

**COUNCIL  
21 JANUARY 2004**

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**EXECUTIVE REPORT  
(SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report supplements the information contained in Item 6 by providing a commentary on the items dealt with at the meeting of the Executive on 20 January 2003.

**2. EDUCATION**

**2.1 Review of Primary School Places in South Bracknell**

- 2.1.1 The Executive considered the results of the consultation on the options to remove surplus school places in South Bracknell. Members will be aware that the Executive Member for Education will be making the final decision on behalf of the Executive on 3 February 2004, before referring the matter to the School Organisation Committee.
- 2.1.2 Having discussed the revisions which had been made to the draft proposals in the light of the consultation exercise, the Executive duly endorsed the recommendations being presented to Council for consideration (Agenda Item 7). It noted that not only did the proposals now on the table meet the Council's objective of removing 500 surplus places, but also met many of the concerns expressed during the consultation period.

**3. COUNCIL STRATEGY**

**3.1 External Auditor's Annual Audit Letter and Relationship Manager's Letter**

- 3.1.1 The Executive received a report on both the External Auditor's annual management letter and the Relationship Manager at the Audit Commission's CPA Improvement Report which summarised the significant issues arising from the Audit Commission's inspection programme during 2002/03. Both letters will also be considered by the Public Scrutiny Commission at its meeting on 12 February 2004.
- 3.1.2 Greg Mackintosh of KPMG, the external auditors, and Steven Shuttleworth, the Relationship Manager, both addressed the Executive and spoke positively about the progress which the Council has made during the past year..
- 3.1.3 There are no major problems identified within the Annual Audit Letter. Moreover, the Relationship Manager's report recognises that the Council has made significant improvements in several areas over the last 12 months, making the Council one of 'top ten' improvers in the country since 2002. Both have drawn attention to issues where further work is required but the overall picture is very positive and augers well for the coming year.

## **3.2 CPA – Corporate Assessment**

- 3.2.1 Allied to the above reports are the results of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2003 which were published on 18 December 2003. The Council's overall CPA category increased from 'fair' to 'good' as a result of significant improvements in the core service score. Because the improvement in the Council's core service score now exceeds the Audit Commission's threshold of 42 points (the Council scored 44 points) the Council is eligible for a corporate assessment in 2004 and is required to notify the Audit Commission of its intention to apply by 31 January 2004.
- 3.2.2 The Executive had no hesitation in instructing the Chief Executive to notify the Audit Commission of the Council's intention to apply for a corporate assessment in 2004 in the third phase of assessments, from September to December.

## **4. SOCIAL SERVICES & HOUSING**

### **4.1 Bracknell Forest Adoption Policy**

- 4.1.1 The Director of Social Services & Housing advised the Executive that it is a statutory requirement, from the Adoption Act 1976, that the Council must operate as an Adoption Agency and therefore have an Adoption Policy in place. She advised that the Council had been applying the former Berkshire County Council policy since local government reorganisation in 1998 but as the Adoption and Children Act 2002 had introduced new requirements for Adoption Agencies, the existing policy needed to be replaced by a local policy to accommodate these requirements.
- 4.1.2 The Director explained that the Act brings adoption law into line with the Children Act 1989 by placing the welfare of the child at the centre of the adoption process. Thus in making a decision in relation to the adoption of a child, the paramount consideration for courts and adoption agencies must be the welfare of the child throughout its life. This was a view strongly supported by the Executive which duly approved the new policy subject to it being explicit within it that the child's welfare, safety and needs must be at the first priority.

## **5 ENVIRONMENT**

### **5.1 Municipal Waste Management Strategy Statement**

- 5.1.1 The Executive also approved the formal adoption of a Municipal Waste Management Strategy Statement, the development of which has been overseen by the Joint Waste Disposal Board.
- 5.1.2 This Statement defines the high level policy and strategic framework within which this Council will develop its waste management services through its partnership with Reading Borough Council and Wokingham District Council. Each of the partners must approve the statement.

## **6 LEISURE SERVICES**

### **6.1 South Hill Park Annual Revenue Grant**

- 6.1.1 The Executive received the annual review of the South Hill Park Arts Centre. This both reviewed the past year and outlined the draft programme of events for the coming year and set out the centre's performance indicators. The review was submitted to support the annual grant application which was duly approved along with the draft programme and performance indicators. The sum awarded, £413,850, was in line with an increase to reflect the Council's inflation provision in the 2004/05 budget.