

COUNCIL
13 JANUARY 2021
7.30 - 8.30 PM



Present:

Councillors Ms Merry (Mayor), Gbadebo (Deputy Mayor), Allen, Angell, Atkinson, Dr Barnard, Bettison OBE, Bhandari, D Birch, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Brown, Brunel-Walker, Dudley, Finch, Ms Gaw, Mrs L Gibson, MJ Gibson, Green, Mrs Hamilton, Harrison, Mrs Hayes MBE, Ms Hayes, Heydon, Mrs Ingham, Kennedy, Kirke, Leake, Mrs Mattick, Mrs McKenzie, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, McLean, Mossom, Neil, Parker, Porter, Skinner, Temperton, Tullett, Turrell, Virgo and Wade

36. Minute silence of remembrance for Freeman of the Borough

Councillor Bettison OBE, Leader of the Council led the meeting in a minute silence to mark the sad passing of James (Jim) Finnie, the Freeman of the Borough, past Mayor, former Conservative Borough Council colleague and Crowthorne Parish councillor.

37. Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 25 November 2020 be approved, and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

38. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

39. Mayor's Announcements

Mayor's Christmas Card competition

The Mayor congratulated Yvonne at St Brendan's Care Home for winning the Mayor's Christmas Card competition and thanked Councillor Ms Gaw, Older Person's Champion, for helping organise the event.

Christmas messages

The Mayor reported that she was disappointed that she couldn't share Christmas wishes with residents personally, paid tribute to the borough's key workers who were on duty over the festive period and thanked all residents who had played their part in staying at home to protect the borough and communities.

Charity update

The Mayor thanked Steve Foye, Deputy Chief Fire Officer and all the staff at Crowthorne Fire Station for donating £250 from a sponsored carwash held in September. She extended her thanks to Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Councillors Dudley and Mrs McKenzie-Boyle for supporting her two military charities

SSAFA – the Soldiers Sailors and Airmen Families Association and the British Forces Foundation.

Bracknell Forest's Covid initiative

The Mayor thanked the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Gbadebo and his Deputy Mayoress for handing out Covid accessory packs containing a mask and hand sanitiser in Crowthorne Market assisted by Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle.

Welcoming businesses to Bracknell Forest

The Mayor had been pleased to be able to welcome Danetti to its new showroom in Bracknell Forest in December.

Thanks to residents

The Mayor concluded by thanking Bracknell Forest residents for their kindness and support of others during challenging times recognising that this had been vital to communities across the borough.

Councillor Mrs Hayes MBE, Executive Member for the Environment

Councillor Mrs Hayes MBE was pleased to announce that the former Martin's Heron Community Association had donated £420 to the Mayor's chosen charities when Winkfield Parish Council took over the running of the Community Centre.

40. **Executive Report**

The Council noted the report from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Bettison OBE, on the work of the Executive since that reported at the Council meeting on 25 November 2020. The Executive had met once on 15 December 2020.

The Leader highlighted:

- The Executive had approved the draft Revenue Budget 2021/22 and draft Capital Programme 2021/22 - 2023/24 which would be debated at the next Council meeting.
- The review of the Licensing Policy Statement was on the agenda for consideration.
- The Executive had noted the performance of the council over the period from July – September 2020 highlighted in the Overview Report.

41. **Pay Policy Statement**

The Council considered a report regarding the publication of its annual Pay Policy Statement. The 2011 Localism Act requires local authorities to publish an annual statement of their approach to pay for the relevant financial year in relation to the remuneration of their most senior employees, their lowest-paid employees and the relationship between the remuneration of the most senior employees and that of other employees. It was confirmed to the meeting that the Employment Committee would be given full opportunity to discuss the statement at its next meeting.

On the proposition of Councillor Bettison OBE, Leader of the Council, seconded by Councillor Heydon it was

RESOLVED that Pay Policy Statement for 2020/21 be agreed.

42. **Statement of Licensing Policy**

The Council considered a report regarding the requirement to prepare and publish a Statement of Licensing Policy every five years in accordance with section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003 ('the Act'). The Statement of Licensing Policy outlines the general approach of the Licensing Authority when making licensing decisions under the Act.

On the proposition of Councillor Porter, Chair of Licensing Committee, seconded by Councillor Brossard it was

RESOLVED that Bracknell Forest Statement of Licensing Policy be agreed.

43. **Questions Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 10**

1. Councillor Neil asked Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning the following published question:

On December 20, The Secretary of State promised laptops for vulnerable pupils would be delivered within two days of a request from schools in January.

Have all schools been advised of this and how many have been received? Can the Council also apply for these to ensure every known vulnerable child has access to their own computer for online learning and is not waiting to share with other siblings?

In response Councillor Dr Barnard stated that secondary schools were able to place their orders for devices at the start of last week and 185 devices were delivered within two to three days. The opportunity for Primary schools to place orders began that day and he anticipated that these would be fulfilled on a similar timescale. Since devices had arrived the school IT managers had ensured they had the correct software, access to data and connectivity and that the young people that they have been allocated devices were able to use them. He advised that schools were now focused on keeping pupils motivated and engaged with learning.

He confirmed that the Council could not apply for any devices as they were provided on a school by school basis consistent with local management of schools. Advice and support were provided to schools so that the devices were fit for purpose. He concluded that other schemes and opportunities available were explored to make sure as many Bracknell Forest children as possible had access to data and devices.

Councillor Neil asked a supplementary question relating to those at risk of digital divide being considered vulnerable and therefore able to attend school, was this happening in Bracknell Forest and what was the impact on schools and the ability to socially distance.

Councillor Dr Barnard responded that pupils would continue to be encouraged to work from home to minimise the risk of virus transmission. He advised that schools were balancing the need to keep students safe at home and the needs of those that required support for a number of reasons be taught in classroom when no other route was suitable they were invited to attend. Some schools found that up to 40% of their students were now attending school and children whose parents were key workers had priority access to attend. He was pleased to see a creative use of the learning platforms available; each school was taking an individual approach and normalise teaching in the difficult circumstances.

2. Councillor Temperton asked Councillor Bettison OBE, Leader of the Council, the following published question:

Scientific analysis shows that the Lateral Flow Test is less than 60% accurate if administered by an untrained person. Although every positive test result on an asymptomatic person would help reduce transmission, a negative result could just be because of an inadequate sample and the person could still be infected. The accuracy of this test depends on the quality of sampling and is best done by trained staff.

Can the Council organise training for the test administrators so that when schools need to use these tests to help safeguard their staff and students, the tests are more reliable?

In response Councillor Bettison OBE reported that school testing was one of the National testing programmes (along with NHS staff testing and care home testing), therefore the Department for Education and Department for Health and Social Care had been working with schools directly to deliver testing. He added that the borough's Public Health and Education and Learning teams had met with headteachers to assure the approach taken locally was of high quality and robust.

He stated that he was confident that all schools in Bracknell Forest had adequately trained their staff to deliver testing (having decided to staff the programme using their own workforce). All staff had undertaken all relevant online training provided by the DfE/DHSC to improve the accuracy of the testing. The Council would continue to work with schools to evaluate the approach being implemented and would support schools to refine their programme, continually driving improvement. He added that that Bracknell Forest schools had been proactive in driving implementation locally, meaning employment in the area was the most advanced across Berkshire.

He concluded that the Council were currently working up the plans for community testing and exploring the workforce options to deliver this. Training featured heavily in the plans to ensure the workforce were competent and accuracy of testing was optimal.

Councillor Temperton asked a supplementary question whether primary schools would also be tested as soon as possible and queried whether this was advisable and would be recommended within Bracknell Forest or should a pilot be run.

Councillor Bettison OBE replied that Bracknell Forest would continue to take the medical and scientific advice provided; he would raise the query with the relevant public health teams and would provide a written response.

3. Councillor Brown asked Councillor Bettison OBE, Leader of the Council, the following published question:

Given the exponential increase in local cases, what plans does the Council have to develop community testing?

In response Councillor Bettison OBE stated that Bracknell Forest was committed to implementing a Community Testing Programme as part of the wider Covid outbreak control plan, targeting Lateral Flow Testing in asymptomatic people to identify positive cases and promote self-isolation early to prevent onward transmission.

He advised the meeting that all Berkshire Local Authorities, including Bracknell Forest, were working with military planners for the next few weeks (11-24 January 2021) to progress the plans for Community Testing locally. He added that the Council

would then submit the proposed approach to Department for Social Care for approval and would then be able to confirm implementation dates.

He concluded that Community testing would in the first instance focus on testing those who could not work from home during the lockdown period with a view to expand community testing out to high risk, high prevalence groups in the longer term.

Councillor Brown asked a supplementary question about the approach to tracing and enforcement of self-isolation.

Councillor Bettison OBE responded that he would provide a written response to the question as it required input from the relevant public health teams.

44. **Continuation of Mayor's Announcements**

Councillor Mrs Hayes MBE, Executive Member for the Environment

Councillor Mrs Hayes MBE reported on 1 March 2021 that the green food waste collection would begin. The competition to name the new food recycling trucks had been launched and 1200 votes had been cast so far on the ten shortlisted. She was pleased to see the level of support from the borough's residents towards climate change.

CHAIRMAN