

Notice of Meeting

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Councillor Angell (Chair), Councillor Virgo (Vice-Chair),
Councillors Mrs Birch, Brossard, Gbadebo, MJ Gibson,
Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, McLean, Mrs Mattick, Mossom, Porter and
Temperton

Tracey Wright, Parent Governor representative

Mark Glanville, Parent Governor representative

Thursday 9 September 2021, 6.30 - 8.30 pm

Microsoft Teams Meeting



Agenda

| Item | Description | Page |
|------|--|-------|
| 1. | Apologies for Absence | |
| | To receive apologies for absence and to note the attendance of any substitute Members. | |
| 2. | Minutes of previous meeting | 3 - 6 |
| | To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission held on 3 August 2021. | |
| 3. | Declarations of Interest and Party Whip | |
| | <p>Members are asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary or affected interests and the nature of that interest, including the existence and nature of the party whip, in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.</p> <p>Any Member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in a matter should withdraw from the meeting when the matter is under consideration and should notify the Democratic Services Officer in attendance that they are withdrawing as they have such an interest. If the Disclosable Pecuniary Interest is not entered on the register of Members interests the Monitoring Officer must be notified of the interest within 28 days.</p> <p>Any Member with an Affected Interest in a matter must disclose the interest to the meeting. There is no requirement to withdraw from the meeting when the interest is only an affected interest, but the Monitoring Officer should be notified of the interest, if not previously notified of it, within 28 days of the meeting.</p> | |
| 4. | Urgent Items of Business | |
| | Any other items which, pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman decides are urgent. | |

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| 5. | Public Participation | |
| | To receive submissions from members of the public which have been submitted in advance in accordance with the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny. | |
| 6. | Health scrutiny arrangements | 7 - 14 |
| | To consider the Statutory Scrutiny Officer's assessment of current arrangements and proposals for improvement to the delivery of health scrutiny at Bracknell Forest. | |
| 7. | Evaluation of the Care leavers' review | 15 - 22 |
| | To consider the evaluation of the Care leavers' review undertaken by the Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel. | |
| 8. | Work Programme Update | |
| | Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairs to provide verbal updates on the work programme and highlight any proposed changes such as scope, scheduling or duration. The Commission to consider the scope for Mental Health review from the Wellbeing and Finance Panel. | To follow |

Date of next meeting

The next Overview and Scrutiny Commission meeting is scheduled for 7 October 2021 when the Commission will be sitting as the Crime and Disorder Panel.

Sound recording, photographing, filming and use of social media is permitted. Please contact Kirsty Hunt, 01344 353108, kirsty.hunt@bracknell-forest.gov.uk, so that any special arrangements can be made.

Published: 1 September 2021

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
3 AUGUST 2021
6.30 - 8.30 PM**

Present:

Councillors Angell (Chairman), Virgo (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Birch, Brossard, Mrs Mattick, Mossom, Porter, Temperton, Atkinson (Substitute) and Brown (Substitute)

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Gbadebo, MJ Gibson, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle and McLean

Executive Members Present:

Councillor D Birch

Also Present:

Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery

Ann Moore, Head of Democratic and Registration Services

Fiona Slevin-Brown, Managing Director – Bracknell Forest Executive Lead for Urgent and Emergency Care, NHS Frimley CCG

Grainne Siggins, Executive Director: People

17. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest.

There were no indications that members would be participating while under the party whip.

18. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

19. Public Participation

No submissions had been made by members of the public under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

20. Health provision in Bracknell Forest

Fiona Selvin-Brown, Managing Director – Bracknell Forest Executive Lead for Urgent and Emergency Care, NHS Frimley CCG presented to the Commission on the current health provision and key issues in Bracknell Forest.

Following questions, the below points were noted:

- Some residents had struggled to book a GP appointment by telephone at peak times. Improvements in telephone capacity and call handling would be considered.
- It was expected that residents would be allowed in waiting rooms at GP surgeries in future. Provision for shelter outside GP surgeries where this was not possible would be considered.
- It was confirmed that the work force at Brants Bridge Urgent Care Centre was the same as pre-pandemic levels but some of the minor illness provision had

been upgraded. When support was not available at GP surgeries, there was an additional 1700 appointments per month available at the centre.

- It was acknowledged that signage at Brants Bridge Urgent Care Centre could be better and improvements would be considered.
- Currently GP surgeries were getting increased enquiries for appointments with some experiencing requests for an additional 200 appointments per day. This increase was attributed to a combination of reasons including support for people who were recovering from Coronavirus, updates to prescriptions and people delaying their appointments through fear of catching Coronavirus.
- It was confirmed that the commission would receive confirmation regarding whether a medic would be available on-site at Brants Bridge Urgent Care Centre.
- It was confirmed that there was an ongoing recruitment campaign for GPs and nurses and some excellent professionals were being attracted to working in the Bracknell Forest area.
- It was confirmed that NHS services were still very busy and services were preparing for winter. Nationally there was new NHS leadership and there was a strengthened emphasis on partnership and community working.

Councillor Dale Birch, Chair of Health and Wellbeing Board explained the work of the board and current focuses.

Following questions, the following points were made:

- It was confirmed that quarterly meetings were considered optimum and allowed partners to feedback to the board in a timely manner.

Grainne Siggins, Executive Director: People explained the current priorities for the People directorate and plans for the department.

Following questions, the following points were made:

- It was noted that the full impact of coronavirus had not yet been realised and the situation would need to continue to be monitored.
- It was acknowledged that mental health support was under pressure with increased demand and there was a focus on signposting young people to the services available. Childhood and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHs) were investing in early help support to prevent young people needing CAMHs support. Online and virtual support solutions were also available to people in need. A lot of investment had gone into routine CMHS offer and decreasing the Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) support waiting lists. There was also investment into crises services and there was more work to do.
- It was requested that figures were provided to the Commission on the number of referrals, the waiting times and readmittance to mental health services.

21. **Minutes of previous meeting**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 8 July 2021 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

Responses to all of the queries and requests for information raised in the meeting had been received or formed part of the agenda.

22. **Membership of Wellbeing and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

The Commission noted the nominations made at Council on 14 July 2021 including Councillor Gibson as the Chair elect of the Wellbeing and Finance Panel.

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs McKenzie be elected to the Wellbeing and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the Municipal Year 2021 – 2022

23. **Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel Report: Food Waste in HMOs and Flats**

Cllr John Porter, Chair of the Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, presented to members the report on Food Waste in Flats and Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

Following questions, the below points were noted:

- It was clarified that individual caddies would be given to very small blocks of flats who already had their own recycling and general waste bins. Larger blocks of flats would receive bins with apertures.
- It was also clarified that contaminated food waste bins would need to be cleaned by managing agents before they could be removed.
- It was questioned whether another condition could be added to planning regulations however Planning Officers had advised that this was already included in planning regulations.
- It was noted that the contamination of dry goods was a particular challenge in flats.

The Commission endorsed the recommendations within the Food waste in flats and Houses of Multiple Occupation review report for submission to the Executive on 21 September and agreed to review the implementation of these recommendations within a year.

24. **Work Programme Update**

Cllr Gill Birch, Chair of the Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel updated the commission on the Community Infrastructure Levy Review and confirmed the report was expected to be presented at the October Commission Meeting. The next review into Special Educational Needs and Disability would be scoped in September.

The Wellbeing and Finance panel would be scope the Mental Health review and it was hoped this would be brought to the September commission meeting.

CHAIRMAN

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To: **Overview & Scrutiny Commission**
9 September 2021

Health Scrutiny: Overview & Scrutiny Arrangements **Statutory Scrutiny Officer**

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report proposes a revision of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission's (OSC) arrangements for the discharge of the statutory health scrutiny function.

2 Recommendation

2.1 That the Commission agrees:

- To reschedule one of its meetings per year to sit as the strategic health scrutiny board
- That the Finance and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel be renamed Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- That the Commission leads on the Council Plan theme, Value for Money

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 Following the COVID 19 pandemic, the issues of community health and wellbeing have become a greater priority than they were when the current arrangements were put in place. Given this increase focus and community need, the Commission has reviewed how it discharges its duty to have overview and scrutiny of the provision of health and public health within the Bracknell Forest Council area.
- 3.2 This recommendation strengthens the current arrangements, while broadly fitting into the current commissioning framework, as having been established in the Commission's report to Council on the 27 November 2019

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 That the Finance and Wellbeing Panel undertakes health scrutiny on behalf of the OSC and the Commission's work programme is re-prioritised to increase overview & scrutiny officer support to this new panel.

This option requires formal changes to the scrutiny arrangements as set out in the Constitution. Resources would be reduced equally from all other Panels, in order to accommodate an additional work programme of health review activity by the new Finance and Wellbeing Panel. This was therefore rejected as it does not strategically align to the new arrangements agreed in 2019 and would move away from reviewing topics thematically, rather than departmentally.

5 Background

- 5.1 In response to concerns raised about whether the current overview and scrutiny arrangements are discharging the Council's statutory health scrutiny duty effectively, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, asked the Statutory Scrutiny Officer to undertake a review. The focus of the review was to assess the adequacy of the current arrangements and make recommendations to the Commission that would both strengthen the current arrangements and provide assurance to Members and the public at large.
- 5.2 Along with social care functions, Overview and Scrutiny, must, and be seen to be, holding all commissioners and providers of publicly funded health and social care services to account for the quality of their services. The powers of the health scrutiny are not just limited to requiring the council's Executive Members to attend and answer questions at meetings held in public, the scrutiny function can also hold to account committees of the council with a health focus, health partnerships between the council and the NHS, plus provision in the voluntary sector. The health and wellbeing board also comes under the local authority scrutiny function, although decisions of partnership boards cannot be 'called in' as they are not decisions of the council's Executive.
- 5.2 To this end, a review has looked into how the health scrutiny function is discharged through scrutiny's statutory powers to obtain information, ask questions in public and make recommendations for improvements, which ultimately those commissioners and providers of services must consider. Further, the Statutory Scrutiny Officer also considered his legal duty "...to promote the role of the authority's overview and scrutiny committee(s)" and therefore looked at the knowledge of these bodies of the council's scrutiny function. Particularly, in terms of knowing that they in turn can refer issues to the Commission, for investigation and review to support good decision making and policy development that has the benefit of the participation of the widest possible audience.

6 Review Findings

- 6.1 On the 5th November 2019, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, considered a report, that proposed revised arrangements for the discharge of the overview & scrutiny function and to report these changes to the Council in order for consequential changes to be made to the Council's Constitution. This report's recommendations were agreed and changed the Overview & Scrutiny Panels from being aligned to a departmental structure that no longer existed, to a thematic structure that better reflected the interconnection of community services and aligned to the 6 themes of the Council Plan. The Overview & Scrutiny Commission formally agreed to implement 3 new panels:
- Finance & Wellbeing
 - Education, Skills & Growth
 - Environment & Communities
- 6.2 Further, that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission would itself lead on a number of issues, including:
- Developing a four-year strategic work programme aligned to the Council Plan following input from scrutiny members, the Executive, Corporate Management Team, partners and the public, ensuring that it is flexible enough to accommodate urgent short-term issues.

- Co-ordinate the work of the Overview & Scrutiny Panels to make the best use of available resources which will include allocating topics to Panels and agreeing the scope of activity.
- Receive findings and recommendations from Panel chairmen in respect of their Panel's scrutiny activity, for consideration and referral to the Executive or other decision-makers as appropriate.
- Prioritise scrutiny activity to ensure that the overview and scrutiny function concentrates on the delivery of work of genuine value and relevance to the work of the Council [and the communities of the Bracknell Forest Council area].
- Discharge the Council's statutory crime and disorder scrutiny responsibilities.
- **Discharge the Council's strategic health scrutiny responsibilities.**
- Lead on Climate Change scrutiny.
- Manage call-in.
- Review the policy framework.
- Scrutinise the budget proposals.
- Hold the Executive to account for performance within the Corporate Performance Overview Report (CPOR).

6.3 These revised arrangements took into account the 2018 recommendations to the council from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS). The key points from their review were:

- There is no clear, shared understanding of the role and purpose of scrutiny by Members
- There is little visibility of public accountability of the political leadership and Executive through open scrutiny
- There is a deficit of democratic accountability
- Portfolio Review Groups severely dilute the role of public scrutiny as this internal process leaves limited scope for Members to add further value at a future public scrutiny stage
- There are too few examples of Executive Members and Leader/Deputy being publicly held to account by scrutiny
- Some Members have missed the need for holding to account and see scrutiny as an information gathering and learning opportunity
- Scrutiny work programmes do not have a clear alignment with the Council corporate plan
- There is no clear objective in much of scrutiny's work
- There is no comprehensive Executive forward plan which scrutiny could use as a basis for scrutiny work plans and to have impact
- There is no triangulation between scrutiny and the Executive in the production of the work programme

- 6.4 In the [Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019 - 2021](#) the Statutory Scrutiny Officer gave his assessment of the function, following these changes and stated that "...I am pleased to report to Council that this report demonstrates that these changes to the function have been highly effective and the function is meeting the highest standards". The report goes on to detail the work of the Commission and Panels, with reports from the Panel Chairmen on their progress against the four-year work programme, which is linked to the Council Plan. It was clear from this assessment that the recommendations from the CfPS, had been taken on board and the new arrangements had addressed these points. That said, in re-establishing its role in council operations, the Statutory Scrutiny Officer acknowledged that the function needs to continue its development, in order to expand its outward-looking approach to scrutiny work. It was felt that Members needed to take on a wider set of issues, as they affect local people, rather than just carrying out oversight of the council as an institution.
- 6.5 Reviewing the function's handling of strategic health scrutiny and public health scrutiny matters, it should be noted that the four-year work programme was agreed before the global health crisis of COVID 19. There is, in the potential expansion of scrutiny's role into this area of public policy, the challenge for the Commission in reprioritising this work, in relation to the resources available, to ensure that the function is investigating the right health matters at the right time, and in the right way. The point has been made that the pandemic isn't over and at the time of writing this report, the UK is in the middle of a third wave, which is affecting a different cohort of the community and therefore its health implications will be different to those affected in wave one and two. It is this new context that has fed into this review and the reason why further changes could be considered by the Commission.
- 6.6 In late 2019, after the agreement of the four-year scrutiny plan, the Berkshire Director for Public Health, had been scheduled to do an opening presentation to the Commission, similar to the presentation that the Commission had on Climate Change, with a view to a similar process. It was scheduled for quarter 1 2020-21 (April – June) and would have provided the Commission with a good overview of the subject. The Commission would, following this session, either scope additional reviews for itself or commission the Finance and Wellbeing Panel to take on additional topics to its programme. As, although the Finance and Wellbeing Panel had a programme of work, there were two unallocated review slots available for this purpose. However, the Commission's schedule for quarter 1 and 2, of the 2020/21 municipal year was deferred in light of the global SARS-CoV-2 (COVID -19) emergency, and general Commission activity was suspended between April – August in 2020.
- 6.7 With regard to the Finance and Wellbeing Panel's work programme, this was based on the 2019 Council Plan priorities. This Panel's work programme already had, as a central focus, a number of health reviews. The work plan for the panel had programmed reviews on:
- Healthy eating, activity and exercise
 - Isolation and Loneliness
 - Digital Access
 - Primary Care Networks
 - Mental Health
 - Unsafe discharge
- 6.8 In reviewing these topics, it was clear that these all had a strong health focus, with the **Healthy eating, activity and exercise** review talking to the council's priority of early prevention in issues. This was then to be followed by a review that addressed

Isolation and loneliness, which was highlighted in the first Government strategy for tackling the topic, "[A Connected Society - A strategy for tackling loneliness](#)". This review had a central health focus, in that the Government's strategy makes the case that:

"Three quarters of GPs surveyed have said they are seeing between one and five people a day suffering with loneliness, which is linked to a range of damaging health impacts, like heart disease, strokes and Alzheimer's disease. Around 200,000 older people have not had a conversation with a friend or relative in more than a month.

As part of the long-term plan for the NHS, funding will be provided to connect patients to a variety of activities, such as cookery classes, walking clubs and art groups, reducing demand on the NHS and improving patients' quality of life.

Up to a fifth of all UK adults feel lonely most or all of the time and with evidence showing loneliness can be as bad for health as obesity or smoking"

This was programmed as an important review, given its cross disciplinary, cross departmental and cross organisational links. This review also had the potential to made recommendations that put the individual at the centre of service thinking and therefore drew together appropriate Public Health, primary health, social care, sports, cultural services and technology, in order to address the needs of the community.

- 6.9 The review of **Primary Care Networks** and **Unsafe [hospital] discharge**, self-evidently have a health focus, as does the Panel's next scheduled review, for quarter 3 2021-22, of Mental health. The only review whose scope was not immediately health focused was Digital Access, although access to services, as seen during the COVID 19 emergency, has for health services, shifted access to digital channels, with virtual consultations, phone diagnosis and on-line booking services.
- 6.10 Having completed a desk top review of the function, in the context of the effectiveness of health scrutiny, there has also been discussions with the Corporate Management Team and the Frimley Clinical Commissioning Group's (CCG) Managing Director for Bracknell Forest. Having reflected on the information gained from reviewing the work programme, reviewing the minutes of the [Frimley Collaborative Commissioning Collaborative Board Meetings March 2020-21](#) and the discussions with senior Officers, this report confirms to the Commission's Chairman and the Commissioners that the council is satisfying its role in health scrutiny, and has discharged its scrutiny responsibility adequately over the time that the [new O&S arrangements](#) have been in place. That said, from this exercise a number of potential improvements have been identified, based on the changed context, since the work programme was put in place. These could be made to highlight when the Commission and Scrutiny Panel is discharging the function and therefore bring wider community attention to its work.
- 6.11 It should be noted that work with health partners, to establish and enhance consultation practices, data sharing and engagement practices has been ongoing for some time. It is noted that health provision is currently undergoing significant changes and the impact of the implementation of the 'Integration and Innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all' or Health White Paper on Bracknell Forest is yet to be determined. However, in reviewing the current arrangements for health provision the proposals for improved health engagement is captured within the recommendations set out within the report.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 Following discussions with the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, it was noted that the Finance and Wellbeing Panel had not, to date, undertaken a review focused on Value for Money. Whereas the Overview and Scrutiny Commission had considered this topic on a number of occasions, centred on pre-budget scrutiny and holding the Executive Member for Transformation and Finance to account in public. It is therefore proposed that this Council Plan theme of Finance / Value for Money could now formally sit with the Commission, instead of the Finance and Wellbeing Panel. This Panel being renamed as the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Given the work programme already set for this Panel, this would align to this programme of work and therefore more clearly position this Panel's health scrutiny work in the public's eye.
- 7.2 The Commission discharges the Council's strategic health scrutiny responsibilities and is therefore the body health providers need to consult with when major changes are proposed. However, the strength of our scrutiny arrangement is the visibility of public accountability, the space to demonstrate political leadership and through open scrutiny bridge any deficit of democratic accountability. So, in addition to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission receiving the findings and recommendations from the new Health and Care Panel, in respect of that Panel's scrutiny activities, that the Commission creates an additional scheduled space for policy debates between the Health and social care providers, the Executive and the Officers of the council. A template for this model already exists, in that this is the model that the Commission has adopted in sitting as the Crime and Disorder Panel, inviting Thames Valley Police, Chair of the Community Safety Partnership, the Executive Member for Culture, Delivery and Public Protection and Executive Director of People Services.
- 7.3 In this proposed change, a meeting of the Commission each year will be retitled to be the meeting of the strategic health scrutiny board, at which the local NHS service providers, Public Health leaders, Social Care leaders and the council's Executive Member can be engaged with and benefit from the critical friend function that is at the heart of the overview and scrutiny process. This would again not change what the Commission does but will give the public a clearer understanding of when health matters that affect the whole borough, are being discussed.
- 7.4 In scheduling this strategic meeting, this will not stop the Commission doing judicious reviews of current issues, at any time. In fact, this proposed change is in addition to the work that the Commission already does. Over the last few years, the Commission has tackled issues as they have arisen or, has taken updates from the NHS, when the health service has felt that the Commission should be briefed on a topic. This proposal is about giving more space to this important topic, not less or less frequent.
- 7.5 In making these two recommendations, the Statutory Scrutiny Officer, notes that these changes are within the purview of the Commission as these do not change any of the established structures, as they simply highlight the health scrutiny work in a way that makes this more accessible to the Commission itself and more importantly, to the public at large.

8 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 8.1 Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 ("the 2000 Act") requires all local authorities operating Executive arrangements to have one or more committees to

scrutinise the actions of the Executive and the authority and provide overview of matters affecting the authority's area and the inhabitants of that area ("overview and scrutiny" committees). Moreover, Executive arrangements by a local authority must ensure that its overview and scrutiny committee has power

- to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive,
- to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the Executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the Executive,
- to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the Executive,
- to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the Executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the Executive,
- to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the Executive on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area.

8.2 The recommendations to establish new thematically based panels from current arrangements aligns with the authority's statutory responsibilities.

Financial Advice

8.3 There are no financial implications arising from this report there are no proposals to increase the existing resource allocation. The recommended changes to the Commission and Panels do not have any impact on the provisions within the Members' Allowances Scheme.

Equalities Impact Assessment

8.4 When discharging its duty to have overview and scrutiny of the provision of health and public health within the Bracknell Forest Council area the Commission should consider the potential impact on all of the borough's residents to help reduce health inequalities due to the following factors: socio-economic status and deprivation, protected characteristics, vulnerable groups or geography.

Health inequalities are defined as unfair and avoidable differences in health across the population, and between different groups within society. Health inequalities arise because of the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These conditions influence opportunities for good health, and how people think, feel and act, and this shapes their mental health, physical health and wellbeing.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

8.5 Effective scrutiny is important to the successful functioning of local democracy by securing the efficient delivery of Council services and driving improvements. Poor scrutiny can be indicative of wider governance, leadership and/or service failure.

Background Papers

[Frimley Clinical Commissioning Group Meetings March 2020-21](#)

Contact for further information

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To: **Overview and Scrutiny Commission**
9 September 2021

Evaluation of Overview and Scrutiny Review – Care Leavers Statutory Scrutiny Officer

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To feedback the outcome of the follow up review of agreed recommendations from the Care Leavers review, conducted by the Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel. This report to the Commission highlights the Panel's findings from the follow up review into how recommendations from the Care Leavers Review had been implemented.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission endorses the Education, Skills and Growth Panels' decision to conclude its scrutiny work into care leavers.
- 2.2 That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission note the lessons learnt, including:
- reviewing the scoping document to incorporate learning from this follow up review by making clearer the intended outcomes and impact of any recommendations.
 - considering what can be accomplished in one day when designing programme of work.
 - reviews should take place no sooner than 6 months after the agreed implementation date to allow for impact to be embedded

3 Reasons for recommendation

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission is committed to following up review activity by its Panels to critically examine whether recommendations, as agreed by the Executive, have been implemented. This analysis is an opportunity to ensure that its work has a meaningful impact as the credibility of Overview and Scrutiny comes from demonstrable influence in making local people's lives better. The Panels have therefore been tasked by the Commission to try to assess the impact of scrutiny through the impact of the implementation of the agreed recommendations. This assessment extends to evaluation of the review arrangements and performance to flag up lessons learnt and suggest improvements for future activity.
- 3.2 It is the role of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer (SSO) to advise the Council on any issues or concerns that may arise about the operation of the scrutiny function and the SSO may on occasion be required to make a determination about what the law says and how this should be applied to any particular situation. In carrying out this statutory role, there is a need to have a nuanced and meaningful understanding of the scrutiny function, in order to accurately make judgments about its operation when disagreements or other issues arise.
- 3.3 The SSO is also responsible for providing advice to the Commission about whether or not recommendations from a review have been implemented to a sufficient standard or if further work should be commissioned, taking into account the impact this may have on the Panel's work programme.

4 Alternative Options

As part of the review process the Education, Skills and Growth Panel thoroughly considered the response proposed based on the reported implementation progress of the agreed recommendations; the measurement of their impact and assessment of learning to be shared about the conduct of the review process. If the Commission is minded not to accept the recommendations at 2.1 and 2.2 then the potential benefits of a further piece of review activity work would need to be fully assessed against existing priorities and resource requirements of the work programme.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission commissioned the Education, Skills and Growth Panel to carry out a review into care leavers as part of the overview and scrutiny four-year work programme, which has been developed to track themes within the new Council Plan.
- 5.2 The review was undertaken on 22 January 2020. The aim of the review was to seek assurance that care leavers in the borough benefitted from accommodation, education and life skills that ensured they had the best possible chance in life. The review entailed interviewing senior officers, visiting specialised accommodation and speaking to three care leavers in one day.
- 5.3 The final 'Care Leavers Review Report' and five recommendations ([follow link in Appendix A](#)) was agreed by the Commission in October 2020. Subsequently, the Executive agreed to implement the recommendations on November 2020.
- 5.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission is committed to following up review activity by its Panels to ensure implementation of recommendations as agreed by the Executive.
- 5.5 This follow up review work was supported by a Governance and Scrutiny Officer who supported Panel members by organising a meeting and developing a progress document to track completion of the recommendations. The document was circulated to officers in advance of the meeting Appendix B. This involved in the region of 8 hours of scrutiny officer time, including a meeting lasting one hour.
- 5.6 At the recommendations review meeting, held on 14 June 2021, the Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel interviewed the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning; Assistant Director: Early Help and Communities; Assistant Director: Children's Social Care; Life Chances Team Manager and Head of Services: Life Chances. Two of the Care Leavers who participated in the original review also attended this meeting.
- 5.7 During the meeting the Panel noted the majority of recommendations had been implemented in full, with the exception of Recommendation 1 (as contained in [Appendix A](#)). The pandemic had an impact on timescales for this review and was more complex than officers had originally anticipated. However, it was clear progress against the outstanding recommendation was well on the way.
- 5.8 The Panel identified the following outcomes and impact following a meeting of the Panel and additional detail can be found in Appendix B.

- A review of the Housing Allocations Policy was underway.
- The life skills booklet had been relaunched and finance information had been added to the Local Offer Care Leavers Website to ensure consistency in terms of the offer for care leavers. This helps children to be better prepared for adulthood with the appropriate skills and support. The help and support is now more accessible to young people.
- Councillors are more aware of care leavers and can better understand the lived experience to help them as corporate parents.
- Line management for all Children Looked After aged 17.5 years had move to the Assistant Team Manager for Leaving Care to help prepare them for adulthood, which meant visits were increased. This provides better transition and young people have a better understanding of what the support will be like post 18.
- The Staying Put Policy had been updated and was now consistent with most other local authorities. This is now easier for young people and foster carers to understand.
- The Joint Protocol between Children's Social Care and Housing Team had been revised to formally set out responsibilities of each team, allowing staff to work more closely together. This will benefit young people to make it clear what to expect taking into account of past experiences.
- The first annual awards ceremony for care leavers was planned for September 2021. This is to provide an opportunity to share achievements with other young people and share aspirations.

5.9 Panel members noted it would have been easier to review the outcomes and impact of its recommendations if they had been identified more clearly within the initial scope and when the Panel met to discuss and agree its recommendations. It is recommended the initial scoping document for reviews is changed to capture the learning from this review. It was also agreed the schedule for the one-day event was too full and the amount of work involved would be better spread over a number of days.

5.10 In summary, good progress has been made against the recommendations as identified in Appendix A and was adequately resourced. The service department contributed effectively to the review. Future scoping documents need to identify intended outcomes and impact, including a hypothesis for Panel members to 'test' while carrying out their review. This should lead to better outcomes for residents.

5.11 The Panel considered whether this review could be more thematic, and it was agreed to be kept departmental, as it was the first review under the new structure. Future reviews have begun to take a broader approach.

6 Commentary from Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chair, Councillor Gill Birch

6.1 The Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel were satisfied that the majority of the recommendations in the 'Care Leavers Review Report' had been implemented and noted this would be reported to Council in the annual report.

6.2 It was particularly good to see the impact the review had on the support for Care Leavers' so that their lives were improved and the transition to independent living was more stable. This was evidenced by the strengthened formalising of the working relationship of Children's Social care and The Housing Team with the review of their Joint Protocol. In fact, a member of the Housing Team now attended drop in sessions

with Children's Social Care and have a presence in MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub).

Half of all care leavers are now visited by a Personal Advisor and an Assistant Team Manager now oversees the transition into the Care Leavers team.

- 6.3 We conducted this review in one-day, which included interviews as well as on-site visits, but felt it would have been more manageable if we had separated the activities and conducted them across multiple days.
- 6.4 As the first Panel to review its recommendations in a formal way we discovered during the process it was difficult to identify the impact scrutiny work had on the lives of care leavers in the borough. This would have been easier to evaluate if measures to monitor the outcomes with the young carers had been established as part of the process and either a survey or a short meeting with the people interviewed asking the same key questions to establish impact of the review. This learning will hopefully influence future reviews by changing the focus of the scoping document to be clearer about outcomes and impacts which the review is aiming to achieve and how this will be measured rather than just the process of completing a review showing an aspect of the council's services.
- 6.5 We felt it was important to share the learning from this review with the Commission to enable us, and officers and everyone involved in the review, to be clear about the anticipated outcomes and impact of any review.

7 Equalities Impact Assessment

- 7.1 An [Equalities Impact Assessment](#) was conducted when the report was initially completed.

8 Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 8.1 As Corporate Parents it is the duty of the local authority to ensure care leavers in the Borough benefit from accommodation, education and life skills that ensure they have the best possible chance in life. Implementing these recommendations will help to ensure we deliver on our Corporate Parenting duties.

In order for the value of scrutiny to be assessed it is important to monitor the implementation of agreed recommendations and measure their impact. Without this ongoing evaluation significant resources could be devoted to activities that neither add value for improving local residents' lives nor directly support the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives.

- 8.2 There is a risk if we do not learn the lessons from this review that we may struggle to identify the outcomes and impact of future reviews, as well as ensuring they are conducted in as efficient way as possible.

9 Financial Advice

- 9.1 As per the initial review, the recommendations above have no financial implications.

10 Climate Change Implications

- 10.1 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to have no impact on emissions of CO2.

As per the initial review, the reasons the Council believes that this will have no impact on emissions are because changes to policy for care leavers does not have a significant impact on climate changes issues.

Contact for further information
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Appendix A

The Care Leavers Review was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission in October 2020 and can be found [Care leavers review - recommendations report | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix B – Report on Care Leavers Review of Recommendations meeting held on 14 June 2021

| | Recommendation as agreed by Executive on 13 October 2020 | Update provided | Chair observations / Panel observations |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1 | <p>Review the Housing Allocation Policy 2015 to include consideration of priority being awarded to care leavers where the authority has a Corporate Parenting role, particularly those who opt to 'stay put' with their foster family.</p> <p>Timescale identified: To be reviewed by 01/02/2021</p> | <p>The Council's Housing Allocation Policy sets out who is awarded priority on the 'My Choice' Housing Register. In 2020 the Policy was updated to reflect the latest homelessness legislation and duties brought in by the Homelessness Reduction Act.</p> <p>A full review of the Allocations Policy is underway. This is a significant undertaking and will include consideration of the needs or, and priority awarded, to a number of specific groups, including Care Leavers and will require a detailed public consultation which will inevitably take some time to complete.</p> <p>For new build housing developments, in negotiating local lettings policies for affordable housing, the Council is consistently seeking agreement to letting a quota of properties to care leavers to secure a stream of suitable move-on accommodation.</p> | <p>It was noted a considerable amount of feasibility work had been undertaken with a view to changing the Housing Allocations Policy and awarding Care Leavers priority status. Cllr Dr Gareth Barnard explained that further evidence to make this change was required, including a full review of the Policy. Cllr Gill Birch, Chair of the Panel, accepted this explanation and that work would continue to check the viability of changing the Housing Allocations Policy.</p> <p>Panel members agreed recommendation 1 had been completed but noted further evidence gathering would continue to further this objective.</p> |
| 2 | <p>Review life skills and money management information to ensure consistency of provision: information available on the Local Offer Care Leavers website and consider frequency of visits to prepare care leavers for independence.</p> | <p>The life skills booklet has been relaunched and finance information has now been added to the Local Offer Care Leavers Website https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/children-and-family-services/fostering-adoption-and-looked-after-children/care-leavers/finances</p> | <p>Panel members welcomed the revision of the life skills booklet to include finance information and how to manage utility bills, etc. These were areas identified by care leavers during the review as issues they struggled with particularly when they became independent.</p> |

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| | Timescale identified: To be reviewed 01/12/2021 | This ensures there is a consistency in terms of the offer for care leavers. The line management for all Children Looked After aged 17.5 years has now moved to the Assistant Team Manager for Leaving Care to help prepare them for adulthood. This means that visits are increased as they receive visits from their social worker as well as their personal advisor. | It was also noted the revised version of this booklet was available on the website. Panel Members acknowledged the comprehensive list of contacts now available. Panel members agreed recommendation 2 had been completed. |
| 3 | Revise the Staying Put Policy using plain English; develop an easy-read version with foster carers and care leavers and consider extending the three-month time limit when a care leaver can return to their foster family. Timescale identified: To be reviewed by 01/12/2020 with any identified changes to policy to be implemented by 01/02/2021) | The policy for Staying Put is now accessed via Tri-X. This means the policy is not only more accessible to all but is now consistent with how most other Local Authorities. There is also guidance through the Fostering Network and Coram BAAF to help with understanding. The Assistant Team Manager for Leaving Care has developed and delivered two training sessions for foster carers around Staying Put and these will continue to be part of the foster carers training programme. The limit in terms of returning to foster family is very much a case by case discussion and we would also focus on what is best for the care leavers in terms of returning. | It was noted the Staying Put Policy had been updated and that it was now consistent with most other local authorities. Panel members agreed recommendation 3 had been completed. |
| 4 | Review the joint protocol between Children's Social Care (CSC) and Housing Team for assessing and meeting the needs of homeless young people. Timescale identified: | Practice and policy have been reviewed and a new joint protocol drafted which has been shared with relevant teams in both Children's and Housing Services. Internal practice and joint working in assessing and meeting the needs of homeless 16/17 year olds is strong. | It was noted the Joint Protocol between Children's Social Care and Housing Team had been revised to formally set out the responsibilities of each team in this area. Panel members agreed recommendation 4 had been completed. |

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| | To be reviewed any policy changes implemented within agreed timeframes with the housing team, no later than 01/02/2021. | Housing and Welfare Services have also instigated a weekly drop-in for Children's Services staff (across the front door, social care and early help) to consult on cases, which facilitates closer working. Prior to the onset of the pandemic, Housing also attended the MASH once a week and this will resume when services are operating normally again. | |
| 5 | Enable care leavers' achievements to be acknowledged and give them the opportunity to participate by replicating the offer to Children Looked After. | We are in the process of planning for an annual awards ceremony for Care Leavers and also extending the participation offer to care leavers. | It was acknowledged this piece of work had been delayed due to the pandemic. Panel members asked when this recommendation would be implemented and were informed there was a provisional date in September. |
| | Timescale identified: To be reviewed by 01/12/2021. | The leaving care team are now using Braccan Walk as a location for Care Leavers to walk in to meet with PA's as well as a PA being based with Rainforest Walk. This is a means of proactively seeking out to support Care Leavers as opposed to them having to come to us for help and support. | Panel members were pleased to note a Care Leaver was to be appointed to sit on the Bracknell Forest Participation Group to seek their views on a wide range of projects. Panel members agreed recommendation 5 had been completed and looked forward to attending the event in September to celebrate Care Leavers' achievements. |