



Corporate Performance Overview Report

Third Quarter 2008/09
(October-December 2008)

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Chief Executive

Overview of Council Performance

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out an overview of the Council's performance for the period October-December 2008. It complements the detailed quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports for the period produced by each Director, which were circulated to Members in February. 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 Last quarter's CPOR was the first to include information on performance against the National Indicator Set, and also the first to include graphical representation of this performance. In many cases, however, there was no data to report. This was the result of four factors:
- Unlike the old Best Value indicators, outturns for a high proportion of the new indicator set are reported not by local authorities but by central government departments or other central agencies. For this reason, we are dependent on external sources for acquiring data. In many cases, fail-safe systems for collecting and publishing this data have not yet been put in place by the departments and agencies in question.
 - A high proportion of the new indicators are brand new measures. We are working to establish systems for calculating outturns on those (relatively few) new indicators which we will be responsible for reporting to central government. However, the newness of the indicators also means that local authorities do not yet have any way of estimating outturns for the large majority of indicators for which they are dependent on external agencies for final outturns.
 - Government is placing greater emphasis on measuring actual changes in the quality of life of local people, rather than simply throughput of work by local agencies. The new indicators are thus more focused on outcomes than on processes. This is generally positive, but it does mean that many indicators are difficult or impossible for local authorities to calculate on an ongoing basis because, unlike many BVPIs, they are not a simple count or other measure of Council activities.
 - The new indicators measure the contribution of all the partners in each local strategic partnership, and not just that of the local authority. Even in Bracknell Forest, where partnership working is generally very effective, a number of difficulties have been encountered in trying to implement a detailed data exchange framework, which are still in the process of resolution.
- 1.3 The current (Quarter 3) report includes a good deal more quantitative data than the Quarter 2 report, but many gaps do remain. Work is ongoing within the Performance & Partnerships team in the Chief Executive's Office, and by performance leads across the Council, to ensure that increasing quantities of internal and external data are available for future reports. Work is also in hand corporately to assure the quality of the performance data which the Council collects and reports, with external consultants having been appointed to produce a high-level improvement strategy and some more detailed policy guidelines, and to begin an ongoing series of training and awareness sessions for relevant officers.

2 Overview of Performance

- 2.1 Annex A shows the performance of the Council and its local strategic partners against the National Indicator Set (where data is available), and that of the Council against its own Service Plan actions and operational risks.
- 2.2 This is the first quarter in which a Green (✓) or Red (✗) status has been applied to performance indicators as well as to actions. In Quarter 2 – the first quarter in which the National Indicator Set was reported – it was felt that there were too few indicators for which a status could be calculated for it to be equitable to show any Green/Red statuses at all. With more data now available, a status has been calculated for around 60 indicators; of these indicators, five are Red (✗), meaning that the outturn is at least 5% adrift of the target. A major reason why a Green/Red status cannot be given for many indicators is a lack of target information. This situation will be improved from 2009/10 following a Council-wide target-setting exercise for non-LAA indicators, which is scheduled for April 2009.
- 2.3 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. Annex A shows that at the end of the third quarter, 265 (90.1%) of these actions had already been completed or were on target to be completed by their due date (✓), whilst 19 (6.5%) were in need of some remedial action (✗). Any proposed remedial action is cited within Annex A alongside the ✗ actions. (The remaining ten actions – 3.4% – had become inapplicable or had been transferred to another department by the end of Quarter 3.)

3 Progress against Medium-Term Objectives

- 3.1 The third quarter of 2008/09 saw good overall progress towards achieving the Council's priorities, notwithstanding the challenges created by the national and international economic situation, which were beginning to have an impact by the close of the quarter. 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 An extensive programme of revised workstreams was agreed with Bracknell Regeneration Partnership to secure regeneration in the light of the economic downturn. A revised regeneration strategy will be presented to the Regeneration Committee in March. Although the revisions to the timescales have meant that some areas of work (such as finalising the Civic Hub plans) have been halted, work on the regeneration was nonetheless taken forward during the quarter. The High Court challenge period for the town centre compulsory purchase order ended without challenge, while good progress was made with the formulation of town-wide strategies and pre-commencement conditions by the Council to facilitate the redevelopment of Enid Wood House. An action planning workshop was held to address broader economic issues in both the short and longer terms, and the new Economic and Skills Development Partnership met in December.

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

- 3.3 The work of the Parks & Countryside Service was particularly impressive during the quarter, with physical improvements made to many sites, grant aid obtained from

external organisations, and a new parks and open spaces strategy drafted. Despite the adverse economic situation and some unfavourable weather, the Leisure Section continued to combine high-quality services with good value for money during the quarter. The economic and climactic conditions prevented Downshire Golf Complex from meeting tough financial targets, but Coral Reef and the Look Out continued to perform well, with both visitor numbers and income on target.

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

- 3.4 Quarter 3 saw the departure of the Chief Officer: Planning and Transport, and the appointment of a new Chief Officer, who will begin work in April. A major planning appeal concerning the TRL site in Crowthorne took place during the quarter, and was a considerable drain on resources. The outcome of the appeal, which was “fast-tracked” under the government’s new scheme for speeding up housing planning appeals, will not be known until well into 2009, but dealing with it meant that the scheduled deadline for completing the Development Management Development Plan was missed. This could have implications for future Housing and Planning Delivery Grants. However, significant progress was made during the quarter on the preparation of the Amen Corner Area Action Plan (Draft Submission), and public consultation on the soundness of the scheme will take place during Quarter 4.

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

- 3.5 From December, residents have been able to mix their recycling in blue bins, which resulted in 500 orders for the bins in December; recycling rates are now at around 42%. The additional waste collection workload experienced by local authorities every Christmas was handled very smoothly in Bracknell Forest this year, despite restricted opening hours at Longshot Lane. Revised waste collections were completed by 10 January, and overall telephone calls about waste collections over Christmas were down 34% on the previous year (excluding telephone orders for blue bins). The quarter also saw the completion of refurbishments to a number of recycling sites, at which fly-tipping opportunities have now been “designed out”.

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

- 3.6 The Scores on the Doors Scheme was launched in November, since when the Council’s website has received over 10,000 hits from members of the public who want to find out the level of hygiene in the Borough’s food premises. The Scheme appears to have been broadly welcomed by businesses and the public alike.

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

- 3.7 The Summer 2008 exam results which were reported provisionally in last quarter’s CPOR were largely confirmed unchanged during Quarter 3. A number of inspections took place during the Quarter, including a one-day inspection of the Youth Offending Service, which was judged to be “performing well” (Grade 3 out of a possible 4). Larchwood Short Break Care Unit was judged to be “Outstanding”, while College Hall Pupil Referral Unit was found to provide a satisfactory standard of education. Cranbourne Primary School was identified as “satisfactory and improving strongly”, but an inspection of Wildridings Primary School identified some areas for improvement. Work by the Local Safeguarding Children Board to identify a comprehensive performance dataset and to develop a safeguarding cue card and toolkit received government recognition as examples of national good practice.

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

- 3.8 The new Community Cohesion Strategy was published and distributed during the quarter, and a draft Community Engagement Strategy was also produced for consultation. The community engagement mapping exercise was completed, which included mapping the engagement work of key local partners. The government's new Equalities Framework, which supersedes the Local Government Equality Standard, was also introduced during the quarter, and work was completed to review the implications of this.

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

- 3.9 A number of areas of crime showed increases during Quarter 3 after many successive quarters of decrease. However, there were signs that increases were tailing off towards the end of the quarter. There were particular concerns about the rates of serious acquisitive crime and assault with injury, although levels are still well below national averages. It is unknown at this stage if the increases are related to the economic situation, but it is likely that this will have an effect on crime eventually. Despite the crime figures, recorded anti-social behaviour fell in all of the six most important categories, and work continued in neighbourhoods to identify current levels of fear of crime.

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

- 3.10 The Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) published its annual star-rating assessment for local authorities' adult social care functions in November. Bracknell Forest was awarded the highest possible three stars ("Excellent"), and was judged to have the best possible ("Excellent") capacity to improve. This is a superb achievement for the Adult Social Care team, which has transformed services since the leadership changes in December 2006. A spot inspection of the Ladybank rehabilitation unit resulted in a "Poor" judgment, but CSCI have since confirmed their satisfaction with the way in which the Council is addressing the inspectors' concerns. The quarter also saw the publication of draft versions of two major new strategies, the first on sensory needs and the second in relation to people with dementia. Significant consultation was undertaken with people who use the services and those who care for them, as well as with service providers.

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

- 3.11 The Council's budget proposals for 2009/10 were published for consultation during the quarter, and the treasury management strategy was revised in response to the economic downturn and the failure of major Icelandic banks. The interim pay award was implemented, and work continued on the introduction of car-parking charges and amendments to the car allowance scheme. An external audit during the quarter resulted in a no-assurance opinion when it emerged that a major contract had been re-let without having been advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union, in contravention of competition rules. The auditors have since stated that they are satisfied with the work which is now being undertaken to address weaknesses in the Council's procurement procedures. Payment of Council Tax at any post office across the country (or at any retail outlet with the Payzone facility) commenced in December, and work also began on merging reception areas across the town-centre buildings in accordance with the Balancing the Budget workstream.

4 Information on Corporate Health, Budgets, and Bracknell Forest Partnership

- 4.1 Information on Corporate Health is set out at Annex B. Budget information is set out at Annex C. Work achieved and ongoing by Bracknell Forest Partnership is outlined at Annex D.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 Overall, the solid performance against actions demonstrated in Annex A represents sound progress despite the unanticipated difficulties facing all local authorities caused by the economic downturn. There is a fairly small number of key actions and performance indicators on which the adverse global situation will inevitably have a negative effect, but action to mitigate this is being taken wherever necessary. Elsewhere, work continues unabated across the Council to maintain its tradition of offering high-quality services to local residents while providing exceptional value for money.

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Chief Executive
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