

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
30 JANUARY 2013
7.30 - 9.35 PM**



Present:

Councillors Leake (Chairman), Angell (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Angell, Baily, Mrs Birch, Ms Brown, Finnie, Gbadebo, Harrison, Heydon, McLean and Turrell

Mr Robin Briscoe, Parent Governor Representative

Executive Members Present:

Councillor McCracken and Ward

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Virgo

In Attendance:

Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Alan Nash, Borough Treasurer
Helen Pennington, Group Accountant, Corporate Services
Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services

37. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

The Commission noted the attendance of the following substitute member:

Councillor Baily for Councillor Virgo

38. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission held on 22 November 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising

The Director of Corporate Services reported that any Member wishing to visit the Customer Contact Centre should contact the Chief Officer: Customer Services. She also reported that it was anticipated that the current problems with the telephone system would be resolved by tomorrow. (Minute 32 refers).

In response to a Member's question regarding the specialist training of police officers (Minute 34a refers) it was agreed to send her information as to whether the training had taken place and, if not, when it would.

Councillor Harrison asked it to be recorded that he omitted to declare a personal interest, as a Binfield Parish Councillor, in the Executive decision relating to Binfield Nursery. (Minute 35 refers).

In response to a Member's question, the Commission was informed that the Health Scrutiny Panel had no current plans to meet with Patient Participation Groups. (Minute 36 refers).

39. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor Mrs Birch declared a personal interest as the spouse of the Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Health and Housing.

Councillors Harrison and Leake declared personal interests, as Binfield Parish Councillors, in the Executive decision relating to Binfield Nursery (see Minute 43 below).

Councillor McLean declared a personal interest, as the spouse of a Binfield Parish Councillor, in the Executive decision relating to Binfield Nursery (see Minute 43 below).

40. Appointment of Parent Governor Representative

The Chairman welcomed Mr Robin Briscoe to the meeting, having been formally appointed by Full Council. The Commission agreed that Mr Briscoe be appointed as a parent governor representative to the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel for a term of office of four years.

41. Public Participation

There were no items submitted under the Public Participation Scheme.

42. The Council's Budget Consultation

The Executive Member for Transformation and Finance and the Borough Treasurer introduced the Council's draft budget proposals for 2013/14, which had been agreed as the basis for consultation with the Commission, Overview and Scrutiny Panels and other interested parties. The Executive would consider all representations made at its meeting on 13 February before recommending the budget to Council.

The Borough Treasurer informed Members that in December 2012, when the draft budget proposals had been agreed as a basis for consultation, there was a predicted funding gap of £1.7m. The Local Government Finance Settlement had resulted in a loss of £1.2m in Government grant over and above the budget forecast. However, the following additional savings had been identified:

- £115,000 reduction in expenditure on Looked After Children
- £250,000 savings resulting from responsibility for 2 year olds being transferred to the schools' budget
- £200,00 reduction in the inflation contingency
- £138,000 savings resulting from the retendering of the Council's insurance contract.
- £377,000 additional income from business rates retention.

The net effect of all the changes was a revised predicted funding gap of £1.9m.

Arising from Members' questions and comments, the following points were noted:

- The Council was able to make a full pre-payment on its pension fund contributions for a further year so earning a higher discount than could be earned if it invested the money whilst making monthly payments. However, the Council was unlikely to have the cash resources available to pay all pension contributions in advance in future years.
- Although Bracknell Forest's Council Tax was proposed to be frozen at present levels, it was anticipated that the Police, Fire Authority and some Town and Parish Councils would be raising their precepts resulting in increased bills for Bracknell Forest residents. A leaflet would be included with the bills sent to residents explaining how the bill was arrived at together with an article in Town and Country. However, it was acknowledged that many residents might not read the information provided.
- Details of the maintenance agreement for the new cremation equipment were reported.
- There was a sufficient underspend to cover the cost of the current works at Coral Reef. Any losses to income would be funded from contingencies.
- The £2.5m identified in the 2013/14 capital programme and further funding in future years for the Twin Bridges highways scheme was a proposal that would be subject to approval by Council when considering the budget. Funding would need to be agreed before a detailed scheme could be drawn up. It was agreed to send a Member information regarding the proposed works. The Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel might review this further.
- Members complimented the Borough Treasurer on the clarity of his presentation of complex budget issues.

The Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection and the Director of Corporate Services reported on the Corporate Services/Chief Executive's Office draft budget proposals. The Assistant Chief Executive had tendered his apologies for being unable to attend the meeting. £137,000 budget pressures had been identified plus another £50,000 Council wide whilst £437,000 savings were proposed. The emphasis was on protecting services to residents, and increasing income where possible. Some staffing reductions were proposed, which would constrain the ability to deliver some objectives in the service plan.

Arising from Members' questions and comments, the following points were noted:

- The income target for both the Outdoor Market and Market Street properties had been under-achieved for a number of years. The budget pressure of £58,000 had been identified as the Corporate Services Department could no longer meet this shortfall from elsewhere in its budget..
- It was agreed to send a Member a copy of the Council's ICT Category Strategy detailing ICT expenditure together with details of expenditure on consultants.
- The proposed reduction in the Civic Service budget was based on underspends in previous years. It was agreed to give further consideration to this reduction and send a Member details of the budget.
- It was acknowledged that moving staff from Seymour House into Ocean House whilst accommodation works took place at Times Square would result in some delay and disruption. However, in the circumstances, it was the best option available.

- The proposed legal and surveyor's fees for property transactions were in line with other local authorities and were broadly in line with commercial rates although some activities e.g. Section 106 Agreements, were not undertaken in the private sector. The fees were sufficient to cover costs.
- Members were informed of proposals for the replacement of the Council Chamber audio visual equipment which would include improved lighting and power. It was anticipated that the cost would be significantly less than the £43,000 estimate.

The Commission also received feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Panels on their consideration of the draft budget proposals.

The Commission agreed that the draft budget be recommended to the Executive, alongside the comments made above.

43. **Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions**

The Commission considered scheduled Executive decisions relating to corporate issues and the following points were noted:

- In response to Members' questions regarding the revised offer received for the Binfield Nursery Site, the Director of Corporate Services reported that the Council had a legal duty to obtain best value and so to consider the offer. The Executive decision at this stage concerned entering negotiations with developers rather than the sale of the site.
- The Government was providing match funding for the Superfast Broadband Project and the Council had allocated funding of £183,000 over the next three years. It was agreed to send a Member further details of the project.
- The Chief Officer: Information Services had taken on the role of ICT Category Manager.
- The Director of Corporate Services outlined some of the tasks undertaken by the contractors under the current Community Consultation and Engagement Services contract. It was agreed to send a Member further details of the work undertaken and the costs involved.

Councillors Harrison and Leake declared personal interests, as Binfield Parish Councillors, in the Executive decision relating to Binfield Nursery. Councillor McLean declared a personal interest, as the spouse of a Binfield Parish Councillor, in the Executive decision relating to Binfield Nursery.

44. **Overview and Scrutiny of the Bracknell Forest Partnership**

The Commission considered a report inviting it to reaffirm its decisions of 28 October 2010 concerning the overview and scrutiny of the Bracknell Forest Partnership.

It was agreed to send a Member details of the costs to the Council, where quantifiable, of the Partnership e.g. clerking meetings.

AGREED that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission reaffirms the Commission's decisions in 2010 that:

1. The Bracknell Forest Partnership Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Group should exist in a reference capacity only, meeting exceptionally if required.

2. O&S reviews of partner organisations' activities should only be carried out when they form an integral part of an O&S review of the Council's own activities, or NHS services.

45. **Review of Preparations for the Community Infrastructure Levy**

The Commission considered the report resulting from the review of the preparations for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) undertaken by a working group of the Commission.

The Commission congratulated the Working Group on its report and thanked the Officers for their support. Members welcomed the report and its recommendations subject to the following amendment:

In Recommendation 8, amend the middle part to read, '.... decisions on CIL-funded projects and spending of CIL monies raised through developments in their wards...'.

AGREED that, as recommended by the Working Group, subject to the amendment to Recommendation 8 detailed above, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

1. Adopts the report of the review of the preparations for the Community Infrastructure Levy undertaken by a working group of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, for sending formally to the relevant Executive Member.
2. Stands down the Working group unless/until further Regulations affecting CIL are published and materially affect the conclusions and recommendations of the Working Group's report.
3. Requests from the Executive regular updates on any further developments in the CIL project, and to arrange for prior consultation with the Commission on any new CIL proposals.
4. Asks the Environment, Culture and Communities O&S Panel to monitor the outcome of the Public Examination of the Site Allocations proposals.

46. **Work Programme Update**

The Commission received a report setting out a summary of progress made against the work programme for 2012/13, with particular reference to the Commission's Working Groups, together with verbal updates from Panel Chairmen.

Adult Social Care and Housing

- The report of the Substance Misuse Working Group would be submitted to the Executive.
- Some Members had visited the new Waymead Short Term Care Home which was excellent.
- Members would be commenting on the Older Person's Strategy

Children, Young People and Learning

- The report of the School Governance Working Group would be submitted to the next Panel meeting.
- The Panel had suggested a number of items to be included in its 2013/14 Work Programme.

Environment, Culture and Communities

- Further to the Commission's consideration of the draft budget proposals 2013/14 (see Minute 42 above), the Panel would be looking at the proposed highway scheme on the Twin Bridges site.

Health

- All Working Groups had completed their work.
- The Council had responded to the Shaping the Future consultation.
- Public Health functions were transferring to the Council

Commission

- The Working Group on Delegated Authorities would hold its first meeting on 7th February.

47. **2013/14 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme**

The Commission was invited to suggest topics for inclusion in its 2013/14 work programme and suggested the following:

- A review of the implementation of strategies previously considered by Overview and Scrutiny, particularly the Communications Strategy..
- The Working Group on Delegated Authorities to also consider aspects of the Code of Conduct.

The Chairman stated that he would consider the most effective means by which Working Group reports could be reviewed. The Working Group on Delegated Authorities would be scoping its report on 7th February and could consider at that time whether to look at the Code of Conduct.

CHAIRMAN