

21 September 2011

Councillor Peter Heydon
1 Siskin Gate
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Dear Peter

Overview & Scrutiny Review of the Draft Medium Term Objectives 2011- 2015

Thank you for your letter dated 16 September outlining the thoughts of the Overview & Scrutiny Working Group that have reviewed the Council's Draft Medium Term Objectives for the period to 2015. Even though most of the objectives stem directly from the Conservative Party Manifesto on which 40 of our Councillors stood, it is helpful to gain the input from the Working Group before we publish a policy programme for the next three and half years.

I am pleased that the Working Group appear to be supportive of the overall thrust of the medium term objectives – although given that they do derive from our manifesto anything else would be quite a surprise !

Many of the points the Working Group makes are valuable and can easily be accommodated in the document. There are, however, a few suggestions where there are subtle nuances that need to be thought through. For ease of reference I will respond to each of the points you make in the order of your letter.

General

- a) Agreed.
- b) Confirmed, although not all of the ten new priorities, notably the one on housing, sit as comfortably under the six over-arching priorities as they did in the last Council.
- c) This is an area where we need to be careful. I accept your point that the Council's role is to facilitate rather than specifically to deliver, but the actual wording of the objective is "*work with the Bracknell Regeneration Partnership and other landowners to deliver comprehensive regeneration, including (was "and in particular")*" - deliver a new Waitrose store.

By taking the objective and the indent together it is clear that this is a multi-agency approach - and the Council deserves credit for its part in making things happen. Adding "facilitate" again to the indent would just repeat the point already made in the initial statement.

- d) Agreed, we will group them more effectively to reflect the six over-arching themes.
- e) Agreed.
- f) See (c) above.
- g) Agreed.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

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- h) I believe the Working Group may be being too cautious here. It is our clear aim to regenerate Bracknell Town Centre and I anticipate that we will make substantial progress towards all of the points over the next three years. As such I believe we need a bold unequivocal objective that makes our ambition and intention very clear.
- i) I think the work at Twin Bridges and the implementation of our own office accommodation strategy are both major and essential projects if the town centre regeneration is to go ahead. I believe their importance merits a specific mention.
- j) Noted.
- k) I think this suggestion is missing the point of the objective which specifically states to support our "older and vulnerable residents". Not all of our vulnerable residents are elderly.
- l) Agreed.
- m) See (c) above – although schools and other partners are key to the delivery of many of the indents, the Council has a major role to play in supporting and challenging our schools and a number of the actions within this objective relate specifically to things that can only be undertaken by the Council.
- n) Agreed.
- o) Agreed – I suggest this becomes "work with our communities to be efficient, open, and easy to access *and to provide value for money*".
- p) I think in this context "ensure" refers to what the Council will do for its staff and/or to promote access channels for residents rather than what the residents themselves will do. I do agree that our residents have a choice on whether they act upon it or not, but that is not what these indents are referring to.
- q) Partly agreed. I think there are repeated references to working in partnership throughout the medium terms objectives. For me, serving of residents is implicit in the whole concept of the medium term objectives in that this is our policy programme for our residents for the next four years, but I do agree that a reference to accountability would be useful.

I hope these comments are helpful. Executive colleagues, senior officers and I have certainly found the Working Groups views positive in helping to sharpen the document. In terms of timing, because the MTO's represent a four year policy programme derived from the manifesto on which we were elected five months ago, I would aim to take them to the Executive and the Full Council on the 18 October and 30 November respectively. That would mean that any further Overview & Scrutiny input would need to be informal and would probably be best directed through you as Chairman of the Working Group. I hope that is acceptable and I would be grateful if you could let me know if you are content with that as an approach.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Paul Bettison
Leader of the Council