

**COUNCIL
1 MAY 2002**

EXECUTIVE REPORT

Since the last report to the Council on 27 March the Executive have met collectively on one occasion to take Executive decisions. The most significant of these are brought to the attention of the Council in this report.

COMMUNITY PLAN FOR BRACKNELL FOREST 2002-2005

All Local Authorities are now required to prepare a Community Strategy for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well being of the area and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK. The Strategy is to be contained in a Community Plan drawn up in partnership with other providers, local businesses and communities. Statutory guidance has been issued by the DTLR which identifies the objectives and components of the Strategy and the principles on which it should be based. Locally extensive consultation has taken place with a range of agencies and the public and a wide selection of attendees participated in a conference entitled "Thinking for Tomorrow" held in February 2002 at K2. That conference produced the ambitions codified in our draft plan.

The first draft of our Community Plan has now been published for consultation with the public and other agencies throughout the summer. Select Committees will have an important role in the consultation and each will be given the opportunity to comment on the plan. We are planning further consultation with the Bracknell Chamber of Commerce, the core groups of partners and business groups. The Executive will bring back the final version of the Community Plan in due course for adoption by the Council.

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE PLAN 2002/03

All Councils are required to publish a Best Value Performance Plan each year. A first draft of this plan for 2002/03 has now been published within the Council's draft Policy and Performance Plan. The plan will now be considered by the Co-ordination Select Committee as a consultation draft before being brought back to the Council for adoption. When completed the plan will be compliant with statutory guidance issued by the DTLR.

In this connection the Council will wish to note that there is no longer a requirement for all Council services to be subject to a fundamental review over a five year period. The legal requirement to review functions does however remain and this change should enable Authorities to focus on national and local priorities and areas of weakness and opportunity identified in the new comprehensive Performance Assessment.

The plan represents a challenging, but achievable programme of work for the coming years setting out clearly the objectives for each Department and the performance targets we aim to meet.

LIFE IS FOR LIVING

The Executive has now published the first ever Cultural Strategy for the Borough of Bracknell Forest. This has been prepared in partnership and consultation with Borough

Council Officers and Members, Town and Parish Councils, the private and voluntary sector and other strategic partners such as the local Police, Primary Care Trust and regional agencies. The Strategy is a wide ranging document reflecting the following definition of culture adopted locally for the purposes of the strategy:

Culture in Bracknell Forest is the combination of pursuits, beliefs and knowledge which defines who we are and what we do.

The Strategy identifies the following four strategic priorities:

- Improve the sense of belonging and community spirit
- Enhance town centres throughout the Borough
- Undertake more outreach and community development work
- Continue to support the range of high quality facilities and services and improvement them where necessary

These strategic priorities are supported by action plans. Overall the aim has been to promote a cross-cutting, multi-agency approach which will construct initiatives reflecting the priorities of individual communities and the Borough as a whole. There will be a balance between deliverable actions, plans and the development of processes which would further develop cultural activity and partnership within Bracknell Forest over a period of time.

BRACKNELL FOREST VOLUNTARY SECTOR COMPACT

The Council will be aware that the Voluntary Sector Compact, comprising representatives of the voluntary and statutory sectors have been developing a series of Codes of Good Practice to guide voluntary activities in the Borough and relationships with the Council. The Executive have previously approved the first Code of Good Practice which deals with Consultation and Communication and has now approved the second code which deals with Funding. Meanwhile, important new arrangements are being put in place for regular formal liaison meetings between the Voluntary Sector Champion, the Executive Portfolio holder for SS&H, senior officers and reps of the Voluntary Sector. The Executive believe that these will help foster the important partnership working that is essential to the future development of services, particularly to vulnerable people within the Borough.

The Voluntary Sector Champion, Councillor Mrs Ryder, in her role as the current chairman of the Voluntary Sector Compact, is also facilitating two workshops to develop action plans and these take place on 29 and 30 April 2002.

ELGIBILITY AND PRIORITY FOR SERVICES (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

The Social Services Joint Review recommended that a review of eligibility criteria for children's services should be undertaken which would set out the basic criteria for providing service including assessment and ensure fair access. In furtherance of that review the former Social Services & Housing Committee endorsed draft eligibility criteria which were then distributed to key stakeholders for comment. As a result, some minor amendments were made to the original draft and the criteria were then piloted for a three month period within the Social Services & Housing department. This pilot has now reached its conclusion and some further relatively minor changes have been made. Staff involved in the pilot have reported back favourably and the Executive have now given final approval to the revised criteria. The criteria will be subject to an annual review process and a public information leaflet is currently being drafted.

LOOKING AHEAD

Once again there are important issues to be addressed by the Executive in the coming weeks, some which are described below:

Public Service Agreement

A report was made to the previous meeting on the development of a Local Public Service Agreement. This work is progressing and negotiations covering the twelve targets will take place during May and June 2002. This will lead to a final report to the Executive in June 2002.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment

Again an initial report on the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process was brought to the last meeting of the Council explaining the background to this new scheme. The present timetable is that self-assessment will be undertaken during June 2002 with on-site fieldwork from 15 – 26 July 2002. There will be an initial feedback on 29 July and we can look forward an announcement during December 2002.

Inspection Children's Services and Action Plan

All Members of the Council were invited to a presentation on 18 April 2002 when the Social Services lead inspector introduced his report on the inspection of Children's Services undertaken during October 2001. Overall this was an encouraging report showing considerable improvement since the Social Services Joint Review and the Director and her staff should be congratulated. As ever there is always room for improvement and no room for complacency as we seek to sustain the progress that has been made over the last year. We have established a joint group comprising Councillors Barnard, Bettison and Miss Haydon, Director of Social Services & Housing, Director of Education and Chief Executive or Deputy and other appropriate officers, to review the inspection report and bring forward a draft action plan at our next meeting.

Policy Advisory Groups

The Co-ordination Select Committee has agreed to a request by the Executive to establish two time-limited sub committees to conduct in-depth policy reviews and bring forward recommendations to the Executive. The Groups will focus on Housing Strategy and Unauthorised Traveller Encampments. The approach represents a new way of working for the Council and will involve widespread consultation and evidence gathering outside of the Council chamber. We hope this will open up avenues and opportunities for the Select Committees to respond to their important role in policy development.

Other Items

There are already a number of important topics listed in our Forward Plan for May, June, July & August 2002 and I would urge Members who are not on the Executive to approach the appropriate Executive Member if they require any further information.