

Bracknell Forest Borough Council

Organisational Assessment (Summary version)

Dated 9 December 2009



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of local public services

Bracknell Forest Borough Council

Overall, Bracknell Forest Borough Council performs well

Managing performance	3 out of 4
Use of resources	2 out of 4
Managing finances	2 out of 4
Governing the business	2 out of 4
Managing resources	3 out of 4

Description of scores:

1. An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements, Performs Poorly
2. An organisation that meets only minimum requirements, Performs Adequately
3. An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Well
4. An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Excellently

Summary

Overall Bracknell Forest Council performs well. The proportion of local people who are satisfied with the Council is 49.9 per cent. This is slightly higher than the national average (45.4 per cent) and the south-east regional average of 47 per cent.

The Council provides good quality services that are important to local people. These include services for children and young people, adult social care, keeping local streets and open spaces clean and free of litter, and quickly removing abandoned cars, fly-tipping and graffiti. Working with local volunteers the Council protects and improves local parks and the countryside. By working with Reading and Wokingham councils it is increasing waste that is recycled - so less waste goes to landfill sites.

However, there are some areas where the Council will need to do more in future to make sure important improvements for local people are achieved. Plans with partners to regenerate Bracknell town centre will take longer to complete than originally thought because of the recession. In addition the Council has not been able to enable as many new affordable houses as originally planned. This has added to a shortage of affordable homes, particularly affordable rented accommodation.

Councillors and staff work well together. Council leaders have a clear plan for Bracknell and give good leadership. The Council has six priorities that are important to Bracknell residents, and they are linked to thirteen objectives so it is clear to managers what is expected of them.

Progress is reported to senior councillors and managers every month. Every

three months this is published for the public so everyone can see what is working well and not so well. Work is improving how this information is collected and making sure it is reliable.

There is a difference between the scores for use of resources (2 out of 4) and managing performance (3 out of 4). The use of resources work, which looked at how well the Council manages its finances and governs itself, identified some things the Council could do better. This includes improving the way it buys in goods and services, improving building maintenance and making sure the information it uses to take decisions is reliable. . It is managing its use of natural resources well, has reduced energy and water use and produced a climate change action plan.

Managing performance focuses on the quality of services the Council provides. Here it was decided that overall services to the public are good with many being among the best in the country. We have decided the overall score should be that Bracknell Forest Council performs well. This is because the Council delivers good outcomes for most of its priority services and it continues to improve its performance in areas important to local people.

Ofsted has rated the Council's children's services as performing well because most inspected services and settings are good or better. However, the quality of provision varies across early years, education and social care. Most children and young people have a good start in life and enjoy good health. Educational achievement is in line with the average for similar areas and England overall. The gap between the majority and those whose circumstance make them vulnerable is closing in some areas, but the picture is inconsistent - for example the proportion not in education, employment and training has now risen above the average for similar areas.

The Care Quality Commission has rated the Council's adult social care as performing well. Leadership in adult social care is strong and the Council understand the needs of the local population. People who use services and their carers are at the centre of strategic planning and the Council works successfully with hard-to-reach groups. Projects help people regain fitness, mobility and independence including supporting people to have more control over their care by giving them their own budgets. The Council supports families and young carers well and works with partners to make sure people do not need to stay in hospital for longer than necessary. Good quality community based support reduces the number of people needing long-term residential care. Individuals are encouraged to identify their own needs and how these could be met but more work is needed in this area. The Council employs people regardless of disability. The number of referrals about keeping older people safe from harm has increased sharply and is now higher than the average for similar councils. However, the rate of referrals about people who fund their own care is less than in similar councils and this may mean more work is needed to improve awareness of staff.

The Council scores 2 out of 4 for use of resources. It manages its finances effectively. It has achieved its budgets in the last 11 years and in 2008-09 it under spent by £1.882m. . For some time the Council has been gradually reducing reliance on interest earned on its reserves and increasing council tax to arrive at a balanced budget. However the Council estimates that low interest rates in 2008/09 reduced its income by £800,000. Value for money is good. Service levels are better than average and costs are low. Council Tax

continues to be the lowest of any mainland unitary authority and the Council has made almost £10 million of efficiency savings since 2004/05. Natural resources are managed well - the Council has reduced energy and water used which has a positive impact on the environment as well as saving money. It has produced a climate change action plan.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>

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Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ
Telephone: 0844 798 1212
Fax: 0844 798 2945
Textphone (minicom): 0844 798 2946
www.audit-commission.gov.uk



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