

**COUNCIL
23 JULY 2003**

EXECUTIVE REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Since the Executive report to the Council meeting on 25 June 2003, the Executive has met once on 15 July 2003. The Executive Decisions taken at that meeting are brought to the attention of the Council in this report.
- 1.2 The decisions have been summarised below either as Policy Framework matters requiring the formal approval of the Council or by reference to the relevant portfolio within which they fall.

2. POLICY FRAMEWORK

Youth Justice Plan [Business Plan] 2003/04

- 2.1 The Executive has endorsed the Plan which is contained in the Council's Policy Framework which therefore requires formal approval by Council.
- 2.2 Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a requirement on each Local Authority to formulate and implement an annual Youth Justice Plan, setting out how Youth Justice Services are to be provided and funded, how they are composed, how they operate, and what functions they carry out. The Youth Justice Plan presented to the Executive is the local response to the thirteen point funding criteria developed by the Youth justice Board on which the Board base their grant contributions to the Youth Offending Teams. It has been developed by the Youth Offending Team, in consultation with partner agencies, and with consideration to other linked plans. Consultation with service users is an ongoing process in the Youth Offending Team, and the views of service users have been incorporated into this plan.
- 2.3 In addition to endorsing the Plan, the Executive noted the action taken to address the question raised by the Social Care Select Committee in September 2002, regarding young people with mental health problems. The measures being taken to address their needs are:
- The Child Adolescent Mental Health Services Consultant will be joining the Youth Offending Team Steering Group.
 - The recruitment of a full time Psychologist to the Youth Offending Team.
 - The recruitment of a health worker with a mental health background to the Youth Offending Team.
 - Further development of the identification of needs for young people in the 16 to 18 age range.
 - The Youth Offending Team participating in research looking at CAMHS provision for young offenders in England and Wales.

3 SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE SERVICES

3.1 The Executive considered two issues relating to our social care policies.

(a) Best Value Review Of Services For Older People Improvement Plan & Executive Summary

The Executive received and approved the Final Report and Improvement Plan from the Best Value Review of Services for Older People in Bracknell Forest.

The review began in January 2002 and sought to take a broad strategic view of services to older people. The review has used the Best Value framework to develop key strategic priorities for older people's services. These priorities will enable Bracknell Forest to respond to the challenge of an ageing population. The report also seeks to identify key areas for service change and efficiencies in the way services are provided.

(b) 'Supporting People' Charging Policy

The Executive approved a charging policy for the Supporting People Programme. The Charging Policy is in line with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's guidelines and Draft Grant Conditions. It is also consistent with the draft Fairer Charging Policy which is currently under development. The Supporting People Charging Policy will minimise disruption to service users and service providers, who already charge for long-term services.

4 PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION

4.1 The one item considered in the Planning & Transportation portfolio will have a significant bearing on the future of Bracknell.

Eastern Gateway Planning Brief

The Executive has approved the Eastern Gateway Planning Brief for public consultation. The Brief covers the London Road and Eastern Business Area comprising 31 ha of land in the Bullbrook, Priestwood & Garth and Wildridings & Central wards. The area contains some of the Borough's key development sites, including the Met Office HQ, Eastern Employment Area and Bracknell & Wokingham College sites. The Borough Council had previously agreed to prepare a development brief for the Met Office site. It is now apparent that the opportunity exists to deal with this key site along with the surrounding area in a more comprehensive and integrated manner. This would help to unlock the potential of sites within the area, and in particular the identified key sites, leading to a more effective planning and design solution and the reinvigoration of the area as a whole.

Production of the brief will also enable integrated and coherent transport measures to be achieved, with funding from developer contributions being available. In addition, the brief will help avoid delay in moving forward identified key sites (i.e. Bracknell & Wokingham College) that could otherwise have a knock-on effect of delay on other key sites (i.e. Bracknell Town Centre and Garth Hill).

The draft brief envisages that the current mix of employment, residential, transport, community and leisure uses in the area will continue. It also makes reference to a hospital, should suitable proposals be forthcoming. In particular, however, the draft brief seeks a balance between increases in employment and housing provision. Redevelopment is advocated where this would raise the quality of the area and lead to other improvements.

5 COUNCIL STRATEGY/CORPORATE SERVICES

5.1 The Executive dealt with 4 items falling within the Council Strategy/Corporate Services portfolio:

(a) Social Cohesion Strategy – Position Statement

The Executive received a progress report on work on the development of a corporate Social Cohesion Strategy. The development of the Strategy is central to the Council's CPA Improvement Plan and, following the recent publication of a Race Equality Scheme, consultants have been commissioned to further develop the social cohesion work into a full corporate strategy.

Preliminary consultation meetings will take place during July with a view to finalising the strategy by the end of September 2003.

(b) Corporate Asset Management Plan

As part of the Government's modernisation programme for local government, Councils are required to produce Corporate Capital Strategies and Asset Management Plans. Where required these must be submitted annually to the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) by 31 July. If in any year the submission of any particular plan is not sought, the Council still has to provide Core Data sheets and Performance Indicator information on these topics. The documents, once submitted to GOSE, are public documents which summarise how the Council approaches and is dealing with Asset Management. The Plan both summarises the work of the past year and informs work in the coming year.

The Executive duly endorsed the Plan and authorised the Acting Director of Corporate Services and the Director of Environment to make final amendments, to incorporate comments received, prior to final submission to GOSE.

(c) Capital Programme Outturn 2002/03

The Executive received the Capital Programme Outturn Report for 2002/03. The Council had an overall capital budget of £22.323m for schemes. Good progress has been made in implementing the 2002/03 capital programme with £16.401m (73%) spent by departments and £5.191m given to Registered Social Landlords for social housing. The overall capital programme was overspent by £0.157m. Additionally, the Executive approved the use of an underspend in Education for future projects increasing the overspend against budget to £0.280m. The capitalisation of revenue expenditure above that which was required will also require additional capital resources of £0.364m.

However, additional capital receipts of £3.423m were generated in 2002/03 that will more than support this additional expenditure

Having noted this, the Executive approved the detailed report on over/underspends and approved a carry forward of £6.008m from the 2002/03 capital programme.

(d) Provisional Out-Turn Revenue Expenditure 2002/03 And Commitment Budget 2004/05 – 2006/07

The Executive also received and noted details of the latest projected revenue out-turn for 2002/03 which highlighted issues that are likely to impact upon the Council's budget in future years. The Council's expenditure for the year to 31 March 2003 is anticipated to be £89.567m.

For planning purposes, it is assumed that the Council will continue to fund schools at the FSS level in future years, and that the schools element of the FSS will increase by 5% each year. Building in this assumption and an allowance for future inflation, based on past experience, the Council faces an underlying funding gap of around £11m by 2006/07. This is consistent with previous projections that have been reported to Members during the past three years. Council Tax increases in each of the next three years in line with the Government's assumed levels of 6% year on year, as published in the Comprehensive Spending Review 2002, would reduce the shortfall to around £4.6m by 2006/07. However, it should again be noted that this is before considering service pressures and developments.

The availability of revenue balances of around £7.9m at the end of this financial year will provide a small degree of flexibility over the speed at which this gap needs to be bridged, although it would not be prudent to "front load" the use of balances as this would create a significant deficit in subsequent years. It will therefore be important to maintain the Council's approach of managing a "soft landing" by supporting the revenue budget over the next three years with phased drawings from useable reserves, while carefully managing additions to the budget arising from service pressures and developments. A broad spectrum of options exists to bridge the identified budget gap, in line with the published medium term financial strategy. To ensure the strategy is delivered, the Executive has established informal Budget Review Groups involving the Executive Portfolio Holders and individual Directors and other staff/Members as appropriate to take this work forward over the coming months.

6 OTHER MATTERS

(a) A New Chief Executive's Office "From Vision to Delivery"

During discussions between the Executive and CMT on the Council's strategic objectives for the next 4 years, a key theme to emerge has been the need to refocus the organisation on the successful delivery of efficient, high quality services in the face of endemic change and significant external pressures. Allied to this, is increasing concern over the Council's capacity, both corporately and in departments, to maintain the progress that has been made in the face of the many initiatives and pressures that are being faced. To address these concerns the Chief Executive has developed broad

proposals for reorganising the Policy Development Unit to provide a resource that is more focused on co-ordinating key initiatives, supporting performance improvements and contributing to the massive regeneration and partnership agenda. The proposal will also assist service departments deliver the Council's overall objectives by identifying "Change Managers" in each department who will be available to work on major cross-cutting issues.

The Executive has endorsed these proposals in principle, subject to finalising details in some areas. Following this, detailed implementation plans will be developed in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Employment Committee.

7 LOOKING AHEAD

- 7.1 The next Forward Plan will be published on 1 August 2003 and will be available for public inspection at Easthampstead House in the usual way and is also regularly updated online at www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk, where you can also find full details on decisions taken by individual portfolio holders.