

**COUNCIL
28 JULY 2004**

EXECUTIVE REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Since the Executive report to the Council meeting on 23 June 2004, the Executive has met twice, on 12 and 20 July 2004, the first meeting being a special meeting to consider a report from the Public Scrutiny Commission .
- 1.2 This report summarises the decisions taken at those two meetings.

2. POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.1 Amen Corner Local Plan Alteration

- 2.1.1 The Executive has recommended that a modest change to the settlement boundary at Amen Corner (referred to as Option 2 in the reports to the Executive on 18 May and 15 June 2004) should be approved as an alteration to the Local Plan and that a review of the entire area should be undertaken as part of the work on the Local Development Framework as it emerges this year.
- 2.1.2 Full details are contained in agenda item 6(a).

2.2 Early Years and Childcare Strategic Plan 2004-2006

- 2.2.1 The Executive has recommended that the Early Years and Childcare Strategic Plan 2004-06 should be adopted.
- 2.2.2 The Plan explains how the local authority will work with partners to plan appropriate actions, coordinate delivery and prioritise their resources, to ensure that together they can meet the Sure Start targets. The Sure Start programme is a development of previous Government programmes that relate to the provision of early education and childcare. Full details are contained in agenda item 6(b).

3 ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Licensing Policy – Approval for Formal Consultation

- 3.1.1 On 7 July 2004 the Secretary of State issued the Guidance to Licensing Authorities and has laid the Order announcing the First Appointed Day when the Licensing Authorities will begin to process the new licensing applications. However, the Regulations and secondary legislation have still not been released. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has issued a timetable as follows:
- 7 July 2004 – Guidance issued. Licensing Authorities begin preparing their Licensing Policies which set out how they will deliver the Act's reforms.
 - August 2004 – DCMS releases draft application Regulations with forms, proposed fees and other draft regulations for public consultation

- 7 February 2005 – First Appointed Day. Licensing Authorities begin to process licensing applications which lie dormant
 - Approximately November 2005 – Second Appointed Day. The new licensing regime begins as new licences take effect and licences are activated
- 3.1.2 The Licensing Act requires the each authority to produce a Statement of Licensing Policy to be used in the determination of license applications with regard to regulated entertainment, late night refreshment and alcohol sales.
- 3.1.3 The Executive has approved a Draft Statement of Licensing Policy for public consultation. Once this commences, the Council must record all responses, comments and views. These must be recorded whether or not they are to be included in the final Policy and if not, why not. All reasons must be given. This is vital in case the Council's Policy is judicially challenged. The Council must be in a position to prove to the Magistrates' Court that it has consulted the community widely.
- 3.1.4 In addition to approving the draft policy for consultation, the Executive has authorised the Executive Member for Public & Environmental Services and Parish Liaison to approve any modifications to the Policy after release of the Regulations and secondary legislation.

4 COUNCIL STRATEGY/CORPORATE SERVICES & RESOURCES

4.1 Provisional Out-Turn Revenue Expenditure 2003/04 And Commitment Budget 2005/06 – 2007/08

- 4.1.1 The Executive received a report on the latest projected out-turn expenditure position for the financial year 2003/04. This also highlighted issues that are likely to impact upon the Council's budget in future years and summarised the Commitment Budget for the period 2005/06 to 2007/08 and process to be applied for preparing the Council's budget for 2005/06..
- 4.1.2 The Council's approved net revenue budget for the 2003/04 financial year was £100.930m. In addition, LPSA pump priming grant of £0.268m that was planned to be spent in 2002/03 was carried forward into 2003/04, although this had no impact on the net revenue budget (as expenditure matches income).
- 4.1.3 The report received and approved by the Executive indicated:
- a. A carry forward into 2004/05 of unspent budgets totalling £0.642m;
 - b. Transfers to earmarked reserves of £1.097m;
 - c. A provisional outturn expenditure for 2003/04 of £99.930m, which represents an underspend of £1.036m;

4.2 Capital Programme Outturn 2003/04

- 4.2.1 The Executive received a report on the latest projected capital out-turn expenditure position for 2003/04. This report also requested the carry forward of approved expenditure that was not incurred by 31 March into the current year's programme.

- 4.2.2 The capital programme for 2003/04 consisted of £27.291m on projects and programmes determined by Service Departments. The projected outturn is £19.460m (71% of approved expenditure) which is consistent with performance in previous years.
- 4.2.3 Many of the schemes included in the capital programme are both technically and logistically complex to implement. Issues such as planning approvals, land transfers and inclement weather can all lead to unavoidable delays. In addition, their financial scale requires a lengthy tender process to ensure the best price is obtained prior to letting the works contract. It is therefore extremely difficult to complete such schemes within the financial year in which they are approved, with the result being an apparent low level of expenditure against budget. In order to address this, it is proposed that future years capital programmes should be developed on a realistic cash flow basis, which will enable a more meaningful comparison to be made between actual and budgeted expenditure.
- 4.2.4 Having discussed the report, a carry forward of £7.974m from the 2003/04 capital programme was approved. In addition, the provisional financing of capital expenditure in the current year was approved.

4.3 Treasury Management Annual Report 2003-04

- 4.3.1 The Executive also received a report updating it on the provisional out-turn position on the Council's Treasury Management activity for the financial year 2003/04 and the investment strategy for 2004/05 agreed in March 2004.
- 4.3.2 The overall rate of return on the Council's investment was 3.62%. This is marginally below the overall benchmark set for the Council's Investment return of 3.7% and 38 basis points below that budgeted for in the HRA and the General Fund. However, the rate of return is only one element used in the calculation of the cash return on investments. Due to a combination of significantly higher capital receipts in the year, due to the substantial rise in Right-to-Buy property prices, and a higher level of overall balances at the beginning of the year than projected the under-performance in terms of absolute rate-of-return was outweighed by the level of investments. The total income generated from investments was £892,000
- 4.3.3 In the light of the report, the Borough Finance Officer has been requested to continue to monitor the performance of the Council's external fund managers and to report back on the decision taken in respect of re-paying the ex-County debt should any progress be made.

4.4 Authority to Dispose of Current Crowthorne Library Site

- 4.4.1 The Executive has authorised the Head of Property to enter into a contract for the disposal of the existing Crowthorne Library.
- 4.4.2 The relocation of Crowthorne Library to the centre of the village in early 2006 will result in the existing library in Lower Broadmoor Road becoming surplus to requirement. It is proposed that the sale of the site will be at market value, providing a capital receipt to the Council which will help offset the cost of fitting out the new library in the village centre.

- 4.4.3 The Council's preference is for the property to be disposed of for a community health use but, in the event that it is not possible to agree terms for an appropriate community health use, a further report on other possible options for the site will be presented to the Executive.

5. **LOOKING AHEAD**

- 5.1 The next Forward Plan will be published on 1 July 2004 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.