

To: **Overview and Scrutiny Commission**
7 July 2022

Overview and Scrutiny Review of Integrated Enforcement Report
Statutory Scrutiny Officer

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel's report to the Commission following the Panel's review into enforcement services.
- 1.2 To provide the advice of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer (SSO) to inform the Commission's decision whether to endorse the Panel's recommendations to the Executive.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 **That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission considers whether to endorse the Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel's recommendations to the Executive, as set out in the Panel report (attached as Appendix A) and paragraph 5.5 of this report, taking into account the comments of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer.**

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 It is the role of the SSO to advise the Council on any issues or concerns that may arise about the operation of the scrutiny function and the SSO may on occasion be required to make a determination about what the law says and how this should be applied to any particular situation. In carrying out this statutory role, there is a need to have a nuanced and meaningful understanding of the scrutiny function in order to accurately make judgments about its operation when disagreements or other issues arise.
- 3.2 The SSO is responsible for ensuring that the scrutiny function is adequately resourced and that service departments and partners are contributing sufficiently to reviews to ensure that they are effective.
- 3.3 The SSO is also responsible for providing advice to the Commission on whether the recommendations within review reports are robust, taking account of resource, legal, climate change, equalities, health and wellbeing and strategic risk implications.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Commission could decide:
 - to endorse the recommendations to the Executive (and others) as set out in the Panel's report
 - to endorse the recommendations in part
 - to ask for further work to be undertaken before the report is submitted to the Executive recognising that this would delay the Panel's next piece of work

- to note the Panel report and not make any recommendations to the Executive (or others)

5 Supporting Information from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer

- 5.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission commissioned the Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel to carry out a review into integrated enforcement as part of the overview and scrutiny four-year work programme, which has been developed to track themes within the new Council Plan.
- 5.2 In support of this review a broad range of witnesses gave evidence putting the Panel in a good position to use this intelligence to frame the review and produce insightful recommendations.
- 5.3 The Panel was supported by Joey Gurney, Governance and Scrutiny Officer who supported the Panel to draw up the scope of the review and prepare an evidence pack of relevant information; to facilitate a number of Panel sessions to interview a range of contributors; to draw out findings from the Panel's investigation, and to prepare a review report. This involved in the region of 300 hours of scrutiny officer time and 12 hours of Panel meetings.
- 5.4 In summary it is the Statutory Scrutiny Officer's view that this review activity had adequate resources and that service departments contributed effectively to the review. The bulk of review activity took place between February 2022 and May 2022 and was slightly delayed due to scheduling challenges. The comments from the relevant officers and partners set out below do not indicate any concerns with the proposed recommendations.
- 5.5 The recommendations are:
1. Introduce the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) as a new standard:
 - Provide appropriate officers with training, ensuring they become accredited.
 - Encourage other appropriate officers to participate in becoming accredited where practical and where resource is available.
 The scheme should be introduced by January 2023.
 2. Introduce an allocation process where a team or officer is assigned as the lead for the duration of an enforcement case. This should be achieved by November 2022.
 3. Develop enforcement strategies encouraging greater collaboration across services and with partners. This will be an ongoing process but an update on its progress will be expected in 12 months' time. It is recognised progress may be impacted by the outcomes of the Panel's upcoming review of the Council's enforcement strategies.
 4. Run regular educational and awareness campaigns on enforcement policies and activities for residents. This includes information campaigns on CSAS as it is introduced. Good enforcement should also be publicised and celebrated, particularly when it involves a joint working approach. This will be an ongoing process but an update on its progress will be expected in 12 months' time.

6 Commentary from Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chair, Councillor John Porter

- 6.1 During this review it quickly became apparent how vast and complex enforcement can be. By its nature, enforcement in a local authority setting often requires collaboration between teams, services, and/or external partners. Therefore, the Panel wanted to explore whether a development of this collaborative approach, in the form of a more integrated model, could help to improve existing enforcement in the Bracknell Forest area. This was achieved by looking at the current enforcement structures and policies at the Council whilst exploring a range of best practices relating to integrated enforcement at other local authorities.
- 6.2 By using the opportunity to speak to different local authorities about their own approach to enforcement, panel members have deepened their understanding of what good enforcement looks like and how this is reflected in council policy and activity. It was also particularly useful for the Panel to learn more on the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme by speaking with Thames Valley Police, and to learn of the productive partnerships the Council has with other enforcement actors such as the Police and the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- 6.3 It was encouraging to discover that the Council is working hard to tackle well known issues associated with enforcement and it was pleasing to learn that a joint working approach across services and with external partners is often adopted by officers. The recommendations put forward by the Panel aim to further enhance these efforts to work collaboratively to ensure Bracknell Forest is a safer, cleaner and happier place to live.

7 Response from Assistant Director for Contract Services

- 7.1 There are a number of teams, in different departments across the Council that provide enforcement services and the panel heard evidence from them. As one of those teams we have been engaged throughout the scrutiny review process which has enabled us to share our good practice with the panel.
- 7.2 The opportunity to present evidence of current enforcement work and share potential options for the future has been invaluable so that Councillors appreciate the complexity and breadth of enforcement activity.

8 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 8.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Financial Advice

- 8.2 Any actions arising from the recommendations are expected to be delivered within existing budgets.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 8.3 The review scope, activities and recommendations were all considered in the initial equalities screening attached at Appendix B.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 8.4 The implications of poor enforcement performance would be reputational damage for the Council as there would be a potential for increased levels of low level and anti-social crime, an inability to protect our highly valued green spaces and appearance of residential communities. At the same time this would undermine the basis of formal application and approvals processes described within the attached report.

Climate Change Implications

- 8.5 The recommendations in Section 2 and 5 above are expected to have no impact on emissions of CO2 because there is no suggested increase in activity or travel that would generate a change.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 8.6 The Council is committed to actively protecting and enhancing the borough's environment to keep it clean and green through enforcement. This supports Bracknell Forest being one of the healthiest places to live. Residents will therefore experience better health, both physical and mental.

Background Papers

None

Contact for further information

Kevin Gibbs, Statutory Scrutiny Officer - 01344 355621

kevin.gibbs@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Joey Gurney, Governance & Scrutiny Officer - 01344 351743

joey.gurney@bracknell-forest.gv.uk