

## **NOTICE OF MEETING**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Commission**

**Thursday 19 November 2009, 7.30 pm**

**Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House, Bracknell**

### **To: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

Councillor Edger (Chairman), Councillor McLean (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Mrs Birch, Finnie, Harrison, Leake, Mrs McCracken, Mrs Shillcock, Turrell, Virgo, Ms Whitbread and Worrall

#### **Church Representative Members** (Voting in respect of Education matters only)

Mr G S Anderson and One Vacancy

#### **Parent Governor Representative Members** (Voting in respect of Education matters only)

Dr P Josepchs-Franks and One Vacancy

#### **Teachers' Associations' Representative Members** (Voting in respect of Education matters only)

Miss V Richardson and One Vacancy

#### **cc: Substitute Members of the Commission**

Councillors Baily, Mrs Beadsley, Beadsley, Dudley, Mrs Pile, Wade and One Vacancy

ALISON SANDERS  
Director of Corporate Services

### **EMERGENCY EVACUATION INSTRUCTIONS**

- 1 If you hear the alarm, leave the building immediately.
- 2 Follow the green signs.
- 3 Use the stairs not the lifts.
- 4 Do not re-enter the building until told to do so.

If you require further information, please contact: Sue Hills  
Telephone: (01344) 352060  
Email: [sue.hills@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:sue.hills@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)  
Published: 9 November 2009



**Overview and Scrutiny Commission**  
**Thursday 19 November 2009, 7.30 pm**  
**Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House,**  
**Bracknell**

**AGENDA**

Page No

**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 24 September 2009.

1 - 6

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

Members are asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interest 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.

**5. APPOINTMENT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEMBERS**

To appoint Councillors to fill the vacant position on the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the vacant position on the Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

7 - 8

**HOLDING THE EXECUTIVE TO ACCOUNT**

**6. EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW OF WASTE AND RECYCLING SERVICES**

To consider the response by the Executive Member to the Overview and Scrutiny report on the Review of Waste and Recycling undertaken by a working group of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

9 - 18

**7. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN**

Forthcoming items on the Executive Forward Plan of a corporate nature are attached for consideration.

19 - 30

## **PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

8. **'ALL OF US' COMMUNITY COHESION STRATEGY AND EQUALITY SCHEMES MONITORING REPORT 2008-2009**

To consider the monitoring report on the implementation of the Council's 'All of us' Community Cohesion Strategy and the Race, Gender and Disability Equality Schemes during 2008-2009.

31 - 60

9. **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORT (CPOR)**

To consider the Chief Executive's Corporate Performance Overview Report for quarter one (April to June) of the 2009/10 financial year.

Copies of the report have been previously circulated with the Executive agenda for 15 September and are available with the online version of the agenda. Members are asked to bring their copies to the meeting.

## **OVERVIEW AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

10. **GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON 'STRENGTHENING LOCAL DEMOCRACY'**

To note the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's response to the consultation by the Department for Communities and Local Government 'Strengthening Local Democracy'.

61 - 72

11. **UPDATES FROM PANEL CHAIRMEN**

To receive verbal updates from Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairmen and the Vice-Chairman of the Joint East Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission will be on 28 January 2010

This page is intentionally left blank



**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION**  
**24 SEPTEMBER 2009**  
**7.30 - 10.07 PM**

**Present:**

Councillors Edger (Chairman), McLean (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Birch, Finnie, Leake, Mrs McCracken, Mrs Shillcock, Turrell, Ms Whitbread and Worrall

**Teacher Representative:**

Miss V Richardson

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Harrison and Virgo  
Mr G S Anderson  
Dr P Josephs-Franks

**Also present:**

Councillor McCracken, Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection

**In Attendance:**

Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services  
Victor Nicholls, Assistant Chief Executive  
Jo Alderson, Head of Procurement  
Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview & Scrutiny  
Sue Hills, Democratic Services Officer

**29. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 16 July 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising –

Minute 26, Centre for Public Scrutiny Self Evaluation – The Chairman reported that the evaluation was in draft and would be sent out to members as soon as possible.

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

Councillor Mrs McCracken declared a personal interest as spouse of the Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection.

**31. Appointment of Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members**

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

**32. Executive Response to the Review of the Implementation of the Housing and Council Tax Benefits Improvement Plan**

The Commission noted the response of the Executive to the review of the implementation of the Housing and Council Tax Benefits Improvement Plan. The report had been written prior to the meeting of The Executive on 15 September 2009 at which the recommended responses contained within paragraph 5 were approved.

The response would be taken back to the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Arising in discussion –

- The need to rationalise and clarify the content of letters sent to claimants. Councillor Leake to supply details of his concerns to Councillor Finnie.
- Councillor Leake to advise Councillor Finnie of details of his concerns about unknown conditions relating to loans.
- The Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel to look into the small budget for Discretionary Housing Allowance.

**33. Executive Forward Plan**

The Commission noted the Executive Forward Plan relating to corporate issues. In response to members' questions, the Director of Corporate Services explained the requirement for the annual report on the on the calculation of the Council Tax base. The Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that members would be consulted on the updated strategy for the Bracknell town centre regeneration.

**34. Annual Report on Procurement**

Jo Alderson, Head of Procurement, presented the Annual Report on Procurement 2008-09, reviewing the expenditure analysis, high spending areas, major procurement projects and achievements during the financial year.

Arising from questions and in discussion –

- Training of members and Executive members to be carried out on awareness of procurement and the audit process.
- The procurement team, established in 2002, comprised five full time officers within Corporate Services and three fulltime staff in service departments.
- Members noted the difference between cashable and non cashable savings.
- The Director of Corporate Services emphasised the value of the procurement team. The draft Use of Resources Assessment by the Audit Commission contained positive comments about the Council's procurement arrangements.
- There had been a saving on consultancies but consultants would always be used for their specialist advice on big projects when the requisite skills or capacity was unavailable internally.
- The procurement team would be involved in the pricing and legal aspects of the tenders for the Playbuilder scheme.
- In answer to a question about value for money and the cost of procurement against the cost of providing the service, the Director of Corporate Services impressed upon the Commission that it was not just about savings, but also

about doing things properly and legally. The expertise supported service departments when going out to tender.

- Information was requested to be sent to Members clarifying the position with regard to consultancies and giving total savings in respect of all consultancies.
- Information was to be sent to all Members on the outcome of the review of consultancy contracts.

The Commission noted the report. The Chairman thanked the Head of Procurement for an informative presentation and report, and emphasised the importance of procurement, which was taken very seriously by the Commission.

### **35. Performance Monitoring Reports (PMR)**

The Commission considered the Performance Monitoring Reports for the first quarter, April to June, of the financial year 2009/10 for the Chief Executive's Office and the Corporate Services Department.

#### Chief Executive's Office

Of 80 detailed actions, 74 were achieved or on target and six were causing concern. Three of the six were related to the regeneration of the Town Centre and the others were –

- Developing CCTV options
- Reviewing and managing the Local Safeguarding Children Board performance reporting arrangements (held up because of staff sickness)
- Publishing an economic assessment for the borough.

Highlighted in the report were –

- The Armed Forces Day
- The opening of Smallmead and Longshot Lane waste and recycling facilities.
- The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership anti-social behaviour conference
- The roll out of the approach to scrutiny of partner organisations.
- Performance management IT systems procurement
- Data quality initial training
- Action plan on regeneration and enterprise had been agreed by the Economic and Skills Development Partnership.

Arising during questions and discussion –

- A list of CAA key dates and details of 'One Place' to be circulated to members.
- The importance of the staff appraisal system. The return of appraisal forms was taken very seriously and monitored by CMT.

#### Corporate Services

The Director of Corporate Services gave a presentation on the performance of Corporate Services during quarter 1. Of 89 detailed actions, 87 were achieved or on target and three were causing concern, all of which were associated with the new Civic Hub.

Arising from questions or in discussion –

- Staff pool cars had been well used during the first month of the scheme.
- Only 18 responses in the staff survey expressed dissatisfaction in losing the essential car user allowance.

- The Council faced challenging budget pressures in 2009/10. One measure being taken was to leave some vacancies unfilled.
- One third of the investment in Icelandic Bank had been returned in a phased process, the remainder being expected over a long period of time.
- The very small print on the PMR would be addressed.
- The need to reassure shopkeepers at Great Hollands on the plans for the area.
- Bracknell Forest's website was considered to be one of the top websites nationally. Resources were not currently available to redevelop it. Members were asked to inform Councillor McCracken of any anomalies in the website.
- Plans were underway to utilise spare office accommodation in the Town Centre. Work had ceased on the Civic Hub.
- RIPA legislation was used sparingly, mainly for benefit evasion and fraud and monitoring of sales to underage children. The Council was inspected every two years to ensure adherence to the legislation. Councillor Leake asked to receive a copy of the Council's RIPA policy which had been approved by CMT.

The Chairman thanked the officers for complete and concise reports.

### 36. **Government Consultation on "Strengthening Local Democracy"**

The Commission considered the report which sought the Commission's views on the proposals in the consultation by the Department for Communities and Local Government 'Strengthening Local Democracy' and agreed the Chairman be authorised to submit to the Chief Executive's office a response to the consultation on the lines indicated.

The Commission were of the opinion that its views would be better incorporated into the Council's response although it hoped the document made clear which were the views of the Commission.

Arising in discussion –

- The resource implications in terms of councillors' time and necessary funding from the Government. The Chairman would include this in the response.

### 37. **Overview and Scrutiny Quarterly Progress Report**

The Commission considered the report which set out the overview and scrutiny activity from May to July 2009 and the national and local developments.

The Commission noted that 31 reviews had been undertaken since December 2003, work which was very useful to the good governance of the borough.

The Chairman reported that first meeting of the Bracknell Forest Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group on 28 September would discuss the scrutiny of the themed partnerships, which was ground breaking work.

Arising in discussion –

- The Council could consider seeking external recognition of the innovative work on partnership overview and scrutiny, perhaps through the Centre for Public Scrutiny's Good Scrutiny Awards. Making an entry would, however, be time consuming.



- The possibility of copywriting any partnership scrutiny toolkit that might developed.

### 38. **Updates from Panel Chairmen**

#### Environment, Culture and Communities O&S Panel

Councillor Finnie reported –

- The last meeting was held at South Hill Park. Not many members of the public attended. The venue was noisy because of a jazz concert. Councillor Worrall asked if public attendance at offsite meetings could be monitored. The Head of Overview and Scrutiny explained that in a self evaluation Bracknell Forest fell short on public engagement with the O&S process and holding meetings accessible to the public was an attempt to remedy this. The meeting at South Hill Park was an opportunity to have a tour of the lottery funded project.

Councillor Mrs Birch advised the Commission that her December panel meeting would be held at the new Bracknell and Wokingham College.

#### Children's Services and Learning O&S Panel

Councillor Mrs Birch reported –

- a very informative and successful first partnership presentation.
- The 14-19 Years Education Provision Working Group was progressing well. She thought the working group may decide to send the report to the Secretary of State as it was a subject of national importance.

#### Health O&S Panel

Councillor Leake reported –

- Working groups on Preparedness for Public Health Emergencies and Bracknell Health Space were progressing well and he thanked Councillors Burrows and Virgo for leading those groups.
- In response to a question about the Patient Focus Working Group, he said the working group decided it wanted to concentrate on emergency procedures. The Chairman would seek a response from Councillor Burrows as to the use of the information on the O&S Patient Focus review and advise Councillor Mrs McCracken.

#### Joint East Berkshire Health O&S Committee

Councillor Leake reported –

- The chair of the Joint O&S Committee rotated annually and for the past year had been Windsor & Maidenhead who did not think working groups were the right way to conduct business. Slough now chaired the Committee. There was some discussion about the productivity of this joint committee.
- The working group on hospital discharge procedures was not progressing, a matter over which Bracknell Forest had no control.
- Further deficiencies had been uncovered in the PCT's budget.
- A working group had been established to look at hospital car park charges.

**CHAIRMAN**

This page is intentionally left blank

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION 19 November 2009

---

### APPOINTMENT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEMBERS (Assistant Chief Executive)

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

A number of vacancies have arisen on Committees and external organisations following the untimely death of Councillor Browne. The subsequent By-Election has not resulted in a change in political proportionality. The vacant committee seats are allocated to the Conservative Group and should be filled on their nomination. This report invites the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Commission to appoint Councillors to fill the vacant position on the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the vacant position on the Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

#### 2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission confirms any appointments proposed by the Conservative Group in respect of the following vacancies on Overview and Scrutiny Panels (one seat in each instance):-**
- **Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel**
  - **Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel.**

#### 3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Officers are required to report to the Council or the relevant Committee when vacancies arise on committees and external organisations.
- 3.2 Part 3, Section 2 of the Council's Constitution states that Council appoint the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, and that the Commission appoint O&S Panel Members. At its meeting on 25 November, Council is being asked to confirm those appointments within its remit, including the appointments to the O&S Commission and the Joint East Berkshire Health O&S Committees. The current vacancies where appointments are made by the O&S Commission are set out in section 2 above. The O&S Commission is invited to consider any nominations put forward for these vacancies. In the case of the Panel vacancies in 2.1, these seats have been allocated by the Council to the Conservative Group and appointments should be made in accordance with the wishes of that Group.

Background Papers  
Constitution

Contact for further information  
Richard Beaumont – 01344 352283  
e-mail: [richard.beaumont@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:richard.beaumont@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION 19 NOVEMBER 2009

---

### EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW OF WASTE AND RECYCLING SERVICES (Assistant Chief Executive)

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the attached Executive response to the review of waste and recycling undertaken by a working group of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

#### 2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission notes the response of the Executive to the review of waste and recycling and refers this to the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel for consideration.**

#### 3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Executive agreed the recommendations in the attached report at its meeting on 20 October 2009. The attention of the Executive member has been drawn to the omission to respond to recommendation 5.12 in the report: 'The feasibility of introducing a holistic Council-wide Borough slogan and/or logo to promote waste reduction and recycling for use on all paperwork, publications, bins and Council owned vehicles be considered'.

#### Background Papers

'Waste Not Want Not' – A review of review of waste and recycling undertaken by a working group of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, June 2009.

#### Contact for further information

Richard Beaumont – 01344 352283  
e-mail: [richard.beaumont@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:richard.beaumont@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

Andrea Carr – 01344 352122  
e-mail: [andrea.carr@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:andrea.carr@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

#### Doc. Ref

-

This page is intentionally left blank

TO: THE EXECUTIVE  
20 OCTOBER 2009

---

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY REPORT ON WASTE AND RECYCLING**  
**[Chief Officer: Environment and Public Protection]**

**1 PURPOSE OF DECISION**

- 1.1 To determine the Executive's response to the recommendations in the report by the Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel's Working Group on Waste & Recycling.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **That the Executive notes the responses to the helpful recommendations of the Working Group and supports the responses given; and**
- 2.2 **that the Working Group be thanked for their work.**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Working Group spent considerable time reflecting on all the issues with the support of appropriate officers. As a consequence the report and recommendations are fully informed and merit proper consideration. As can be seen the majority can be accepted and acted upon. Indeed in some instances the work of the Group has already informed and helped change working practice.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 Each of the recommendations has alternatives and these options were considered by the Working Group and the Executive Member. The detailed reasons why the recommendations are being proposed are highlighted in the supporting information.

**5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 5.1 The report of the Working Group is attached as Annex 1. The recommendations arising are considered in detail below.

re<sup>3</sup> Project

- 5.2 Should the opportunity arise through the re<sup>3</sup> contract, 'in-vessel' composting of food waste be explored;

**The implications of introducing such a service are currently being explored through the re<sup>3</sup> partnership. Whilst any material can be collected doing so without there being a sustainable outlet for the material is not practical. Currently the only option for such waste would be to landfill it or to transport it long distances to a processing plant assuming we can effect a contractual relationship via WRG. The cost implications of introducing a separate food**

**waste collection would also need to be taken into account.**

#### ABC Scheme

- 5.3 An investigation be carried out into the feasibility of giving all residents the option to request 140 or 240 litre wheeled blue bins if they have insufficient space or demand for the larger 240 litre bin or the 140 litre bin is not large enough to accommodate paper and card waste in addition to cans and plastic bottles.

**We have a small stock of 140 litre bins. When ordering bins we try to have regard to potential demand so as to limit the quantity held in stock and there is a minimum order quantity. The need for providing smaller bins for pensioners and also where space is at a premium is recognised. The standard bin used by most households is the 240 litre bin and with the co-mingling of waste now permitted this size is being well used by households across the Borough.**

- 5.4 Action be taken to tackle the increase in fly-tipping;

**The incidence of fly tipping in the Borough is not on the increase and in fact appears to have decreased. That said the need for being even more proactive in this regard was identified via the work of the Street Cleansing Working Group. Action is being taken and co-ordinated via the Cleaner Borough Group to good effect. Camera technology is now being used and details of those caught offending are being put through legal process. In addition we are "designing out" the potential for fly tipping at recycling sites with new informative signage and fencing around banks thus giving no space to dump rubbish. This seems to be successful at the sites that have been redesigned.**

- 5.5 The waste management practice of the top CPA rated councils and those with the highest levels of recycling and composting be explored to identify best waste and recycling practice for possible adoption in Bracknell Forest;

**This council has already been rated at the highest level by CPA inspectors. Officers already work closely with the re<sup>3</sup> partner authorities to implement mutually beneficial initiative and via membership of professional bodies keep in touch with developments in and around the country. There are always going to be options to be explored but these options come with a cost and unless there is an accessible and sustainable outlet should not be developed. The priority locally for the next 12 months should be to seek to maximise the benefits arising from the use of the blue bin, to encourage as much home processing of garden or food waste as possible (via composters and green cones) and to seek to encourage an overall reduction of what goes into the residual bins.**

- 5.6 The Working Group continue to monitor ABC and recycling developments following the move to placing all dry kerbside recyclables together in wheeled blue bins and report its findings in a follow up report in approximately 12 months time.

**Agreed. The Council should get a report on the changes in relation to both the introduction of the blue bins as well as the effectiveness of the new MRF in Reading. A recent small study of recycling and green waste tonnages has highlighted the poor performing areas which enable the team to target those areas.**



### Minimise Waste/Increase Recycling

- 5.7 As those on low incomes may not be in a position to buy brown bins or garden refuse sacks leading to garden waste being placed in landfill bins, the cost benefit options of providing them free of charge to those on income support be explored;

**The use of brown bins decreases the tonnage of waste going to landfill. Where possible it is better to encourage home composting on both financial and environmental grounds. We could change the current policy to provide bins for those on low incomes provided the budget was available. A very significant number of people use the garden sacks at 30p each and are happy to have that choice. We need to better understand why people have not taken up the offer. In this Borough we charge a one off fee. Lots of Councils make an annual charge.**

- 5.8 The feasibility of providing recycling banks at hospitals, churches and charities, also usable by the public be investigated;

**This is part of an ongoing review and a re<sup>3</sup> objective has been set to investigate potential places for new glass recycling sites. Reading BC has recently placed glass banks in a number of small shopping precincts, churches, clubs and pubs and some at the side of the road on wide pavements. The success of these is being closely monitored with a view to informing future practice.**

- 5.9 The Government be lobbied to promote the recycling of additional articles in order to procure more recycling opportunities and achieve sustainability;

**This is already being done via WRAP and other professional waste organisations – NAWDO, CIWM, LGA etc. We have been supporting such organisations.**

- 5.10 The Council be mindful of and take steps to support, LGA and DEFRA waste reduction campaigns;

**The Council is already a registered WRAP and 'Recycle Now' partner. Through its links with the CIWM and NAWDO we will continue to be very involved in all LGA and DEFRA led campaigns.**

- 5.11 Schemes for collecting waste and recyclables from small businesses, such as bin sharing, be investigated and facilitated;

**This is already in hand through the re<sup>3</sup> partnership and Business Link. A waste strategy has been published and is on the re<sup>3</sup> website ([www.re3.org](http://www.re3.org)).**

- 5.12 The Social Care and Learning Department be asked to approach schools concerning the provision of educational programmes to promote recycling and waste reduction, possibly in partnership with 'Waste Watch';

**The Councils' waste officers, the re<sup>3</sup> Waste Minimisation Officers and the LEAs have already produced an re<sup>3</sup> schools pack. A website has been launched specifically for the educational needs of schools.**

### Food Waste

- 5.13 Measures to reduce food waste through education and promotion, such as encouraging residents to support the national "Love Food, Hate Waste" campaign and working with the WI, be pursued;

**Food waste minimisation is the main priority for the partnership in 2009/10. re<sup>3</sup> launched a campaign in March 2009 with postcards going to targeted households in the borough where it was found in the 2007 waste analysis had high levels of food waste and various other promotional activities.**

- 5.14 Opportunities to make further food digesting Green Cones available to residents at a subsidised cost be pursued;

**Capital funding has set aside for purchase of more Green Cones in 2009/10.**

- 5.15 The LGA be requested to advise the national headquarters of major supermarket chains that BOGOF offers and multi portion packs are leading to food waste and ask them to pursue alternatives such as price reductions;

**Work is already being undertaken by WRAP on our behalf in respect of this.**

- 5.16 Subject to satisfactory checks with the local Water Board, the use of food waste disposal units to facilitate food waste reduction by residents living in smaller properties with confined space or flats be promoted;

**The use of such units is not supported by the sewerage agencies. They point to the potential for causing blockages and the fact that food waste is not the same as sewerage. Adding food waste to sewerage can give rise to added problems at times of flooding.**

### The Council's Town Centre Offices

- 5.17 Alternative bin arrangements in the Council's offices, such as the replacement of personal bins with compartmentalised bins to facilitate recycling, be pursued;

**This has already been actioned where space allows**

- 5.18 A recycling plan for the new civic hub be developed when the operational fit out stage is reached;

**A draft report was presented for consultation at the 12 March Climate Change Group meeting.**

### Household Waste and Recycling Collection Service Questionnaire

- 5.19 Further residents' feedback in respect of the waste and recycling service be sought through whatever means are considered to be appropriate;

**The Council already surveys its residents in several ways. Our next detailed survey is due in Autumn 2009. In addition our residents' views are canvassed at various promotional activities throughout the year and when they use Longshot Lane. The results of those surveys are made public and used to inform custom and practice.**

## **6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

### Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The Borough Solicitor has nothing to add to the report.

### Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 In the current financial year there are budgets of £219,000 in capital and £151,200 in revenue to support waste and recycling initiatives.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 There are no equality impact issues arising from the recommendations of the Working Group

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 There are no strategic risk management issues arising from the recommendations of the Working Group

## **7 CONSULTATION**

### Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 The Working Group included representatives of the Town and Parish Councils and they interviewed and took information from a number of interested parties.

### Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Direct interview and presentations to the Group.

### Representations Received

- 7.3 Not applicable.

### Background Papers

Report of the Working Group – February 2009

### Contacts for further information

Steve Loudoun

Chief Officer: Environment and Public Protection

01344 352501

[steve.loudoun@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:steve.loudoun@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

Janet Dowlman

Head of Waste & Street Cleansing

01344 352511

[janet.dowlman@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:janet.dowlman@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

### Document Ref

CO/Cttes&Groups/Executive/2009/O&SReportononWaste&Recycling20-10-09 (c)

# Equality Impact Assessment Record

Date of EIA

25 June 2009

Directorate

ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE & COMMUNITIES

		<b>Step</b>
<b>Initial Screening Record</b>		<b>1/2</b>
Activity to be assessed	<b>Overview &amp; Scrutiny Report on Waste and Recycling</b>	
What is the activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy/strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Review <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change	
Is it a new or existing activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Existing	
Aim / objective / purpose of the activity – who is the activity designed to benefit/target?	<p><b>The purpose of the activity is</b> to determine the Executive's response to the recommendations in the report by the Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny panel's working group on Waste and recycling.</p> <p><b>The activity is designed for</b> Members of the Council insofar as the review looked at the way an existing service was delivered looking for areas where changes might be made.</p>	
Who is responsible for the activity?	<b>The person responsible for this function is:</b> Janet Dowlman	
Did Step 1: Initial Screening indicate that a full EIA was necessary?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes – full EIA completed and recorded below. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – full EIA not completed therefore record ends here.	
<b>Full EIA Record</b>		
Who are the members of the EIA team?	Overwrite with names of individuals, section or team	
What evidence has been found to indicate that the activity might need to be amended? (Include any consultation undertaken)	Overwrite with the data, information or research that was used in the EIA	
With regard to the equalities themes, which groups might be <b>impacted</b> by the activity? Might any of these groups be impacted <b>adversely</b> ?	<b>Groups Impacted</b>	<b>Groups impacted adversely</b>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Race and ethnicity <input type="checkbox"/> Disability <input type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Age <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Orientation <input type="checkbox"/> Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/> Race and ethnicity <input type="checkbox"/> Disability <input type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Age <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Orientation <input type="checkbox"/> Religion or belief
What evidence is there to suggest an impact/adverse impact?		
On what grounds can impact or adverse impact be justified?		
Is there any current action that addresses issues for any of the groups impacted/adversely impacted?		
		<b>4</b>
		<b>3/4</b>

What changes will you make to the activity reduce or remove any differential/adverse impact?	List the actions that you have planned as a result of the EIA.	5
Into which action plan/s will these actions be incorporated?		
Who is responsible for the action plan?		6
Have any examples of good practise been identified as part of the EIA?		
Has the EIA been published on the Council website?	Yes / No	
Who is the relevant Chief Officer and have they signed off the EIA?	Name  Signature.....	
Which PMR will this EIA be reported in?	Note the service department and relevant quarter/date of PMR	

This page is intentionally left blank

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION 19 NOVEMBER 2009

---

### EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN ITEMS RELATING TO CORPORATE ISSUES (Assistant Chief Executive)

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

This report presents current Executive Forward Plan items relating to corporate issues for the Commission's consideration.

#### 2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission considers the current Executive Forward Plan items relating to corporate issues appended to this report.**

#### 3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Consideration of items on the Executive Forward Plan alerts the Commission to forthcoming Executive decisions and facilitates pre-decision scrutiny.
- 3.2 To achieve accountability and transparency of the decision making process, effective Overview and Scrutiny is essential. Overview and Scrutiny bodies are a key element of Executive arrangements and their roles include both developing and reviewing policy; and holding the Executive to account.
- 3.3 The power to hold the Executive to account is granted under Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 which states that Executive arrangements of a local authority must ensure that its Overview and Scrutiny bodies have power to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the Executive. This includes the 'call in' power to review or scrutinise a decision made but not implemented and to recommend that the decision be reconsidered by the body / person that made it. This power does not relate solely to scrutiny of decisions and should therefore also be utilised to undertake pre-decision scrutiny.

#### Background Papers

Local Government Act 2000

#### Contact for further information

Richard Beaumont – 01344 352283  
e-mail: [richard.beaumont@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:richard.beaumont@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank



## OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION

### EXECUTIVE WORK PROGRAMME

REFERENCE	I019130
-----------	---------

**TITLE:** Annual Report on Procurement 2008/09

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** The Executive Member is asked to note the Annual Report on Procurement 2008-09

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** No financial implications.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive Member for Finance, Resources and Assets

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** N/A

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** None

**DATE OF DECISION:** Not before 2 Nov 2009

REFERENCE	I019313
-----------	---------

**TITLE:** Bracknell Town Centre Regeneration Update

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To consider the latest progress report on proposals for the regeneration of Bracknell town centre.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** There are no financial implications arising directly from the progress report.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Bracknell Town Centre Regeneration Committee

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Not applicable.

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** None.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 9 Nov 2009

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I014589
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Place Survey

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To inform the Executive of the Place Survey results for 2008.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** None

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Bracknell Forest residents

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** The survey itself was the bi-annual survey of residents for Bracknell Forest.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 17 Nov 2009

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I019224
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Job Evaluation Scheme

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To consider Counsel's advice in relation to the Council's current Job Evaluation Scheme.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** The financial impact will need to be dependent on the outcome of consideration of the report and the course of action taken by the Executive.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** None at this stage.

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** None at this stage.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 17 Nov 2009

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I019103
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Procurement Update

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To advise the Executive of progress with implementing the Procurement Regulations Action Plan.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** No financial implications.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Not applicable.

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** None

**DATE OF DECISION:** 17 Nov 2009

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I018519
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Calculation of Council Tax Base - 2010/11 Local Council Tax discounts - 2010/11

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To agree the calculation of the council tax base for 2010/11 and the level of local council tax discount offered for 2010/11.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** To be determined.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Director of Corporate Services

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Not applicable

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** None

**DATE OF DECISION:** 17 Nov 2009

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I019095
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Revenue Budget 2010/11

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To approve the Council's budget proposals for consultation.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Council's Annual Budget Proposals.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Open consultation. All views welcome.

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Website  
BF1500  
Business Ratepayers

**DATE OF DECISION:** 15 Dec 2009

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I019097
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Capital Programme 2010/11 - 2012/13

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To approve the Draft Capital Programme for consultation.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Part of Council's annual budget proposals.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Open consultation. All views welcome.

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Website  
BF1500  
Business Ratepayers

**DATE OF DECISION:** 15 Dec 2009

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I019425
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Strategic Risk Register

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To review and approve the updated Strategic Risk Register.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Risks have financial impact.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** N/A

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Strategic Risk Management Group

**DATE OF DECISION:** 15 Dec 2009

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I019134
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Sale of Land at Bay Road

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** The purpose of the report is to seek agreement from the Executive to dispose of the surplus land at Bay Road to Thames Valley Housing Association.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** A capital receipt will be received if the land is successfully marketed.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** None.

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** None.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 15 Dec 2009

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I016144
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Corporate Performance Overview Report

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To inform the Executive of the performance of the Council over the second quarter of 2009/10.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** No financial implications

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** N/A

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** N/A

**DATE OF DECISION:** 15 Dec 2009

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I015726
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Discretionary Rate Relief and Hardship Relief

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To consider new applications for discretionary rate relief and hardship relief.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Within existing budget

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

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** None.

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** None.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 31 Dec 2009

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I018517
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Customer Contact Strategy 2007-2010 Annual Update Report

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To provide an update to the Customer Contact Strategy for the Council.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Within existing budget.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Not applicable.

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** None.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 19 Jan 2010

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I019101
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Revenue Budget 2010/11

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To recommend to Council the annual budget.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** The Council's annual budget proposals.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Open consultation. All views welcome.

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Website  
BF1500  
Business Ratepayers

**DATE OF DECISION:** 16 Feb 2010

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I019099
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Capital Programme 2010/11 - 2012/13

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To approve the Council's Capital Programme.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Part of the Council's annual budget setting.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Open consultation. All views welcome.

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Website  
BF1500  
Business Ratepayers

**DATE OF DECISION:** 16 Feb 2010

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I019270
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Contract Award for the Supply of Fixed Line Telephony

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To approve contract award for the supply of fixed line telephony.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Within existing budget.

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

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Not applicable.

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** None

**DATE OF DECISION:** 26 Feb 2010



<b>REFERENCE</b>	I010993
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Bracknell Town Centre Regeneration Strategy

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To confirm a strategy for the regeneration of Bracknell Town Centre.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** None

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Town Centre Stakeholders

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** External consultation

**DATE OF DECISION:** 16 Mar 2010

This page is intentionally left blank

TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
DATE: Thursday 19 November

---

**‘ALL OF US’ COMMUNITY COHESION STRATEGY  
AND EQUALITY SCHEMES ANNUAL REPORT 2008-09  
(Director of Corporate Services)**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The *‘All of Us’ Community Cohesion Strategy and Equality Schemes Monitoring Annual Progress Report for 2008-09* reports progress against the Council’s Community Cohesion Strategy 2008/09–2011/12 during its first year of implementation and progress against our Disability, Race and Gender Equality Schemes in 2008/09. The report includes detailed performance monitoring information against the action plans and examples of success stories of promoting community cohesion and equality of opportunity in Bracknell Forest. The Equality Framework; the new IDeA Local Government performance framework for equalities, launched in April 2009, reinforces the important role overview and scrutiny processes have in reviewing equality impacts and objectives.

## **2 SUGGESTED ACTION**

- 2.1 **The Commission is asked to note Appendix One the ‘All of Us’ Community Cohesion Strategy and Equality Schemes Monitoring Annual Progress Report for 2008-09.**

## **3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Annual Report summarises the progress made during 2008-09 in implementing Bracknell Forest Council’s “All of Us” Corporate Strategy for promoting Community Cohesion 2008/09 – 2011/12; our second community cohesion strategy approved by the Executive in April 2008.
- 3.2 The report also summarises the progress made during 2008-09 in promoting equality of opportunity through implementing the Council’s Race, Disability and Gender Equality Schemes. The Equality Schemes detail how the Council is meeting its general and specific duties under various equalities legislation to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations between different people.
- 3.3 The Council works very closely with partners including; the voluntary sector, the Police, East Berkshire PCT, Bracknell Forest Homes, the Parish and Town Councils and the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people in the borough. The Partnership’s Community Cohesion and Engagement Working Group oversee and monitor the delivery of the strategy.
- 3.4 The Council published its first Disability Equality Scheme in 2006. Our Disability Equality Scheme 2006 -09 is now reaching the end of its lifespan and this report is the final annual report on the scheme. The Council published its first Gender Equality Scheme in December 2007; this is the first annual report on the scheme. The Council published its second Race Equality Scheme 2008- 2011 in April 2008 and therefore this is also the first annual report on the progress made implementing

this scheme. All of the schemes were approved by the Executive and it was agreed that annual reports would be submitted to members detailing progress to date.

#### Performance results

- 3.5 The Council has made considerable progress in implementing “All of Us”. This is evident in the two key performance measures against which the success of the strategy will be judged, namely: 86 of the 88 key tasks in our action plan have been completed within their allocated timescale or are ahead of schedule during 2008-09.
- 3.6 The major performance indicator by which the Council measures its progress in Community Cohesion is “the percentage of people who feel that people from different backgrounds get on well together”. This has been measured by survey in 2003 and 2006 and those agreeing with this statement increased significantly from 66% in 2003 to 81% in 2006. In 2008, 82% of people believe people from different backgrounds get on well together; this result is significantly higher than the all England average of 76.4% and helps demonstrate that a high level of community cohesion is being maintained during the economic downturn and while the diversity of the borough has increased significantly.
- 3.7 Members’ attention is also drawn to a sample of case studies of where the Council has successfully applied the principles contained in the Community Cohesion Strategy and Equality Schemes. These case studies are outlined on pages 4 - 8 of Appendix 1
- 3.8 Good progress has also been made in implementing our Equality Schemes. All of the 75 key tasks in the Disability Equality Scheme 2006-09 have been completed, the majority ahead of schedule. All 14 of the Gender Equality Scheme 2007-10 key tasks are completed or on track for completion in their respective timescales. 25 out of the 26 key tasks in the Race Equality Scheme 2008-11 action plan are completed or on track for completion in their respective timescales.
- 3.9 In light of this progress the Council is well placed to build on its achievements and to move the Community Cohesion and Equalities agenda forward through the further implementation of the All of Us implementation plan and the Equality Scheme Action Plans in 2009-10.

#### Key Pieces of Work in the Last Twelve Months

- 3.10 During 2008-09 new Equality Impact Assessment Guidance and a training programme were delivered for staff. Equality Impact Assessments were completed on the Council’s major services and functions. Equality and Diversity Training was delivered to members and staff. The Council’s Equality Group made significant progress in moving the Council to Level Three of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

#### Where do we go in the future?

- 3.11 In developing our community cohesion and equalities work there are a number of opportunities and challenges for future years. The demographics of the borough continue to change, increasing diversity. The recession is placing financial and other pressures on our communities and has the potential to threaten good relations and increase tensions between people. To date, we have not witnessed any increase in community tension but we must continue to monitor this carefully.

- 3.12 During 2009-10 the Council will be migrating from working on the Equality Standard over to working on the new Equality Framework for Local Government; which provides the opportunity for increased partnership working on tackling inequalities. Forthcoming changes in equality legislation proposed in the Equality Bill present opportunities in relation to streamlining equality legislation and enabling the Council to work more flexibly to reduce inequality locally.
- 3.13 The Council will be working on developing a Single Equality Scheme in 2010-11 to respond to the legislative changes, which will replace our existing Disability, Race and Gender Equality Schemes. The scheme will outline our priorities and action to promote equality of opportunity across the six equality strands; age, gender, religion and belief, disability, race and sexual orientation, as well as for any other new protected groups. In developing the scheme we will need to ensure that we engage effectively with all parts of our community and focus our limited resources carefully.

#### Background Papers

'All of Us' in Bracknell Forest – A Corporate Strategy for Promoting Community Cohesion 2008/09- 2010/11 and Equality Schemes Monitoring Annual Progress Report Autumn 2009.

Detailed Action Plans with annotated progress are available on the following page:

<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/your-council/yc-community-cohesion.htm>

#### Contact for further information

Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services  
01344 355603  
alison.sanders@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Abby Thomas, Principal Policy Officer Community Engagement and Equalities  
01344 353307  
abby.thomas@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

# **“All of Us” in Bracknell Forest**

A Corporate Strategy for Promoting  
Community Cohesion  
2008/09 – 2010/11  
And

## **Equality Schemes Monitoring**

Annual Progress Report  
Autumn 2009



If you would like a copy of this report in large print, in Braille, in another format or translation into other languages please contact Abby Thomas, Corporate Services, Bracknell Forest Borough Council, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell RG12 1AQ Tel. 01344 353307 [abby.thomas@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:abby.thomas@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Community Cohesion and Equality – Our Successes	4
3. A Quick Guide to Community Cohesion and Equality	9
4. All of Us – An Executive Summary	10
5. Disability Equality Scheme 2006-09 – An Executive Summary	11
6. Gender Equality Scheme 2007-10 – An Executive Summary	14
7. Race Equality Scheme 2008-11 – An Executive Summary	16
8. The Council's progress to date	19
9. Performance Indicators: progress to date	22
10. Conclusion and challenges for the future	25

## Appendices

- A. All of Us Implementation Plan Monitoring 2008-09
- B. Disability Equality Scheme 2006-09: Action Plan Monitoring 2008-09
- C. Gender Equality Scheme 2007-10: Action Plan Monitoring 2008-09
- D. Race Equality Scheme 2008-11: Action Plan Monitoring 2008-09

Copies of the “All of Us” Community Cohesion Strategy and our Equality Schemes are available on the Your Council/Community Cohesion and Diversity page of the Council's website [www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk)



## 1. Introduction

This report summarises the progress made during 2008-09 in implementing Bracknell Forest Council's "All of Us" Corporate Strategy for promoting Community Cohesion 2008/09 – 2011/12; our second community cohesion strategy. "All of Us" is the Council's overarching Equality Strategy. The report also summarises the progress made during 2008-09 in promoting equality through implementing the Council's Equality Schemes. The Equality Schemes detail how the Council is meeting its general and specific duties under various equalities legislation to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations between different people. Working in partnership is crucial to fostering community cohesion and reducing inequalities. The Council works with partners through the Partnership's Community Cohesion and Engagement Working Group to enable the delivery of and monitor our strategies.

The Council published its first Disability Equality Scheme in 2006. Our Disability Equality Scheme 2006 -09 is now reaching the end of its lifespan and this report is the final annual report on the scheme. The Council published its first Gender Equality Scheme in December 2007; this is the first annual report on the scheme. The Council published its second Race Equality Scheme 2008- 2011 in April 2008 and therefore this is also the first annual report on the progress made implementing this scheme.

The Council has made considerable progress in implementing "All of Us" working with our partners. This is evident in the two key performance measures against which the success of the strategy will be judged, namely:

- ✓ 86 of the 88 key tasks in our action plan have been completed within their allocated timescale or are ahead of schedule during 2008-09.
- ✓ The major performance indicator by which the Council measures its progress in Community Cohesion is "the percentage of people who feel that people from different backgrounds get on well together". In 2008 measured by the new Place Survey, 82% of people believe people from different backgrounds get on well together; this result is significantly higher than the all England average of 76.4% and demonstrates that a high level of community cohesion is being maintained while the diversity of the borough has increased significantly.

Good progress has also been made in implementing our Equality Schemes. This is demonstrated by:

- ✓ All of the 75 key tasks in the Disability Equality Scheme 2006-09 have been completed, the majority ahead of schedule.
- ✓ All 14 of the Gender Equality Scheme 2007-10 key tasks are completed or on track for completion in their respective timescales.
- ✓ 25 out of the 26 key tasks in the Race Equality Scheme 2008-11 action plan are completed or on track for completion in their respective timescales.

The case studies on pages 4 – 8 highlight some of the ways in which the Council has successfully implemented the Community Cohesion Strategy and Equality Schemes in 2008-09. In light of this progress the Council is well placed to build on its achievements and to move the Community Cohesion and Equalities agenda forward through the further implementation of the "All of Us" implementation plan and the Equality Scheme Action Plans in 2009-10.

## **2. Community Cohesion and Promoting Equality 2008-09 – Our Successes**

### **Crowthorne Carnival**

There has been a bi-annual community carnival in Crowthorne High Street since 1977. It offers the community a chance to come together and celebrate the businesses, organisations and people in the village. In 2008 Bracknell Forest Council's Arts Development team worked with the Crowthorne Carnival Committee to attract and engage the teen population in the village, a development need addressed by the Crowthorne community. To this end, we employed 'Street Processions' an established carnival arts group, for an intensive month-long project leading to the participation of a group of teens in the 2008 Carnival procession.

'Street Processions' worked with a range of students, from Edgbarrow School and Youth Centre, Young Carers and young people identified and engaged with the assistance of the local Police Community Support Officer. The group met in

June 2008 for three, two hour after school sessions with Street Processions at the Youth Centre. They created sculptural umbrellas; screen printed and customised T-shirts; and created vehicle decorations for the procession. The week before the Carnival day a full day workshop was held in the school hall. In addition to the 'Street Processions' artists, it also included workshops with a DJ, street dancer, and hairdresser. The following week thirteen teens processed in the 2008 Crowthorne Carnival and won their category.



### **The Green Machine**

A new ethical company has been launched to make the borough blooming marvellous. 'Green Machine' was officially launched on Monday, February 16 2009, and will offer a quality gardening and maintenance service to residents and businesses in the area. It also offers employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

The company offers a range of services including grass cutting, weeding, shrub and hedge trimming, pruning and garden clearing at a competitive rate. The reliable service will be headed up by a professionally trained landscaper who will oversee

the team of employees some of whom have a disability but want to work and gain training.



## **Supporting New Residents and Pupils and Families with English as an Additional Language**

A 'Welcome to Bracknell Forest Guide' has been produced for anyone new to the borough to help them to access services and participate in the community. This has been translated into six languages including Urdu. An 'Induction and Support Pack for Admitting New Arrivals', was also written by the Council's English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Diversity Team and introduced in two secondary schools. Immediate results

show indications of accelerated progress in language development by pupils. A successful bid was developed to the Migration Impact Fund to deliver further training and support to teachers in using the induction and support pack. Regular monitoring by external advisers from the Department for Children Schools and Families National Strategies Team has highlighted the good support given to EAL pupils.

## **Rights Respecting Schools Award**

The 'Rights Respecting School' Award (RRS) is a scheme that places the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) at the heart of a school's ethos. The UNCRC is a globally agreed and ratified 'values framework'. In working towards becoming 'Rights Respecting,' a school will follow a bespoke Action Plan format to ensure that leadership, learning and relationships support the articles of the UNCRC. Bracknell Forest became the second authority (one of five pilot authorities) in the country where it was introduced.

In 2008-09 with the programme in its second year, head teachers and school staff in our schools have seen its potential for affecting relationships, attitudes, behaviour and achievement. There has been a positive impact on children's self-esteem and it leads to greater pupil participation and pupil voice in school matters. Any school in Bracknell can sign up to the RRS award scheme and gain access to support and training. So far, 21

Primary and 2 Secondary schools have signed up to the scheme with 6 achieving the Level 1 Award.



## **Working with the Nepalese Community**

The Council worked with the Runnymede Trust in 2008 to support their research into the Nepalese in Britain. A number of meetings were

organised to enable local Nepalese community members to contribute to the research, which is a part of a series of studies on the growing

complexity of diversity in Britain. The Runnymede Trust research report *Soldiers, Migrants and Citizens – The Nepalese in Britain* was published in August 2008 and has helped the Council in profiling the community and strengthening relationships with the Nepalese in Sandhurst.

Early in 2009 a Nepalese Community Support worker was appointed by the Council, jointly funded by the Council, Thames Valley Police and East Berkshire Primary Care Trust, to focus on working with children and families from the Nepalese community. The aim of their work is to help further support the integration of the Nepalese community in Sandhurst and build on the existing strengths within the

community by providing information, advice and guidance to make life easier in the UK. Thus ensuring that the community has information about the Council and its partners and how to access the services we provide.



## Information for Carers

Bracknell Forest Council recognises that many of its employees combine work with caring responsibilities – for children, older relatives or other dependents. Many of our policies are designed to allow flexibility in the workplace which may help individuals to juggle their responsibilities at work and home.

Whilst Bracknell Forest had a number of separate policies on issues of interest to employees who were carers, it was felt that the carers would benefit from being able to access the information they might need more readily. It would also signal the Council's supportive attitude towards those who combine work with caring responsibilities.

A new document was therefore added to our Employee Support page on our intranet which signposted carers to policies that might assist them – including the right to ask for flexible working (extended this year in line with new legislation); time off for dependents; the flexitime scheme; guidance on flexible working; paternity leave; parental leave; and adoption leave.

We added information on our staff support scheme for those who might be finding their caring responsibilities stressful and contact information that would allow them to investigate childcare options for children and other useful information.

## Dance and Older People's Project

The project aimed to create open and accessible dance provision for older people in the Borough and to attract interested individuals, including those not accessing other services for older people. This approach was ambitious and far more challenging than running the project within an established group

setting, such as a day centre, sheltered accommodation or residential home.

The project began with the delivery of 10 taster sessions across the Borough. These sessions included targeted workshops at day centres and



nursing homes as well as open access workshops that were widely publicised through direct mailings and networks such as Age Concern; 48 older people took part. A regular class has been running since 2007 involving over 30 people aged from 50 to late 70s. In 2009 5 members felt confident enough to perform at Lift Off Dance Festival and in September 2009 the class will transfer over to South Hill Park Arts Centre and be run as part of their Do It! Programme of regular classes. This project was organised in partnership with South Hill Park Arts Centre with additional funding from Arts Council England.

When asked to expand on their reasons for joining the group, most of the participants made comments that related to a social need:



*"I needed something to cheer up my life".*

*"To get away from the house".*

*"What I most liked about the project was feeling part of a group".*

### **Library Home Service Volunteers**

Volunteers provide a home delivery service for books and other loan items for residents who cannot reach the borough's libraries. The home delivery service is available to Bracknell Forest residents who cannot visit the borough's nine libraries in person due to health or mobility problems or visual impairments.

The free service is run by 14 volunteers who discuss with customers the books or recordings they are interested in receiving, and return with specific requests or other items they think will be of interest. The customers are visited at the same time every two or three weeks. The volunteers are supported and offered training by the council to help them in their work.

### **Sandhurst Military Academy**



Close links with the Sandhurst Royal Military Academy (RMA) have been

maintained through 2008-09. Work has been undertaken with the Military Academy to support the continued integration of the Nepali community in Sandhurst and to raise awareness of the Nepali community with the wider community.

In early August 2008 the RMA hosted a Kids Combat Challenge event, when 50 children from the Sandhurst community, identified by their schools as needing additional support, took part in a variety of team building events organised by the Academy and

supported by the Council's Extended Services team. The RMA welcomed

the opportunity to further build their links with the local community.

### **Bracknell Railway Station**

A new bridge with a lift and facilities were opened in April 2009 at Bracknell railway station, enabling people with limited mobility and in wheelchairs to access platform 2.

Booking hall disability access improvements are being undertaken in the summer 2009. The Council is also currently making forecourt improvements to the station which will benefit those with limited mobility.

### **Age to Age – Storytelling and Singing Workshops**

Older people from Ladybank Residential Home were invited to work with Storyteller and reminiscence worker Janet Dowling. Janet met with individuals and asked them to tell their own stories about their past. The aim of the workshop is to create a voice for older people and to enable children to listen, learn and create out of these stories songs to sing.

These reminiscences were turned by Janet into stories to be told to children from St Margaret Clitherow School and Birch Hill School. Musician, Roger Watson worked with the pupils during their lunch break and after school to help the children select stories to turn into songs and lyrics. After just 6 sessions, the children had produced 4 original songs which were performed back to the residents at Ladybank in November 2008. A CD was produced of the recording and given to all those who participated and is now on the Heritage On Line website. The project

was supported by the Council's Extended Services Team.



Age to Age also recently took place with Harmans Water School pupils and older residents who use Downside Resource Centre, many of whom are in their 90s. During autumn 2009 the project is running in Crowthorne, working with the Crowthorne Reminiscence Group.

### **3. A Quick Guide to Community Cohesion and Equality**

#### **What is Community Cohesion**

'Community cohesion' put simply is the way in which groups of people get on with one another and support each other. Community cohesion is strongest when everyone has the opportunity, the resources and the motivation to participate in society as fully as they wish and on an equal basis with others. So a lack of community cohesion occurs when people are prevented from participating or feel alienated. We acknowledge that everyone is different, with differing needs; however everyone should have the same or similar opportunities. Community cohesion as a term and concept arose from the Cattle Report following the riots in Oldham and Burnley in summer 2001.

#### **Why is Community Cohesion important?**

Because community cohesion is about recognising four important principles:

- Opportunity: everyone in Bracknell Forest is provided with the similar opportunities
- Accessibility: everyone is able to access opportunities, services and facilities
- Inclusion: no one is excluded from accessing services, facilities or opportunities
- Difference: different groups in the community and different people have different needs and need different levels of services and support in order to have the same opportunities, accessibility and to be included.

Carrying out our business with these four principles in mind is what the Council is there to do. Community Cohesion therefore is a critical part of all that we do, because community cohesion is about understanding and addressing the needs of all of our customers in what is an increasingly diverse population, with different risk factors related to different communities. In doing so the Council and its partners approach to community cohesion will be both meaningful and proportionate.

#### **Equalities Legislation**

In Bracknell Forest, particularly for the Council there are many pieces of legislation around community cohesion issues. Over the last couple of years a number of pieces of equality related legislation came into force. These are the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, and the Equality Act 2006.

All of these pieces of legislation have differing, specific requirements for the Council and have resulted in the production of three Equality Schemes with detailed action plans to coordinate the Council promotion of disability, race and gender equality. However, the Council considers it appropriate and sensible to group these documents together as a 'family' under the umbrella of "All of Us" the overarching Corporate Equality Scheme. In this way we can coordinate our activities and monitor our action to achieve the varying objectives.

## **4. The “All of Us” Community Cohesion Strategy 2008-09-2010-11 – An Executive Summary**

### **4.1 All of Us**

The Council working with its partners published its first “All of Us” corporate community cohesion strategy in 2004, a strategy for achieving community cohesion and ensuring that there is equality of opportunity throughout Bracknell Forest. Community cohesion is already good in Bracknell Forest, as our performance indicators show. In 2003 66% of the public surveyed agreed that Bracknell Forest was a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, which rose to 81% in 2006. However if this is to be sustained in the long-term, we cannot afford to be complacent. Following the successful implementation of our first strategy the Council developed “All of Us” 2008/09 – 2011/12, our second corporate strategy for promoting community cohesion. The strategy details exactly what the Council and its partners need to do, with the help of local people, to ensure that community cohesion is strengthened and promoted and to ensure that equality for all in Bracknell Forest.

### **4.2 Objectives**

The strategy has four overall objectives, which are ensuring:

- Everyone has similar life opportunities
- The diversity of people, their circumstances and their communities is respected and valued
- There are positive relationships between people
- Work with people and partners to assist with building and strengthening communities.

### **4.3 Actions**

The strategy is delivered through a detailed three year implementation plan and monitored by Bracknell Forest Partnerships’ Community Cohesion and Engagement Working Group, see Appendix A.

### **4.4 Measures**

We will monitor the success of this strategy by:

- Firstly, monitoring the delivery of our implementation plan
- Secondly, the extent to which our performance improves against a number of national measures of achievement called performance indicators (see Community Cohesion Performance Indicators)
- Thirdly by celebrating some of the improvements and initiatives that have taken place in the community (see Our Successes).

The key indicators we will measure success by will be:

- The proportion of people who feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together
- The percentage of people that feel they belong to their neighbourhood, a new national indicator

These are both measured nationally by the Place Survey.



## **5. Disability Equality Scheme 2006-09 – An Executive Summary**

### **5.1 The Duty to Promote Disability Equality**

Bracknell Forest Council welcomes the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 with the legal obligation for public authorities to promote disability equality. The Council has adopted the social model of disability as a fundamental principle. It recognises that people are not disadvantaged by their impairments but by the way in which they are discriminated against.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 made it unlawful to discriminate against someone because of his or her disability. It also required organisations to make 'reasonable adjustments' so that a disabled person could take a job, continue to work for an organisation or access services. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 amended the 1995 legislation. It introduced the duty to promote disability equality. The duty to promote disability equality contains two elements – a general duty for all public bodies and a specific duty, which applies to a more limited number of specified public authorities, including Bracknell Forest Council.

The Code of Practice produced by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) states that the “overarching goal of the duty is to promote equality of opportunity”. In many cases the disadvantage and discrimination that disabled people experience arise from attitudinal and environmental barriers. The duty to promote disability equality aims to overcome these barriers.

#### **General Duty**

The general duty to promote disability equality places a duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act
- Eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life
- Take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

#### **Specific Duty**

The specific duty requires a designated public authority to produce and publish a Disability Equality Scheme (DES), setting out how it will fulfil its general and specific duties to promote disability equality. Disabled people must be involved in the development of the Scheme. Bracknell Forest Council published its first Disability Equality Scheme in October 2006,

### **5.2 Aims**

#### **Discrimination Disabled People Face**

Disabled people are discriminated against in a number of different ways. These include:

- Discriminatory attitudes
- A lack of accessible information
- Inaccessible environments

- Employment and services that have not been designed to take account of the needs of disabled people.

A key aim of the Disability Equality Scheme is therefore to ensure that disabled services users and employees do not face discrimination in any of the above capacities.

## **Promoting Disability Equality**

Promoting equality of opportunity for people with disabilities and other people is key to ensuring the success of the Disability Equality Scheme. It is also an essential element of the Council's Community Cohesion Strategy "All of Us". The actions outlined in the Disability Equality Scheme therefore aim to both eliminate negative discrimination towards and promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities.

## **Who Do We Mean by "Disabled People"?**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 definition of a disabled person is someone who has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Disabled people include people with physical and sensory impairments, people with learning difficulties, people experiencing mental and emotional distress.

People with HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis (MS) are also covered by this definition of a disabled person from the point of diagnosis, rather than from the point when the condition has some adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The number of people in the Borough who declared themselves as having a limiting long-term illness in the 2001 census was:

12,864 or 12% of the total Borough population.  
6,152 or 9% of the Borough population that are of working age

## **5.3 Goals**

The goals of the Disability Equality Scheme were developed through extensive consultation with disabled service users and employees of the Council. The broad goals of the scheme are to:

1. Adopt the Social Model of Disability
2. Improve the information it has about disabled people and their needs and use this to plan and implement services
3. Improve the ways in which disabled people are involved on its main partnerships and advisory bodies
4. Improve the ways in which disabled people are involved in the designing, planning and running of its services
5. Improve the information it provides about its services in formats that are accessible for disabled people

6. Influence the improvement of the provision of accessible public transport to enable disabled people to use its services
7. Improve internal liaison between departments to provide a consistent, 'joined-up' approach to its services
8. Improve its support for organisations run by and that work with disabled people
9. Improve recruitment and training opportunities for disabled job applicants and employees
10. Identify ways in which the costs of using services can be reduced to increase the participation of disabled people

#### **5.4 Actions and Measurement of Progress**

We turned these ten goals into action through the delivery of a three year Action Plan, see Appendix B. The action plan is monitored by Bracknell Forest Partnerships' Community Cohesion and Engagement Working Group.

We measure the success of this scheme in two ways:

- Firstly, the extent to which we achieved the key tasks and outcomes in the three-year Action Plan.
- Secondly, by celebrating some of the tangible improvements that have been made in the community (see 'Our Successes').

## **6. Gender Equality Scheme 2007-10 – An Executive Summary**

### **6.1 Promoting Gender Equality**

The Council published its first Gender Equality Scheme in April 2007. The Scheme was produced using priorities set by the Council's strategic plans. The Equality Act 2006 created the Gender Equality Duty for the public sector. The Gender Equality Duty has two parts to it, the general duty and the specific duty.

The general duty places a legal duty on the Council to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

To help meet its general duty, the Council has a specific duty to:

- Produce a Gender Equality Scheme - identifying its gender equality goals and actions to meet them, in consultation with employers and other stakeholders
- Monitor and review progress
- Review the Scheme every three years
- Develop, publish and regularly review an equal pay policy, including measures to address promotion, development and occupational segregation
- Conduct and publish gender equality impact assessments of all major policy developments, and publish its criteria for conducting such impact assessments

### **6.2 Aims**

The purpose of the scheme is therefore to:

- Show how the Council will mainstream gender equality in all areas of its work
- Meet and go beyond our legal duties to make gender equality a reality
- Set out our priorities on how we intend to tackle gender inequality, eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity between women and men.

In summary in addition to equal pay our gender equality scheme focuses on:

- Reducing domestic violence and hate crime
- Eliminating sexual and sexist harassment
- Supporting people who have caring responsibilities in the workplace
- Providing services in a way that ensures gender equality and access for all.

### **6.3 Objectives**

While within the borough the proportion of males and females within the population is evenly balanced, a significant majority of the Council's workforce is female 78% compared to male 22%. This pattern has remained stable for a number of years and reflects typical Local Government patterns across the Country. The Council has specific gender equality objectives as an employer and also as a service provider.

These objectives include:

1. Carrying out periodically an equal pay audit and developing an equal pay action plan
2. Reviewing and increasing the number of part time and job share opportunities
3. Reviewing arrangements for providing support and information to carers
4. Reviewing our harassment and bullying procedure to ensure that sexual harassment is fully addressed
5. Further developing processes for recording internal and external gender related hate crime or incidents
6. Building confidence amongst victims of domestic violence to report incidents; providing victims with support; and working with perpetrators to reduce repeat offences
7. Ensuring that all service areas produce equality impact assessments with gender equality as a integral part of them and that identified actions are implemented
8. Ensuring that gender equality is integrated into the delivery of the equality and diversity training strategy.

#### **6.4 Actions and Measurement of Progress**

These goals are laid out in a detailed action plan; see Appendix C. The action plan is monitored by Bracknell Forest Partnerships' Community Cohesion and Engagement Working Group.

We measure the success of this scheme in two ways:

- Firstly, the extent to which we achieved the key tasks and outcomes in the three-year Action Plan.
- Secondly, by celebrating some of the tangible improvements that have been made in the community (see 'Our Successes').

## **7. Race Equality Scheme 2008-11 – An Executive Summary**

### **7.1 The Duty to Promote Race Equality**

#### **The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000**

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RR(A)A 2000) came into force on 2 April 2001 following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report, published in February 1999.

#### **General Duty**

It placed a general duty on a wide range of public authorities to promote race equality. This duty means that such authorities must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
- promote equality of opportunity; and
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

The Guidance issued by the Commission for Racial Equality (the CRE) to complement the RR(A)A 2000 suggested that public authorities should consider the following four steps to meet the general duty:

- Identify which of their functions and policies are relevant to the duty, or, in other words, affect most people
- Put the functions and policies in order of priority, based on how relevant they are to race equality.
- Assess whether the way these 'relevant' functions and policies are being carried out meets the three parts of the duty.
- Consider whether any changes need to be made to meet the duty, and make the changes.

(Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality, CRE 2002)

#### **Specific Duty**

In addition, specific duties were placed on some public authorities responsible for delivering important public services including local councils, hospital trusts and police authorities. These specific duties included:

- Preparing and publishing a race equality scheme (RES). This scheme should set out the functions or policies that were relevant to meeting the general duty, and how the relevant public body was going to meet the duty in the areas of policy and service delivery.
- Monitoring employment procedures and practice. The CRE guidance indicated that these public bodies might find it useful to include the arrangements they were making to meet their employment duties in their race equality schemes.

- The third specific duty covered the preparation of a race equality policy and arrangements for meeting specific duties on policy and employment in education institutions.

The RR(A)A 2000 made it clear that it was no longer enough for public bodies just to ensure that they did not discriminate unfairly. There was also a clear obligation on them to take positive steps to promote race equality in everything that they did. The guidance issued by the CRE also made it clear that when a public body looked at the impact which all their activities might have on promoting race equality that the weight given to race equality should be proportionate to its relevance to a particular function. This approach means giving greater consideration and resources to functions or policies that have most effect on the public, or on the authority's employees.

## **7.2 Promoting Race Equality**

Bracknell Forest Council took these new duties on board with enthusiasm and commitment and published its first Race Equality Scheme (RES) in February 2003. Part of the work in drawing up this first RES was to set out how we would carry out the assessment of which of our functions had the most impact on the public or on our staff in terms of race equality.

The RES details both the general and the specific parts of the Race Equality Duty for the Council, covers how the Council will assess the impact of its current and future policies and proposes an implementation plan setting out how the Council will fulfil its general duty to promote race equality. Our second RES 2008/09 – 2011/12 was published in April 2008.

The Council recognises that the borough is becoming increasingly diverse. The 2006 Office of National Statistics' mid year estimates show the minority ethnic population as 14% in the borough compared to 9% in 2001 census. Since 2001 the number of school pupils from minority ethnic groups has grown from 6.1% to 14.6% in 2009. There are 76 different home languages of pupils in Bracknell Forest schools with small number of pupils speaking many of these languages. 7.7% of pupils have a language other than English as their first language. Some of the largest ethnic minorities in the borough are the Nepalese, Filipino, Indian, Polish and Portuguese communities.

## **7.3 Objectives**

The following are the key objectives for the Council contained within our second Race Equality Scheme 2008/09 – 2011/12:

1. Review functions that are relevant to the general duty - all functions considered as being relevant to meeting the general duty to promote race equality, must be assessed for their likely impact on racial equality. Actions arising from Equality Impact Assessments must then be implemented.
2. Assessing and monitoring of services and policies – including reviewing ethnic origin data, accurately profiling the Borough's ethnic minority communities and improving performance management of race equality objectives.

3. Reporting racist issues – ensuring that the Council does all it can to encourage the reporting of racist incidents in Bracknell Forest.
4. Consultation - ensuring that each department that engages in consultation produces a consultation plan including arrangements to consult BME communities.
5. Arrangements for publishing of race equality work - ensuring that the Council publishes all race work including the results of impact assessments, consultation and monitoring in departmental race equality action plans and workforce monitoring data.
6. Arrangements to ensure access to information and services - ensuring that everyone, whatever their background, can get information about Bracknell Forest Council and the services it provides.
7. Arrangements for ensuring all our staff understand their responsibilities - ensuring all staff have the skills and knowledge to help them to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, and promote equal opportunities and good race relations.
8. Implementing the Specific Employment Duties - making the Council workforce representative of the communities it serves and continuing to meet the monitoring requirements set out in Article 5 of the Race Relations Act 1976 (Statutory Duties) Order 2001.
9. Promoting civic participation diversity - drawing on the skills and experience of as wide a range of people as possible for positions in public life and ensuring that the composition of the Council reflects all sections of the community which it serves.

## **7.4 Action Plan and Measurement of Progress**

These objectives are laid out in a detailed action plan; see Appendix D. The action plan is monitored by Bracknell Forest Partnerships' Community Cohesion and Engagement Working Group.

We measure the success of this scheme in two ways:

- Firstly, the extent to which we achieved the key tasks and outcomes in the three-year Action Plan.
- Secondly, by celebrating some of the tangible improvements that have been made in the community (see 'Our Successes').



## **8. The Council's Progress to Date**

### **8.1 "All of Us" Community Cohesion Strategy 2008-09/2011-12**

The Council has made considerable progress in implementing the strategy during 2008-09 working with our partners. This is clear from the key performance measures against which the success of the strategy is being judged, namely:

- ✓ 86 of the 88 key tasks in our action plan have been completed within their allocated timescale or are ahead of schedule. Please see Appendix A which highlights the progress to date on each key task in the action plan.
- ✓ The major performance indicator by which the Partnership measures its progress in Community Cohesion is "the percentage of people who feel that people from different backgrounds get on well together". This has been measured by survey in 2003 and 2006 and those agreeing with this statement increased significantly from 66% in 2003 to 81% in 2006. In 2008 the result for this indicator continued to increase, measured by the new Place Survey, to 82%; this result is significantly higher than the all England average of 76.4% and demonstrates that a high level of community cohesion is being maintained while the diversity of the borough has increased significantly.
- ✓ The second key performance indicator on which progress is measured is the "% of people that feel they belong to their neighbourhood", this is a brand new Indicator in the Place Survey 2008 and therefore we can not measure trends in our progress against this yet. The 2008 result for Bracknell Forest was 51.9%. The all England average for this was 58.7%. However, this needs to be considered against a background of a very good performance result in the Place Survey for overall/general satisfaction of local people with the area, which is significantly higher than the all England average and the high level of agreement that people from different backgrounds get on well together.

### **8.2 Equality Action 2008-09**

During 2008-09 the Council created a new Community Engagement and Equalities Team to coordinate the Council's work on Community Cohesion, Community Engagement and Equalities. New Equality Impact Assessment Guidance and a training programme were delivered for staff. Equality Impact Assessments were completed on the Council's major services and functions. Equality and Diversity Training was delivered to members and staff. The Council's Equality Group made significant progress in moving the Council to Level Three of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

### **8.3 Disability Equality Scheme 2006 - 2009**

The Council has made excellent progress in implementing the Disability Equality Scheme action plan which was launched in October 2006 and comes to an end in October 2009 as illustrated by Appendix B.

- ✓ All of the 75 key tasks have been completed in the three years of the scheme, the majority ahead of schedule.
- ✓ Some of the tasks that have seen excellent progress include:
  - A new bridge with a lift and facilities were opened in April 2009 at Bracknell railway station, enabling people with limited mobility and in wheelchairs to access platform 2.
  - Currently of the 81 hackney carriage vehicles, 71 are fully wheelchair accessible and 9 are swivel seat vehicles.
- ✓ The three key tasks that had fallen behind schedule at the time of the last progress report in spring 2008 have been implemented. All new bus shelters now have a perch seat (task 6.5); Members diversity training was delivered in July 2008 with further training planned (task 1.5); and the Library Service will be consulting on disability issues through the Access Advisory Panel (task 4.7).

## 8.4 Gender Equality Scheme 2007-10

The Council has made considerable progress in implementing the Gender Equality Scheme and this is evident in the performance monitoring of the action plan, see Appendix C.

- ✓ All 14 of the key tasks in the action plan are completed or on track for completion in their respective timescales.
- ✓ Some tasks that have seen particularly good progress include:
  - The production of support information for Council staff who are carers
  - The reporting of domestic violence incidents rose in 2008-09
  - The *Changing Ways* programme continues to be run for repeat offenders committing domestic violence offences at full capacity with additional funding being sought to expand the programme.

## 8.5 Race Equality Scheme 2008-11

The Council has made significant progress in the first year of implementing the Race Equality Scheme action plan; see Appendix D.

- ✓ 25 out of the 26 key tasks in the action plan are completed or on track for completion in their respective timescales.
- ✓ The one task which has not been implemented is 5.2 'Each department to publish a detailed Race Equality Scheme'. Due to the forthcoming changes in Equality Legislation proposed in the Equality Bill it has been decided that this is no longer appropriate and that departments should be addressing equalities issues holistically across all six equality strands through the production of equality impact assessments and implementation of the actions agreed in these.

- ✓ Some tasks that have seen particularly good progress include:
- A programme of Equality Impact Assessment completions have been carried out on relevant functions, these have been published. A three year schedule for Impact Assessment completions is being developed.
  - Guidance, training and support have been given to schools to induct, assess and meet the educational needs of English as an Additional Language pupils. Priority languages have been identified. Guidance has been issued to each school.
  - Experian consultants completed research using mosaic origins to map the ethnicity of communities in the borough; this included an analysis of take up of library services by different ethnic groups. Schools Census data and DWP NI Registrations data is used to update this profile annually. This information has been shared with and promoted to departments.

## 9. Community Cohesion Performance Indicators: Progress to Date

### Introduction

Since the development of the first Community Cohesion Strategy, the Government has introduced a new National Indicator Set, made up of 198 performance indicators. Out of this indicator set, the two main indicators chosen to measure our community cohesion strategy performance are NI1 “percentage of people who believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together” and NI2 “percentage of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood”. These indicators are supported by a series of other indicators linked to community cohesion and equalities.

### Results

Table One summarises the Partnership’s performance at the end of 2008-09 on the indicators that we have chosen to measure the success of our Community Cohesion Strategy. The new indicator set differs from the old Best Value indicators used previously to measure the performance of our first community cohesion strategy. In particular, a high proportion of the new indicators are not reported by local authorities but by central government departments and agencies, on which local authorities are dependent for acquiring data. In many cases, fail-safe systems for collecting and publishing this data have not yet been put in place by these departments and agencies. In addition, a high proportion of the indicators are brand new measures, so there are no historical datasets. Because most of the new indicators have complex methodologies designed to measure high-level outcomes rather than to count processes, it is difficult for local authorities to design proxy measures or to estimate outturns. Therefore at the present time we do not have performance data for a number of these indicators and where these are new indicators we can not analyse our comparative performance over previous years.

The major performance indicator by which the Partnership measures its progress in Community Cohesion is “the percentage of people who feel that people from different backgrounds get on well together”. This has been measured by survey in 2003 and 2006 and those agreeing with this statement increased significantly from 66% in 2003 to 81% in 2006. In 2008 the result for this indicator continued to increase, measured by the new Place Survey, to 82%; this result is significantly higher than the all England average of 76.4% and it is estimated that this would put the Council in the best quartile nationally compared to other Local Authorities although national quartile position information is not yet available.

The Place Survey result for our second key performance indicator on which progress is measured is the “% of people that feel they belong to their neighbourhood”, this is a brand new Indicator in the Place Survey 2008 and therefore we can not measure trends in our progress against this yet. The 2008 result for Bracknell Forest was 51.9%. The all England average for this was 58.7%. This suggests that Bracknell Forest is

in the worst quartile nationally; however this can not yet be confirmed. Possible reasons for this result are the high proportion of commuters living in Bracknell Forest, coupled with the good transport links and relatively low property prices which encourage people to use the borough as a dormitory. However, our performance indicators show that respondents to the Place Survey feel that people do get on well together and there is also a high level of general satisfaction with the local area; significantly above the all England average. The Bracknell Forest Partnership along with its Community Cohesion & Engagement Working Group will be ensuring that an action plan is put in place to address this result.

Performance in 2008-09 was particularly strong on NI7; this indicator is measured by a new survey of voluntary sector organisations run by the Cabinet Office which asks about the positive or negative influence of the Local Authority on the third sector. The outturn of 21.8% positive responses is among the second best in the country; the national figure is 16.2%. Bracknell Forest is also in joint-first place nationally for "very positive" responses (4%).

**Table One**

NI Ref	Title	Latest performance at year end 2008-09	Reporting method/period	Approx quartile position (compared to Berkshire unitaries)	Approx Quartile position (compared to all English LAs)	Local Area Agreement target
1	Percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area	82.1	Place Survey 2008.	Best	Best	Yes
2	Percentage of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood	51.9	Place Survey 2008.	Worst	Worst	No
3	Civic participation in the local area	9.0	Place Survey 2008.	Worst	Worst	No
4	Percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality	28.0	Place Survey 2008.	Second	Third	No
6	Participation in regular volunteering	20.6	Place Survey 2008.	Third	Third	Yes
7	Environment for a thriving third sector	21.8	Cabinet Office Third Sector survey 2008.	Best	Best	No
44	Ethnic composition of offenders on Youth Justice System disposals	No data	No data and no target due to small size of cohort.	N/A	N/A	No

69	Children who have experienced bullying	52.6	"Tell Us 3" Survey 2008.	N/A	Worse than median	Yes
81	Inequality gap in the achievement of a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19	No data	No data currently available on this new indicator.	N/A	N/A	No
82	Inequality gap in the achievement of a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19	No data	No data currently available on this new indicator.	N/A	N/A	No
92	Narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest	30.6	Summer 2008 exams.	N/A	N/A	Yes
114	Rate of permanent exclusions from school	0.18	Academic year 2007/08.	N/A	N/A	No
124	People with a long-term condition supported to be independent and in control of their condition	No data	No data currently available on this new indicator.	N/A	N/A	No
127	Self reported experience of social care users	No data	No data currently available on this new indicator.	N/A	N/A	No
128	User reported measure of respect and dignity in their treatment	No data	No data currently available on this new indicator.	N/A	N/A	No
129	End of life care -- access to appropriate care enabling people to be able to choose to die at home	No data	No data currently available on this new indicator.	N/A	N/A	No
130	Social Care clients receiving Self Directed Support per 100,000 population	351.8	Financial year 2008/09.	N/A	N/A	Yes
136	People supported to live independently through social services (all adults)	3,000	Financial year 2008/09.	N/A	N/A	Yes
139	The extent to which older people receive the support they need to live independently at home	24.5	Place Survey 2008.	Worst	Worst	No
140	Fair treatment by local services	74.3	Place Survey 2008.	Second	Third	No
151	Overall employment rate (working-age)	84.9	Figures relate to September-October 2008 (latest available data).	Best	Best	No
152	Working age people on out of work benefits	2.4	Figures relate to September-October 2008 (latest available data).	N/A	N/A	No
166	Median earnings of employees in the area	£538.50	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (March 2009).	N/A	N/A	No

## 10. Conclusion and Challenges for the future

Considerable progress has been made in implementing “All of Us” in 2008-09, the first year of implementing our second corporate community cohesion strategy.

- ✓ 86 of the 88 key tasks in our action plan have been completed within their allocated timescale or are ahead of schedule.
- ✓ We are maintaining high levels of community cohesion in the borough against a backdrop of increased diversity within the borough and an economic downturn.

Progress implementing our Disability Equality Scheme 2006-09 has been excellent:

- ✓ All of the 75 key tasks have been completed in the three years of the scheme, the majority ahead of schedule.

Considerable progress has also been made in implementing our Race and Gender Equality Schemes. In light of this the Council with its partners is well placed to continue to develop its community cohesion and equalities work in the light of continued changes to the demographics and make up of our communities and national policy developments.

However, we are not complacent and recognise that there will always be more that we can do to ensure that the Council improves the quality of its service delivery; ensuring services are provided fairly and appropriately to all its residents; as well as making sure that the Council's staff are appropriately supported to give of their best; and that our workforce is drawn from the widest pool of talent.

### Opportunities and Challenges

In developing our community cohesion and equalities work there are a number of opportunities and challenges for future years. The demographics of the borough continue to change, increasing diversity. The recession is placing financial and other pressures on our communities and has the potential to threaten good relations and increase tensions between people. To date, we have not witnessed any increase in community tension but we must continue to monitor this carefully.

During 2009-10 the Council will be migrating from the Equality Standard over to working on the new Equality Framework for Local Government; which provides the opportunity for increased partnership working on tackling inequalities. Forthcoming changes in equality legislation proposed in the Equality Bill present opportunities in relation to streamlining equality legislation and enabling the Council to work more flexibly to reduce inequality locally. The Council will be working on developing a Single Equality Scheme in 2010-11 to respond to the legislative changes, which will replace our existing Disability, Race and Gender Equality Schemes. The scheme will outline our priorities and action to promote equality of opportunity across the six equality strands; age, gender, religion and belief, disability, race and sexual orientation, as well as for any other new protected groups. In developing the scheme we will need to ensure that we engage effectively with all parts of our community and focus our limited resources carefully.

This page is intentionally left blank



## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION 19 November 2009

---

### GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON 'STRENGTHENING LOCAL DEMOCRACY' (Assistant Chief Executive)

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting on 24 September 2009, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission considered its response to the Overview and Scrutiny proposals in the government's consultation document on 'Strengthening Local Democracy'. The Commission delegated to the Chairman the input to the Council's overall response to the consultation and the specific questions affecting O&S. The Council's response has subsequently been finalised in agreement with the Commission Chairman and is attached for information.

#### 2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission notes the Council's response to the government's consultation document on 'Strengthening Local Democracy'.**

#### Background Papers

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Commission meeting on 24 September 2009:  
'Strengthening Local Democracy'

#### Contact for further information

Richard Beaumont – 01344 352283  
e-mail: [richard.beaumont@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:richard.beaumont@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

#### Doc. Ref

-

# BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO 'STRENGTHENING LOCAL DEMOCRACY' CONSULTATION BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The following is a response by the Council's Corporate Management Team, although responses to questions 1 to 7 and 17 to 18 have been provided by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

## **General**

Bracknell Forest Council is very supportive of the overall thrust of the Government's proposals to strengthen local democracy, but we set out below our disagreement with some of the detailed proposals.

## **Responses to consultation questions**

<b>CHAPTER 1: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AT THE CENTRE OF DECISION MAKING</b>	
<b><u>Question 1</u></b>	Do you agree that we should extend scrutiny powers in relation to Local Area Agreement (LAA) partners to cover the range of their activities in an area, not just those limited to specific LAA targets?
<b><u>Q1 Response</u></b>	<p><b><u>Overview and Scrutiny Commission response:</u></b></p> <p>Yes. The number of LAA targets is limited, and these do not cover all important aspects of public service provision by LAA partners.</p> <p>Both with this proposal and the other proposals in the consultation document, any increase in powers would have to be exercised with common sense, control and sensitivity. They could only be introduced with regard to those regulatory bodies already endowed with statutory powers over utilities such as OFWAT and OFGEN.</p> <p>Subject to the availability of suitable administrative resources further powers that allow local authorities to increase the scope of scrutiny to cover those issues of concern to the local community are to be encouraged.</p> <p>These powers would also give local authorities added authority to gain a response from other organisations and utilities which otherwise might not be attainable. Examples of this could be the severe disruption of services through storm of flood, or, delay in reacting to a breakdown in services that is disadvantageous to local residents. The opening up of footpaths and highways without warning and crude reinstatement of the infrastructure is also often another source of inconvenience and public anger.</p>
<b><u>Question 2</u></b>	Do we need to make scrutiny powers more explicit in relation to local

	councils' role in scrutinising expenditure on delivery of local public services in an area? If so, what is the best way of achieving this?
<u>Q2 Response</u>	<p><u>Overview and Scrutiny Commission response:</u></p> <p>Yes. This follows on from Question 1. If powers are given to local authorities to scrutinise those service providers and organisations not currently obligated to respond to scrutiny under current arrangements, it must be the case that this would include questions about policy, income, expenditure and budgetary matters generally.</p> <p>As we emerge from the present recession it is clear that rising recovery costs will be a concern and there is every reason to believe that allowing scrutiny to comment on the manner in which these costs are retrieved, by organisations outside local authorities would be in the public interest.</p> <p>The existence of local authority Overview and Scrutiny powers needs to be reflected in the legislation governing all the partner LAA organisations, also those to which the new scrutiny powers would apply.</p>
<u>Question 3</u>	<p>Do you agree that we should bring all or some of the local public services as set out in this chapter fully under the local authority scrutiny regime? Are there other bodies who would benefit from scrutiny from local government?</p>
<u>Q3 Response</u>	<p><u>Overview and Scrutiny Commission response:</u></p> <p>Yes. Local authorities should have the means to scrutinize all public bodies that affect the lives of their communities. Although this must be done in partnership with regulatory bodies, such as OFWAT and OFGEN, that already exist to do this and have the power to make changes.</p> <p>When these or other utilities understand that they could be held to account and scrutiny it would exercise the minds of the decision makers to be careful to consider their plans properly before executing them.</p> <p>The extension of scrutiny powers should apply only to those organisations effectively providing a monopoly service to local residents, and which are already subject to public regulation; there has to be a dividing line between these and the wider private sector.</p> <p>This would be a significant expansion in local authority Overview and Scrutiny, requiring a commensurate increase in resources if it is to be delivered at all well. In the current financial climate, this could only be achieved by the Government granting additional resources to local authorities.</p> <p>Given the succession of piecemeal legislation extending local authority overview and scrutiny, it would be helpful if Government set out its entire</p>

	long-term objectives for the development of local authority scrutiny, and introduced consolidating legislation.
<u>Question 4</u>	How far do you agree that we should extend scrutiny powers to enable committees to require attendance by officers or board members of external organisations to give evidence at scrutiny hearings, similar to the powers already in existence for health and police?
<u>Q4 Response</u>	<p><u>Overview and Scrutiny Commission response:</u></p> <p>Scrutiny powers should be enhanced to include the right to summon officers or Board members to appear before scrutiny committees to explain their actions.</p> <p>As suggested above, greater ‘transparency’ in these matters would exercise the minds of policy and decision makers to think things through carefully before committing themselves to a process that could be detrimental to the welfare of ordinary citizens.</p> <p>Again, if powers are enhanced some mechanism must be introduced to enable scrutiny to engage properly with regulatory bodies.</p>
<u>Question 5</u>	What more could be done to ensure that councils adequately resource and support the local government scrutiny function to carry out its role to full effect?
<u>Q5 Response</u>	<p><u>Overview and Scrutiny Commission response:</u></p> <p>The standard of scrutiny and the way in which elected members deal with it is entirely dictated by the effort and resource an authority is willing to allocate to it.</p> <p>The usefulness of good scrutiny is becoming increasingly recognised and when applied properly it is a very powerful way in which to exercise control over an Executive to ensure against excess or poor governance. Applied improperly it becomes a vehicle for dissent, inefficiency and confusion this usually occurs when insufficient resource is applied to the process.</p> <p>Because of this the scrutiny system in any organisation must be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Properly resourced to enable it to carry out its function efficiently.</li> <li>Able to provide elected members with the means by which they can carry out their scrutiny duties with confidence; conscious of the fact that some members have limited time and may find enhanced powers difficult to cope with.</li> <li>Robust enough to stand challenge itself by the Executive and management who may wish to limit its powers.</li> </ol>

	<p>d. Led by members who are willing to uphold the principles of best practice and have the status given to them that acknowledges this.</p> <p>e. Given the responsibility to act sensibly in the work it does; on the understanding that whilst the process is not itself a decision making one its influence, built on constructive systems effectively aids the process of local government.</p> <p>There is certainly a strong case for ranking the chair of certain scrutiny committees on a par with Cabinet posts. This would undoubtedly raise the visibility, accountability and recognition of the process which it deserves.</p> <p><u>It cannot be emphasised strongly enough that If the powers of scrutiny are to be enhanced in any meaningful way the resources to do the job properly must be provided.</u></p>
<u>Question 6</u>	How can council leaders ensure that scrutiny is a core function of how their organisations do business and have a full and proper role in scrutinising the full range of local public services?
<u>Q6 Response</u>	<p><u>Overview and Scrutiny Commission response:</u></p> <p>Council Leaders have a responsibility to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Ensure that the administration they lead functions in a way that best serves the public it represents.</li> <li>b. Because of this successful Leaders should acknowledge that the 'Cabinet' system was not designed to omit an input on policy and decision by non-Executive members.</li> <li>c. Accept that provided that the scrutiny function is well resourced, it has an extremely important part to play in delivering good and effective local government.</li> <li>d. Ensure that members of their cabinet 'buy in' to the scrutiny process, use it appropriately as an aid and avoid trying to circumvent it which could sometimes be the case.</li> </ul> <p>Unless Council Leaders are fully committed to supporting the whole process ensuring that it functions efficiently – it will fail!</p> <p>Ensuring that scrutiny is a core function of how councils do business is foremost a cultural issue which cannot be sensibly legislated for. Bracknell Forest Council would not be supportive of fuller legal requirements.</p>

<u>Question 7</u>	What more could be done to better connect and promote the important role of local government scrutiny to local communities, for example citizens as expert advisers to committees?
<u>Q7 Response</u>	<p><u>Overview and Scrutiny Commission response:</u></p> <p>The 'Community call for Action' and 'Councillor call for Action' schemes are designed to involve the public more in local affairs. This is improved by public consultation on important issues and the involvement of local community groups and organisations.</p> <p>Opportunities to co-opt specialists onto scrutiny committees are to be explored and encouraged, when there is good purpose to do this.</p> <p>However, it must be recognised that public engagement is difficult to enlist unless the matter is specific to local interest e.g. health, education, development (e.g. mobile phone masts).</p> <p>Despite this it is essential that scrutiny is taken outside the local government environment to give the public an opportunity to get involved even if they don't take up the opportunity. This is a real challenge for most local authorities, and various techniques have been deployed (e.g. actively seeking public contributions to the selection of topics for scrutiny review), or are under development (e.g. giving overview and scrutiny a profile in local democracy week). But it would be unhelpful for these or other techniques of public engagement to be centrally dictated by central government. Central government's role should be more in terms of fostering good practice through organisations such as the Centre for Public Scrutiny, who provide valuable and practicable advice in this field.</p>
<b>CHAPTER 2: STRONG LOCAL GOVERNMENT OPERATING IN THE LOCAL INTEREST</b>	
<u>Question 8</u>	How best should any reduction in numbers of LAA targets ensure that services are responsive to the most important local needs and priorities as well as national entitlements?
<u>Q8 Response</u>	<p>The consultation document suggests that the introduction of entitlements (as proposed in Building Britain's Future document) as well as greater scrutiny powers will mean that performance issues can be addressed earlier.</p> <p>In this case the previous inspection regime's weakness of the inspectors' ability to make quality judgements about governance in the widest sense. Inspectors need to be skilled to a high level in assessing good governance in an organisation. If governance is working well then the quality of discussions between councillors, staff, the public, partners and stakeholders should be good enough to enable effective, democratic and transparent decision-making at all levels in the organisation.</p> <p>Specifying service standards so that customers know what to expect is good practice. However, in many cases local circumstances need to be</p>

	<p>taken into account when setting standards. It would not be helpful or appropriate to have nationally prescribed standards for all services i.e. rural context for transport standards.</p> <p>A reduction in numbers of LAA targets must seek to at least retain the current balance between national and locally identified priorities. There is a need to reduce the expensive and inflexible apparatus of central target setting and reporting. It should not be tied to the creation of new central requirements and specifications.</p>
<u>Question 9</u>	Should councils have a power to engage in mutual insurance arrangements?
<u>Q9 Response</u>	<p>Through the budget and performance scrutiny activity we would expect to see creative and pragmatic solutions in reducing costs whilst improving performance and achieving value for money for our residents. The decision in relation to LAML was a clear disappointment for local authorities that are endeavouring to meet central Government's efficiency targets through shared services and innovative working. As such instead of focussing on new service delivery vehicles, supported by reliance on its well-being powers, much greater scrutiny and uncertainty will surround such decisions. This can only result in the stifling of innovation and the continued unwarranted criticism of local authority productivity.</p> <p>As such we would welcome both a specific power enabling Council's to engage in mutual insurance arrangements, but also a review of the well-being powers to include a "financial" well-being power so that councils can confidently move forward in the wide-ranging reviews of services that are necessary in the coming years.</p>
<u>Question 10</u>	Are there other powers needed to cover engagement in further complex arrangements of a possibly speculative nature outside of existing powers?
<u>Q10 Response</u>	See response to question 9.
<u>Question 11</u>	Do you agree that greater powers should be premised on demonstration of local confidence? How should this be demonstrated? How can councils best reverse the decline in confidence?
<u>Q11 Response</u>	<p>The recent universal national decline in citizen satisfaction with councils suggests that this indicator is currently insufficiently sensitive to local circumstances to enable use in this way.</p> <p>The decline in confidence can best be reversed by effective communication of quality of service and the inclusion of such initiatives such as the requirement for local authorities to spell out clearly on their websites local residents' rights in terms of consultation, Freedom of Information, Statement of Community Involvement, petitions, scrutiny, complaints, area committees, Councillor Calls for Action etc. It should also be a requirement that the local authority runs 'how to become a councillor' events and publicity.</p>
<u>Question 12</u>	Are there core issues that should have greater council control which

	councils believe they are currently prevented from undertaking? If so what are they and what is the case for councils to take on these roles?
<u>Q12 Response</u>	There are no comments to question 12.
<u>Question 13</u>	Do you agree that there should be a review of the structure of local partnerships with a view to identifying unhelpful overlap and duplication? Are there particular issues on which such a review should focus?
<u>Q13 Response</u>	Reviews are always healthy to ensure existing arrangements are fit for purpose as long as they focus on the good practice that already exists in the public sector. Any review should be proportionate to the issues involved and should be led by the Comprehensive Area Assessment.
<b>CHAPTER 3: LOCAL AUTHORITIES TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE</b>	
<u>Question 14</u>	How is the current national indicator system working to incentivise local authorities to take action on climate change? Should Government take new steps to enable local authorities to play a greater role in this agenda?
<u>Q14 Response</u>	<p>It is not clear which indicators are considered to be climate change indicators as they are included under “Environmental Sustainability”, along with non-climate change indicators such as NI190 (animal health), NI195 (environmental cleanliness), and NI 196 (fly tipping).</p> <p>Others have non-climate change policy drivers, although they also have climate change implications: NI187 (fuel poverty); NI191 (residual household waste); NI192 (% household waste recycled); NI193 (% municipal waste landfilled); NI194 (air quality); NI197 (biodiversity); NI198 (children to school transport).</p> <p>Climate change Indicators that specifically address climate change mitigation or adaptation are: NI 185 (CO<sub>2</sub> from LA operations); NI186 (per capita CO<sub>2</sub> in LA area); NI188 (planning to adapt); NI189 (flood &amp; coastal erosion).</p> <p>Although these groupings are open to discussion, they should not carry equal weight for local authority action on climate change.</p> <p>Indicators in the first group should not be considered as climate change indicators at all.</p> <p>Indicators in the second group have climate change relevance but different policy drivers, which were largely in place before the current indicators were published. It is therefore questionable to what extent these indicators are incentivising climate change action in local authorities.</p> <p>Indicators in the third group are specific climate change indicators, with</p>



	<p>NI185 and NI186 addressing mitigation, and NI188 and NI189 addressing adaptation. These indicators are incentivising local authorities to take action on climate change, but not necessarily in the most effective way.</p> <p>LA signatories to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change have developed climate change strategies and action plans based on local priorities. These reflect national climate change policies and targets, and incorporate elements of all relevant indicators. An indicator measuring the progress of developing and implementing local climate change (mitigation and adaptation) action plans, including specific targets (e.g. CO<sub>2</sub> reduction), would be far more effective than the current mix and match, and give local authorities a greater role in determining their own priorities.</p>
<u>Question 15</u>	Where can local authorities add most value in meeting climate change aims, and what should Government do to help them do so, giving consideration to the proposals set out in this chapter?
<u>Q15 Response</u>	<p>As Chapter 3 illustrates, local authorities can add value in many ways, given the necessary powers, political will and access to resources.</p> <p>Most value will be gained by providing access to finance by those local authorities wishing to pursue national priorities at the local level.</p> <p>142. Care should be taken with financial reward and punishment schemes such as CRC as this may further undermine weak local authorities already struggling to provide essential services.</p> <p>144. The general aim is supported.</p>
<u>Question 16</u>	How do we ensure that national policies reinforce local efforts – for example, around transport, renewable energy, and energy efficiency?
<u>Q16 Response</u>	<p>As climate change is a global issue, local efforts should reinforce national policy, not the other way round. National policies can reinforce local effort by addressing policy conflicts that inhibit local efforts.</p> <p>Many local authority functions are driven by non-climate change policies and indicators, even though they have climate change implications. In spite of this, local authorities have a growing body of knowledge regarding the practicalities of implementing climate change policies through different functional departments at the local level.</p> <p>More focussed analysis on key local authority functions would reveal policy conflicts and highlight potential solutions.</p> <p>The government response to the summer 2007 floods and the Pitt Report demonstrates the value of a focussed approach to flood risk</p>

	management.
<b>CHAPTER 4: SUB-REGIONAL WORKING</b>	
<u>Question 17</u>	Should the activity of sub-regional partnerships be required to be subject to scrutiny arrangements?
<u>Q17 Response</u>	<p><u>Overview and Scrutiny Commission response:</u></p> <p>This is already the case with health where in some authorities there is joint partnership working in the scrutiny of the local Health Authorities.</p> <p>This should certainly be expanded to ensure that other sub-regional partnerships are included in scrutiny arrangements.</p> <p>If the scrutiny process is expanded to other public services and utility organisations there can be a strong case for including sub-regional partnerships also.</p> <p>The regional assembly used to scrutinise the work of SEEDA and others. This has now gone with the abolition of the regional assemblies. Given the geographical scope and potential financial scale of sub-regional partnerships, they should be required to be subject to local authority scrutiny.</p>
<u>Question 18</u>	Should councils' joint overview and scrutiny committees be able to require sub-regional bodies to provide them with information on the full range of their activities and to consider their recommendations on sub-regional matters?
<u>Q18 Response</u>	<p><u>Overview and Scrutiny Commission response:</u></p> <p>The answer to this question is unequivocally 'yes'. There is no purpose in seeking to increase local democracy if those sub-regional bodies, that often influence the lives of the community without proper consultation, are excluded from the process.</p>
<u>Question 19</u>	Should the duty to respond to petitions be extended to sub-regional bodies?
<u>Q19 Response</u>	This would start to undermine local subsidiarity over local issues. The proposal should be rejected.
<u>Question 20</u>	Do current and planned models for joint working give people a clear enough voice in decisions that are made sub-regionally?
<u>Q20 Response</u>	They appear to be sufficient. Certainly it would be helpful to create additional mechanisms or structures.

<u>Question 21</u>	How could we go further to make existing and planned city- and sub-regional structures more accountable, in addition to the suggestions in this document?
<u>Q21 Response</u>	Nothing to add to the proposals in the light of the comments above.
<u>Question 22</u>	Should we give more powers and responsibilities to city- and sub-regions? If so, what powers or responsibilities should be made available?
<u>Q22 Response</u>	No. A key principle in Bracknell Forest (and one that underpinned the local government reorganisation in Berkshire) is that decisions are dealt with at the lowest possible level. Suitable arrangements exist already to enable sub-regional economic and other issues to be addressed at the most appropriate level.
<u>Question 23</u>	Is there a need for direct democratic accountability at the sub-regional level? What would be the best means of achieving this, giving consideration to the options set out above?
<u>Q23 Response</u>	No. Elected members are already in place that provides such democratic accountability. A further layer of 'accountability' will only confuse residents (and cost public money). See also response to question 22.
<b>CHAPTER 5: CLEAR RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT</b>	
<u>Question 24</u>	Should central and local government's roles be more formally established?
<u>Q24 Response</u>	The arrangements are already clear and well defined. The issue is with the way central government departments work together as there are often conflicting roles, guidance and timelines.
<u>Question 25</u>	What are your views on the draft principles set out above as away of achieving this ambition?
<u>Q25 Response</u>	The obligations should be balanced by obligations and expectations on central government to guide its relationship with local government.
<u>Question 26</u>	Do you agree that an ombudsman-style arrangement and a joint select committee of both Houses of Parliament are the correct approaches to oversee and enforce these principles, if adopted?
<u>Q26 Response</u>	No. The ombudsman-style arrangement would distract the Local Government Ombudsman from their primary role in reviewing serious complaints against local authorities, and the proposed joint select committee of both Houses of Parliament would detract from Parliament's role in holding central – as opposed to local – government to account. Furthermore, the proposal would fundamentally undermine local democratic accountability, and be an entirely retrograde step for strengthening local democracy.

This page is intentionally left blank