crime and increase people's sense of safety in the Borough

- 3.9 The overall level of crime in Bracknell Forest continues to fall, with a reduction since April of over 8%. In particular, the number of burglaries of dwellings fell by 35% during the quarter. The Council's Crime & Disorder Reduction Team has joined with the police and the fire service to undertake patrols of some estates to identify areas vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and arsons. In July, the Community Safety Manager and the CADIS Analyst gave a well-received presentation on CADIS at the National Crime Mapping conference in Manchester. The Restorative Approaches in Neighbourhood (RAiN) project, a scheme to train staff from a range of agencies to address neighbourhood disputes before legal action becomes necessary, has been launched in Bracknell Forest as a trial area. A contract for the provision of the Borough-wide community TV scheme was also let during the quarter on behalf of Bracknell Forest Partnership.

Medium-Term Objective 9: Promote independence and choice for vulnerable adults and older people

- 3.10 The charging policy for Adult Social Care was approved by the Executive during the quarter, and work is now underway to undertake the necessary assessments. The performance of Adult Social Care as reported in the self-assessment has shown improvement once again this year, and work has now begun to prepare for the Annual Review Meeting in September.

Medium-Term Objective 10: Be accountable and provide excellent value for money

- 3.11 Progress was made during the quarter on the "balancing the budget" workstreams, including the closure of the payment counter at the Cash Office and the merger of reception areas, while property was disposed of at 6 Ramslade Cottages and The Avenue and solicitors were instructed to complete the sale of land at Brakenhale School. The necessary budget realignment resulting from the Council-wide restructuring was successfully completed, as was the implementation of the revised pension arrangements. Collection of Council Tax at the end of the quarter reached 29.46%, compared to 29.01% at the same time last year, with the proportion of direct debit payments now up to 76.2% of CT payers, putting Bracknell Forest second in the BACS "Direct Debit Challenge League". The Council published its Annual Report, and Bracknell Forest Partnership published the new Sustainable Community Strategy and signed-off Local Area Agreement. The new Mayor was successfully inducted, and work was progressed on the development of a Member Learning and Development Strategy. The quarter also saw the successful introduction of the new corporate identity.

4 Performance against Actions, Corporate Health, Budgets and Bracknell Forest Partnership Performance

- 4.1 Detailed performance against actions, together with an update on actions to mitigate risks identified in Service Plans, is set out at Annex A. Information on Corporate Health is set out at Annex B. Budget information is set out at Annex C. Work achieved by the Bracknell Forest Partnership is set out at Annex D.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 Overall, the solid performance against actions demonstrated in Annex A represents a sound start to the new financial year, one which is already building on the achievements of 2007/08. The transition to the Council's new departmental structure can be seen to have been implemented successfully, with the new departments already demonstrating their commitment to the Council's tradition of providing high-quality, value-for-money services to local residents.

Timothy Wheadon
Chief Executive
August 2008
