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## NOTICE OF MEETING

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

18 MAY 2006

**TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

You are requested to attend a meeting of the above Commission on **18 May 2006 at 7.30 pm** in the Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House, Bracknell, to transact the business set out in the attached agenda.

Chris Herbert  
Acting Director of Corporate Services & Resources

### **Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission**

Councillor Sargeant (Chairman) (to be confirmed)  
Councillor McLean (Vice-Chairman) (to be confirmed)

Councillors Beadsley, Mrs Birch, Browne, Earwicker, Edger, Grayson, Harrison, Leake, Thompson and Worrall (all to be confirmed)

### **Substitute Members of the Committee**

Councillors Adams, Baily, Jones, Kendall, Mrs Pile and Mrs Shillcock (all to be confirmed)

### **Church Representative Member\***

Mr G Anderson and Mr M G Gibbons

### **Parent Governor Representative Members\***

Mr O Dempsey and Mrs D Whitbread

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**THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION**  
**18 May 2006 (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** 1 - 8  
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission held on 9 March 2006.
  
3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**  
Members are required to declare any personal or prejudicial interests and the nature of that interest, including the existence and nature of the party whip, in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

**PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

4. **DEPARTMENTAL OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE**  
Discussion with the Executive Member for Leisure and Corporate Services & Resources concerning the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance for Corporate Services & Resources.

**AUDIT & INSPECTION**

5. **STATEMENT ON INTERNAL CONTROL AND INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL ASSURANCE REPORT 2005/06** 9 - 36  
Acting as the Council's Audit Committee, the Commission is invited to consider key internal audit issues arising in the statement of internal control and annual assurance report of the Acting Director of Corporate Services and Resources (Finance) and implications for future overview and scrutiny activity.

**OVERVIEW & POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

6. **REPORT OF THE SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS AND PUPIL BEHAVIOUR POLICY WORKING GROUP** 37 - 78  
To consider the final report from a Review of School Exclusions and Pupil Behaviour Policy undertaken by a Working Group of the former Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel.

*(The report is circulated in paper copy to Members of the Commission only)*

7. **OTHER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACTIVITY**

To receive verbal updates from Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairmen.

8. **URGENT ITEMS**

Any other items which, pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman decides are urgent.

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
9 MARCH 2006  
(7:30 pm to 9:30 pm)**

Present: Councillors Sargeant (Chairman), Beadsley, Mrs Birch, Browne, Earwicker, Edger and Thompson

Church Representatives:  
Mr Anderson

Also Present: Councillors Birch and McCracken

Apologies for absence were received from:  
Councillors McLean, Leake and Worrall  
Mr Dempsey

In attendance: Victor Nicholls, Assistant Chief Executive  
Alan Nash, Assistant Borough Treasurer

**37. Minutes and Matters Arising (Item 2)**

Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 November 2005

Arising from Minute number 27 concerning the Efficiency Plan, the Commission was advised that the progress report referred to was based on the original return to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and that the Council had met its Gershon efficiency targets.

Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 January 2006

In response to a Member's query arising from Minute number 32, the Assistant Borough Treasurer clarified that it was possible to set capital receipts against revenue and that revenue balances could also be utilised.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission held on 23 November 2005, 19 January 2006 and 14 February 2006 be agreed as correct records, and signed by the Chairman.

**38. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip (Item 3)**

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

**39. School Performance/Transfer Working Group Report (Item 6)**

Having been considered previously by the Lifelong Learning and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel, the report of the School Performance/Transfer Working Group, which had been established by that Panel, was before the Commission for final approval.

The Chairman of the Panel, who was also a Member of the Working Group, introduced the report and thanked the remaining Working Group Members and relevant officer for the time and effort they had dedicated to undertaking the review. Review activities had included visits to all secondary and some primary schools in Bracknell Forest together with some schools outside the Borough and interviewing relevant officers and witnesses. The report respected the confidentiality of schools and witnesses who had provided valid and candid information towards the review. Having acknowledged that some matters raised in the report had now been overtaken by events owing to the duration of time since the commencement of the review, the Chairman of the Panel explained and elaborated upon the findings and recommendations contained in the report. The recommendations concentrated on the need for secondary school teachers to receive complete, timely and consistent Key Stage 2 information, including personal details, to facilitate secondary transfer and stated that opportunities for increasing interaction and liaison between teachers of Year 5, 6 and 7 pupils should be considered. The provision of a central learning resource in each school was highlighted as good practice to assist pupils to tackle the increased amount of homework received following secondary transfer. The establishment of learning support units at all secondary schools in the Borough was welcomed to assist those pupils who struggled with the change from Year 6 to 7 both to boost numeracy and literacy skills and to tackle behavioural problems. Financial implications of some of the recommendations were acknowledged by the Working Group.

The report was well received by Commission Members who commended it as an excellent and thorough piece of work. The following points emerged from discussion around the report:

- Although secondary school teachers had sufficient planning and preparation time with which to observe Year 6 teaching in preparation for secondary transfer without the incurring of additional costs, this was not usually the case with primary schools and the use of supply teachers would be necessary to free primary teachers to observe Year 7 teaching.
- Although some primary schools allocated additional homework to Year 6 pupils in readiness for secondary transfer, review findings indicated that many pupils were not sufficiently prepared or equipped to deal with the increased amount of homework allocated by secondary schools.
- A Member endorsed the recognised good practice of providing primary pupils with a named folder in which to collect their best items of work to take with them to secondary school to build their confidence and demonstrate their academic achievements.
- Although the report had taken some time to complete, it had been influential during its preparation and had prompted a trail of change including the implementation of new initiatives such as the data transfer calendar attached at Annexe 4 to the report.
- Interviews with pupils as part of the review indicated that many found the edge smartcard useful as it saved them the need to carry money.

Having noted that the report would be submitted to the relevant Executive Member for a response, it was suggested that progress against adoption of the report be measured in six months and **AGREED** that an additional recommendation be added to the report to the effect that the Local Education Authority send a copy to all headteachers in the Borough in order to spread good practice and encourage implementation of recommendations.

40. **Performance Monitoring and Review (Item 4)**

Quarterly Operations Report (QOR) – Chief Executive’s Office

The Assistant Chief Executive introduced the Chief Executive’s Office QOR for the third quarter of 2005/06 which detailed progress during the previous quarter, addressed staffing issues and adopted a forward look. The QOR included capital monitoring and outlined progress towards objectives and against performance indicators.

Continuing work on the regeneration of Bracknell town centre was highlighted and the Commission noted that development of the specification and brief in respect of replacement civic accommodation had involved work across all departments of the Council. The Community Plan had been published during the last quarter and the Council had won a Chartered Institute of Public Relations award for improvements to its internal communications via the internal communications strategy. The forward look section of the QOR identified the need to keep pace with expanding work relating to the regeneration of the town centre, including the renewable energy project and the completion of a technical brief for the Council’s future accommodation requirements. In order to progress the Local Area Agreement with Bracknell Forest Partnership and others during the next quarter, a project team would be established and it anticipated that related guidance would be published by the end of the month. Although work towards the negotiation of all outstanding targets with a view to signing off Local Public Service Agreement 2 had not been completed by the end of February due to some delays, it was hoped that this would be achieved by the end of March.

Comments and points of clarification arising from consideration of the QOR included the following:

- A Member requested that consideration be given to the re-naming of the Syrret Suite, the wedding/civil ceremonies suite at Easthampstead Park Mansion, prior to production of a new promotional and marketing brochure. The Executive Member for Leisure and Corporate Services and Resources agreed to discuss the matter with the Member at a later date. Although the Commission felt that the Syrret Suite was an excellent facility, its access route was thought to be poor.
- Although there were some legal issues in respect of the Renaissance Project, the renewable energy initiative forming part of the regeneration of the town centre, there were options to solve these and discussions were taking place with Bracknell Regeneration Partnership.
- It was thought that the Government’s ‘Change Up’ initiative designed to enhance the voluntary sector had distracted Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action from leading on the Voluntary Sector Compact and promoting the associated service level

agreement. A re-launch of the Compact to renew interest and increase attendance was suggested.

- The Commission was advised that the residents' satisfaction survey referred to was a bi-annual general survey of residents' satisfaction with Council services which was issued in a prescribed way with questions set by the Government.
- It was noted that the term 'qualified' as applied to audited performance indicators implied an error or omission.
- Detailed plans to create the new civic hub, including a new library and arts provision, were progressing well and a design team had been selected. A development agreement with the Bracknell Regeneration Partnership was required before matters could progress further and strategic and technical briefs were being developed. In addition to the input of several architects, a Council cultural project group and the Town Centre Public Arts Strategy, a Member suggested that councillors be given the opportunity to contribute towards the cultural and artist aspects of the civic hub.
- The Best Value review in respect of community leadership had been abandoned due to changes in the resources directed to deliver a large part of the sustainable communities remit.
- Having regard to the performance indicator relating to local concentration of deprivation, it was noted that progress against the associated strategy was being reviewed and this involved the measurement of figures against indices of deprivation.

#### Quarterly Operations Report (QOR) – Corporate Services and Resources Department

The Assistant Borough Treasurer highlighted a number of aspects of the QOR for the Department of Corporate Services and Resources for the third quarter of 2005/06 which followed a similar format to that of the QOR of the Chief Executive's Office. These included continuing work and support to further the Council's plans to comprehensively develop and regenerate the town centre and to assist with planning for the new civic hub. Work towards meeting the Government's 'Decent Homes Standard' was progressing with the window programme and associated composite door installation works nearing completion and rewiring contracts shortly commencing. Excellent progress had been achieved in Customer Services in terms of both current performance and the development of services for the future. Improvements on already good rates of Council Tax and Business Rate collection had been achieved during the last quarter. Significant pieces of work to develop proposals for consultation on the reorganisation of both Bracknell Forest Services and ICT Services had also taken place.

Looking forward, the drafting of the Section 106 Agreement relating to the development of the town centre remained a priority of the Department before its focus turned to supporting negotiations with the Bracknell Regeneration Partnership. Following the selection of the preferred supplier for a Customer Relationship Management system, the Department would concentrate on successfully planning for and implementing the product, commencing with a base build of the system.



Comments and points of clarification arising from consideration of the QOR included the following:

- The Council's ability to meet the Government's 2010 'Decent Homes Standard' was largely dependent upon future decisions concerning the addressing of a budget gap of £8m.
- With regard to the Council's customer service centre, the design of the proposed civic hub included a shared single customer reception area which would endeavour to respond to the majority of queries at the first point of contact. The switchboard would remain located in Time Square.
- It was intended that service standards relating to responses to enquiries was applied throughout but the nature of a query would dictate the response time.
- Although the recent recruitment exercise to appoint to the post of Head of Audit and Risk Management had been unsuccessful, the vacancy had been filled on an interim basis and it would now be possible to pursue initiatives such as implementing recommendations arising from the recent benchmarking exercise.
- Resource issues had delayed progress with the introduction of performance management software following the resignation of the officer involved in the process.
- Measures were being taken to overcome problems associated with implementation of the repairs and stores element of the new housing ICT system.
- Further to a question concerning work streams associated with the new civic hub, the Assistant Chief Executive acknowledged that it was now timely to provide Members with a presentation in respect of the current civic hub programme. He agreed to raise the matter at the next meeting of the Regeneration Committee, to be held on 20 March.
- The Assistant Borough Treasurer undertook to circulate to Members a brief progress report in respect of implementation of the recommendations arising from the Best Value review of transport.
- Members noted that the latest upgrades to the 'Agresso' financial management ICT system had significantly improved the functionality and operating speed of the system.
- Negotiations with third party landowners as part of the regeneration of the town centre were progressing and related matters would be referred to the Planning and Highways Committee in coming months.

## Corporate Performance Overview Report (CPOR)

The CPOR, which provided a strategic overview of the Council's performance over the past quarter, indicated that overall there had been continued good performance across Council services. Notable developments during the quarter included progress towards the regeneration of the town centre and the excellent emergency response to the recent power failure affecting Council offices which had enabled normal services to be resumed within 24 hours. Against the general picture of good progress and high achievement were a small number of areas giving some cause for concern. These included the Department of Transport's assessment of the Council's provisional Local Transport Plan 2 as requiring substantial improvement. This response had been disappointing in terms of partnership work with the Government Office of the South East (GOSE) as advice received from GOSE during the preparation of the Plan was not as helpful as on previous occasions. However, GOSE had subsequently provided helpful feedback on the process enabling improvements to be made to the Plan and giving grounds for optimism that the final Plan would receive a more favourable rating. Implications for the Council arising from the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA), such as impeding disposal of assets, were noted. Members were advised of the resource impact of the forthcoming inspection of Council services for older people by the Commission of Social Care Inspection.

Comments and points of clarification arising from consideration of the CPOR included the following:

- Actions to promote and improve public transport included the provision of modern and efficient buses, sheltered bus stops, real time bus information and a new bus station as part of the redevelopment of the town centre.
- The Assistant Chief Executive undertook to arrange for a Member to receive information concerning improvements to the disabled access to Bracknell Library.
- The Commission noted that the Thames Basin Heaths SPA was a Europe-wide protection initiative pursuant to regulation and subject to individual definition by each member country. The interpretation placed on the regulation by English Nature, which was based on scientific evidence relating to Dorset, was not felt to be appropriate for the Thames Basin Heaths area.
- It was agreed that officers should give consideration to the best method of providing Members of the Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel with an opportunity to consider the proposed revisions to the Local Transport Plan prior to its adoption by the Council.
- The Assistant Borough Treasurer agreed to arrange for Members to be provided with further details concerning measures to reduce the backlog in the processing of Housing Benefit and Council Tax claims resulting from issues associated with the introduction of the 'Pericles' ICT system.
- Targets relating to risk-based inspections of local food outlets had not been met owing to staff vacancies resulting from continuing difficulty in recruiting qualified environmental health officers, which was being experienced on a national scale.

- A Member requested clarification of the data definition and comment associated with performance indicator 53 that related to the receipt of intensive home care.
- The Commission was advised that the form of reporting and monitoring staffing matters was closely defined in a Best Value performance indicator in order to indicate the nature of any related issues. In response to concerns that the staff turnover rate was high, Members were advised that there was a package of measures in place to enhance staff recruitment and retention.

41. **Service Planning 2006/07 (Item 5)**

The Commission was invited to consider and comment on a report setting out the Service Plans for 2006/07 prior to its submission to the Executive on 14 March 2006. Service Plans formed part of the Council's financial and policy planning process and were fundamental to the delivery of its Medium Term Objectives for 2003-2007 and its budget plans. They were also an important element in the Council's performance management system and supported the preparation of the statutory annual Corporate Plan and provided the basis for regular performance monitoring through Quarterly Operations Reports. In addition to setting out each Department's key objectives for the year in the context of the Council's Medium Term Objectives, Service Plans detailed actions to be taken to achieve these and underpinned the Bracknell Forest Sustainable Community Plan.

The following points arose from discussion around the Service Plans:

- The action under Medium Term Objective 3 which sought to ensure that children were safe through timely and proportionate intervention and that all children 'at risk' had a designated social worker, was an aspiration to work towards and sustain becoming part of the Social Services and Housing Department's core business.
- Medium Term Objectives for 2007-2011 would be agreed by the new Council following the Borough elections in 2007.
- Having noticed that both Medium Term Objectives 2 and 14 contained a similar objective concerning disabled facilities grant, a Member requested that the officers check the Service Plans for any unintentional duplication.
- Members welcomed the Service Plan action which sought to address negative perceptions of young people in the community by extending opportunities for involvement in voluntary activities and accredited award schemes. The action linked to Local Public Service Agreement targets and would dovetail into the schools healthy eating initiative.

**CHAIRMAN**

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**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
18 MAY 2006**

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**STATEMENT ON INTERNAL CONTROL  
AND  
INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL ASSURANCE REPORT 2005/06  
(Acting Director of Corporate Services & Resources – Finance)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 require the Council to publish a Statement on Internal Control (SIC) to accompany the annual Statement of Accounts, which is to be approved by the Final Accounts Committee on 27 June 2006. The aim is to provide assurance that the Council's systems of internal control are working effectively and to identify those areas where improvements can be made.
- 1.2 The contents of the SIC are drawn from Internal Audit's Annual Assurance Report 2005/06 and issues identified by External Audit and other agencies and inspectorates. The SIC must include both of these areas in order to comply with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government.
- 1.3 From the work undertaken during the year, the Head of Audit is of the opinion that key systems are operating soundly and that there is no fundamental breakdown of controls. Whilst the general system of internal controls accords with proper practice, some specific issues have been identified and the primary purpose of this covering report is to draw those to the attention of members of the Commission.

**2. SUGGESTED ACTION**

- 2.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Commission is invited to consider Internal Audit's Annual Assurance Report 2005/06 and the Statement on Internal Control and consider whether any further action is required.**

**3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

**Background**

- 3.1 Under the Council's Constitution and Scheme of Delegation, the Borough Treasurer is responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the Council under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. Professional guidance issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy requires the provision of an effective Internal Audit function to partly fulfil the Borough Treasurer's responsibilities under Section 151.
- 3.2 Corporate governance best practice requires the Council to have an audit committee or its equivalent, which enables the Borough Treasurer to formally report the activity of Internal Audit to Members. Under the Council's scrutiny arrangements, Internal Audit activity is reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission, which acts as the Audit Committee, and provides the

mechanism by which significant weaknesses in internal control can be escalated.

### **Internal Audit Annual Assurance Report**

3.3 The Head of Audit's Annual Assurance Report is attached at Annex A. The main issues, from an internal control perspective, are summarised below:

- The reliability of performance data has been a recurring theme in external audit and inspection reports. Internal Audit resources were redirected in 2005/06 to focus on the calculation and reporting of performance data, supporting the action that is being taken in this area. Although improvements have been made Internal Audit is planning to carry out more work in this area in 2006/07, in conjunction with external audit, in order to provide the Council and external agencies with assurance that that performance data is reliable.
- Control over passwords remains an area of concern. An irregularity within the area of trade waste highlighted the risks associated with sharing and not updating passwords. Systems reviews during the last year have identified further areas where password controls and basic security features could be improved. Appropriate recommendations have been made and will be followed up in 2006/07 to ensure that they have been implemented.
- Inadequate records within two schools and home to school transport meant that Internal Audit were unable to confirm that the necessary CRB checks had been carried out in a number of instances. These have been followed up by the department. Internal Audit will continue testing for compliance in this important area as an integral part of all relevant audits in the future.
- As there is always some staff turnover the Council needs to promote an anti-fraud culture on a regular basis. Although some training has taken place in the last year further work is necessary to improve and maintain awareness of the Council's Fraud and Corruption Policy, Whistleblowing Policy and procedures for complying with the Money Laundering Regulations. This will include publicity material and a continuation of the training programme.
- The need to continually review and update the Council's risk management arrangements and the Corporate Risk Register in particular is identified as an issue. The Corporate Risk Register was originally approved by the Executive in 2003 and needs to be refreshed so that all significant risks are incorporated in future Service plans and budgets. This is one of the key tasks for the recently appointed interim Head of Audit and Risk Management. An action plan has been developed and an initial report will be made to the Executive during the summer.

### **Statement on Internal Control**

3.4 The publication of a SIC is a statutory requirement. It has to be published alongside the annual Statement of Accounts after being approved by the Final Accounts Committee and signed by the Leader and Chief Executive. Best practice requires this to be reviewed by the Council's Audit Committee, or

equivalent, prior to its formal approval and signature. The draft SIC is attached at Annex B and reflects those issues identified within the Internal Audit Annual Assurance report 2005/06. The intention is that the SIC should be correct at the time of publication and it has, therefore, been necessary to incorporate a number of issues not covered by Internal Audit's Annual Assurance Report. These are summarised below:

- Following the creation of the new Education, Children's Services and Libraries Department in May 2005, further organisational change has occurred recently, with responsibility for Bracknell Forest Services moving from Corporate Services and Resources to Social Services and Housing. In addition to this there has been staff turnover at the top levels of management across the Council. Major organisational change has the potential to weaken a previously strong internal control environment. Internal Audit work in 2006/07 will include ensuring that the recent organisational changes have not compromised the Council's internal control arrangements.
- Whilst the Council has delivered within budget since 1998 and the 2006/07 Budget was prepared in line with the Medium Term Financial Plan, the Council still faces major challenges in the years ahead if it is to achieve the planned 'soft landing' and deliver a balanced budget that does not rely on the use of reserves and balances. This will be especially difficult if the Council retains its housing stock, as it will be costly to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010. The complexities of the Waste PFI contract that is being negotiated at present on behalf of three Berkshire authorities, including Bracknell Forest, could also have a significant impact on the Council's finances for the foreseeable future. In any event, robust budgetary control arrangements will need to be maintained throughout this period to ensure that spending does not exceed the budget and jeopardise the Council's future financial plans. Internal Audit will review budgetary control each year as this is one of the Council's key financial systems.

### **Background Papers**

Internal Audit Reports for 2005/06  
Internal Audit Annual Plan 2005/06  
Quality Questionnaires relating to 2005/06 audit reviews  
External Audit Reports relating to 2005/06  
Inspection Reports issued in 2005/06

### **Contact for further information**

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
18 MAY 2006**

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**INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL ASSURANCE REPORT 2005/06  
(Acting Director of Corporate Services and Resources - Finance)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Under the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government, the Head of Audit is required to provide an annual assurance report timed to support and be consistent with the Statement on Internal Control (SIC), which accompanies the Council's annual accounts.

**2. HEAD OF AUDIT'S OPINION 2005/06**

- 2.1 **From the work undertaken during the year, the Head of Audit is of the opinion that key systems are operating soundly and that there is no fundamental breakdown of controls.**
- 2.2 **The general system of internal controls in place at Bracknell Forest Borough Council accords with proper practice, except for those specific areas summarised in paragraph 9.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate the risk of failure altogether, as no system of control can provide absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss, nor can Internal Audit give that assurance. Internal Audit does, however, provide assurance on a range of financial and other systems in use in BFBC by undertaking a series of reviews in accordance with a risk-based audit plan.

**4. WORK OF OTHER AGENCIES AND INSPECTORATES**

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

**Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2004/05 (AA&IL)**

- 4.2 Steven Shuttleworth, the Audit Commission's Relationship Manager, attended the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission on 9 March 2006 and summarised the conclusions and significant issues arising from recent audits and inspections of the Council as identified in the AA&IL for 2004/05. The Letter confirmed that the authority's overall corporate governance arrangements are considered satisfactory, noting that "the Council has continued to maintain robust systems of internal control, and KPMG have not identified any significant weaknesses."

## ANNEX A

- 4.3 The External Auditor also gave an unqualified opinion on the Council's accounts for 2004/05 and found that arrangements to prevent, detect, investigate and report upon fraud and corruption are satisfactory. External Audit also reported that they were again able to place reliance on the work undertaken by Internal Audit.
- 4.4 The Letter did, however, identify six areas on which the Council is recommended to give priority and focus. In brief these were: -
- long-term management of the Council's housing stock and meeting the decent homes standard (DHS) (also mentioned in last year's Letter)
  - housing management performance, where the CPA rating was 1 (on a scale of 1 – 4, when 4 is the best) and where most performance indicators are below average and over half are in the bottom 25% nationally (also mentioned in last year's Letter)
  - adult social services, where performance management systems are not yet fully embedded (also mentioned in last year's Letter but significant improvements in data quality are acknowledged)
  - Supporting People service, where an inspection revealed significant weakness but an improvement plan is now in place
  - value for money in future libraries provision, against a background of comparatively high costs and comparatively low levels of customer use and satisfaction
  - ensuring the Medium-Term Financial Strategy remains robust in the face of budget pressures, especially any decision to retain the management of the Borough's housing stock in-house and the resulting financial pressures caused by the need to achieve the DHS by 2010

### **Comprehensive Performance Assessment**

- 4.5 Under the new arrangements (*CPA – the harder test*), the inspection work found that BFBC is a three star Council and is improving well. Good performance was highlighted in children's services, the plans to regenerate Bracknell Town Centre and partnership working/community leadership. Adult social care, planning and the benefits services were praised as areas of significant improvement. Less good performance was noted in housing and housing related services for vulnerable people.
- 4.6 The inspectors assessed overall value for money as good and praised the focus on achieving improved services and, at the same time, the necessary budget reductions. They suggested that further improvements in value for money should be possible in the library service and by extending joint procurement arrangements with other Councils.
- 4.7 The overall conclusion was that the Council "is improving well and is improving outcomes for local people in many areas." It also "has a strong history of focusing on priorities and meeting financial targets, and has the ability to sustain future improvement."

## ANNEX A

- 4.8 The Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Plan 2005/6 – 2006/7 remains in place and the Internal Audit Plan for both 2005/06 and 2006/07 pays attention to the audit of performance data, including the Best Value Performance Indicators.
- 4.9 The inspectors assessed the Council's use of resources as scoring 3 out of 4, noting that there is a robust system for performance management. The Council was encouraged to consider producing an annual report if consultation with the public illustrates a demand. A further improvement would be to update the 'adequate' risk management processes by an annual review of the processes and by ensuring that relevant councillors receive risk management training.

### **Education and Children's Services**

- 4.10 The joint Ofsted/CSCI annual performance assessment scored all relevant children and young people services as grade 3 ("a service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users"). Outcomes in all areas were assessed as good. Strengths included partnership working, early years' provision and increased use of the youth service. Areas for improvement included further reduction in teenage conception rates, the low number of foster carers and adopters for children with disabilities and the attendance and attainment of looked-after children.
- 4.11 72% of schools responded to the Audit Commission's Annual Survey of schools' views of their LEA in 2005. The overall level of satisfaction was even higher than in 2004. Of 51 services for which a comparison with 2004 was possible, 33 had improved. Of the total of 80 services included in the survey, 69 were in the top quartile and 41 were ranked in the top 10 authorities in England and Wales.
- 4.12 In addition, BFBC conducted its own survey into 'Services for Schools' and 68% of schools responded. This survey asked for opinions on 28 services supplied by the LEA and 17 had improved overall, notably Landscape Maintenance and Payroll. Only 8 were considered to have worsened and 3 had not changed.

## ANNEX A

- 4.13 Ten Ofsted inspections were made during 2005/06 - five primary schools, four secondary schools and the pupil referral unit. The tables below summarise the overall conclusions in key areas: -

<b>School</b>	<b>Achievement &amp; Standards</b>	<b>Leadership &amp; Management</b>	<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>
College Town Junior	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Cranbourne Primary	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Great Hollands Primary	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Warfield CE Primary	Good	Good	Good
Edgbarrow Secondary School	Good	Good	Good
Ranelagh CE Secondary School	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Sandhurst Secondary School	Good	Satisfactory	Good
Brakenhale Secondary School	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Wooden Hill Primary & Nursery	Good	Good	Good
College Hall Pupil Referral Unit	Good	Good	Good

- 4.14 All the Ofsted reports were broadly positive and none of the key assessments were less than 'satisfactory.' Special mention should be made of Ranelagh, which was assessed as 'outstanding' across the board and of Brakenhale, which was previously a school under special measures but which is now rated 'satisfactory' on the key assessment criteria.

## ANNEX A

- 4.15 Schools were also asked to self assess their internal controls using the Audit Commission's "Keeping Your Balance" guidance. Internal Audit will check, as part of the standard audit programme, that the assessment is accurate and also that it has been reported formally to the Governing Body. The results are summarised in the following table: -

Returns with no matters arising	30
New schools with several areas still being developed (Great Hollands, the Pines)	2
Schools with issues over the audit of Private Funds (Harmanswater, St. Joseph's and St. Michaels - Easthampstead).	3
School with issue over ordering (Owlsmoor)	1
School not submitting a return (Warfield)	1
Total returns expected	37

- 4.16 Warfield Primary was the only school not to respond and was also the only school not to respond to the previous self-assessment exercise in 2003/04. As such, an in-depth audit of this school will be added to the 2006/07 audit plan.

### **CSCI Review 2005**

- 4.17 The Annual Review of Performance by the Commission for Social Care Inspection was reported in late 2005. The result was to restore the second star lost in 2004. The star was restored because the Council's capacity for improvement in adults' services was reassessed as 'promising,' having been rated as 'uncertain' in 2004. The overall conclusion was that the Council was serving most children well with a promising capacity for improvement and serving some adults well, also with a promising capacity for improvement.
- 4.18 Adult Services were assessed as now having more challenging – but still realistic – plans and better structures to support the delivery of improved performance, including strengthened performance management arrangements. There were better arrangements to support those service users opting for direct payments and partnership arrangements with NHS bodies were assessed as good.
- 4.19 Improvements are still needed in ensuring real ownership of the performance management framework at all levels and in further improving access to direct payments and supporting people services to all user groups.

**Benefits Fraud Inspectorate Assessment**

- 4.20 In 2002, 2003 and 2004 the Benefits Fraud Inspectorate found the Council's level of performance to be 'fair.' The Council's failure to achieve the national targets set for the 5 key benefits performance indicators meant that the overall assessment could not be better than 'fair.'
- 4.21 In 2005, however, the Council was assessed as meeting 57 of the 65 qualitative targets, resulting in an overall assessment of 'excellent.' BFBC was assessed as meeting all the requirements of the verification framework and was praised for implementing previous recommendations and for having a comprehensive accuracy checking procedure and robust performance management arrangements.
- 4.22 In terms of claims administration, BFBC met or exceeded 4 of the 6 performance measures, although 2 were not met (time taken to process new claims and time taken to pay new rent allowance claims). BFBC also met or exceeded 2 of the 3 performance measures for security but 1 was not met (time taken to resolve data matches).
- 4.23 Benefits is considered to be a high risk area because of the volume of transactions and the significant income and expenditure involved, together with the risk of fraudulent activity. As a result, Council Tax and Housing Benefit features in the Internal Audit Plan every year and is also reviewed independently by External Audit for the purposes of certifying claims for government grant.

**Audit Commission**

- 4.24 The Audit Commission carried out an inspection early in the third year of the Supporting People programme. The conclusion was that it was a fair, one star service with uncertain prospects for improvement. The Commission praised a number of areas, including offering certain new or improved services to particular vulnerable groups, the strong financial accountability, a review of governance arrangements and the revised and improved structure and capacity of the service. Criticism was made of the failure to complete service reviews, of the late start in establishing proper governance arrangements, of the focus on traditional, accommodation-based services and of the poor quality of the literature available to potential clients. Further, the Commission concluded that the Council lacked sufficient understanding of the eligibility criteria, which threatened to compromise value for money arrangements and even to provide services ineligible for Supporting People funding.

**Best Value Review**

- 4.25 A BVR of Community Safety was undertaken jointly with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Thames Valley Police. Although the review was not inspected, the services were commended for the commitment, skill and experience of the individuals involved and for good partnership working. Both Boroughs have very low rates of violent crime, the Youth Offending Teams are ranked in the second quartile nationally and public consultation was well developed. Numerous recommendations were made for further improvements.

These included reducing the impact of anti-social behaviour, strengthening the links between the Community Safety Partnership and the business and voluntary sectors and introducing regular monitoring of public satisfaction on community safety issues.

**5. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

- 5.1 The Executive has approved a Local Code of Corporate Governance based on best practice guidance issued jointly by CIPFA and SOLACE in the publication 'Corporate Governance in Local Government – A Keystone for Community Governance'. At the time the Local Code was approved, seven minor areas of non compliance were identified including the need to develop procedures to deal with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and to update Contract Regulations.
- 5.2 Internal Audit has reviewed these areas of weakness and concluded that action has been taken to address each of them. It is Internal Audit's opinion that the Authority now complies with best practice.
- 5.3 The Code will be updated during 2006/07 and the revised version will be submitted to the Executive for formal approval. Further work will be required to promote and raise awareness of the corporate governance arrangements, including the Whistleblowing Policy, the Fraud and Corruption Policy and the Money Laundering Regulations.

**6. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 6.1 The Council has approved a Risk Management Policy Statement, which sets out the Council's attitude to risk. The policy: -
- explains the Council's underlying approach to risk management
  - emphasises how the efficient and effective management of risk forms part of the Council's overall operational objectives
  - identifies the main responsibilities of the Strategic Risk Management Group (SRMG)
- 6.2 The SRMG has continued to meet on a quarterly cycle and has set up an Emergency Planning/Business Continuity Sub Group, which also meets quarterly. There is also a Financial Risk Sub Group, which is maintaining and reviewing regularly a list of risks including the budget, audit and insurance and major projects.
- 6.3 In their AA&IL, KPMG assessed risk management arrangements as 'adequate' but suggested that improvements should be made by updating the overall processes on an annual basis and ensuring that members with responsibility for risk management receive appropriate training.
- 6.4 A review of the Corporate Risk Register was planned for the autumn of 2005 but was deferred pending a wider benchmarking exercise, which was undertaken by consultants and their report was received in September 2005. The recommendations from this report and KPMG's comments are being incorporated into a risk management action plan to ensure that the Council

## ANNEX A

complies with best practice and keeps its risk register and risk management processes up to date. Implementation has been delayed slightly as a direct result of being unable to recruit a Head of Audit and Risk Management in late 2005. Implementing the action plan is a priority now that the post has been filled on an interim basis.

- 6.5 The SRMG reports annually (and as necessary) to the Corporate Management Team (which also receives the SRMG minutes). The latest report to CMT in October 2005 included revised terms of reference for the Group.

### 7. INTERNAL CONTROL

#### Internal Audit Performance

- 7.1 The work of internal audit is carried out using a risk based approach and a five year strategic audit plan, which is updated each year to reflect new and changed risks. The annual audit plan is drawn up from this document and finalised by discussion and agreement with each department and other interested bodies.
- 7.2 The agreed audit plan for 2005/06 has been delivered in full, although some alterations were made to the original plan during the year in response to information gained during the year combined with known changes in risk.

#### Results of 2005/06 Audits

- 7.3 During the year 2005/06, 119 audits were completed but two opinions were given on separate aspects of two audits, giving a total of 121 opinions. A full schedule of the completed audits and their assurance opinions is set out in Appendix A. A summary of assurance levels is given in the table: -

ASSURANCE	2005/06	2004/05
Full	2	5
Satisfactory	92	101
Limited	10	11
None	0	0
No opinion given	3	3
Opinion to be confirmed – final report outstanding	14	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>120</b>



Assurance Opinion Classifications

7.4

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

**“Double Limited Assurances”**

7.5 The following audits received a 'limited' level of assurance both for the 2005/06 audit and the previous audit of that particular area:

- Home to School Transport
- Brakenhale School (2004/05 audit completed in 2005/06)

### Feedback from Quality Questionnaires

- 7.6 Quality questionnaires are sent to each auditee with each draft audit report. 73 were returned to 3 May 2006 of 102 issued (72%), with the overall response being positive. The results are summarised as follows:

DEPARTMENT	VERY SATISFIED	SATISFIED	NOT SATISFIED	TOTAL
Chief Executive	n/a	1	0	1
Corporate Services & Resources	n/a	21	5	26
Education & Libraries	n/a	19	3	22
Environment & Leisure	n/a	11	2	13
Social Services & Housing	n/a	10	1	11
<b>Total for 2005/06</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Total for 2004/05</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>63</b>

- 7.7 The questionnaire was simplified for 2005/06 and the overall assessment can only be 'satisfied' or 'not satisfied.' All unsatisfactory responses are followed up and any necessary actions taken. Questionnaires where the response is very positive are highlighted to the contract manager.
- 7.8 The increase in the number of 'unsatisfactory' replies is of concern. Issues raised more than once included inadequate or no exit meeting, the auditor appeared to lack sufficient knowledge of the service under review and the report was produced late. These are all quality issues and have been raised with the contractor (Deloitte) at the monthly contract monitoring meetings. A joint decision between the Council and Deloitte resulted in one auditor being removed from the BFBC contract during 2005/06 due to concerns about the quality of work.

### Compliance with Code of Practice

- 7.9 Internal Audit has comprehensive quality control and assurance processes in place which comply with the requirements of the CIPFA standards and Code of Practice. Our assurance is drawn from: -
- our Internal Audit Contractor (Deloitte) has ISO9000 accreditation, awarded by independent assessors
  - the work of External Audit and their reliance on Internal Audit's work
  - our own in house internal quality reviews
  - feedback from auditees

**8. OTHER INTERNAL AUDIT ACTIVITIES**

**National Fraud Initiative 2004/05**

- 8.1 The National Fraud Initiative is the Audit Commission's data matching exercise and is designed to help participating bodies to detect fraudulent and erroneous payments from the public purse. It takes place every two years and BFBC received its data from the Audit Commission in January 2005. The Fraud Officer (Housing Benefits) and the Acting Head of Audit attended a training session to enable the information provided to be used in the most effective manner.
- 8.2 The final return was submitted on time, in December 2005. The exercise found 4 cases of fraud, which resulted in overpayments estimated to be in excess of £44,000. In one case, the claimant was convicted and sentenced to 120 hours community service and fined £200. In the other three cases, formal cautions have been issued and the overpayments are being recovered.

**PAYE and NIC Reviews**

- 8.3 Ernst and Young were contracted to look at the Council's PAYE and NIC arrangements and they developed an action plan to avoid possible penalties from HM Revenue and Customs.
- 8.4 This is a key risk area, as penalties are high, for example, for employing people not permitted to work in the UK or paying 'employees' as consultants. Internal Audit carried out a detailed review of employment status in 2005/06 to support the consultancy work.

**Fraud and Irregularity**

- 8.5 Several frauds and irregularities have been identified during the year. A financial irregularity affecting trade waste income was reported and investigated, together with allegations of falsifying records at a primary school.
- 8.6 Internal Audit investigated several minor thefts at Council establishments and a more significant theft from an Environment & Leisure imprest account. An invoice scam relating to payments for unsolicited entries in publications was also investigated.

**9. SIGNIFICANT CONTROL WEAKNESSES**

- 9.1 In forming its opinion, Internal Audit is required to comment on the quality of the internal control environment, which includes consideration of any significant risk or governance issues and control failures which arise. During the financial year 2005/06, key weaknesses were identified in the following areas and resulted in limited assurance opinions: -

Directorate	Audit
<p><b>Corporate Services &amp; Resources</b></p>	<p><b>Pericles Council Tax and Housing Benefits System.</b> Two high priority (referred to as priority 1) recommendations were made. One related to the need to upgrade to version 35 of the software once testing was complete, as the current version 34 had poor access controls and lacked a robust audit trail. The other related to improving password controls and lockout arrangements.</p> <p><b>Agresso Application &amp; Operating System Review</b> One Priority 1 recommendation was made. This related to the need to use the controls built into the Windows 2003 Operating System, including minimum password lengths, password history and lockout facilities.</p> <p><b>Contracting &amp; Procurement.</b> Two priority 1 recommendations were made relating to ensuring that all delegation and sub-delegation is properly documented and approved and to more consistent logging/maintenance of contract documentation.</p>
<p><b>Education, Children's Service &amp; Libraries</b></p>	<p><b>Home to School Transport.</b> The single priority 1 recommendation related to the need to ensure, and retain evidence of, CRB clearance for all drivers and escorts.</p> <p><b>Sensory Impairment Contract Monitoring.</b> This audit was included in the 2005/06 plan as considerable monies are involved and the area has not been audited for some time. Two priority 1 recommendations were made. One advised an up to date Service Level Agreement, which was agreed but this issue will need to be addressed by the consortium. The second recommended that a clear pricing structure should be established and this will also need to be addressed by the consortium. All recommendations were agreed in principle but it is appreciated that they cannot be implemented by BFBC in isolation.</p> <p><b>Cranbourne Primary School.</b> The priority 1 recommendation related to the personal files of staff which should include evidence of CRB checks, evidence of two references having been received and evidence of qualifications.</p> <p><b>Brakenhale School 2004/05 Audit.</b> The school has made considerable progress to improve control over the last two years; however it is again having staffing difficulties with the position of bursar. The current bursar has been on long term sick leave, which has resulted in a lack of reliable budgetary information being reported to</p>

	governors. This resulted in a priority 1 recommendation. The second priority 1 recommendation related to retaining evidence that CRB checks have been carried out and a third priority 1 recommendation related to the failure to audit the Private Fund since 2002, despite a previous Internal Audit recommendation to that effect.
<b>Environment &amp; Leisure</b>	<p><b>Weighbridge.</b></p> <p>The audit was undertaken following the discovery of a major irregularity. Four priority 1 recommendations were made covering: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• user identification and passwords for IT systems</li> <li>• setting up a direct debit for the customer in question (this was the usual arrangement for all other trade customers)</li> <li>• improved checks in the billing process</li> <li>• independent authorisation of invoice lists</li> </ul>
<b>Social Services &amp; Housing</b>	<p><b>Anite Housing Management Application &amp; Operating System Review</b></p> <p>One Priority 1 recommendation was made. This related to the need to use the controls built into the Windows 2000 Operating System, including minimum password lengths, password history and lockout facilities.</p>

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## APPENDIX A

## TABLE OF ASSURANCE

April 2005 to March 2006

REPORT	ASSURANCE LEVEL				RECOMMENDATIONS			
	Full	Satisfactory	Limited	None	CATEGORY			AGREED
					1	2	3	
<b>Chief Executives</b>								
Best Value Performance Indicators		X				n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Corporate Services &amp; Resources</b>								
Physical Security of Buildings		X				7	6	12*
New cash/chq procedure Times Sq.		X				3		3
Cash & Cheque (Cashiers)		X				5	1	5*
Customer Section & Reception		X				5	1	6
Council Tax		X				4		4
NNDR		X				6		6
Bank & Reconciliations		X				1		1
Budgetary Control		X					2	0+
Capital Accounting & Fixed Assets		X				1		1
Creditors		X				2	3	5
Debtors		X				2	1	3
Main Accounting		X					1	1
Payroll		X				6		6
Treasury Management		X				2	1	3
VAT		X				5	3	Reply o/s
BACSTEL		X				9	1	Reply o/s
Freedom of Information		X					1	1
Hospitality		n/a			n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Elections & Electoral Registration								Report o/s
Members' Allowances		X				3		3
Anti-Virus Controls IT		X				3		3
Departmental PC Controls		X				2	1	3
Pericles			X		2	5		7
Implications of E-Government		X				6		6
Disaster Recovery Arrangements								Report o/s
IT Security BS7799		n/a						£
Network Review								Report o/s
Agresso		X	X		1	7		Reply o/s\$
Content Management		X				5	5	10
Customer Relations Management								Report o/s
Registrars		X					1	1
Housing & Property Repairs - Contract		X				4		3*
Stores Procedures		X				3		3
Contracting & Procurement			X		2	8	1	11
Employment Status		X				5		Reply o/s
Commercial Property Estates Man't		X					2	Reply o/s

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REPORT	ASSURANCE LEVEL				RECOMMENDATIONS			
	Full	Satisfactory	Limited	None	CATEGORY			AGREED
					1	2	3	
<b>Education, Children &amp; Libraries</b>								
Education Library Service		X				5	1	6
Libraries – Main Finance		X					1	1
Book Purchasing								Report o/s
Sandhurst Library		X					1	1
Binfield Library		X					2	2
SE Grid for Learning (Lead Authority)		X				1		1
Standards Fund	X							n/a
Teaching & Support Services	X						2	2
Adult & Community Learning		X			n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Student finance (Ltd 04/05)		X					1	1
Recoupment								Report o/s
Home to School Transport (Ltd 04/05)				X	1	3	1	Reply o/s
Early Years		X				3		3
PLASC		X				2		2
Sensory Impairment (Contract Monit)				X	2	3		5
Bracknell Family Centre		X				3	1	4
Special Educational Needs		X				1	1	2
School File Reviews		n/a						n/a
School Self-Assessment		n/a						n/a
Ascot Heath Junior		X				2	2	3*
Broadmoor Primary		X				3	4	7
College Town Junior		X				4	2	Reply o/s
Cranbourne CE Primary				X	1	5	5	Reply o/s
Easthampstead Park		X				6	5	11
Edgbarrow		X				1	2	3
Foxhill Primary		X				6		6
Garth Hill		X				7	3	10
Harmanswater Primary		X				1	3	4
Kennel Lane Special								Report o/s
Larchwood		X				5		5
New Scotland Hill Primary		X					2	Reply o/s
Meadowvale Primary (Irregularity)				X?				?
Meadowvale Primary								Report o/s
Owlsmoor Primary		X				6	1	7
Pines Infant Closing		X			n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Pines Junior Closing		X			n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Warfield CE Primary		X				5	4	9
Winkfield St. Mary's CE Primary		X				9	3	12
Other Care & Support Services		X				1	1	2
<b>Environment &amp; Leisure</b>								
Car Parks		X				1		1
Leisure – Cash Spot Checks		X			n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Downshire Golf Complex		X				4		4
Edgbarrow & Sandhurst LC		X				4		4
Bracknell Sports and LC		X				3	6	Reply o/s

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REPORT	ASSURANCE LEVEL				RECOMMENDATIONS			
	Full	Satisfactory	Limited	None	CATEGORY			AGREED
					1	2	3	
Coral Reef		X				2	5	Reply o/s
Leisure Catering		X				1		Reply o/s
The Look Out		X				2		2
Dance Project (Ltd 04/05)		X				1		1
Easthampstead Park		X				1	4	5
Planning IT (Uniform)		X				5	1	6
Weighbridge			X		4	1	1	6
Cemetery & Crematorium		X				4	2	6
Section 106 & Planning Policy		X				2	1	2*
Community & Concessionary Transport		X				2		2
Highways Consultants		X				3		3
Rechargeable Works		X				1		1
Trading Standards		X				2	1	Reply o/s
Building Regs (incl. f/up 04/05)		X				2	1	3
Landscape Services (Ltd 04/05)								££
Local Land Charges (Ltd 04/05)		X				2	1	3
Environmental Health		X				1	3	4
Licensing		X					1	Reply o/s
<b>Social Services &amp; Housing</b>								
Mental Health – day & other services		X				4	1	5
Direct Payments		X				7		7
The Look In		X				4		4
Older People Day Care								Report o/s
Learning Disabilities Residential								Report o/s
Physical Disabilities Residential etc.								Report o/s
Housing Needs		X				5	2	7
Sale of Council Houses		X				3	1	4
Supportive Housing (F/up 04/05)		X				3	2	5
Council Tax & Housing Benefit		X				6	2	8
Housing Rents		X				1	2	Reply o/s
Housing Management		X				2	1	Reply o/s
Forestcare								Report o/s
BROC		X				3		3
Heathlands		X				6	2	8
Ladybank OPH		X				5		5
Waymead – short term		X				3	2	5
Waymead – long term closing		X			n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Anite Hous. Man. System		X	X		1	3		Reply o/s\$
<b>Late Completion 04/05</b>								
Brakenhale School			X		3	3	3	9

\* One recommendation disagreed.

+ Two recommendations disagreed.

Seven recommendations in total were not agreed by auditees during the year, in either category 2 or 3. Internal Audit considered the explanations received and concluded that



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failure to implement these would not materially affect the Council's overall internal control environment.

£ No opinion given and the 4 recommendations were not prioritised.

\$ Application assurance satisfactory but operating system assurance limited.

££ Draft report issued but further work required on inventory controls before report can be finalised.

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**DRAFT****STATEMENT ON INTERNAL CONTROL****1. Scope of Responsibility**

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

**2. The Purpose of the System of Internal Control**

- 2.1 The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Bracknell Forest Borough Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.
- 2.2 The system of internal control has been in place at Bracknell Forest Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2006 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and accounts and, except for the details of principal risks identified in paragraphs 3.3 to 3.10 below, accords with proper practice.

**3. The Internal Control Environment****Principal Statutory Obligations and Organisational Objectives**

- 3.1 The vision for Bracknell Forest provides the ultimate goal around which all actions of staff and resources are focussed in the long term. The vision is "to make Bracknell Forest a place where all people can thrive: living, learning and working in a clean, safe and healthy environment." The Council ensures a sustained focus on what matters in Bracknell Forest over the medium term by translating the long term vision of the Council into the Council's fifteen medium term objectives: -
- To lead the regeneration of Bracknell to provide a town fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century
  - To promote sustainable communities through innovative housing strategies and effective maintenance
  - To provide a safe framework for developing the community
  - To improve art, culture, sport and recreation provision within the Borough
  - To work with partners to improve health provision within the Borough

## DRAFT

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

### **Risk Management – Principal Risks**

- 3.2 The Council has a Constitution under which members and officers work to ensure compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations. Risk management is becoming embedded in the activities of the Authority. Service Plans from 2005/2006 include a risk assessment that identifies risk factors and actions to mitigate those risks which might affect the achievement of the Council's 15 medium term objectives. The most significant risks identified are set out below together with brief examples of the action taken to mitigate these risks: -

#### Performance Data

- 3.3 The reliability of performance data has been a recurring theme in external audit and inspection reports. Internal Audit resources were redirected in 2005/06 to focus on the calculation and reporting of performance data, supporting the action that is being taken in this area. Although improvements have been made Internal Audit is planning to carry out more work in 2006/07, in conjunction with external audit, to provide assurance to the Council and external agencies that its performance data is reliable.

#### Password Controls

- 3.4 Control over passwords remains a concern. An irregularity within the area of trade waste highlighted the risks associated with sharing and not updating passwords. Systems reviews during the last year have identified further areas where password controls and basic security features could be improved. Appropriate recommendations have been made and will be followed up in 2006/07 to ensure that they have been implemented.

#### CRB Checks

- 3.5 Inadequate records within two schools and home to school transport meant that Internal Audit were unable to confirm that the necessary CRB checks had been carried out in a number of instances. These have been followed up by the department. Internal audit will continue testing for compliance in this important area as an integral part of all relevant audits in the future.

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### Anti Fraud Culture

- 3.6 As there is always some staff turnover, the Council needs to promote an anti-fraud culture on a regular basis. Although some training has taken place in the last year further work is necessary to improve and maintain awareness of the Council's Fraud and Corruption Policy, Whistleblowing Policy and procedures for complying with the Money Laundering Regulations. This will include publicity material and a continuation of the training programme.

### Risk Management Arrangements

- 3.7 The need to review and update the Council's risk management arrangements and the Corporate Risk Register in particular is identified as an issue. The Corporate Risk Register was originally approved by the Executive in 2003 and needs to be refreshed so that all significant risks are incorporated in future Service Plans and budgets. This is one of the key tasks for the recently appointed interim Head of Audit and Risk Management.

### Organisational Change

- 3.8 Following the creation of the new Education, Children's Services and libraries Department in May 2005, further organisational change has occurred recently, with responsibility for Bracknell Forest Services moving from Corporate Services and Resources to Social Services and Housing. In addition to this there has been staff turnover at the top levels of management across the Council. Major organisational change has the potential to weaken a previously strong internal control environment. Internal audit work in 2006/07 will include ensuring that the recent organisational changes have not compromised the Council's internal control arrangements.

### Resources Available to the Council

- 3.9 Whilst the Council has delivered within budget since 1998 and the 2006/07 Budget was prepared in line with the Medium Term Financial Plan, the Council still faces major challenges in the years ahead if it is to achieve the planned 'soft landing' and deliver a balanced budget that does not rely on the use of reserves and balances. This will be especially difficult if the Council retains its housing stock, as it will be costly to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010. The complexities of the Waste PFI contract that is being negotiated at present on behalf of three Berkshire Authorities, including Bracknell Forest, could also have a significant impact on the Council's finances for the foreseeable future. In any event, robust budgetary control arrangements will need to be maintained throughout this period to ensure that spending does not exceed the budget and jeopardise the Council's future financial plans. Internal Audit will review budgetary control each year, as this is one of the Council's key financial systems.

### **Best Value**

- 3.10 A Best Value Review was undertaken on Community Safety, jointly with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Thames Valley Police. The review identified many areas of best practice but also made 30 recommendations for improvements.

**DRAFT****Financial Management**

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

**Performance Management**

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

**4 Review of Effectiveness****Assurance**

- 4.1 Bracknell Forest Borough Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control. The review is informed by the work of the following: -
- Internal Audit, who have responsibility for reviewing the development and maintenance of the internal control environment and who report throughout the year to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission
  - External Audit, who have responsibility for assessing the relevant significant operational and financial risks that apply to the Council as summarised in the Annual Audit & Inspection Letter from the Audit Commission's Relationship Manager
  - The Chief Executive's Corporate Performance Overview Report
  - Best Value Reviews
  - The work of other review agencies and inspectorates including Ofsted, the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate and the Commission for Social Care Inspection

**5. Significant Internal Control Issues**

- 5.1 In respect of the principal risks identified in section 3.3 to 3.9 of this statement, we are of the opinion that no significant gaps in assurance exist and that appropriate action is being taken to mitigate the risks identified.

**DRAFT****6. Corporate Governance**

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

Cllr P. D. Bettison  
Leader of the Council  
June 2006

T. R. Wheadon  
Chief Executive  
June 2006

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## **Review of School Exclusions and Pupil Behaviour Policy**

**Report by a Working Group of the  
Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel**

**March 2006 (v4)**



# Review of School Exclusions and Pupil Behaviour Policy

## Summary:

This Working Group was set up by the former Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel to review practice and provision relating to all exclusions (lunchtime, fixed term and permanent) with a view to minimising the number of exclusions and enhancing the provision for excluded pupils.

In so doing, the Working Group sought to:

- Carry out an objective investigation into current provision for excluded pupils in Bracknell Forest and consider how that provision is applied.
- Explore good practice in other local education authorities (LEAs) and schools.
- Identify a way forward with recommendations aimed to minimise the number of exclusions and to enhance arrangements for excluded pupils.

This report summarises the Working Group's findings and conclusions. The recommendations of the Working Group are set out at Section 7.

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## 1. Introduction

At its meeting held on 27 May 2004, the former Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel established this Working Group to review the Council's approach to school exclusions and pupil behaviour policy.

The Working Group's objectives were to:

- investigate current provision for excluded pupils and consider how that provision is applied.
- look at trends where new exclusions are occurring to establish the effectiveness of individual school's handling of exclusions.
- consider exclusion support organisations e.g. Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and Education Welfare Officers (EWOs).
- identify possible alternatives to PRUs (e.g. specialist units within schools).
- consider whether Special Educational Needs is a factor in exclusions.
- identify preventative and support measures associated with exclusions.

In progressing the review, the Working Group sought to:

- review local exclusion levels and compare against the national average.
- explore the Borough's provision and to ascertain how excluded pupils are dealt with and treated.
- establish reasons for exclusions and identify any related trends.
- being mindful of the need to provide equal access to education for all, consider exclusions from the perspective of schools to establish the extent to which education is prejudiced in the event that the exclusions policy is not adhered to.
- look at school secondary transfer practices in the context of exclusions.
- investigate exclusion issues and PRU provision in other local authority areas.
- explore whether current PRU provision is sufficient and how pupils are reintegrated into mainstream education.
- interview relevant witnesses including social workers and the Safer Communities Manager in relation to exclusion issues including anger management.

## **2. Investigation and Information Gathering - Information from Officers**

### **Presentation from the Director and Assistant Director of Education, Children's Services & Libraries (Children, Young People & Families)**

The Director and Assistant Director gave a presentation to the Working Group in respect of pupil behaviour and exclusions, a copy of which is attached to this report at Annexe 1. The presentation commenced with an explanation of the statutory duty placed on an LEA to provide every child and young person of school age with full time education of at least 20 hours per week giving each one access to the national curriculum.

The presentation gave national and regional comparisons with the amount of permanent exclusions in Bracknell Forest and the total number of permanent exclusions in the Borough from 1998/99 to 2002/03, which saw a drop from 53 in 1998/99 to 21 in 2002/03 followed by a sharp increase the following year. A breakdown of exclusion from September to May 2003-04 across the six secondary schools in the Borough was provided. 25% of excluded pupils were re-integrated into another school whilst 75% attended an alternative provision such as the home teaching service or pupil referral units which offered high quality facilities and flexible projects. Compared with the annual cost of a secondary school place (£3,020), exclusion was costly and an equivalent place at College Hall PRU was £9,630 whilst home teaching cost £40 per hour. The social cost of exclusion was considered to be incalculable. Issues affecting the pupil referral service were staffing difficulties, lack of alternative provision, pupil mix, school reluctance to re-integrate excluded pupils and the exclusion of younger pupils (key stage 1).

Key issues relating to exclusion, such as circumstances where permanent exclusion was necessary, measures to avoid exclusion and actions to improve capacity to provide for excluded pupils were highlighted. Attitudes in schools, the sanctions framework, re-integration protocol and community responses were all factors affecting greater consistency. Information concerning exclusion preventative measures and available support for pupils and families was provided.

### **Witness Session with the Early Intervention Co-ordinator**

Cindy Bateman, the Early Intervention Co-ordinator, was interviewed by the Working Group to explain the purpose of the Early Intervention Programme, her role and how the Programme related to exclusions. The Children's Fund had provided £40k to establish this project which featured a co-ordinator who worked with primary age children who would struggle at transfer to secondary school. The co-ordinator had links with the Behaviour Support Team (BST) and at the time of the interview was dealing with 16 cases involving 10 and 11 year olds. The early intervention eligibility criteria, which is set out at Annexe 2 to this report, requires potential candidates to be between the ages of 8 and 13 and be at risk of offending, indulging in substance abuse or behaving in such a way to attract the attention of the school, LEA or police e.g. truancy, bullying or non-offence anti-social behaviour. The remit of early intervention ceases when a pupil enters the criminal justice system.

Early intervention is seen as an effective method of preventing or tackling behavioural problems associated with secondary transfer and potential offending.

**Witness Session with the Assistant Director of Education, Children’s Services & Libraries (Children, Young People & Families) and the Children and Families Manager**

The discussion with the Assistant Director and Children & Families Manager focused on responses to the following questions/information requests that had been previously prepared by the Working Group for their response.

1.	<p><u>Please explain the exclusions procedure.</u></p> <p>This information was included in the folder of guidance concerning exclusions from schools and PRUs previously circulated to the Working Group and is attached to this report at Annexe 3.</p>
2.	<p><u>For the period 1998 – 2004, please provide an exclusion breakdown for each school and a breakdown of the reasons for exclusions for:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of pupils excluded (as a percentage of total on roll).</li> <li>• Total number of pupils excluded for a fixed term.</li> <li>• Total number of days lost through fixed term exclusions.</li> </ul> <p>Although all information was not available in the requested format, the Working Group has been provided with charts (attached at Annexe 4) showing some of this information.</p>
3.	<p><u>Please provide a breakdown of where fixed term excluded pupils were referred during 1998 – 2004 as percentages.</u></p> <p>The Working Group was advised that the six secondary schools in the Borough fall into three groups on the basis of their equivalent sizes. Garth Hill and Easthampstead Schools form the first group being the largest two secondary schools, Edgbarrow and Sandhurst Schools comprise the middle sized group and Brakenhale and Ranelagh Schools constitute the third group as the smallest schools. Although it is one of the smallest secondary schools in the Borough, Brakenhale School currently has the most exclusions which number 14. Although there had been no exclusions at Ranelagh School at the time of the Working Group’s recent visit to that School, four governor disciplinary committees were subsequently proposed and might lead to the equivalent number of exclusions. There were no Year 7 exclusions during the autumn term and of the 4 impending exclusions, 3 are Year 9 and the remainder is Year 10. Previous exclusions relate to Years 8 and 9. Efforts including the BEST project and early intervention work to reduce the number of exclusions are proving successful and primary level exclusions are unusual. Mental health issues, family matters or undiagnosed SEN are often the cause of exclusions. As there are a number of factors and catalysts relating to exclusions, their frequency and timing is difficult to predict. Very few excluded pupils are reinstated as a result of the small number of exclusion appeals held in Bracknell Forest as procedures have been improved, guidance offered and grounds for reinstatement limited. Occasionally headteachers’ decisions to exclude are challenged by school governors.</p>

4.	<p><u>Please provide a breakdown of reasons for exclusions.</u></p> <p>The Assistant Director provided a breakdown of the reasons for permanent exclusions in 2003/04 and 2004/05 (attached at Annexe 5) which indicate that verbal abuse and threatening / disruptive behaviour are the most common reasons. 10% of this is directed at other pupils whilst the remainder concerns adults. Respect and use of language are factors in exclusions and it is acknowledged that some pupils experience difficulties in drawing boundaries between the language and behaviour that are acceptable in different aspects of society. Although society is becoming more lenient, schools attempt to maintain high standards. It is noted that relaxed discipline, the drug culture and parental views of schools and attitudes towards discipline are factors affecting pupil behaviour.</p>
5.	<p><u>Please provide a breakdown of number of exclusions for primary, lower secondary and upper secondary (or by year group or by age group).</u></p> <p>Data providing a breakdown of permanent exclusions by school and by year group (attached at Annexe 6) indicates that the majority of permanent secondary exclusions during 2003/04 relate to Year 10 and only 1 has occurred in Year 7. Academic pressures and the impact of puberty are noted as factors. This pattern reflects the intensive work at the transfer stage with those pupils at risk of exclusion preventing more exclusions in the earlier years of secondary school. In addition to social background factors, an inability to keep pace with schooling is a trigger for disruptive behaviour as such pupils wish to demonstrate their prowess by other means when they experience difficulty in accessing the curriculum.</p>
6.	<p><u>How many primary schools have primary peer mediation, or other preventative measures and are there any plans for secondary schools to introduce such a scheme?</u></p> <p>Positive use is made of peer pressure and preventative measures and similar support, including the assistance of the Behaviour Support Team, currently utilised in all but 5 primary schools. A different approach is required in secondary schools which present greater challenges and related work is being undertaken in 3 secondary schools at present (Sandhurst, Edgbarrow and Ranelagh).</p> <p>The empowerment, voice, greater sense of ownership and commitment offered by school councils is considered effective as it reflects changes in traditional boundaries and associated attitudes to authority and discipline. The Healthy Schools Initiative which concentrates on promoting health and wellbeing, including mental aspects, is a further positive factor.</p>
7.	<p><u>Can you recommend any successful preventative strategies and suggest what to look out for during visits to schools?</u></p> <p>Preventative provision is being strengthened and special units have been established in 3 secondary schools (Brakenhale, Garth Hill and Easthampstead Schools). The units will provide continuity between schools and the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and offer support for 'softer' problems,</p>

	<p>often in the form of short term measures, whilst the PRU addresses more severe cases. Some excluded pupils experience problems in only one area such as with a particular teacher or subject and can be assisted by the special units within schools as and when support is required. Appropriate personnel, support staff with specific experience and a higher than usual teacher : pupil ratio is required to operate the specialist units which require funding of approximately £100k per school. It is probable that the need for a PRU will continue in the event that all secondary schools receive a special unit as a number of unresponsive pupils will remain and be inappropriate for integration into mainstream education.</p> <p>In response to a suggestion that PRUs can appear too attractive to pupils, the Assistant Director has advised that there are necessary cultural differences between schools and PRUs and, in order to overcome their difficulties and ‘bad’ experiences in school, the ‘hard core’ of excluded pupils occupying the 30 places in the PRU require a different environment from mainstream education in order gain aspirations, self esteem and qualifications for later life. As it is possible that younger pupils with less severe problems who the LEA seek to reintegrate into mainstream education could be enticed by the prospect of attending a PRU, it is suggested that units within secondary schools are the most appropriate setting for such pupils. Although one headteacher has challenged the academic rigour of College Hall, this criticism is considered unfair as its pupils are unable to proceed at the same pace of those in mainstream education but nevertheless attain good external examination results. In addition, College Hall is felt to perform more highly than PRUs in other LEA areas and its management committee is supportive.</p> <p>The possible merits of offering an alternative curriculum such as apprenticeships has been raised and it is acknowledged that owing to funding constraints one school would be unable to offer all alternative curriculums and therefore collaboration between schools is necessary to achieve this.</p>
8.	<p><u>Where are excluded pupils placed – do they move from school to school?</u></p> <p>The majority of permanently excluded pupils are in Year 10 or 11 (11 of 13) and are placed in College Hall. Two Year 9 pupils who have each received two permanent exclusions from different secondary schools are now also placed in College Hall. These are the first permanently excluded Year 9 pupils and work is being undertaken with a view to return them to mainstream education. Headteachers are generally of the opinion than transferring pupils to another school or provision is beneficial as it removes them from an environment which they find adverse. Some secondary schools are reluctant to accept pupils excluded from other schools to avoid increasing their number of pupils with difficulties and the small number of secondary schools and close communities in Bracknell Forest limit opportunities for managed moves and fresh starts for pupils.</p>



9.	<p><u>Are exclusions effective or do pupils get excluded from the next school they go to?</u></p> <p>The two Year 9 Pupils have been excluded for a second time from the schools they transferred to following their first permanent exclusion.</p>
10.	<p><u>How many pupils are permanently excluded without a fixed term exclusion (from all schools) and where do they go?</u></p> <p>Very few pupils are permanently excluded without a fixed term exclusion and at the time of the discussion there were four such exclusions in Bracknell Forest, all of whom have been transferred to other schools in the Borough.</p>
11.	<p><u>Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) – how many pupils are re-introduced back into main stream schools? What is the system for re-introducing / integrating pupils back into mainstream (do they get behind in the curriculum?)?</u></p> <p>Although the officers were not in a position to provide the data necessary to fully answer the above questions at the meeting, they advised that PRUs have a re-integration support teacher and a Reintegration and Attendance Panel examines cases individually before a decision as to the placing of each pupil is made on the basis of evidence provided.</p>
12.	<p><u>Please provide a breakdown of PRUs – how many excluded pupils stay, how many are re-introduced into mainstream schools and do some pupils attend for mornings only?</u></p> <p>Annexe 7 indicates the number of pupils retained in the PRU and the number reinstated to mainstream education.</p>
13.	<p><u>What are the costs of alternatives to mainstream education and is cost a factor?</u></p> <p><u>- PRU (pupil costs £10 - £15,000 each per annum?)</u></p> <p><u>- Home teaching (£40 per hour?)</u></p> <p>The Assistant Director confirmed that the PRU pupil cost of £10-15,000 per annum is correct.</p>
14.	<p><u>How do neighbouring LEA's approach exclusions - do they use PRUs or alternatives? What are their procedures?</u></p> <p>As the majority of pupils excluded from schools in Wokingham District are residents of Reading, responsibility for their subsequent education lies with Reading Borough Council and there are no PRUs in Wokingham but several of differing types in Reading which receive more funding than other Berkshire unitary authorities owing to the greater incidence of exclusions and related problems. Arrangements in Windsor and Maidenhead, which has one PRU for primary pupils and one for secondary children, are similar to those in Bracknell Forest.</p>

15.	<p><u>Please provide comparative figures – how many pupils are fixed and permanently excluded by Wokingham and Windsor &amp; Maidenhead?</u></p> <p>Although the number of exclusions from Bracknell Forest during the 2004 Autumn term has been lower than that of neighbouring LEAs, the number in Bracknell Forest is now increasing. The following permanent exclusions were made during the 2003/2004 academic year and it is anticipated that figures for 2004/2005 will be similar:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bracknell Forest – 36</li> <li>• Wokingham – 40</li> <li>• Windsor and Maidenhead - 35</li> </ul>
16.	<p><u>What agencies / resources are available to support exclusions? Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) – how many are there? Is their recruitment and retention successful? Do they liaise with the YOT and BEST?</u></p> <p>In response to a Member's comment that the Working Group has received mixed comments from headteachers in respect of EWOs, the Children &amp; Families Manager has advised that a split allocation of EWOs has been made in the current year giving each secondary school 50% of two officers' time. Some schools have expressed a preference for 1 full time EWO and would prefer an approach where EWOs worked with year groups, however, families are often spread across different year groups and EWOs could be more effective working with the whole family. Although some schools would prefer EWOs to increase the amount of background family work provided, Government targets focus on school attendance and therefore EWOs are obliged to concentrate their efforts on tackling truancy.</p> <p>The negative comments received from schools have concentrated on the Child &amp; Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) which has been poor in recent years owing to the difficulties associated with staff recruitment and inappropriate referrals. No particular problems are incurred in relation to the recruitment and retention of EWOs and further funding is welcomed to enable the recruitment of more EWOs.</p>
17.	<p><u>What use is made of Cooper's Hill (and other Community Centres) in relation to exclusions?</u></p> <p>Use of Cooper's Hill in relation to exclusions, which has been criticised by inspectors, is avoided and one to one tuition is provided there under emergency circumstances only when there is no spare capacity at College Hall. At the time of the meeting there were no pupils receiving tuition at Cooper's Hill. Youth Offending Team accommodation and Priestwood Youth and Community Centre are utilised as alternatives to Cooper's Hill under similar circumstances. The LEA is legally obliged to provide full time education for all pupils and situations where this is not provided are extremely rare. To avoid such circumstances, the LEA endeavours to identify placements for this provision on a one to one basis, provide education at home or arrange work experience.</p>

18.	<p><u>Unless this information is confidential, please provide a breakdown of the type of background / family problems of excluded pupils (e.g. the number with single parents and whether they are disciplined at home).</u></p> <p>Although this information is not specifically available, the reasons for exclusions gave some insight in to excluded pupils' social circumstances.</p>
19.	<p><u>Possible alternatives to exclusions? What are they?</u></p> <p>Early intervention and support to prevent exclusions and the use of special units within schools are possible alternatives.</p>
20.	<p><u>What support is available at schools e.g. anger management, peer mediation, sin bins?</u></p> <p>Although both anger management and peer mediation initiatives are utilised in Bracknell Forest schools, sin bins are not provided.</p>
21.	<p><u>What becomes of excluded pupils?</u></p> <p>The LEA continues to provide support to excluded pupils.</p>
22.	<p><u>How will the model described in the document 'Promoting Positive Behaviour' be utilised in schools? Will the LEA be providing any further resources in this regard?</u></p> <p>Schools' attention was drawn to the above document in the folder of guidance prepared by the LEA in respect of exclusion from schools and PRUs. No additional resource to support the document is provided and the LEA hopes that is received in the spirit intended.</p>

### **Witness Session with the Assistant Director of Education, Children's Services & Libraries (Children's Services) and the Safer Communities Manager**

#### Assistant Director of Education, Children's Services & Libraries

The Assistant Director explained her responsibilities which cover a wide range of social services for children including all initial assessments where concern exists, and direct intervention if necessary, in relation to child protection and family breakdown. Her area of work is divided into two sections, namely, under 11 years of age and over 11's to reflect primary and secondary spheres of the education system. The over 11's team work mainly with children on the Child Protection Register and looked after children. Other teams in Children's Services are the Family and Adolescent Support Team (FAST) who aim to support teenagers by tackling their problems and preventing their entry in to the care system and the After Care Team which provides support for those who have left care. The Assistant Director made reference to the Youth Offending Team (YOT), a multi-agency team consisting of representatives from the health service, police, probation, education and social services, which was established four years previously to work with those who have offended or are at risk of offending.

Social Services' involvement with school exclusions relates to the potentially serious impact which they have on the excluded children and their families with whom social services are involved. This impact stretches to performance monitoring as 3 of the 18 national performance indicators relate to children as follows:-

- The number of looked after children absent from school for 25 days;
- Attainment of looked after children in terms of the number of GCSE's acquired; and
- Support, training, placement etc. on leaving care.

Permanent exclusion of looked after children impacts on their foster placement with independent carers as many are unavailable during the day to provide care resulting in the necessity to transfer children to alternative care arrangements with financial implications. Although the Working Group has not given specific consideration to looked after children during their recent visits to secondary schools in the Borough, Members acknowledge that placements and stability are in jeopardy as a result of exclusions.

The Assistant Director responded to arising questions in the following terms:-

- Exclusions can increase the need for fostering as some parents are unable to cope when their children are excluded and can become a factor in anti-social behaviour and offending as excluded pupils lose the structure to their day. At the time of the witness session a disproportionately high number of children involved with the YOT (23 of 30) were excluded pupils, 7 of whom were looked after;
- Social Services becomes involved in the lead up to exclusion in the event that the child and family concerned are receiving care. The priorities for social workers, namely, CP register, looked after children and eligibility criteria, limit the Department's scope to intervene at an early stage in respect of potential exclusions. Although the Department is not always involved when a pupil is excluded, it does have a representative on the Reintegration and Attendance Panel (RAP), a mechanism which addresses concerns where children are excluded or at risk of exclusion. The Children Act 2004 specifies how related agencies should work together to improve outcomes for all children, particularly the vulnerable.
- Although Social Services provision is aspirational and ambitious seeking to offer good services at an early stage as a preventative measure, there are inevitably some gaps in provision owing to the involvement of other agencies. A model for the provision of a co-ordinated range of accessible and non-stigmatising services at an early stage is sought. Difficulties generally occur when children are at an older age and the number of children on the CP register and in care is higher at this age group. Support for parents through parenting skills groups and 'solution focus therapy' is beneficial seeking to solve problems and avoid the need for children to enter care.
- Education of looked after children is promoted as a discreet group and seeks to raise awareness of the difficulties experienced as a result of being looked after with a view to preventing such children from being further disadvantaged in the

future. Although not all Bracknell Forest looked after children are educated in the Borough requiring reliance on other local education authorities, the Council compares well in this regard on a national scale. An associated issue is the absence of visits to schools by those responsible for looked after children. Although research indicates that looked after children perform best when they remain in their communities, an example of 4 boys progressing well having been placed outside their communities was cited.

- At the time of the witness session the number of looked after children was 70 and the total amount of involvements with the YOT, which fluctuated, was 60-70. The majority of children involved with the YOT is as a result of court orders such as supervision and referral orders.
- Further to a request for a breakdown of YOT referrals across the schools in the Borough, the Assistant Director undertook to ascertain whether such information was collected. In response to new legislation, a needs analysis was being undertaken in the light of demographics, geographical mapping and performance data etc. It would be necessary for partners to analyse and share information and it was anticipated that the data gathering process would be complete in May/June 2005. Comparison of local data against that of areas with less exclusion is considered to be beneficial.

#### Safer Communities Manager

The Safer Communities Manager drew attention to the 2004 Annual Public Health Report for the south-east which identifies Bracknell Forest as being the second highest of 19 authorities in terms of the number of exclusions. He advised that, although it is intended that pupils should be occupied at a PRU or in receipt of home education for 25 hours per week following exclusion, this is not always the case. The majority of crimes and victims of violent crimes involve men between the ages of 15 and 22 years, many of whom were regular truants or excluded pupils. At the time of the witness session, the Safer Communities Manager was working with 3 such youths and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders were a possibility in these cases. The YOT forms part of the Safer Communities family within the Council and is a successful multi-agency body dealing with various reparation and community orders including Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and Acceptable Behaviour Orders. A number of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders have been issued in Bracknell Forest and, owing to the low levels of crime in the Borough, are of disproportionate concern to the community. They generally seek to deny offenders access to towns, are difficult to police and are considered to be most effective against adults with a view to preventing re-offending. Two of the three worst youth offenders in the Borough were subject to Acceptable Behaviour Orders. Such orders are only resorted to when other measures have failed being viewed as a sign of failure and 50% are broken leaving the concerned youth in danger of court action.

The Safer Communities Team is the product of a three year community safety strategy, the third year of which commenced in April 2005, for the reduction of crime and increased safety in Bracknell Forest. Four key areas of the strategy are to reduce crime through work with local priority offenders, to minimise the harmful effects of drugs on communities by limiting availability and assisting users, to tackle the perception of anti-social behaviour and to work with young citizens. The expectation of becoming a victim of anti-social behaviour is greater than the reality of this happening and, with the benefit of a Government grant, an Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator has been employed to develop and implement this part of the strategy. The YOT is undertaking diversionary work with young people to prevent

offending and reduce the risk of being a victim. The Drug/Alcohol Action Team (DAT) is working with young drug offenders to assist them in making informed lifestyle choices.

The Safer Communities Manager and Assistant Director responded to Members questions and comments in the following terms:-

- From the age of 9-10 years it is possible to identify those pupils who will be at risk of exclusion or offending and Artemis, a police operated computer system, is utilised to identify and flag risk factors in young people with data from the police, education and Social Services. The Council is required to undertake a system of information sharing and assessment in order to alert relevant partners and agencies of concerns relating to children. Much work is being carried out in this area including piloting work undertaken by ten trail blazing local authorities. It is possible for related systems to flag which agencies are involved with a particular child to indicate where responsibility and funding commitments lie. Integrated processes, service eligibility criteria, a common assessment format and cultural change to avoid silo working are being developed. In addition, the YOT is involved in a national project involving the identification of risk of offending amongst 9-13 year olds.
- Additional funding of base services to increase the amount of early intervention provided would be beneficial in order to tackle problems at an early stage and prevent their escalation to exclusion or offending.
- Although some schools visited by the Working Group have expressed an opinion that insufficient social services are provided at an early stage to support those at risk of exclusion, the Assistant Director advised that resources and priorities dictate where support is provided and Social Services are unable to become involved where the associated thresholds are not met. High level services to looked after children are a costly priority area and it is not possible to reduce the amount of support provided in this area to free resources for more ground level preventative work.
- It has been noted that West Berkshire Borough Council utilise external agencies and resources to work with those pupils who are in danger of exclusion and prevent disruption to other pupils' education.
- Erosion of discipline and respect, the complexity and challenges of modern parenting, reducing extended family support, more working parents and one parent families and the lack of male role models are seen as factors contributing to exclusion. Officers have suggested that pupils need to learn the difference between boundaries of behaviour at school and at home and that teachers and parents should be supported and empowered as many of the latter have not received good parenting themselves. As their parents often challenge teachers, pupils follow this example. Sometimes behavioural problems are more severe in one cohort of pupils than another.

## **Meeting with the Assistant Director of Education, Children's Services & Libraries (Children, Young People & Families) – Independent Consultant's Review of School Exclusions in Bracknell Forest**

### Background

The Assistant Director of Education and Libraries gave a presentation which mirrored that previously given to headteachers of Bracknell Forest secondary schools further to the review of school exclusions undertaken by an independent education and management consultant in November 2004. The report emanating from this review was not in the public domain and had been the subject of limited circulation to headteachers, senior colleagues in schools who had been interviewed as part of the process and this Working Group. The report was complimentary in many aspects identifying a growing commitment to inclusion and evidence of a cultural change within the Council and schools, referring to examples of effective multi-agency practice and outlining a number of positive developments which had the potential to contribute towards reducing exclusions. However, the report also raised some issues with related practices and procedures.

The purpose of commissioning the review was to establish the reason for the sharp increase in the rate of exclusions during 2003/04 which followed a previous downward slant. The identification of any common factors would inform the preparation of future strategy at both school and LEA levels.

### Methodology

The methodology employed by the consultant consisted of six strands, namely, review of relevant national and local documentation, analysis of LEA data on fixed term and permanent exclusions, study of individual excluded pupils' case records, interviews with samples of excluded pupils and their parents/carers and a range of governors and professionals in schools, the LEA and other agencies. The file review of the 32 excluded pupils in the Borough sought to identify any common exclusion factors. Local and national trends and factors, including comparative data, were also considered. As Edgbarrow and Ranelagh had no excluded pupils at the point of the review, they had not been taken into consideration as part of the review which had concentrated on the remaining four secondary schools in Bracknell Forest.

### Findings

The findings of the review indicated that permanent exclusions in Bracknell Forest were broadly consistent with the pattern of national trends from 1998/99 to 2002/03. However, during 2003/04 exclusion levels in Bracknell Forest rose higher than national rates and those of the South East of England but no pattern of causes has emerged as a result of the review. The majority of exclusions were the result of conflict between pupils and teachers, particularly where a long history of behavioural problems existed. 2 of the 32 pupils excluded at the time of the review had been permanently excluded from more than one school.

The Government issued a target in 1997 seeking a reduction in permanent exclusions by one third and the LEA was closely monitoring exclusions and had injected additional resources and efforts into securing a reduction. 53 Bracknell Forest pupils had been excluded in 1996 and the Borough's drop in exclusions has been more rapid and longer lasting than the national trend with an up turn occurring in 2002/03 a year later than other LEAs. A possible reason for this up turn was a change in Department for Education and Skills policy relating to exclusions which was delivered

via a national message to the effect that there were good reasons to exclude, including poor behaviour and drug related incidents. Permission to exclude was granted to headteachers whilst related LEA powers and the disciplinary role of governors were weakened. The consultant felt that Governor Disciplinary Committees now rarely went against headteachers' recommendations regarding exclusion and were only likely to do so where they felt that exclusion was too extreme a punishment and that too little preventative work had been undertaken by the school during the lead in to exclusion. However, Members of the Working Group had experiences of governors challenging headteachers' intention to exclude although this may not have been apparent in the related documentation. Such challenge was felt to strengthen the school's approach and inform its stance in relation to potential future exclusion. Although teachers possibly lacked the time to match need with intervention, it was expected that the Pastoral Team within schools would analyse problems and identify a response such as utilising anger management or behaviour support facilities.

The consultant found limited evidence of systematic or diagnostic assessment of pupil behaviour and felt that insufficient analysis of problems or early intervention took place. The process was intended to be commenced by schools and supplemented by subsequent outside support from bodies such as the Behaviour Support Team and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The consultant felt that there were elements of a 'referral culture' in Bracknell Forest whereby problems were referred to other service providers such as CAMHS and insufficient attention was given to analysing problems and identifying an achievable solution. The report sought a more robust system enabling schools and the LEA to diagnose the cause of behavioural problems and undertake early intervention.

Attention was drawn to the staffing difficulties being experienced by CAMHS which struggled to attract specialists to work in its particular area. The Service had been overloaded with referrals during the past year and in many instances referrals had been made to alternative agencies. However, the NHS had recently undertaken work to improve the services offered by CAMHS which was now managed by a clinical psychologist with the assistance of specialist nurses and was able to provide family support to combat disorders including anorexia, self harm, depression etc. Alternative referrals were made in the event that other services were felt to more closely meet a pupil's needs. Education Welfare Officers had now established closer links between schools and CAMHS and GPs also made referrals to CAMHS. The Working Group was advised that professionals within schools should be aware of the type and extent of services available and be able to identify the most appropriate referral in individual cases. However, there was a need to make smarter referrals to access the correct service without delay and combat the 'referral culture'. It was acknowledged that assessment was a crucial factor to inform systematic diagnosis of problems and that improvements in this area were required. Pastoral Teams and CAMHS staff received training seminars to assist with identification of pupil problems to establish whether they were mental health, social or learning difficulty related. Teachers and staff in schools decided when such training was required. As there were examples of double referrals from schools and GPs, the Assistant Director agreed that schools should be advised against telling parents to take their children directly to GPs and leave this to the referral system in order to maintain links with the school. A greater range of support for parents including parenting skills classes were being provided. Many problems stemmed from pupils' home life, parental break-up and new partners in particular.

A Member drew attention to the surfacing of problems at primary level and felt that earlier intervention, subject to the availability of funding and resources, may prevent



such problems escalating at secondary transfer. It was felt that more younger secondary pupils were being excluded and access to curriculum was cited as a cause as some pupils had numeracy and literacy problems and were therefore unable to keep pace with their class. It emerged from the report that permanent exclusion had a damaging effect on pupils' academic achievements and future life chances, that it appeared some schools were not utilising exclusion as a last resort and that teacher attitude was a significant factor. Excluded pupils would have an impact on school examination results and a conflict between the 'standards agenda' and 'inclusion agenda' existed. Denying excluded pupils from sitting examinations was felt to be a retrograde step for the pupils concerned and less emphasis on league tables was a possible ameliorating measure.

All six secondary schools operated in different ways and there was no correlation between tracking of SEN and behaviour issues which was undertaken by different teams. Although the Children and Families Team decided the most appropriate placement for pupils following exclusion, reintegration into another mainstream school was felt to be the best approach for those who had been excluded once. Although the system sought to allocate excluded pupils to a particular school, most schools were reluctant usually to accept those excluded from another school. Schools with high exclusion levels were expected to accept a larger number of pupils excluded from elsewhere but those with a track record of success with reintegration were not expected to accept more than a reasonable share. Attitudes towards reintegrated pupils were a significant issue and, irrespective of a positive attitude and contrite stance, excluded pupils were viewed in a dim light and not given a fresh start. Use of a 'best friend' advocate was felt to be successful as few pupils were in conflict with all their peers. There was a financial impact associated with placements at the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), which was financed from the general Schools Budget, as the cost per pupil per year was £14k compared with a cost of £3k per annum in mainstream education.

During recent visits to schools as part of its exclusion review work, the Working Group had experienced varying approaches adopted by different schools, some of whom were more sophisticated than others in their methods. It was felt that training and a consistent approach by schools would be beneficial and the LEA sought similar exclusion practice across all schools in the interests of consistency.

### Recommendations

The recommendations contained in the report fell into three categories and related to schools, the PRU and the LEA. The first category stated the need for policies and procedures to reflect best practice, evaluation of the effectiveness of SEN provision, early identification and assessment of behavioural problems and strong links between pastoral and SEN provision. It was also recommended that the range of support available for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) be reviewed and extended, teachers and support staff be given access to high quality professional development opportunities and support in relation to managing behaviour and assessing need and that regular monitoring and on-going evaluation be undertaken to ensure compliance with policies and procedures to achieve greater consistency.

The PRU, in consultation with the LEA and schools, was recommended to review and develop support for pupils on long term placements and consider methods of developing outreach services to schools in collaboration with existing support services and other agencies.

Recommendations to the LEA were to ensure schools' clarity concerning the extent of support currently available to them and means of accessing it; consider ways of extending, improving and better co-ordinating support for schools in areas of BESD; continue to develop multi-agency practice at strategic and operational levels; identify and disseminate good practice in reducing exclusions and reintegrating excluded pupils; build on good relationships and increase its challenge to schools; and improve upon existing mechanisms for supporting and placing excluded pupils.

### 3. Investigation and Information Gathering: Visits to Secondary Schools

In order to inform the review, Members of the Working Group visited all six secondary schools in the Borough and interviewed headteachers, pastoral teachers and other school staff. Questions had been prepared for the visits and these, together with the answers received are set out below.

1.	<p><u>Could you outline your school's exclusions procedure?</u></p> <p>One school utilises many 1, 2 or 3 day exclusions and its procedure is supported by a paper trail and consists of governor involvement at the final warning stage and after 2 or 3 exclusions, setting homework for fixed term excluded pupils, re-admittance with parental assurances and programmes to support and re-integrate pupils following exclusion.</p> <p>Another school notifies parents of fixed term exclusions by telephone and also utilises a paper trail to record events. 1 day fixed term exclusions are rare and internal exclusions are more usual. Following 3-5 day fixed term exclusions, re-admittance requires parental involvement and an internal report and after 6 day exclusions, three governors and the Governor Disciplinary Committee become involved.</p> <p>The reintegration package is considered to be very important by one school and the highest level of report includes additional half an hour school attendance per day. Short term exclusions are not thought to result in behaviour change and parental support is an issue. Whilst a pupil is excluded a learning mentor organises work for him/her.</p> <p>One school operates behaviour management strategies for pupils at risk of exclusion which includes reports and an exit card system for 'cooling off' periods. Parents are kept fully informed and formal warnings are issued prior to most fixed term exclusions which can be of a duration of 1-8 days. After 6 days, re-admission is via the Governor Disciplinary Committee.</p> <p>One school logs behaviour profiles and pastoral staff refer this information to key stage managers or the assistant headteacher. Parents and the headteacher become involved in the exclusion process and pupils are encouraged to talk to their parents before the school contacts them and pupils are never excluded on the day of an incident.</p> <p>The full database evidence compiled by Easthampstead Park School has been cited as an example of good practice by an officer of the LEA.</p>
2.	<p><u>For what reasons do pupils tend to be excluded?</u></p> <p>Reasons for exclusions from schools include drug use, vandalism and theft of equipment (often involving the police), repeated disruptive behaviour and failure to respond, foul and abusive language and threats to members of staff, violence towards and assault of fellow pupils and one incidence of an attack on a learning support assistant.</p>

3.	<p><u>How many pupils are excluded at your school per term / year / on average?</u></p> <p>One school reports that, although short fixed term exclusions are given, only one permanent exclusion has occurred in the last school year the reason for which is thought to reflect the designated area, positive behaviour support in the local community and experienced staff. 3 or 4 permanent exclusions have occurred in the past 5 years. The present Year 11 includes five pupils from other schools, one of whom was permanently excluded from elsewhere, four of whom are 'fresh starts' and all of whom are on final warnings. The school feels that it is difficult to deal with such pupils at this late stage.</p> <p>One school has issued 41 fixed term exclusions totalling 249 days. Of its 34 exclusions, 4 are permanent.</p> <p>Two permanent exclusions have occurred at another school in the past 12 years and 4 fixed term exclusions (totalling 21 days) were given in the autumn 2004/05 term.</p> <p>An increase in the number of longer term fixed term exclusions is being experienced at one school and at the time of the visit there were 10 pupils at risk of permanent exclusion.</p> <p>Another school reports 9 permanent exclusions in the 2003/04 academic year.</p>
4.	<p><u>What preventative measures or alternatives to exclusion do you utilise (e.g. peer mediation, anger management, exclusion units)?</u>  <u>Could you comment on their relative merits or degree of success?</u>  <u>Are any of these new initiatives?</u></p> <p>All schools utilise a number of preventative measures including assistance from education welfare officers, LEA officers, social services, special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs), the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Behaviour Support and Behaviour Change teams, Connexions, RAP, individual education plans, the Pastoral Support Programme, the Anger Management initiative and learning support assistants (LSAs). The professionalism of its staff is highlighted by one school as such a measure.</p> <p>An external liaison group is in operation at one school and senior members of staff are available to intervene with problems in the classroom. Peer group mentoring (with specially trained Year 11 pupils), form prefects, internal exclusion and Year 7 'settle and sort' assistance for new entrants in need of extra help are also utilised. The EWO and the LEA's Children and Families Manager are valued by this school.</p> <p>One school makes use of a referral panel of agencies to discuss pupil provision together with reports/counselling and mentors. 15-20 pupils can be accommodated in a learning support unit (LSU) staffed by a learning mentor, SENCO and LSA for a maximum of three weeks each. Although the LSU had been in existence for two and a half years, it has only become effective two to three months before the Working Group visited the school.</p>

	<p>Another school also utilises Youthline, individual learning plans, pastoral support plans (PSPs), education psychologists and a liaison group which meets fortnightly. 35-40 children are being monitored for behavioural problems at any one time at this school and fixed term and permanently excluded pupils' behaviour is monitored twice termly by governors. Teachers expressed a view that CAMHS is under resourced and therefore appointments with pupils are very infrequent.</p> <p>A pupil inclusion unit (PIU) features at one school and is staffed by a part time teacher and full time LSA. The PIU is a fully equipped room able to accommodate four pupils and is also used to reintegrate pupils following exclusion. In addition to other measures, this school utilises in class support, 'time out' and daily report cards and detentions. The school feels that its behaviour policy together with the Consistency Management and Co-operative Discipline (CMCD) initiative and the PIU are lowering the number of disaffected pupils and the amount of time spent outside school. The school is prepared to give long fixed term exclusions to prevent permanent exclusions.</p>
5.	<p><u>Where do pupils excluded for a fixed term receive their education?</u></p> <p>One school has referred to education other than at school and feels that the LEA should provide more of this. The skills programme at the Further Education College is seen as a favourable facility for excluded pupils but lacks sufficient placements.</p> <p>Year 10 and 11 pupils are transferred to the PRU following exclusion but it has limited places for pupils up to Year 9 and therefore this facility is rarely available. It is difficult for the PRU to undertake preventative work at Year 10 and 11 and the approach of 50% of pupil time being spent in the PRU and the remaining 50% at school is not felt to be effective.</p> <p>The regime employed by the PRU has been subject of some criticism by schools and the view has been expressed more than once that the regime is too comfortable and its culture and the quality and quantity of work undertaken ill prepares pupils for re-integration into mainstream education, particularly those in Key Stage (KS) 4 who are unlikely to reintegrate. Also, the PRU recommends inappropriate pupils for re-integration into mainstream education. One school recognises that the PRU is likely to experience difficulties in handling both KS3 and KS4 pupils and suggests that these stages should be managed separately with appropriate strategies for each group.◇</p>
6.	<p><u>How often do excluded pupils end up moving from one school to the next?</u></p> <p>Difficult pupils are taken from other schools following re-integration and difficulties are experienced. Additional support from the PRU prior to reintegration is welcomed.</p>

◇ Measures to manage these stages separately have been put into practice since this report was first drafted.

	<p>One school has received two managed moves during the last 12 months although other pupils have been moved by their parents in order to give them a fresh start. Another school has received 5 pupils excluded from other schools, all of whom are now on final warnings.</p> <p>Sometimes pupils who might be excluded are voluntarily removed from schools and transfer to another school for a 'fresh start'. One school that is in receipt of such pupils indicates that it is always likely to struggle unless the admissions policy which creates this situation is changed.</p>
7.	<p><u>How effective are exclusions?</u></p> <p>Schools have expressed differing views as to the effectiveness of 1 day and short term exclusions, some feeling that they are beneficial and others that they have no positive disciplinary effect resulting in behaviour change and that parental support is an issue. Whilst exclusions are very time consuming to manage, one school considers that they result in better learning and academic results whilst another school has reservations concerning the effect that accepting pupils excluded from other schools has on achievements.</p>
8.	<p><u>Are any pupils permanently excluded without fixed term exclusion? If so, how many and where do they go?</u></p> <p>General indications from schools are that permanent exclusion for a first offence is rare and drug dealing has been cited as an example where this may happen.</p>
9.	<p><u>Do you have any arrangements for re-introducing / integrating pupils who have been excluded back into the mainstream?</u></p> <p>PIUs also used to reintegrate pupils following exclusion.</p>
10.	<p><u>What agencies / resources are available to you to support exclusions and how useful are they?</u></p> <p>Agencies and assistance available to support exclusions include CAMHS, Connexions, RAP, Behaviour Support and Behaviour Change teams, Youthline, learning support assistants, education psychologists, education welfare officers, SENCOs, LEA officers, social services, professional staff in schools and a referral panel of agencies to discuss pupil provision. Resources consist of the anger management initiative, CMCD, the Pastoral Support Programme, LSUs, PIUs and individual education plans.</p> <p>The agencies are generally considered to provide a good service although there is a need for more co-ordination. CAMHS is the exception and schools have expressed reservations regarding its lack of resources and limited capacity to assist. Two schools feel that support from social services is not robust. The support of the Behaviour Support Team is costly for schools. LSUs, PIUs and CMCD are considered to be effective and lower the number of disaffected pupils and the amount of time spent outside school. The</p>

	<p>former Children and Family Unit was beneficial but has not been replaced. One school identified a need for special support prior to permanent exclusion.</p>
11.	<p><u>What use do you make of Cooper's Hill (and other Community Centres) in relation to exclusions?</u></p> <p>No schools cited examples of using Cooper's Hill or other Community Centres in relation to exclusions.</p>
12.	<p><u>Without breaching confidentiality in relation to any individuals, are you able to comment on the type of background / domestic circumstances of excluded pupils?</u></p> <p>The nature of family circumstances has been cited by schools as a significant factor in many exclusions and home support is a feature where it has been suggested that social services might become more involved. Examples of such circumstances given are poor parenting, broken homes and parents who do not respect teachers and place a low value on education.</p>
13.	<p><u>What tends to become of excluded pupils?</u></p> <p>Year 10 and 11 pupils tend to remain in the PRU to complete their education whilst efforts are made to re-integrate younger excluded pupils into mainstream education.</p>
14.	<p><u>Are you aware of/do you make use of the document 'Promoting Positive Behaviour: Sanctions Framework' produced by Bracknell Forest Borough Council?</u></p> <p>One school expressed the view that this document is too prescriptive and inflexible and another school feels that although helpful, it is too inflexible and that exclusion cases need to be dealt with on their individual merits. Others have detected variations between the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) document concerning exclusions from schools and PRUs and the guidance prepared by the LEA.</p>
15.	<p><u>Are you aware of any measures which could be taken, or you would like to take, to improve the exclusion process? Are there any practices you consider excellent or in need of improvement?</u></p> <p>One school seeks more support for pupils at risk of exclusion and for resources to employ additional staff to settle in newcomers.</p> <p>Another school seeks increased PRU provision, a half-way house to enable pupils to re-integrate into mainstream education and an internal withdrawal unit. The latter provision is also sought by a second school to prevent many pupils reaching the point of exclusion and to enable peer group education to proceed uninterrupted. Whilst this may not necessarily reduce the number of exclusions, it would raise the educational ethos of the school.</p>

	<p>A further school welcomes an additional member of staff, not necessarily a teacher, to co-ordinate services available to assist pupils.</p> <p>One school requires a greater capacity pupil inclusion unit and most schools seek full time education welfare officers (EWOs) in place of the current arrangement where schools are supported by two part time EWOs. The placing of a greater emphasis on welfare issues instead of attendance problems by EWOs is welcomed.</p> <p>Another school expresses concern in relation to accountability and seeks evidence of the impact of exclusions.</p>
16.	<p><u>Do you think the LEA supports you enough or do you think there are areas that could be improved?</u></p> <p>One school comments that it finds the LEA to be very supportive and another that it values its EWO and the Children and Families Manager. Two schools feel that the LEA is target driven rather than support driven and seek more support from the LEA for pupils at risk. Another school has expressed concern that the LEA encourages appeals against exclusion.</p> <p>A school feels that it and another school have high exclusion rates as they receive a number of pupils who are excluded from other schools or transferred to avoid exclusion and feel that more proactive intervention from the LEA would be beneficial in this area.</p> <p>Concern is expressed as to whether legal requirements to provide full time education are met in the case of excluded pupils.</p>

General comments received from schools in addition to the above answers indicate that each school considers the welfare of pupils to be paramount and measures are adopted to accommodate pupils with innate problems. Schools adopt a responsible approach to exclusion recognising the effect it has at Years 10 and 11 on pupil achievement. Whilst schools accept the obligation to receive pupils excluded from another school, they feel that this is likely to have an adverse effect on examination results and there are concerns regarding the effect on other pupils.

The approach and systems relating to exclusions are different at schools and some are more 'hands on' than others. One school appears to operate a scoring system resulting in exclusion of non-conforming pupils whilst another has a well documented approach but is felt to exclude too easily.

Virtually all schools would welcome a unit within the school to give more sustained personal attention to the more difficult pupil away from the classroom and consequent disruption to help avoid exclusion but not replace it where necessary.

Despite some reservations, particularly with regard to CAMHS, the exclusions support agencies are seen by schools as good although there is a need for more co-ordination.



#### 4. **Investigation and Information Gathering: Information from Outside Agencies**

##### **Witness Session with the Manager of the Youth Offending Team (YOT)**

The YOT Manager explained that each local authority is obliged by statute to have a youth offending service to cater for 10-17 year olds in the criminal justice system. The service considers risk factors leading to the likelihood of youth offending, a significant one of which is education related. The YOT Manager expressed a view that the re-structuring of the Council to form the new Education, Children's Services and Libraries Department is a positive move towards linking all children's services and achieving a common approach to education and promoting social inclusion.

The YOT is a multi-agency team comprising seconded workers from the primary agencies involved, namely, the health service, education, police and probation to give a holistic service to young offenders. The education worker in the YOT focuses on those who experience difficulties at school such as behavioural problems or special educational needs. She assesses such pupils and intervenes where necessary to work with pupils and families to integrate those in the pupil referral service back into mainstream education or identify alternative provision. The YOT undertakes rigorous assessment to identify the social factors that lead to offending and works with the youth in question to target these and ensure that Court orders are strictly enforced.

With regard to school exclusions, research published by the Youth Justice Board indicates that the three highest factors leading to offending are:-

- Low attainment at school, truancy, exclusion etc;
- Peer involvement concerning criminal and anti-social behaviour, truancy and exclusion; and
- Family problems including drug abuse and anti-social behaviour.

The latter aspect leads to a 90% increase in the likelihood of offending.

The YOT works closely with the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and schools where possible although some schools are more receptive than others in this regard. A behaviour change programme has been introduced into four secondary schools in the Borough, namely, Sandhurst, Brakenhale, Garth Hill and Easthampstead Park Schools. Ranelagh has declined to take part in the initiative and Edgbarrow will be targeted in future to encourage its involvement. The initiative consists of a six week programme whereby police officers and the education worker visit schools and work with teachers to identify those pupils at risk of offending. Having worked with both pupils and teachers, the programme workers withdraw from the school at the conclusion of the programme and leave the teachers to continue their work. Under the programme two visits per academic year are made to two schools and follow up work is carried out. Role plays, conflict management and examples of alternative types of behaviour in given circumstances are included. All referrals under the programme are in need of assistance and consist of Year 10 and 11 pupils. Schools are relied on to identify groups of pupils in need and who would mix and work well in the programme environment. Temporarily excluded pupils are invited to join the programme with a view to maintaining a link with their school in the interests of continuity. In the event that participants are excluded during the course of the six week programme, they will continue taking part until its conclusion. The initiative

replaces the former anger management programme to offer a broader more positive service.

The following points emerged from Members' questions to the YOT Manager:

- Although the YOT's core work is with 10-17 year olds in the criminal justice system, it seeks to focus more on preventative work and, when invited, will visit schools to undertake such work with pupils who have been identified by their school as being at risk of offending. It is possible to identify such pupils at an early primary school stage and all involved agencies seek to tackle problems at the earliest opportunity to prevent behaviour becoming entrenched and leading to entry into the criminal justice system. The YOT Manager, who fully supports the change for children agenda, has indicated that it will be some time before the success of the associated policies and strategies can be gauged. The direction in which resources are pitched is an issue and she feels that people and resources are key to its development.
- The YOT has direct links with the Council, particularly with the Education, Children's Services and Libraries Department and also had links with education workers and Education Behaviour Support Staff in schools and with headteachers. Every new case referred to the YOT is supported by full information from the school including details of attainment and attendance etc. Not a particularly high number of YOT referrals are permanently excluded and at present 2 of the 45 current cases fall into this category and 6 are attending the PRU. Approximately one third of cases currently attending school have been previously excluded or placed out of the area. Although there are multi-factors relating to most cases referred to the YOT, including some instances of substance misuse and involvement of looked after children, the two main and closely linked causes are:
  - Poor parenting skills and support resulting in a lack of encouragement in relation to schooling, no co-operation with the school and a blurring of behavioural boundaries; and
  - Educational factors such as poor attainment and attendance.
- Although the YOT does provide support in cases where schools and parents have pursued all measures open to them to alleviate problems, many parents lack the skills and knowledge to set appropriate parameters of behaviour for their children.
- The YOT, which is funded from contributions from all partner agencies involved and is in receipt of a grant from the Youth Justice Board, lacks funds to trial new initiatives. The only opportunities for undertaking a new project would be to make a bid for additional funding to the partners. Preventive measures to youth offending and disruptive behaviour also have a financial impact owing to the significant cost of educating excluded pupils outside mainstream schools.
- 7 or 8 of the 45 cases currently assigned to the YOT are looked after children, half of whom are also in the PRU. Being looked after is a factor in offending as a high proportion of such children experience problems and issues. Although there is a link between looked after children and exclusion, the rate in Bracknell Forest is not significantly high. The percentage of excluded pupils involved with the YOT would normally be 14% but this figure was lower at the time of this witness session. The YOT seeks to work with children as soon as they become

excluded to prevent their associating with other excluded and / or offending peers on the streets and developing a bad and disengaged lifestyle. Those excluded pupils who have been given a place at an alternative school are not included in exclusion figures.

- At the time of the meeting with the YOT Manager, the YOT was dealing with 45 live cases relating to court orders in the criminal justice system referred through the courts. The proportion of youths with whom the YOT works outside this core is limited and the YOT Manager is investigating possibilities of redirecting resources to undertake greater preventative work rather than providing rehabilitation services following offending. Ideally, separate services would be available to tackle problems at each stage. In addition to the behaviour change programme, the YOT maintains contact with schools under circumstances where offenders have not been excluded. This contact allows the YOT to obtain the pupil's history and monitor his/her progress. A consent form is required for information sharing in this regard and having been advised that the pupil has offended, the school alerts the YOT if deterioration in behaviour or peer groups occurs.
- Although there is regular low level cannabis use in Bracknell Forest, drug use is not a serious problem and little hard drug use occurs. Alcohol abuse is a factor leading to exclusion and offending and is linked to the violent aspects of offending such as assaults, fights, criminal damage, nuisance and rowdy public disorder behaviour. Crime hotspots in the Borough are in the vicinity of Great Hollands and Priestwood and the YOT receives monthly police bulletins which provide crime statistics. Bracknell town centre area is generally quiet apart from some incidents mainly involving adults in the area of Enid Wood House. However, regeneration of the town centre with the addition of bars and pubs could exacerbate this in the future.
- There are instances of more academically able children misbehaving and not realising their potential. Disruptive behaviour is perceived by the public as the result of insufficient discipline. Although schools have different approaches to tackling behavioural and other pupil problems, all have a caring ethos where pupils are at the heart of matters and schools attempt to solve related problems. All six secondary schools in the Borough have cited poor parenting as a problem and there is a need for parenting skills classes. Unfortunately, those parents most in need of support are the most reluctant to attend such classes. As young people soon become parents themselves, the cycle of offending and disruptive behaviour is passed on to future generations as parenting role models and skills are lacking and an abusive manner is adopted.
- It has been suggested that cohorts of disruptive behaviour occur on a cycle of 3-4 years and that owing to its comparative small size for an LEA, exclusion figures for Bracknell Forest can be significantly swayed by a small change in exclusion numbers in any given year. The YOT Manager has advised that, following two good years, the 2003 cohort has been problematic and that exclusion figures for 2005 are expected to be high.

When asked whether there was any action she would welcome to assist with the YOT's work such as greater preventative measures, the YOT Manager responded that she was unaware of how accountable schools were to the LEA in terms of exclusion as there was a variety of different procedures across schools. Although schools possibly warranted their own policies to reflect their local communities, she welcomed a consistent and flexible approach to ensure that pupils who were moved

between schools to achieve an often beneficial change in environment received similar treatment and the same levels of tolerance at different schools. As pupils were only referred to the YOT following exclusion, Mrs Roberts felt that consideration could be given to identifying the correct level of involvement in preventative measures and welcomed the opportunity to assist in the lead up approach. In response to the view expressed by some schools that they received an insufficiently rapid response to requests for assistance with anger management problems, the YOT Manager advised that, although she would like to respond to requests for assistance from schools, she was obliged to concentrate on the statutory aspects of the service and was unable to leave court order referrals unsupervised. Unfortunately, resources were too limited to fully accommodate both facets. There was no specific doorway to introduce the YOT during the lead in to exclusion and evidence to confirm that the particular pupil was deviating towards criminal behaviour was required in circumstances where the YOT performed the role of lead agency. In the event that a court order was issued, the receiving youth would report to the YOT and usually receive hour long sessions in anger management education approximately twice per week. A representative of the YOT now attended the RAP panel and the main role of the education worker seconded to the YOT was to work on re-integration. Assessment of individual pupils was key to establishing their needs and, where necessary, alternatives or additions to mainstream academic education were recommended. These included the Accelerator Programme which provided extra curricular activities, such as the motor mechanics project, in place of lessons for pupils of 14 years plus.

### **Witness Session with Ms Tracey Tilbry, Project Manager, South East Berkshire Education Business Partnership**

Ms Tilbry explained to the Working Group the purpose complimentary and functions of the extended work experience and mentoring initiatives organised by the South East Berkshire Education Business Partnership and their link to school exclusions. The Partnership worked with the Local Education Authority and Learning and Skills Council and also provided other initiatives including the Maths Marathon, the Science Fair, the Science Circus, Junior Masterchef and interview experience. In addition to Ms Tilbry, the Partnership employed five staff offering management, project, marketing, administration and ordinary work experience support. At the time of the discussion, the ordinary work experience provision was merging with the Partnership and would become part of its extended work experience scheme.

A paper detailing the stages of the extended work experience and mentoring processes is attached at Annexe 8.

#### Extended Work Experience Scheme

The bulk of Ms Tilbry's work was concentrated on the extended work experience scheme. The scheme sought to tackle low self esteem and assist pupils who were disillusioned and possibly approaching exclusion. It was felt to be effective in preventing exclusion as it removed pupils from potential conflict situations at school for periods of time. Candidates selected to take part in the scheme were generally those who were under achieving and lacked interest in the curriculum. Such pupils required motivation which they were not receiving at school and the scheme sought to provide this with a view to encouraging an improvement in pupil behaviour, the adoption of a more mature attitude and self belief which would reap benefits for their future education. It was necessary for pupils to wish to take part in the scheme and they were not encouraged to do so against their wishes. Identifying the best placement for a pupil was crucial to the success of the scheme and some were

complimentary to academic courses such as sports placements at Wellington College to assist with leisure, tourism and physical education studies.

The scheme process consisted of Ms Tilbry contacting schools to identify suitable Year 11 pupils to take part in the scheme, interviewing those pupils to confirm their suitability and preparing them for the programme, matching pupils to appropriate employers and visiting the employer to discuss issues and pupil placement. Pupils were then interviewed by their potential employer and were visited and monitored throughout the process by Ms Tilbry who passed feedback to their schools. The interview was of an informal nature and offered pupils beneficial interview experience and a sense of achievement. Pupils were awarded with a certificate on completion of the scheme in recognition of their attainment which enhanced their curriculum vitae and made them more employable. They also received encouragement and praise for their efforts from schools.

There were occasions when the scheme was unsuccessful where pupils had not 'gelled' with employers or where pupils were identified as unsuitable when interviewed by Ms Tilbry. Unsuitability generally consisted of more extreme problems such as current incidents of violence, Youth Offending Team intervention and the need for extended family support. Pupils who no longer exhibited such problems and whose offences were 'spent' would not be discounted from the scheme.

The next scheme session, featuring 30 placements, was commencing on 12 September 2005 and pupils would spend the first week on work experience before returning to school for a full week and then spending one or two days per week with employers until December. Pupils were monitored and employers were consulted throughout the process and the possibility of extending the work experience into the January term was possible on the reduced basis of one day's work experience per week to avoid too much loss of teaching. Although the programme related to Year 11 pupils, preparation for selection and placement commenced in the latter part of Year 10. All existing GCSE subjects were pursued by pupils involved in the scheme and any who were struggling academically would only receive placements of one day per week rather than two days to maximise their time in school. The amount of time spent on extended work experience was also reduced for those attending Bracknell and Wokingham College one or two mornings per week to undertake courses such as the Accelerator Scheme. The programme related to The Holt School in Wokingham and Charters School in Windsor and Maidenhead in addition to all of the six secondary schools in Bracknell Forest.

Ms Tilbry utilised a database of ordinary work experience for Year 10 pupils and approached involved companies concerning the extended scheme as many preferred a single longer term pupil placement to receiving numerous pupils each for weekly placements. The scheme represented a test of workability skills and involved companies required assurance that pupils possessed these and the correct attitude for work experience. The types of companies with which placements were made included engineering firms, the Council, shops, builders, landscape gardeners, nurseries, care homes and some own family firm placements were made. Efforts were made to establish which type of work experience would be of interest and motivation to pupils and corresponding placements were made although the first choice was not always possible. Many pupils went onto take up apprenticeships following the scheme whilst others undertook further education having realised that previous attitudes and behaviour displayed at school were not conducive to future career prospects. Although apprenticeships involved working at a menial level, they provided valuable experience of a working environment, team working and interaction with adults. Of the 24 pupils partaking in the previous year's scheme, 18 finished the

course all of whom remained with their placement company or transferred to the Sixth Form or college of further education, including one Sixth Form pupil who had previously been a school refuser. The behaviour and attitude of another pupil with particular problems had been transformed at school as a result of completing the programme and he continued to undertake paid work with the company where he received his work experience. Removing pupils from schools to attend the programme was often more effective than their remaining under difficult circumstances and being disciplined.

Limited finance, lack of staff resources and insufficient employers hampered expansion of the scheme. Its funding, which was currently from the European Social Fund, would discontinue in December 2006 and therefore alternative funding sources were being sought. Similar schemes operated in central and west Berkshire which were also funded by the European Social Fund. There were many more pupils who would benefit from involvement in the scheme and Ms Tilbry welcomed increased funding, further resources and more companies to work with. Leaflets promoting the scheme were circulated to employers in the hope of recruiting more firms to the scheme. Although Ms Tilbry did not work with permanently excluded pupils and was not trained to do so, many pupils who participated in the scheme had received fixed term exclusions. Of the cohort of 30 joining the programme in September 2005, one pupil from The Holt School and approximately 50% of those from Easthampstead Park School had received 1 week to 10 day exclusions but no pupils from Ranelagh School had been excluded. By contrast, the scheme operating in central Berkshire was linked to its PRU and therefore catered for permanently excluded pupils. Ms Tilbry felt that the scheme would be beneficial to excluded pupils and welcomed the opportunity to develop links with the PRU in Bracknell Forest to support excluded pupils should the necessary funding, resources and training be made available to provide the extra care required to assist them. In this event, further preparation would be required and employers would be briefed as to the type of pupil they were receiving and would have the opportunity to refuse any pupil they considered to be unsuitable. The PRU currently operated a scheme with Bracknell and Wokingham College to offer some work experience to pupils. Although the scheme was directed at pupils, parental input into the arrangements was possible if parents wished to become involved. However, there were occasions when parents were more disaffected than their children.

With regard to looked after children, the scheme had worked with one looked after child with a long term placement during the past year. Another looked after child taking part in the scheme had been moved to another and distant placement during the programme without the Partnership being notified and Ms Tilbry emphasised the need for an effective information flow between schools, social services and the health service in order to provide the Partnership with such necessary information. It was hoped that implementation of the Children's Act would assist with adopting a more joined up approach. Four of the 30 pupils commencing the programme in September 2005 were looked after.

### Mentoring Scheme

The mentoring scheme process followed a similar format to that of the extended work experience programme and involved companies including 3M, Fujitsu, Excel and HSBC Bank and some smaller local firms. The mentoring provided work related learning including preparation of a curriculum vitae, basic presentation and organisational skills and conducting business telephone calls. A new cohort would be commencing in October 2005 and pupils, usually in Year 10, would attend for one day per week until the following July. Existing mentoring groups in schools were utilised

and at the completion of the work of such groups, schools identified those in need of the scheme. Those selected to participate tended to be of an academic level slightly below the best achievers.

Reference was made to a two year mentoring programme facilitated by Excel which consisted of a garden makeover project completed at Dennis Pilcher House, a home for the elderly in the Borough, as the community section of the Bracknell in Bloom initiative. 15 pupils commenced the project and all 9 of those who completed it had been disaffected with various problems and resumed their studying after, including 1 who attended agricultural college. The project required those involved to liaise with the residents to ascertain their wishes for the garden and to plan, fund and carry out the makeover. After a break, Excel was now seeking to undertake a further mentoring project commencing after Christmas and would contact schools when a project had been identified. Business skills mentoring at 3M would commence in October. Ms Tilbry accompanied pupils to mentoring sessions at 3M and Excel which normally consisted of one session per 14 days. Two mentoring schemes were generally in operation at a given time.

Peer mentoring was a further project being undertaken by Ms Tilbry and involved training Year 12 pupils to mentor Year 8 pupils as the latter was the stage when disaffection and related problems generally commenced. The subject of the mentoring was to be decided and could include bullying, homework organisation etc and the process was a modification of that operated by mentoring companies. Peer mentoring had been successful in schools as pupils were more amenable to responding to peers than teachers and mentoring was felt to help prevent exclusion. An example of the success of mentoring was cited and involved a pupil whose behaviour and life had improved considerably following mentoring at a local electrical engineering firm. The pupil had successfully re-sat an examination and was undertaking an apprenticeship with day release studying following mentoring.

## **5. Practice in Other Authorities**

### **1. Feedback from the Visit to a Secondary School in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead**

The visit to the secondary school, which specialised in sport and had an ethos of teamwork, had addressed both performance/transfer and exclusion issues. The school had excluded only one pupil during the past three years and undertook much link work with primary feeder schools in order to prepare pupils for transfer and ensure that the process was seamless. It participated in the buddy schools scheme, a national initiative that consisted of links between primary and secondary schools. The joining cost of the scheme was £5k and non-participation was thought to disadvantage pupils at secondary transfer. The PRU serving the school separately catered for Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils.

The school also participated in a Cluster 'Behaviour in Partnership Project' whereby cluster group meetings were held with its five Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead maintained primary feeder schools and one teacher was released for a morning to visit each feeder school. A transfer support teacher from the school visited pupils in primary feeder schools from Year 4/5 onwards to identify at an early stage behavioural problems that were likely to impact at or after transfer. Where behavioural problems were known to exist, these visits took place as early as Year 4. The visits enabled primary pupils to identify with a future secondary teacher who they met over the course of the two years preceding transfer and this eased the transfer process for them. In addition, the visits set pupils' expectations of secondary school enabling them to adapt more easily on transfer. Although Bracknell Forest feeder schools did not form part of this project, they were visited by transfer support teachers from the school and the headteacher of one Bracknell Forest junior school was a member of the committee which managed the scheme and therefore familiar with it. However, such visits could interfere with the primary schools' agenda and timetables. Although Year 6 pupils of this junior school had visited the secondary school in previous years in preparation for transfer, such visits had taken place at Year 5 during the last year. The secondary school's clear admission policy, strong rules and expectation that pupils would conform to rules were thought to maintain a low level of exclusion. Although the School operated a policy of receiving excluded pupils from other schools at the same rate at which it excluded its own pupils, this was not a problem owing to its low exclusion levels. The school was known for its high quality library and 6<sup>th</sup> Form and, although many pupils from within its designated area attended private schools, a number joined the school at 6<sup>th</sup> Form level. Although the school's Parent Teacher Association undertook limited fundraising, it was fully subscribed with a large 6<sup>th</sup> Form and therefore enjoyed a healthy budgetary position as schools received threefold funding for 6<sup>th</sup> Form pupils compared with other pupils.

Although the school previously had three Bracknell Forest feeder schools, it was now recruiting more widely and received pupils from a fourth school in addition. Members felt that the Cluster scheme gave the school an opportunity to select and actively recruit future pupils at an early stage on the basis of their behaviour enabling it to be fully subscribed at the expense of some secondary schools in Bracknell Forest. The school's waiting list included pupils from other designated areas and it continued to recruit pupils up to Year 8 where vacancies existed. It was suggested that the Bracknell Forest secondary schools should adopt a similar policy of early contact and interaction with feeder primaries.



During the past three years, Year 6 teachers had visited a mixed ability cross section of their former pupils six months following transfer to the school in order to moderate and monitor their work and performance. Last year, for the first time, no performance dip was indicated and the close transfer liaison was thought to be the reason.

Weekly training sessions involving relevant staff were held at the school in relation to building pupils' self esteem. Teaching assistants provided support for Years 7 and 8 and strategies relating to different learning styles, behaviour, anger management and social issues were cascaded through the school. Maintaining a constant relationship with the same pupils assisted staff to identify problems as they arose. A Behaviour Partnership Co-ordinator gave good practice sessions every half term and saw pupils with behavioural problems every two weeks. Organiser cards featuring vote and traffic light systems to indicate a pupil's level of academic understanding were utilised.

Class teachers were authorised to utilise their own sanctions to address misbehaviour in lessons in line with issued guidance. Heads of year offered support in relation to organising misbehaving pupils to receive detention with another teacher.

The process associated with misbehaviour involved use of a pastoral information sheet which was passed to the pupil's tutor, the involvement of the head of year with detention, of half hour or full hour duration, followed by referral to the deputy headteacher. The head of year / deputy headteacher could have a pupil for a half or full day without breaks as a form of internal suspension. The head or other teachers and parents became involved with fixed term exclusions and governor involvement occurred when these were of 2-3 days or more. Occasionally pupils were sent home at lunchtime and required to complete allocated work.

## **2. London Borough of Brent Local Education Authority (LEA) - Behaviour Improvement Programme and Witness Session with the Head of the Pupil Referral Service**

One reason for the visit to Brent was to discover more regarding the exclusion techniques it employed as part of the Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP). At the time of the visit to Brent, it was one of the 34 LEAs piloting Phase 1 of the BIP and had a target to provide first day cover for all excluded pupils in the programme. All schools participating in the programme in Brent faced challenges in managing behaviour, attendance and exclusion.

### Exclusion Processes in Brent

For exclusions of 1 to 3 days, the schools worked with pupils on site utilising resources provided for this purpose through the BIP. Those excluded for 3 to 14 days were referred to alternative provision organised in partnership with the Youth Service and pupils excluded for more than 14 days were referred to the Pupil Referral Service.

There were two sites on Youth Service premises to serve the north and south of the Borough, respectively. Upon exclusion, the excluding school would immediately contact the appropriate Youth Service site to book a place, provide background information relating to the pupil, work for the pupil to complete and someone to escort the pupil to the site on their first day of attendance. The Youth Service workers not only worked with pupils on the work packages provided by the school but also on specialist topics such as anger management and drugs awareness. Where

necessary, the Youth Service engaged appropriate speakers to meet pupils' needs. In addition to the youth workers, there was also a tutor on site to support pupils with the curriculum.

At the completion of the exclusion, youth workers completed a 'return to school' form which flagged up issues that pupil and teachers could continue to address on the pupil's return to school. Youth workers were also building on the practice of attending school meetings with pupil, teachers and parents to provide some ongoing support following the pupil's return to school.

### Outcomes of the Project

At the time of the visit, both the Youth Service and LEA were very encouraged by the success of the programme and were finding that youth workers possessed specific skills in managing and supporting young people whose behaviour was poor. The dynamics between young people and youth workers were different from those between young people and teachers. The positive results of the programme included a reduction in the number of pupils re-offending and very positive responses from pupils concerning the Youth Service provision and the personal support they received there.

### Interview with the Head of the Pupil Referral Service, Brent

The Head of the Pupil Referral Service indicated that Brent has 14 secondary schools, 65 primary schools and a total school population of 40,000 pupils. The area has a diverse multi-cultural population with a significant amount of ethnic inhabitants and high levels of mobility. Reasons for excluding pupils include physical assault, threat of violence, possession of a weapon, theft, possession / use of drugs and sexual harassment. Modification of exclusion guidelines for headteachers has given them increased scope in relation to exclusions. Most exclusions take place in Years 10 and 11 and the number of exclusions peaked in 1995/96, followed by a down turn in successive years which levelled off in 2001/02 and has since climbed again.

A new KS3 PRU was provided in 2002 to cater for 25 pupils and has been virtually oversubscribed. Excluded pupils often spend half term in the PRU and each school in Brent has been required to take three pupils who have been previously excluded. There was a sense of community and co-operative atmosphere between schools. Every school has a teacher one day per week from the PRU for support and meetings are held at three weekly intervals between LEA officers, an exclusions officer, two secondary headteachers and one primary headteacher. The KS4 PRU had a capacity of 50 and catered for 25 Year 10 and 25 Year 11 pupils. Permanently excluded KS4 pupils were not re-integrated in to mainstream education as the PRU curriculum differed from that taught in schools. These pupils were successful in their GCSE attainment and although KS4 pupils were taught science in the KS3 science laboratory, there was no interaction between the two stages. Whilst school uniform was not worn in the PRU, there was a dress code and expectation of good behaviour. A related KS4 vocationally based project was operated at the local college of further education to offer 20 pupils experience in the fields of motor mechanics, building, leisure, tourism, health and social care. At the time of the interview, there were 6 or 7 pupils in the KS2 PRU which had a capacity of 8.

There were few exclusions in KS 1 and 2 where care was different from the later key stages. Although much work was undertaken in respect of secondary transfer, there were no transfer units geared to Year 7 and no particular secondary relationship with feeder primary schools. Exclusion levels were lower in the primary phase than the

secondary phase and although four of the fourteen secondary schools in Brent had more permanent exclusions than the remaining ten, the latter often utilised more fixed term exclusions. All secondary schools had at least one learning mentor who was linked by a lead mentor for the LEA to ensure consistency and six secondary schools, including the four with the highest levels of permanent exclusions, had learning support units to offer short term intervention without exclusion, for which additional funding was provided. These four secondary schools were part of the BIP and any of their pupils issued with a fixed term exclusion attended one of the two Youth Service provisions, which accommodated ten pupils each. Parents were generally thought to favour this approach as it enabled pupils to be occupied and follow the regular school programme during exclusion. All schools in Brent sought a fixed term exclusion centre and it was proposed to provide more of these to meet demand.

Support in respect of inclusion included central support from Brent LEA for various projects, an education welfare officer funded by the BIP to undertake rapid response work in the case of absences from school, a Behaviour Support Team and proposals to establish a new primary Behaviour Support Team. A small vulnerable schools fund was being utilised to finance 50% of the time of a learning support assistant for a period of six weeks to support inclusion. This initiative could avoid the need to statement pupils and would cater for 25-30 children providing a quick response within a week of problems being manifested. More teacher training in respect of classroom management was being provided and strategies for working with pupils with behavioural problems were being developed.

Although the process was consistent in relation to exclusions associated with drugs and weapons, pastoral support plans in Brent differed and the weight attached to them varied between schools. Parents were advised of disciplinary action and exclusion and meetings were held on a three weekly basis to consider the legal requirement to provide full time education by day 16 of an exclusion. Relevant forms were completed on-line at the point of exclusion.

### **3. Secondary School, Wandsworth – Visit and Witness Session with Headteacher**

The school in question is a visual arts specialist college with a sixth form which places pupil achievement and development at its heart. In addition to creativity, high ambition and social responsibility are important values to the school and it promotes tolerance and appreciation of difference in reflection of its multi-cultural and multi-lingual nature. The school utilises LEA and Department for Education and Skills guidance in relation to exclusions and has a policy of permanently excluding in instances of possession / use of weapons and violence to staff and other pupils. However, such instances are rare and the two related permanent exclusions made during the year preceding the visit were the first for some time.

The exclusion process at the school includes a learning support centre, an umbrella pupil support centre and weekly panel meetings, attended by representatives of all relevant agencies, to which any staff member can refer pupils at risk of exclusion. Although the school felt that changes in associated personnel occurred too frequently, it acknowledged that joint working with CAMHS and the YOT was as successful as can be expected. A holistic approach is adopted towards referred pupils taking their attendance, homework and other factors in to consideration. The number of fixed term exclusions had been reduced by use of the internal referral system and there were approximately ten pupils in the referral unit at the time of the visit. Supervised community service, such as litter picking, was undertaken after

school on Fridays or for an afternoon in primary schools as a form of discipline where pupils' actions have damaged the environment or they had otherwise misbehaved.

The school was involved in the Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP) and 50% of its pupils with a fixed term exclusion were referred to an exclusion centre in an annexe of another school specialising in improving behaviour from the first day of their exclusion. The exclusion centre admitted pupils up to a maximum period of 15 days with up to 3 days of tutorials and regular school rules but a stricter code of conduct applied. There were a large number of Year 6 pupils in need of a statement of educational needs, many of whom had not attended school during Year 6.

## 6. Findings and Observations

- (i) Although there is greater consistency amongst schools in their approach to permanent exclusions, there is no overall consistency in the handling of fixed term exclusions and more uniform application of the Department for Education and Skills' pupil support management guidance entitled 'Improving Behaviour and Attendance: Guidance on Exclusions and Pupil Referral Units' (reference DfES/0087/2003) would be beneficial.
- (ii) Some schools, particularly primary schools, view exclusion as a failing on their part to solve pupils' problems. All schools welcome more measures to prevent exclusion, such as more education welfare or other support for pupils at risk, internal withdrawal units and pupil inclusion units within schools.
- (iii) Early intervention to address behavioural problems which could lead to exclusion is seen as the key to success, particularly at Key Stage 2, as demonstrated by some schools.
- (iv) A special pupil inclusion programme and/or unit located in each school to serve as a 'half way house' between school and the pupil referral unit to prevent exclusion and to re-integrate excluded pupils into mainstream education is welcomed.
- (v) The separation of Key Stage 3 from Key Stage 4 pupils in pupil referral units is considered beneficial to the educational needs of Key Stage 3 pupils as it increases the likelihood of their return to mainstream education. This separation to meet Key Stage 3 educational needs is now being achieved in Bracknell Forest through a focused outreach service with secondary schools as part of the Pupil Referral Service. (Item 6 of the agenda for the meeting of the Executive held on 20 December 2005 refers.)
- (vi) Concern has been expressed as to whether legal requirements to provide full time education for excluded pupils are being met.
- (vii) Preparation and follow up work in relation to primary to secondary transfer is considered to reduce exclusions as it eases the process for pupils assisting them to settle in to secondary school.
- (viii) Peer mediation in schools is seen as successful as pupils are able to understand the problems being experienced by their younger peers and offer assistance. It is also a beneficial development experience for those offering mentoring provided that they are appropriately trained.

## 7. Recommendations

- (a) A Key Stage 2 initiative to identify pupils displaying signs of becoming at risk of exclusion in the future and to offer focused support to such pupils be adopted.
- (b) Separate units for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils be provided in pupil referral units to benefit the educational needs of Key Stage 3 pupils and meet the objective of returning them to mainstream education.\*
- (c) A pupil inclusion programme and/or unit be located in each school to reduce the likelihood of permanent exclusion and to re-integrate excluded pupils into mainstream education.
- (d) An effective protocol between schools and the local authority be drawn up to formalise the process of all schools receiving pupils excluded from other schools.\*
- (e) A feasibility study be established to consider a special fixed term exclusions unit to cater for the educational needs of pupils with fixed term exclusions across the Borough to enable pupils to continue to be taught the curriculum in a safe and supportive low pupil : teacher ratio group offering a fresh environment from their school.
- (f) The concept of mentors be extended to enable appropriately trained pupils to visit their primary schools to provide mentoring for Years 5 and 6.

\* Some progress has been made in these areas since the commencement of this review.

## 8. Acknowledgements

The Working Group members, Councillors Mrs Gill Birch, Mrs Maureen Beadsley, Mrs Jacqui Ryder and Cliff Thompson together with Mr Gordon Anderson and Mr Orrie Dempsey would like to express their thanks to the following people for their co-operation and time. All those who have participated in the review have been thanked for their contribution and provided with a copy of this report. The Working Group note that, as a length of time has elapsed since the commencement of this review, a number of recommended measures may have been wholly or partly implemented.

Teachers and pupils at the following schools:

Birch Hill Primary School, Bracknell Forest  
Fox Hill Primary School, Bracknell Forest  
New Scotland Hill Primary School, Bracknell Forest  
St Michael's CE Primary School, Bracknell Forest  
Warfield CE Primary School, Bracknell Forest  
Wildridings Primary School, Bracknell Forest

Brakenhale School, Bracknell Forest  
Charters School, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead  
Chestnut Grove School, Wandsworth  
Easthampstead Park School, Bracknell Forest  
Edgbarrow School, Bracknell Forest  
Garth Hill College, Bracknell Forest  
Ranelagh School, Bracknell Forest  
Sandhurst School, Bracknell Forest

Adastron House  
College Hall Pupil Referral Unit

Local Education Authority, London Borough of Brent

Pete Hrekow, Education and Management Consultant

The following officers from Bracknell Forest Borough Council and outside agencies:

Andrea Carr	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Jan Haunton	Overview and Scrutiny Manager
Tony Eccleston	Director of Education, Children's Services and Libraries
Martin Gocke	Assistant Director of Education, Children's Services and Libraries (Children, Young People and Families)
Alex Walters	Assistant Director of Education, Children's Services and Libraries (Children Services)
Gloria King	Children and Families Manager, Education, Children's Services and Libraries
Ian Boswell	Safer Communities Manager, Social Services and Housing
Cindy Bateman	Early Intervention Co-ordinator
Karen Roberts	YOT Manager
Tracey Tilbry	Project Manager, South East Berkshire Education Business Partnership

## 9. Glossary of Terms

BESD	Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties
BST	Behaviour Support Team
BIP	Behaviour Improvement Programme
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CMCD	Consistency Management and Co-operative Discipline
DAT	Drug / Alcohol Action Team
DfES	Department of Education and Skills
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
FAST	Family and Adolescent Support Team
GP	General Practitioner
IEP	Individual Education Plan
KS	Key Stage
LEA	Local Education Authority
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
LSU	Learning Support Unit
NHS	National Health Service
PIU	Pupil Inclusion Unit
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PSP	Pastoral Support Plan
RAP	Reintegration and Attendance Panel
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
YOT	Youth Offending Team



## 10. Breakdown of Hours Spent Undertaking this Review

Working Group Meeting	9 August 2004	Scoping & presentation
Working Group Meeting	15 September 2004	6.00 pm
Working Group Meeting	29 September 2004	5.30pm (Qs to Martin & Gloria)
Working Group Meeting	8 November 2004	Early Interventions
Lead Member Meeting	10 January 2005	1 hour
Working Group Meeting	11 January 2005	1 hour 40 minutes
Lead Member Meeting	1 February 2005	1 hour
Lead Member Meeting	8 February 2005	30 minutes
Working Group Meeting	10 February 2005	1 hour 50 minutes
Working Group Meeting	20 April 2005	1 hour 45 minutes
Working Group Meeting	9 May 2005	1 hour 30 minutes
Working Group Meeting	30 August 2005	1 hour 50 minutes
Lead Member Meeting	5 September 2005	1 hour
Lead Member Meeting	7 September 2005	1 hour
Lead Member Meeting	13 September 2005	1 hour
Lead Member Meeting	10 October 2005	1 hour
Lead Member Meeting	25 October 2005	1 hour
Lead Member Meeting	9 November 2005	30 minutes
Working Group Meeting	13 January 2006	1 hour
Working Group Meeting	6 February 2006	1 hour 30 minutes
Lead Member Meeting	28 Lead Member	1 hour
Working Group Meeting	6 March 2006	1 hour 35 minutes

Visit to Brakenhale School	6 December 2004	2 hours
Visit to Edgbarrow School	24 November 2004	2 hours
Visit to Easthampstead School	7 December 2004	2 hours
Visit to Garth Hill School	8 December 2004	2 hours
Visit to Ranelagh School	29 November 2004	2 hours
Visit to Sandhurst School	26 November 2004	2 hours
Visit to College Hall PRU	14 March 2005	2 hours
Visit to Charters School	21 September 2005	2 hours
Visit to Adastron House PRU	16 May 2005	2 hours
Visit to Brent LEA	20 September 2005	4 hours
Visit to Chestnut Grove School	26 September 2005	4 hours

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