

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
11 SEPTEMBER 2008  
7.30 - 9.35 PM**



**Present:** Councillors Edger (Chairman), McLean (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Birch, Burrows, Finnie, Leake, Mrs Shillcock, Thompson, Virgo, Ms Whitbread and Worrall.

Mr G S Anderson (Church Representative Member)  
Mr I Sharland (Parent Governor Representative Member)

**Also Present:** Councillor McCracken

**Apologies for absence were received from:**  
Councillor Brunel-Walker

**In attendance:**

Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services  
Sally Hendrick, Head of Audit & Risk Management  
Richard Beaumont, Head of Performance & Scrutiny  
Priya Patel, Democratic Services Officer  
Clare Wormald, Government Office for the South East

The Chairman welcomed Clare Wormald from the Government Office for the South East to the meeting.

**31. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 17 July 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**Matters Arising**

Minute 21, Corporate Performance Overview Report, paragraph (vi)

It was agreed that the issue of the self-service library facility be referred to the Environment, Culture & Communities Scrutiny Panel and that they be asked to monitor the service.

Minute 28, Work Programme for 2008/09 Municipal Year

It was reported that the Corporate Management Team had been consulted on the O&S Work programme and that no issues had been raised. The Executive would now be consulted on the programme at their meeting on 15 September.

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

Mrs Birch declared a personal interest in Item 6, Report of the Review of Support for Carers, as the spouse of the Executive Member for Adult Services.

There were no other declarations of interest made at the meeting or indications that Members would be participating whilst under the party whip.

### **33. Risk Management Update**

The Commission was presented with a report that updated them on Risk Management arrangements prepared by the Head of Audit and Risk Management.

It was reported that the Executive had approved the updated Risk Register attached as appendix 1, on 22 July. The Executive had also agreed that actions to address risks over the tolerance level should be developed by officers who had been identified as risk owners and that these would be monitored by the Executive on a quarterly basis through the Performance Management Reports.

Significant effort had been made to improve the identification of risks and mitigating actions in directorate Service Plans for 2008/09. Members and Senior officers had taken part in workshops to assess the risks, which had been used to update the Strategic Risk Register and to identify how they impacted on Service Plans. There would be further training for officers on risk management, to ensure there was an effective risk management culture across the Council.

In response to members' queries, the Director of Corporate Services explained that Zurich Municipal had been engaged to assist on risk management pending the recruitment to the post of Head of Audit and Risk Management.

In response to members' queries around houses being built without accompanying improvements in infrastructure, it was reported that many of these infrastructure improvements were out of the control of the Council and depended on utilities such as water, gas and electricity to ensure improvements were made. Members asked that this be made clear in the report.

In response to members' queries concerning difficult decisions and budget pressures, the Director of Corporate Services explained the risks surrounding demand led services, particularly young people requiring social services.

In terms of the risk of key people leaving, it was reported that as a small authority, this was a significant risk as a great deal of knowledge and expertise was often vested in a small number of key people. It was crucial that handovers were carried out thoroughly.

It was reported that whilst below tolerance level risks were not assigned with risk owners, they were still regularly monitored and if these risks rose above the tolerance level, they would be assigned with a risk owner.

The Director of Corporate Services advised members that the risks in the register were generic in nature and, notwithstanding the efforts of many people, no organisation could be certain that they had identified every risk affecting them.

It was reported that action plans would be developed for each member of CMT, each CMT member would then need to report on their actions, which had varying timescales, and these would be reported to members through the performance monitoring reports. This would include, for example, the risk surrounding the anchor store for the regeneration of Bracknell town centre. The Strategic Risk Management Group, comprising senior officers from all Council departments, would also monitor the overall action plan. The Director of Corporate Services assured members that

although action plans had not been completed for every risk, all risks were being appropriately managed.

The Chairman said that the Commission were very interested in risk management, and acknowledged that a lot of work had been carried out in this area,. He asked the Head of Audit and Risk Management to indicate in the next report to the Commission in four months' time the designated owners of all risks in the register, and the progress being made in managing all the risks.

#### 34. **Report of the Review of Support for Carers**

A report resulting from the review of the support for carers undertaken by a working group of the Social Care and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel was considered by the Commission. The report had been considered and approved by the Social Care and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel at their meeting on 10 September.

Mrs Shillcock, lead member of the working group, reported that members had found this investigation to be most interesting. The working group had considered the support that was provided as a whole in the Borough for carers. The working group looked at two types of support:

- Support to the cared for – this included advice, equipment, access to respite care. It was found that provision by the Council and the voluntary services in this service area, was good. CSCI had affirmed that provision was good.
- Support given to carers themselves – this provision was wide ranging and included support in the home, respite care, overnight respite and emergency care. There was also some financial support for longer breaks.

The working group had found that carers were able to access information in a huge variety of ways. Despite this it was found that many carers still did not know how to access services and information.

The 2001 Census had identified 8,200 carers in the Borough, yet only 200 were on the mailing list of Voluntary Action Bracknell and 500 were receiving support from the Council.

It was difficult to gauge what the needs of the majority of carers was, most were satisfied with the care that was being given to those they cared for.

It was reported that the Carers Strategy Group were working to develop a Strategy, which was currently in draft and would include a Business and Action Plan.

The Chairman and Members of the Commission thanked the Working Group for an excellent and informative piece of work and report. It was noted that the Chief officer: Adult Social Care had also welcomed the report as it highlighted the role and work of the PCT in engaging GPs in this work.

Members felt that this work should be publicised more widely and it was agreed that publicity be generated via Community TV and that this be added to paragraph 5.2 of the report. It was also agreed that a press release be drafted to highlight the working group's report.

It was noted by members that the Government allowance for carers for the Borough was much lower than the number of carers identified by the Census. It was reported

that this was because of the Department of Health's formula that looked at deprivation.

It was agreed that the Head of Performance and Scrutiny would investigate the basis for the difference in funding between East Berkshire local authorities as outlined on page 52 of the agenda papers.

It was agreed that the Chairman would formally send the report to the Executive Member for his response. The Executive response would then be presented at the Commission meeting on 20 November 2008.

**The Vice-Chairman took the Chair for the consideration of the following item.**

**35. Report of the Review of the Local Area Agreement**

The Commission were presented with a report arising from a review of the Local Area Agreement by a working group of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission. Councillor Edger, lead member of the working group, reported that the working group had met with numerous officers including the Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive and the Strategy and Partnerships Officer.

In addition, the working group had met with the Leader and the relevant Executive Member. The meetings had all been productive and had helped the working group to understand how the final 35 indicators had been derived as well as to explore how partnership working could be developed further. The working group had been impressed with the strength of the partnerships already in place, particularly the 10 themed partnerships.

The working group recognised that in the future, focus would be placed on area grants and the cascading of funds through partnerships. It was clear that the Commission and Scrutiny Panels would have an important role to play in terms of considering the work of the partnerships. The recommendations in the report suggested ways in which the Commission and Panels could scrutinise the work of the partnerships.

The working group recognised that it was important that scrutiny of any themed partnership by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels was undertaken with sensitivity. Scoping must be agreed by all parties involved before work began, to avoid misunderstanding, unnecessary concern or dispute. Any success arising from scrutiny reviews should be jointly acknowledged with contributing partners.

Members asked that the minutes of the meeting between the working group and the Leader be circulated to them, once they had been finalised.

It was reported that the report would be submitted to the Bracknell Forest Partnership Board on 9 December 2008 for their consideration. The Commission would then receive an update on progress in six months' time.

Members found the report interesting and welcomed the opportunity to develop a system of robust scrutiny as well as the opportunity to begin to build a relationship with the partnerships.

The Working Group reported that the recommendations in the report on pages 69 and 70 needed to be clearly attributed to those to whom they were addressed and

that this would be done before the report was sent. The Chairman would also formally invite the Executive Member and others to comment on the report.

With reference to the consultation being carried out by the Department for Communities and Local Government, it was agreed that the consultation document would be circulated to all members of the Commission and that a response would be agreed with the Chairman and Vice Chairman, before being submitted. The finalised response would have the input of Commission members and the Corporate Management Team.

**36. Overview and Scrutiny Quarterly Progress Report**

The Commission noted the fourth quarterly progress report on Overview and Scrutiny.

**37. Updates from Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairmen**

The Commission were provided with updates on working groups' progress:

Supporting People

One member had been unable to attend and so little progress had been made, Mrs Fleming would now be joining the Group, and a further meeting had been arranged.

Patient Focus

There had been limited progress with the Patient Focus Working Group, as problems had been encountered.

Hospital Discharge Procedures

This Joint East Berkshire Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee working group had made limited progress

Social Care & Learning

Mrs Birch reported that the carers' report that was considered earlier in the meeting was due to be submitted to the Social Care & Learning Panel on 12 November 2008.

English as an Additional Language

This working group's report would be completed by November.

Social Care Modernisation

Work was progressing well, the report would be prepared in time for the Social Care and Learning Scrutiny Panel meeting on 18 December.

**38. Executive Forward Plan**

The Commission noted the Executive Forward Plan. The Head of Performance and Scrutiny informed members that as the Council would soon be entering the budget cycle, it was proposed that some training be provided for Scrutiny members around scrutinising the budget. This would be useful for members who were new to overview and scrutiny as well as to provide a refresher for other members.

He stated that he would consult members on potential dates for the training as well as source an external provider for the training. It was noted that as members would

be scrutinising the work of financial officers, it would not be appropriate to ask these same officers to deliver training on scrutiny.

It was anticipated that training would be delivered in November with a budget scrutiny Handbook being provided for members.

**CHAIRMAN**