

**COUNCIL  
26 MARCH 2003**

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**EXECUTIVE REPORT**

Since the Executive report to the previous Council meeting on 27 February 2003, the Executive has met on 11 March 2003. The Executive Decisions taken at that meeting are brought to the attention of the Council in this report.

**1. GARTH HILL COLLEGE AND BRACKNELL AND WOKINGHAM POST-16 CENTRE**

The Council has been previously notified of discussions taking place and leading to proposals to establish a post-16 centre at Wick Hill. This will be an exciting project at the leading edge of collaborative provision for the 16-19 age range. The Executive has now approved Heads of terms which relate to the development and future operation of the centre and to working in partnership to prepare a master plan for the future of the site. Subject to the agreement of the parties involved, namely the Council, the School Governing Body and the College Corporation, to the Heads of Terms proposed the centre will proceed on the basis of joint management arrangements between Bracknell & Wokingham College and The Garth Hill College under the governance arrangements for the College. Work on the master plan is now nearing conclusion and it is hoped that the Executive will be able to approve this for consultation at its April meeting.

**2. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN (BUSINESS PLAN 2003/04)**

Local authorities are required to formulate and implement an annual Youth Justice Plan following the format set out in guidance produced by the Youth Justice Board. This plan is part of the Council's policy framework and is therefore subject to approval by the full Council but nevertheless has to be signed off by a wide range of external partners. Government guidance for completion of the plan for the coming year was issued in November 2002 and the late receipt of this guidance coupled with the involvement of other stakeholders has made it impossible to complete the plan by the statutory deadline of 31 March 2003. In these circumstances the Executive have agreed that the final Youth Justice Plan for the coming year will be brought to the Executive, and subsequently the Council, in June. This will enable a full and detailed business plan to be finalised with Youth Justice Board approval and complete financial information.

**3. RACE EQUALITY SCHEME**

Section 71(1) of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places new duties on public authorities irrespective of the size of the local ethnic minority population. This is a direct response to national reports dealing with the identification of institutional racism.

In response to these new duties, the Executive has approved proposals for the development of a Race Equality Scheme for the Council designed to meet the new statutory responsibilities. The initial scheme has been the subject of consultation and discussion with departmental representatives involved in fair access and equality issues and has been drawn up in consultation with the Reading office of the Council for Racial Equality. The priority now is to prepare a

comprehensive race equality scheme comprising aims and objectives plus action planning which will be in place by May 2003.

#### 4. **CPA IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2002/2004**

Following the comprehensive performance assessment undertaken during late 2002 by the Audit Commission and other inspectorates, there is a requirement to respond by the production of an improvement plan. The Executive has now approved a draft improvement plan covering the period 2002/2004. The Improvement Plan is a high level summary of other plans for improving services in the coming months through a series of more detailed service plans and other strategic plans. A copy has been circulated with the agenda for this meeting and the Executive has submitted the following recommendation:

**RECOMMENDATION** That the CPA Improvement Plan 2002/2004 be approved and adopted as the Council's formal response to the issues raised.

#### 5. **RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY STATEMENT**

One of the key recommendations arising from the Best Value Review of Finance was that the Council should introduce an approach to risk management which more adequately reflected current best practice. This led to the establishment of a strategic Risk Management Group to develop a corporate approach to risk management. The Executive has now adopted a policy statement which lays the foundations for the adoption of best practice and contributes towards the development of such a corporate approach.

#### 6. **PROCUREMENT STRATEGY AND REVIEW OF CONTRACT REGULATIONS**

The Best Value Review of Finance also took account of modern best practice relating to local government procurement and gave rise to a series of recommendations in that respect. Since completion of the review work has been in progress to implement a number of those recommendations which were agreed by the Executive on 18 June 2002 and in subsequent reports. A draft procurement strategy and implementation plan have now been endorsed by the Executive as set out in Annexe A and B

**RECOMMENDATION** that the draft Procurement Strategy and Implementation Plan set out in the Annexes to this report be adopted.

Interim revisions to Contract Regulations have also been endorsed by the Executive and, as a variation to the Council's Constitution, are the subject of a separate report (Agenda Item 7).

#### 7. **TRANSFER OF BERKSHIRE HEALTHCARE TRUST RESIDENTIAL HOMES TO INDEPENDENT SECTOR PROVIDERS**

The closure of long stay hospitals such as Church Hill House has enabled many people with learning difficulties to lead more socially included lives than they were able to as long term NHS patients. It is considered that the NHS should not be a provider of social care and that the outcomes for the individuals living in residential homes would be improved through management by organisations which were primarily concerned with the provision of social rather than medical care.

Eighteen residential homes are located in the Borough and are currently being run by the Berkshire Healthcare Trust. There has been a tender process to move 14 of these homes to independent sector care providers funded through Section 28A of the National Health Services Act 1977. The funding is provided by the Strategic Health Authority to the care provider via the Council's Social Services & Housing Department who are responsible for commissioning social care.

Following a comprehensive tendering process the landlord function for the 14 homes in the borough will be provided by a registered social landlord. Two care providers have been selected each of which will be responsible for the delivery of care in seven of the homes. In approving these arrangements the Executive has been assured that the transfer to a new care provider will be in the best interests of the residents involved and will be handled with the utmost sensitivity and proper consultation with the residents' families and carers.

## 8. **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next Executive Forward Plan will be published on 1 April 2003 and will be available for public inspection at Easthampstead House in the usual way. Of particular interest will be consideration of the department service plans for 2003/04 along with other important matters such as the master plan for the joint 16-19 centre at Wick Hill and the action plan arising from the SSI inspection of services to older people.

