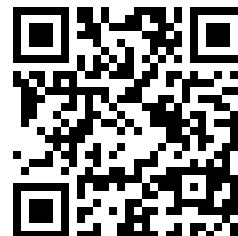


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Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

Tuesday, 29 October, 2013 at 6.30pm
in Council Chamber Council Offices
Market Street Newbury

Date of despatch of Agenda: Monday, 21 October 2013

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact David Lowe / Charlene Myers / Elaine Walker on (01635) 519817 / 519695 / 5194

e-mail: dlowe@westberks.gov.uk / cmyers@westberks.gov.uk / ewalker@westberks.gov.uk

Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at www.westberks.gov.uk



Agenda - Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission to be held on Tuesday, 29 October 2013 (continued)

- To:** Councillors Jeff Beck, Brian Bedwell (Chairman), Jeff Brooks (Vice-Chairman), Marcus Franks, Dave Goff, Mike Johnston, Alan Macro, Gwen Mason, Tim Metcalfe, Andrew Rowles, Garth Simpson, Tony Vickers, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb, Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko
- Substitutes:** Councillors Peter Argyle, George Chandler, Sheila Ellison, Roger Hunneman, Carol Jackson-Doerge, David Rendel, Julian Swift-Hook and Keith Woodhams

Agenda

Part I	Page No.
1. Apologies for Absence To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any),	
2. Minutes To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 17 September 2013.	1 - 4
3. Declarations of Interest To remind Members of the need to record the existence and nature of any Personal, Disclosable Pecuniary or other interests in items on the agenda, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct .	
4. Actions from previous Minutes To receive an update on actions following the previous Commission meeting.	5 - 12
5. West Berkshire Forward Plan 01 November 2013 to 28 February 2014 Purpose: To advise the Commission of items to be considered by West Berkshire Council from 01 November 2013 to 28 February 2014 and decide whether to review any of the proposed items prior to the meeting indicated in the Plan. http://www.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1594	13 - 14
6. Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme Purpose: To receive new items and agree and prioritise the work programme of the Commission for the remainder of 2013/14.	15 - 22
7. Items Called-in following the Executive on 5 September 2013 To consider any items called-in by the requisite number of Members following the previous Executive meeting.	



Agenda - Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission to be held on Tuesday, 29 October 2013 (continued)

8. **Councillor Call for Action**
Purpose: To consider any items proposed for a Councillor Call for Action.
9. **Petitions**
Purpose: To consider any petitions requiring an Officer response.
10. **Update on the Health Service in West Berkshire and the PCT quality Handover** 23 - 26
Purpose: To receive an update in respect of the changes to the Primary Health Care in West Berkshire and examine the Clinical Commissioning Groups management of its quality responsibilities following handover from the PCT in April 2013.
11. **Medium Term Financial Strategy** 27 - 48
Purpose: To review the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
12. **Blue Badge Procedure** 49 - 58
Purpose: To consider the Blue Badge Improvement Service (BBIS) financial report post 1st April 2013.
13. **Scrutiny Recommendations Update** 59 - 66
Purpose: To provide the Commission with an update on the progress of recommendations resulting from scrutiny reviews.

Andy Day
Head of Strategic Support

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact Moira Fraser on telephone (01635) 519045.

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2013

Councillors Present: Jeff Beck, Brian Bedwell (Chairman), Jeff Brooks (Vice-Chairman), Dave Goff, Mike Johnston, Alan Macro, Gwen Mason, Tim Metcalfe, Andrew Rowles, Garth Simpson, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb and Emma Webster

Also Present: Nick Carter (Chief Executive) and Rachael Wardell (Corporate Director - Communities), David Lowe (Scrutiny & Partnerships Manager) and Charlene Myers (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Marcus Franks

Councillors Absent: Councillor Tony Vickers and Councillor Laszlo Zverko

PART I

27. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2013 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:

Item 19, paragraph 5: was amended to read; Councillor Vickers raised the concern that current reviews underway by the Business Improvement District (BID) and Council Officers considered *issues* related to parking matters for commuters and visitors to Newbury.

Item 19, paragraph 8: was amended to read; Councillor Vickers held *the view* that the Community Right to Bid process required an opportunity for public review and without this the decision lacked transparency.

Item 23, paragraph 13: It was clarified that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) had considered a number of sites as the potential location for a new fire station.

Item 23, paragraph 14: It would be recorded that the Commission discussed the Highway Agency's proposal to remove the hard shoulder on the M4 and how an emergency response of the RBFRS would be impeded as a result.

Item 23, paragraph 16: The item was in relation to the retained crew at the Newbury fire station.

28. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

29. Actions from previous Minutes

The Commission received an update on actions from the previous meeting and the Chairman agreed to write to the RBFRS to ensure that item 2.3 was not overlooked.

30. West Berkshire Forward Plan 1st September 2013 to 31st December 2013

The Commission considered the West Berkshire Forward Plan (Agenda Item 5) for the period covering 1 September 2013 to 31 December 2013.

Councillor Gwen Mason asked whether any schools had been identified in relation to item EX2721. Rachael Wardell advised that the item was created as a direct outcome of the recent public consultation and that the principle of identifying the schools had been approved. It was hoped that schools would have volunteered during the course of the consultation given this had not occurred the next steps would seek to identify schools in order to create a shortlist.

Resolved that the Forward Plan be noted.

31. Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme

The Commission considered its work programme for 2013/14.

Item OSMC/12/144: Councillor Jeff Brooks advised that the task group had looked at the current utilisation and income generated, over the course of two meetings, along with opportunities to expand the income stream. The task group would review the Portfolio Holder's report in respect of Shaw House before considering their recommendations to avoid duplication.

OSMC/11/110: Councillor Alan Macro asked that the item was considered earlier than scheduled in the work programme. Councillor Emma Webster advised that the item reviewed the policy and procedures introduced two years earlier. It was agreed that the item should remain on the work programme for discussion in April 2014.

Councillor Brooks asked whether a request to discuss home to school transport had been received from Councillor David Allen. It was agreed that Officer's would add the item to the work programme for future discussion.

OSMC/12/149: Officers' review of the Newbury town centre parking had concluded and the Commission would have the opportunity to review the Officers' report.

Resolved that the work programme be noted.

32. Items Called-in following the Executive on 5th September 2013.

No items were called-in following the last Executive meeting.

33. Councillor Call for Action

There were no Councillor Calls for Action.

34. Petitions

There were no petitions received at the meeting.

35. Performance Report for Level One Indicators

The Commission considered a report (Agenda Item 10) concerning the Quarter one Council performance indicators.

Jason Teal highlighted that the reporting framework contained 50 key accountable measures and activities in total. The quarter one report provided the Commission with an update in respect of 34 measures.

Councillor Brian Bedwell queried why the number of Looked After Children, children and young people subject to a Child Protection Plan and number of adult learners had either

decreased or increased in the opposite direction to that which would be preferred. Jason Teal explained that the number of adult learners had decreased compared to last year due to the reduced level of funding in early 2012; the current statistics were more in line with the reported levels from Q1 2011/12.

Rachael Wardell explained that the increased number of children or young people subject to a Child Protection Plan was as a result of the observations issued by the OFSTED inspection last year. Rachael Wardell advised the Commission that Children's Services was required to amplify vigilance. The number of children placed in care was as a result of the increased focus on addressing Child Sexual Exploitation. The Commission heard that for residential care, children could be placed outside West Berkshire.

Councillor Brooks questioned why the number of care assessments conducted had decreased. Rachel Wardell explained that signposting clients to alternative support services via the Access for All team contributed towards the reduced number of assessments required for residents over the age of 65. In addition, the number of clients on the database had decreased but the total number residents waiting for an assessment had increased. Rachael Wardell would investigate how long residents had to wait before receiving an assessment and report back to the Commission.

Councillor Quentin Webb asked whether, in the Officer's opinion, the number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests would continue to rise. David Lowe advised that the number of FOI requests had consistently increased, it was predicted that the volume would continue to rise. The Strategic Support Service recently recruited 1FTE to assist with the increasing number of requests.

Councillor Jeff Brooks requested that the report provided comments alongside each measure of volume to enhance the Commissions understanding. Jason Teal agreed to look into what could be provided for Q2.

In response to questions asked, Jason Teal explained that the annual measures could not updated in earlier quarters as they related to outturns which could only be compiled at a single point in time (i.e. attainment, or survey results) and so progress could not be demonstrated.

Resolved that the report be noted.

36. Revenue and capital budget reports

The Commission considered a report (Agenda Item 11) concerning the Financial Performance during Quarter One (2013-2014).

The Chairman invited the Commission to comment on the information presented.

Councillor Brooks requested that the Budget Monitoring report contained the previous year's performance so that current statistics could be contextualised. Andy Walker would amend the monitoring tool for Quarter two reporting.

Councillor Simpson highlighted the variances within the budget and questioned whether the monitoring tool was robust. Andy Walker advised that the accountants consulted budget managers to ensure that profiling was accurate and detailed.

Councillor Simpson also asked whether the percentage of remaining budget to be committed (in Appendix 1b) would be spent. Gabrielle Espin explained that the commitment of funds, in some service areas, was delayed due to the process of allocation.

Councillor Mike Johnson asked whether there were measures in the capital programme to assess project spend against project deliverables. In response Gabrielle Espin advised that it was rare for a project to exceed the funding allowance. It was suggested that the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION - 17 SEPTEMBER 2013 - MINUTES

process had controls in place to ensure savings would be made where possible. Andy Walker explained that each project would complete a post implementation review, during which it was possible to scrutinise the budget. Andy Walker agreed to sample each budget of the top 20% of projects to see whether savings were available and then report back to the Commission.

Councillor Macro asked why the Education Programme was significantly revised. Gabrielle Espin advised that when the programme was approved in March 2013, the increased pupil numbers scheme was incomplete. Since then the scheme had been re-profiled which impacted on the five year programme. The Commission heard that the pupil numbers review was still underway.

Councillor Metcalfe asked whether pupil numbers were affected by some schools transferring to academy status. Rachael Wardell advised that funding for school places was provided centrally, irrespective of whether the place was provided via an academy. Rachael Wardell explained that the Council commissioned pupil places in line with the level of demand.

In response to questioning, Nick Carter explained that as a result of a review conducted 18 months ago, it was agreed that the Adventure Dolphin Centre would take a commercial approach to marketing its facilities. The recent decline in use, and thus pressures within the budget, was thought to be the result of the recent poor summer weather during Q1. Nick Carter advised the Commission that the Adventure Dolphin Centre had a business plan would seek to commercialise the facility.

Councillor Brooks stated that members of the Commission were unable to provide their comments in the report because the Commission could not see the Financial Performance report before submission to the Executive. Councillor Bedwell agreed to write a letter raising Councillor Brook's concern.

Councillor Garth Simpson questioned the justification behind creating the Children's Services Risk Fund. In response, Andy Walker explained that Children Services' was a volatile area and the risk fund was created only in the most volatile of areas in order to manage the level of risk. The reserve would be monitored on a monthly basis and altered dependant on the perceived risk.

Councillor Macro questioned why £100,000 of the S106 funds for the A340 rail bridge at Aldermaston was reprofiled. Andy Walker agreed to investigate this matter and report back to the Commission.

Resolved that the report be noted.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.40 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

Agenda Item 4.

Title of Report:	Actions from previous meetings
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Meeting:	29 October 2013

Purpose of Report: To advise the Commission of the actions arising from previous meetings

Recommended Action: To note the report

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Brian Bedwell – Tel (0118) 942 0196
E-mail Address:	bbedwell@westberks.gov.uk

Contact Officer Details	
Name:	Charlene Myers
Job Title:	Strategic Support Service
Tel. No.:	01635 519695
E-mail Address:	cmyers@westberks.gov.uk

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission with an update on the actions arising from its previous meeting.

2. Actions

- 2.1 **Resolution:** Neighbourhood Action Groups would receive the contact details for RBFRS staff to enable them to contribute to fire safety and fire safety risk assessment training.

Action/ response: Scrutiny officers have requested an update from RBFRS on this item.

- 2.2 **Resolution:** The suggested topic for scrutiny, Home to school Transport, would be included at the next OSMC meeting.

Action/Response: Officers confirmed that the item would be added to agenda for discussion at the meeting 29 October 2013.

- 2.3 **Resolution:** Rachael Wardell would investigate how long residents had to wait before receiving an assessment and report back to the Commission.

Action/Response: Update not yet available. A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

- 2.4 **Resolution:** The Commission were unable to provide their comments in the Revenue and Capital budget report because the Commission could not see the Financial Performance report before submission to the Executive. Councillor Bedwell agreed to write a letter raising the concern.

Action/Response: A letter has been sent.

- 2.5 **Resolution:** The Commission would receive a formal response with regards to each of the recommendations made by the OSMC Homelessness review.

Action/ Response: Response provided within appendix A

- 2.6 **Resolution:** Andy Walker would investigate why £100,000 of the S106 funds for the A340 rail bridge at Aldermaston was reprofiled.

Action/Response: Highways officers have advised that this funding is to widen the footway on the north side of the Rail Bridge at the A340 near Aldermaston Wharf. This is a well used footpath that is less than a metre wide in places. Following negotiation with Council officers, Network Rail agreed to widen the footway on the south side and across the bridge when they replaced the bridge during their electrification works. However, they were not working in the area of the northern footway and this will need to be widened by the Council as it is public Highway.

The works have been reprofiled as the landowner whose land is required for the widening is not willing to sell and more time is needed to negotiate.

Appendices

Appendix A – OSMC Homelessness strategy update

Title of Report:	Update on Homelessness Recommendations
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Meeting:	29 October 2013
Forward Plan Ref:	

Purpose of Report: To provide an update on the homelessness recommendations made by OSMC on 11 December 2012

Recommended Action: OSMC to note the progress made on the homelessness recommendations

Portfolio Member Details	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Roger Croft - Tel (01635) 868638
E-mail Address:	rcroft@westberks.gov.uk
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	15 July 2013

Contact Officer Details	
Name:	Mel Brain
Job Title:	Service Manager, Housing Strategy & Operations
Tel. No.:	01635 519403
E-mail Address:	mbrain@westberks.gov.uk

Executive Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 26th November 2012, OSMC held a special meeting to scrutinise the Council's response to homelessness. A number of witnesses were invited to the meeting to give evidence and at the OSMC meeting on 11 December 2012, OSMC made 12 recommendations.
- 1.2 Some of the recommendations were for the Housing Service to consider. Four of the recommendations were published alongside the draft Homelessness Review & Strategy for consultation.
- 1.3 On 9th May 2013 the Executive approved the adoption of the Homelessness Review & Strategy 2013-2018. This decision was called in on 17th May 2013 and the call-in was considered by OSMC on 02nd July 2013. At this meeting, OSMC agreed the adoption of the Homelessness review & Strategy as presented to Executive but requested that the Housing Service provide a further update on the recommendations and addressed the questions raised in Part B of the call-in. This report responds to that request and is an update to the report prepared for and published in the OSMC papers of 16th April 2013.

2. Update on the Recommendations

- 2.1 Each of the recommendations is presented in turn, along with the update on progress.

Recommendation 1: The Executive Member for Housing should work with other local agencies to agree an accepted methodology for the counting of rough sleepers. A report outlining the production process and count should be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission within 6 months of agreement.

Update: The Housing Service follows Government guidance and methodology for the counting of rough sleepers. A methodology is already in place and the Housing Service is satisfied that this provides an accurate estimate. The Housing Service collates information from a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies that may come into contact with rough sleepers and then verifies the information prior to submitting the estimate.

Since the OSMC recommendations, the Housing Service has met with Homelessness Link, who are funded by CLG to work with local authorities to tackle homelessness, to discuss rough sleeper estimate methodology. Homelessness Link have not raised any concerns about the way in which West Berkshire apply the CLG methodology.

The Homelessness Strategy is focused on prevention. This recommendation is not preventative and is about data collection. In addition, the Housing Service is following Government methodology. For this reason, this recommendation has not been included in the action plan but the data will feed into future homelessness reviews.

Recommendation 2: The Executive Member for Housing should advise the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions of the genuine concerns held locally that the impending

changes to the benefits regime will have an adverse effect on homelessness in West Berkshire.

Update: Since the recommendations were made, the new Social Sector Size Criteria has been introduced, as has the phase-in of Personal Independence Payments (PIP) to replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and the Benefit Cap. The transition to Universal Credit is expected to be introduced later in 2013.

Whilst there are concerns about the impacts of welfare reforms locally, there are also provisions in place to mitigate against the worst of those effects, for example, Discretionary Housing Payments. Nationally there has been lobbying by a wide range of stakeholder groups and some amendments have been made to the proposals with more regulations likely. It is recommended that this action should be deferred until there is hard evidence that can be used to support concerns.

The Homelessness Strategy has not included this specific action, as it is unclear yet whether such action will be appropriate. However, one of the key priorities for the Homelessness Strategy is 'Mitigating the negative impacts of the welfare and housing reforms' and the action plan contains practical actions to directly support clients affected by the reforms.

Recommendation 3: The Executive Member for Housing should establish how the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) plans to deliver Universal Benefits (which include Housing Benefit) locally and report by 31 March 2013 on plans for transferring Housing Benefit payment to DWP.

Update: There is a national roll out of Universal Credit and details of how this benefit will be delivered are currently in the process of being published. The issue of transferring Housing Benefit to the DWP is a matter for the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Economic Development, Health & Safety, Pensions, Human Resources.

This action was not included within the Homelessness as it concerns information available in the public realm, is an administrative matter for Revenues & Benefits rather than for Housing Services and will not directly contribute to the prevention of homelessness.

Recommendation 4: The Executive Member for Housing should consider the production, either as part of the Homelessness Strategy or separately, of a 'reconnection' policy, to ensure that homeless people who have no local connection to West Berkshire are able to sustainably relocate to those places outside of the district with which they do have a link.

Update: The Housing Service already seek to reconnect applicants with no local connection to the district back to a locality where they do have a local connection as part of their standard housing options approach. This can include establishing contact with family and friends, securing that accommodation and/or support will be available on their return and funding transport costs to enable applicants to return.

Members are referred to Appendix One of the Homelessness Strategy, (the Homelessness flow-chart) which highlights that local connection and referrals back to authority areas where applicants do have a local connection is standard practice.

<p>Recommendation 5: The Executive Member for Strategic Support should ensure that time is made available at a District Parish Conference for Housing officers to explain to Councillors the content of, and rationale for, the Homelessness Strategy when agreed.</p> <p>Update: The Council does not dictate what items are on the District Parish Conference agenda and it is for Parish Councils to determine what items they consider appropriate. The Housing Service will attend, if invited, or will provide a copy of the Homelessness Review and Strategy to interested Parishes upon request.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6: At the next revision of the Council's Service Level Agreement with the Citizens Advice Bureau, the Executive Member for Strategic Support should consider the offer by SHELTER to assist with housing advice, so as to ensure that the document contains the requirement for the Bureau to provide a dedicated housing advisor.</p> <p>Update: This recommendation has been discussed with the CAB. All of their volunteer generalist advisors offer housing/homelessness advice, backed up by an in-bureau specialist and further backed up by the Citizens Advice specialist support unit. The CEO of CAB Newbury has specifically said, in a letter to the Head of Strategic Support Services, that CAB do not wish to appoint dedicated Housing Advisors. This recommendation cannot be supported as it would be likely to have a detrimental effect on the wider service provided by Citizens Advice and could cause a bottleneck and create a capacity problem that does not currently exist.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7: Performance monitoring reports received from the Citizens Advice Bureau relating to homelessness (including all financial advice), which are sent to the Executive Member for Strategic Support should be routinely made available to the Executive Member for Housing and his Shadow.</p> <p>Update: Quarterly monitoring reports are received from the CAB and the Head of Strategic Support is able to pass them onto the Portfolio Holder who can share them with the Shadow.</p> <p>This action has not been included within the Homelessness Strategy as it concerns data collection and does not contribute to the prevention of homelessness.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8: The Executive Member for Housing should work, through the Local Government Association, the Government and especially the Valuation Office Agency, to achieve transparency of the factors and values taken into consideration by VOA when setting the Local Housing Allowance and, if possible, an appeal mechanism.</p> <p>Update: This action was intended to be included in the Homelessness Strategy and the officer apologises that this was overlooked. Notwithstanding this, work to address action this pre-dates the OSMC Special Meeting and is being continued, in liaison with the MP. At the request of the Portfolio Holder Housing, Richard Benyon, MP, recently wrote again to the VOA. A response is awaited from the VOA.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9: The Executive Member for Housing should develop and implement a plan to heighten awareness of the causes and impacts of homelessness, particularly how</p>

it might be prevented and what help is (and is not) available.

- Raising the awareness of all those whose work may bring them in contact with homelessness on the role of other organisations
- The location of leaflets, including with partner organisations (for example Newbury Town Council, Thames Valley Police, libraries and detached youth workers)
- The engagement of young people from before they enter the workforce, including through secondary schools, in financial and housing-related education
- The content and language of leaflets. Assistance is available through Two Saints from people who have previously been homeless

Update: These actions form a core part of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan. A new suite of leaflets has already been developed and published and Connexions are providing training in schools on matters relating to housing and homelessness.

Recommendation 10: The Executive Member for Housing should ask Newbury Town Council to consider the provision of lockers to allow rough sleepers to store their possessions (for example sleeping bags) securely during the day.

Update: The Portfolio Holder has written to Newbury Town Council and a response is awaited.

This action has not been included within the Homelessness Strategy as it does not contribute towards prevention of homelessness.

Recommendation 11: The Executive Member for Housing should ask the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire to establish closer links with Loose Ends to ensure that any shortages of volunteers and other resources to enable them to provide a better service to their clients are met urgently and effectively.

Update: Shortly prior to the OSMC, the Housing Service arranged a meeting with Loose Ends to discuss how best to work with each other but Loose Ends failed to attend. An offer was made, both at the OSMC Scrutiny day and subsequently, for a Housing Options Officer to provide a surgery at Loose Ends for the benefit of their clients. This offer has not been accepted to date but remains open. It is considered that it is for Loose Ends themselves to establish links with the Volunteer Centre should they require the assistance of the centre.

This action has not been included within the Homelessness Strategy as it does not contribute towards prevention of homelessness.

Recommendation 12: Further investigation should be undertaken into the reasons why West Berkshire seems to have a very large proportion of young families facing homelessness whose friends and extended family are unwilling or unable to provide them with temporary housing/accommodation.

Update: The Housing Service agrees that it would be beneficial to have a better understanding of the reasons why young families are asked to leave home by family and friends and would suggest that this may be an area for further scrutiny rather than for the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan.

3. Part B of the Call-In

- 2.2 Part B of the call-in asked four specific questions, each of which is answered below.
- 2.3 Question 1: What Council resources go into the homelessness forum? The Homelessness Forum is a multi-agency group with a primary focus on both strategic issues, but also covering current operational issues, relating to homelessness. The Council provides staff resources to ensure representation at the Forum and proactively works with the relevant agencies to implement identified actions.
- 2.4 Question 2: Do other agencies attend? Yes, this is a multi-agency forum and includes representatives from Two Saints, the DAAT, Turning Point, DWP, TV Police, CMHT, Probation, West Berkshire DA Service, the DA Reduction Co-ordinator, Creative Support, Bromford Housing Group (Fountain Gardens), the PCT, Revenues & Benefits, the Housing Service and Contracts & Commissioning.
- 2.5 How often does it meet? The Homelessness Forum has just been re-constituted and will meet quarterly.
- 2.6 Do other agencies send reps to meetings this Council hosts that relate to homelessness? Yes. The Housing Service is a core member at a wide range of multi-agency groups that focus on issues that may result in, or arise from, homelessness. These include, but are not restricted to, MAPPA, MARAC, AD SG, Young Persons Housing Panel, MH Housing Panel, Offender Management Group, Integrated Offender Management Group, Domestic Abuse Forum and Child Protection Conferences.

Appendices

There are no Appendices to this report.

Consultees

Local Stakeholders: *

Officers Consulted: June Graves, Head of Care Commissioning, Housing & Safeguarding

Trade Union: *

Agenda Item 5.

Title of Report:	West Berkshire Forward Plan
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Meeting:	29 October 2013

Purpose of Report: To advise the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission of items to be considered by West Berkshire Council from 01 November 2013 to 28 February 2014 and decide whether to review any of the proposed items prior to the meeting indicated in the plan.

Recommended Action: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission considers the West Berkshire Council Forward Plan and recommends further action as appropriate.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Brian Bedwell – Tel (0118) 942 0196
E-mail Address:	bbedwell@westberks.gov.uk

Contact Officer Details	
Name:	Charlene Myers
Job Title:	Strategic Support Officer
Tel. No.:	01635 519695
E-mail Address:	cmyers@westberks.gov.uk

Supporting Information

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Forward Plan attempts to cover all decisions, not just those made by the Executive, which the Authority intends to take over the next 4 months. The Forward Plan, attached at Appendix A, for the months of 01 November 2013 to 28 February 2014, also shows the decision path of each item including Council, Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.
- 1.2 In order to hold the Executive to account, Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Members are asked to identify any areas of forthcoming decisions which may be appropriate for future scrutiny.

Appendices

Appendix A – West Berkshire Council Forward Plan – 01 November 2013 to 28 February 2014. <http://www.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1594>

Agenda Item 6.

Title of Report:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Meeting:	29 October 2013

Purpose of Report: To receive, agree and prioritise the Work Programme of the Commission.

Recommended Action: To consider the current items and any future areas for scrutiny.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman	
Name & Telephone No.:	Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

Contact Officer Details	
Name:	Charlene Myers
Job Title:	Strategic Support Officer
Tel. No.:	01635 519695
E-mail Address:	cmyers@westberks.gov.uk

Supporting Information

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission, Health Scrutiny Panel and Resource Management Working Group is attached at Appendix A for the Commission's consideration. Members are also asked to consider any future areas for scrutiny.

Appendices

Appendix A – Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme - 2013/14

Reference	Subject	Purpose	Format	Methodology	Start Date	End Date	Lead Officer / Service Area	Portfolio Holder	Status	Comments
OSMC/11/112	Medium Term Financial Strategy	To review the MTFS Annual recurrence	In meeting	Annual item for October	Oct-13	Oct-13	Andy Walker	Councillor Alan Law	Scheduled	
OSMC/12/133	PCT Quality Handover	To examine the PCT's arrangements for the handover of its quality responsibilities to Clinical Commissioning Groups	In meeting		Oct-13	Oct-13	Dr Abid Irfan	Councillor Graham Jones	Scheduled	6 month update requested.
OSMC/12/133	Update on the Health Service in West Berkshire	To update members on the changes to Primary Health Care in West Berkshire	In meeting		Oct-13	Oct-13	Dr Abid Irfan	Councillor Graham Jones	Scheduled	6 month update requested.
OSMC/11/113	Procedures for Blue Badge Holder	To review the operation of the new procedures, criteria and rules of use for Blue Badge holders following the introduction of them in January 2012.	In meeting		Oct-13	Oct-13	Mark Edwards	Councillor Keith Chopping	To be scheduled	Financial report expected post april 13
OSMC/13/149	Closure of Magistrates Court	To review the business dealt with in the Court combined with the restrictions imposed on the type of work it can deal with.	Special meeting		Nov-13	Nov-13			Scheduled	Court Clerk unable to attend meeting until dec 13. Special meeting will take place 13 November
OSMC/09/02	Performance Report for Level One Indicators	To monitor quarterly the performance levels across the Council and to consider, where appropriate, any remedial action. Quarterly Item	In meeting		Sep-13	Dec-13	Jason Teal – 2102 Policy & Communication	Councillor Roger Croft	In progress	Quarterly item.
OSMC/09/57	Revenue and capital budget reports	To receive the latest period revenue and capital budget reports	In meeting	Quarterly item.	Sep-13	Dec-13	Andy Walker – 2433 Finance	Councillor Alan Law	In progress	May lead to areas for in depth review. due following sep Exec meeting
OSMC/11/111	Risk Register	To scrutinise individual items on the Risk Register on an annual basis. Annual recurrence	In meeting	Annual item for November	Dec-13	Dec-13	Ian Priestley	Councillor Roger Croft	Scheduled	
OSMC/11/119	Continuing Healthcare (CHC)	To assess the effect of the CHC operations policy and procedures in practise	In meeting		Dec-13	Dec-13	Jan Evans – 2736 Adult Social Care	Councillor Graham Jones	Scheduled	Monitoring of the CHC independent review action plan. Update against actions requested after 6 months.
OSMC/11/113	Asset Disposal	To conduct a review of the Council's Asset Disposal and Community Right to BID guidance	In meeting		Sep-13	Dec-13	Andy Walker	Councillor Alan Law	In progress	Commission updated on 2/9/13. Requested that they review the amended guidance post Greenham Control Tower - Commission will receive a written update at the December meeting
OSMC/12/144	Shaw House	To understand the utilisation and income generated	Task Group (Cllrs Franks, Brooks, Beck & Ellison)		Jun-13	Dec-13	Steve Broughton - 2837 Head of Culture & Environmental Protection	Councillor Hilary Cole	In Progress	Final discussion to follow visit to Shaw House on 1/8/13 Task Group to conclude work undertaken to date.
OSMC/12/143	Adult Social Care Eligibility Criteria	To conduct a review of the Council's Fair Access to Care Services policy	Task Group (Cllrs Webb & Mason)		Dec-12	Dec-13	Jan Evans–2736 Adult Social Care	Councillor Joe Mooney	In Progress	Terms of Reference for the review agreed - postponed until december
OSMC/11/110	Energy Saving	To review the Council's policies and procedures for Energy Saving.	In meeting		Apr-14	Apr-14	Adrian Slaughter	Councillor Dominic Boeck	Scheduled	Completed in April 2012. Review to be undertaken in April 2014.

Reference	Subject	Purpose	Format	Methodology	Start Date	End Date	Lead Officer / Service Area	Portfolio Holder	Status	Comments
OSMC/12/135	Annual target setting	To examine the annual targets being set for 2013/14.	Task Group (Cllrs Webb, Webster & Vickers)	Task group working directly with PM officers	May-14	May-14	Jason Teal – 2102 Strategic Support	Councillor Roger Croft	In Progress	Annual review
OSMC/11/129	Housing Allocations policy	To conduct a review of the Council's Housing Allocation Policy	In meeting		Sep-14	Sep-14	Mel Brain - 2403 Social Care Commissioning and Housing	Councillor Roger Croft	To be scheduled	Commission updated on 2/7/13: Opportunity to comment on the final draft at 2/9 meeting. Opportunity to review the policy 12 months after implementation.
OSMC/12/149	Newbury town centre parking	To ensure that the needs of Newbury residents, businesses and visitors are appropriately balanced.	Task Group		Early 2014	Mid 2014	Mark Edwards–2208 Highways and Transport	Councillor Pamela Bale	To be scheduled	Suggested by Councillor Tony Vickers and added to the work programme at the meeting of 2 July. To be discussed following completion of the BID/WBC car parking review
OSMC/13/147	Welfare Reform	To understand the preparations for national Welfare Reform and consider any issues arising.	In meeting		Mar-14		Sean Anderson - 2149 Head of Customer Services	Councillor Alan Law	Scheduled	- Item incorporated at OSMC meeting of 16/04/13 - Schedule for early 2014
OSMC/13/148	GP data provision for school placement modelling	To review whether GP data is being provided to the Council for the purposes of forecasting school placement needs.	In meeting						To be scheduled	
OSMC/12/122	Home Care	To understand and critically appraise the processes in place for the provision of Home Care.	Task Group				Jan Evans–2736 Adult Social Care	Councillor Joe Mooney	To be scheduled	Established within the ASC Efficiency programme with a review of inhouse service and a new procurement mechanism for external domiciliary care - to be reviewed in Oct 2013 Task Group to be established following completion of Adult Social Care Eligibility Criteria TG.

Suggest a topic for scrutiny

About you – contact details	
Title	Cllr
Firstname*	David
Surname*	Allen
House No./Name*	66
Address (Line 2)	Greenham Road
Address (Line 3)	
Address (Town/City)	Newbury
Postcode*	RG14 7HX
Email Address	dallen@westberks.gov.uk
Telephone Area Code/Number*	07807 785556

* These details must be filled-in.

Your suggested topic(s)	
Your suggested topic for scrutiny:	
Home to school transport	
Your reasons for requesting that this topic be considered: <i>(Please include your reasons for suggesting the topic and include details of any evidence you may have)</i>	
See attached notes for further details (page 3 of this document)	
Topics suggested for scrutiny need to meet one of the following criteria. Please click the appropriate box(es):	
(1) The issue is an area of key public concern (e.g. as identified through Members surgeries, constituents' concerns, the Annual Satisfaction Survey, raised in the local media, etc).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(2) There is evidence of poor performance within the activity (i.e. through performance indicator data, experience of Members, internal or external auditor findings, etc).	<input type="checkbox"/>
(3) It is a budgetary area in need of examination to ensure value for money is being obtained.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(4) There has been a pattern of budgetary overspends within the area.	<input type="checkbox"/>
(5) It is a corporate priority for the Council as published within the Council Strategy.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(6) It has an external focus (e.g. scrutiny of the Council's partners, government agencies, utility providers, private sector companies, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>
(7) It is a Central Government priority area.	<input type="checkbox"/>
(8) It is an area of new Government legislation that has significant implications for the Council or its partners.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The outcomes you hope scrutiny of this topic will achieve:
Transparency of costs of home-to-school transport; Implications of Council's policy regarding Post 16+ transport to school Understanding of numbers of children affected by changes in the Discretionary Fare Payer scheme Resilience and practicalities of proposed alternative schemes, specifically Safer Walking Routes and cycle training
If you have already raised this issue with a Member or Officer of West Berkshire Council, please provide details here:
Meeting with Caroline Corcoran, Services Manager on 18 June 2013

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form. Whilst we cannot guarantee that your suggestion for scrutiny topics will always result in a scrutiny project, every suggestion or comment will be carefully considered.

If you wish to post your form, please send to:

Elaine Walker,
 Strategic Support
 West Berkshire Council
 Market Street
 Newbury RG14 5LD

or email to: ewalker@westberks.gov.uk

Home to School transport Notes for attached Scrutiny request 20 June 2013

I have some queries and concerns regarding the changes to the Home to School Transport policy and the Fare Payer scheme. These changes have generated interest and questions from the public, especially those parents affected by the changes due to be implemented from September 2013.

Following a meeting held on 18 June 2013 between Cllr Keith Woodhams, Cllr Irene Neil and Caroline Corcoran and myself I have gained a better understanding of the need for change and the resulting financial implications. From the meeting I noted:

- Every Fare Payer parent/carer was written to, detailing the changes
- WBC subsidises Fare Payer passengers by between £100 and £500 **per pupil**, per year
- Walking/cycling is healthier and a cheaper option
- A Catchment Area review is to be undertaken
- A Safer Route to School review is underway (although I understand it will take up to 3 years to complete)
- The increases in Fare Payer rates make them comparable to public transport costs
- The Fare Payer Scheme is discretionary

However, I still have some issues with the implementation and concerns with the effects that the changes may bring about. For instance the changes may:

- **Increase the number of private car journeys**
- **Increase cost to some parents for coach transport**
- **Some parents will find there is no public transport alternative to use**
- **Lack of consultation (schools were asked to inform parents of the changes, because it 'was cheaper for the Council to do it that way')**
- **Potential danger of children walking to school along busy roads**
- **Post 16+ pupils will not get funding for school transport. They will need to pay for transport or apply to the school's Hardship Fund if available. This is despite the recent changes to Government policy so that young people from this September have to remain in full time education, training or employment until age 18 (from 2015).**

I have completed the Scrutiny form highlighting the following areas:

1 Key public concern. I have received email complaints and there has been newspaper reports regarding the impact of the Fare Payer scheme changes.

3 Budgetary. The figures quoted in my meeting with Caroline Corcoran for coach hire seem very high. A scrutiny of the negotiated rates would be useful.

5. Corporate priority. Improving Education in West Berkshire is a vital priority.

8. New area of Government legislation. Post 16+ students having to remain in education, training or employment.

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Agenda Item 10.

Title of Report:	Primary Healthcare in West Berkshire and the quality handover from the Primary Care Trust
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Meeting:	29 October 2013

Purpose of Report: To update the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission on primary healthcare in West Berkshire following its handover from the Primary Care Trust

Recommended Action: To receive and provide comment on the Newbury and District Clinical Commissioning Group's update

Background documentation Berkshire quality handover document, available at <http://decisionmaking.westberks.gov.uk/documents/s23746/Appendix%20A%20-%20Draft%20Berkshire%20Cluster%20PCT%20handover.pdf>

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Brian Bedwell
E-mail Address:	bbedwell@westberks.gov.uk

Contact Officer Details	
Name:	David Lowe
Job Title:	Scrutiny and Partnerships Manager
Tel. No.:	01635 519817
E-mail Address:	dlowe@westberks.gov.uk

Executive Report

1. Background

- 1.1 On 1 April 2013 Clinical Commissioning Group (CCGs) took over responsibility for primary healthcare from Primary Care Trusts (PCTs).
- 1.2 This change was significant and involved considerable organisational upheaval in the NHS.

2. Previous scrutiny involvement

- 2.1 At its meeting of 19 March 2013 the Health Scrutiny Panel (HSP) received items on the quality handover from the PCT and on the provision of primary healthcare in West Berkshire. It was agreed that updates on both items would be received after 6 months of operation of the revised arrangements.
- 2.2 At its meeting of 21 May 2013 the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission agreed that the updates requested by the HSP should be incorporated into its own work programme and considered at a future meeting.

3. Minutes of the 19 March 2013 – quality handover

- 3.1 The minutes record that:

Sara Whitaker introduced the Primary Healthcare Trust handover document to Panel Members. Members were advised that the document provided an overview of healthcare services in Berkshire and set out for successor organisations the key risks, challenges, achievements and ambitions for quality and patient safety in Berkshire, in preparation for handover from the Berkshire PCT on the 31 March 2013.

The version 4 draft document was due for sign off on the 19 March 2013. Sara Whitaker advised Members of the Panel that the document was nationally mandated in terms of its structure although the content could vary between PCTs.

Sara Whitaker summarised the key elements and advised that the document would be accompanied by an evolving quality agenda to focus key tasks. Councillor Hunneman suggested that the handover document provided an opportunity for performance review following the introduction of the new health structure. It was noted that there was no statutory requirement to provide an updated version of the handover document; however, it could be used as a basis for comparison.

Members discussed monitoring the effectiveness of the Quality Handover. It was noted that the document outlined areas of high risk of which the PCT detailed the action taken to address the issue and planned action for the CCG. It was suggested that the CCG reported back to the Health Scrutiny Panel in 6-9 months to provide an update regarding high risk items.

Philip McNamara explained that the Berkshire CCG's were created to provide clinical leadership. Each team was assigned specific areas of leadership and it was expected that the CCG would provide quality reports on a regular basis.

It was noted that the PCT handover document failed to mention smaller areas of the PCT, as such it was questioned how the CCG's would manage the transition with limited information. Sara Whitaker advised that some smaller areas had not been mentioned because there were no concerns to highlight. Members heard that the PCT and CCGs conducted face to face handovers to reinforce a seamless transition.

Resolved that

CCG to report back to the Health Scrutiny Panel in 6-9 months to provide an update regarding high risk items.

4. Minutes of the 19 March 2013 – primary healthcare

4.1 The minutes record that:

Philip McNamara explained that the Newbury and District CCG (N&DCCG) would cover a small area in comparison to other CCGs in Berkshire, however, the area was significant and diverse.

Members were advised that the CCGs intended to deliver:

- *The right care for patients, at the right time and provided in the right place*
- *Health and social care services that work more closely together*
- *Care closer to home for patients, recognising the issues of access and travelling distances for some of our communities*
- *Further development of patient centred health services in our Community Hospital in Thatcham*

The CCG would provide a degree of scrutiny to Healthcare, delivering Innovative ways of providing care, through better use of technology, a wider skills-base and team support for individual members of staff, or development of shared care-planning with patients. It would be the CCGs intention to commission accessible, efficient patient care from a wide range of providers offering value for money care.

Philip McNamara explained that the Commissioning Plan existed in draft and was due for sign off imminently. The plan detailed key priorities and illustrated the strategic context of the plan beside the tactical plans created by the N&DCCG.

CCGs had been extensively monitored by the NHS Commissioning Board Area Team for 12 months prior to confirming their status. It was expected that the NHS CB would confirm the status of the N&DCCG on 27 March 2013. Philip McNamara explained that the N&DCCG was categorized a wave 1 CCG, therefore considered sufficiently prepared for handover on the 1 April 2013, Therefore, Philip McNamara was not concerned about the competency of the N&DCCG.

Jan Evans reminded the Panel that CCGs in North and West Reading were responsible for West Berkshire Patients and therefore suggested the neighbouring CCG formed apart of the same review. Members agreed that West Berkshire CCGs inclusion would be essential.

Panel Members suggested the N&DCCG provided a structure layout to illustrate the changes within the Healthcare Service and incorporate the CCGs applicable to areas within West Berkshire. It was noted that the public could access information regarding the N&DCCG via the website as of the 1 April 2013. Jan Evans suggested that residents would not experience a change in service accessibility and the detail regarding internally restructure may be irrelevant to some.

Jan Evans asked whether the CCGs developed their own benchmarks for performance management and whether these would be available to the public. Philip McNamara explained that the CCG would be monitored and challenged by Health Watch. It was noted that the NHS CB AT highlighted measures to the CCGs for peer review on a quarterly and annual basis.

Resolved that:

N&DCCG to report the progress of the actions outlined within the Commissioning Plan.

5. Update

- 5.1 Dr Abid Irfan, the Clinical Chair of the Newbury and District Clinical Commissioning Group, will update the Commission on the items previously considered by the HSP.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission receives and provides comment on the Newbury and District Clinical Commissioning Group's update.

Appendices

There are no appendices to this report.

Agenda Item 11.

Title of Report:	Medium Term Financial Strategy
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Meeting:	29 October 2013

Purpose of Report: To update the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission on the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy

Recommended Action: To comment on the Medium Term Financial Strategy

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Brian Bedwell
E-mail Address:	bbedwell@westberks.gov.uk

Contact Officer Details	
Name:	Melanie Ellis
Job Title:	Chief Accountant
Tel. No.:	01635 519142
E-mail Address:	mellis@westberks.gov.uk

Executive Report

1. Background

- 1.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is produced annually and seeks to provide an overview of the Council's financial position into the medium term. The MTFS is based upon a number of assumptions about future income streams and forecast expenditure levels for the Council.

2. Previous scrutiny involvement

- 2.1 The production of the MTFS has historically been scrutinised by the Resource Management Working Group (RMWG). It was agreed at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission meeting of 21 May 2013 that the matters previously considered by the RMWG would transfer to the Commission.

3. Consideration of the Strategy

- 3.1 The Head of Finance and the Chief Accountant will provide the Commission with a presentation on the Spending Review which took place in June 2013 and which has affected a number of the Council's income streams.
- 3.2 The Council's existing MTFS is attached in appendix A.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission provides comment on the Strategy and accompanying presentation.

Appendices

Appendix A Medium Term Financial Strategy 2013 – 2016

Medium Term Financial Strategy: 2013-16

1. Introduction

The organisation has a record of strong financial management. Historically budgets have been delivered without significant over or underspends and the Council operates with low level of reserves. The Council's ability to manage within significant financial change is vital to its continuing success in delivering the Council Strategy.

In recent years the Council has delivered historically low levels of Council Tax changes year on year, including a Council Tax freeze in 2011-12 and in 2012-13. Also, since 2010 there has been unprecedented reductions in the Council's grant from Central Government. The Council has responded to these challenges by reducing costs across its different services whilst ensuring that services remain focussed on the priorities contained within the Council Strategy (2012-16).

As will be outlined in Chapter 2, the council needs to identify an expenditure reduction programme that will save £17m over the course of the medium term financial strategy in order to match predicted income levels. This gap will be closed through a mix of income generation, expenditure reductions, efficiency savings and a modest rise in council tax of 2% in 2013/2014.

A number of challenges lie ahead for the Council. The Government's strong focus on deficit reduction will mean continued cuts to Government grants to the Council until 2018. The Government has also put in place significant reforms to Council finances by allowing Councils to retain some of the growth in local Business Rates. Ensuring that businesses thrive and grow within West Berkshire will therefore be an increasing priority for the Council; not just to ensure that the district retains its strong base as a place to do business, but also to enable the Council to retain sufficient monies so as to deliver its services in line with the Council Strategy. Another Government reform has been to let Councils set up their own Council Tax Support scheme, but with a 10% reduction in funding from Central Government, to encourage people into work. Both of these reforms

will require close monitoring to ascertain how they will impact on the Council's finances from 2013.

During this period the demand for many Council services will continue to increase. Adult Social Care (ASC) has seen a significant increase in demand in recent years. The ASC efficiency programme is making strong inroads into delivering the necessary year on year savings whilst protecting access and quality of service. Demand in other areas such as Childrens' services - where additional cost pressures are occurring due to extra child placements – are also increasing our spend.

Government reforms to benefits payments will also create shifts in demand for Council services, especially for the Housing Services. In Education, Government reforms create significant instability over the Council's future role in influencing the education of the district's children, with funding flows moving away from 'maintained' schools. At the same time, the Council's universal services (such as Waste management, highways, planning and cultural services) must respond to an increasing population, reduced Government funding and built-in contractual cost increases.

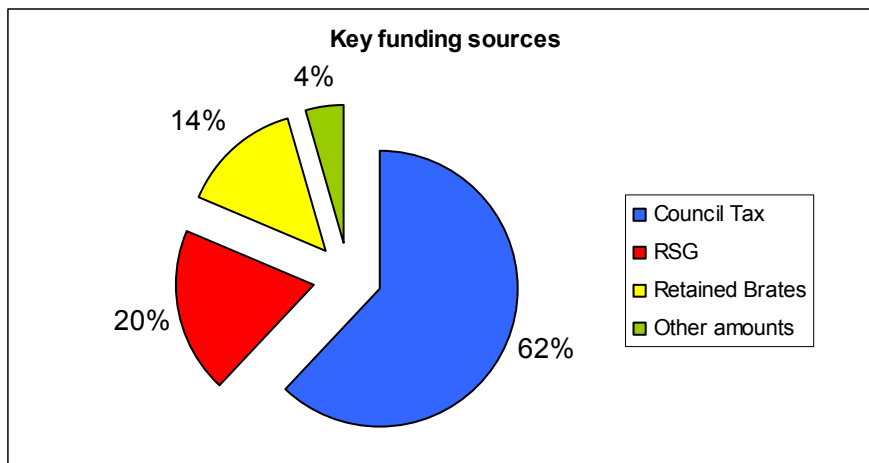
The Council has responded positively to all these challenges and will continue to do so. This document sets out in further detail the financial impact on the Council, what the Government's financial reforms mean and how the Council will respond within the anticipated financial resources over the next three years.

2. The financial challenge

The Council has seen significant reductions to its Government Grants over the past three years, and expects to see further reductions in the coming years. At the same time, the Council has suppressed Council Tax levels and the working assumptions is to maintain low levels of Council Tax rises in the future.

As the graph below highlights, from 2013-14 the Council's primary financing sources are from three main areas:

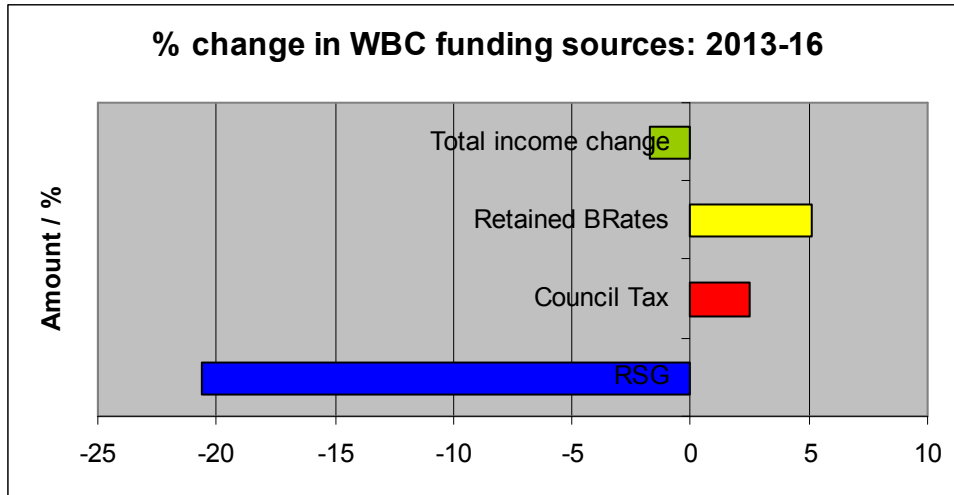
Graph 1.1: Funding sources



This highlights that nearly two thirds of the Council's funding comes directly from the local population in the form of Council Tax; therefore decisions around its level, and the increase in properties on which the Council can charge Council Tax (the Council Taxbase) is extremely important for West Berkshire Council.

The changes of the three main areas of WBC's funding is highlighted below:

Graph 1.2: Percentage changes to WBC funding: 2013-16



The impact of the graph above is significant. If the Council is to perform exactly the same functions year on year with no additional demands (for example in Adult or Children’s Social Care) then the Council’s costs rise by just over 2% year on year. This is due to a combination of nationally driven pay awards and cost increases on the contracts the Council has with external service providers.

The top bar shows that expected income is reducing, primarily due to reductions in RSG. Therefore, just to ‘stand still’ the Council must find over 6% of savings (circa £7m) over this period before adjusting for any reduction in funding levels and additional cost pressure on the Council (modelled at circa £10m) hence the savings requirements of circa £17m over the next three years.

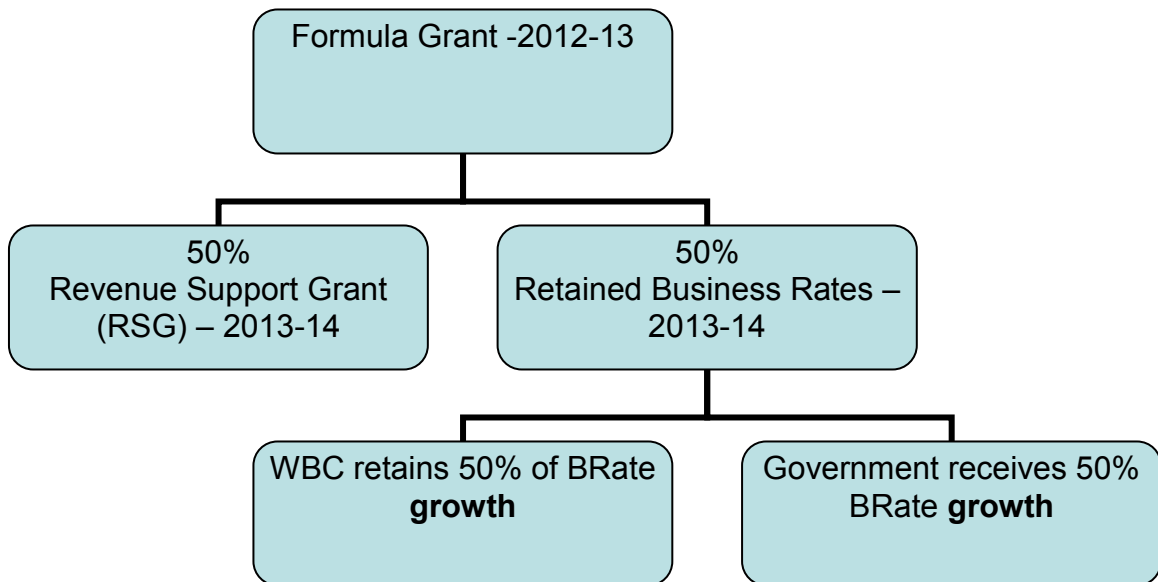
The net change (taking into account base movements, inflation, additional cost pressures, investments and savings) is a reduction of circa £6m over the course of the MTFS.

3. Government's reforms to Local Government finance

From 2013/14, the Government are implementing fundamental reforms to Local Government finances. The main change is the ability for Councils to retain some of the Business Rates they collect.

The current scheme is based on the Council collecting Business Rates from businesses in West Berkshire (about £80m) and then returning these to Government. Following a complex financial formula, the Council receives about £40m back from Government.

The new scheme will split the above in half. 50% of the Government's financing of Councils will remain as above. The other 50% will allow the Council to retain some business rates. Government works out the past two years average business rates and if the Business Rates in 2013-14 are above this average¹ the Council retains this amount, subject to a levy imposed by Government. For West Berkshire Council this will mean a levy of 50p in the pound on Business Rate growth; i.e. WBC keeps 50p and 50p is returned to the Government².



¹ The Council does not benefit from any inflation uplift

² If Brates fall then WBC is liable for the first £3m+ of loss until Government provide a 'safety net' payment

The Government is also making changes to capital borrowing. At present, the Council borrows money from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB), a subsidiary of HM Treasury. The rates obtained are favourable compared to private sector financing rates. From November 2012, Government allowed Councils to borrow at 20 base points lower from PWLB if they provide additional information on future capital spending programme, which the Council has done. In 2013-14, Government are likely to introduce a 'scrutiny' rate which is potentially lower still if Councils borrow for schemes that the Government believes are in line with national objectives and offer value for money. Details on this scheme are yet to be announced, though the Chancellor's Autumn Statement seems to imply that this borrowing could be used to support economic development via Local Economic Partnerships. Note: The Council is a member of the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP

4. Delivering the Council Strategy

To ensure that the MTFFS represents the themes expressed in the Council Strategy (2012-16), the Council set Capped Expenditure Levels (CELs) to directorates over the period 2013-16. These indicative CELs set out the net change to directorate budgets over the three years based on assumptions such as expected cost pressures, major contracts and any existing savings plans and priorities in the Council Strategy .

The Council Strategy focuses on four key priority areas.

- Caring for and Protecting the vulnerable
- Promoting a vibrant district. With special emphasis on Infrastructure (Highways & Rural Broadband)
- Improving Education
- Protecting the Environment

These are underpinned by a set of principles outlining how we are approaching and responding to changes in the policy, financial and legislative landscape and how we intend to shape future service delivery. This provides the framework around which our ambitions and aspirations will be achieved - articulated through a Council Delivery plan: setting out the key activities we are undertaking over the next few years; the outcomes and targets we are seeking to attain, whilst ensuring that we continue to live within our means.

Our overarching vision:

Keeping West Berkshire a great place in which to live, learn, work and do business



The purpose of the Council:

1. Helping you to help yourself
2. Helping you when you cannot help yourself
3. Helping you to help one another
4. Promoting and acting in the interests of the communities, people and businesses of the district.

Our priorities in delivering public services:

- Caring for and protecting the vulnerable
- Promoting a vibrant district
 - Improving education
- Protecting the environment

The principles we work to:

- Putting people first
- Living within our means
- Empowering people and communities
- Transforming our services to remain affordable and effective
- Doing what's important well

. These strategic objectives and principles form the basis for our future service delivery and financial planning.

Establishing a medium term strategic and financial planning cycle

Against the background of financial contraction and uncertainty, it is important to provide a level of assuredness and stability as far as possible in our strategic and financial planning. As such, we have refined a broad, medium term strategic and financial planning cycle within the authority.

The starting point for this are the objectives and supporting performance targets we have set out in the Council Strategy and this delivery plan over the 4 years 2012 -16. Each of the Council's service units produces a service delivery plan to support the key strategic documents which in turn is used to shape the key measures and activities which track progress through the Council's performance management framework. Each strategic objective is embedded within individual service delivery plans and a set of key outcomes / output measures and four year targets (where appropriate) have been developed against each of them.

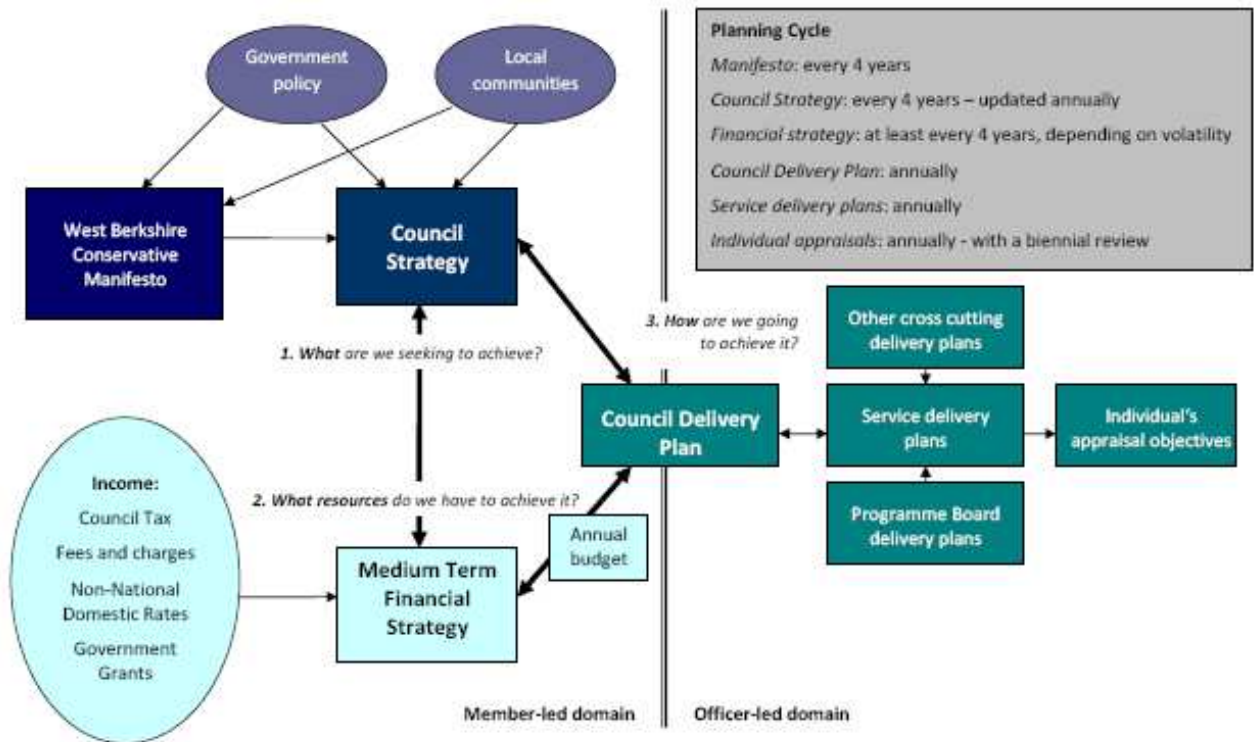
The MTFs then prioritises the allocation of our resources to those determined as most critical in supporting the strategic objectives within the strategy and our statutory responsibilities over the same period. This is reflected in the Capped Expenditure Levels (CELs) agreed for each directorate over the period 2013-16.

These indicative CELs set out the net change to directorate budgets over the three years based on where the priorities in the Council Strategy lie, along with a number of assumptions based on expected cost pressures, major contract and any existing savings plans.

This ensures that the MTFs reflects the priorities expressed through the Council Strategy and that through the service delivery plans, managers are able to ensure a clear delivery plan against key objectives over the coming years and view of available resources.

The diagram below highlights the planning framework and the linkages that exist between the various elements. At the centre of this framework lies the Council Delivery Plan, the primary purpose of which is to provide an effective link between the Council Strategy and the Medium Term Financial Strategy and individual service delivery plans.

Fig 1 - West Berkshire Council strategic planning framework



Capped Expenditure Levels

Over the period 2013-16, Adult Social Care is expected to make a net reduction in its budget in line with the ASC Efficiency Programme which commenced in 2012. The Environment directorate sees a relatively flat CEL: this is due to there being more contractual cost pressures than other directorates (due to the waste, highways and public transport contracts) and its prominence in the Council Strategy through *Promoting a Vibrant District* (including infrastructure) and *Protecting the Environment*.

Due to the Autumn Statement and Government's reforms to finance (see later chapters) the CELs will need to be revised over the course of this MTFS to ensure an ongoing balanced budget for the Council.

Asset and Capital Strategies

It is also important that the Council's asset and capital strategies follow the Council Strategy as the guiding document for the Authority's activities. To ensure that the Council Strategy is imbued across all capital-related activities, the Asset Management Strategy (part of the Capital Strategy that accompanies this document) has been more closely aligned to the Council Strategy. This is to ensure that over the life of this MTFS the Council's tangible assets reflect the services currently provided, these assets are efficient as possible, and assets that do not align with the Council Strategy are disposed of. Within the Capital Strategy itself, funding decisions over the lifespan of the document are considered in light of the Council Strategy and fit to achieve these objectives. Key spend areas within the strategy encompass *Promoting a Vibrant District* and *Improving Education*.

Outcome Based Reviews

In tandem with our approach to maximising efficiency and income and annual financial planning cycle, a programme of Outcome-Based Reviews will look at the delivery services from an outcome perspective. Different to more traditional evaluative and budgeting exercises, this approach uses the intended outcome(s) - or impact(s) - as the starting point, and then looking to see how most effectively and efficiently that outcome(s) can be delivered.

Starting from the 'end point' of the intended impact allows us to take a fresh look – without reliance on how historically services have been provided – at what resources and activities are needed in order to achieve a desirable outcome.

Outcome Based Reviews are focused on the effectiveness of delivering the intended outcome(s). In effect this asks the questions, 'what is the intended goal(s) and is there a more effective way of realising these? The point is to say, irrespective of how an outcome was achieved in the past, if we were to start from scratch, how would we deliver a service to achieve the outcome most effectively and what resource is needed to support this?

We recognise that not all functions will be suited to an outcome based review process. A number of pilots are being trialled over

the course of 2012/13 with a fuller programme developed for the next few years.

5. The financial model

The Medium Term Financial Plan is summarised below, with further explanation behind each items within the model. In summary, income remains constrained within this model over the next three years, and to compensate for this the CELs will see larger than anticipated net reductions over the MTFS.

Line ref	MTFS	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
		<i>£m</i>	<i>£m</i>	<i>£m</i>
	<i>Council Tax increase (%)</i>	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%
1	Council Tax income	-75.66	-76.80	-77.57
2	Revenue Support Grant	-23.97	-19.89	-16.18
3	Retained Business Rates	-17.13	-17.82	-17.97
4	Education Support Grant (ESG)	-2.67	-2.54	-2.54
5	NHS monies to support Social Care	-1.79	-1.83	-1.83
6	New Homes Bonus funding	-1.50	-2.15	-2.72
7	Collection Fund deficit / surplus (-)	0.77		
8	Funds available	-121.94	-121.02	-118.80
9	Budget build growth (pay and non-pay)	2.09	1.71	1.74
10	Contractual inflation	0.41	0.58	0.60
11	Unavoidable pressures	1.68	1.00	0.97
12a	Possible Savings identified	-5.70	-3.34	-3.60
12b	<i>Further savings required</i>		-2.08	-2.45
13	Other adjustments	-0.41	0.25	0.25
14	Directorate budget requirement	115.57	113.52	110.78
15	Levies & capital financing costs	6.78	7.25	7.76
16	Budget requirement	121.94	121.02	118.80

1) Council Tax

Council Tax change assumption shown; current taxbase growth assumptions are 0.25%, then 0.5% and 1% to reflect new developments from 2014-15.

2) Revenue Support Grant (RSG)

This figure is based on outcome of the Local Government Finance Settlement (December 2012). Figures from 2015-16 and beyond are unknown at present, but assumptions have been put in place for reductions over 15%. A new spending review is being

undertaken in the first half of 2013 by the Government; this could have an impact on the 2014-15 figures.

3) Retained Business Rates

This is the anticipated element of retained Business Rate growth retained. This is based on growth assumptions of 0.25% per annum. In the recent years the Business Rate take (once RPI inflation has been excluded) fluctuates up and down by up to 10%. Nationally the figure has risen by approximately 0.6% p.a. Analysis of the first year of how this scheme functions will help inform future predictions of this figure. Also important is the performance of the national and local economy in maintaining and growing the number (and size) of businesses in the local area.

4) Education Services Grant (ESG)

This figure represents a Government Grant in respect of Local Education Authority (LEA) support service functions to schools. This was previously included within the 'formula grant' but from 2013-14 is separated. The assumption in the MTFs is that there is a 5% reduction in children in maintained schools in 2014-15 with no further schools converting to Academy status beyond then. For every pupil that is in an Academy school, the financial loss via this grant will be circa £116 per pupil.

5) New Homes Bonus

This is monies received from central Government (equivalent to the Council Tax received on a band D property) for every net new additional property in the district. The Government created this scheme to incentivise planning authorities to help promote new properties being built.

6) NHS monies to support Social Care

Non ring-fenced funding from the NHS to support Social Care services that link with the health service

7) Collection Fund

This is the surplus or deficit from the previous year's Collection Fund. The Collection Fund is a ring-fenced account for Council Tax collected, and the variation compared to the expected Council Tax collected is pass-ported into the next financial year.

8) Funds Available

Summary of the total non-ringfenced funds available for setting the Council's budget

9) Base Budget

Adjustments to the Council's core costs; primarily non-pay inflation up to 1.5% on contracts, pay inflation and incremental pay awards

10) Contractual Inflation

The amounts over 1.5% for Council inflation linked contracts

11) Additional cost pressures

Any additional investments required for new costs; for example due to additional demand in social care

12) Savings

The totals of savings requirements to ensure a balanced budget

13) Other Adjustments

Summary value of adjustments due to Government funding changes (in 2013-14 this includes de-ringfencing a grant and funding parish Councils for changes due to Government's reform of Council Tax Support) or transfers from or to reserves.

14) Directorate budget requirement

Summarises the value of the changes above on Council's directorate budget

15) Levies and capital financing costs

Budget for payments to the Environment Agency, Magistrates courts, interest paid and received on Treasury Management (Investment) activity and, primarily, the revenue costs of paying for long term capital borrowing.

16) Budget requirement

Total budget required

2013/14	£121.94m
2014/15	£121.02m
2015/16	£118.80m

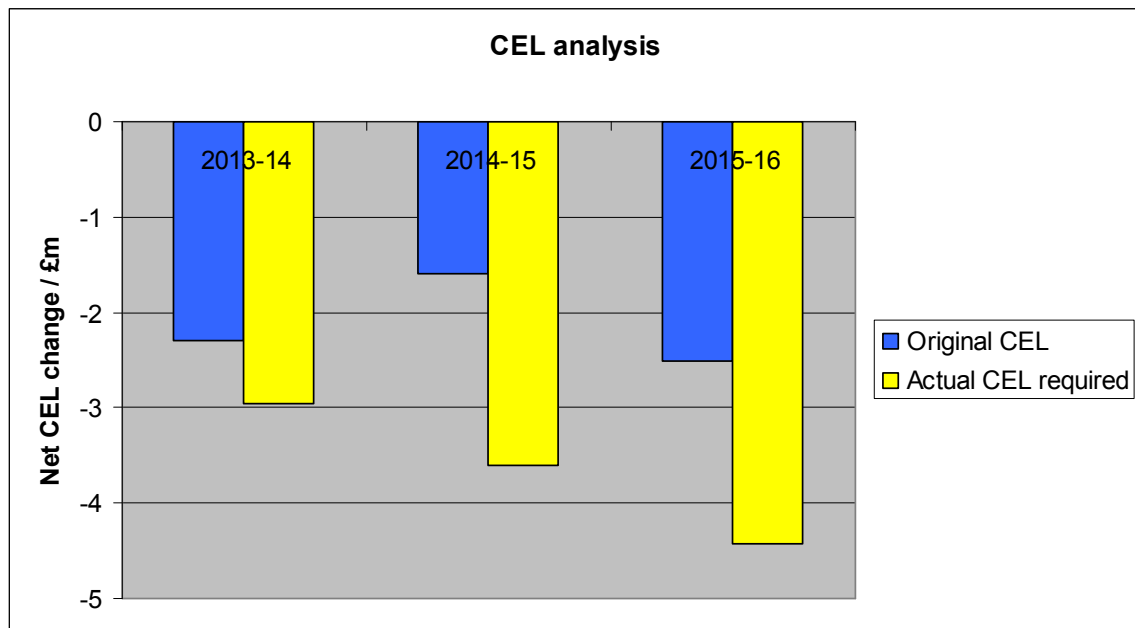
Note: the 2012/13 requirement was £123.34m

6. Rising to the challenge

The previous chapters have explained the overall financial situation which the Council faces has deteriorated due to the Autumn Statement and some of the reforms to Local Government finance. The 2014 and beyond position could deteriorate further with the new Spending Review planned by Government that is due to be released in the first half of 2013.

1. The underlying approach to financial management over the medium term remains similar to the previous year; i.e. Council Strategy led, CELs supporting the provision of the Council Strategy and then Business Planning beneath this. The scale of the reductions to Government funding and the challenge that this presents means a further strategic policy review is required.

Below is a graph summarised the existing CELs and the additional savings required:



As per previous years the Council will focus on making efficiency savings first to ensure the organisation is as effective as possible. Given the scale of the CEL reductions, and the level of savings already identified, further reductions beyond efficiency will be required. The Council will therefore need to look more at income generation, which it has been successful in doing in the past, though opportunities to raise fees significantly remain constrained. This leaves the Council to pursue further options to transform services and also to disinvest in services. This direction, and the policy review framework required to adjust CELs and influence this process, will be developed during early 2013 to guide directorates and services over the medium term.

7. Beyond the medium term

The Government's strategy to reduce the national financial deficit is likely to continue through to 2018 at the very earliest. Local Government has been one of the areas of the public sector that has seen the highest reductions in Government spend, and this is likely to continue to be the case.

In light of the ongoing funding reductions and constraint with any new Council Tax rises, the Council will be considering its core models of serviced delivery over the coming months in light of the refreshed Council Strategy and local priorities.

The Council also needs to ensure that it has a robust financial structure on which to base its long term decisions. Continued capital investment (albeit at lower levels than in recent years) continues to ensure that the Council Balance Sheet and core assets are maintained and protected. The Council will also review its asset base to ensure that it is in line with the direction articulated within the Council Strategy.

There also needs to be sufficient levels of reserves for the Council to deliver services and take appropriate risks in amending service delivery models without impacting on the financial viability of the organisation. The main reserves that the Council holds in light of the MTFs are the 'General Reserves' of just over £6m (or just over 5% of net revenue expenditure³) and the Medium Term Financial Volatility Reserve (MTFVR) of £1.5m.

³ This is the level traditionally recommended, though s151 officers must set out the final % used

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Agenda Item 12.

Title of Report:	Review of the costs of the Blue Badge Improvement Scheme after the first year of operation
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Meeting:	29 October 2013

Purpose of Report:

To update members of the OSMC on the outcome of the review of the costs of the Blue Badge Improvement Scheme for the first full financial year of the new scheme.

Recommended Action:

That the report be noted.

Key background documentation:

Report to Council on 6 December 2011 "New Blue Badge Improvement Service" and report to Resource Management Working Group on 12 March 2013 "The Impact of the Blue Badge Improvement Service".

Portfolio Member Details	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Pamela Bale - Tel (0118) 9842980
E-mail Address:	pbale@westberks.gov.uk
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	4 October 2013

Contact Officer Details	
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Executive Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Blue Badge scheme enables disabled persons to park on those areas of yellow lines where a loading ban is not in force. In West Berkshire Blue Badge holders may also park free of charge and without time limit in almost all of the Council's pay to park car parks.
- 1.2 Originally implemented in 1971 as an Orange Badge, the Blue Badge scheme had become increasingly subject to fraud as the cost of parking in the major urban areas increased and as a consequence the scheme was thoroughly reviewed by the government in 2010. The review culminated in the implementation of the Blue Badge Improvement Service (BBIS) on 1 January 2012.
- 1.3 The implementation of the BBIS placed additional duties and responsibilities on those local authorities who administer the Blue Badge scheme. This included, from 1 April 2012, the introduction of Independent Mobility Assessments. These are used where an application is deemed to be "border-line" between approval and rejection and the expertise of an Occupational Therapist is needed to determine such applications. Coinciding with the implementation of the BBIS was the introduction of a new style of Blue Badge incorporating many of the latest security printing techniques making the badges extremely difficult to copy. A contractor (Northgate) was appointed by the Department for Transport (DfT) to print and issue the Blue Badges and the contractor charges Councils £4.60 for every Blue Badge issued.
- 1.4 The BBIS allowed all local authorities who issue Blue Badges to review the application fee charged to applicants and under the BBIS proposals local authorities could charge up to a maximum fee of £10.00. The Blue Badge fee had stood at £2.00 since 1971 and the modest income generated contributed to the running costs of the scheme. However, with the contractor that makes and issues the Blue Badges charging £4.60 per badge; and the requirement to pay for an Occupational Therapist to conduct Independent Mobility Assessments, the Blue Badge application fee had to be reviewed.
- 1.5 On 6 December 2011 the Council agreed to set the Blue Badge application fee at £10.00 from 1 January 2012 and retain this fee for the duration of the five year sub-agreement between the Council and Northgate, but agreed to review the costs involved in the scheme after it had been in operation for a year. This report provides the results of the review. As the Independent Mobility Assessments were not introduced until 1 April 2012 the review was slightly delayed and covers the costs of the BBIS for the financial year from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013.

2. Factors Considered

(a) Administering the Blue Badge Improvement Service

- 2.1 The Blue Badge Team moved from Social Services to Highways and Transport in January 2011 and at the point of transfer it was comprised of two part-time officers who worked a combined total of 48¾ hours per week. Following the implementation of the BBIS and the increase in both the complexity of the Blue Badge application system and the attendant increase in the level of work involved in administering the

scheme, one of the officers had her hours of work increased by 4¾ hours each week, providing a resource of 53½ per week. This proved insufficient to fully cope with the increase in work load and to prevent an unacceptable delay in processing Blue Badge applications so a part-time Parking Officer working 18½ hours each week was relocated to provide assistance. This brought the resources available in the Blue Badge Team to 72 hours each week. One of the officers is now on Maternity Leave and a fixed term appointment has been made to provide cover, with the fixed term appointment ending on 31 January 2014. The officer providing this cover is working the same number of hours as the officer who is on maternity leave was. The cost of the officers administering the Blue Badge Improvement Scheme (BBIS) for the financial year 2013/14 is £47,000.

- 2.2 Each Blue Badge application must be recorded on the Council's RAISE system, which captures information relating to Social Care cases in West Berkshire. The details relating to a successful application for a Blue Badge are also entered on the Northgate system and the salient details are passed to them. Before the Blue Badge application is processed the Northgate system makes cross checks with information held on other government databases to ensure the veracity of the applicant's details. Attempts have been made to see if there can be any cross-communication between the RAISE and Northgate systems to remove the duplication of time and effort, but both systems have very robust security features that preclude such action.
- 2.3 The Council currently has some 6,000 Blue Badges issued, with each badge valid for three years. On average the Council issues about 1,800 Blue Badges per annum and the analysis of the Blue Badges issued in 2012/13 is shown at Appendix A. Once an application has been approved the Council sends the details to Northgate, who issues the Blue Badge to the successful applicant. The contract between the DfT and Northgate is for five years and Northgate charges local authorities £4.60 plus VAT for each Blue Badge issued, with the Council able to reclaim the VAT element.
- 2.4 The Council received a representation from the Tadley and District Citizen's Advice Bureau expressing the view that the blue badge application form is rather complicated. The form we use is the model form produced by the Department for Transport (DfT) but some local authorities have produced their own more user friendly versions. Consequently we are also intending to produce a simpler form to assist our customers and to demonstrate our willingness to listen to what they say.
- 2.5 The Council incurs administrative costs as every Blue Badge application, both first time applications and applications to renew a Blue Badge, must be carefully checked to ensure that applicant meets the qualifying criteria. The fee of £10.00 is only paid when an application is successful and some Blue Badge applications are unsuccessful. However each of these unsuccessful applications receives the same amount of time and effort and in some cases the decision not to issue a Blue Badge may only be taken after an Independent Mobility Assessment. The Independent Mobility Assessments for these unsuccessful applications are undertaken without any of the expenditure being recovered as the unsuccessful applicants have their fee returned.

(b) Independent Mobility Assessments

- 2.6 Every Blue Badge application is initially assessed using a desktop model and scoring matrix provided by the DfT. This assessment uses the information gleaned from the application and the information is used to determine a score for each facet of the eligibility criteria, which then determines if the application meets the required total score for a badge to be issued. Since the applicant is not seen in person at this stage, the desk-based assessment relies heavily on the applicant providing accurate and detailed replies to the questions in the application form. The questions are designed to enable the applicant to provide information about themselves; their disability; any medical conditions they experience; and their ability to walk. Where an applicant has a permanent and substantial disability, the Council's eligibility decision is based on whether they are unable to walk or have very considerable difficulty walking. The decision is not based on the presence or absence of any particular diagnosis or condition.
- 2.7 Whilst the desk-based assessments have a role as a filtering mechanism to identify applicants who are clearly eligible or clearly ineligible for a badge, they cannot be successfully used in all cases as the sole means of determining all applicants' eligibility for a badge. Where the desktop assessment results in the applicant being "eligible, but subject to further assessment" the Council refers the applicant for an Independent Mobility Assessment (IMA), where an Occupational Therapist determines if a Blue Badge should be issued based upon the information provided by the applicant. The applicant will be asked by the Occupational Therapist to clarify or confirm information, or to provide additional information wherever necessary.
- 2.8 At the inception of the BBIS the Blue Badge team initially sought an in-house resource for the Independent Mobility Assessment (IMA) service, but was advised that none was available. After unsuccessful approaches to both the company that provides the Occupational Health Service for the Council and to Berkshire NHS, an independent Occupational Therapist was eventually obtained. In the financial year from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 some 81 Blue Badge applicants were referred for an IMA. Of this total 30 applicants were approved for a Blue Badge and a £10.00 fee was paid to mitigate the costs of the administration and the IMA; 47 applicants were unsuccessful where no Blue Badge application fee was paid, but the administration costs and the costs of an IMA were still incurred; and 4 applicants failed to attend leaving the Council with the costs of administering the application to that point. The costs paid by the Council for the IMA service for 2012/13 was £5,934.52 and the details can be found at Appendix B.

(c) The Blue Badge Fee

- 2.9 As mentioned in 1.5 above the Council, at its meeting on 6 December 2011, set the Blue Badge fee at £10.00, to operate from 1 January 2012 upon the implementation of BBIS. In preparing this review of the BBIS the other two alternative fee options originally considered and rejected at the Council meeting have been re-considered now that the data is available for the full financial year 2012/13. There were 1,868 Blue Badges issued in 2012/13 and the calculations below are based on this figure. The Council pays Northgate a £4.60 fee per issued Blue Badge and in 2012/13 this amounted to £8,592.80. In addition there were 3 applications for which additional postage was payable to fast track delivery of the Blue Badge. Also a payment of £3,040.00 was paid for our subscription to the Assisted Interview software for the duration of the contact, which enables our Blue

Badge team to provide immediate help to applicants who find the application form difficult to understand. The total amount paid to Northgate in 2012/13 was £11,640.15 (Appendix A refers).

- 2.10 The first alternative option was to retain the old £2.00 fee that had operated since 1971. This would have generated Blue Badge application fee income of £3,736 and would have led to a budget deficit of £7,904.15 from the Northgate facet of the Blue Badge service alone. If the £5,934.52 cost of the Independent Mobility Assessment (IMA) service is added the total operational deficit of retaining the old £2.00 fee would therefore have been £13,838.67 in 2012/13. This is a budget pressure that cannot be justified.
- 2.11 The second alternative option was to set the Blue Badge fee at £6.60, which was the old Blue Badge fee of £2.00 plus the £4.60 fee now charged by Northgate. This would have generated Blue Badge application fee income of £12,328.80 and have led to a total operational budget deficit of £5,245.87 after meeting the costs of paying the Northgate and IMA service costs in 2012/13. This is also a budget pressure that cannot be justified.
- 2.12 The approved £10.00 fee that the Council charges for a Blue Badge generated a small surplus of £1,105.33 in 2012/13. None of the calculations in this section of the report take account of the costs of the Council's Blue Badge officers employed in administering the service. This is because they are part of the Parking teams revenue funded establishment. However section 2.1 of this report indicates that the cost of these officers for the current financial year 2013/14 is £47,000. It is clear therefore that if these costs are taken into account there will be a total operational deficit with the current Blue Badge fee of about £46,000 and there would be higher total operational deficits with the lower fee alternative options in the current financial year if the number of Blue Badges processed remains about the same.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 It will be seen from 2.8 to 2.11 above that any reduction in the Blue Badge fee from the current charge of £10.00 will result in an income reduction that cannot be justified when only taking the operational costs into consideration. If staff costs are taken into account the costs outstrip income by even more. With the current £10.00 fee a small surplus is generated but this also becomes a substantial deficit if staff costs are included. The £10.00 fee is charged only to successful applicants, but it has been shown within this report that equal amounts of resources are spent on processing unsuccessful Blue Badge applications and there is no income received to mitigate the expenditure as no fee is charged to unsuccessful Blue Badge applicants. Unfortunately the Council is not permitted to charge a higher fee than the £10.00 maximum set by central government but this review has clearly demonstrated that there are no grounds for reducing the current fee and that it is entirely appropriate to retain this fee throughout the term of the contract between the DfT and Northgate, which expires on 31 December 2017.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 To coincide with the implementation of the Blue Badge Improvement Service (BBIS) on 1 January 2012 the Council resolved, at its meeting on 6 December 2011, to increase the Blue Badge application fee from £2.00 to £10.00. The Department for Transport (DfT) has appointed the contractor Northgate to

manufacture and issue Blue Badges to successful applicants and Northgate charges local authorities £4.60 for each Blue Badge issued. The implementation of the BBIS from 1 January 2012 also introduced the need for some applicants to be referred for an Independent Mobility Assessment (IMA). In 2012/13 the total cost of the payments to Northgate and to the IMA was some £17,575. In the same period income from Blue Badge application fees was only nominally above this figure without taking into account the costs of the Council staff administering the BBIS. If these staff costs are taken into account there is a deficit of some £46,000.

- 4.2 When the Council agreed to set the Blue Badge application fee at £10.00 and retain this fee for the duration of the five year sub-agreement with Northgate it also resolved that the costs involved in the scheme should be reviewed after it had been in operation for a year. This report provides the results of the review and demonstrates that the existing Blue Badge fee of £10.00 is reasonable and appropriate. Consequently the decision to retain the £10.00 fee for the duration of the 5 year sub-agreement between the Council and Northgate that commenced on 1 January 2012 is fully justified.

Appendices

Appendix A - Blue Badges Issued in 2012/13

Appendix B - Independent Mobility Assessment Spend 2012/13

Consultees

Local Stakeholders: Not applicable.

Officers Consulted: Mark Edwards; Mark Cole

Trade Union: Not applicable

Appendix A: Blue Badges Issued in 2012/13

	SupplD	SupplD (T)	Period	Order No	Cost Centre	Deliv'd	Spend £	Notes
	18168	Northgate	201201	1197832	18220	369	1697.40	
							2.45	Extra Postage
Σ2	18168	Northgate	201201			369	1699.85	
	18168	Northgate	201204	1203367	18220	176	809.60	
Σ2	18168	Northgate	201204			176	809.60	
	18168	Northgate	201205	1205099	18220	151	694.60	
Σ2	18168	Northgate	201205			151	694.60	
	18168	Northgate	201206	1206624	18220	148	680.80	
Σ2	18168	Northgate	201206			148	680.80	
	18168	Northgate	201207	1208067	18220	184	846.40	
Σ2	18168	Northgate	201207			184	846.40	
	18168	Northgate	201208	1210131	18220	143	657.80	
	18168	Northgate	201208	1210131	18220		2.45	Extra Postage
	18168	Northgate	201208	1211119	18220		3040.00	Assisted Interview Subscription Fee
Σ2	18168	Northgate	201208			143	3700.25	
	18168	Northgate	201209	1211851	18220	157	722.20	
Σ2	18168	Northgate	201209			157	722.20	
	18168	Northgate	201210	1213132	18220	63	289.80	
	18168	Northgate	201210	1213132	18220		2.45	Extra Postage
Σ2	18168	Northgate	201210			63	292.25	
	18168	Northgate	201211	1215097	18220	187	860.20	
Σ2	18168	Northgate	201211			187	860.20	
	18168	Northgate	201212	1216762	18220	151	694.60	
	18168	Northgate	201212	1217995	18220	139	639.40	
Σ2	18168	Northgate	201212			290	1334.00	
Σ1						1868	11640.15	

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Appendix B: Independent Mobility Assessment Spend 2012/13

	SupplD	SupplD (T)	Period	Order No	Cost Centre	Spend £
	32305	Kimbercare Ltd	201204	1204035	18220	560
	32305	Kimbercare Ltd	201204	1204616	18220	297.5
Σ2	32305	Kimbercare Ltd	201204			857.5
	32305	Kimbercare Ltd	201206	1207076	18220	297.5
Σ2	32305	Kimbercare Ltd	201206			297.5
	32305	Kimbercare Ltd	201208	1209678	18220	652.1
Σ2	32305	Kimbercare Ltd	201208			652.1
	32305	Kimbercare Ltd	201209	1212192	18220	1,080.36
	32305	Kimbercare Ltd	201209	1212488	18220	714.02
Σ2	32305	Kimbercare Ltd	201209			1,794.38
	32305	Kimbercare Ltd	201210	1214433	18220	784.02
Σ2	32305	Kimbercare Ltd	201210			784.02
	32305	Kimbercare Ltd	201212	1216715	18220	749.02
	32305	Kimbercare Ltd	201212	1218000	18220	800.00
Σ2	32305	Kimbercare Ltd	201212			1,549.02
Σ1						5,934.52

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Title of Report:	Scrutiny Recommendations Update Report
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Meeting:	29 October 2013

Purpose of Report: To inform the Commission of the progress of scrutiny recommendations approved by the Commission during the previous year.

Recommended Action: To note the information.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman	
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Executive Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Commission of the progress of scrutiny recommendations approved by the Commission.
- 1.2 Since September 2012, the Commission has approved 44 recommendations for submission through the Executive cycle. To date 44 have been adopted by the Executive.
- 1.3 26 of these recommendations are recorded as having been implemented within 12 months and a further 17 are on track to be implemented within the required timescale and 1 recorded as not started.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members of the Commission note the update and consider any further action as appropriate.

Appendices

Appendix A – Scrutiny Recommendations Update

Review title	Recommendation	Date Agreed by OSMC	Date Adopted by Executive	Link to Exec Report	Update	Implemented within 12 months?
Domestic Abuse	(1) The Portfolio Holder responsible for Safer Communities should take steps to secure the attendance at the West Berkshire Domestic Abuse Forum representatives from schools and General Practitioners, to ensure that all appropriate agencies are represented.	30/10/12	14/02/13		- Appropriate education representation discussed at Domestic Abuse Forum in February and Domestic Abuse Reduction Coordinator to draft letter for Forum Chair - A GP attended the February meeting of the DA Forum and will be discussing future attendance with CCG colleagues	On Track
	(2) The Portfolio Holder responsible for Children and Young People should secure the necessary funding to make permanent the Domestic Abuse Response Team in order to ensure that its effective work continues.	30/10/12	14/02/13		No planned changes to funding for 2013/14	On Track
	(3) The Portfolio Holder responsible for Children and Young People should consider increasing the resources available to the Domestic Abuse Response Team in order to improve its resilience.	30/10/12	14/02/13		Opportunities to increase resources available to DART through increased partnership activity being explored	On Track
	(4) The Portfolio Holder responsible for Safer Communities should take steps to ensure that the incoming Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) fully understands the value of the West Berkshire Independent Domestic Violence Adviser. The desired outcome would be for funding, which will move from the Home Office to the PCC's control, to be maintained at existing levels.	30/10/12	14/02/13		- Briefing Document on Domestic Abuse, including the value of the IDVA, sent to Police and Crime Commissioner. - Response to draft Police and Crime Plan submitted on behalf of Safer Communities Partnership. - Police and Crime Commissioner to announce funding allocations at end of March 2013	On Track
	(5) In the event that the desired outcome at recommendation (4) cannot be achieved, the Council would need to review the implications of this decision.	30/10/12	14/02/13		Pending Recommendation 4	
	(6) The Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing should make available funding to reduce the gap for Independent Domestic Violence Advisers in the district from the current 0.8 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to the 2.5 FTE recommended by the charity Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA).	30/10/12	14/02/13		- Review of service provided by A2 Dominion, including provision of an Independent Domestic Violence Adviser, to be reviewed. Scoping document for the review was agreed in the September SCP meeting. - Review to be completed by the end of December 2013 with final report to be ready by January 2014	On Track
	(7) In order to raise and maintain the profile of domestic abuse, the Portfolio Holder responsible for Safer Communities should publish a domestic abuse strategy, for which appropriate governance and delivery mechanisms should be established.	30/10/12	14/02/13		- Strategic Statement on Domestic Abuse drafted for consideration by new Domestic Abuse Strategic Forum and Safer Communities Partnership. - Domestic Abuse Strategic Forum to be responsible for delivery against the Strategic Statement and to report to the Safer Communities Partnership Strategy Group	On Track
	(8) The Portfolio Holder responsible for Safer Communities should review the 'Making Changes' programme to ensure that it is effective and fit for purpose.	30/10/12	14/02/13		- Independent evaluation of Making Changes commissioned with report due at beginning of April 2013 - Making Changes Committee and programme Facilitators carrying out review of procedures. - Duluth Accredited Training delivered to all Making Changes Facilitators 18th – 20 th March 2013	On Track
	(9) The Portfolio Holder responsible for Safer Communities should seek from HM Court and Tribunal Service that the Special Domestic Violence Court be reinstated in Newbury, in order to ensure that victims from West Berkshire receive justice expediently.	30/10/12	14/02/13		Specialist Domestic Violence Court to be reinstated in Newbury from 1 st April 2013	Yes

Review title	Recommendation	Date Agreed by OSMC	Date Adopted by Executive	Link to Exec Report	Update	Implemented within 12 months?
	(10) Following the success of previous campaigns, the Portfolio Holder responsible for Safer Communities should develop and deliver a media and communications plan to maintain or improve the level at which domestic abuse is reported.	30/10/12	14/02/13		- Safer Communities Partnership Strategy 2013/14 will include communication actions in respect of Domestic Abuse - Strategy to be signed off by Strategy Group in May 2013 - Domestic Abuse Strategic Forum to oversee implementation of actions and report to Safer Communities Partnership Strategy Group	On Track
	(11) The Chief Executive of the Royal Berkshire Hospital should develop, deliver and review the effectiveness of packages of training and support for all staff working in maternity, post-natal and accident and emergency units to ensure that they have the requisite skills and confidence to be able to identify, record and deal effectively with domestic abuse.	30/10/12	No			NA
	(12) The Chief Executive of the Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust should provide assurance to the Safer Communities Partnership that funding for the post of Specialist Practitioner Domestic Abuse remains a priority, in order that her important and valued work continues.	30/10/12	14/02/13		Annual assessment in December 2013	On Track
	(13) The Chairman of the West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board should critically examine the appropriateness and effect of the action taken in response to Recommendation 11 of the Pemberton Domestic Homicide Review, in order to ensure that its desired outcome is achieved.	30/10/12	14/02/13		- GP 'IRIS' training programme Steering Group to be convened on 25 th April 2013 - Domestic Abuse Reduction Coordinator and Safer Communities Partnership Team Manager to be Steering Group members	On Track
	(14) The Portfolio Holder for Housing should write to the Home Secretary requesting that she give consideration to the establishment of a national system for refuge provision, in order to ensure that there is an appropriate number and mix of accommodation type available.	30/10/12	14/02/13		Analysis described under Recommendation 15 will need to be completed before a letter can be written	On Track
	(15) In order that professionals working with domestic abuse are able to understand the composite picture and manage resources accordingly, in conjunction with A2Dominion the Portfolio Holder for Housing should establish a mechanism to capture data on the total number of referrals being made to refuges, whether within the district or elsewhere. After six months of data collection, an assessment should be made as to the appropriateness of both the number and type of refuge accommodate provided.	30/10/12	14/02/13		Analysis of existing data to be undertaken to understand demand and comparison with other Local Authorities with similar population profile to be undertaken by December 2013.	On Track
	(16) The Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing should develop and deliver a media and communications plan to counter negative perceptions of refuges held by the public, in order that those perceptions do not prevent, dissuade or otherwise deflect female victims of domestic abuse from seeking help from them when they need it.	30/10/12	14/02/13		- Work to be incorporated into review of existing domestic abuse service to be undertaken by September 2013 - Review Framework to be scoped in June 2013	On Track
	(17) In order that all professionals with a need to know, do know, the Local Police Area Commander should take the necessary steps to ensure that data captured on the I-DASH can be shared with schools.	30/10/12	No			NA

Review title	Recommendation	Date Agreed by OSMC	Date Adopted by Executive	Link to Exec Report	Update	Implemented within 12 months?
	(18) The Portfolio Holder responsible for Children and Young People should ensure that there is no further reduction in the staffing of the West Berkshire YOT, in order to enable it to continue its valued work on Domestic Abuse.	30/10/12	No			NA
	(19) The Portfolio Holder responsible for Education should take steps to train Emotional Literacy Support Assistants as 'domestic abuse champions' in schools, in order to support all other school staff in dealing with domestic abuse.	30/10/12	14/02/13		- West Berkshire 'Champions' scheme commissioned to commence in May 2013 by A2 Dominion. - Additional training for ELSA's to start in September 2013	On Track
	(20) The Portfolio Holder responsible for Education should take steps to make training in domestic abuse mandatory for all schools' staff, in order to ensure that they have the requisite skills and confidence to be able to identify, record and deal effectively with the effects in children of domestic abuse.	30/10/12	14/02/13		e-learning package introduced December 2012	On Track
	(21) The Portfolio Holder responsible for Safer Communities should ensure that a timetable is developed and that appropriate resources are made available in order to ensure that the domestic abuse tiered training system is delivered by no later than April 2013.	30/10/12	14/02/13		- Training programme developed in December 2012 - e-learning package introduced December 2012 - Champions Scheme to be introduced from May 2013 - 4 DASH/MARAC training dates identified for 2013/14	On Track
	(22) The Portfolio Holder responsible for Children and Young People should, through the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, consider re-running domestic abuse awareness and other training for voluntary organisations, in order to ensure that they have an appropriate level of understanding. The West Berkshire Volunteer Centre may be able to provide assistance in the promotion of the courses.	30/10/12	14/02/13		- e-learning package introduced in December 2012 and access promoted to voluntary organisations - The LSCB has commissioned additional Domestic Abuse Training Courses at advance (specialist) level to be delivered in 2013/14 that all staff and volunteers will be able to access.	Yes
	(23) The Chairman of the West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board should commission the Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) scheme for adoption by the West Berkshire Clinical Commissioning Group, in order to improve the awareness of and responsiveness to domestic abuse by GP practices.	30/10/12	14/02/13		- IRIS Steering Group to be convened on 25 th April 2013 - Domestic Abuse Reduction Coordinator and Safer Communities Partnership Team Manager to be Steering Group members	On Track
	(24) The Portfolio Holder responsible for Corporate Services should ensure that levels of awareness of domestic abuse are increased amongst all staff, with specific training provided for those in identified posts.	30/10/12	14/02/13		LSCB e-learning package introduced in December 2012	Yes
	(25) The Portfolio Holder responsible for Corporate Services should produce domestic abuse guidance for all Council staff, irrespective of status, in order that all are aware of the actions that might be taken in the event of another member of staff disclosing to them that they are experiencing domestic abuse.	30/10/12	14/02/13		HR produced revised draft guidance for employees which explicitly includes advice on what to do if an employee makes a disclosure to you. The revised guidance will be published once other minor amendments are finalised - expected no later than November 2013.	On track

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Homelessness	<p>1. "The Executive Member for Housing should work with other local agencies to agree an accepted methodology for the counting of rough sleepers. A report outlining the production process and count should be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission within 6 months of agreement."</p>	11/12/12	No		<p>The Housing Service follows Government guidance and methodology for the counting of rough sleepers. A methodology is already in place and the Housing Service is satisfied that this provides an accurate estimate. The Housing Service collates information from a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies that may come into contact with rough sleepers and then verifies the information prior to submitting the estimate. Since the OSMC recommendations, the Housing Service has met with Homelessness Link, who are funded by CLG to work with local authorities to tackle homelessness, to discuss rough sleeper estimate methodology. Homelessness Link have not raised any concerns about the way in which West Berkshire apply the CLG methodology.</p> <p>The Homelessness Strategy is focused on prevention. This recommendation is not preventative and is about data collection. In addition, the Housing Service is following Government methodology. For this reason, this recommendation has not been included in the action plan but the data will feed into future homelessness reviews.</p>	NA
	<p>2. "The Executive Member for Housing should advise the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions of the genuine concerns held locally that the impending changes to the benefits regime will have an adverse effect on homelessness in West Berkshire."</p>	11/12/12			No	<p>Since the recommendations were made, the new Social Sector Size Criteria has been introduced, as has the phase-in of Personal Independence Payments (PIP) to replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and the Benefit Cap. The transition to Universal Credit is expected to be introduced later in 2013.</p> <p>Whilst there are concerns about the impacts of welfare reforms locally, there are also provisions in place to mitigate against the worst of those effects, for example, Discretionary Housing Payments. Nationally there has been lobbying by a wide range of stakeholder groups and some amendments have been made to the proposals with more regulations likely. It is recommended that this action should be deferred until there is hard evidence that can be used to support concerns.</p> <p>The Homelessness Strategy has not included this specific action, as it is unclear yet whether such action will be appropriate. However, one of the key priorities for the Homelessness Strategy is 'Mitigating the negative impacts of the welfare and housing reforms' and the action plan contains practical actions to directly support clients affected by the reform.</p>

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	3. "The Executive Member for Housing should establish how the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) plans to deliver Universal Benefits (which include Housing Benefit) locally and report by 31 March 2013 on plans for transferring Housing Benefit payment to DWP."	11/12/12	No		There is a national roll out of Universal Credit and details of how this benefit will be delivered are currently in the process of being published. The issue of transferring Housing Benefit to the DWP is a matter for the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Economic Development, Health & Safety, Pensions, Human Resources. This action was not included within the Homelessness as it concerns information available in the public realm, is an administrative matter for Revenues & Benefits rather than for Housing Services and will not directly contribute to the prevention of homelessness	NA
	4. "The Executive Member for Housing should consider the production, either as part of the Homelessness Strategy or separately, of a 'reconnection' policy, to ensure that homeless people who have no local connection to West Berkshire are able to sustainably relocate to those places outside of the district with which they do have a link."	11/12/12	09/05/13		The Housing Service already seek to reconnect applicants with no local connection to the district back to a locality where they do have a local connection as part of their standard housing options approach. This can include establishing contact with family and friends, securing that accommodation and/or support will be available on their return and funding transport costs to enable applicants to return. Members are referred to Appendix One of the Homelessness Strategy, (the Homelessness flow-chart) which highlights that local connection and referrals back to authority areas where applicants do have a local connection is standard practice.	Yes
	5. "The Executive Member for Strategic Support should ensure that time is made available at a District Parish Conference for Housing officers to explain to Councillors the content of, and rationale for, the Homelessness Strategy when agreed."	11/12/12	No		The Council does not dictate what items are on the District Parish Conference agenda and it is for Parish Councils to determine what items they consider appropriate. The Housing Service will attend, if invited, or will provide a copy of the Homelessness Review and Strategy to interested Parishes upon request.	NA
	6. "At the next revision of the Council's Service Level Agreement with the Citizens Advice Bureau, the Executive Member for Strategic Support should consider the offer by SHELTER to assist with housing advice, so as to ensure that the document contains the requirement for the Bureau to provide a dedicated housing advisor."	11/12/12	No		This recommendation has been discussed with the CAB. All of their volunteer generalist advisors offer housing/homelessness advice, backed up by an in-bureau specialist and further backed up by the Citizens Advice specialist support unit. The CEO of CAB Newbury has specifically said, in a letter to the Head of Strategic Support Services, that CAB do not wish to appoint dedicated Housing Advisors. This recommendation cannot be supported as it would be likely to have a detrimental effect on the wider service provided by Citizens Advice and could cause a bottleneck and create a capacity problem that does not currently exist.	NA
	7. "Performance monitoring reports received from the Citizens Advice Bureau relating to homelessness (including all financial advice), which are sent to the Executive Member for Strategic Support should be routinely made available to the Executive Member for Housing and his Shadow."	11/12/12	No		Quarterly monitoring reports are received from the CAB and the Head of Strategic Support is able to pass them onto the Portfolio Holder who can share them with the Shadow. This action has not been included within the Homelessness Strategy as it concerns data collection and does not contribute to the prevention of homelessness	NA
	8. "The Executive Member for Housing should work, through the Local Government Association, the Government and especially the Valuation Office Agency, to achieve transparency of the factors and values taken into consideration by VOA when setting the Local Housing Allowance and, if possible, an appeal mechanism."	11/12/12	09/05/13		At the request of the Portfolio Holder Housing, Richard Benyon, MP, recently wrote again to the VOA. A response is awaited from the VOA.	On track

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	<p>9. "The Executive Member for Housing should develop and implement a plan to heighten awareness of the causes and impacts of homelessness, particularly how it might be prevented and what help is (and is not) available. Consideration might be given to the following aspects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising the awareness of all those whose work may bring them in contact with homelessness on the role of other organisations • The location of leaflets, including with partner organisations (for example Newbury Town Council, Thames Valley Police, libraries and detached youth workers) • The engagement of young people from before they enter the workforce, including through secondary schools, in financial and housing-related education • The content and language of leaflets. Assistance is available through Two Saints from people who have previously been homeless. 	11/12/12	09/05/13		These actions form a core part of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan. A new suite of leaflets has already been developed and published and Connexions are providing training in schools on matters relating to housing and homelessness.	Yes
	10. "The Executive Member for Housing should ask Newbury Town Council to consider the provision of lockers to allow rough sleepers to store their possessions (for example sleeping bags) securely during the day."	11/12/12	No		This action has not been included within the Homelessness Strategy as it does not contribute towards prevention of homelessness.	NA
	11. "The Executive Member for Housing should ask the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire to establish closer links with Loose Ends to ensure that any shortages of volunteers and other resources to enable them to provide a better service to their clients are met urgently and effectively."	11/12/12	No		This action has not been included within the Homelessness Strategy as it does not contribute towards prevention of homelessness.	NA
	12. "Further investigation should be undertaken into the reasons why West Berkshire seems to have a very large proportion of young families facing homelessness whose friends and extended family are unwilling or unable to provide them with temporary housing/accommodation."	11/12/12	No		The Housing Service agrees that it would be beneficial to have a better understanding of the reasons why young families are asked to leave home by family and friends and would suggest that this may be an area for further scrutiny.	NA
Call In - Healthwatch Commissioning	The Executive ensure that sufficient information is available in every report to allow a robust decision to be made.	04/02/13	07/03/13	No report - emailed directly to the Leader of the Council.	The recommendation was made at Management Board on 07/03/13.	Yes