

PLACE SHAPING IN BRACKNELL FOREST

Place shaping – the theory

Local public sector organisations and the residential and business community have shared ambitions – to create attractive, prosperous, vibrant, safe and strong communities where people want to live, work and do business.

There is an exciting prize to be grasped – stronger local and national prosperity through action at the sub-regional and local level to develop the distinctive nature of places and their communities. Together, local government, business, communities and the wider public sector can build this vision.

The general term used for this approach is 'Place Shaping'. 'Place-shaping' is the creative use of powers and influence to promote the general well-being of a community and its citizens. It includes the following components:

- building and shaping local identity;
- representing the community;
- regulating harmful and disruptive behaviours;
- maintaining the cohesiveness of the community and supporting debate within it, ensuring smaller voices are heard;
- helping to resolve disagreements;
- working to make the local economy more successful while being sensitive to pressures on the environment;
- understanding local needs and preferences and making sure that the right services are provided to local people; and
- working with other bodies to respond to complex challenges such as natural disasters and other emergencies

Enabling all sectors to work together in partnership is the only effective way to deliver the 'Place Shaping' agenda.

Bracknell Forest Partnership – a local vehicle

Bracknell Forest Partnership is the overarching partnership for the area. It draws together influential people from across Bracknell Forest. This includes senior representatives of the public agencies (local councils, Police, Fire Service and Primary Care Trust) sitting alongside businesses, and people from voluntary groups and the community. Working together brings many benefits including working towards joint goals, co-ordinating use of resources and tackling shared issues.

This year Bracknell Forest Partnership has an exciting work programme including refreshing its two key drivers for action – the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement.

Sustainable Community Strategy – a consensus vision

The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) is the document that sets out the joint vision that Bracknell Forest Partnership agrees. It provides a starting point from which all the individual organisations can plan their work.

The current SCS 'Living Together, Working Together' was published in October 2005. Bracknell Forest Partnership is working to review this vision and publish a revised SCS in June 2008.

The work is in three distinct stages.

Stage one is the development of an evidence base to give a clear picture of Bracknell Forest today by collating frameworks of:

- a. Local performance statistics;
- b. Priorities published in key local and regional strategies;
- c. Findings from recent public consultations;
- d. Areas where performance sits within the bottom quartile nationally;
- e. Key people's opinions of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, drivers for change and policy challenges (gathered via a BFP workshop held on 10 September 2007)

This evidence base is nearing completion and all stakeholders are asked to review the frameworks and provide any additions or comments. The evidence base can be found at:

<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/your-council/yc-bracknell-forest-partnership/yc-bracknell-forest-partnership-evidence-base.htm>

Please take the time to make sure your organisation is represented correctly within these evidence base frameworks.

Stage two involves gathering key people's views on the most appealing scenarios for the future of Bracknell Forest and build the key elements and priorities for inclusion in the vision. This will be undertaken at the BFP conference to be held on 12 November 2007

Stage three will be to consolidate this material, carry out a risk assessment and finally consult widely on the draft vision before publishing in June 2008.

Local Area Agreement – a contract for delivery

A Local Area Agreement (LAA) is a set of targets negotiated with Central Government (e.g. reduce crime by 5% by March 2008). Bracknell Forest's first LAA was published in April 2007 and contained 111 targets. It followed strict Government guidance and included many mandatory targets that did not necessarily reflect the priorities within our joint vision.

Bracknell Forest is required to publish its next LAA in June 2008. Government is wholly changing its approach and new style LAAs will contain fewer targets overall (up to 52) but all targets will have a focus on those areas with local need for improvement.

Full details will be published in Government Operational Guidance expected in early November. What is clear already is that the improvement priorities selected will only be agreed by Government if there is a clear evidence base as to how they were chosen.

The chosen targets will also influence how some existing funding received from Central Government is spent. Work is underway to ensure we understand how this funding is currently spent – so that we know the risks of shifting any of this funding to new priorities.

Development of Bracknell Forest's LAA will take place in five stages.

Stages one and two are shared with development of the SCS (i.e. desk based evidence collation and stakeholder views gathered from the event on 12 November 2007). Which will be used to generate a long list of themes to be considered for inclusion within the LAA.

Stage three is to agree the criteria on which the themes will be tested for inclusion. Currently the draft criteria state that a theme will only be included in the LAA if it could be considered to normally meet at least four out of the following six criteria:

- a. The theme supports delivery of the Bracknell Forest Sustainable Community Strategy;
- b. The theme is highlighted across the evidence base as a priority in partners' strategies and/or from public consultation;
- c. The theme's performance shows a need for improvement – or current improvement needs to be sustained – and there is potential for impact within the three-year life of the LAA;
- d. The theme is linked to specific funding streams that are to be included in the new area based grant;
- e. One or more of the partners, or an existing theme partnership, is willing to commit time and resources to the themes development and delivery;
- f. A robust performance measure baseline exists or is included in the new set of 200 national indicators

Stage four is to apply the test criteria to the themes and develop a long list of improvement themes for the LAA. This will be used for consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and for starting negotiations with Government.

Stage five is the detailed negotiation of the targets against the improvement themes before publishing in June 2008.

Find out more

Full details of Bracknell Forest Partnership and its work programme are set out in the Handbook which is available electronically at

<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/bracknell-forestpartnership-handbook.pdf>

If you need a printed copy then please email debbie.ogles@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

A BFP newsletter will be produced in November 2007 containing a summary of the event of 12 November 2007 and more details of new style LAAs following publication of the Government guidance.