

**COUNCIL  
28 APRIL 2004**

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**EXECUTIVE REPORT  
(SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report supplements the information contained in Item 13 by providing a commentary on the items dealt with at the meeting of the Executive on 20 April 2004.

**2. SOCIAL SERVICES & HOUSING**

**2.1 Day Opportunities Review - Response to Scrutiny Panel Report**

- 2.1.1 The Executive considered a report from the Health, Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Panel on its review of the processes employed to reach the decisions made regarding Day Opportunities in the Borough. It welcomed the report by the Panel and sees this as a model, which could usefully be extended to other areas of scrutiny.

- 2.1.2 The Executive particularly welcomed the fact that the scrutiny panel supported the Executive decision to re-model adult day opportunities services, with the consequence that the Johnstone Court Day Centre would close. In addition, the Executive agreed its detailed response to each of the Panel's recommendations which will be submitted to the next meeting of the Health, Social Care & Housing Scrutiny Panel.

**2.2 Best Value Review Of Housing Strategy And Enabling**

- 2.2.1 The Executive received and approved the Best Value Review of Housing Strategy and Enabling Report and the Improvement Plan arising from the Review.

- 2.2.2 This Best Value Review was carried out between 2002 and 2003 with a view to securing continuous improvement of the Housing Strategy and Enabling function at an affordable cost. It focused on whether the Housing Strategy and Enabling function provides cost-effective services that meet appropriate performance standards.

- 2.2.3 The scope of the review was as follows:

- a To ensure the Council's housing strategy fits into the regional and national context, enabling us to achieve a "fit for purpose" rating from the Government Office of the South East for our Housing Strategy document. To ensure the housing strategy is flexible and responsive to change where appropriate, and robust enough to deliver on the Council's stated aims.
- b To ensure housing strategy and enabling is seen as a corporate activity, which fits with corporate aims
- c To ensure we deliver the housing objectives of the Borough.

2.2.4 The report does not raise any new issues, though some issues were new in 2002. The improvement plan shows that whilst the Review was being carried out, a significant number of important recommendations have already been implemented, including the adoption of Supplementary Planning Guidance for provision of affordable and key worker housing; stock condition surveys in the private and public sectors; and the bid for Home Improvement Agency funding.

### **2.3 Council Housing Stock Options Appraisal: Elected Members' Involvement**

2.3.1 The Executive has also agreed to appoint a Committee to oversee the options appraisal for the Council housing stock and ensure the fullest participation in the process by members.

2.3.2 The Committee's membership will be the Leader of the Council, the Executive Member for Social & Health Care Services and Housing, the Executive Member for Corporate Services and the Executive Member for Leisure Services. In addition, the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Champion and the Leader of the Labour Group are to be co-opted to the Committee as non-voting members.

2.3.3 It is also proposed to hold ad hoc meetings with local members representing wards with the largest concentration of Council housing, namely Priestwood and Garth, Old Bracknell, Bullbrook, Harmanwater, Great Hollands North, Great Hollands South, Hanworth and Wildridings & Central. These meetings would provide an opportunity for local members to work with officers and tenants in delivering the project.

## **3. EDUCATION**

### **3.1 Behaviour Support Plan**

3.1.1 The Executive approved the Behaviour Support Plan for the next three years.

3.1.2 Since 1998, local authorities have been required to produce a document in which they state the arrangements they have made, or proposed, for the education of children with behavioural difficulties, including the "provision of advice or resources to schools for promoting good behaviour and discipline, and dealing with pupils with behavioural problems". This document is known as the Behaviour Support Plan.

3.1.3 Bracknell Forest's first Behaviour Support Plan was issued in December 1998, and revised for April 2001. The current revision will have a lifespan of less than the three years originally anticipated by the DfES. Instead, the next version will be subsumed within the Single Education Plan or possibly a combined Children's Services Plan.

3.1.4 The Executive recognised how important it would be to ensure that the targets set in the Plan were met. To do so, would involve commitment not only from the Council and schools but also parents.

#### **4. CORPORATE SERVICES**

##### **4.1 Citizenship, Naming And Renewal Of Vows Ceremonies**

- 4.1.1 The Executive has approved the arrangements and charges to be applied in relation to citizenship, naming and renewal of vows ceremonies.
- 4.1.2 The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 provides for applicants for British Nationality to make a citizenship oath and pledge at a ceremony in the presence of a superintendent registrar. Attendance at a ceremony will be mandatory for those over 18 years of age, applying for British citizenship.
- 4.1.3 Local authorities are now also expected to make available naming ceremonies, either directly or via another local authority or provider. Such a ceremony gives the parents the opportunity to celebrate the birth of their child publicly and to show their commitment to its upbringing through a secular ceremony.
- 4.1.4 There is also demand from couples who wish to celebrate their marriage by reaffirming their marriage vows either in a secular ceremony or at the place where they were originally married. Local authorities are therefore expected to make available marriage reaffirmation ceremonies also either directly or via another local authority or provider.
- 4.1.5 It is recognised that as society changes and develops, there may be other celebratory services that local authorities would wish to provide such as civil funerals. Civil partnerships, which will provide a framework for the legal recognition of same sex couples, will be a mandatory service, which the government proposes will be delivered locally, and new powers are currently awaited.
- 4.1.6 In addition to approving the arrangements for providing these new ceremonies, the Executive also noted that, as part of the current accommodation review arising from the restructuring of the Council, it was proposed to move the Council's Marriage Room to Easthampstead Park Mansion.