



Councillor Paul Bettison
Leader
Bracknell Forest Council
Easthampstead House
Town Square
Bracknell
Berkshire
RG12 1AQ

Date: 16/09/2011

Dear Councillor Bettison,

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE DRAFT MEDIUM TERM OBJECTIVES 2011-2015

As you know, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission decided to form a Working Group to contribute to the formulation of the Council's new Medium Term Objectives (MTO's) following the 2011 local government elections. I summarise below the views of the Working Group, which we would like to address to you in your capacity as Executive Member for Council Strategy.

General

- a) The covering report by officers to the Executive on the new MTO's, also the covering report to Council in due course, could usefully explain what the purpose of the MTO's is (for example, that that they do not describe everything the Council does, only the priority issues), refer to the version which they replace, and explain the process of updating them following the local government elections. We also suggest that the covering report should make a commitment to review the MTO's annually.
- b) We seek confirmation that the 'MTO's 2011-2015' are embedded within the Council's six priorities. There is a very wide range of council functions, and the layer of priorities seem to us to be a useful way of grouping together a larger number of disparate MTO's. We are also concerned that simply dropping the priorities could cause presentational difficulties publicly. I note that, since the Working Group met, you have told me that the current Priorities will, in fact remain.
- c) The wording of some of the MTO's needs to more clearly distinguish the Council's role on the deliverables cited. For example, on MTO 1 the Council has facilitated the delivery of the new Waitrose store in various important ways; but the actual delivery – in terms of funding, design, construction, ownership and operation is exclusively a matter for the private sector.
- d) The MTO's do not appear to be in any particular order, and the Working Group suggest it would assist to group together the MTO's which are related, for

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example MTO's 1 (Regeneration) and 10 (Economic Prosperity); also MTO's 2 (Planning) and 8 (Housing); also MTO's 3 (older and vulnerable residents) and 9 (Health and well being); and possibly MTO's 4 (younger residents) and 5 (Learning).

- e) Many of the MTO's have in their headings the words, 'and in particular'. We suggest it might be more fitting to replace these words with, 'including', as the MTO's are not a comprehensive list of everything the Council does to achieve these high level objectives.

MTO 1 (Regeneration)

- f) Please see the general observation c) above.
- g) The Working Group suggest deleting from the penultimate bullet the words, 'to take pressure off of our countryside' given that this does not accord with the site allocation decisions affecting Binfield and Warfield.
- h) The deliverables are challenging and we regard some to be outside the Council's control; for example the viability of housing development is linked to – as yet unknown - future movements in house prices. Consequently, it might be advisable to preface this MTO with words on the lines of, 'Subject to market forces, commercial viability, and the work of partner organisations'.
- i) Some of the wording seems unduly detailed for a statement of high-level objectives. For example, the words 'including work at Twin Bridges', and 'Implement an accommodation strategy to' seem to be unnecessary.

MTO 2 (Planning Policies)

- j) I should record that a separate Overview and Scrutiny Working Group is reviewing the Site Allocations DPD and they may have observations to make on this and the Core Strategy in due course.

MTO 3 (Older and vulnerable residents)

- k) We suggest replacing 'people' in the second and penultimate indents with, 'elderly local residents'.

MTO 4 (Younger residents)

- l) In the same vein as paragraph h) above, we regard the deliverables on childcare places to be challenging and outside the Council's control, as the vast majority of these places are provided by private sector organisations. Consequently, it might be advisable to preface indent 5 with 'Encourage and facilitate enough high quality...'

MTO 5 (Working with schools and partners)

- m) Please see the general observation c) above. There are many factors affecting educational achievements, and the Council's control over these is limited.

MTO 9 (Health and well being)

- n) Recognising that much of this has to be delivered by partner organisations, we suggest that the first indent should start, 'Support the Primary Care Trust in focussing on improving.....'

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MTO 11 (Working with Communities and partners)

- o) The achievement of Value For Money is a principal duty of local authorities and we recommend that the term is expressly used in this MTO.
- p) Recognising that the Council is dependent on residents exercising individual choice, we suggest that the words 'Help to' should be inserted before 'ensure' in the first, third and fifth indent.
- q) The Working Group suggest that partnership working, serving residents and accountability are sufficiently important that they should be expressly referred to, either in this MTO or in a preface to the collection of MTO's.

We hope you find these observations and recommendations helpful. Please ask the Executive to consider these points and give me your written response to them, together with any other comments the Executive may wish to make, within two months of the date of this letter. I anticipate that the Commission will then consider your response at its meeting on 24 November 2011.

Kind regards,



Councillor Peter Heydon
Working Group Lead Member

Copies to: Councillor Leake; Chief Executive; Assistant Chief Executive

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