

ACTIONS TAKEN: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION MEETING – 1 JULY 2013

Minute 10 - Commercial Property Portfolio

Information to be provided by Finance officers on the legal limitations on the raising of finance by secured debt on the property portfolio

The Borough Treasurer and the Borough Solicitor have advised that whilst property is often used as security for borrowing within the private sector, this type of security is not necessary within local government because we operate within a different legislative framework.

Under the Local Government Act 2003 (section 1) a local authority may borrow money for any purpose relevant to its functions under any enactment OR for the purposes of the prudent management of its financial affairs. Section 13-a local authority may not mortgage or charge its property and all money borrowed "shall be charged indifferently on all the revenues of the authority".

Therefore, the Council is able to set its own limits on how much we borrow, largely based on whether we can afford to make the repayments. These are the prudential indicators that form part of the formal budget report to Council each year.

In terms of security, all borrowings are secured on the revenues of the authority. This means that when we set our annual budget we have to have regard to any repayments that are due and increase council tax or make savings to ensure that the budget contains sufficient provision for the repayments. This security is also enshrined within legislation and means that lenders to local authorities do not need to look to our property assets for security. In practice this is all rather academic as the cheapest source of finance is usually the government itself, operating through the Public Works Loan Board.

Officers to contact Londis regarding usage of empty unit at Great Hollands

Officers are in contact with Londis, who have said they plan to open the extra unit shortly after funding for the refurbishment is in place.

Officers to explore the possibility of incorporating a clause into leases that required a tenant to maintain an active shop

Legal officers are looking at what wording can be incorporated in future leases.

Officers to review the adequacy of signage to Birch Hill neighbourhood shops

The road signage has been made more visible with plant cutting and officers consider the site signage is as good as all other centres. Consideration could be given to local or group branding but there is no budget to support this at present.

Minute 11 - Residents Survey 2012

Key actions in the draft action plan and the updated action plan to be circulated to members for information

Officers have advised that the updated action plan is likely to be reviewed by the Corporate Management Team in September, following which it will be circulated to members of the Commission by the Head of Community Engagement and Equalities.

Minute 13 - Quarterly Service Reports

Note setting out the various factors influencing the number of reported cases of domestic abuse including clarification on how the effectiveness of work undertaken to tackle domestic abuse was measured to be circulated

A response is in the attached report.

Minute 14 - Corporate Performance Overview Report

Data relating to households in all types of temporary accommodation to be circulated

The Chief Officer:Housing has advised that the use of temporary accommodation for households where the Council has accepted a homeless duty or where we are investigating whether we owe a homeless duty changes day by day. Therefore, one way to show the various types of accommodation households are housed in where we have accepted a homeless duty and we are waiting for a suitable permanent home to become available is to measure it on a specific day. For example, on 30 June 2013 there were 55 homeless households, the majority of which we had accepted a homeless duty, and those where we were still undertaking investigation were housed in bed and breakfast. The breakdown of type of temporary accommodation was as follows:

- 9 households in properties the Council has on short term leases
- 25 households in Council owned properties
- 7 households in properties in the private rented sector
- 1 household in women's domestic violence refuge
- 4 households in bed and breakfast
- 9 households who are homeless at home (living with friends/ relatives on a temporary basis)

September Employment Committee Work Force Monitoring Report to be circulated

The monitoring report is being produced for the Employment Committee meeting on 9 October. The Chief Officer: Human Resources will circulate the report to members of the Commission at the same time as the Employment Committee agenda is published.

Information pertaining to the work taking place to secure sufficient secondary school places in the Borough to meet forecast demand to be circulated

Forecasting demand for school places is undertaken within the CYPL department. The Chief Officer Strategy, Resources and Early Intervention is the senior officer responsible for the updating and the production of school place forecasts. The Chief Officer has established a Pupil Places Planning Board, which meets quarterly and produces an annual School Places Plan (SPP). The SPP is signed off by the Executive Member for CYPL each year and is published on the Council's public website: [School Places Plan 2012-2017](#).

The SPP forecasts provide a five year projection of both primary and secondary

school places and take into account births (taken from GP/NHS data), demographic trends (taken from the Office of National Statistics) and the impact of new housing (from the Council's Planning Policy Team). Allowances also have to be made for movements taking place within the local housing market, which is more difficult to forecast. The overall analysis is complex and requires data to be collected, input, analysed and interpreted from a number of sources.

The SPP is the working document used by the department to identify where and when additional school places are required to be provided. The data is used to develop outline construction projects where expansion work is deemed to be feasible. These are brought onto the Council's capital programme for approval by the Executive and Full Council in February/March of each year. Once these expansion projects have been approved, individual construction projects are further developed by the Council's Managing Partner in close liaison with the school in question, over the details of the works on site. Once projects are 'live' the Education Capital Programme Board oversees key milestones and delivery aspects of individual projects.

The Borough has seen significant growth of new housing and inward migration. This has resulted in the creation of 474 new secondary places over the last 3 years as follows:

SCHOOL	FROM	NEW PLACES
Edgbarrow	Sep-10	150
Garth Hill College	Sep-10	180
Ranelagh	Sep-10	48
Brakenhale	Sep-13	96
Total:		474

In respect of primary school places we have created 1,194 new places over the last 3 years as follows:

PRIMARY SCHOOL	FROM	NEW PLACES
Crown Wood Primary	Sep-11	97
Holly Spring Infant & Junior	Sep-11	210
Jennett's Park Primary	Sep-11	210
Sandy Lane Primary	Sep-11	47
Crown Wood Primary	Sep-12	30
Jennett's Park Primary	Sep-12	30
Meadow Vale Primary	Sep-12	90
Sandy Lane Primary	Sep-12	30
Crown Wood Primary	Sep-13	30
Holly Spring Infant & Junior	Sep-13	30
Jennett's Park Primary	Sep-13	30
The Pines	Sep-13	30
Meadow Vale Primary	Dec-13	150
Crown Wood Primary	Dec-13	180
Total:		1,194

Looking forward, the pressure points highlighted in the SPP forecasts indicate a current deficit of secondary school places in the North of the Borough. A number of options are currently being developed to address this deficit. The increasing demand in primary school places, as set out above, are already feeding into the pressures

and demand for secondary school places in the medium to long term across the Borough.

SPP forecasts suggest that whilst some schools will be over-subscribed, Bracknell Forest will continue to have an overall surplus of secondary places until September 2018 by which point all existing places in the intake years may be expected to be full. In response to this, the Council's longer term strategy includes for construction of a new secondary school which is proposed to be built at Blue Mountain, to provide up to 1,600 new school places. This is currently planned to be opened in September 2018, however the project is currently at an early stage and is subject to site acquisition, planning permission, and funding which have not yet been agreed.

An important aspect of forecasting school places is the potential impact of neighbouring Authorities. Regular meetings are held with officers in Wokingham and the Royal Borough in order to understand the potential changes to the school estate in these Boroughs. For example, a new free school sponsored by Eton College is currently being built on the Holyport Manor site in the Royal Borough which may ease pressure on our demand for North Bracknell secondary places, should parents choose to apply there. This is however balanced by housing development in the East of Wokingham which is likely to reduce their surplus secondary places limiting the availability of these for Bracknell Forest residents to apply for. We continue to closely monitor developments at Charters secondary school in the Royal Borough specifically in relation to changes in their catchment area. This is a key issue as two of our Bracknell Forest primary schools currently feed into Charters (Cranbourne and Ascot Heath). Bracknell Forest Council would be a statutory consultee on any changes proposed by neighbouring schools or Authorities that may affect demand for pupil places in our Borough.

This issue is kept under review by the Children, Young People and Learning O&S Panel, which received updates on school admissions in October 2012 and 3 July 2013. Further, the O&S Work Programme for 2013-14 includes the Panel reviewing the planning of sufficient school places.

Further information can be obtained from:

David Watkins
01344 354061

Chief Officer: Strategy, Resources and Early Intervention
david.watkins@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

L172 Reasons for the missing of target relating to the timeliness of financial assessments, and its impact to be circulated

The Director has advised that the following information has previously been provided to the Adult Social Care and Housing O&S Panel:

The Council has a contributions policy for Adult Social Care, prior to last year the target for completion of these was that 95% of these would be carried out within 14 days.

In preparation for the move of Housing into the Department there was a minor internal restructuring within the finance section. This coincided with target setting for 2012/13, which was to increase the target by shortening the window for financial assessments to 5 days.

In order to achieve this, "mobile working" for financial assessment officers was being introduced to allow financial assessments to be completed within a person's home,

but the technical aspects of this change were not finalised until August 2012. The introduction of mobile working has reduced the amount of officer time being spent on travelling to and from the office to complete financial assessment paperwork.

The target for financial assessments was to achieve 95% of completed financial assessments within 5 days of notification. The performance for the year as a whole was 74.3%.

The target was eventually met, but not until mid-way through the year. There were two reasons for this: Firstly, although the new structure was formally in place on 1st April 2012, it was not fully recruited until August 2012; Secondly the technical aspects of mobile working were also delayed. Once these were resolved the target of 95% was achieved – from September onwards performance was at or above 95% each month, clearly then there was insufficient headroom to "catch up" .

For the first three months of this year (2013/14) performance has been at or above 95%.

Members may be interested to note that during the financial year a benchmarking exercise was undertaken on financial assessments, which showed, amongst other things, that the actual performance on the timeliness of financial assessments was in the top 10% of authorities, prior to the achieving of the 95% target.

People who are supported at home must not be billed for services until they have been financially assessed, so quicker financial assessment will lead to billing earlier. (Members may be aware of a recent LGO judgement on Kent CC in this regard) Secondly, people who are supported in a residential setting may be billed for a period prior to being assessed, but are marginally more likely to default. Quicker billing therefore reduces the risk of bad debt. The main benefit of the new target is improved customer service, reducing the time when people are uncertain over what they might need to contribute. The delay in meeting the target meant that the improvement in customer service was delayed, there were however no adverse financial impacts.

All of this was achieved within existing resources

NOTE FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION MEMBERS

INVESTMENT IN DOMESTIC ABUSE – VALUE FOR MONEY

Assistant Chief Executive

July 2013

1 Introduction

Members of the commission asked whether the council's expenditure on domestic abuse represented good value for money. This note outlines how the money is being spent and the impact being made.

2 Expenditure

- 3.1 As the levels of the more well-known categories of crime have reduced over recent years in Bracknell Forest (39% reduction in overall crime since 2009/09), it has given the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) the opportunity to focus on more hidden crime e.g. domestic abuse (DA). This work has been facilitated by the allocation of council funding of £100K per annum since 1 April 2011. The Executive of the DA Forum, which is a multi-agency sub-group of the CSP, has allocated this money to various projects which are evidencing results within the cohorts that they work with.
- 3.2 These allocations are shown as follows for 2013/14 (allocations have been broadly similar to this since 2011/12):

Approved Breakdown of £100K for 2013/14

DA Training for the Workforce	1500
Positive Intervention for Children Affected by Domestic Abuse programme	2000
Domestic Abuse Service Co-ordination DASC)(Project	6500
Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Service (DAPS) Project	40000
(Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA)	20000
Outreach Worker	12000
Sanctuary Scheme (for victims to stay in their own homes)	1000
DA Co-ordinator	15000
Publicity	2000
	100000

Making a difference:

Domestic Abuse Service Coordination:

- 3.3 The DASC project aims to address a distinct gap in service to standard and medium-risk victims and perpetrators by providing an enhanced level of support through Berkshire Women's Aid to victims and their children as well as provide an enhanced level of management and supervision of perpetrators. The project costs £6,500 per annum plus we pay an amount of £12,000 to Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA) who were procured to provide the enhanced victim support.

- 3.4 An initial cohort of 11 men in 2011/12 was selected and monitored to establish the effectiveness of the approach and results showed a reduction from 68 repeat calls to police in 2011/12 to 24 in 2012/13.
- 3.5 Robust research using nationally recognised approaches was recently conducted by the Berkshire East DA Co-ordinator into costs of managing domestic abuse (locally and nationally). National estimates are that DA costs £440 per person in society whereas the local costs equate to £1,313 per person in society. If the local costs are applied to the reduction of 44 incidents referred to above, this equates to over £57,000 alone, not taking into account the costs attributable to the perpetrator and children. Considering that the DASC project costs £6,500 per annum, this is clearly excellent value for money.
- 3.7 Due to this success, additional police funding was sourced in 2013/14 and the cohort has now been increased to 90 over the year to increase the number of people who can benefit from this approach. The DASC Working Group is now working in conjunction with Cambridge University to scientifically evaluate the DASC approach with this larger cohort and the results are expected to be released towards the autumn of 2014.

Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Service:

- 3.8 The Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Service (DAPS) is a 1-to-1 service which addresses attitudes and behaviours of DA perpetrators. The funding allocation above pays for a DAPS worker who works with perpetrators referred by children's social care where there are children who are either on child protection plans or who are children in need because of emotional abuse (i.e. domestic abuse). In 2012/13, 25 children were removed from child protection plans where the perpetrator had participated in the DAPS programme. Specific figures for the costs associated with a child protection plan are difficult to find but the following was quoted by the Guardian on 14.06.10 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/jun/14/society-daily>) and in an article by Localis on CSV Volunteers in Child Protection (VICP) (29 June 2010):

'There is significant cost to children's services in having a child with a child protection plan:-

- staff time preparing for the panel
- the cost of convening a panel
- the cost of professionals representing many disciplines attending the panel
- the cost of the agreed intervention
- the cost of monitoring change'

- 3.9 In view of the fact that the DAPS service has contributed to 25 children being removed from CPPs in one year and it costs £40 K per year, this service is clearly excellent value for money. It is also worth noting that an externally-facilitated evaluation of the DAPS approach is in its final stage and will be available in due course.

Independent Domestic Violence Advocate:

- 3.10 At the last quarter:

- A total of 85 clients were contacted by the Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) as at 31 May 2013. This is an increase from 56 from 11 June 2012. New referrals increased from 6 to 34 over the same time period.
- The DASC Outreach Worker dealt with 69 clients as at 31 May 2013 from 47 from 1 April 2012. New referrals also increased from 4 to 16 over the same time period.
- It is noted that the total amount of funding that BWA receive from BFC is £32,000 per annum. Taking into account that over 100 clients were worked with, this equates to a figure of £320 per client. With reference to research conducted by Howard et al (see The Henry Smith Charity www.henrysmithcharity.org.uk), the average costs as per 4 London independent domestic violence advocacy schemes is £501 per case. This is considerably more than what BFC is paying.

3.11 Although we have achieved success within those cohorts that we are working with the challenge is to, not only replicate these results in larger numbers, but also to address the culture of domestic abuse in Bracknell Forest.

Overall impact:

- 3.12 It is important to note that domestic abuse is unlike more traditional crime types where incidents reduce the more work that is done in those areas. In fact, the more awareness-raising and interventions that are carried out, it is very likely that the levels of reporting will increase as victims feel more confident and supported to report DA. It could even be argued that if our work to tackle DA was reduced, reports of DA may reduce but offending would remain.
- 3.13 Research has shown that the average victim of DA will experience an average of 35 assaults before making the first report. (Women's Aid: Jaffe 1982). It is also known that one of the disincentives to reporting DA is that victims have historically felt that no-one will believe them and they may not be taken seriously. Clearly the Bracknell Forest projects have gone some way to address this. In addition, under the new family legal aid rules, most private law services are only available to the victims of domestic violence. In order to be entitled to legal aid, the client has to produce 'trigger evidence' proving that they are a victim of abuse. (<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/advice/articles/legal-aid-changes-key-information-and-advice/>)
- 3.14 Therefore, the question needs to be considered: 'what does success look like?'

The Domestic Abuse Forum has grappled with this question recently due to the high repeat rate in Bracknell Forest and we feel that, as a result of the prioritisation of DA in the borough, together with the above funding and launch of brand new, innovative projects, recognition of DA as a major contributor to children being on child protection plans, inclusion of DA as a criteria in the FIP and Family Focus work etc., this has all created a culture within the workforce of BF of non-tolerance of DA. This has passed through services to service users who have translated this into increased reports.

Contact for further information

Ian Boswell – 01344 352121 Ian.Boswell@bracknell-forest.gov.uk