



BRACKNELL
TOWN COUNCIL

Business Plan

November 2015

V1

What is the Bracknell Town Council (BTC) Business Plan (BP)?

It is a statement of the Town Council's vision for the town, its purpose, values, objectives and key BTC priorities. The BP is a document that sets out what Bracknell Town Council itself can achieve, either directly or by trying to increase its influence on the relevant delivery body, such as Bracknell Forest Council. The aim of the Business Plan is to give Bracknell's residents an understanding of what the Town Council is trying to achieve and how it intends to deliver this. It details what the Town Council intends to focus on over the next three to four years. The Business Plan will be used each year to plan activities and set the budget for the coming year, so will be reviewed around each November.

Why has the Town Council decided to produce a Business Plan?

Having an agreed strategy will provide a framework for the Town Council to work within, enabling it to operate in a more consistent and co-ordinated way. At the same time, the Business Plan will help the local community to have a better understanding of what the Town Council does and also to clarify what it doesn't do; including to explain what issues fall under the responsibility of other delivery bodies such as Bracknell Forest Council, or Bracknell Forest Housing Association. It is intended to become a 'live' document which the Town Council will update regularly, enabling it to track and monitor its progress against the key priorities. Because the Business Plan will be publicly available, Bracknell's residents will be able to monitor progress and to comment, for example at the Annual Town Meeting.

Management of the Council

Councillors: The strategic direction for the Council is provided by its 27 Councillors.

Town Council Staff: The Council currently employs around thirty staff (full time equivalent). The staffing structure is shown on the BTC website. The council's officers routinely manage on a day to day basis, ensuring the delivery of services to residents.

Corporate Vision and Objectives

The Town Council's vision for Bracknell is:

A successful, vibrant, attractive town, where people want to live, work, study and visit.

The Town Council's Mission Statement:

The Town Council aims to improve the quality of life for residents by ensuring that Bracknell is a desirable, thriving and sustainable place in which to live. It will do this in a number of ways:

- It provides a democratic and representational voice for the community.
- Where services are provided directly they are managed to a good quality standard, in an efficient, effective and responsive way, at an affordable cost.
- Where services are provided by others, the Town Council endeavours to ensure that they are dealt with effectively, and in accordance with the wishes of the community.
- It works with its residents, local authorities and other service providers, businesses and community organisations with the aim of achieving a safe, healthy, prosperous and sustainable community.

The Key Objectives of Bracknell Town Council are:

- To serve those who live, study and work in Bracknell and those who visit.
- To promote and represent the community's views and aspirations.
- To provide high standard, cost-effective services and amenities to help meet the needs and wishes of residents.
- To work in partnership, or otherwise, with other statutory and voluntary bodies, businesses and individuals to ensure an improving standard of services and facilities to meet the needs and expectations of Bracknell's residents.
- To achieve a degree of influence over services delivery and development in the town to ensure that the best interests of Bracknell are taken into account.
- To seek a fair share of investment in the town.
- To encourage the devolution of services to the Town Council, but only where they can be delivered more effectively and efficiently, and ideally with no additional cost to the tax payer.
- To enhance and promote the historic and cultural heritage of Bracknell and safeguard its unique identity and its natural and built environment.
- To encourage and promote the economic and commercial vitality of the town centre and to strive for a pleasant, clean and safe environment throughout the town.
- To promote and support local voluntary groups and clubs that seek to assist residents and visitors to Bracknell.
- To be a professional, competent and caring Town Council.
- To help to create a socially inclusive and caring community which embraces all its residents, irrespective of age, culture, income, race, sexual orientation or religion, and which seeks to develop their well-being, knowledge, understanding and mutual co-operation.

Financial Information

Income and Expenditure

The Town Council is mainly funded by the residents of Bracknell, through what is known as the 'precept'. This is levied by the Town Council and collected on its behalf by Bracknell Forest Council as part of the Council Tax bill. £75.64 per year per band D property of Bracknell residents' Council Tax funds the Town Council precept (2015/16 financial year) The total budgeted expenditure for the Council is around £2.2m. Details of the Councils budgets and of previous spending are provided on the Council's website.

Except for a small contingency sum, the budget is fully allocated. Therefore, unless the Town Council is able to secure new grant funding, which is only available for certain activities/ in certain instances, any new activities or facilities which require additional resources would either have to replace an existing activity, be funded from reserves, or be funded via an increase in the precept. Any un-used contingency or under spend would, however, be able to be allocated to a reserve fund and built up for specific purposes.

Reserves and balances

Bracknell Town Council adopts a risk-based approach to its levels of balances which is reviewed annually. Currently the minimum level of balances is set at approximately six months gross operating costs, within the former Audit Commission guidelines of 3-12 months costs. Reserves are held above this for specific, earmarked purposes.

Allowances

BTC Councillors are unpaid and receive no allowance for their duties. There is, however, a small allowance is given to the Mayor to meet any expenses involved in fulfilling the Mayoral duties.

Bracknell Town Council's Main Areas of Responsibility

The Town Council has responsibility for:

- the management, maintenance and development of its parks, including play areas and sports pitches.
- the provision of allotments.
- the running of Bracknell in Bloom, with partners
- the organising of various events and activities in Bracknell
- the provision of various grants.
- submitting comments on planning applications
- bus shelters
- pavilions and halls for hire
- TV licensing grants
- radar keys
- fishing permits

The Council is also represented on a number of external organisations.

Governance

Bracknell Town Council aims to be a professional, competent and caring Council, to be open and accountable in all it does and to ensure the sound financial management of Town Council resources.

The Town Council aims to:

- be well-informed about the needs and opinions of the town's residents and businesses by consulting them on major issues
- improve services to the public by encouraging members and staff to develop their skills, by undertaking appropriate training.
- ensure Councillors are given the opportunity to keep abreast of new opportunities and policy.
- be a good and fair employer by providing fulfilling work opportunities and conditions for its staff.
- continuously promote public participation in all Town Council meetings and initiatives.
- achieve/ maintain accreditation as a 'Quality Council'.
- deal with enquiries and fault reports from members of the public speedily and efficiently.
- be an effective custodian of the Council's property and documents.

Communication

The Town Council recognises the role of good communications in building positive relationships with the public and with organisations that provide services in the town and as such will continue to seek to improve established channels of communication. To achieve this, the Council will:

- post regular news of Town Council initiatives on the new website
- keep employing other methods of distribution for Town Council news, such as 'Bracknell Matters' newsletters.

- provide an opportunity at each Town Council meeting for public questions and comments.
- make the Town Council Business Plan available on the Town Council website.
- share a report covering Town Council activities during the previous twelve months at the Annual Meeting.
- seek accreditation of 'Quality Council' Status.
- continue to invite representatives of outside agencies to address the Council on key matters of interest (to Town Council meetings but also to round table discussions with the Council).
- work with other statutory and voluntary bodies, businesses, residents and other stakeholders as appropriate, in order to facilitate coordinated effort.
- appoint representatives to appropriate external agencies and committees.
- attend relevant conferences and meetings.

KEY PLANNED ACTIVITIES 2016 year – STRATEGY AND FINANCE

Refer terms of reference for this Committee. Planned key activities include:

- **maintain a strong financial position for the Council**
- **achieve quality status for the Council**
- **ensure the council is resilient and in a position to respond to change**
- **completion of a Bracknell Neighbourhood Plan, in line with the agreed timetable**
- **maintain grants to support community groups which benefit the community.**

KEY PLANNED ACTIVITIES 2016 year – ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Refer terms of reference for this Committee. Key activities include:

- **ensure 'gold' in Bracknell in Bloom in 2016, and compete at national level in 2017**
- **maintain buildings, play areas and other facilities to a high standard**
- **rebuild (or at least refurbish) Great Hollands pavilion**
- **continue to run and support a range of events and activities in our parks**
- **seek additional allotment sites and look for opportunity to extend the cemetery**

KEY PLANNED ACTIVITIES 2016 year – STAFFING

Refer terms of reference for this Committee.

Planned key activity: maintain a motivated and productive team, recruiting as needed

Monitoring the Business Plan

The list of activities will make up an 'Action Plan' which will be monitored at future Council meetings, with each Committee reviewing progress against its own objectives and targets, and an annual report considered in November/ December each year to understand the progress made, where further work is needed and if there are any blockages to progress. The Business Plan will also be available on the Town Council website as a way of telling residents what the Council is doing to meet the needs of the community and for residents to tell. It is our intention to review the Business Plan regularly, publish progress and make any changes considered necessary as a result.