
EXECUTIVE REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Since the Executive report to the Council meeting on 19 January 2005, the Executive has met once, on 15 February 2005.
- 1.2 The decisions have been summarised by reference to the relevant portfolio within which they fall.

2. COUNCIL STRATEGY

2.1 Budget Proposals 2005/06

- 2.1.1 The main business addressed by the Executive at this meeting was to review the budget proposals in the light of the consultation exercise which had followed the publication of the draft proposals in December.
- 2.1.2 The recommendations in respect of:
 - a) Housing Revenue Account and Housing Improvement Programme 2005/06
 - b) Capital Programme 2005/06 – 2007/08
 - c) General Fund Revenue Budget 2005/06

are detailed in item 6 of this agenda.

2.2. Corporate Performance Assessment - Draft Improvement Plan

- 2.2.1 Council will be aware that, in December, the Audit Commission published its Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) for this Council. The rating was 'Good'.
- 2.2.2 Having considered the detailed report from the Audit Commission on the findings of its inspection in October 2004, a draft Improvement Plan has been prepared for the period 2005-2007.
- 2.2.3 The draft Improvement Plan highlights ten areas for improvement that were identified in either the Council Ability or Core Service dimensions of CPA 2004: These are
 - a Adult Social Services: addressing the Commission for Social Care & Inspection view of the Council's 'uncertain' capacity for improvement.
 - b Children's Services: reconfiguring services to meet the Every Child Matters agenda.
 - c Housing Strategy: completing the stock options appraisal, improving delivery of affordable homes and developing plans to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010.

- d Housing Management: improving housing management performance.
- e Community Safety: providing a stronger focus and strategic approach to the safer communities role.
- f Performance management and service standards: ensuring performance data is more robust and publishing accessible standards for all services.
- g Transport: developing a stronger strategic approach through the LTP2 process.
- h Information Technology: implementing major new systems in social services, housing management, and benefits.
- i Education: producing alternative plans for developing Garth Hill College/Wick Hill Centre for 16–19 Studies.
- j Community Plan: providing long-term ambitions and SMART targets.

2.2.4 In addition to these areas, the draft Plan re-emphasises the following key local priorities where it is essential that the Council maintains its focus and builds on the successes already achieved:

- a Leading the regeneration of Bracknell to provide a town fit for the 21st century.
- b Creating and maintaining a quality environment.
- c Working with partners to improve health provision within the Borough.
- d Promoting community cohesion within the Borough.
- e Improving community engagement within the Borough.
- f Maintaining continuous service improvement.

2.2.5 The Executive agreed that the draft Improvement Plan should be published as the basis for consultation with the Public Scrutiny Commission and partner organisations. The plan builds on the CPA report and the Audit Commission Relationship Manager's letter and will help deliver the Council's Medium Term Objectives.

2.2.6 In addition, the Executive approved the following Best Value reviews for completion during 2005/6 – 2006/7:

- Community Safety: completion of the joint review with Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead
- Community Leadership: including the Council's approach to community engagement and partnership working
- Corporate Emergency Response (including emergency planning, out of hours provision and business continuity).

2.2.7 In the first two cases, the reviews relate specifically to headline improvement priorities within the plan. The corporate emergency response is also a wide-ranging

and important, which may have relevance to the improvement priority work in modernising adult services and housing management.

- 2.2.8 In considering these issues, the Executive noted both the importance and scale of the workload facing the Social Services & Housing Department including the need, in this period, to address the requirements of the Children's Act. As a result, the Executive has authorised the Chief Executive with the Directors of Education & Libraries and Social Services and Housing to lead an initial consultation exercise designed to develop outline proposals for the creation of a Children's Services Department on 1 May 2005. The Executive will consider the proposals and the overall route-map for more in depth integration of children's functions at its meeting on 19 April. In parallel, the Council could make arrangements for the internal appointment of a Director of Children's Services towards the end of April, in preparation for the formal creation of the new Department from 1 May. A separate report on tonight's agenda deals with this issue (Item 7).
- 2.2.9 Whilst focussing on the early creation of the Children's Services Department, the Executive was also concerned to ensure that the importance of the agenda for adult social services and housing was fully recognised and that the planned changes enhance the capacity for the Council to deliver the many initiatives in these areas.

3 PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION

3.1 Local Transport Plan

- 3.1.1 The Executive has published a draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) for public consultation purposes with key stakeholders and residents. The LTP will set out the Borough Council's plans for transport up to 2011. The production of this plan is a statutory requirement placed upon all transport authorities and is one of the six key plans that the Council is required to produce. It is intended that this document will set the context for transport within the borough for the next six years.
- 3.1.2 The new LTP will be a 'theme' based document e.g. value for money. It will concentrate more on key outcomes as opposed to the last LTP (2000 – 2005) which was more output based. The plan will focus on packages of solutions rather than single mode i.e. a move to better integration, performance management, with monitoring being vital.
- 3.1.3 The 'Shared Priorities' outlined in the guidance have been agreed between the DfT and the Local Government Association. These play a fundamental part in structuring this next Local Transport Plan (2006-2011). The four shared priorities are dealing with congestion, accessibility, safer roads and better air quality. There is also an over-arching priority to maintain the transport infrastructure. Targets and indicators for these priorities will need to be implemented and will form the basis of the assessment process of the final plan.
- 3.1.5 The DfT has indicated the level of funding the Council may receive for maintenance and integrated transport measures for the next five years in the form of a "planning guideline"; this is based on a formula basis. However LTP's will be assessed and where authorities perform well they could be rewarded with additional funds of up to 25% extra on top of the guideline. This would be an ongoing procedure during the life of the plan and would be assessed by GOSE through the Annual Progress Report process in the Autumn each year.

- 3.1.6 Initial indications of the planning guideline suggest that the level of monies being allocated for maintenance work will lead to a continuing deterioration of the standard of the borough's roads. This should be considered in the light of the Best Value Inspection of Streetscene which identified the deterioration of the highway network as a concern, recommending that a stronger case be made to Government to increase the level of investment. In the current and next financial year we have been allocated funds for specific schemes on the A329 and A321 yet still road conditions deteriorate. Given the Borough Council is considered to be excellent in terms of its delivery of schemes and financial management, the only conclusion is that funds for investment made available by Government are still inadequate.

4 LOOKING AHEAD

- 4.1 The next Forward Plan will be published on 1 April 2005 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.