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NOTICE OF MEETING
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

07 JUNE 2007

TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

You are requested to attend a meeting of the above Commission on **07 June 2007 at 7.30 pm** in the Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House, Bracknell, to transact the business set out in the attached agenda.

Alison Sanders
Director of Corporate Services

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Councillor Edger (Chairman)
Councillor Thompson (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors Baily, Mrs Beadsley, Mrs Birch, Browne, Brunel-Walker, Finnie, Leake, McLean,
Ms Whitbread and Worrall

Substitute Members of the Commission

Councillors Beadsley, Dudley, Kensall, Mrs Pile, Mrs Ryder, Mrs Shillcock and Simonds

Church Representative Members*

Mr G Anderson and Mr M G Gibbons

Parent Governor Representative Member*

Mr I Sharland

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Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services
Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1AQ

* with voting rights in respect of education matters only.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
07 June 2007 (7.30 pm)
Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House, Bracknell.

AGENDA

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|--|----------------|
| 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS
To receive apologies for absence and to note the attendance of any substitute members. | |
| 2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission held on 15 March 2007. | 1 - 8 |
| 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP
Members are required to declare any personal or prejudicial 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. | |
| 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. | |
| <u>Audit and Inspection</u> | |
| 5. ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER
To consider the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter of March 2007 from the Audit Commission, presented by Greg McKintosh (KPMG) and David Bryant (Audit Commission). | 9 - 28 |
| 6. INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL ASSURANCE REPORT AND STATEMENT ON INTERNAL CONTROL 2006/07
To consider the Internal Audit Annual Assurance Report and Statement on Internal Control 2006/07. | 29 - 50 |
| 7. AUDIT COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES
To nominate two Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to act as lead Members on audit issues. | |
| <u>Performance Monitoring</u> | |
| 8. DEPARTMENTAL OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE
To consider the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of the fourth 2006/07 Quarterly Operations Reports (previously circulated) for:

a. The Chief Executive's Office; and
b. Corporate Services | |

These can be viewed via <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/your-council/yc-council-performance/yc-measuring-council-performance.htm#qor>

Discussion with the Director of Corporate Services and the Assistant Chief Executive on possible Overview and Scrutiny coverage in 2007/08.

Holding the Executive to Account

9. **EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN** 51 - 60
- Forthcoming items on the Executive Forward Plan of a corporate nature are attached for consideration.

Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

10. **PAST ACTIVITIES AND INDICATIVE WORK PROGRAMME** 61 - 66
- To receive a summary of the Commission's overview and scrutiny activities in the last three years and the indicative work programme endorsed by the previous Overview and Scrutiny Commission. Members of the Commission are invited to consider which issues they would like to include in their work programme for 2007/08.
11. **PANEL UPDATES**
- To receive verbal updates from Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairmen, the Chairman of the Joint East Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and from the lead Member on the Commission's Working Group on health funding.

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Agenda Item 2

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION 15 MARCH 2007 (7.30 - 10.40 pm)

Present: Councillors Sargeant (Chairman), McLean (Vice-Chairman), Beadsley, Mrs Birch, Earwicker, Edger, Leake, Thompson, Baily (Substitute), Kendall (Substitute) and North

Church Representatives:

Mr G Anderson

Also Present:

Councillor North, Executive Member for Public Protection and Services
Councillor Piasecki

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Browne and Worrall

In attendance:

Richard Beaumont, Head of Performance & Scrutiny
Alan Nash, Head of Finance
Victor Nicholls, Assistant Chief Executive
Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment and Leisure
Alison Sanders, Direct of Corporate Services

46. **Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members**

The Commission noted the attendance of the following substitute members:

Councillor Baily for Councillor Browne
Councillor Kendall for Councillor Worrall

47. **Minutes and Matters Arising**

Minute 41 – Smartcard Transport Pilot Scheme – further to the request for additional information, the Director of Corporate Services introduced the Director of Environment and Leisure who provided the Commission with a brief overview of the Scheme, the national context in terms of a national travel card and answered Members' questions in respect of this issue. The Commission indicated that it might wish to return to this issue at a future meeting.

Minute 41 – Digitv Scheme – the Director of Corporate Services advised that additional information about Digitv had been circulated to Members.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission held on 18 January 2007 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

48. **Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

There were no declarations of interest or indications that members would be participating whilst under the party whip.

49. Internal Audit Plan 2007/08

The Head of Finance (Alan Nash) presented a report which sought the Commission's views on the proposed Internal Audit Plan for 2007/08. Members were advised a new approach had been taken for this Audit Plan, which was heavily influenced by an assessment of risk. Consequently the Audit Plan focussed on those areas of the Council's business which would have the greatest influence on the achievement of its objectives. Also highlighted was the need for flexibility in the Plan, so the number of days shown for each audit area was purely indicative and subject to change as required by circumstance. The Council's Head of Finance was confident that the Audit Plan could be delivered within budget. If significant changes to the Plan became necessary, it was proposed that these would be discussed with those members nominated by the Commission to have specific responsibility for audit matters and reported to the Commission in the regular internal audit assurance reports.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:

- i) Contingency Planning – the basis for the proposal of 40 days included for contingencies was queried and Members were advised that previous experience would suggest that this would be a realistic level of contingency provision;
- ii) Transport – Members queried the allocation of 10 audit days to transport, which had been identified as an area of weakness in the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter. It was clarified that the Annual Audit & Inspection letter referred to the Local Transport Plan. The proposed audit was largely concerned with tenders for Home to School transport, to carry out a review of procurement and the financial consequences of this;
- iii) Housing Stock Transfer – it was noted that a large allocation had been made to this issue (20 days), which reflected the substantial amount of work which would be required, irrespective of the final outcome of the vote
- iv) Schools – Members were asked how schools were selected for audit and were advised that factors such as previous experience, limited assurance, changes in bursars or head teachers were all considered in addition to a cyclical approach based upon a controlled risk self assessment prepared by schools which identified high levels of risk;
- v) Bracknell Forest Services (BFS) – BFS would be audited under the Social Services and Housing audit area and would also be linked to the Housing Stock Transfer;
- vi) Total Audit Days – comparatively speaking, Bracknell Forest's planned audit days were less than neighbouring authorities and members were assured that this was reflective of the lower level of risk within Bracknell Forest compared to other authorities;
- vii) Internal and External Audit – Members were advised that audit work was carried out internally as much as possible as this was done at a lower cost than external audit. This relied upon the external auditor being satisfied with the standard of internal audit, which was currently the case. There was also co-ordination between internal and external audit to minimise duplication;
- viii) Housing Management – members were advised that if the housing stock transferred to a Registered Social Landlord (RSL), audits would become the responsibility of the RSL; and
- ix) Sheltered Housing – this did not present a substantial risk, which was reflected by a low audit day allocation. This would be used to audit fewer sheltered housing facilities in rotation but in more depth.

50. **2006 Comprehensive Performance Assessment Results**

The Head of Performance and Scrutiny advised members that Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) results for all unitary authorities had been published on 22 February 2007. Bracknell Forest's CPA results were supported by an Annual Audit and Inspection Letter (AAIL) which had been presented to the Executive in draft and the final AAIL would be being brought to the Commission at its next meeting in June 2007. Key features were a retained overall CPA rating of 3, however the assessed direction of travel had moved from improving well to improving adequately largely because of issues around:

- Adult social care
- Supporting people
- The operational leadership of these areas

It was **AGREED** that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission consider the CPA results in more detail at its meeting on 7 June 2007

51. **Report of the Working Group on Anti-Social Behaviour**

Members were advised that the Berkshire Healthcare Trust (PCT) was now considering the provision of mental health care for 16/17 year olds, and the Commission would be kept informed of any further developments. As agreed at the previous meeting of the Commission, the Executive Member for Public Protection and Services attended to seek clarification around some of the recommendations made in the final report of the Working Group on Anti-social Behaviour and discuss issues and concerns relating to anti-social behaviour, prior to giving the Executive's response to the report. The following conclusions were reached with regard to the recommendations made in the Working Group report (page 28 of the agenda pack):

Recommendation 1: Non Executive Members were not involved enough in existing processes which deal with anti-social behaviour. Members were advised that the new Local Area Agreement guidance would affect current ways of working, particularly in relation to partnership working.

Recommendation 2: The removal or abstraction of Neighbourhood Police Officers was an issue and Thames Valley Police would be invited to clarify the reasons and processes for such abstractions. It was agreed that it would be helpful to also invite the Town and Parish Councils to this presentation.

Recommendation 3: The School Liaison Officer (SLO) had been appointed and there had been positive feedback on the progress of the work achieved by the SLO. Fuller details of this would be provided at the next Adult, Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting on 20 March, with a report by the SLO on activities to date.

Recommendation 4: As already detailed, the PCT were considering the issue of mental health provision for 16/17 year olds. It was unclear whether the main issue was the selection criteria for existing services or a lack of resources. The Executive Member for Public Protection and Services agreed to investigate this further.

Recommendation 5: It was agreed that as a report on the issue of supporting ex-prisoners was due out in June, this issue could be reconsidered at a later stage, with a watching brief in the meantime.

Recommendation 6: The Draft Alcohol Strategy was to be presented to the Adult, Social Care & Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel next week.

Recommendation 7: This issue was being considered by Councillor Leake as Chairman of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel, with a report back to the Executive to clarify matters.

Recommendation 8: It was apparent that largely because of differing performance reporting frameworks and service aims, partnership working did on occasion encounter difficulties. It was recognised that effective partnership working in the future was crucial and this was something to work towards. Again, the recent Local Area Agreement guidance would influence future partnership working.

Recommendation 9: There were already targets in place in relation to anti-social behaviour as part of the Local Area Agreement. It was acknowledged that an agreed definition of anti-social behaviour for the purposes of performance reporting would be useful.

Recommendation 10: There was agreement that this discussion had been very helpful and had provided additional detail for the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel to incorporate in its review of this report in November 2007.

The Executive Member thanked the Working Group for their report.

52. **Report of the Working Group on Youth Provision**

Councillor Mrs Birch and Councillor Beadsley presented this report and highlighted the following issues:

- i) the Working Group was very pleased to report that the young people of Bracknell Forest were an asset to the community and a press release had been prepared and issued to draw attention to this fact;
- ii) the young people of Bracknell Forest were found to have good social skills;
- iii) the report identified and listed a substantial number and variety of activities available to young people within the Borough, however young people were keen to have more facilities and activities made available locally;
- iv) the Town Centre redevelopment was seen as key with a recommendation from the Working Group that the Town Centre Regeneration Team consult the Youth Forum on and work to deliver facilities for young people in the Town Centre;
- v) most of the activities listed were relatively inexpensive which was very positive;
- vi) opportunities for young people to volunteer needed expanding and making accessible to all young people; and
- vii) access and transport were both issues for young people for which there were no easy answers.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:

- i) Perceptions of Young People – this report reflected a very positive and realistic view of young people within Bracknell Forest which was often undermined by the actions of a few young people;

- ii) The Activities List – this list within the report needed to be made available and publicised throughout the Borough;
- iii) Awards – awards schemes such as the recent Bracknell Awards for Teenagers were to be encouraged as a useful way of recognising the many achievements of young people;
- iv) Parenting – good parenting was very important for most young people to provide the attention, opportunity and encouragement necessary to help them achieve; and
- v) Transport – the need to provide transport links to enable young people to attend activities.

Gratitude was expressed for the time and effort contributed by the Working Group in the production of a very informative and useful report. It was **AGREED** that the report be forwarded to the Executive Member for Children’s Services.

53. **Report of the Working Group on Libraries**

Councillor Mrs Birch presented this report which detailed the review of libraries within Bracknell Forest carried out by the Working Group.

Members were advised that all library users placed a high value on libraries and their staff and facilities including ICT. Other findings included the importance of libraries as part of their local communities with users often visiting on a weekly basis and enjoying a high standard of service.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:

- i) Remit of the Report – this did not deal with the operational side of the libraries service, so issues such as staffing were not considered;
- ii) Home Taught Children – there was an increasing trend towards teaching children at home, for which the library service was essential;
- iii) Social Issues – concerns were raised around the isolating effects of ICT and the inadequate levels by which reading and learning were improving;
- iv) Crowthorne Library – it was felt that the good practice evident at this new library in terms of layout and displays should have been highlighted in this report and shared across the Borough;
- v) Observations/Conclusions and Recommendations – it was observed that all of these required further consideration by the Executive Member rather than just the recommendations alone; and
- vi) Report Format – it was agreed that it would be helpful to agree a standardised format for future working group reports, although a level of flexibility would always be necessary in view of the broad range of issues being considered.

Members thanked the Working Group for the work involved in producing a very informative report. It was **AGREED** that the report be forwarded to the Executive Member for Education and Libraries, and that he be invited to attend the next meeting of the Commission to provide feedback on both the observations/conclusions and recommendations made within the report.

54. **Departmental Overview and Performance**

The Director of Corporate Services presented the Quarterly Operations Report (QOR) in respect of Corporate Services for the third quarter of 2006/07. Highlights included the completion of the Town Centre S106 agreement, the high level of responses to the Disability Equality Scheme consultation, the progress made with the

Community Cohesion Strategy, the 'go live' for the Customer Relationship Management IT System in November 2006 and the ongoing preparation for the elections in May 2007.

Looking forward to the final quarter of 2006/07, substantial work would be needed to support the Town Centre & Civic Centre processes, produce and consult on, the draft Gender Equality Scheme & Community Cohesion Strategy, progress the Customer Relationship Management system, support the Your Homes Project, update the risk strategy and consult on, the IT Strategy.

In discussions, Members raised the following issues:

- i) Elections – the need for sufficient staff and resources to ensure the elections run smoothly;
- ii) Civic Centre – the possibilities for increased Member involvement in processes around the work being done on the Civic Centre. It was acknowledged that the timetabling of the different stages of work for the Civic Centre was tight, so Members needed to be mindful of this, however the Member Development Charter Steering Group intended to have some input into the Civic Centre processes;
- iii) S106 Agreement – clarification was sought and provided with regard to what the Town Centre S106 Agreement with the Bracknell Regeneration Partnership was comprised of and should deliver;
- iv) Neighbourhood Forums – Members queried how effective these were. They were advised that a review of Neighbourhood Forums had been carried out last year which had concluded that the existing format represented the best balance between effectiveness and available resources at the moment. However, a further review was underway in light of concerns that not all residents were able to participate in the forums;
- v) Demographics – Members discussed the issue of the changing population within Bracknell Forest with the introduction of a number of residents of ethnic origin new to the Borough. It was felt that additional provision was needed to support these new residents and communities and Members were assured that mapping was underway to identify what was needed and focus resources accordingly;
- vi) Budgets – Members were pleased to note that the targeted substantial underspend within Corporate Services of £450,000 by the end of the financial year had been met in order to offset overspends in other areas of the Council. However this was not without an effect on performance; and
- vii) Projects – Members were asked how substantial projects such as 'Your Homes' were managed in terms of resources and staffing for example. Members were advised that Corporate Services provided a substantial level of support in such instances with finances, staff and resource management for the areas of the Council involved.

The Assistant Chief Executive presented the QOR in respect of the Chief Executive's Office for the third quarter of 2006/07. Of great relevance to the work of the Chief Executive's Office were the recent Local Government White Paper and Local Government Bill, as these documents essentially set out the future work programme for the Chief Executive's Office. Highlights for the third quarter included the work on the Town Centre with the S106 Agreement signed and development agreement making good progress. The Civic Hub Work Programme was progressing well with the current focus on the designs for the building and procurement issues. The finalised Local Area Agreement had been submitted in January 2007, which should be operational from 1 April 2007 and the work for the CPA in October had already been started.

The forward look was focussed upon the same four areas of work plus the recent Local Area Agreement guidance which indicated that in future the LAA would be the only place where local authority targets would be agreed and a duty of co-operation was placed upon partners to achieve future targets. The implications of the new LAA guidance were therefore far-reaching and would require substantial work in this area.

55. **Executive Forward Plan**

The Executive Forward Plan for items of a corporate nature was noted.

56. **Panel Updates**

Lifelong Learning and Children's Service Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Members were advised that all of the planned work programme had been completed with subsequent improvements made to the school transfer process, an improved situation with regard to school exclusions via the use of special units and the successful launch of the Youth Website.

Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The investigation into the allocation of Primary Care Trust (PCT) funds in the last financial year was ongoing, by a working group of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission. The Chief Executive of the PCT had been interviewed and the Executive Member for Adult Services and Housing would shortly be consulted with. In addition to this there was consideration of the role of the Health and Social Care Partnership Board. This current work was the first of a two part process, which would produce a report recommending whether or not this matter should be pursued further and the second, more involved part of the process carried out. Members were advised that the use of an external expert had been found to be very beneficial and provision needed to be made in future budgets to allow for this possibility again. A working group of the Panel had also been considering the health implications around extended schools and the way the Council and the PCT worked together on this issue at budgetary and operational levels. The Working Group on the Health Strategy was in place.

Since December 2006, the Joint East Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been established and was currently considering issues around CAMHS provision and community health. It was reported that meetings of the Joint Committee had gone well and the health partners considered it important and a prime focus for consultation. It was **AGREED** that the Joint East Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee would in future have its own heading under Panel Updates.

Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Logistical difficulties prevented a full report at this meeting, however Members were advised that the Annual Audit Inspection Letter had commented on the Supporting People Programme.

Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The Local Development Framework was progressing well and the transfer of Parking Enforcement to the Council had gone smoothly. Of particular note were the Design Awards for developments within Bracknell Forest which were to be encouraged to promote high quality and individual design for new developments locally. This was

particularly necessary in view of the forthcoming Town Centre redevelopment and large-scale housing development expected.

57. Scrutiny of External Public Service Bodies

The Head of Performance and Scrutiny presented a report which detailed the principal public bodies external to the Council for the Commission to consider how it and the Scrutiny Panels might extend their scrutiny function to cover. As well as arising from a previously expressed interest in extending scrutiny to public services, by the Commission, the Local Government Bill currently before Parliament would be likely to expand the role for local authority Overview and Scrutiny in relation to other public service providers. Members were advised that it therefore seemed likely that the scrutiny of some public bodies would become a statutory requirement and others may be included via locally agreed governance protocols.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:

- i) Resources – concerns were expressed that this expanded remit would not be achievable without the commitment of additional resources to Overview and Scrutiny;
- ii) Focussing Work – the increased need for Overview and Scrutiny to clearly identify and focus its work upon specific issues was acknowledged; and
- iii) Internal Issues – the need to ensure that scrutiny of external bodies was not done at the expense of important internal issues such as transport, was regarded as essential.

The Commission expressed its thanks to Councillor Sargeant for his Chairmanship of the Commission and for his commitment and service to the local authority and residents of the Borough. It acknowledged that Councillor Sargeant's wealth of experience would be missed and Commission Members wished him all the best for the future.

CHAIRMAN

Annual Audit and Inspection Letter

Bracknell Forest Borough Council

The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high-quality local services for the public. Our remit covers around 11,000 bodies in England, which between them spend more than £180 billion of public money each year. Our work covers local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services.

As an independent watchdog, we provide important information on the quality of public services. As a driving force for improvement in those services, we provide practical recommendations and spread best practice. As an independent auditor, we ensure that public services are good value for money and that public money is properly spent.

Status of our reports

This report provides an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council, drawing on audit, inspection and performance assessment work and is prepared by your Relationship Manager.

In this report, the Commission summarises findings and conclusions from the statutory audit, which have previously been reported to you by your appointed auditor. Appointed auditors act separately from the Commission and, in meeting their statutory responsibilities, are required to exercise their professional judgement independently of the Commission (and the audited body). The findings and conclusions therefore remain those of the appointed auditor and should be considered within the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission.

Reports prepared by appointed auditors are:

- prepared in the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission; and
- addressed to members or officers and prepared for the sole use of the audited body; no responsibility is taken by auditors to any member or officer in their individual capacity, or to any third party.

Copies of this report

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Our overall summary

- 1 This report provides an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council. It draws on the findings and conclusions from the audit of the Council, from inspections and other work that have been undertaken in the last year, and from a wider analysis of the Council's performance and its improvement over the last year, as measured through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework.
- 2 The report is addressed to the Council, and in particular has been written for councillors; but it is available as a public document for stakeholders, including members of the community served by the Council.
- 3 The main messages for the Council included in this report are as follows.
 - While the Council remains a 3 star council, its improvement is now assessed as being less strong (improving adequately) than it was assessed last year (improving well).
 - The Council is generally improving services, with many improving well. It continues to achieve good overall customer satisfaction and provides good overall value for money, but its track record is mixed.
 - There are important areas where the Council will need to focus improvement efforts. Three are of particular concern: adults' social care, housing-related services for vulnerable people, and the operational leadership of these two services (the last of which has recently been dealt with). In addition, there is one other area of acknowledged weakness: community safety.
 - In addition, the Council will need to focus effort on progressing housing issues, and on agreeing updated medium-term ambitions and re-aligning the medium-term financial strategy.

Action needed by the Council

- 4 The CPA and Direction of Travel assessments summarise the Council's overall performance during the past year. They take account of all the findings and recommendations made by the Commission, your appointed auditor KPMG LLP and other inspectorates to the Council as part of individual audit and inspection reports, issued separately during the year.
- 5 Based on this work, we consider that councillors need to ensure that appropriate focus and priority are given to five areas.
- 6 First, the Council needs to focus and sustain effort to address three areas of acknowledged weaknesses:
 - adults' social care – in particular, completing an effective commissioning strategy for older people and associated purchasing plans, and ensuring a fully effective approach to performance management;

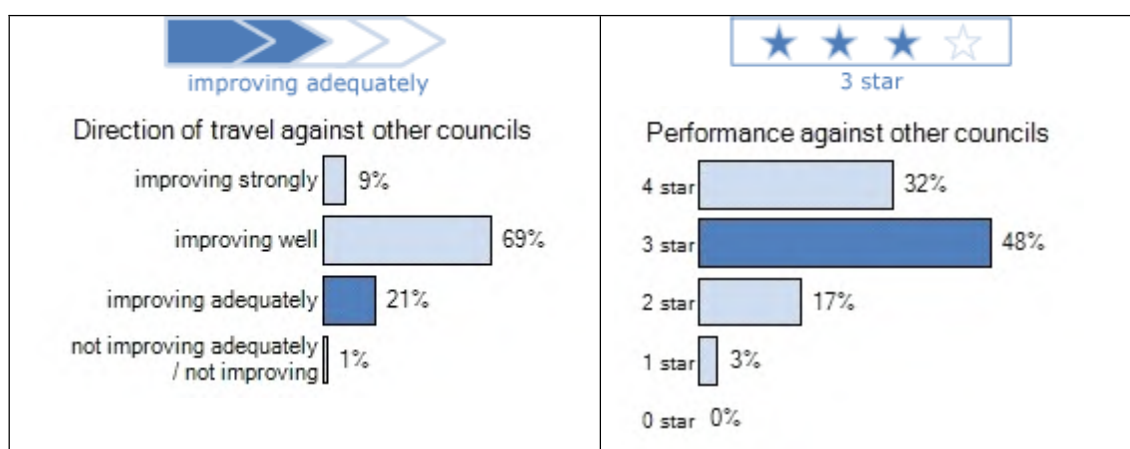
- supporting people care – in particular, strengthening the business plan and improving managerial capacity to focus on the priorities which the Council is seeking to address in terms of outcomes against its strategic priorities; and
 - community safety – in particular, providing improved strategic leadership and performance management.
- 7 So far as adults' social services is concerned, the two previous years' letters have noted that the Council has made considerable investments in delivering its plan to promote independence of adults and older people, and put in place good structures to support the delivery of improved performance. However, there still remains some way to go before performance management systems are sufficiently embedded throughout the service. Government has identified the Council's rate of improvement as a matter of concern. The challenge for the Council is therefore ensuring that recent improvement continues in a sustainable way, and especially accelerating the pace of improvement and modernisation. Completing an effective commissioning strategy for older people, and further advancing the approach to performance management, will be key to improvement.
- 8 In relation to the supporting people service, improvement over the past two years has been limited. The Council agreed a business plan to address the recommendations of the Commission's 2005 inspection, but this does not make clear the priorities which the Council is seeking to address in terms of outcomes against its strategic priorities. The Council acknowledges that the Supporting People agenda is not progressing as well as it should be, and that it needs to re-focus its approach to tackle the right issues in the right way. It is planning significant management changes in early 2007, and has increased money in next year's budget, to address these concerns. Given that this service is aimed at meeting the needs of the most vulnerable members of the community, and progress has been limited despite the need for it being highlighted in the last two year's letters, the need for urgent improvement is a significant issue.
- 9 The third weak area where the Council, with its partners, needs to improve performance is community safety. Although overall crime rates are generally low in Bracknell Forest, crime increased between 2004/05 and 2005/06, and continued to do so over the early part of 2006, and it is unclear from the most recent data whether the position is improving. The Crime Reduction Partnership is not as effective as necessary. The Council is taking steps to address these issues, and believes it is now on target to reduce the increase in crime rates by the end of the year, from which it can work towards achieving its target of a 2.6 per cent reduction by the end of 2007/08. Achieving this presents a key challenge, and will require sustained effort over the next year or so.
- 10 The Council will also need to focus considerable effort and attention on housing issues over the next year – in particular, ensuring continued focus on project and performance management to improve service delivery while at the same time developing robust new arrangements for the service. In relation to housing management performance, the improvement over the past year is encouraging. But much remains to be done to ensure the service delivers the standards that tenants have a right to expect.

- 11 How such improvements are to be delivered will depend partly on whether the service is transferred to a social housing provider or remains in-house. As noted in previous letters, if the service is not transferred, the Council will face considerable financial difficulties which will make it extremely difficult (at best) to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010, and then maintain that standard. But whatever the outcome of the tenants' ballot on housing stock transfer, the Council will have to ensure continued improvement during any transition period; and it will need to put in place robust arrangements to ensure longer-term quality of service and delivery of its strategic housing role.
- 12 Finally, the Council needs to agree clear updated medium-term ambitions and priorities that build on the broad priorities in the Community Plan, and to re-align the medium-term financial strategy as necessary to ensure the resources are available to deliver them. The Council is well aware that the recent acute financial pressures it has faced will continue, so that agreeing future priorities will require it urgently to resolve some difficult choices. Bearing in mind that this process will take place after the election of a new Council, it also needs to ensure that effective transitional plans are in place until the updated plans are adopted.

How is Bracknell Forest Borough Council performing?

- 13 The Audit Commission’s overall judgement is that Bracknell Forest Borough Council is improving adequately, and we have classified the Council as three star in its current level of performance under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. These assessments have been completed in all single tier and county councils with the results shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Direction of Travel and CPA, February 2007



Source: Audit Commission

- 14 Our overall assessment is summarised as follows. Bracknell Forest Borough Council is improving adequately and is a three star council.
- 15 The Council is generally improving services, with many improving well. It continues to achieve good overall customer satisfaction and provides good overall value for money, but its track record is mixed. Education and children’s services generally are improving well. Recycling rates have greatly improved, and housing management has improved. The Council provides good community leadership, and works well with its partners. It has made good community improvements such as health, road safety and street scene, which are increasingly visible to local people.
- 16 However, three areas of concern remain: adults’ social care, housing-related services for vulnerable people, and the operational leadership of these two services. The Council has now dealt with the leadership issue and has the corporate ability to support future improvement. It is making good progress on its plans to sustain improvement and is well-advanced in reviewing its workforce to deliver them, but some are not robust enough. Firm plans are now in place to regenerate Bracknell town centre. The Council’s medium-term financial strategy reflects the key improvement priorities.

Our overall assessment - the CPA scorecard

Table 2

Element	Assessment	
	2005	2006
Direction of Travel judgement	Improving well	Improving adequately
Overall	3 star	3 star
Current performance	out of 4	out of 4
Children and young people	3	3
Social care (adults)	2	2
Use of resources	3	3
Housing	1	2
Environment	2	3
Culture	3	2
Benefits	4	3
Corporate assessment/capacity to improve (based on assessment in 2004 - not reassessed in 2005 Or 2006)	4 out of 4	4 out of 4

(Note: 1 = lowest and, 4 = highest)

The improvement since last year - our Direction of Travel report

What evidence is there of the Council improving outcomes?

Overview

- 17 The Council is generally making improvements to services, and many have improved well, especially if latest (unaudited) data is used, and it is generally sustaining improvements made before. It has made important contributions to wider community outcomes which are increasingly visible to local people. But the overall rate of improvement is average when compared to all councils nationally (although well above average when compared to similar councils), and it is inconsistent or in some cases not improving as fast as other councils. While two CPA service scores have improved in 2006, two have deteriorated. The Council has not improved in all of its priority areas (for example in community safety and transport), and – excepting housing and education – there are relatively few examples of strong improvement. The Council continues to provide improved value for money.
- 18 Overall, 67 per cent of selected performance indicators have improved over the period since 2004/05 – average compared to other single tier councils. Some 29 per cent are in the best 25 per cent performance nationally, slightly better than the single tier council average of 28 per cent. Of those indicators where a quartile position is given, 23 are above average and 19 are below average. The picture for both relative performance and rate of improvement in 2005/06 is mixed across service areas and in terms of national/local shared priorities.
- 19 The Council continues to achieve good overall satisfaction. The recently published national survey shows that satisfaction with the Council overall, although having fallen from previous survey (from 60 to 56 per cent), remains in the best 25 per cent of councils. The proportion of people satisfied with how well the Council keeps them informed about services and benefits provided is also in the best 25 per cent. However, the position in relation to satisfaction with services is mixed. Of the 34 indicators that could be compared with 2003/04, 15 have improved, one is unchanged and 18 have got worse. Of the 36 indicators comparable with other councils, 10 are in the best 25 per cent of customer satisfaction, 13 are in the middle range and 12 are worst 25 per cent.

Children's services

- 20 The Council is making strong progress in children's services generally, and has attained a positive Annual Performance Assessment from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI). As a result, the Children's and Young People CPA score is '3' in 2006 – the same as in 2005 – but individual components have improved. Children's services therefore contribute well to the Council's objectives of 'promoting learning and training for all ages' and 'improving health and wellbeing'.

- 21 Education continues to perform well, with major improvements; and the Council's contribution to good performance is well-regarded by schools. Standards across Key Stages 1 to 3 are good and are consistently above the national average, and have mostly improved. Standards at KS 4 continue to improve – for example, the number of pupils achieving 5 or more A* - C GCSE grades increased for the third year in succession, from 54 to 60 per cent. However, standards for 16 to 19 year olds, though improving, are below the national average and require improvement.
- 22 The Council makes an excellent contribution to the *Every Child Matters* objective of children 'being healthy', and continues to provide good outcomes in terms of 'staying safe', 'enjoying and achieving', 'making a positive contribution' and 'achieving economic well-being'. Closer working with the Learning and Skills Council is underway to ensure effective and broad vocational opportunities.

Environment services

- 23 The Council has made good progress overall in environment services, particularly since summer 2006. The services make an effective contribution to achieving the Council's objectives of 'protecting and enhancing the environment', 'developing a town fit for the 21st Century' and 'providing decent and affordable housing', but progress on 'improving travel and transport', while substantial, is less advanced. The CPA Environment score improved to '3' in 2006, compared to 2 in 2005.
- 24 The Council met its statutory recycling/composting target for 2005/06, and its 27 per cent recycling rate for the year overall was improved on 2004/05 and in the best 25 per cent of councils nationally. The green waste collection and alternate weekly collection schemes launched in summer/autumn have further increased recycling rates to over 40 per cent and significantly reduced waste levels. The Council's new contract arrangements for street care focus on responding directly to 'local needs' and concerns about heavy littering, rather than standardised sweeping schedules. They have resulted in a much cleaner borough overall, which is reflected in improved levels of satisfaction relating to street care.
- 25 Planning continues to improve. Improvements in the past two years mean that from April 2006 the Council is no longer a planning standards authority. It has continued to improve, in terms of both absolute performance and relative to other councils. The Council's ability to deliver house building rates to meet Structure Plan and RPG 9 targets, including high proportions of affordable housing, has been hindered in the past year by the issues affecting sites near the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. The Council took a proactive approach to produce a mitigation strategy and agree it with English Nature, to ensure that it could progress affordable housing developments. It expects as a result that it should be able to release sites for building from next year.

- 26 The Council's performance in relation to transport is mixed. The condition of roads as measured by 2005/06 performance data is mixed – some (particularly primary roads) have improved well, but others are not good comparatively. Congestion has been managed, and the Council has met its target of restricting traffic growth below 14 per cent over the 10 year period 1996 - 2006 – an ambitious target given the high car ownership and poor public transport in the area. The Council has also made progress towards improving road safety, and recent improvements have given the Council confidence that it will achieve its stretched targets for casualty reduction for 2006/07. The Department for Transport assesses the Council's delivery of its *Local Transport Plan* (LTP)¹ over the past five years as 'satisfactory', and assesses its plans in LTP2 for the next five years as 'fair'.

Adults' social care

- 27 Overall the Council has made some sound and important improvement compared to last year, but indicators show mixed performance and many important concerns remain. CSCI have assessed the Council as 'serving some people well' with 'promising capacity to improve'. The Adults' Social Care CPA score in 2006 is '2', the same as in 2005. The overall lack of progress compared to other councils is a concern. However, the Council has now completed most of the actions arising from the CSCI report.
- 28 Particular improvements include better take-up of direct payments across all user groups; completing an analysis of older people's needs, which is vital for planning future services; an improved care management service focusing on delayed transfers of care, which has resulted in far fewer people for whom the Council has responsibility remaining in hospital; and completion of a review of charging policy.
- 29 However, some important weaknesses remain to be addressed. The Council does not have a consistent approach to engaging a more diverse range of older people and carers, although it has taken steps to address this, and needs to further involve stakeholders in improving services. Also, a performance management culture is still not fully embedded and needs progressing further, although this has improved. Adults' social care services are therefore not yet making a fully effective contribution to the Council's objective of 'improving health and well-being'.
- 30 As indicated in last year's letter, the challenge for the Council therefore remains the need to accelerate the pace of improvement and modernisation. Government has identified the Council's rate of improvement as a matter of concern, and has asked CSCI to monitor progress frequently and to report to the Minister as appropriate. The appointment of a new Director of Social Services and Housing is an important step forward in this respect. Completing an effective commissioning strategy for older people and associated purchasing plans, and further advancing the approach to performance management, will be key to improvement.

Housing

- 31 Last year we reported that the Council's housing and supporting people services were seriously under-performing, and not contributing well to its objectives of 'providing decent and affordable housing' and 'improving health and well-being'. The Council has taken steps to improve housing management in the past year and, as a result, the CPA Housing score is '2' in 2006, compared to '1' in 2005.
- 32 The Council has improved performance in 2005/06 for many key indicators (such as length of stay hostel accommodation), although some deteriorated slightly. The latest (unaudited) data shows continued improvement for most indicators.
- 33 The Council is making progress in reducing the proportion of non-decent homes, from 42 per cent in 2005/06 to 30 per cent at the end of 2006, using latest (unaudited) data. Improving its social housing stock to meet the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) is a key issue for the Council. In 2006 it took the important decision to seek to transfer its housing to a social landlord, and is currently preparing for a ballot of its tenants on this issue (to be held in March 2007). The outcome of this ballot will have significant implications for the Council's ability to meet the DHS by 2010, and its future approach to housing management. The Commission will be inspecting the Council's housing service in late 2007, which will enable a more detailed assessment of its effectiveness and prospects for improvement, and the results will be reported separately in early 2008.
- 34 Improvement of the Supporting People service over the past two years, following the Commission's inspection in 2005, has been limited. The Council agreed a business plan to address the report's recommendations, but this is very much focused on process changes. The Council acknowledges that the Supporting People agenda is not progressing as well as it should be, and that it needs to refocus its approach to tackle the right issues in the right way. It has made a number of recent improvements, is planning significant management changes in early 2007, and has increased money in next year's budget, to address these concerns.

Housing and council tax benefits

- 35 Last year's letter reported that the housing and council tax benefits had seen major improvement, having been the subject of focused effort to address under-performance that has been of concern for some years, and that the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) rated the service in 2005 as 'excellent' (compared to 'fair' in 2002, 2003 and 2004). BFI have rated the service as 'good' in 2005. As a result, the CPA Benefits score is '3' in 2006, compared to '4' in 2005.
- 36 Performance on some indicators in 2005/06 slipped compared to 2004/05 as a result of problems associated with installing a new IT system to help the Council speed up the way it deals with benefits claims. However, the most recent data shows that these problems have now been largely overcome, and that performance has begun to recover to previous levels.

Cultural services

- 37 Last year we reported that the picture for cultural services was mixed. Overall performance including satisfaction was considerably higher for parks and open spaces and sports and leisure facilities than for the libraries service, which was comparatively expensive and had low use and low satisfaction. User satisfaction has improved, but this position remains broadly unchanged.
- 38 The 2006 national satisfaction survey results show that the three indicators comparable with the previous survey and directly applicable to the Council have all improved. Satisfaction with sports and leisure and with parks and open spaces is higher, and in top 25 per cent of councils. Satisfaction with libraries has improved to below average nationally, having previously been in the worst 25 per cent of councils, although 93 per cent of users are satisfied with the library service. The Council now meets 9 of the 10 national standards for libraries. It has also examined the reasons for its relatively high cost for the libraries service, which is due to central recharges, and understands its cost base fully.
- 39 However, on a range of other indicators – notably the number of active borrowers from libraries, and libraries stock level and stock turn – the Council is not performing as well other councils. As a result, the overall Cultural Services CPA score for 2006 is '2', compared to '3' in 2005¹.

Wider community outcomes and access to services

- 40 Last year we reported that the Council displays good community leadership through effective partnership working, supported by a strong local strategic partnership, and that the second Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA2) emphasised community safety and health issues that reflected local partnership priorities. The Council's community leadership remains strong, and it continues generally to work effectively with its partners to improve wider community outcomes, including good progress in promoting health and wellbeing.
- 41 The Bracknell Forest Partnership has made good progress on delivering the actions set out in the *Sustainable Community Plan*, and has delivered a range of positive outcomes. These include securing anti-social behaviour orders and crack house closures, school awards through the EcoSchools programme, environment and cultural facilities improvements, and local neighbourhood actions resulting in improvements that matter to local people, such as action on litter and speeding.
- 42 The Council has also made important progress towards improving access and quality of service for all its community, based on the results of impact assessments for all services and developing effective mechanisms to engage with young people. However, the Council is not engaging effectively with all hard-to-reach groups, but it is aware of and taken steps to address the issue.

¹ The Council feels that some of the indicators now used to calculate the score do not reflect its actual performance, and considers that the lower score does not signify a real deterioration in services experienced by local people.

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- 43 The Council recognises that the Crime Reduction Partnership has not been as effective as necessary. Although overall crime rates are generally low in Bracknell Forest, crime as measured by key community safety indicators increased from 2004/05 to 2005/06, and over the early part of 2006. In part, the percentage increase exaggerates the position because absolute levels of crime are low. However, it is unclear from the most recent data whether the position is improving. Incidences of burglary, common assault and criminal damage remain areas of concern, and overall levels of car-related crime are particularly worrying.
- 44 The Council and partners are taking steps to address these specific areas, and more generally to improve strategic leadership of the community safety agenda. The chair of the Crime Reduction Partnership will change in early 2007, and the Council plans to re-locate its community safety team into the Chief Executive's office to ensure a greater focus on performance management. The Council believes it is now on target to reduce the increase in crime rates by the end of the year, from which it can work towards achieving its target of a 2.6 per cent reduction by the end of 2007/08. Achieving this presents a key challenge, and will require sustained effort over the next year or so.

Value for money

- 45 The Council's appointed auditor, KPMG, has assessed its overall use of resources and value for money as good, the same as 2005, and considers that the Council is generally improving value for money.
- 46 It shows higher than average costs in respect of culture and central services, with housing and home office costs being at the median point; but its South East location and new town infrastructure make costs expensive compared to 'nearest neighbour' councils. Where spending is relatively high this is in line with the Council's priorities or external factors, and generally delivers improved and comparatively high quality services such as education, planning and transport.
- 47 Overall costs and unit costs for key services demonstrate best value compared to other councils providing similar levels and standards of services and allowing for the local context. The Council examines costs for all policy and operational decisions as part of the budget setting process, and develops clear business cases for large-scale projects which are linked back to its strategic objectives.
- 48 The Council continues to plan and deliver significant budget savings far in excess of those required by government targets. It has embedded the need for value for money.

How much progress is being made to implement improvement plans to sustain future improvement?

Robustness of the Council's plans for improvement, and effectiveness of improvement planning

- 49 The Council continues to make good progress overall on its plans to sustain improvement, although it needs to resolve some issues, and overall corporate governance arrangements remain satisfactory.

- 50 Most of the Council's improvement plans – including those to help it manage and improve value for money – are robust, with good performance management and planning frameworks. For example, Ofsted/CSCI consider that the *Children and Young People's Plan* (CYPP) sets out a clear and appropriate agenda for the future that takes careful account of local needs. The Council is also generally effective at implementing its improvement plans, in terms of achieving its key objectives and milestones. But plans for supporting people need strengthening. The Council is also aware of the need to keep an eye on the progress of the *Older People's Plan*, although to date this is progressing well.
- 51 The Council has now put firm plans in place to regenerate Bracknell town centre, with planning permission issued in December 2006. This £750 million project is a key development which will give the local community new homes, shops and leisure facilities, and include major improvements to local transport systems.
- 52 As noted last year, the Council aligns its corporate, service and financial plans well to ensure that it directs resources to priority areas; and it has ensured that its medium-term objectives are linked to the aims and objectives of the *Community Strategy*. However, the Council recognises that a key task over the next twelve months or so, following the local government elections, is the need to update its priorities and to re-align as necessary the resources to deliver them.

Capacity to deliver improvement plans

- 53 As noted in last year's letter, the Corporate Assessment report in December 2004 concluded that the Council has 'excellent' corporate capacity to sustain future improvement, with high quality senior managers and executive councillors and staff who are committed and well-motivated. It also acknowledged that the Council has a strong performance culture and performance management framework. Last year's letter also raised no concerns about weaknesses in arrangements for securing continuous improvement or failures in corporate governance that would prevent improvement levels being sustained, and that needed to be addressed. These attributes remain the case.
- 54 The Council is well-advanced in reviewing its workforce to ensure the delivery of its plans in many service areas. It faces significant budget challenges but in the context of a robust medium-term financial strategy (although, as noted above, this will need rolling forward in the light of decisions later this year on future priorities). Councillor capacity has increased. The Council has also improved its capacity with external support in important areas, particularly through the successful conclusion of the Waste Private Finance Initiative contract.

- 55 But some key issues remain to be resolved in performance management and the deliverability of some of its plans. Last year we identified three major service areas where sustained effort was required to address acknowledged weaknesses: housing (both housing management and meeting the DHS), supporting people, and adults' social care. The Council has made not yet made sufficient progress to address these concerns. Housing management and adult social care have improved but not consistently or significantly when compared to other councils; and progress to address Supporting People inspection recommendations is limited. However, concerns over the operational leadership of these services and of community safety have now been resolved, providing the basis to enable the Council to move forward in a purposeful way.
- 56 The Council therefore needs to focus on three key issues. In relation to housing, the Council needs to address the implications of the housing stock transfer vote (if 'yes', ensuring a smooth transfer of stock and setting up effective new client management arrangements; and if 'no', resolving what this means in terms of resources to achieve DHS). With regard to the other areas of weakness identified last year, it needs to fully embed its performance management systems and culture throughout adult social care services, and it needs to improve managerial capacity to deliver effective use of the extra resources it is providing for Supporting People services.

Service inspections

- 57 The Commission has not undertaken any inspections at the Council during 2006.
- 58 An important aspect of the role of the Relationship Manager is to work with other inspectorates and regulators who report on the council's performance, including:
- Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted);
 - Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI);
 - Benefits Fraud Inspectorate (BFI);
 - Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG);
 - Department for Education and Skills (DfES); and
 - Government Office for the South East (GOSE).
- 59 We share information and seek to provide 'joined up' regulation to the Council. During the last year the Council has received the following assessments from other inspectorates and regulators.
- Ofsted and CSCI: Annual Performance Assessment for Education and Children's Social Care Services (November 2006):
 - contribution of the Council's children's services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people – '3' (good);
 - contribution of the Council's social care services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people – '3' (good); and

- the Council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people – '3' (good).
- CSCI: Older People Services inspection report (May 2006), Annual Review of Performance for Adult Social Care (November 2006) and Annual Performance (Star) Rating for Social Services (December 2006):
 - service score for adults social care – '2' ('serving some people well' with 'promising capacity to improve') leading to an overall star rating of '1 star'.
- BFI: Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Reporting (October 2006) – '3' (good).
- GOSE, on behalf of Department for Transport: Assessment of local transport plan (December 2006):
 - Delivery of *Local Transport Plan 1* (2000 to 2005) – 'satisfactory'; and
 - Plans for *Local Transport Plan 2* (2006 to 2011) – 'fair'.

Financial management and value for money

- 60 Your appointed auditor KPMG has reported separately to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on the issues arising from the 2005/06 audit and has provided:
- an unqualified opinion on your accounts;
 - a conclusion on your value for money arrangements to say that these arrangements are adequate; and
 - a report on the *Best Value Performance Plan* confirming that the Plan has been audited.
- 61 The findings of the auditor are an important component of the CPA framework described above. In particular the Use of Resources score is derived from the assessments made by the auditor in the following areas:
- financial reporting (including the preparation of the accounts of the Council and the way these are presented to the public);
 - financial management (including how the financial management is integrated with strategy to support council priorities);
 - financial standing (including the strength of the Council's financial position);
 - internal control (including how effectively the Council maintains proper stewardship and control of its finances); and
 - value for money (including an assessment of how well the Council balances the costs and quality of its services).
- 62 For the purposes of the CPA your auditor has assessed the Council's arrangements for use of resources in these five areas as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Use of Resources Assessment

Element	Assessment
Financial reporting	3 out of 4
Financial management	3 out of 4
Financial standing	3 out of 4
Internal control	3 out of 4
Value for money	3 out of 4
Overall assessment of the Audit Commission	3 out of 4

(Note: 1 = lowest and 4 = highest)

63 The key issues arising from the audit, as reflected in the above judgements where appropriate, are as follows.

- The Council has maintained good systems of internal financial control, and continued to operate in line with its medium-term financial strategy. As a result of its review of the controls in place, KPMG did not raise any recommendations further to those identified by Internal Audit (Interim Report, May 2006).
- The Council has maintained standards of control and process to ensure a level '3' rating was achieved. Comprehensive files of evidence to support the Use of Resources assessment were provided by officers.
- Further work is still required to demonstrate that the Council has updated and refined its risk management processes to meet all criteria within this Key Line of Enquiry. This work is currently in process, and KPMG have seen progress being made – for example, in their work with Internal Audit, where a full risk-based plan is being developed for 2007/08 onwards. A separate report of all Use of Resources findings has been presented to management.
- No issues were encountered in undertaking the accounts audit, with only two best practice recommendations being raised. These have already been reported to the Council in the *Report to Those Charged with Governance* (September 2006). No material adjustments were required to the accounts.
- KPMG's review of data quality identified some areas for improvement for the Council ahead of the 2007 assessment. These include identification of a corporate lead for data quality; development of a data quality strategy; and also introducing a programme of training for all relevant staff in respect of data quality, in line with the strategy. All of the auditor's detailed findings have been reported in a separate report on data quality (November 2006).
- No significant issues were identified in respect of the grant claim audit, with all claims being presented to the auditor ahead of the deadline.

Conclusion

- 64 This letter has been discussed and agreed with the Chief Executive. A copy of the letter was presented at the Executive meeting on 13 March 2007, and it will be presented at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7 June 2007.
- 65 The Council has taken a positive and constructive approach to our audit and inspection. I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the Council's assistance and co-operation.

Availability of this letter

- 66 This letter will be published on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk, and also on the Council's website.

Steven Shuttleworth

Relationship Manager

1 March 2007

(Final publication version: 28 March 2007)

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION 7 JUNE 2007

INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL ASSURANCE REPORT AND STATEMENT ON INTERNAL CONTROL 2006/07 (Borough Treasurer)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Accounts and Audit regulations 2003 require the Council to publish a Statement on Internal Control (SIC) to accompany the annual Statement of Accounts, which is to be approved by the Final Accounts Committee on 26 June 2007. The aim is to provide assurance that the Council's systems of internal control are working effectively and to identify those areas where improvements can be made.
- 1.2 The contents of the SIC are drawn from Internal Audit's Annual Assurance Report 2006/07 (incorporating the Head of Audit's opinion) and issues identified by external audit and other agencies and inspectorates. The SIC must include both of these areas in order to comply with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government

2. SUGGESTED ACTION

2.1 That the Overview & Scrutiny Commission:

- (a) Note the Head of Audit's opinion (Section 6),
- (b) Consider whether any further action is required, and
- (c) Comment on the proposed Statement on Internal Control (Appendix B)

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Under the Council's Constitution and Scheme of Delegation, the Borough Treasurer is responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the Council under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. Professional guidance issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy requires the provision of an effective Internal Audit function to partly fulfil the Borough Treasurer's responsibilities under Section 151.
- 3.2 Corporate governance best practice requires the Council to have an Audit Committee or its equivalent, which enables the Borough Treasurer to formally report the activity of Internal Audit to Members. Under the Council's scrutiny arrangements, Internal Audit activity is reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission, which acts as the Audit Committee, and provides the mechanism by which significant weaknesses in internal control can be escalated. Internal Audit report on their activities to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission at least twice each year. One of these reports is this annual assurance report (incorporating the opinion of the Head of Audit) which is used to underpin the contents of the SIC.

- 3.3 The publication of a SIC is a statutory requirement. It has to be published alongside the annual Statement of Accounts after being approved by the Final Accounts Committee and signed by the Leader and Chief Executive. Best practice requires this to be reviewed by the Council's Audit Committee, or equivalent, prior to its formal approval and signature. The draft SIC is attached at Appendix B and reflects those issues identified within the remainder of this report. It also includes reference to any issues arising outside of the financial year in order to ensure it is up to date at the time of publication. These include the adoption of twelve corporate themes for 2007/08 in place of the previous medium term objectives and the outcome of the ballot on stock transfer.
- 3.4 The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate risk altogether. No system of control can provide absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss, nor can Internal Audit give that assurance. This report, together with the Head of Audit's opinion and the SIC can, therefore, only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance.

4. INTERNAL AUDIT ACTIVITY

Internal Audit Performance

- 4.1 The work of Internal Audit is carried out using a risk based approach and a strategic plan. The work undertaken during 2006/07 comprised the last year of the strategic audit plan ending on 31 March 2007. Following a risking and consultation exercise, a new strategic plan is now in place for audit work commencing on 1 April 2007. The first year of the new plan was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 15 March 2007.
- 4.2 The audit plan for 2006/07 will be delivered in full, although a number of audits are still in progress at the time of writing this report due to staffing resource problems experienced by the Council's contractor Deloitte and Touche Public Sector Internal Audit Ltd. (D&T).

Results of 2006/07 Audits

- 4.3 At the time of writing 94 of the 121 audits in the plan for 2006/07 have been completed. A full schedule of the completed audits and their assurance opinions is set out in Appendix A. A summary of assurance levels is given in the table below:

OPINION LEVEL	2006/07	2005/06
Full Assurance	4	2
Satisfactory Assurance	80	106
Limited Assurance	7	10
No Assurance	1	0
No opinion required	2	3
Work in progress	27	0
Total	121	121

Opinion Classifications

- 4.4

OPINION LEVEL	DEFINITION
Full Assurance	There is a sound system of internal control designed to meet the system objectives and the controls are being consistently applied.
Satisfactory Assurance	There is basically a sound system of internal controls although there are some minor weaknesses and/or there is evidence that the level of non-compliance may put some minor systems objectives at risk.
Limited Assurance	There are some weaknesses in the adequacy of the internal control system which put the systems objectives at risk and/or the level of compliance or non compliance puts some of the systems objectives at risk.
No Assurance	Control is weak leaving the system open to significant error or abuse and/or there is significant non-compliance with basic controls.

Double Limited Assurance

- 4.5 IT operating systems received a limited assurance in both 2005/06 and 2006/07. The full implementation of the recommendations is required by 31 May and a follow up audit will be carried out early in 2007/08.

Feedback from Quality Questionnaires

- 4.6 Quality questionnaires are sent to auditees with each draft audit report. 71 have been returned to date. As some reports were still in draft stage at the time of writing, it is expected that the remaining questionnaires will be returned with the response to the draft reports. The overall response is reasonably positive and the results are summarised as follows:

DEPARTMENT	SATISFIED	NOT SATISFIED	TOTAL
Chief Executive	1	0	1
Corporate Services	18	5	23
Education, Children & Libraries	24	2	26
Environment & Leisure	6	2	8
Social Services & Housing	13	0	13
Total for 2006/07	62	9	71
Total for 2005/06	62	11	73

- 4.7 All unsatisfactory responses are followed up and any necessary actions taken, which can include auditors being removed from the contract. The number of unsatisfactory replies is of concern. Common reasons for evaluating the audit as unsatisfactory are poor communication, inadequate exit meetings and the late issue of reports. The responses to quality questionnaires are discussed at every monthly contract monitoring with D&T. The lateness of reporting is the main issue being addressed by D&T at present and the Council has withheld contract payments until performance returns to a satisfactory level.

National Fraud Initiative

- 4.8 As in previous years the Council is participating in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) 2006, which is a bi-annual data matching exercise co-ordinated by the Audit Commission. In October 2006 the required data was collected and submitted for matching with that of other participating bodies and the results of the matches relating to this authority were received in January 2007.
- 4.9 The results were reviewed and high risk cases identified for further investigation. Investigations are still ongoing, but no cases of fraud have been identified to date. This year the data also covered creditors payments for the first time and results from this exercise give good assurance on the system, as only one duplicate payment of £82.25 was identified over a period of three years and this has now been recovered.

- 4.10 Cases will continue to be investigated during the course of 2007/08 and findings reported to the Audit Commission. Any issues arising from the NFI will be included in future Internal Audit Assurance Reports to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission.

Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs)

- 4.11 This year External Audit carried out all of the work relating to the BVPI out-turn figures. In preparation for this work Internal Audit made pre-audit visits to areas, which were considered high risk, to ensure that those officers responsible for calculating BVPIs were adequately prepared should External Audit include them in their testing. This procedure proved valuable and will be repeated in 2007/08.

Fraud and Irregularity

- 4.12 Twelve potential frauds and irregularities were identified and investigated during the year. These can be summarised as follows:
- Four minor cases of missing cash
 - A potentially fraudulent claim for benefits by a member of staff
 - Overcharging by a school contractor
 - Submission of fictitious overtime claims
 - Misuse of Council systems to give preferential treatment for housing repairs, and
 - Four cases relating to the Council's car parks, including a shortfall in income and misuse of visitor passes

Financial Management Standards in Schools (FMiSS)

- 4.13 For the year ending 31 March 2007 the DfES has introduced a requirement for schools to meet clear and consistent standards for financial management, which is known as FMiSS. All secondary schools were required to assess themselves against these standards at 31 March 2007 and primary and special schools will have to do the same over the next three years.
- 4.14 The Section 151 Officer will be required to sign a declaration annually stating how many schools have reached the standard and how many have not. Internal Audit and Education Finance have agreed an approach on how this new requirement would be managed. Reliance will be placed on the schools' self assessments along with a review by Internal Audit and Education Finance. If requested, schools can have an external assessment undertaken, which they must pay for. In exceptional circumstances the Section 151 Officer may require a school to have an external assessment undertaken.
- 4.15 All of the Council's secondary schools completed and submitted their self assessments on time and these are currently being reviewed. This process will be completed in time for the Section 151 Officer to fulfil his obligations under the scheme. At the time of writing this report it cannot be confirmed how many secondary schools met the standard by 31 March 2007, but a verbal update will be given at the meeting and further details will be reported in the next half yearly report to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission.

Significant Control Weaknesses

- 4.16 In forming its opinion, Internal Audit is required to comment on the quality of the internal control environment, which includes consideration of any significant risk or governance issues and control failures which arise. During the financial year 2006/07, key weaknesses were identified in the following areas and resulted in limited or no assurance opinions: -

Directorate	Audit
<p>Corporate Services</p>	<p><u>e+ Card (IT Audit)</u> Two priority one recommendations were made; one concerning the number of system functions which are incomplete and/or providing inadequate service and the other to address the risks of implementing new applications into the live environment before full system testing has been carried out.</p> <p><u>AXIS (IT Audit)</u> This audit of the new cashier's system, which included e-payments, contained four priority one recommendations. These covered weaknesses over privileged access rights (e.g. ability to make changes), the secure protection of the password for the built-in supervisor ID, the current undesirable access rights to the system by the application vendor and the system's audit trail.</p> <p><u>Operating Systems (IT Audit) Follow Up</u> In 2005/06 three IT applications were given a limited level of assurance due to significant weaknesses in the operating systems and these were covered in this one follow up review. The original report contained one priority one recommendation, four priority two recommendations and one priority three. It was found that some progress had been made on implementing these recommendations, but none had been fully implemented.</p>
<p>Education, Children's Service & Libraries</p>	<p><u>St. Michael's Easthampstead School</u> This audit was given a limited level of assurance due to the lack of evidence of pre-employment checks being carried out on one member of permanent staff and two supply teachers.</p>
<p>Social Services & Housing</p>	<p><u>Housing Repairs Irregularity</u> This report was produced following an investigation into a complaint that relatives of BFS staff were unfairly having significant improvements to their council homes carried out. The report resulted in no assurance and three priority one recommendations were raised. These covered staff involvement in jobs for close relatives and friends, staff involvement in jobs on their own tenanted properties and</p>

	<p>access controls to the housing repairs system,</p> <p><u>Housing Repairs Additional Audit</u> The audit work involved in carrying out the above review identified additional areas of concern and this audit addressed those and resulted in two priority one recommendations. One related to the stock of materials used in housing repairs; this was implemented and the BFS stores and stock control has now been outsourced to a private company. The second concerned the use of the imprest account.</p> <p><u>Housing Caretakers' Overtime</u> This audit was requested following an irregularity regarding overtime and extra hours paid to a roving housing caretaker. The purpose of this review was to evaluate controls in this area and identify any possible additional staff who might have been receiving excessive payments. Four priority one recommendations were raised relating to, monitoring additional hours, possible disciplinary action against a second employee, assessing the requirements for caretaking and cleaning and the vetting of employees.</p> <p><u>Joint Arrangements with PCT</u> Two priority one recommendations were raised to ensure that a signed agreement is put into place with the East Berkshire PCT and that an annual voucher is produced and authorised each year in line with Section 28A of the National Health Service Act 1977.</p>
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All the above audits resulting in limited or no assurance are subject to follow up and appear in the 2007/08 audit plan.

Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Audit

- 4.17 The Accounts and Audit Regulations require the SIC to be considered by a committee of the Council, or by Full Council. To facilitate this the terms of reference of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission were revised last year to include the responsibilities of an Audit Committee.
- 4.18 Recent amendments to the Accounts and Audit Regulations also require the Council to review the effectiveness of its system of Internal Audit once a year and for these findings also to be considered by a committee of the Council, or by Full Council. As this amendment has only been introduced recently there is only limited guidance on how this should be achieved and so the matter has been discussed with our External Auditors and the following approach adopted for 2006/07.
- 4.19 As audit work is, in the main, carried out by our contractor (D&T) reliance will be placed upon their systems of quality control, ISO 9001:2000 accreditation and professional standards. In addition the Council has stipulated within the contract with D&T a number of standards which are monitored along with regular quality reviews of D&T's work.

- 4.20 During 2006/07 an exercise was undertaken to assess the Council's Internal Audit function against the Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the United Kingdom 2006. This demonstrates that the Council meets these standards with the exception of some minor issues which will be addressed during 2007/08. These include finalising the draft Internal Audit strategy, formalising policies on the retention and access to audit documentation and files.
- 4.21 In conclusion, it is considered that Internal Audit has been effective for the year under review notwithstanding the delay in issuing draft reports identified earlier.

5. WORK OF OTHER AGENCIES AND INSPECTORATES

- 5.1 The work of both Internal and External Audit is key to generating assurance on the internal control environment and the effectiveness of internal audit. This annual report takes assurance from these sources and also from a number of independent review agencies as detailed below.

Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2005/06

- 5.2 This letter was discussed by the Executive at their meeting on 13 March 2007, when Steven Shuttleworth, Audit Commission Relationship Manager, attended to present the document and respond to Executive member's questions. This item was then included in the Executive's report to Full Council at their meeting on 25 April 2007 and is on the agenda for this meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission for detailed discussion.
- 5.3 The External Auditor gave an unqualified opinion on the Council's accounts for 2005/06, no material adjustments were required and only two best practice recommendations were made concerning the final accounts process. The letter confirmed that the Council maintained good systems of internal financial control and no recommendations were raised further to those already identified. The letter concluded that the Council has maintained standards of control and process to ensure a level '3' rating (out of 4) in the Use of Resources part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). It acknowledged that progress has been made on refining the Council's risk management process, but that further work was still required. The Executive has since approved a Risk Management Strategy and a number of the proposed actions have been implemented.
- 5.4 The Letter identified three areas on which the Council needs to focus improvement efforts, these were in brief: -
- Adults' Social Care – commissioning, purchasing and performance management;
 - Supporting People Care – strengthening the business plan and improving managerial capacity to focusing on identified priorities and
 - Community Safety – improving strategic leadership and performance management.

Detailed improvement plans are in place to address these and other weaknesses.

External Audit's Report to those Charged with Governance

- 5.5 The Code of Audit Practice requires the Council's External Auditors to report on the work they carried out to discharge their statutory responsibilities to those charged

with governance prior to the publication of the financial statements. This report was presented to the Executive on 19 September 2006 and to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission by Greg McIntosh, Director of KPMG LLB (UK) at their meeting on 23 November 2006.

- 5.6 Based on the work undertaken, KPMG issued the authority with an unqualified value for money conclusion and also concluded that there were adequate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2006.
- 5.7 Their work on the Accounts and Statement on Internal Control resulted in them issuing an unqualified audit opinion for the year ended 31 March 2006. The Statement on Internal Control was considered to be in compliance with CIPFA's guidance and was not considered misleading or inconsistent with other information that they were aware of from the audit of the financial statements.

Data Quality Review

- 5.8 The Audit Commission has developed a three stage approach to assessing the quality of data produced by the Council and this largely replaces the former audit of Best Value Performance Indicators. The three stages comprise a review of management arrangements, an analytical review and completeness check and a spot check on a sample of high risk indicators. The Council achieved an overall score of 2 (adequate performance) out of a possible 4. A number of performance improvement observations were made by External Audit including the development of a data quality strategy, introduction of a Council wide training programme and continuing spot checks by Internal Audit of high risk indicators. The latter has been included in the 2007/08 audit plan.

2006 Annual Performance Assessment of Services for Children and Young People

- 5.9 This annual inspection carried out jointly by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and OFSTED judged the Council to be a grade 3, which means that the service consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users. Outcomes in all areas were assessed as good except in the area of "being healthy", where the contribution of the authority was considered excellent. Many key strengths were detailed and the report indicated that the authority has good capacity to improve even further.
- 5.10 Some key areas for improvement were also identified, which included the need to reduce the costs of social care placements and improve the recruitment and retention of social workers. These two areas had already been recognised and work to address them is underway.

2006 Annual Performance Assessment for Adult Services

- 5.11 The annual assessment carried out by CSCI judged the authority as serving some people well and rated the authority as one star, but considered the capacity for improvement promising. There had been improvements in the take up of direct payments, analysing the needs of older people, care management relating to people remaining in hospital, the charging policy and users receiving statements of need.
- 5.12 Areas of improvement were identified and the need for the Council's leaders to accelerate the pace of improvement and modernisation was stated. Significant

changes have taken place in the management of Social Services and Housing and detailed improvement plans are in place.

2006 Inspection of Social Care Services for Older People

- 5.13 This inspection concluded that the authority was serving some people well and there was full commitment to improve overall performance. Thirteen recommendations were made in relation to the six national standards many of which had already been identified and work on improvement started prior to the inspection. A comprehensive action plan has been produced in response to the inspection, which includes timescales. It is anticipated that once all the improvements identified have been achieved the Council will be considered to be serving most older people well.

Benefits Fraud Inspectorate Assessment 2006

- 5.14 In 2006 this assessment concluded that the Council had met 7 of the 12 performance measures giving a score of 3, which is good, but has reduced from the excellent rating given for 2005. There was improvement in claims administration, but a decline on user focus, mainly due to delays in dealing with appeals. The Council's performance on security remained excellent as did resource management. Reference was also made to past problems with IT being resolved meaning that the required data is now submitted to the Department of Works and Pensions at the appropriate time and in the correct format.
- 5.15 Benefits is considered to be a high risk area because of the volume of transactions and the significant income and expenditure involved, together with the risk of fraudulent activity. As a result, Council Tax and Housing Benefit features in the Internal Audit plan every year and is also reviewed independently by External Audit for the purposes of certifying claims for government grant.

Audit Commission School Survey 2006

- 5.16 89% of Bracknell Forest schools responded to this annual survey, which is an increase on the 72% response in 2005. For 56 of the 76 services in the survey, the Council is in the top 10 authorities nationally and overall is ranked as the 13th highest performing out of the 131 participating authorities and 4th of the 41 unitaries who took part.
- 5.17 Two of the areas where the authority was perceived as being below average were the school meals service and home to school transport; both of these key services are subject to new contracts, which were not in operation at the time of the survey. Improvements were perceived in the areas of safeguarding children, child protection training, admission processes, personnel and advice to pupils on their future beyond school.

OFSTED School Inspections

- 5.18 Fourteen OFSTED inspections were made during 2006/07 - thirteen primary schools and one secondary school. The tables below summarise the overall conclusions in key areas:

School	Achievement & Standards	Leadership & Management	Overall Effectiveness
Easthampstead Park Secondary	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Ascot Heath C of E Junior	Good	Good	Good
Binfield C of E Primary	Good	Good	Good
Birch Hill Primary	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Broadmoor Primary	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
College Town Infant	Good	Good	Good
Crown Wood Primary	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Crowthorne C of E Primary	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Harmanswater Primary	Good	Good	Good
Holly Spring Junior	Good	Good	Good
The Pines Primary	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
St. Michael's Easthampstead C of E Primary	Good	Good	Good
Uplands Primary	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Winkfield St. Mary's C of E Primary	Good	Good	Good

- 5.19 All the OFSTED reports were positive with the exception of Easthampstead Park School, which was evaluated as inadequate overall. As a secondary school, Easthampstead Park was required to complete a self assessment against the Financial Management Standards in Schools (FMSiS). The draft self assessment concluded that not all the standards were met by 31 March 2007. However, an action plan is in place to address the shortcomings and there will be further audit activity at this school during 2007/08 to ensure that adequate progress is made towards meeting the standards by 31 March 2008.

6 HEAD OF AUDIT'S OPINION 2006/07

- 6.1 From the work undertaken during the year, the Head of audit is of the opinion that key systems are operating soundly and that there is no fundamental breakdown of controls.**
- 6.2 The general system of internal controls in place at Bracknell Forest Borough Council accords with proper practice, except for those specific areas summarised in paragraph 4.16.**

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TABLE OF ASSURANCES

April 2006 – March 2007

REPORT	ASSURANCE LEVEL				RECOMMENDATIONS CATEGORY		
	Full	Satisfactory	Limited	None	1	2	3
Chief Executives							
Partnerships & Joint Arrangements		X				1	
BVPI (pre KPMG audit review)		n/a					
Grants to voluntary organ. inc. SHP							
Corporate & Ethical Governance		X				2	1
Corporate Services							
Design & Print Services		X				3	1
Depot Security		X				5	1
Vehicle Workshop & Fuel Cards		X				3	1
E-Mail Security IT		X				1	
Payroll & Personnel IT System		X				7	1
Pericles IT System		X				1	
IT Change Controls		X				2	
Imprest Review		n/a					
Surveying Services		X				1	2
Cashiers		X				5	
Council Tax		X				2	2
NNDR		X				5	2
Bank & Reconciliations		X				1	
Budgetary Control	X						
Capital Accounting & Fixed Assets		X					1
Creditors		X				2	1
Debtors		X					1
Main Accounting	X						
Payroll		X				4	
Treasury Management		X				1	2
AGRESSO F/up and Interfaces IT		X				3	3
E+ Card IT			X		2	4	2
Operating Systems F/up IT			X		1	4	1
Corporate credit/debit cards							
Insurance inc. supply	X						
Pensions							
VAT		X				2	3
Contracting and Procurement							
Training							
Bacstel F/up IT		X				7	1
AXIS IT New Cashier's System			X		4	12	8
Elections & Electoral Registration		X				2	4
Disaster Recovery Arrangements IT		X				5	
Network Review & Security IT F/up		X				4	2
Education, Children & Libraries							

REPORT	ASSURANCE LEVEL				RECOMMENDATIONS CATEGORY		
	Full	Satisfactory	Limited	None	1	2	3
Admission Service & Supply of LMS Formula	X	X					1
Behaviour Support Team							
Home to School Transport							
School Catering							
Sensory Impairment (Follow up)							
Education Centre		X					3
Personnel Services inc. CRB		X					1
PLASC		X				2	
Adastron House		X				1	6
Binfield C E Primary		X				4	3
Birch Hill Primary		X				2	6
Brakenhale (Follow up)		X				5	2
College Hall Pupil Referral Unit		X				4	
College Town Infant							
College Town Junior							
Crownwood Primary plus LAL							
Easthampstead Park School		X				2	5
Edgebarrow		X					3
Garth Hill		X					2
Great Hollands Primary		X				7	6
Holly Spring Infants		X					2
Holly Spring Junior		X				2	4
Meadow Vale Primary (Follow up)							
Owlsmoor							
Pines Primary		X				7	4
Ranelagh		X				2	2
Sandhurst		X				4	10
Sandy Lane Primary		X				2	4
St. Joseph's R C Primary		X				1	8
St. Michael's C E Primary		X				4	3
St. Michael's Easthampstead C E			X		2	4	3
Uplands Primary		X				2	1
Warfield							
Whitegrove Primary		X					4
Wildridings Primary		X				1	4
Woodenhill Primary		X				4	3
Coopers Hill Youth Centre		X					2
NRG Project		X				3	
Sandhurst Youth Centre							
Edgebarrow Youth Centre							
Youth Offending Team							
Ascot Heath Library		X				3	4
Whitegrove Library		X				1	4
Crowthorne Library		X				1	4
HORIZON IT New Library System							
Children & Families Residential		X				2	
Direct Payments – Children		X				7	
Traveller Education Service							

REPORT	ASSURANCE LEVEL				RECOMMENDATIONS CATEGORY		
	Full	Satisfactory	Limited	None	1	2	3
Book Purchasing/Stock Control		X				4	1
Recoupment		X				1	1
Kennel Lane School		X				6	1
Meadowvale School		X				5	4
Brakenhale School		X				4	6
Environment & Leisure							
Bracknell Market		X				2	
Leisure Cash Spot Checks x 2		X					
GIS (Geographical Info System) IT		X				10	1
CONFIRM (Highways System) IT		X				3	
Weighbridge Follow Up Ltd 05/06		X				3	
Emergency Planning & Civil		X					2
Highways Management of		X				1	2
Cemetery & Crematorium		X				4	1
Development Control		X					1
Parking IT New system		X				9	1
Parking – decriminalisation							
Waste Management (new							
Parks and Countryside							
Easthampstead Park							
Downshire Golf Complex							
Social Services & Housing							
Receiverships & Appointeeships		X					1
Section 31 Arrangements &		X				1	
Easthampstead Caravan Park		X				1	
Service Charges – Leasehold Flats		X				1	
Forestcare IT Systems		X				2	1
Housing & Property Repairs		X				5	1
Housing Repairs – contingency			X		2	6	
BFS Irregularity				X	3	6	1
Housing Caretaker Irregularity			X		4	4	8
Direct payments - adults		X				6	1
Glenfield		X				2	4
SWIFT – IT system		X				2	1
Sheltered Housing		X				2	3
Joint Arrangements with PCT's			X		2	4	
Downside Resource Centre		X				3	1
Heathlands Day Centre		X				4	2
Council Tax and Housing Benefits		X				5	1
Housing Rents		X				5	2
Stores Stock Check		X					
Older People - Residential		X				3	
Learning Disability Indep. Living							
Small Land Sales							
Older People/Phy Dis- Homecare		X				4	1
Learning Disability Residential		X				2	
Forestcare		X				3	1

Note

One category 2 recommendation in the Payroll and Personnel IT audit was not agreed by the auditee. Internal Audit considered the explanations received and concluded that failure to implement this would not materially affect the Council's overall internal control environment, as alternative controls are in place.

DRAFT STATEMENT ON INTERNAL CONTROL 2006/07

1. Scope of Responsibility

- 1.1 The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council has to ensure that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk. This statement is designed to meet the full Statement on Internal Control requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 and the amendments to these regulations which came into force on 1 April 2006.

2. The Purpose of the System of Internal Control

- 2.1 The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Bracknell Forest Borough Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.
- 2.2 The system of internal control has been in place at Bracknell Forest Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2007 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and accounts and, except for the details of principal risks identified in paragraphs 3.2 to 3.8 below, accords with proper practice.

3. The Internal Control Environment

Principal Statutory Obligations and Organisational Objectives

- 3.1 The long term vision of the Council is "to make Bracknell Forest a place where all people can thrive: living, learning and working in a clean, safe and healthy environment." Until the end of 2006/07, the Council ensured that there was a sustained focus on what matters in Bracknell Forest by translating the vision into the following fifteen medium term objectives. However, these have been reviewed and for 2007/08 they will be replaced by the 12 Corporate Themes, which are listed after the objectives.

Medium Term Objectives in place during 2006/07

- To lead the regeneration of Bracknell to provide a town fit for the 21st century
- To promote sustainable communities through innovative housing strategies and effective maintenance
- To provide a safe framework for developing the community

- To improve art, culture, sport and recreation provision within the Borough
- To work with partners to improve health provision within the Borough
- To work with the voluntary sector to improve outcomes for vulnerable groups
- To raise achievement in schools
- To review the provision of school places in Bracknell
- To increase participation in adult learning to improve basic skills for employment
- To achieve a better match of Special Education provision to need
- To create and maintain a quality environment
- To develop and implement transport policies that improve movement and maintenance
- To improve outcomes for children
- To improve older people's lives
- To maintain quality and extend access to all services

Corporate Themes to come into effect for 2007/08

1. Promote the Sustainable Development of Bracknell Forest Town Centre
2. Promote Sustainable Communities through innovative housing strategies
3. Help create a safer, stronger community which is socially cohesive
4. Increase participation in and enjoyment of art, culture, sport and recreation
5. Protect and Improve Public Health in the Borough
6. Improve outcomes for children and young people
7. Increase participation in adult learning
8. Improve services for vulnerable adults and older people
9. Create and maintain a quality environment
10. Improve transport and movement in and around the Borough
11. Improve efficiency, effectiveness and access to services
12. Improve Corporate Governance and Partnership Working.

Risk Management – Principal Risks

- 3.2 The Council has a Constitution under which members and officers work to ensure compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations. Risk Management is continuously becoming more embedded in the activities of the Authority and all Service Plans include a risk assessment that identifies risk factors and actions to mitigate those risks, which might affect the achievement of the Council's objectives. In addition audit and inspection reviews have identified the most significant risks and these are set out below together with brief details of the action taken to mitigate these risks.

Performance Data

- 3.3 The reliability of performance data has been a theme in External Audit and Inspection Reports in the past and, although improvements were reported for 2006/07, more progress needs to be made in this area. A corporate lead for data quality needs to be appointed, a data quality strategy must be developed and training in this area needs improvement. Internal Audit will be working in conjunction with External Audit in 2007/08 to provide assurance to the Council and external agencies that its performance data is reliable.

IT Systems Controls

- 3.4 Increasing reliance is placed upon IT systems by the Council to deliver its services and meet its objectives, which means that it is vital to have good assurance on the controls over these systems. Internal audit found significant weaknesses in two IT systems during the year, which included poor access controls, under usage of an audit trail and the inadequate testing of new systems. Previously identified concerns over the Authority's operating systems were found to have been addressed, but review found that there was still one weakness partly outstanding over password controls. Appropriate audit recommendations have been made to address all these issues and these will be followed up in 2007/08 to ensure that they have been implemented. In addition, due to the importance of the security of these systems, ongoing discussions are taking place on the progress towards full implementation of the recommendations before the next formal audit review.

Anti Fraud Culture

- 3.5 The Council needs to continue to promote an anti-fraud culture on a regular basis and to bring to the attention of all staff, members and other interested parties the Council's Fraud and Corruption Policy, Whistle Blowing Policy and procedures for complying with the Money Laundering Regulations. Further training and the circulation of appropriate publicity material is planned during the coming year.

Risk Management Arrangements

- 3.6 The Corporate Risk Register was originally approved by the Executive in 2003 and needs to be updated so that all current significant risks are incorporated in future Service Plans and budgets. In addition, there is a need for risk management awareness training for both members and officers. The intention is for these two key tasks to be addressed during 2007/08.

Organisational Change

- 3.7 There have been no major organisational changes during the year, however there will be significant change over the coming year due to the transfer of the housing stock to a Bracknell Forest based housing association following the tenants' vote in favour of this action. The 2007/08 annual Internal Audit plan identifies this as an area of high risk and includes a review of the stock transfer arrangements.

Resources Available to the Council

- 3.8 Whilst the Council has delivered within budget since 1998 and the 2006/07 Budget was prepared in line with the Medium Term Financial Plan, the Council still faces major challenges in the years ahead if it is to deliver a balanced budget that does not rely on the use of reserves and balances. Whilst the transfer of the housing stock in 2008 will contribute towards the achievement of a sustainable budget further work will be required during 2007/08 to deliver a balanced budget from 2008/09 onwards. In any event, robust budgetary control arrangements will need to be maintained throughout this period to ensure that spending does not exceed the budget and jeopardise the Council's future financial plans. Internal Audit will review budgetary control each year, as this is one of the Council's key financial systems.

Best Value

- 3.9 The report and improvement plan, which resulted from the Best Value Review of the Council's Emergency Response, was finalised during 2006/07. The overall conclusion was that the review uncovered nothing to challenge the Council's ability to

support the immediate response of the Council's services effectively in the event of an emergency and that the emergency response structures currently offer good value for money.

Financial Management

- 3.10 Financial management procedures within the authority are robust and underpinned by the Council's Financial and Contract Regulations. These set out the rules for the control and management of the Council's finances and assets. Budget monitoring procedures are well established and regular reports are produced for the Corporate Management Team. Executive and Scrutiny members also receive regular financial reports each quarter. Financial management is fully integrated into the Council's performance management arrangements. All major risks have been reviewed and appropriate provisions for known liabilities have been made in the Council's balance sheet.

Performance Management

- 3.11 Performance management is the responsibility of individual directors, who report quarterly to Corporate Management Team and their Executive portfolio holder through Quarterly Operations Reports. These reports are available to all members and the public and provide the mechanism through which Executive members are accountable to the Council as a whole and the Overview & Scrutiny Commission in particular. Each quarter the Chief Executive prepares a Corporate Performance Overview Report which highlights key performance issues for both the Executive and the Overview & Scrutiny Commission.

4 Review of Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control and of Internal Audit

- 4.1 Bracknell Forest Borough Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and of Internal Audit. These reviews are informed by the following:
- Internal Audit, who have responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the service they provide and for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment,
 - External Audit, who have responsibility for assessing the relevant significant operational and financial risks affecting the Council as summarised in their Report to Those Charged with Governance and their Annual Audit & Inspection Letter,
 - The annual Comprehensive Performance Assessment Use of Resources judgement, and
 - The work of other review agencies and inspectorates including Ofsted, the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate and the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

5. Significant Internal Control Issues

- 5.1 In respect of the principal risks identified in section 3.3 to 3.8 of this statement, we are of the opinion that no significant gaps in assurance exist and that appropriate action is being taken to mitigate the risks identified.

6. Corporate Governance

- 6.1 Members and senior officers are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of Bracknell Forest's affairs and stewardship of the resources at its disposal. To this end, Bracknell Forest has approved and adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles and reflects the requirements of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework "Corporate Governance in Local Government: A Keystone for Community Governance."
- 6.2 The Borough Solicitor, in his role as the Council's Monitoring Officer, is essentially responsible for ensuring that the Council acts lawfully, to bring any Ombudsmen reports with findings of maladministration to the attention of the Council and to discharge certain responsibilities under the statutory framework relating to member conduct. All reports presented to any of the Council's Committees or the Executive are required to include comments from both the Borough Solicitor and Borough Treasurer bringing Member attention to any legal or financial implications. The Council has a Members' Code of Conduct and training has been provided to all Members including those on the Standards Committee.
- 6.3 During the year the Council has continued to put in place appropriate management and reporting arrangements to enable it to satisfy itself that its approach to corporate governance is both adequate and effective in practice.
- 6.4 We are satisfied that Bracknell Forest's corporate governance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively.
- 6.5 We have been advised about the implications of the result of the review of the effectiveness of internal control by the Authority. Plans to address identified weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the system are in place.

Cllr P. D. Bettison
Leader of the Council
June 2007

T. R. Wheadon
Chief Executive
June 2007

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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION

EXECUTIVE WORK PROGRAMME: Chief Executive's/Corporate Services

REFERENCE	I006059
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TITLE: Award of framework agreements for transport services

PURPOSE OF DECISION: Home to school and ad hoc transport services.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: None - covered by existing budgets.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Director of Corporate Services

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: Parents / guardians

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: Consultations have been held with parents.

DATE OF DECISION: Before 31 May 2007

REFERENCE	I005757
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TITLE: Capital Outturn 2006/07

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To approve the 2006/07 Capital Outturn.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Within existing budget.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: None.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: None.

DATE OF DECISION: 26 Jun 2007

REFERENCE	I005755
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TITLE: Revenue Outturn 2006/07

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To approve the 2006/07 revenue expenditure outturn.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Within existing budget.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: None.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: None.

DATE OF DECISION: 26 Jun 2007

REFERENCE	I006641
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TITLE: Your Homes – Pre-Transfer process & Governance Arrangements

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To explain the process for LSVTs; to agree the governance of the project for the Council; to agree the set up budget for Bracknell Forest Homes.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Within existing budget.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: None.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: None.

DATE OF DECISION: 26 Jun 2007

REFERENCE	I006247
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TITLE: Applications for discretionary relief from Business Rates and Council Tax

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To consider any applications for discretionary relief from Business Rates and Council Tax

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Within existing budget

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive Member for Leisure, Corporate Services and Public Protection

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: None

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: None

DATE OF DECISION: Before 29 Jun 2007

REFERENCE	I005759
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TITLE: Commitment Budget 2008/09-2010/11

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To approve changes to the commitment budget.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Within existing budget.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: None.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: None.

DATE OF DECISION: 24 Jul 2007

REFERENCE	I006803
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TITLE: Discretionary Rate Relief

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To consider any applications for relief.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Within existing budget.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive Member for Leisure, Corporate Services and Public Protection

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: None.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: None.

DATE OF DECISION: Before 30 Nov 2007

REFERENCE	I006801
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TITLE: Review of Discretionary Relief

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To review the claims of existing applicants and grant relief to 31 March 2012.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Details to be contained within the Director's report.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive Member for Leisure, Corporate Services and Public Protection

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: None.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: None.

DATE OF DECISION: Before 30 Nov 2007

REFERENCE	I005767
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TITLE: Draft General Fund Revenue Budget 2008/09

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To agree draft budget proposals for consultation.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: To be determined.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: Council tax payers and business rate payers.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: To be determined.

DATE OF DECISION: 18 Dec 2007

REFERENCE	I005761
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TITLE: Draft Budget Proposals 2008/09

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To agree draft budget proposals for consultation.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: To be determined.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: Council Tax payers and business rate payers.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: To be determined.

DATE OF DECISION: 18 Dec 2007

REFERENCE	I005765
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TITLE: Draft Capital Programme 2008/09 - 2010/11

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To agree draft budget proposals for consultation.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: To be determined.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: Council tax payers and business rate payers.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: To be determined.

DATE OF DECISION: 18 Dec 2007

REFERENCE	I005763
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TITLE: Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 2008/09

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To agree draft budget proposals for consultation.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: To be determined.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: Council tax payers and business rate payers.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: To be determined.

DATE OF DECISION: 18 Dec 2007

REFERENCE	I006805
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TITLE: Discretionary Rate Relief

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To consider any applications for relief.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Within existing budget.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive Member for Leisure, Corporate Services and Public Protection

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: None.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: None.

DATE OF DECISION: Before 31 Dec 2007

REFERENCE	I005774
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TITLE: Capital Programme 2008/09-2010/11

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To approve the capital programme 2008/09 to 2010/11 for submission to Council.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: To be determined.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: Council tax payers and business rate payers.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: Widespread consultation with stakeholders via meetings and the Council's website.

DATE OF DECISION: 12 Feb 2008

REFERENCE	I005776
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TITLE: General Fund Revenue Budget 2008/09

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To approve the General Fund Revenue budget 2008/09 for submission to Council.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: To be determined.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: Council tax payers and business rate payers.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: Widespread consultation with stakeholders via meetings and the Council's website.

DATE OF DECISION: 12 Feb 2008

REFERENCE	I005770
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TITLE: Budget Proposals 2008/09

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To recommend to Council General Fund, HRA and Capital Budgets for 2008/09.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: To be determined.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: Council tax payers and business rate payers.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: Widespread consultation with stakeholders via meetings and the Council website.

DATE OF DECISION: 12 Feb 2008

REFERENCE	I005772
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TITLE: Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 2008/09

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To approve the Housing Revenue Account 2008/09 for submission to Council.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: To be determined.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: Council Tenants.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: To be determined.

DATE OF DECISION: 12 Feb 2008

REFERENCE	I006807
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TITLE: Discretionary Rate Relief

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To consider any applications for relief.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Within existing budget.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive Member for Leisure, Corporate Services and Public Protection

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: None.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: None.

DATE OF DECISION: Before 31 Mar 2008

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION 7 JUNE 2007

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACTIVITY (Assistant Chief Executive)

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide new members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission with an overview of the activities undertaken by the Commission over the last three years and to consider the indicative work programme for 2007/08 attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the activities of the Commission for the last three years be noted; and**
- 2.2 **That the indicative overview and scrutiny work programme for 2007/08 attached at Appendix 1 be approved.**

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The work of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission during the last three years, summarised below, centred on corporate issues. Through co-ordination of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, the Commission also maintained coverage of the full range of the Council's activities and those of its Health partners. During 2006, the Commission strove to make the Overview and Scrutiny process more open and to stimulate greater public engagement. For example, the Commission and its Panels have adopted more open room layouts, published their forward work plan on the Council's website and stimulated press interest in the work of overview and scrutiny.

Overview and Policy Development

- 3.2 The Commission reviewed and approved reports raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for the onward consideration by the Executive, including Tree Policy Review, School Exclusions & Pupil Behaviour policy and School Transfers & Performance. In all cases the Commission was satisfied with the response received from the Executive. The value of overview and scrutiny reviews was demonstrated in 2005 when the lead member of the working group undertaking a review of untaxed/abandoned vehicles was invited to give a presentation at the Successful Scrutiny Roadshow, an event organised by South East Employers, on the review and its outcomes.
- 3.3 Members of the Commission also contributed to and monitored the progress of important Council policy areas such as the Community Cohesion Strategy, the Comprehensive Performance Assessment improvement plan, the Gershon efficiency plan and the progress in developing the procurement function.

Performance Monitoring

- 3.4 Commission members reviewed the performance of the Corporate Services Department and the Chief Executive's Office, mainly through their Quarterly Operations reports, allowing them to question Executive Members and officers in detail about the trends, pressures and priorities for these areas. They also maintained a rolling review of the Council's Corporate Performance Overview quarterly reports. The Commission's conclusions and recommendations were wide-ranging and included asking the Council to amend the model disciplinary procedures for school staff and headteachers, and expressing its concern at the time taken to realise benefits from a Best Value Review of Transport. Members were generally reassured by the high standards of performance set and adhered to, and will continue to keep under review the few exceptions encountered, such as the need to speed up the roll-out of the Council's strategic risk management arrangements.

Holding the Executive to Account

- 3.5 The Commission has kept a watching brief on the Executive's decisions and forward plan and its only occasion to 'call-in' a decision was in July 2004 in relation to the Amen Corner Planning Framework. The call-in resulted in a review of the original decision leading to more thorough consideration of the matter and to an alternative and more informed decision being recommended to, and agreed by, full Council given the significant impact on the Borough's Development Plan. The call-in also triggered agreement to undertake a review of the entire Amen Corner area as part of the work of the Local Development Framework.

Budget Consultation

- 3.6 The Commission has considered the Council's budget proposals each year and wrote to the Government Minister expressing serious concern over the Local Government Grant Settlement in 2006/07. It was also consulted on the approach to Departmental Service Plans.

Audit and Inspection

- 3.7 Commission members regularly reviewed reports by the Council's internal and external auditors, and paid particular attention to the relatively few issues of concern in those reports. The Commission was particularly encouraged by the very positive 2006 annual report on governance by the External Auditors.
- 3.8 It was decided to formalise the Commission's role as the Council's Audit Committee and the recommendation to promulgate this by changing the Commission's Terms of Reference in the Constitution was accepted by full Council.

Background Papers

Agenda, minutes and review reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission 2004/05 – 2006/07.

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Possible Main Topics for Overview and Scrutiny in 2007/08

The determination of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for the forthcoming year will, following the 2007 local government elections, be a matter for the newly appointed members of the Commission and its Panels. To help inform that decision, and having taken note of the future developments set out in section 9 of the Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report 2006/07, our experience and the views offered by others, the current members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission set out below an indicative programme of the main topics which we consider are worthy of review. The proposed indicative work programme below will necessarily be subject to refinement and updating.

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

1. Co-ordination of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels
2. Routine Monitoring of the performance of the Council's corporate functions.
3. Audit Committee duties, including the review of plans and the reports of both internal and external audit.
4. Periodic review of the Council's strategic risk management arrangements.
5. The operations of other public sector service providers (other public bodies, such as the Department for Work and Pensions and the South East Economic Development Agency have important statutory roles to play in providing services to the Borough and its residents. Using existing powers, enhanced by the forthcoming *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill*, the Council can and should hold the more significant service providers to account for their performance). After an initial scoping review, specific reviews of individual providers may be carried out by one or more of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.
6. Review of the Council's procurement arrangements
7. ICT Strategy
8. The Council's involvement in partnerships and the Bracknell Forest Partnership in particular (*The Local Area Agreement will 'go live' in April 2007, and there is a new duty on the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function to ensure that scrutiny of all the theme partnerships is in place*)
9. 2008/09 budget scrutiny
10. Exercising pre-decision scrutiny by reference to the Executive Forward Plan.

Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel

1. Review of Adult Treatment Plan (Drugs and Alcohol Action Team)
2. 'Your Homes' – implementation, following the residents' ballot.
3. Monitoring the performance of the Social Services and Housing Department.
4. Monitoring the implementation of the action plans for Supporting People and Adult Social Care (arising from the 2006 Commission for Social Care Inspection).
5. Review of action taken in response to the Panel's report on anti-social behaviour.
6. Exercising pre-decision scrutiny by reference to the Executive Forward Plan.
7. Contributing to the development of significant statutory plans and policies (*department to provide details of forthcoming plans and policies for 2007*).

Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel

1. Parking enforcement – implementation of the Council’s new powers and future opportunities.
2. Monitoring the performance of the Environment and Leisure Department.
3. Bracknell Town Centre regeneration.
4. Waste – Progress review of new waste Private Finance Initiative contract, also the experience of the first year of Alternative Bin Collection.
5. Exercising pre-decision scrutiny by reference to the Executive Forward Plan.
6. Contributing to the development of significant statutory plans and policies (*department to provide details of forthcoming plans and policies for 2007*).

Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel

1. Contributing to and agreeing the Council’s development of a Health Strategy for the Borough.
2. Monitoring the remediation of underfunding of health care in the Borough, as revealed by the Chief Executive of the Berkshire East PCT.
3. Extended Schools/Children’s Centres – a joint review with the Lifelong Learning and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
4. A review centred around patient focus, being a principal area of concern for residents, perhaps concentrating on waiting lists, consultant referral and infection control.
5. In concert with the Joint East Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, monitoring the performance of the Berkshire East PCT.
6. Contributing to the development of significant statutory plans and policies proposed by the PCT.

Lifelong Learning and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

1. Preparations for, and outcome of the 2007 Joint Area Review.
2. Monitoring the performance of the Education, Children’s Services and Libraries Department.
3. Exercising pre-decision scrutiny by reference to the Executive Forward Plan.
4. Contributing to the development of significant statutory plans and policies (*department to provide details of forthcoming plans and policies for 2007*).

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