

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
2 DECEMBER 2020
6.30 - 9.42 PM**



Present:

Councillors Angell (Chair), Virgo (Vice-Chair), Mrs Birch, Brossard, Gbadebo, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, McLean, Mrs Mattick, Mossom, Porter, Temperton and Tullett
Parent Governor representative: Mark Glanville

Apologies for absence were received from:

Parent Governor representative: Tracey Wright

Executive Members present:

Councillor Bettison OBE, Leader of the Council
Councillor D Birch, Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing
Councillor Brunel-Walker, Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration
Councillor Harrison, Executive Member for Culture, Delivery and Public Protection
Councillor Mrs Hayes MBE, Executive Member for the Environment
Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance
Councillor Turrell, Executive Member for Planning and Transport

Also Present:

Councillors Brown, Ms Gaw, Mrs Ingham, Leake and Parker

In attendance:

Timothy Wheadon, Chief Executive
Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery
Andrew Hunter, Director: Place, Planning & Regeneration
Damian James, Assistant Director: Contract Services
Ann Moore, Head of Democratic and Registration Services
Gareth Jones, Shared Services Manager

44. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 11 November 2020 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chair.

45. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations made and no indications that members would be participating while under the party whip.

46. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

47. Public Participation

Under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny Rebecca Murphy, representing CPRE Berkshire (Campaign to Protect Rural England), spoke to the meeting regarding the inclusion of reference to protecting green belt spaces

within the Council Plan. She encouraged councillors to consult the published report 'A Positive Vision for London's Green Belt' available at [https://www.cpre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/19.11.04 - APPG London s Green Belt report - A Positive Vision for London s Green Belt.pdf](https://www.cpre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/19.11.04_-_APPG_London_s_Green_Belt_report_-_A_Positive_Vision_for_London_s_Green_Belt.pdf)

48. **Climate Change presentations**

Professor Nigel Arnell, University of Reading addressed the Commission on the scientific evidence and effects of climate change. In response to questions Professor Arnell gave his opinion that:

- Two degrees global increase was an average and was not safe as land and sea do not increase equality
- Reduction of emissions was a collective process
- Total annual rainfall may not change but there would be fewer but wetter days
- The challenges of supplying water due to changes in rainfall was affected by weather over long periods and the management of water levels would be considered by water suppliers and the Environment Agency
- There was no current evidence that climate change would impact the jet stream to the extent of altering wind behaviour
- Carefully managed planting of trees would reduce carbon emissions, send a political message and have a local impact through flood management schemes
- Cooling could be managed through designing new buildings but did require investment or management
- International policy was to limit the temperature increase and any change from current climate would require investment to respond

Professor Tim Dixon, University of Reading gave an overview of work undertaken by other authorities. In response to questions Professor Dixon gave his opinion that:

- The crowd funding scheme being run in West Berkshire was a good idea as allowed residents to invest in climate change bonds
- there was no easy solution to finding the right balance to different sustainable modes of transport
- detrimental environmental impact caused by disposed personal protection equipment counteracts other sustainable changes made during lockdown
- Reading Climate Change Partnership had tried to encouraged people to make pledges and organisations to make pledge on reducing carbon emissions by reducing flights for example

Kathryn O'Neal representing Bracknell Climate Change Action Group addressed the meeting on their views on climate change measures.

49. **Update from Climate Change review group**

Members of the Climate Change Review Group reported back to the Commission on the research undertaken since the March meeting:

- Councillor Mrs McKenzie-Boyle reported on the potential sustainable solutions to reduce the pollution along Crowthorne High Street. It was noted that a one-way system would not be beneficial to either residents or the local businesses. Further details would follow on the proposal to install an air cleansing planter in the Millennium Garden.
- Councillor Templeton reported that she had attended a webinar on 'Funding the Green Agenda' which highlighted the scheme run by Ambundance in

West Berkshire selling climate change bonds. 72% of local people were interested in investing in local green agenda with the same returns as National Savings on £5 to £100 investments. Residents had reinvested their interest into future projects. This crowd funded scheme had raised £1million. Potential project to retrofit schools and enable residents to get involved.

- Councillors Brossard and Temperton had undertaken research on school infrastructure across all 38 schools. Recognition that the challenge was balancing cost of installing improvements against the savings that could be made. Further work would be ongoing to identify opportunities.
- Councillor Mossom had investigated how to reduce the use of water bottles and installation of water station in the town centre. He was investigating the cost of installation and whether there were grants available to support the installation.
- Councillor Virgo highlighted his ambition to reintroduce the tree planting scheme which enables residents to pay for trees to be planted locally.

Councillor Virgo concluded that all research would be passed on to the Executive Director: Delivery's team and findings from reviews would be presented to the Executive for consideration.

50. **Council's Strategy and proposals on Climate Change**

Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery updated the Commission on the progress made towards developing a Climate Change strategy for the Council since the March meeting.

In response to questions raised it was noted that:

- 41 projects had been identified within the local Bracknell Forest context
- the health pandemic had delayed delivery of the climate change strategy as officers responded to the national crisis
- the Council was able to use its procurement power to reduce costs, improve insulation and consider sustainability
- consideration given to native species and long term maintenance programmes
- Executive Director: Delivery considered Bracknell Forest to be 'active' rather than 'in progress' as had been delivering the strategy objectives and its projects were integral in the Council's plans
- All of the 41 projects were being managed within existing budget and the costs associated with staffing resources could be identified for each project
- Aspirational projects were also in development for which funding would continue to be sought when appropriate grants became available
- Mixture of factors encouraging environmentally friendly development in area including planning policy will support the design of the scheme, biodiversity response such as provision of bat boxes, section 106 funds might contribute to installing sustainable drainage and then building control measures to deal with how the building is constructed and insulated.
- The Council worked with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) on the green economy such as digital infrastructure to enable people to work from home across the borough including rural areas, transport grants sought to improve the transport network around Bracknell and congestion management schemes to improve air quality and contributed to planting schemes.

- The Council was working with the Business Improvement District (BID) to improve cycle and bus access.
- Building control measures require increasing standards of efficiency.
- The projects identified by the Climate Change review groups would be cross referenced against the existing projects to feed into the final Strategy and added as aspirational projects as appropriate.
- Priority within the strategy was reducing carbon dioxide and improvements against the baseline.
- Part of the strategy was to enable the role of Councillors as community leaders and the community to drive down carbon emissions across the borough.

On behalf of the Commission, the Chair thanked the Executive Director: Delivery for his team's hard work to pull the document together and their ongoing work to deliver the strategy. Gareth Jones, Shared Services Manager was recognised, in particular, for his co-ordination role.

51. **Work Programme Update**

Each Panel Chair provided a verbal update on work programme progress.

Education, Skills and Growth

The Apprentices review was in progress with two meetings held with witnesses and a survey issued. Initial findings had been made but further meeting to be held.

Environment and Communities

The Registered Social Landlords review was in progress and meetings scheduled with housing officers, public protection officers and then discussions with two Registered Social Landlords. The Review Panel were hoping to talk to residents about their experiences.

Wellbeing and Finance

The Isolation and Loneliness review evidence pack and review schedule were being developed. The Review Panel were hoping to talk with hard to reach residents about their experiences by engaging with Involve.

52. **Environment and Planning & Transport portfolios in relation to climate change**

Councillor Mrs Hayes MBE, Executive Member for the Environment joined the meeting to answer questions on her portfolio in relation to climate change and she stated that:

- There was a cross party working group on delivering food waste and suggesting environmental projects such as using an aerobic digester
- Bracknell Forest residents were committed to recycling
- Food waste collections would start in March 2021

Councillor Turrell, Executive Member for Planning and Transport joined the meeting to answer questions on his portfolio in relation to climate change and he stated that:

- Significant national announcements, policies and plans were making change a reality for example: Government's 10 point plan for green industrial revolution and first national infrastructure strategy.

- Covid has produced opportunities for change such as increased use of remote meetings but impact elsewhere such as fear of using public transport and increase in plastic waste.
- The Council had introduced LED lighting, work ongoing with subway lights and bollards to LED including traffic light conversion. Installation of electric vehicle charging points in car parks and investigating other opportunities to expand schemes.
- Use of sustainable materials in highways products using a product matrix
- Encouraging more sustainable transport use and build on increased interest in walking and cycling this year. Improving links between cycle ways network across the borough.
- Combination of approaches to increasing vehicle charging site as on sites under direct control electric charging points were being installed at no cost to Council whereas on other sites the Council could encourage installation through planning process. He stated that he anticipated quick progress once demand increased.
- The borough did not have high levels of particulate pollution but he supported the project to promote the reduction of cars idling by the Public Protection Partnership.
- The suggestion to extend the Bikeability scheme to adults was interesting
- Consideration needed to be given to how vehicles could be charged in estates where they were parked away from homes and noted that sometimes lamp posts were also positioned away from the kerb which would incur other issues if the solution was charging via lamp posts.

53. Work Programme Update - Review scope

The Commission agreed that the proposed scope for the Climate Change review be approved and the review commissioned.

CHAIRMAN