

**COUNCIL
30 NOVEMBER 2011**

EXECUTIVE REPORT

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Since the Executive report to the Council meeting on 21 September 2011, the Executive has met twice, on 18 October 2011 and 15 November 2011. This report covers the key decisions made at both meetings, summarised by reference to the relevant portfolio within which they fall.

2 PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Site Allocation Development Plan Document – Publication and Submission

- 2.1.1 Production of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADPD) is an essential element in the delivery of the Council's Core Strategy Vision to 2026. It will help ensure that major developments in the Borough are properly planned, that the Council has a robust and continuous five year supply of housing land and, hence, is less vulnerable to inappropriate developments being allowed on appeal. It also means that the Council has an up to date development plan. The full document that was considered by the Executive runs to 291 pages and is available on the Council's website or from Democratic Services.
- 2.1.2 A key component of the SADPD is the identification of sites for meeting the Borough's housing needs. Work on the document has been under way for several years. The process began following the adoption of the Core Strategy with work commencing on the current document at the end of 2009. Early stages of the process comprised evidence gathering and stakeholder engagement. The evidence gathered included completion of a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment to which anyone could contribute suggestions. This led to the identification of a long list of available sites which were assessed for their suitability for development.
- 2.1.3 The first major consultation ran from February to April 2010. Following this there were four Design Workshops held during May 2010 which considered eight potential new development areas in more detail. Representatives from local resident associations, amenity groups, Parish/Town and Borough Councillors were invited to these workshops. In all, over 1300 respondents made representations to the consultation which were all collated and considered by the Council. These representations and further technical work were used to narrow down the list of potential sites to four preferred strategic urban extensions.
- 2.1.4 A Preferred Option document then included policies and illustrative concept plans for these proposed major urban extensions. It also identified a set of smaller sites to be allocated within and on the edge of existing urban areas and included a number of proposed policies for other land uses and policy designations. The Preferred Option Consultation ran from 8 November 2010 to 17 January 2011. Again, this was open to all and included exhibitions, online consultation, a response form, fact sheets, an advertisement in the Bracknell Standard, an article in the Winter 2010 edition of Town and County, and a schedule of Frequently Asked Questions that was also published on the consultation website. Meetings were also held with Crowthorne

Parish Council and Binfield Parish Council. The consultation was also advertised on the Council's website homepage and streamed through social networking sites.

- 2.1.5 Around 800 responses were received to the Preferred Option consultation and the 'Summary of Responses to SADPD Preferred Option Nov 2010 – Jan 2011' document set out how the Council has taken the representations into account and the changes made to the document as a result.
- 2.1.6 Development of the SADPD is inevitably contentious in some areas, particularly in those areas where additional housing is proposed. However, if the SADPD was abandoned, a new Core Strategy Review would look to a longer timeframe (i.e. 2031 as opposed to 2026) which would mean, based on the existing annual housing requirement, needing to find additional sites for at least another 2,695 homes. This is due to national policy guidance that plans should cover at least a 15 year period from the date of their adoption. As the review would take approximately 4 years to complete and adopt, the next logical plan period would be to 2031. This delay in providing an adequate supply of housing to meet our own needs increases the likelihood of inappropriate development, particularly as the Council currently lacks a five year housing supply, making it vulnerable to inappropriate housing applications on any site during the four year period. Delay in establishing the SADPD would also hinder the Council's ability to establish a Community Infrastructure Levy charging regime to secure developer funding for essential infrastructure.
- 2.1.7 The regulations specifying the process for formulation and adoption of Development Plan Documents (DPDs) require that the Council publish for consultation a draft DPD before it is submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination. The Executive approved the following process for consultation:-
 - a) Online consultation using the Objective consultation portal.
 - b) Update front page of Council's web page and Boris to include notification that the Draft Submission SADPD Consultation has commenced and provide direct link to consultation.
 - c) Town and Country Article
 - d) Press release to local newspapers at start of Draft Submission SADPD Consultation and placing of formal notice.
 - e) Explanatory leaflet to complement the Draft Submission SADPD Consultation, this will explain that the consultation is based on soundness and what this means for the way in which responses should be framed.
 - f) Question and Answer document explaining in non-technical language how the Draft Submission SADPD has been arrived at and responding to the key issues raised through the Preferred Option Consultation. (attached at Appendix V)
 - g) Half page advertisement in local newspapers at start of Draft Submission SADPD Consultation (this is not a statutory requirement but would help to raise awareness).
 - h) Email/letter to consultees/individuals on our database who responded to the Participation Document and/or the Preferred Option to inform them

that the consultation is taking place and how to access the material and respond (over 1,300 organisations and individuals are on the database).

- 2.1.8 Subject to Council's endorsement the Executive has approved the Draft Submission Site Allocations Development Plan Document along with the revised Proposals Map and supporting documents, for publication for a six week consultation to commence on 16 January 2012. Therefore the Executive has:

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

- (1) **The Draft Submission SADPD, the Proposals Map changes and all supporting documents, be formally submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination; and,**
- (2) **The process for consultation set out in paragraph 2.1.7 is approved.**

3 COUNCIL STRATEGY AND COMMUNITY COHESION

3.1 The Council's Medium Term Objectives

- 3.1.1 The Council's Medium Term Objectives represent the central policy framework for the life of this Council. They underpin service planning, resource allocation, and are central to the Council's performance management arrangements. As such they guide and influence activities right down to the level of individual staff work programmes and appraisals. The priorities do not represent every aspect of the council's work but do highlight the issues on which particular importance has been placed over the life of the Council. The Executive is therefore recommending that the Council approve the priorities and medium term objectives 2011 – 2015.
- 3.1.2 Over the life of the previous Council from 2007 – 2011, 6 overarching priorities were underpinned by 13 specific medium term objectives. The Executive believe that the overall strategic direction, expressed through the 6 overarching priorities remains relevant. However, there is a need for even greater clarity and focus to ensure that the limited resources available are directed towards Members priorities. As a result the number of medium term objectives has been reduced to 11 as follows:

Priority 1 - A town centre fit for the 21st Century

1. Regenerate Bracknell Town Centre

Priority 2 - Protecting and enhancing our environment

2. Protect communities by strong planning policies
3. Keep Bracknell Forest clean and green

Priority 3 - Promoting health and achievement

4. Support our younger residents to maximise their potential
5. Work with schools and partners to educate and develop our children, young people and adults as lifelong learners
6. Support opportunities for health and well being

Priority 4 - Create a borough where people are safe and feel safe

7. Support our older and vulnerable residents
8. Work with the Police and other partners to ensure Bracknell Forest remains a safe place

Priority 5 - Sustain economic prosperity

9. Sustain the economic prosperity of the Borough
10. Encourage the provision of a range of appropriate housing

Priority 6 - Provide value for money

11. Work with our communities and partners to be efficient, open, transparent and easy to access and to deliver value for money

Each medium term objective is itself underpinned by a number of key actions, which are phrased in such a way as to make it possible for Members and residents to determine simply whether the action has been delivered or not at the end of the Council's four year term. Overall, the programme represents a challenging but achievable set of priorities for the next four years.

3.1.3 Therefore the Executive has, RECOMMENDED that the priorities and medium term objectives set out at Appendix 3 to the associated report be approved.

3.2 Bracknell Forest Faith and Belief in Action 2010-11

3.2.1 The Executive has noted the reports, Faith and Belief Communities in Action 2011 - Executive Summary, and Mapping Local Religious Minority Populations. These reports were commissioned by the Prevent Steering Group, funded by the Government's Challenge and Innovation Fund. Work was undertaken by the Institute of Community Cohesion and Experian.

3.2.2 While the mix of nationalities, ethnicities and faiths are changing the underlying picture of cohesion and integration in the Borough remains positive. Many of the factors that divide different communities and faiths in other parts of the country are not prominent in Bracknell Forest. In the main, ethnic groups are not geographically segregated in residential terms compared to other areas. However, the evidence points to the need for continued focus on integrating the Borough's new incoming migrant communities – in particular Nepalese, Eastern European and Black African population.

3.2.3 The reports make recommendations on maintaining community cohesion, engagement and preventing violent extremism. These recommendations will be considered for inclusion in the development of the Council's new equality scheme and where appropriate, in service planning by departments. However not all of the recommendations are for the Council to implement. A number relate to the voluntary sector and faith communities for consideration through the Bracknell Forest Faith and Belief Forum.

4 CULTURE, CORPORATE SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION

4.1 Polling District and Polling Place Review

4.1.1 The Executive has considered a report outlining the recommendations of the Electoral Review Steering Group and the designation of polling districts and polling places for the Borough with effect from 1 December 2011.

4.1.2 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a new duty on Councils to review their polling district and polling place arrangements every four years and this was the second full review carried out by the Council.

4.1.3 The Electoral Review Steering Group considered carefully the present arrangements for polling districts and polling places in the Borough. They paid particular attention to representations received, available alternative options and issues including: where polling places were outside the polling district, the use of schools as polling places, areas where significant development had commenced or was planned and the impact on current arrangements and facilities; along with issues brought to light following the Council's May 2011 elections.

4.1.4 Accordingly, the Executive has RECOMMENDED to Council:

1 That no changes be made to the following Polling Districts and Polling Places which meet the statutory criteria and provide reasonable and accessible facilities;

BA	BG	BM	CN	SP	WN	WV	WZ
BD	BH	BN	CS	SQ	WP	WW	
BE	BJ	BP	SJ	WG	WQ	WX	
BF	BK	BW	SO	WM	WS	WY	

2 That no changes be made to polling districts BB (Binfield) and BL (Harmans Water) which also meet the statutory criteria and provide reasonable and accessible facilities, but that they be kept under review as developments progress.

3 That the new Jennett's Park Community Centre be designated as the Polling Place for BQ.

4 That no change be made to Polling District BT but that the Kerith Centre buildings be designated as the new Polling Place.

5 That the Polling Districts and Polling Places for the Borough of Bracknell Forest are approved as set out at Annex C to the report with effect from 1 December 2011.

4.2 Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

4.2.1 The Executive has endorsed the Council's Policy on Directed Surveillance and use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources.

4.2.2 The statutory Code of Practice issued by the Home Office states that the Policy should be set once a year and ensures compliance with Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and the Human Rights Act 2000.

4.2.3 The Council is only able to use RIPA powers for the purpose of preventing or detecting crime or preventing disorder. In fact, this Council generally only uses RIPA powers for test purchases in respect of underage sales of alcohol, cigarettes and knives.

4.2.4 An Overview and Scrutiny Working Group met on 18 October to consider the Policy. The Working Group concluded that in their view the Council has used RIPA powers correctly and on a proper basis.

4.3 Transfer of Capital Funds from Thin Client Project to PC Refresh

The Executive has agreed to re-direct capital budget designated for the purchase of thin client devices to a traditional desktop replacement programme.

5 ADULT SERVICES, HEALTH AND HOUSING

5.1 Modernisation Older People's Services

- 5.1.1 The Executive has endorsed a wide range of measures intended to improve support for older people in the Borough. These measures include consultation with people currently receiving support and with staff involved in its delivery. Importantly, although support to older people would be provided in different ways and the proposals seek more efficient and effective working within the department, support to older people would not be cut.
- 5.1.2 The consultation will include the future of 'In House' Home Support for people with long term conditions, the future of Ladybank Older Persons Home and proposals to enhance capacity in Community Response and Reablement by introducing new rosters and use of technology.
- 5.1.3 The consultation processes began on 19 October in line with Cabinet Office guidelines to allow a full 13 weeks. A clear consultation programme is planned to ensure the public and all staff are engaged in the process and that the Council's existing policies and procedures are followed. The results of the various elements of the programme would be reported for final approval to either the Executive, the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing or departmental management team accordingly.

5.2 Emergency Duty Service – Outcome of Service Review

- 5.2.1 The Executive has endorsed the proposed new service model of operation for the Emergency Duty Service. This will include The Bracknell Forest Appropriate Adult Out of Hours Scheme covering the 6 Unitary Authorities of Berkshire.
- 5.2.2 Bracknell Forest hosts the Emergency Service on behalf of the other Unitary Authorities' Adults and Children's Departments. A full consultation on the new model has taken place and was supported by all six Councils. The Emergency Duty Service has been under review since last year instigated by the ever increasing demand upon the service, with an unprecedented increase of 25% of referrals in the last year, against a static staff base.
- 5.2.3 The proposed new model will provide a more efficient service and improve value for money further.

5.3 Blue Badge Reform

- 5.3.1 The Government has announced a significant reform of the Blue Badge Scheme aimed at ensuring a fair allocation of badges against a backdrop of rising demand so that the scheme remains sustainable in the long term. The measures taken forward are designed to tackle fraud and misuse and to make the scheme fairer and more sustainable for those disabled people who most rely on it.
- 5.3.2 The new reforms are to be implemented from 1 January 2012 and would include extra responsibilities allocated to the Council. Local Authorities are responsible for the day-to-day administration and enforcement of the Blue Badge Scheme. They are

also now responsible for determining and implementing administrative, assessment and enforcement procedures which are in accordance with governing legislation.

- 5.3.3 The Executive has therefore endorsed changes to the Council's Blue Badge Scheme to meet the new responsibility including raising the charge of a Blue Badge in line with the Department of Transport guidance from £2.00 to £10.00.

5.4 Section 75 Pooled Budget for Community Equipment Services

- 5.4.1 The Executive has agreed to enter into a new Pooled Budget Agreement for a Community Equipment Service across Berkshire which will include both health and social care partners.
- 5.4.2 Community equipment for adults throughout Berkshire is currently commissioned through an integrated health and social care partnership agreement in line with direction contained in the Health Act 1999. The current provider is South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS), operating from a base in Theale. The contract is due to expire in March 2012.
- 5.4.3 The six Berkshire Unitary Authorities and the Berkshire NHS (PCT Cluster) propose to establish a renewed joint agreement from March 2012, for the funding of a Community Equipment Service to replace that existing one. Slough Borough Council is the lead commissioning body for Community Equipment Service.
- 5.4.4 The partners have developed a more forward-looking service specification. Alongside the traditional service delivery, the specification incorporates elements of a retail model, in which people requiring simple aids to daily living are able to meet their equipment needs in a more individual way. The new service will be available for both Children's Services and Adult Social Care to access.
- 5.4.5 The agreement is an example of integrated health and social care services that will deliver choice, consistency and operating efficiency across Berkshire. The outcomes of the service will be reported to the Bracknell Forest's Health and Well-being Board.

5.5 Agency Staff Contract

The Council has undertaken a mini competition under a recently-established national Framework Agreement managed by the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) for the appointment of agency staff. The Council's own contract would be placed under the ESPO framework for a period of 4 years. This would ensure that the Council has an effective and reliable contractor offering an efficient and reliable service to hiring managers minimising the need for intervention by Council officers, and which delivers best value for money.

6 FINANCE, RESOURCES AND ASSETS

6.1 Contract Award for Cleaning Services at Offices, Public Buildings & Schools

- 6.1.1 The Executive has approved the contract for the provision of Cleaning Services due to commence on 4 January 2012.
- 6.1.2 The contract ensures that the Council has an effective and reliable contractor offering effective contract management and supervision, which minimises the need for intervention by Council officers, and delivers best value for money. The contractor

would deal with all cleaning related tasks, including the provision of all office cleaning, carpet cleaning, window cleaning and supply of consumables to all civic offices.

- 6.1.3 A large number of school sites have also bought into the contract and will therefore be in a position to benefit from the cleaning service arising from this award. This in turn links to priority two and four of the Councils Medium Term Objectives which seek to ensure that all sites remain clean, accessible and attractive.

6.2 Annual Audit Letter

- 6.2.1 The Executive has noted the Audit Commission's Annual Audit Letter 2010/11. This provides an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council. The Annual Audit Letter was also considered by the Governance and Audit Committee on 8 November 2011.
- 6.2.2 The Audit Commission is required to provide the Council with an Annual Audit Letter. The letter summarises the findings from the 2010/11 audit, which comprises two elements; the audit of the financial statements and the District Auditor's assessment of the Council's arrangements to achieve value for money in the use of resources.
- 6.2.3 Three recommendations are set out in the report and these will be reflected in the Corporate Services Service Plan for the coming year.

7 EDUCATION

7.1 Academies

- 7.1.1 The Executive has re-affirmed the Council's ambition for all Bracknell Forest schools to be 'good schools'. In so doing it will support head teachers and governors to determine how to achieve the best possible outcomes for their pupils, including consideration of the potential benefits and challenges of becoming an Academy.
- 7.1.2 In light of the latest developments in the Coalition Government's programme for schools to become academies, there was a need to consider the implications and the potential impact this might have on services provided by the Council. Under the previous government it was predominantly underperforming secondary schools which became Academies. However, from 2011 the academy route has been opened to all primary, secondary and special schools. Over the past year the Department for Education (DfE) has constantly increased the scope for schools to become Academies and, with some restrictions, any school can now apply. The DfE have published extensive guidance for schools wishing to convert to an Academy and a small grant is available to assist with the process.
- 7.1.3 Despite this, the landscape around Academies continues to change and develop as further Coalition Government policy emerges. The Executive wants to be positioned so that Bracknell Forest schools who wish to do so do not miss out on any perceived potential benefits of becoming Academies. It recognises that in a small Local Authority decisions taken by one school can have implications for the rest. The intention is to maintain ongoing dialogue with schools and should there be any change in the position of schools in relation to Academy status that neither the Council nor other schools are unnecessarily disadvantaged.

7.2 Education Capital Programme – Award of Contract for Meadow Vale Primary School

- 7.2.1 The Executive has approved the contract for the Phase 1 works at Meadow Vale Primary School under the Primary Capital Strategy for Change (PCSfC).
- 7.2.2 In July 2008 the Executive approved the Primary Capital Strategy for Change (PCSfC) for Bracknell Forest, which secured £8.378m of government funding through the Primary Capital Programme (PCP) grant for the first 3 years of works. Meadow Vale School was included within that programme.
- 7.2.3 The PCSfC was intended to be an ambitious programme of school transformation works over a 15 year period. However, following cancellation of further PCP grant by the Coalition Government the programme has been reviewed and scaled down to address only the essential works required to meet the Council's statutory duty to provide sufficient pupil places. The programme now includes six schools. Due to the phasing of the works, as further classes are built each year to accommodate the additional pupils as they move through the school from Reception to Year 6, it is expected to be completed by 2017.

8 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

8.1 Inspection of Bracknell Forest Fostering Service

- 8.1.1 The Executive noted the report of the Ofsted inspection of the Bracknell Forest Fostering Service and endorsed the recommendations and associated action plan. The inspection was carried out from 6 – 11 July 2011.
- 8.1.2 The inspection focused on five outcomes for children: helping children to be healthy which was judged as good, protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe which was judged as good, helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do which was judged as outstanding, helping children make a positive contribution which was judged as outstanding, and achieving economic well-being which was judged as good. The overall provision was judged to be 'Good' with some outstanding features, which is a very positive result.
- 8.1.3 The inspection confirmed that there is a strong and effective fostering service in Bracknell Forest. It is particularly pleasing to note that the Inspectors found outstanding provision in relation to helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do and also in the area of helping children make a positive contribution. Overall the inspection report positively reflects some of the quality of the work being offered to our vulnerable children.

9 LOOKING AHEAD

- 9.1 The next Forward Plan will be published on 1 December 2011 and will be available for public inspection at Easthampstead House in the usual way and will also be available online at www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk, where you can also find full details on decisions taken by individual portfolio holders.