

COUNCIL
11 JANUARY 2023
7.30 - 10.04 PM



Present:

Councillors Bhandari (Mayor), Mrs L Gibson (Deputy Mayor), Allen, Angell, Dr Barnard, Bettison OBE, Bidwell, D Birch, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Brown, Finch, Ms Gaw, Gbadebo, MJ Gibson, Green, Harrison, Mrs Hayes MBE, Heydon, Mrs Ingham, Mrs Mattick, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, McLean, Neil, Porter, Temperton, Turrell, Virgo and Wade

Present Virtually:

Councillors Atkinson, Dudley, Mrs Hamilton, Ms Hayes, Leake, Mrs McKenzie, Ms Merry and Mossom

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Brunel-Walker, Kennedy, Kirke, Parker and Skinner

33. Minutes of Previous Meetings

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meetings held on 30 November and 21 December 2022 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

34. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

35. Mayor's Announcements

Mayor's Opportunity Champion Awards Winner

The Mayor began his announcements with a continuation of the Opportunity Awards that were announced at the Council meeting on 30 November 2022.

The September award was presented to Peter Manners-Smith for the amazing work Peter was doing in Binfield on multiple fronts. Peter ran the choir, which the Mayor had been honoured to listen to when unveiling the Christmas tree, and the rackets clubs in the local area. The Mayor described Peter as 'truly an opportunity champion' and very deserving of the Opportunity Award.

Mayor's Engagements

The Mayor had been very honoured to have been invited to the 40th anniversary of the Scottish Dancing Institute at Crowthorne and thoroughly enjoyed participating a little bit.

The Mayor had also been honoured to present an amount of money that had been raised to Bracknell food bank.

The Mayor had turned on Christmas tree lights at the Lexicon and in Binfield. Awards had also been presented to winners of the Mayor's Christmas card competition and the Mayor had very much enjoyed visiting the schools and meeting the students.

The Mayor spoke of how poignant and heart-warming it had been to have lunch with and meet those living in Bracknell Forest who are homeless.

Ofsted Reports

Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning, reported that Edgebarrow had received an Ofsted report judging it 'outstanding' in all categories. Congratulations were given to everyone involved with the school.

Councillor Dr Barnard announced that a new school, Kings Academy, had been judged 'good' at its first inspection. This was said to have been a 'tremendous start for a very prestigious school'.

Councillor Dr Barnard explained that, when taken together, Bracknell Forest local authority, in terms of 'good' and 'outstanding' schools was ranked the sixth best in England. It was noted that making the jump to the next level would be extremely difficult due to having a comparatively small number of schools in the borough.

Councillor Dr Barnard said that this was 'huge credit to everyone in our schools and schools improvement team' and described the ranking as evidence of the Council's ongoing and long-term commitment to support Governors and those involved in the leadership of schools.

Councillor Dr Barnard explained that this meant when families were choosing schools for their children in autumn they would be choosing from 'good' and 'outstanding' schools.

Councillor Barnard also recognised the work that schools in the borough had put in during autumn term and recognised the challenges head teachers had managed regarding staff and student illness. The Councillor explained that this was also true for the highly trained staff in the SEND team that support children in the borough with additional needs.

36. Police and Crime Commissioner's Presentation

Police and Crime Commissioner, Matthew Barber, attended the meeting along with the Chief Constable, John Campbell, and Superintendent Andrew Cranidge of Thames Valley Police. They gave a presentation to Council about the work Thames Valley Police had done over the previous year and their plans for the future.

Police and Crime Commissioner – Matthew Barber

The PCC began by explaining that he would be focussing on a number of areas over the upcoming year.

The first of these being 'contact with the public'. The PCC explained that he would be looking at 101 specifically due to the fact that it is the main contact for the public with the police for non-emergency issues. The PCC said that he would be looking to improve the service, not only by providing call centres with additional resources, but also looking at technological and system changes that can be made. Over the coming year, Thames Valley Police looked set to knock several minutes off of the average time a member of the public waits to talk to an operator when using the 101 number.

The PCC announced that other methods of contacting the police were being explored. Online access to investigation updates for victims of crime was being looked into. Other messaging platforms were also being explored as ways for the public to contact the police. The PCC hoped that these projects would be able to be launched publicly in the financial year to follow.

The next area the PCC discussed was 'delivering effective community policing on the ground'. He spoke of the need to have a good visible presence within communities. The PCC explained that Thames Valley Police were in a strong position regarding policing numbers with over 4,800 officers in the force. There was a hope that by the end of 2023 there would be more police officers per head of the population than there had ever been before. That would go beyond the Home Office target for recruitment.

In the budget that was to be set over the coming weeks, the PCC was looking to secure not just the additional officers part of the TVP's full-establishment, but also to set provision to continue to grow the number of officers in future years so that TVP can at least keep pace with population growth.

The PCC explained that the increase in police numbers would allow Superintendent Cranidge and his team to become more proactive in preventing crime before it occurs and, thereby, alleviate some of the emergency demand.

Chief Constable – John Campbell

The Chief Constable gave a presentation on the work Thames Valley Police had been doing since they last attended Council in September 2021. The presentation also looked at some figures on TVP recruitment, arrests and prosecutions.

The Chief Constable advised that TVP were undertaking a review of some of their structures within policing and confirmed that letters had been sent to LA's relating to this. The review was commissioned not only because it is the right thing for an organisation of TVP's size to do every ten years or so, but also because of the savings TVP was required to make as a public organisation.

The Chief Constable explained that, going forward, there were some very important basics in terms of how TVP were going to deliver policing. These were a commitment to community policing and enhancing the relationship with local authorities.

The Chief Constable spoke of some of the highlights of the past year. TVP had been awarded 'White Ribbon' accreditation – this reflects an organisation that is committed to stamping out misogyny, sexism and the harassment of women. TVP had also been given a 'Menopause Friendly' award as an employer that reflects and understands the impact of menopause on women in our workplace. TVP had been one of the first forces in the country to be awarded a 'Race Trailblazer' award for being committed to recognising issues of diversity within the organisation. TVP had recently been graded 'outstanding'.

Along with Scotland and London, the local area had been the focus internationally as members of the public gathered to pay their respects to the late Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at Windsor Castle. Local Superintendent, Andrew Cranidge, had been taken away from his regular duties to assist with the London Bridge Operation. The Chief Constable explained that while this was a local loss, the force sometimes faced challenges that would necessitate drawing officers from around the force to assist. Around 2,000 officers were on duty at Windsor Castle on the day of the final

internment of the late Her Majesty. The Chief Constable described the operation as a proud day for the force.

The Chief Constable announced that he was leaving TVP at the end of March 2023 and his replacement was to be his Deputy Chief Constable, Jason Hogg.

Superintendent Andrew Cranidge

Local Superintendent, Andrew Cranidge, continued the presentation. He explained that there were three key areas that he directed his staff to work to across the police. These were violence against women and girls, violence and knife crime and, finally, victim care.

The Superintendent ran through a number of slides containing the 'outcome rates' for Crime, Domestic Abuse, Residential Burglery, Violence with Injury, Knife Crime and Sexual Offences. The Superintendent briefed Members on a number of operation meetings, such as, Op Kinetic, which was the domestic abuse meeting that reviewed all domestic abuse offences - there were two separate meetings: one for perpetrators and one for victims.

4 examples of the good work TVP had been doing in Bracknell were presented by Superintendent Cranidge.

Chief Constable John Campbell

The Chief Constable concluded the presentation by updating Members on some comments that had been made during TVP's Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) Report.

At the conclusion of the presentation, the Mayor congratulated the outgoing Chief Constable, John Campbell, on the sterling service that he provided to Thames Valley Police over the years.

In advance of the meeting, members had submitted some questions for the representatives of Thames Valley Police. These were answered in turn:

Councillor Chris Turrell

Question: Given the increased concern from residents over speeding and noisy driving, what actions are being taken or being considered by Thames Valley Police, using technology, such as cameras or dashcam evidence?

Answer: There had been developments in technology that may have been able to detect noisy vehicles. There were, however, some challenges around how much money it would cost to implement versus the number of noisy vehicles on the road.

Operation Chrome was ongoing. TVP had been working with the Road Policing Team to try and capture and record offences. Work had also started with the CSP and local councils around 'target hardening'.

The PCC hoped that in the next budget he would be able to provide some funding for piloting new technology. A preference was expressed that the new technology be mobile to get maximum coverage of roads in Bracknell.

Councillor Temperton

Question: *How can Community Policing become more visible and more effective so residents report crime again, knowing action will be taken and they will be kept informed?*

Answer: The Chief Constable explained that the increase in police officers would start to bear fruit – there had been 600 extra members of staff employed compared to three years prior. Because of their training programme, some neighbourhood officers had had to be used to do response policing. The Chief Constable advised that it was possible that this would be the case for a few months. He emphasised that this did not reflect any loss in TVP's commitment to neighbourhood policing.

TVP encouraged members of the public to report drug crime. There was recognition that the use of 101 as a reporting mechanism could be difficult – there was an average two-minute waiting time. There was also recognition that TVP must improve on the loop from members of the public reporting crime and TVP, where possible, keeping them informed on matters relating to the crime they reported.

Councillor Brunel-Walker *The question was not answered at the meeting and, as such, the response below was provided in writing at a later date*

Question: I am sure you will agree that the sustained and ambitious investment in the regeneration of Bracknell town centre over recent years has achieved a stunning retail and leisure destination for our residents and visitors. As the Lexicon celebrates its fifth anniversary, the Council, Bracknell Regeneration Partnership, Thames Valley Police and our retailers continue to work very closely to make our town welcoming, safe and accessible.

One of The Lexicon's strengths is our shared commitment to the safety of customers and workers which involves collaborating to tackle crime in its various forms. Through the extensive security resource provided by the Lexicon, the engagement of neighbourhood policing and retail security in some premises, we have on the surface achieved our aim but, in reality, the picture is changing for the worse.

The rise in thefts from premises, incidences of anti-social behaviour, e-scooters and cycling in the pedestrianised areas are damaging the perception of the town centre.

Can you reassure the Council, our residents and businesses that Thames Valley Police recognise as a priority the need to make the Town Centre safe, welcoming and resilient to criminal activity through a level of Police resource reflecting the importance of our town centre now and in the coming years? Will the Chief Constable and Police & Crime Commissioner confirm the level of Police resourcing dedicated to the town centre and the actions being taken to materially reduce theft from retail businesses and incidences of anti-social behaviour?

Answer: NHP & Dep Commander have been working closely with centre manager and CSP manager to address issues. Part of the approach is that five Security staff are CSAS accredited (Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) under Police Reform Act 2002) from October 2022. Provides the powers below:

1. Power to require giving of name and address
2. Power to require name and address for anti-social behaviour
3. Power to require persons aged under 18 to surrender alcohol
4. Power to stop cycles
5. Power to photograph persons away from a police station

6. Power to deal with begging
7. Power to issue fixed penalty notices for cycling on a footpath
8. Power to issue fixed penalty notices for graffiti and fly-posting
9. Power to issue fixed penalty notice on behalf of Bracknell Forest Council for breaches of the Alcohol Public Space Protection Order (PSPO).

There is a specific tasking for all LPA officers to patrol the Lexicon and this is now providing evince from civil order such as CBOs to manage the behaviour of persistent offenders. Further meetings are in the diary to review.

Councillor Mrs Birch

Question 1: Due to the 3 fatalities on Mill Lane and Ringmead would the police consider putting in average speed cameras from Nine Mile Ride, along the A3095 and down Mill Lane to Twin Bridges with the speed being 40 mph along this corridor? This would help speeding, ensure traffic flow but deter the anti-social speed racers but, more importantly, also make it safer for our residents.

Answer: There were no average speed cameras in the local area that were controlled by TVP. The introduction of average speed cameras would have required a joint partnership arrangement between TVP and the local authority. Fixed and mobile speed cameras were in place.

The PCC said that average speed cameras were to be considered when looking at the additional funding for the next financial year.

The local Superintendent was going to discuss average speed cameras with the Roads Policing Chief.

Question 2: Can you please give an update on recruiting PCSO's as the lack of a neighbourhood police presence is causing concern. When can we expect Bracknell to have a fully staffed neighbourhood police team in place?

Answer: Recruitment of PCSO's had been covered in the presentation.

The Chief Constable added that courses were planned throughout 2023. It was hoped that PCSO recruitment would improve once Officer recruitment had slowed down.

It was acknowledged that slow PCSO recruitment was causing a communication breakdown between residents reporting crime and the local police. It was hoped that an increase in PCSO recruitment in the months following would solve this issue.

Question 3: I have had an increasing number of residents contact me about finding evidence of drug misuse and an increase in the smell of marijuana, can you please give an assurance about the measures you are taking to stop this?

Answer: The Tasking Team was tackling CDLs where there was exploitation of vulnerable and young. This included the use of closure orders and at the time there was a number of closure orders across Bracknell. There were 7 CDLs operating in Bracknell but that number was reduced to 2 due to disruption from the police. Intel over last few years had indicated that CDLs did not want to come to Bracknell due to risk of police intervention.

Councillor Gbadebo

Question: Is there a mobile app (not a website) that residents could download to report crime and follow-up/monitor progress something similar to an IT helpdesk ticketing system? If there is no app, why not? An app would have easy access to the various sensors on mobile devices eg GPS, camera, mic, etc to aid and simplify crime reporting. A single app could be shared by all UK police force.

Answer: There was not an app available at the time, however, there was a considerable amount of work being done in this area. The police had a national internet presence in the UK so that all police forces looked and felt the same.

There was a national piece of work ongoing looking at how the relationship with the public could be mobilized using what the public use day in day out in terms of apps.

The PCC was of the view that there should not be a bespoke 'app', but rather the police should look into how messaging apps that people use in their every day lives could be used to contact the police.

Councillor Gaw

Question: What is the money accrued from speeding tickets spent on and how is it or could it be used to promote and prevent speeding in target areas?

Answer: The money accrued from speeding tickets was being invested back into a Road Safety Fund. The fund was then being used to finance road safety initiatives and other capital projects such as new equipment.

Councillor McKenzie-Boyle

Question: The Home Office announced the funding settlement for police forces across the country for the next financial year. In Thames Valley, this means an additional £5.1m in Government grant, an increase of 1.8%. Alongside this funding from the Home Office, the Government has also allowed Police & Crime Commissioners to increase council tax by up to £15 (for a Band D property) in order to make additional investments in policing.

I'm sure residents would only be too pleased that £15 would ensure a police patrol on their streets. Knowing your commitment to our communities Mr Barber I'm sure this will high on your priority list and next meeting could you let us know the results of what a £15 per household has actually bought us.

So I'm asking for reassurance that the possibility of extra burden on the precept will give us extra police resources that are visible; those police resources are distributed fairly across the borough, and officers who have pledged to attend Neighbourhood action groups giving them opportunity to hear first-hand from residents their concerns which is one of their KPIs, actually do.

Answer: The PCC reiterated his desire for TVP to deliver for communities.

The PCC explained that the 1.8% increase in home office funding did not account for the inflationary costs that TVP was experiencing. The PCC explained that if he were to go ahead with the increase in council tax, the funds raised were to be used to put

additional officers on the streets. He also explained that a substantial savings plan was in place over the upcoming years in an effort to balance the books.

Councillor Leake

Question: If it is so that individuals who receive a speeding fine have to also pay to attend a speeding awareness course, that course effectively becomes cost neutral. In this event, what would the funds accrued from fines be spent on?

Answer: The Chief Constable explained that the primary use of the money was on the staff implementing structures around speed enforcement. He offered to go away and prepare a more comprehensive response to the question.

The PCC expanded on the answer given by the Chief Constable by explaining that some of the funds would be used on the pilot tech schemes that he had mentioned earlier in the meeting. He reiterated the fact that some of the money would be used on managing the process. Excess funds would be used on projects relating to road safety and education, which was being done in conjunction with the Borough and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The Mayor again thanked the PCC and the representatives from TVP for attending.

37. **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 30 November 2022. The Executive had met once on 13 December 2022.

The Leader highlighted the following matters that had been considered:

- A draft capital programme had been approved for consultation based on a total spending of £6.427m.
- The Executive had agreed its draft revenue budget proposals for 2023/24 as the basis for consultation.
- The Strategic Procurement Plan for Corporate and School's Cleaning Services had been approved.
- The Executive had agreed to make alternations to the Policies Map that were necessary to give effect to the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan.
- The formal making of the Warfield Neighbourhood Development Plan had been agreed.
- The performance of the council over the period July to September 2022 had been noted.
- The Strategic Procurement Plan for the provision of Accommodation Based Housing Related Support had been approved.

The report contained a recommendation that the Council was asked to resolve in respect of the following matter:

- The Joint Minerals and Waste Plan

On the proposition of Councillor Chris Turrell, Executive Member for Planning and Transport seconded by Councillor Mrs Dorothy Hayes MBE, Executive Member for the Environment it was

RESOLVED that the recommendations relating to the Joint Minerals and Waste Plan as set out at paragraph 5.3.1 of the Executive Report be approved.

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

Councillor McLean asked Councillor Turrell, Executive Member for Planning and Transport, the following published question:

Residents of Warfield, and surrounding areas, have suffered considerable inconvenience and disruption of late, as a result of unauthorised works encroaching Harvest Ride and adjacent roads. what steps is the Executive Member for Planning and Transport taking to prevent reoccurrences of such unauthorised activities and can he make the fines applicable commensurate with the inconvenience they cause?

In response, Councillor Turrell said the following:

“Thank you for the question. It is worth noting that a number of organisations beside the Council, usually utilities, have powers to work on Bracknell Forest's highway network. Since November 2014, the Council has operated a Street Works Permit Scheme as an extension of its powers granted by legislation including the Traffic Management Act 2004. Most highway authorities have set up such schemes. The objectives of the scheme are primarily to regulate occupation of the public highway by statutory undertakers and their contractors.

Schemes are required to deliver parity of treatment across works promoters. Importantly, this includes local highway authorities and their contractors. Whilst all works promoters require a permit to be granted prior to occupying the highway, there are limited grounds upon which the Council can refuse. In dire emergencies the procedure is different: the statutory undertaker must notify the Council within two hours of starting work, in order to obtain a permit. It is rightly the case that in dangerous circumstances, public safety comes before red tape.

Fundamentally, the permit scheme cannot unreasonably withhold access to the highway and must instead seek to facilitate works through co-ordination and the application of prescribed permit conditions. Fixed Penalty Notices can be issued for breaches of scheme conditions or the absence of a valid permit. These penalties are fixed in statute. As an example, the absence of a valid permit would incur a penalty of £500, subject to discount for prompt payment. It is not acceptable for a contractor to plead ignorance of a permit scheme or to proceed with non-urgent work without a permit: it is well known that highway authorities operate permit schemes. Having obtained a permit, the contractor should display the permit reference at the site, together with telephone and digital contact details.

Residents with concerns can either use these details, or in case of difficulty, contact customer services at the Council. If these details are not visible, I would strongly urge residents to contact the Council to report this, so that the highway network team can take appropriate action as soon as possible.

During December 2022, the period to which this question relates, there were two incidents of unauthorised access to the public highway by contractors in the Warfield area. One case involved a fibre-optic telecommunications provider operating without a valid permit and the other was a Council contractor who failed to update their application for re-programmed work. An FPN was issued in both cases.

Pre-pandemic, the scheme processed approximately 6,500 permits per year with this having since risen to around 8,500 due to the roll-out of digital fibre installation supported by the Government. During 2021/22, 138 fixed penalty notices were issued. Total PCN and fines averaged £64,000 annually in the four years to 31 March 2022, and have been £78,000 between 1 April and 31 December 2022.

In the last published annual scheme evaluation report, the overall benefits of the permit scheme were demonstrated through the 178 calendar days of impactful works which were avoided through the co-ordination and collaboration with works promoters.

At any time, residents or businesses, along with wider stakeholders can view the status of planned or on-going road works via the publicly available website "[one.network](#)" which provides details of the works promoter, the type of work and its duration.

So, we have an established scheme with clear sanctions and enforcement, keeping our roads as clear of works as practicably possible."

Councillor Ingham asked the Executive Member a supplementary question on what pressure could be applied to ensure reinstatement of grass verges to an acceptable standard following unauthorised works.

The Executive Member explained that grass verges had to be reinstated to how they were before the unauthorised works took place – using the same materials. Councillor Turrell explained that hard reinstatement was fairly straightforward, whilst restoring verges could be slightly more problematic because the weather could throw up difficulties.

After the meeting, Councillor Turrell provided further detail to his response to the supplementary question. The additional information is set out below:

"Each undertaker has power to conduct works in the public highway under the relevant act for their sector i.e. Gas Act, Water Act, Telecoms Act etc. Under the New Roads & Street Works Act 1991 the standards of their works are prescribed under sections 65 (Safety) and section 71 (Reinstatement) and the details are contained in the Safety at Street Works and Road Works Code of Practice https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/321056/safety-at-streetworks.pdf and the Specification for the reinstatement of openings in highways https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/977196/specification-for-the-reinstatement-of-openings-in-highways-fourth-edition.pdf.

There is provision for an undertaker to complete an interim reinstatement whereby an alternative material is used than that of a permanent reinstatement but the reinstatement must be made permanent after 6 months. Between the Act & the Specification it is determined that a reinstatement guarantee period is 2 years from the date of permanent reinstatement or 3 years if it is a deep excavation (>1.5m depth of cover). The street authority has the power to inspect but has no duty to inspect although our internal policy is to over inspect at Category A (works in progress) and Category B (undertaken within 6 months of interim or permanent reinstatement). The street authority may be paid a fee of £50 for a sample of inspections (up to 30%) although the current consultation on new regulations would

change this percentage based on the performance of the individual undertaker but ultimately the street authority can perform as many inspections as it likes at its own cost. (It is however, important for the street authority to only inspect the works and not supervise them).

There is one piece of case law (British Telecommunications PLC v Nottinghamshire County Council) that in summary found that the guarantee period cannot be relied upon by the undertaker if it can be proven that the reinstatement never complied with the specification at the time. Thus a defective reinstatement is a continuing offence until discovered by the street authority after which the utility must repair the reinstatement or the street authority must lay information for summary trial at the magistrates court within 6 months. This often requires investigatory works in the form of coring the reinstatement if the core determines that the reinstatement fails the undertaker has to pay the costs of the core and reinstate to the specification if however, the core proves that the reinstatement is compliant all costs must be borne by the street authority and the undertakers liability for the reinstatement ends.

Verges are inspected along with all other reinstatements but the specification allows for a period of up to 12 months for sufficient growth to be established. On inspection we will ensure the ground is level, or as it was found, and any stones larger than 20mm nominal size removed, adequately seeded and if not will call back the undertaker to make good. Also if growth does not establish we can and will call back the undertaker at any time. If any verges are not picked up in the sample inspection regime any concerns can be reported to the council and we will inspect and follow due process, but in the first instance sufficient time should be given to allow regrowth to establish.”

Councillor Temperton asked the following question to Councillor Bettison, Executive Member for Council Strategy and Community Cohesion:

“Can the Council have an update on the numbers and wellbeing of the Refugees and Asylum seekers supported by Bracknell Forest? Have any of the refugees registered as homeless, and if so, what support is being given to them?”

In response, Councillor Bettison said the following:

Refugees and Asylum seekers directly supported by Bracknell Forest Council

The council is directly supporting approximately 230 Refugees and Asylum Seekers across the schemes outlined below:

- 165 people have arrived on the Homes for Ukraine Visa Scheme, 149 are staying with Host families and 16 people are now living in private rented properties.
- 40 Afghanistan nationals who are either on the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) or Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) Visa scheme. 13 are here long term with housing allocated and 27 are here in temporary accommodation secured by the Home Office until longer term accommodation options are found.
- We are anticipating 28 unaccompanied asylum seeking children arriving in the borough under the National Transfer scheme.

- 2 Syrian families under the vulnerable persons resettlement scheme who are in long term accommodation.

Initial Welfare Support

Each adult refugee on these schemes is welcomed on arrival to Bracknell Forest by a Family Link worker from Early Help. The Link workers give them and their hosts guidance on how to set up life in the UK such as applying for bank accounts, universal credit, Biometric Residence Permits, NHS Healthcare checks and applying for school places. They also receive:

- A sim card
- A Three Month bus pass
- Welcome packs from our Voluntary and Community sector.
- Free 12 month Leisure pass.

Ongoing Welfare Support

The refugees on these schemes have check in conversations and visits with Early Help's link workers at least once per month but increased frequencies for those with higher needs, they also have access to:

- Housing advice (including rematching to new hosts on Homes for Ukraine Scheme or advice on private rental properties). This includes support from a Moving On officer post to support families to access the private rental sector.
- Opportunities to learn and practice language through language cafes or volunteering through our Voluntary and Community Sector.
- Careers advice and support with applying for jobs.
- Access to mental health services
- Support for our schools such as English as an Additional Language (EAL) provision.
- Community activities (Such as through the Vzi Razom Community hub in Princess Square).
- We also have fortnightly communications updates to guest and hosts with the latest news and updates.
- Link workers are also very responsive and actively look for any safeguarding concerns amongst the refugees during their work to ensure safety of our Refugees and Asylum seekers.

Indirect Support

We are also indirectly supporting refugees on the following schemes with community engagement and signposting of support. We are not in direct contact with arrivals under these visa schemes unless they contact us, as we are not given data or contact details for them.

- Ukraine Family Visa Scheme
- Ukraine Visa extension scheme
- Hong Kong British Nationals Overseas Visa scheme

Homeless Registrations and Support

From these schemes we are aware of the following being registered as homeless:

Homelessness application accepted	25
Housing prevention or relief duty accepted	18
Number of families in Temporary Accommodation	6

These individuals currently receive statutory homelessness support where they are entitled under the terms of their visa. This support involves:

- Offer of advice on housing options available
- Where assessed as having a reason to believe they are Homeless, Eligible and in Priority Need they will be provided with emergency housing,
- Supported to find longer-term housing or help where appropriate to stay/return to their home or host
- Registered with Homefinder and Help 2 Rent – private sector options in and out of area
- Registered on the Housing Register – social housing in area
- Personal Housing Plan to support them self-resolve their homeless situation
- Allocated a Tenancy Sustainment Officer if support is required to maintain their Temporary Accommodation

Councillor McLean asked the following question to Councillor Harrison, Executive Member for Culture, Delivery and Public Protection:

“Following the introduction of the Elections Act 2022, what steps will the Council be taking to prepare residents for the need to provide photo identity documents in order to be able to vote? What system will be in place to allow those without suitable documents to apply for an ‘electoral identity document?’”

Councillor Harrison responded by explaining that from the 4th May 2023, voters would need to show photo ID at polling stations. The Electoral Commission had launched a public awareness campaign. Their website set out all of the information regarding voter ID, including what ID is acceptable and what to do if someone does not have an acceptable photo ID.

The document must be the original – it cannot be a photocopy. Out of date photo ID could be used as long as it looks like the person it is supposed to be and the document showed the correct name.

The Electoral Services team was receiving training in the administration of the process and that was to cover whether local ID documents such as the Council’s E+ card will be acceptable in time for the launch of the Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) portal.

The Council was supporting the national campaign with its own communications plan which was going to provide information regarding the requirement for photo ID through all available channels between the end of January and election day.

Residents without an accepted photo ID could apply for a free VAC through the gov.uk website. Applications for the 4th May 2023 election could be made from late January until 5pm on 25th April 2023. There was an option to complete a paper application form for those who could not do so online. You must be registered to vote before you can obtain a VAC.

The Bracknell Forest Website was to provide links to the VAC portal once it had become available.

Councillor Brown had submitted a question similar to that submitted by Councillor McLean. She noted that the previous answer given by Councillor Harrison sufficiently answered her question but asked that the Executive Member make it clear whether the E+ card would be accepted when that information was available. Councillor Harrison confirmed he would let members know once the document had been verified properly.

39. Motion (or Motions) Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 11

Motion 01/2023 was moved and seconded by Councillors Temperton and Bettison OBE respectively as follows:

This Council strongly believes in the need to continue its work to address the impact of man-made Climate Change on our local communities. To this end, this Council asks the executive to continue its detailed action plans with measurable ambitious annual targets and an annual report to address the climate emergency to ensure that the Council meets the government target of eradicating its net contribution to climate change by 2050.

Speaking to the motion Councillor Temperton emphasised that the word 'emergency' had to be included in the motion because there was an emergency. She hoped that including the word 'emergency' in the motion would put urgency into the conversation that would hopefully lead to action. The Met office had confirmed 2022 as the hottest year on record with average annual temperatures passing 10°C for the first time.

Councillor Temperton ran through some statistics to support the rationale for her motion.

Councillor Temperton recognised that she had done a lot to increase its biodiversity and reduce its carbon footprint. She noted that the Council could only do so much. Every business and resident's commitment was going to be required. Councillor Temperton commended residents for their response to the Council's food waste recycling campaign.

Councillor Temperton expressed a desire for the Council hold more roadshows to encourage change and to be out in every community.

Councillor Virgo said, in supporting the motion, that Councillors had been working cross party on the Council's climate change goals. Every portfolio was being examined for its climate change impact. Councillor Virgo agreed there was an emergency and stated that important initiatives were being worked on, and were to be announced in due course, that were to make a huge difference to the Borough.

Councillor Dr Barnard spoke in support of the motion. He mentioned that world communities, business and industry had come together to tackle environmental problems in the past – giving the examples of acid rain and holes in the ozone layer.

Councillor Dr Barnard explained that he was confident that by working together, residents and the Council would be able to affect positive change.

Councillor Turrell expressed his pleasure at the direction the Council was taking. He explained that Bracknell Forest Council had a record of taking opportunities when they arose and that the Climate Change Strategy that the Council had brought into force in 2020 was a very useful means of being able to take those opportunities as quickly as possible.

Councillor Bidwell spoke in favour of the motion. He said that it was important that the strong language that had been recommended in the motion be maintained by all members so that the public were aware of the Council's commitment to tackle the climate emergency.

Councillor Harrison spoke of the need for action. He highlighted the fact that climate change would happen regardless of what language was used to describe it. Councillor Harrison called for more recycling and for a continued effort to reduce the amount of energy used. He also spoke of the need for emergency planning so that the Council would be better placed to deal with the impact of climate change.

Councillor Bettison OBE, the motion's seconder, thanked Councillor Temperton for agreeing that the best message to send was via a cross-party motion to show unity. He highlighted the importance of working together. He explained that all of the work that had been done in the war against carbon in the past had been down to the fact people had worked together and, this unity was to be needed in the fight to come.

Councillor Bettison OBE spoke of the need to work with everyone who wanted to work with the Council in the fight against climate change.

Councillor Mrs Hayes MBE thanked Members for realising that Bracknell Forest Council was determined to fight climate change. Working with the residents had been substantially beneficial to the Borough and it was hoped that this benefit would continue to be realised.

Winding up, Councillor Temperton thanked those who had spoken and reiterated that there was a climate emergency and, if all stakeholders were brought together, the Council would achieve net zero carbon.

On being put to a vote the motion was CARRIED.

CHAIRMAN