

**COUNCIL – ADVISORY MEETING
23 FEBRUARY 2022
7.30 - 10.20 PM**



Present:

Councillors Ms Merry (Mayor), Gbadebo (Deputy Mayor), Allen, Angell, Atkinson, Dr Barnard, Bettison OBE, Bhandari, Bidwell, D Birch, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Brown, 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-Boyle, McLean, Neil, Porter, Skinner, Temperton, Turrell, Virgo and Wade

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Brunel-Walker, Mrs McKenzie, Mossom and Parker

At the commencement of agenda items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 the Mayor advised the advisory Council that the decisions on each item would be taken at the in-person Council meeting to be convened the following day. This was as a result of the decisions being reserved to Council and therefore could not be delegated to the Chief Executive.

44. Minutes of Previous Meetings

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meetings held on 12 January 2022 be approved, and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

45. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Dr Barnard declared an affected interest in agenda item 6, Financial Plans and Revenue Budgets 2022/23, by virtue of his role as governor on both Warfield Primary and Garth Hill Secondary Schools as both have been identified to receive funding through the capital programme proposals.

Councillor Bidwell declared an affected interest in agenda item 6, Financial Plans and Revenue Budgets 2022/23, by virtue of his role as a governor at Fox Hill Primary School.

46. Mayor's Announcements

Civic Events

The Mayor advised the meeting that it had been a relatively quiet time since the last meeting with a number of events cancelled due to Covid including her proposed Platinum Ball.

Challenge the Mayor

The Mayor announced her 'Challenge the Mayor initiative' in which she invited residents and businesses in the borough to challenge her to take on a task in exchange for a donation to her civic charities. The first challenge would be undertaken on Monday 28 February in Great Hollands and she thanked Councillor Temperton for challenging her.

Charity Events

The Mayor thanked Councillor Gibson for raising funds for her military charities by shaving off his hair and beard. Councillor Gibson explained that he had an affinity for the charity due to previously representing IS Uxbridge and more poignantly due to the recent loss of his friend.

Memorial Service for Squadron Leader Lawrence Benny Goodman

The Mayor reflected on the memorial service for Bracknell resident Squadron Leader Lawrence 'Benny' Goodman which she had attended on Friday 4 February. Benny had died aged 100 on the 18th of July 2021 following a career in the RAF and flying in many missions, raids and bringing back liberated Prisoners of War. The Mayor shared a video of the Squadron leader reading the poem 'Remembrance'.

Tree Planting Programme

Councillor Harrison, Executive Member for Culture, Delivery and Public Protection reported that more than 3,000 young trees had been planted in the borough during the Winter period by the Parks and Countryside Rangers as well as local volunteers. He gave a special thanks to Warfield Environment Group, Easthampstead Rotary Group, Bracknell Conservation Volunteers and Town and Parish colleagues planting in their own areas.

47. **Executive Report**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bettison OBE, presented his report on the work of the Executive since that reported at the Council meeting on 12 January 2022. The Executive had met twice on 25 January and 8 February 2022.

The Leader highlighted the following matters that had been considered:

- Revenue Budget and Capital Programmes had been considered and were subject to separate reports at both meetings.
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026 had been agreed with an overall aim "to prevent homelessness and assist those who do become homeless to find and keep suitable housing". The Strategy set out five priorities:
 - Universal prevention – awareness of options
 - Targeted prevention – reaching people earlier when at risk
 - Preventing and relieving at crisis point
 - Recovery
 - Providing a range of suitable options
- Funding had been agreed to design 20 self-contained units for people with learning difficulties at Bridgewell Supported Living. This would facilitate independent living in shared accommodation and was likely to generate significant savings of £0.975m over five years.
- Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan was a joint plan covering Bracknell Forest, Reading, RBWM and Wokingham. Hampshire County Council had been commissioned to develop the plan. The draft had been submitted to the Secretary of State in February 2021 and had been

considered at Public Hearings during September and October 2021. The required modifications were subject to six weeks consultation.

- Bracknell Forest Cambium Partnership was created with Countryside in 2020. The Annual Review of the Joint Venture Business Plan 2020 – 2023 had been undertaken by the LLP Board and recommended to both parties with no significant changes to the established strategy.
- Two significant procurement plans were agreed covering Temporary accommodation housing maintenance and the Short breaks play and leisure scheme.

In response to Councillor Bidwell's question regarding where the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026 was available, Councillor Birch, Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Health and Housing confirmed this was published on the Council's website.

48. **Financial Plans and Revenue Budgets 2022/23**

The Council considered the report by the Executive Director: Resources which set out the financial plans and revenue budgets for the financial year 2022/23 and the supporting information which presented the Council's spending plans for 2022/23 and detailed budgets for the General Fund and Capital Programme.

Councillor Heydon gave a comprehensive presentation placing particular focus on the following matters:

- He stated that the Council was focused on value for money, maintaining services and green spaces, and remaining one of the lowest taxed authorities
- He reflected that the covid funding had supported the borough in a variety of ways including bringing the Forest Giants to Bracknell and made available unprecedented levels of funding to local voluntary and community groups, through the Bracknell Forest Recovery Grant. The Council had worked closely with Involve targeting support at the agreed priority areas of health and wellbeing, education and skills, disadvantage and exclusion, and building stronger communities. The Council had also funded a whole range of initiatives to help address financial hardship in low-income households, for example topping up the value of school holiday supermarket vouchers last Summer.
- He advised that detailed planning for the coming year's budget started back in September 2021. Based on assumptions from the high-level Spending Review announcement in late October the draft proposals were published in December for consultation. He stated that the overarching aim was to protect front line services and within this context, the capital programme did not contain any new funding for additional major schemes, to avoid placing significant pressure on the revenue budget. Schemes that have already been approved and are underway would be funded including work to redevelop the central depot facilities and, in partnership with the NHS, to construct a new health and community hub in Binfield.
- He reflected that the Heathlands partnership model had been genuinely ground-breaking, that it had taken a number of years to bring forward a local care and health facility for local residents and he was disappointed that the recent storm had prevented the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care attending his planned visit.

- He thanked the Executive Director for Resources and his team for their commitment, professionalism and wise counsel.
- He noted that on average, mainstream schools would receive a 5.7% increase in funding per pupil next year from the separate Dedicated Schools Grant. It is expected that this will cover rising costs overall, although the impact will vary between individual schools.
- He advised that, as with many local authorities, the Council faced significant pressures on the High Needs Budget which funds provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Funding for those pupils would increase by 11.5% in 22/23. Although this was a generous settlement it would fall short of forecast costs. A potential overspend of around £7.5m was predicted next year, leading to a cumulative deficit of around £20m. He concluded that work was underway on a strategy to provide more local places for children with complex needs, but it would take time to bring these facilities on board to deliver both service advantages and savings compared to out of area placements.
- He reported that typically inflationary costs would add around £2m to the budget each year but for 2022/23 over double that was being allowed for to maintain the same level of service.
- He advised that there were continually rising costs in both adult and children's social care. This was not due to significant increases in the number of vulnerable people receiving care services but rather due to increasing levels of complexity, combined with tightening supply in the social care market, most notably for children's services.
- He reflected that it was becoming increasingly difficult to make efficiencies to help balance the budget when faced with such pressures. For 2022/23 £2.3m of savings had been identified and included in the draft proposals.
- He was pleased to report that the budget consultation had received 86 responses from members of the public. The Council has responded as follows:
 - Almost three quarters of the responses were from local taxi drivers, raising objections to some of the proposed increases in license fees. The Council asked colleagues at West Berkshire Council, who do the work to administer these, to review those charges and they have been reduced.
 - Thirteen responses raised concerns about our draft proposal to extend access to our libraries using our Open Plus technology, with a small reduction in staffed opening hours. Since December, the Library service has looked again at how the proposed saving could be achieved. Through deleting a small number of vacant posts and a modest reduction to the book fund budget, the same level of saving is being achieved without any impact on current staffed opening hours.
- He stated that the level of council tax was one of the most difficult decisions to balance. The local government finance settlement confirmed that Bracknell Forest was permitted to increase the level of council tax by up to 4.5% in 2022/23. This comprises a 2% general increase and a 1% Adult Social Care Precept that applies to all authorities with social care responsibilities plus a further 1.5% Adult Social Care precept carried forward from 2021/22. The maximum permitted council tax increase of 4.49% in 2022/23 was being proposed.
- He advised that the future level of Government funding was at risk with business rates system being reset in 2023/24, a new grant funding methodology due to be introduced as well as uncertainty around the impact of "levelling up" on Bracknell Forest.

- He explained that the proposals included the use of over £1m of reserves to support the budget but that using more reserves would be a short-term plan and not anticipating the pressures that were going to affect the borough.
- Despite the proposed council tax increase, he stated that Bracknell Forest residents would still be paying one of the lowest levels of council tax in the country. In recognition that some low-income households are already struggling with meeting household bills an additional £100 council tax discount to all working age households receiving council tax support was proposed. This was being funded from Bracknell Forest's own resources and was completely separate from any other Government schemes.

On the proposition of Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance, seconded by Councillor Bettison OBE the recommendations as set out in the agenda papers were moved.

On the proposition of Councillor Temperton, Leader of the Opposition, seconded by Councillor Bidwell the following amendment was proposed:

This Council supports the recommendations submitted by the Executive in respect of the Capital Programme 2022/23 – 2024/25 and the Revenue Budget 2022/23 as set out in pages 19 and 20 of the agenda, with the following amendments (highlighted in bold);

2.2 Revenue Budget 2022/23

i) The budget proposals set out in Table 1 (page 3) of the summary report for Council, subject to the changes identified in sections 3.2(pages 4), 3.3 (pages 4 to 5), 3.4 (pages 5 to 7), 3.6 (pages 7 to 8),3.9 (pages 9 to 11), 7.2 (page 20) and 7.3 (page 20) of the report, **plus an additional one-off pressure of £0.100m for improvements to parking on our estates** be agreed;

viii) A contribution of **£1.560m** (after allowing for additional interest from the use of balances) be made from revenue balances to support revenue expenditure. Comprising £775K already in the core budget, plus an extra £677K to cover the reduced Council tax and some for lost interest;

x) The Council's Council Tax requirement, excluding Parish Council precepts, be set at **£70.065m**

xi) The Council Tax for the Council's services for each Valuation Band be set as follows:

Band	Tax Level Relative to Band D	£
A	6/9	968.10
B	7/9	1,129.45
C	8/9	1,290.80
D	9/9	1,452.15
E	11/9	1,774.85
F	13/9	2,097.55
G	15/9	2,420.25
H	18/9	2,904.30

That the impact of the above changes be reflected in a revised Council Tax Resolution.

The meeting was adjourned for councillors in attendance to consider the circulated amended Council Tax resolution.

On being put to the vote the amendment fell.

A recorded vote was taken on the substantive motion and the voting was as follows:

FOR (33): Councillors Allen, Angell, Atkinson, Dr Barnard, Bettison OBE, Bhandari, D Birch, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Dudley, Finch, Ms Gaw, Gbadebo, Mrs Gibson, M J Gibson, Green, Mrs Hamilton, Harrison, Mrs Hayes MBE, Ms Hayes, Heydon, Mrs Ingham, Mrs Kennedy, Kirke, Leake, Mrs Mattick, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, McLean, Ms Merry, Porter, Skinner, Turrell and Wade

ABSTAIN (4): Councillor Bidwell, Brown, Neil and Temperton

Therefore it was **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** on 24 February 2022 that:

2.1 Capital Programme 2022/23 - 2024/25

- i) General Fund capital funding of £16.311m for 2022/23 in respect of those schemes listed on pages 184 to 186 of the agenda report be agreed;
- ii) The inclusion of £7.037m of expenditure to be externally funded (including £1.133m of S106 funding) as outlined in the summary report for Council (page 179) and included on pages 184 to 186 of the agenda report;
- iii) That those schemes that attract external grant funding be agreed for inclusion within the 2022/23 capital programme at the level of funding received;
- iv) Capital schemes that require external funding can only proceed once the Council is certain of receiving the grant;
- v) The inclusion of an additional budget of £1m for 'Invest to Save' schemes be agreed.

2.2 Revenue Budget 2022/23

- i) The budget proposals set out in Table 1 (page 3) of the summary report for Council, subject to the changes identified in sections 3.2 (pages 4), 3.3 (pages 4 to 5), 3.4 (pages 5 to 7), 3.6 (pages 7 to 8), 3.9 (pages 9 to 11), 7.2 (page 20) and 7.3 (page 20) of the report, be agreed;
- ii) Fees and charges as set out in Annexe G (pages 106 to 170) be approved;
- iii) A provision for inflation of £4.368m be approved;
- iv) The commitment budget as set out in Annexe A be approved (pages 23 to 24);
- v) That the Council should make additional funding available for distribution to schools through the local funding formula at the level set out in section 4.1 (pages 11 to 12) of the summary report for Council subject to any minor amendments made by the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning following the receipt of definitive funding allocations for Early Years and High Needs pupils;
- vi) A general contingency totalling £1.900m be included, use of which is authorised by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Executive Director: Resources in accordance with the delegations included in the Council's constitution;
- vii) Subject to the above recommendations the revised draft budget proposals be agreed;
- viii) A contribution of £0.775m (after allowing for additional interest from the use of balances) be made from revenue balances to support revenue expenditure;

- ix) Total net expenditure (after use of balances) of £87.337m (page 22), be approved;
- x) The Council's Council Tax requirement, excluding Parish Council precepts, be set at £70.742m;
- xi) The Council Tax for the Council's services for each Valuation Band be set as follows:

Band	Tax Level Relative to Band D	£
A	6/9	977.46
B	7/9	1,140.37
C	8/9	1,303.28
D	9/9	1,466.19
E	11/9	1,792.01
F	13/9	2,117.83
G	15/9	2,443.65
H	18/9	2,932.38

At the meeting on 08 February 2022 the Executive recommended the 2022/23 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and noted that strategy together with the Prudential Indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement were matters which the Council needed to approve.

- xii) The Council approves the following indicators, limits, strategies and policies included in Annexe E (pages 75 to 98):
 - The Prudential Indicators and Limits for 2022/23 to 2024/25 contained within Annexe E(i);
 - The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy contained within Annexe E(ii);
 - The Treasury Management Strategy Statement, and the Treasury Prudential Indicators contained in Annexe E(iii);
 - The Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator in Annexe E(iii);
 - The Investment Strategy 2022/23 to 2024/25 and Treasury Management Limits on Activity contained in Annexe E(iv);
- xiii) The formal Council Tax Resolution contained in section 3 be approved.

3 Council Tax Resolution

3.1 That the recommendations of the Executive outlined in sections 2.1 and 2.2 be agreed.

3.2 That it be noted that the amounts calculated for the year 2022/23 in accordance with Section 67 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 are:

(a) 48,249 TAX BASE FOR THE WHOLE COUNCIL AREA

being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as amended, as its council tax base for the year

(b) TAX BASE FOR PART OF THE COUNCIL'S AREA

EACH PARISH AREA £

Binfield	4,482
Bracknell	20,528
Crowthorne	3,087
Sandhurst	8,007
Warfield	5,220
Winkfield	6,925

being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 6 of the Regulations, as amended, as the amounts of its council tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate

3.3 That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2022/23 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 as amended (the Act):

(a) £324,342,353

TOTAL EXPENDITURE INCLUDING GENERAL FUND, PARISH PRECEPTS AND THE COUNCIL'S SHARE OF ANY DEFICIT ON THE COLLECTION FUND

being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act

(b) £249,764,964

TOTAL INCOME INCLUDING GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AND THE COUNCIL'S SHARE OF ANY SURPLUS ON THE COLLECTION FUND

being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act

(c) £74,577,389

BOROUGH AND PARISH PRECEPTS NET EXPENDITURE TO BE FINANCED FROM COUNCIL TAX

being the amount by which the aggregate at 3.3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3.3(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its council tax requirement for the year

(d) £1,545.68

AVERAGE BAND "D" COUNCIL TAX FOR WHOLE BOROUGH

being the amount at 3.3(c) above, divided by the amount at 3.2(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (including Parish precepts)

(e) £3,835,188

PARISH PRECEPTS

being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act

(f) £1,466.19

BOROUGH COUNCIL TAX FOR BAND "D" PROPERTIES

being the amount at 3.3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3.3(e) above by the amount at 3.2(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year if there were an area of the Borough to which no special item relates

(g) Part of the Council's area	BOROUGH AND PARISH COUNCIL TAX FOR EACH PARISH FOR BAND 'D' £
Binfield	1,520.75
Bracknell	1,560.70
Crowthorne	1,551.13
Sandhurst	1,540.95
Warfield	1,510.75
Winkfield	1,546.63

being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 3.3(f) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 3.2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate

(h) Part of the Council's area **BOROUGH AND PARISH COUNCIL TAX IN EACH PARISH FOR EACH VALUATION BAND**

Parish	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Binfield	1,013.83	1,182.81	1,351.78	1,520.75	1,858.69	2,196.64	2,534.58	3,041.50
Bracknell	1,040.47	1,213.88	1,387.29	1,560.70	1,907.52	2,254.34	2,601.17	3,121.40
Crowthorne	1,034.09	1,206.43	1,378.78	1,551.13	1,895.83	2,240.52	2,585.22	3,102.26
Sandhurst	1,027.30	1,198.52	1,369.73	1,540.95	1,883.38	2,225.82	2,568.25	3,081.90
Warfield	1,007.17	1,175.03	1,342.89	1,510.75	1,846.47	2,182.19	2,517.92	3,021.50
Winkfield	1,031.09	1,202.93	1,374.78	1,546.63	1,890.33	2,234.02	2,577.72	3,093.26

being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 3.3(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable

to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands

- 3.4 That it be noted that for the year 2022/23 the Police and Crime Panel have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council regarding the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley, in accordance with Section 40 of the Act, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley	160.85	187.66	214.47	241.28	294.90	348.52	402.13	482.56

- 3.5 That it be noted that for the year 2022/23 the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, subject to confirmation by the Fire Authority on 15 February, in accordance with Section 40 of the Act, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	49.30	57.52	65.73	73.95	90.38	106.82	123.25	147.90

- 3.6 That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 3.3(h), 3.4 and 3.5 above, the council, in accordance with section 30(2) of the act, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of council tax for the year 2022/23 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

(a) Part of the Council's area	TOTAL COUNCIL TAX FOR EACH VALUATION BAND							
Parish	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Binfield	1,223.98	1,427.99	1,631.98	1,835.98	2,243.97	2,651.98	3,059.96	3,671.96
Bracknell	1,250.62	1,459.06	1,667.49	1,875.93	2,292.80	2,709.68	3,126.55	3,751.86
Crowthorne	1,244.24	1,451.61	1,658.98	1,866.36	2,281.11	2,695.86	3,110.60	3,732.72
Sandhurst	1,237.45	1,443.70	1,649.93	1,856.18	2,268.66	2,681.16	3,093.63	3,712.36
Warfield	1,217.32	1,420.21	1,623.09	1,825.98	2,231.75	2,637.53	3,043.30	3,651.96
Winkfield	1,241.24	1,448.11	1,654.98	1,861.86	2,275.61	2,689.36	3,103.10	3,723.72

49. Report of Independent Remuneration Panel

The Independent Remuneration Panel appointed by the Council met in November at the Council's invitation. The Council was asked to consider the Panel's recommendations and to decide whether to make any changes to the current allowances scheme.

On the proposition of Councillor Leake, Chair of Employment Committee, seconded by Councillor Allen it was proposed that:

- all the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, as set out in their report, be accepted for implementation from 1 April 2022;
- the list of approved conferences, set out in Annex B of the agenda report, be approved for insertion in the Scheme; and
- the Council notes that Hilda Johnston has resigned from the Panel and thanks her for the contribution she made.

On the proposition of Councillor Temperton, Leader of the Opposition, seconded by Councillor Bidwell the following amendment was proposed:

- all the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, as set out in their report, be accepted for implementation from 1 April 2022 **excluding the proposal to index Basic Allowance, SRAs, Co-optees' Allowances, Civic Allowances and payments to Members of Independent Education Panels (paragraph 98 of the report)**

On being put to the vote the amendment fell.

Therefore it was **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** on 24 February 2022 that

- i) all the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, as set out in their report, be accepted for implementation from 1 April 2022;
- ii) the list of approved conferences, set out in Annex B of the agenda report, be approved for insertion in the Scheme; and
- iii) the Council notes that Hilda Johnston has resigned from the Panel and thanks her for the contribution she made.

50. **Appointment of Local External Auditors**

The Council considered the recommendation from the advisory meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee regarding arrangements for the appointment of local external auditors under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 for the financial years 2023/24 to 2027/28.

On the proposition of Councillor Allen, Chair of Governance and Audit Committee, seconded by Councillor Heydon it was

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL on 24 February 2022 that

- i) Bracknell Forest remains part of the Public Sector Auditor Appointments (PSAA) collective procurement arrangement to appoint an External Auditor from the 2023/24 financial year on the grounds that this approach is most likely to achieve best value in a restricted market and avoids the need and cost of the Council itself undertaking a complex and time-consuming procurement process; and

- ii) the Executive Director: Resources be authorised to progress discussions with other s151 officers in Berkshire and the PSAA around whether a single audit firm should be appointed to cover all authorities in the county area.

51. Annual update of the Council's Pay Statement

In accordance with the 2011 Localism Act and in line with the Transparency Regulations the Council is required to publish an annual Pay Statement. The Council considered the Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22 for publication.

On the proposition of Councillor Leake, Chair of Employment Committee, seconded by Councillor Allen it was

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL on 24 February 2022 that

- i) the Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22 be agreed.

52. Recruitment of Chief Executive Officer

The Council considered the report advising councillors of the arrangements to recruit a permanent Chief Executive to provide management direction in the delivery of the Council's strategy and fulfil the statutory position of Head of Paid Service.

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

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL on 24 February 2022 that

- i) the process by which a new Chief Executive is to be recruited, as set out in paragraphs of the agenda report be noted; and
- ii) an Advisory Appointment Committee be appointed to support the Council in this appointment process as set out in paragraphs 5.2 to 5.4.

53. Questions Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 10

Councillor Mrs Birch asked Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning the following published question:

Can the Executive member share with the Council the different approaches that can be taken when Leadership and management concerns about a local authority or academy school are reported?

In response Councillor Dr Barnard stated that there was a comprehensive answer due to the partnership working and governance framework surrounding the management of schools. A full version of the response would be appended to the minutes. He summarised that in relation to Local Authority maintained schools there were a number of mechanisms used to closely monitor performance. The Standards and Effectiveness Team met fortnightly to discuss any concerns. Where a range of intelligence created a broader picture of concern around a particular school, perhaps in relation to leadership or the quality of education, or where standards drop to unacceptably low levels, the Head of Standards and Assistant Director decide whether a Declaration of Concern was necessary. A very prescribed process would then follow. This could be provided but is available as part of the Bracknell Forest

Learning Improvement Strategy available on the Bracknell Forest Council website. Since the strategy was implemented, the process has been effective, and no schools have been issued with a formal Performance and Standards Warning notice. The Council's approach had been to intervene early and avoid things reaching the point where this was necessary.

In relation to Academies if similar concerns were to exist then the Local Authority would write to the Chair of Governors, the Head of the Academy/Multi Academy Trust and the Regional Schools Commissioner, outlining the concerns requesting a Declaration of Concern meeting. The Local Authority can either broker additional support for the school and agree to monitor its progress with the Regional Schools Commissioner, or if there are more significant concerns, the Regional Schools Commissioner will issue a formal Performance and Standards Notice. This process was set out in the Bracknell Forest Learning Improvement Strategy. He advised that where specific concerns were raised about academies, the Assistant Director or Head of Standards could address these directly with either the Headteacher or the CEO of the trust, as appropriate.

He advised parents to contact the Head Teacher or the Chair of Governors if they had concerns. He wanted to reassure that if there were significant concerns processes were in place and existing safeguarding processes would be followed if appropriate.

Councillor Mrs Birch asked what the process was for parents and carers to express concerns about a school. Councillor Dr Barnard encouraged parents and carers to engage with the school to resolve the issue. However he added if they remained unhappy then they could raise concerns with Ofsted directly who would then take a view as to whether they need to contact and take action with the school depending on the seriousness of the issue. He concluded by repeating that if the Local Authority had concerns then they would liaise with the school and decide if further action needed to be followed.

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

This year the half term holiday just passed and the Easter school holiday dates do not align with neighbouring local authorities. This has put an extra stress on all those working in schools who live or work in one Borough but whose children attend a school in another. This at a time when school staff so desperately need our support.

How did this happen and can residents be assured it will not occur again?

In response Councillor Dr Barnard apologised to everyone affected and recognised the inconvenience and frustration this situation would have caused. He explained the process followed in setting term dates for Bracknell Forest community schools was to consult with immediate neighbours and then with all Bracknell Forest Headteachers to try and align dates wherever possible. There was no statutory timing for consulting on or setting term dates, and all authorities consult on and set their dates at different times which sometimes also creates mis-alignment.

He advised that the 2021/22 term dates were consulted upon with all Headteachers and there were no comments received back. Some of local authority neighbours chose to publish different dates after the Bracknell Forest dates had been agreed,

and some of these were different to that they had previously advised the Council that they were consulting on; presumably because Easter falls later this year.

He confirmed that term dates for the 2022-23 academic year this issue did not occur, and the term dates that were agreed last year are aligned. He recognised the difficulty that mis aligned term dates could cause for schools and parents. He stated that there could unfortunately be no guarantee that this would not happen again in future years because the dates set by neighbouring authorities were outside of the Council's direct control, however he concluded that they would be vigilant in future years to minimise any disruption.

CHAIRMAN

Agenda item 11 - Councillor Mrs Birch to Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning

Can the Executive member share with the Council the different approaches that can be taken when Leadership and management concerns about a local authority or academy school are reported?

The different approaches that can be taken when Leadership and management concerns about a local authority or academy school are reported:

- Broad concerns about the effectiveness of a school or academy

LA maintained schools

A number of mechanisms exist by which the performance of schools is closely monitored. The Standards and Effectiveness Team hold a fortnightly meeting, at which each STEP provides a brief update on each of their allocated schools (maintained and academies who purchase the SLA), and any concerns from the wider team, including governor services, are shared. In addition to this, teams from across Education and Learning attend the Schools of Concern meeting, usually held twice per year, at which all Bracknell Forest schools are discussed, and intelligence relating to each school is pooled to gather a holistic view, and to identify any emerging patterns or concerns. It is also common practice for specific concerns raised about schools, either by LA officers, elected members or parents, to be shared with the Assistant Director for Education and Learning and/or the Head of Standards.

Where a range of intelligence creates a broader picture of concern around a particular school, perhaps in relation to leadership or the quality of education, or where standards drop to unacceptably low levels, the Head of Standards and Assistant Director decide whether a Declaration of Concern is necessary. Where this is the case, the Headteacher and Chair of Governors are invited to meeting with the Assistant Director and Head of Standards, to explain the evidence underpinning the concerns and inform them that they are to be issued with a Declaration of Concern. School leaders are then required to produce an improvement plan, and are subject to 6-weekly Rapid Response Board (RRB) meetings, and have 12 weeks to demonstrate improvement. Where there is evidence to support improvement after this time, the school continues to be monitored via 6-weekly Standards Monitoring Board (SMB) meetings for a maximum of two further terms. If insufficient progress is seen after this time, a formal Performance and Standards Warning notice meeting is held. In line with the DfE's Schools of Concern guidance, a formal warning notice is issued to the school, and copied to Ofsted and the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC). At this stage, the school has 15 days to submit an action plan, and within a further 15 days, the LA intervene by implementing a number of possible additional measures, including removing the governing body and implementing an Interim Executive Board (IEB). Should these measures still not result in improvements, the final stage includes escalation to the Secretary of State.

In Bracknell Forest, since this strategy was implemented, the RRB/SMB process has been effective, and no schools have been issued with a formal Performance and Standards Warning notice. Our approach is to intervene early and avoid things reaching the point where this is necessary.

Through the Standards Monitoring Board process, the school are closely held to account, and are required to demonstrate their progress against the milestones identified within their plans. They are also eligible for additional support: additional STEP time beyond that set out within the Service Level Agreement; school to school leadership support brokered by the LA; additional reviews and monitoring activities to inform action planning; where appropriate,

funding to facilitate additional training, resources and support for staff and leaders to improve standards, etc.

Academies

Where similar concerns exist regarding academies, the LA would write to the Chair of Governors, the Head of the Academy/MAT and the Regional Schools Commissioner, outlining the concerns requesting a Declaration of Concern meeting. The LA can either broker additional support for the school and agree to monitor its progress with the RSC, or if there are more significant concerns, the RSC will issue a formal Performance and Standards Notice.

This process is set out in the flow chart on pages 27 – 29 of the Bracknell Forest Learning Improvement Strategy:

[Learning Improvement Strategy \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/learning-improvement-strategy)

- Specific concerns

Where *specific* concerns are raised relating to a particular aspect of leadership and management of a school, these are usually referred to the appropriate LA team, e.g. Standards and Effectiveness, Early Years, Safeguarding and Inclusion, or SEND etc., and these are tackled directly with the school. The school STEP is often informed and involved in discussions about particular issues. This information feeds in to the wider view of leadership at the school, and can shape the school improvement work carried out in partnership with the school.

Where specific concerns are raised about academies, the Assistant Director or Head of Standards can address these directly with either the Headteacher or the CEO of the trust, as appropriate.