

**COUNCIL
25 SEPTEMBER 2002**

EXECUTIVE REPORT

The Executive met on 10 September 2002 and has taken Executive decisions on the following matters.

1 LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICES AGREEMENT

1.1 The Council has been previously notified of the work in progress to develop a Local Public Services Agreement between the Council and its partner organisations and the Government. The negotiations are now being concluded and will form a basis of an agreement which sets out the Authority's commitment to specific performance improvements and the Government's commitment to the recognition of improvements in financial terms and through relaxation of statutory and administrative controls. Thirteen targets are proposed as follows:

- (i) improve secondary school attendance.
- (ii) improve performance of Brakenhale School.
- (iii) reduce preventable hospitalisation and ensure reduction in delays in moving people of 75 on from hospital.
- (iv) improve the educational attainment of children and young people leaving care aged 16 and over.
- (v) increase the participation of problem drug users in drug treatment programmes.
- (vi) reduce the rate of re-offending of young offenders.
- (vii) reduce vehicle crime.
- (viii) increase the percentage of household waste recycled or sent for composting.
- (viii) reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured in Bracknell Forest road accidents.
- (x) increase the supply of affordable housing.
- (xi) increase library usage.
- (xii) improve cost effectiveness.
- (xiii) reduce repeated domestic violence.

In approving the targets described above as the basis of the Local Public Services Agreement, the Executive has also agreed that the planned total of Council expenditure on this project amounting to £1,589,000 would be included in the commitment budget 2002/03-2004/05 and that the "pump priming" grant of £718,000 would be added to balances and used to finance, in part, the planned total of Council expenditure. Any performance reward grant received by the Council will be used initially to finance the remaining Council expenditure not met by the "Pump Priming" Grant.

2 CUSTOMER CONTACT INITIATIVE

- 2.1 The Executive has received a progress report on the Customer Contact Initiative, and subject to approval by the Council has agreed that a sum of £70,000 should be allocated from the restructuring fund to finance the delivery of consultancy services in order to make further progress. The work will be taken forward by a Focus Group working with the consultants under the strategic direction of the Customer Contact Programme Executive Board.

3 SERVICES TO SCHOOLS – BEST VALUE REVIEW

- 3.1 The Executive has received and endorsed the final report on the Best Value Review of Services to Schools and the accompanying improvement plan. This was a major Best Value Review following on from the recommendations of the Ofsted Inspection of the LEA and encompassed all the services offered to support the management of schools maintained by the Borough Council including Property Services, Management Services and Curriculum Services. The review concluded that the majority of services provided through the Borough Council were at least satisfactory and the majority were good or better. An improvement plan has been developed for the period 2002-2007 based on 23 specific recommendations arising from the Review.

4 REALLOCATION OF UNSPENT VOLUNTARY AIDED SCHOOLS CAPITAL FUNDING

- 4.1 Following a reform of liabilities and funding arrangements for premises work at voluntary aided schools by the DRES which took effect from 1 April 2002, the Local Education Authority is no longer liable for any capital funding at such schools with the exception of playing fields and any buildings thereon. As a result Education capital funding of £181,000 is no longer required for a number of projects part funded by DfES. The Executive has agreed to the virement of this sum for the following two projects:

Town Centre Nursery	£37,000
New Scotland Hill Primary School – admin/resources extension	£144,000

- 4.2 Discussions are currently taking place with DfES in relation to extra grant funding for the Town Centre Nursery Project and in the event of such funding being made available, the amount of £37,000 will be used to construct a new purpose built store for PE and dining furniture at Kennel Lane Infant School.

5 SCHOOL BUDGETS – CHANGE TO IN YEAR RE-CALCULATIONS

- 5.1 The current funding formulae for schools allocates the majority of initial budgets to schools on the basis of forecast number on roll, with funding weighted by age. Further funding is allocated for additional pupils with statements of special educational needs through Needs Weighted Pupil Units. Budgets are re-calculated and adjustments made on receipt of actually pupil head count data or revisions to needs of SEN pupils. The Executive has been advised that experience in the recent past indicates that original budgets generally overstate the number of pupils in school for the start of the following spring term and, as a result, the funding is returned to the Council's general reserves under current policies. This can conflict with the policy of setting education expenditure to at least the level of the education standard spending assessment. Accordingly the Executive recommend that the funding formula for schools should be amended so that savings which result from a reduction in pupil numbers and/or their needs are returned to schools through increasing the value of the Age Weighted Pupil Unit or Needs Weighted Pupil Unit as appropriate. However, in the current financial year, the Council has approved a budget of £0.125 million above SSA in order to fully fund the teachers' pay award.

RECOMMENDATION

that the funding formula be amended to provide that:

- (a) for the financial year 2002/03, if in-year school budget re-calculations show a net saving, any amount above £0.125 million be re-distributed to schools.**
- (b) with effect from the financial 2003/04, where in-year school budget re-calculations show a net saving, all of the funds be re-distributed to schools.**

6 STAFF COLLEGE, BRACKNELL – PLANNING AND DESIGN BRIEF

- 6.1 The Executive has deferred consideration of the planning and design brief for the Staff College at Bracknell to enable further discussions with the landowner. It is anticipated that the brief will now be considered by the Executive at its October meeting.

7 DRAFT REGIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY

- 7.1 South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) has published a draft Regional Transport Strategy covering the period until 2016. The draft strategy acknowledges the problems faced by the South East; specifically the key role transport plays in maintaining the economic strength of the region and contains a vision, key proposals, objectives and policies in support of the vision.
- 7.2 In general terms the objectives are supported by the Executive but there are specific issues of great significance to Bracknell Forest and the Executive has approved the basis of a response on behalf of the Borough Council specifically targeted at such issues.

- 7.3 In addition the Association of Councils of the Thames Valley and Region will be submitting a joint response on behalf of all Thames Valley Authorities and the Borough Council will have an input into that joint response.

8 ANNUAL LIBRARY PLAN

- 8.1 All library authorities are required to produce an Annual Library Plan which is a strategic document intended to shape the future of the service within the Authority. This document forms part of the Council's Policy Framework and a consultation draft has now been published on behalf of the Executive. Following the outcome of consultation, a revised draft will be brought to the October meeting of the Council.

9 BRACKNELL FOREST VOLUNTARY SECTOR COMPACT

- 9.1 The Executive has previously adopted a series of codes of good practice drawn up by the Voluntary Sector Compact which aims to assist voluntary and community organisations in the Borough to develop in specific areas. The Executive has now endorsed the fourth code of good practice which covers development issues. This code completes the initial four areas of focus for Voluntary Sector Compact and future work will involve the creation of action plans and identifying the potential for other codes in the future.

10 YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN

- 10.1 Under Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 it is the duty of each local authority to formulate a Youth Justice Plan setting out how Youth Offending Services in their area are to be provided. This involves several departments within the local authority and other agencies including Thames Valley Police, Berkshire Probation Service and Bracknell Forest Primary Care Trust. The plan has to be submitted to and approved by the Youth Justice Board and forms part of the Council's policy framework. Work was proceeding by the Youth Offending Teams in Bracknell Forest and Windsor and Maidenhead to consider a potential merger but it has become clear more recently that the Youth Justice Board are undertaking a review of Youth Offending Teams and would be issuing guidance later in the year on the future structure, function and funding arrangements. Accordingly although the two teams are continuing joint working at an operational level, further work on the potential merger has been held over until such guidance has become available. The Youth Justice Business Plan for 2002/03 is enclosed with this agenda for approval by the Council at agenda item 7.

11. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY AND PROCEDURES

- 11.1 The Executive has approved detailed policies and procedures relating to the way in which the Council will take care of children in public care and which provide detailed guidance on the status and procedures to approve carers. The policy and procedure have been developed on a series of key principles as follows:
- (i) to promote the private placement of children with relatives and friends as an alternative to them being looked after by the authority, where appropriate.

- (ii) to promote the placement of looked after children with relatives and friends rather than stranger carers, as far as practical and consistent with their welfare.
 - (iii) to promote the early discharge of children from the looked after system to the care of relatives and friends, so as long as this consistent with their welfare.
 - (iv) there should be no financial disincentive for a child to be looked after outside of the care system.
 - (v) there needs to be clarity on the decision making and approval process by which a child becomes looked after and the status of the carer.
- 11.2 The revised policy and procedure are under-pinned by separate policies and procedures dealing with:
- (a) kinship care
 - (b) residence order allowances

12 COMMUNITY TRANSPORT TENDER

- 12.1 The Executive has previously reported its intention to move towards a single contract for the provision of community transport and minibus services in the Borough. This would replace the adhoc system of Voluntary Sector Grants which have previously been awarded at the beginning of each calendar year. A service specification has been developed in conjunction with the community transport operators, and following the issue of tender documents, one valid tender was received from Keep Mobile and this has been accepted by the Executive from 1 October 2002. The assessed annual revenue cost is £103,640.

13 CAR PARK MANAGEMENT CONTRACT

- 13.1 The Council's Car Park Management Control runs to the end of February 2003. The Executive has now approved a short list of companies to be invited to tender for the new contract to run 1 March 2003.

14 TOWN CENTRE RE-DEVELOPMENT – MEMBER DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- 14.1 The Council has two distinct roles in relation to re-development of Bracknell Town Centre namely that of local planning authority and as a significant owner of land in the Town Centre. It is important that the Council does not and is seen not to allow the exercise of its responsibilities as local planning authority to be influenced by its interest as a landowner. In order to achieve the separation of these interests and to preserve cross party for the project, the Leader has indicated he now proposes to delegate his responsibilities for the management maintenance, improvement, development and re-development of Bracknell Town Centre to a committee of the Executive and that the Leader of the Labour Party will be invited to serve on the committee as a co-opted non-voting member. The Councillors appointed to this committee will not participate in the Council's duties as a planning authority. It should also be noted that members of the Select Committee on Corporate and

Resource Issues who wish to participate in relevant planning decisions will be debarred from participating in any scrutiny of decisions taken by the Executive Committee.

15 **LOOKING AHEAD**

- 15.1 The Executive is now entering into the initial planning stages for next year's policy objectives, service delivery objectives and budget. This will dominate the work of Executive Members through the proposed budget working groups. The Executive will concentrate on drawing up proposals throughout October and November 2002 and intends to publish its draft proposals following the procedure laid down in the Council's constitution in mid December.

- 15.2 Other important topics in the current work programme include the Freedom of Information Publication Scheme, Corporate Human Resource Strategy and the ICT Strategy and Three-Year Plan. In addition it is hoped that the Executive will have received the outcome of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process.

- 15.3 The Council is reminded that the Forward Plan for the Executive is published on the first of each month.