

## **NOTICE OF MEETING**

**Overview and Scrutiny Commission  
Thursday 24 November 2011, 7.30 pm  
Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House, Bracknell**

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

Councillor Leake (Chairman), Councillor Angell (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Mrs Angell, Mrs Birch, Ms Brown, Finnie, Harrison, Heydon, McLean, Turrell, Virgo and Ms Whitbread

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

Mr D Moss and One Vacancy

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

Ms S Cauchi and One Vacancy

#### **Children's Social Care Representative** (non-voting)

Ms C Mitchell

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

Councillors Allen, Baily, Kensall, Ms Miller, Mrs Temperton and Worrall

#### **Executive Members Invited:**

Councillor Mrs Ballin

ALISON SANDERS  
Director of Corporate Services

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Published: 14 November 2011



**Overview and Scrutiny Commission**  
**Thursday 24 November 2011, 7.30 pm**  
**Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House,**  
**Bracknell**

**AGENDA**

Page No

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

To receive apologies for absence and to note the attendance of any substitute members.

2. **Minutes and Matters Arising**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission held on 15 and 21 September 2011.

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

Members are asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interests and the nature of that interest, including the existence and nature of the party whip, in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

4. **Urgent Items of Business**

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

**Holding the Executive to Account**

5. **Review of Medium Term Objectives**

To consider the response by the Executive to the letter from the Commission's Working Group resulting from the review of the proposed new Medium Term Objectives.

13 - 20

6. **Review of Highway Maintenance**

To consider the response by the Executive to the interim report by a Working Group of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, resulting from the review of Highway Maintenance.

21 - 28

7. **Economic and Skills Development Partnership**

To receive a presentation on the work of the Economic and Skills Development Partnership.

8. **Executive Forward Plan**

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

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## **Overview and Policy Development**

### **9. Working Groups Update**

To note the progress of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's Working Groups on: Neighbourhood Engagement; the new Performance Management Framework; ICT Strategy; Plans for Sustaining Economic Prosperity; and Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Strategy).

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### **10. Updates from Panel Chairmen**

To receive verbal updates from Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairmen on each panel's progress against the work programme, drawing attention to any new major issues or changes needed to the programme.

The next planned meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission will be on 26 January 2012.

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION**  
**15 SEPTEMBER 2011**  
**7.30 - 9.20 PM**

**Present:**

Councillors Leake (Chairman), Angell (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Angell, Baily (Substitute), Ms Brown, Finnie, Harrison, Heydon, Turrell and Virgo

Ms S Cauchi, Parent Governor Representative

**Executive Member:**

Councillor McCracken

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Mrs Birch, McLean and Ms Whitbread  
Mr D Moss, Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth  
Mrs C Mitchell, Children's Social Care representative

**In Attendance:**

Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services  
Alan Nash, Borough Treasurer  
Victor Nicholls, Assistant Chief Executive  
Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview and Scrutiny  
Sue Hills, Democratic Services

**16. Substitute Members**

The Committee noted the attendance of the following Substitute Member:

Councillor Baily for Councillor McLean

**17. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings of the Commission held on 9 June 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman thanked the Vice Chairman for chairing the first meeting of the Commission in his absence.

Matters arising, not already on the agenda:-

Minute 10, Executive Forward Plan, 1025655 Economic Development Strategy – The Working Group had met and raised a number of points with the Executive Member and Assistant Chief Executive.

Minute 11, Performance Monitoring Reports – the details of the Council's Community Safety Manager taking responsibility for managing some staff of Thames Valley Police had been sent to all Commission members.

Minute 13, Work Programme 2011/2012 – the Working Group on neighbourhood engagement had met and were constructing a letter to send with the Working Group's views.

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

There were no declarations.

**19. Urgent Items of Business**

Since the publication of the agenda a Call In had been received in relation to the implementation of the older persons accommodation and support services strategy. A meeting of the Commission had been called to consider the Call In at 6.00pm on Wednesday 21 September 2011 in the Function Room. The agenda would be published on 16 September.

The Chairman asked members to let Democratic Services or the Overview and Scrutiny team know whether they were able to attend.

He advised the Commission that he was making attempts to resolve the issues and, if resolved, the meeting may not need to proceed.

**20. Responses to Overview & Scrutiny Report: Addendum to the report relating to the review of the Bracknell Healthspace**

The Commission received the report of the Assistant Chief Executive on responses to the addendum to the report of the Bracknell Healthspace. The recommendations contained within the report to the Executive had been agreed on 6 September.

The Commission considered and noted the responses of the Executive and NHS Berkshire to the addendum report and referred them to the Health O&S Panel for detailed consideration.

**21. Executive Forward Plan**

The Commission noted the Forward Plan relating to corporate issues. The following issues were raised:-

1029214 – Contract award for cleaning services at offices, public buildings and schools.

The Chairman questioned why this and other entries stated 'not applicable' for principal groups to be consulted. In this particular case the Director of Corporate Services was aware that wide consultation had taken place with interested parties.

The Director would remind officers to include fuller details on consultees in future.

1029821 – Policy on Directed Surveillance and use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS)

The Director of Corporate Services confirmed that the Council did not use CHIS's but used Direct Surveillance to test underage sales of alcohol and cigarettes. The Director would let members know how many times covert surveillance had been used in the last 12 months.

The Commission wished to be consulted prior to the Executive taking a decision.

**22. Performance Monitoring Reports**

The Commission considered and noted the Performance Monitoring Reports for the first quarter, April to June 2011, for the Chief Executive's Office and the Corporate Services Department.

Chief Executive's Department

The Assistant Chief Executive had nothing to add to the report.

In response to questions:-

- Community Safety – the figures related to reported crime.
- Progress against service plan – resource issues had delayed some work on the website. The Commission noted that a vacancy had remained unfilled since July.
- The new PMR format would commence at quarter 2.

Corporate Services

The Director of Corporate Services particularly drew members' attention to :-

- Progress on the Town Centre, including the compulsory purchase orders.
- Work with the Royal Military Academy to support service leavers resettling in the community.
- The development of the neighbourhood engagement review options.
- Following development in ICT over the past 12 months, the Thin Client desk top strategy would be taken back to the Executive with a request to redirect funds to a more traditional approach.
- The new PMR format would commence at quarter 2.

In response to questions:-

- The Chairman raised a question on the departmental sickness absence. The Director would check the end of year predicted figures as she did not think that those quoted were correct. This was only a prediction after Quarter 1. 5.15 days per annum per employee was below the Bracknell Forest Council level of 5.22 days, the all sector employers' in the South East level of 7.7 days and the Local Government employers' in the South East level of 10.3 days.
- Attempts had been made to find alternative accommodation for those the subject of a CPO and compensation was paid as quickly as possible.
- In response to a question on the effect of online shopping on the Town Centre, the Assistant Chief Executive said it was the Council's objective to provide a fantastic shopping centre relevant to the size of the local area and there was plenty about which to be optimistic.

### 23. **Corporate Performance Overview Report**

The Commission received and noted the Chief Executive's Corporate Performance Overview Report (CPOR) for the first quarter, April to June 2011.

Arising in questions:-

- The Assistant Chief Executive confirmed the cost effectiveness of Edgbarrow Sports Centre.
- The increase in the numbers of children requiring high cost support packages could, in part, be attributable to domestic abuse, better reporting and good monitoring systems. Officers were trying to manage the overspend by achieving savings elsewhere.
- New benefits claims were 29% more than in the previous quarter, reflecting the economic conditions prevailing nationally. However those claiming Jobseekers Allowance was less than the national average. Statistics were kept on jobs lost within the borough. Information was on the economic development webpage and members could contact the Assistant Chief Executive for any additional information.
- Support had been discontinued for single on-shore wind turbines as they were thought to be less cost effective than some other measures. The new Waitrose store in Bracknell incorporated a Biomass plant.

### 24. **Budget Scrutiny**

The Council was facing some difficult budgetary years and the Chairman indicated that the scrutiny of proposals should not just be a rubber-stamping exercise but wherever possible should endeavour to protect front line services to residents.

The Borough Treasurer advised that there was an approximate £6million funding gap next year. The Council would endeavour to maximise efficiency savings but a gap of this size would however lead to staffing cuts.

The budget proposals would be published on 5 December and a six week consultation period would commence on 14 December. The Borough Treasurer suggested the Commission and Panels may wish to look at budgets at a strategic level in addition to the operational details of frontline service levels. The Chairman encouraged Panels to consider the impact of inflation when scrutinising the budget proposals.

### 25. **Review of Highway Maintenance - Interim Report**

The Commission noted that, following agreement by email, the interim report of the review of Highway Maintenance had been finalised and sent to the Executive Member on 20 July. The response of the Executive was awaited.

### 26. **Overview & Scrutiny Public Participation Scheme**

Richard Beaumont presented the report of the Assistant Chief Executive seeking the Commission's agreement to the draft Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny before its consideration by the Governance and Audit Committee.

The Commission considered whether to reduce the deadline for requests to speak to two days but ultimately agreed the three days recommended in the report.

Although the operational arrangements had not yet been worked out, no difficulties were anticipated. Members discussed whether questions should be limited to items on the agenda or any matter relating to the business of that Panel/Commission.

Arising from questions:-

- Panel Chairmen already had the discretion to accept questions from the public.
- The suggestion of a short 'Question Time' on the agenda.

The Commission agreed that

- In number 1 of matters falling outside the scheme 'Individual's' should be deleted and 'Personal' added.
- The fifth bullet of number 6 should be amended. The restriction should not be to individual meeting agendas, only to the remit of the Commission or Panel concerned.
- In number 6 of the same section, 'and has been considered' should be added to the third bullet point.
- The scheme should be reviewed in due course.

The Commission

- (i) endorsed the scheme as set out in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (ii) noted that further proposals may be brought forward in due course, in the light of practical experience, to extend the public participation arrangements, and to expand the scheme through the use of social media.

## 27. **Overview & Scrutiny Bi-Annual Progress Report**

The Commission noted the bi-annual progress report of the Assistant Chief Executive for the period March to August 2011, which also included significant national and local developments in Overview and Scrutiny.

Councillor Virgo updated the Commission on the progress with the Bracknell Healthspace:-

- the Section 106 negotiations had been progressed;
- a new car park management plan and layout was awaited;
- the Strategic Health Authority now had to agree the Healthspace before which it had to agree the business plan and write to interested parties to seek their approval.

## 28. **Work Programme 2011/2012**

Richard Beaumont introduced the report of the Assistant Chief Executive relating to changes to the work programme and procedural changes to reduce the pressure on the Commission by greater empowerment of the O & S Panels.

The Commission:-

- (i) agreed the revised work programme for Overview and Scrutiny in 2011/2012;
- (ii) agreed to consult the Executive and Corporate Management Team on the revised work programme; and
- (iii) recommended to Governance and Audit Committee that Council be asked to approve an amendment to the Constitution to extend to the

Overview and Scrutiny Panels the Commission's power to adopt Overview and Scrutiny reports, the making of recommendations to the Executive, Full Council and other organisations, and the consideration of responses to O & S reports.

29. **Updates from Panel Chairmen**

Adult Social Care O&S Panel

Councillor Turrell updated the Commission on the Panel, including:

- An interesting autism awareness presentation in July.
- Carers conference in September which should be reported to the next Panel meeting.
- Work on personalisation.

Environment, Culture and Communities O&S Panel

Councillor Finnie updated the Commission on the work of the Panel, including:

- Future discussion of Bagshot Road resurfacing.
- Future discussion of the environmental management of schools.

Children, Young People and Learning O&S Panel

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice chairman Richard Beaumont updated the Commission on :

- The new Independent Local Safeguarding Children Board Chair would present the LSCB Annual Report.
- Gordon Anderson had resigned and a new Diocese representative was being sought.
- A meeting with the Youth Council to see if they wished to become engaged with the scrutiny process.

Health O&S Panel

Councillor Virgo updated the Commission on the work of the Committee which included:

- A meeting with Charles Waddicor, Chief Executive for NHS Berkshire.
- The setting up of the Health and Well-being Board.
- The major changes to Health and the possibility of reconvening the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee as a pan-Berkshire Committee.

30. **Exclusion of Public and Press (S100A)**

**RESOLVED** that pursuant to section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and having regard to the public interest, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for consideration of item 16 which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information under category 1 of Schedule 12A of that Act:

- (3) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), provided that information in this category is not exempt information if it is required to be registered under the Companies Act 1985; the Friendly Societies Acts 1974 and

1992; the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts 1965 to 1978;  
The Building Societies Act 1986; or the Charities Act 1993.

31. **Review of the Office Accommodation Strategy**

The Commission considered the report on the Executive's response to the letter from a working group of the Commission which reviewed the draft Office Accommodation Strategy.

Councillor Angell, the Lead Member of the Working Group, advised members of the meetings held which had led to the four comments/recommendations set out in the letter to the Executive Member.

The Commission noted the satisfactory responses of the Executive Member.

Councillor McCracken expressed his gratitude to the working group members for their contribution.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Angell for his work on this matter and thanked Councillors McCracken and Ward for their co-operation.

**CHAIRMAN**

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
21 SEPTEMBER 2011  
6.00 - 7.01 PM**



**Present:**

Councillors Leake (Chairman), Angell (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Angell, Baily, Ms Brown, Finnie, Harrison, Heydon, Turrell and Virgo

**Executive Members:**

Councillor Birch

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Mrs Birch and McLean  
Ms S Cauchi and Mr D Moss

**In Attendance:**

Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview & Scrutiny  
Andrea Carr, Policy Officer  
Simon Heard, Assistant Borough Solicitor  
Simon Hendey, Chief Officer: Housing  
Bev Hindle, Chief Officer: Planning & Transport  
Ann Moore, Head of Democratic & Registration Services  
Victor Nicholls, Assistant Chief Executive  
Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture & Communities  
Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services  
Emma Silverton, Democratic Services Officer  
Timothy Wheadon, Chief Executive

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

There were no declarations of interest.

Councillor Leake commented that he attended the GP Practice in Binfield as a patient, but this was not a reportable personal interest.

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

The Committee noted the attendance of the following Substitute Member:

Councillor Baily for Councillor Mrs Birch.

**34. Call- In of Executive Decision - Implementation of Older Persons Accommodation and Support Services Strategy**

The Chairman introduced the Call-In requested by four councillors of the second part of the Executive's decision I030320, concerning the implementation of the Older Persons Accommodation and Support Services Strategy, relating only to the Binfield Nursery Site, which was agreed at its meeting on 6 September 2011.

An additional map of the Binfield Nursery Site and adjoining area was circulated to members of the Commission. It was noted that the map showed a concept plan which was indicative of a possible development proposal for the site. It was noted that the map had been circulated to Ward Members prior to the Executive briefing on 23 August.

Councillors who had requested the Call-In of the Executive decision made it clear that they welcomed what the Older Persons Accommodation and Support Services Strategy was trying to achieve and were not concerned with the basic aims of what the decision was trying to achieve.

However, the Members who had requested the Call-In expressed their concerns relating to the Binfield Nursery Site which were that the site did not adequately define important parameters of any proposed scheme in relation to; density of housing, protection and future use of the preserved wall area, an indication of a suggested percentage of affordable housing or extra care units, reference to provision to relocate the loss of existing nursery provision or funding of the proposed new GP surgery.

Members felt that, notwithstanding the role and remit of the Planning Committee, further guidance and should be given to developers and assurance of their commitment for the provision of services should be secured to ensure that best use of the land was made. Members also sought confirmation about whether the land had been disposed of and the basis for the numbers of housing units in the Executive report.

Vincent Paliczka, The Director of Environment, Culture and Communities said that Members' concerns were understood, and assured Members that no decision had been made to dispose of the land at the Binfield Nursery Site. The Director stated that the Executive's decision I030320 was an 'in principal' decision, the decision to dispose of the land would be subject to further research by officers and subsequent decisions by the Executive. The Decision to dispose of the land would require a decision by the whole of the Executive in addition to a decision by the Executive Member for Environment that the land was surplus to requirement which would require her to be satisfied that there was a viable alternative solution to the nursery available.

It was highlighted that any proposals submitted by any developers would be subject to the Council's planning policies which included guidance relating to issues of density and preservation of local character. It was stated that the wall outside of Binfield House was not listed.

The Council were bound by law to obtain best consideration of the land. The Director stated that at this early stage it would be counter productive to place constraints on the site as it would become less attractive to developers, restrict the options available to the Council, and potentially mean the Council would not receive best consideration.

The Commission noted that the land for the GP Surgery was not owned by BFC and that proposals for a new surgery were for negotiation between the GP, PCT and developers. Whilst the Council would not be part of these discussions, planning policies were in place to ensure continued health provision. It was noted that the Council could not provide an assurance that there would be a new GP surgery on the site however, if a proposal was put forward without a surgery it was unlikely that it would be granted planning consent.

Officers were currently undertaking work to look at a range of options that could be put in place to meet the service provided to the Council's landscaping service from the nursery. In response to a question from a Member concerning the employment issues raised by the possible disposal of the Binfield Nursery site, the Director said that these might arise and if so, would be dealt with when consideration was given to the various options for replacing the Nursery services.

Councillor Birch, Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing, thanked Members for their support of the Older Persons Accommodation and Support Services Strategy. Councillor Birch referred to earlier briefings for Ward Members, he assured Members of the Commission that he was keen to see that all concerns raised were answered at the appropriate stage and reiterated that the Executive's Decision was a provisional one and that no decision had been made to dispose of the land to date. Councillor Birch also stated that views of the public would be taken in to account and Ward Members would be consulted at an early stage of any development proposal.

It was noted that if a developer entered pre-planning application then the scheme would be subject to the Council's planning policies and available for comment to the public and Councillors who would have the opportunity to make representations. The Executive Member was confident in the Council's planning process and believed that any development of the site would be appropriate and not beyond the Council's control.

Simon Hendey, Chief Officer: Housing, reported that the figure for Extra Care Housing, which provided accommodation for older people as they became progressively more frail, had been calculated based on projections of the current number of annual local authority placements to residential care in Bracknell Forest.

Existing tenure in the Borough had been taken in to consideration when looking at the balance of affordable housing and private ownership. It was noted that, as with any private development, the Council would not be able to control whether the housing was purchased by residents from within the Borough. Officers had consulted with residents on market need and developed the strategy based on what local people felt they needed.

The Executive Member assured Members that he intended to press for the very best local facilities possible with regard to any development on the site and that Ward Members would be consulted before a final decision was made.

Members had an opportunity to ask questions about the nature of the decision and the background and context to it, the various options considered by the Executive and the implications of these. In response to Members' questions:

- Prospective developers had invested time and money in formulating proposals for the site, but no disposal had been agreed, to date.
- Officers were working on the detailed scheme, which was likely to be presented to the Executive for its consideration within the next few months,
- It was confirmed that the reference to both sites in paragraph 3.6 of the Executive report was in relation to the Garth area only.
- The term older persons related to people over the age of 50

At the Chairman's invitation, the Chief Executive commented that the Executive decision was 'in principle'. The final decision would be dependent on what could be negotiated, and this would have to comply with planning and national policies. Any

sale would probably be contingent on planning consent. Having considered the evidence presented by officers and discussed the issue in detail, the following motion was proposed and seconded:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission has the following concerns with the second part of the Executive's decision I030320, to agree in principle the Binfield Nursery Site being developed, and refers the decision back to the Executive for their reconsideration. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission recommends that prior to the proposed disposal of the land the Executive gives the following guidance to any potential developer:

1. Any proposed housing density does not exceed that of adjacent areas
2. That any listed structure, or structures with current preservation orders, be retained and/or enhanced
3. Gives guidance as to the percentage of the total housing development on the site that should be affordable housing
4. That before the sale the Executive determines where the 'lost' nursery land should be sited and/or what alternative arrangement should be put in place
5. That a clear commitment be obtained from the PCT or other relevant health body or organisation, that funding is, or will be, in place to fund a new surgery contingent on the demolition of the existing one.

The Commission believes that these matters fall within the overall Environmental and sustainability strategies of the Council.

**RESOLVED** that the second part of the Executive's proposed decision I030320, to agree in principle the Binfield Nursery Site being developed, be referred back to the Executive for their reconsideration in light of the above points that were agreed by the Commission.

**CHAIRMAN**

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION 24 NOVEMBER 2011

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### REVIEW OF THE MEDIUM TERM OBJECTIVES Assistant Chief Executive

#### 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report introduces the response to the letter by a working group of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, on the review of the new Medium Term Objectives.

#### 2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission considers the response of the Leader of the Council to the letter by a working group of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, on the review of the new Medium Term Objectives.**

#### 3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 At its meeting on 18 October, the Executive considered a report on the proposed new Medium Term Objectives. Annexed to that report was the letter from the O&S working Group, together with the response to the points raised by the Working Group. The Executive decided to recommend to Council that the priorities and Medium Term Objectives set out in the report be approved.

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS/ EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT/ STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES / OTHER OFFICERS/ CONSULTATION – Not applicable**

#### Background Papers

Report to Executive and minutes, 18 October 2011.

#### Contact for further information

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Councillor Paul Bettison  
Leader  
Bracknell Forest Council  
Easthampstead House  
Town Square  
Bracknell  
Berkshire  
RG12 1AQ

Date: 16/09/2011

Dear Councillor Bettison,

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE DRAFT MEDIUM TERM OBJECTIVES 2011-2015

As you know, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission decided to form a Working Group to contribute to the formulation of the Council's new Medium Term Objectives (MTO's) following the 2011 local government elections. I summarise below the views of the Working Group, which we would like to address to you in your capacity as Executive Member for Council Strategy.

### General

- a) The covering report by officers to the Executive on the new MTO's, also the covering report to Council in due course, could usefully explain what the purpose of the MTO's is (for example, that that they do not describe everything the Council does, only the priority issues), refer to the version which they replace, and explain the process of updating them following the local government elections. We also suggest that the covering report should make a commitment to review the MTO's annually.
- b) We seek confirmation that the 'MTO's 2011-2015' are embedded within the Council's six priorities. There is a very wide range of council functions, and the layer of priorities seem to us to be a useful way of grouping together a larger number of disparate MTO's. We are also concerned that simply dropping the priorities could cause presentational difficulties publicly. I note that, since the Working Group met, you have told me that the current Priorities will, in fact remain.
- c) The wording of some of the MTO's needs to more clearly distinguish the Council's role on the deliverables cited. For example, on MTO 1 the Council has facilitated the delivery of the new Waitrose store in various important ways; but the actual delivery – in terms of funding, design, construction, ownership and operation is exclusively a matter for the private sector.
- d) The MTO's do not appear to be in any particular order, and the Working Group suggest it would assist to group together the MTO's which are related, for

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

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example MTO's 1 (Regeneration) and 10 (Economic Prosperity); also MTO's 2 (Planning) and 8 (Housing); also MTO's 3 (older and vulnerable residents) and 9 (Health and well being); and possibly MTO's 4 (younger residents) and 5 (Learning).

- e) Many of the MTO's have in their headings the words, 'and in particular'. We suggest it might be more fitting to replace these words with, 'including', as the MTO's are not a comprehensive list of everything the Council does to achieve these high level objectives.

#### MTO 1 (Regeneration)

- f) Please see the general observation c) above.
- g) The Working Group suggest deleting from the penultimate bullet the words, 'to take pressure off of our countryside' given that this does not accord with the site allocation decisions affecting Binfield and Warfield.
- h) The deliverables are challenging and we regard some to be outside the Council's control; for example the viability of housing development is linked to – as yet unknown - future movements in house prices. Consequently, it might be advisable to preface this MTO with words on the lines of, 'Subject to market forces, commercial viability, and the work of partner organisations'.
- i) Some of the wording seems unduly detailed for a statement of high-level objectives. For example, the words 'including work at Twin Bridges', and 'Implement an accommodation strategy to' seem to be unnecessary.

#### MTO 2 (Planning Policies)

- j) I should record that a separate Overview and Scrutiny Working Group is reviewing the Site Allocations DPD and they may have observations to make on this and the Core Strategy in due course.

#### MTO 3 (Older and vulnerable residents)

- k) We suggest replacing 'people' in the second and penultimate indents with, 'elderly local residents'.

#### MTO 4 (Younger residents)

- l) In the same vein as paragraph h) above, we regard the deliverables on childcare places to be challenging and outside the Council's control, as the vast majority of these places are provided by private sector organisations. Consequently, it might be advisable to preface indent 5 with 'Encourage and facilitate enough high quality...'

#### MTO 5 (Working with schools and partners)

- m) Please see the general observation c) above. There are many factors affecting educational achievements, and the Council's control over these is limited.

#### MTO 9 (Health and well being)

- n) Recognising that much of this has to be delivered by partner organisations, we suggest that the first indent should start, 'Support the Primary Care Trust in focussing on improving.....'

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

MTO 11 (Working with Communities and partners)

- o) The achievement of Value For Money is a principal duty of local authorities and we recommend that the term is expressly used in this MTO.
- p) Recognising that the Council is dependent on residents exercising individual choice, we suggest that the words 'Help to' should be inserted before 'ensure' in the first, third and fifth indent.
- q) The Working Group suggest that partnership working, serving residents and accountability are sufficiently important that they should be expressly referred to, either in this MTO or in a preface to the collection of MTO's.

We hope you find these observations and recommendations helpful. Please ask the Executive to consider these points and give me your written response to them, together with any other comments the Executive may wish to make, within two months of the date of this letter. I anticipate that the Commission will then consider your response at its meeting on 24 November 2011.

Kind regards,



**Councillor Peter Heydon**  
**Working Group Lead Member**

Copies to: Councillor Leake; Chief Executive; Assistant Chief Executive

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

Bracknell Forest Council, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1AQ  
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21 September 2011

Councillor Peter Heydon  
1 Siskin Gate  
Jennett's Park  
Bracknell  
RG12 8BF



Dear Peter

**Overview & Scrutiny Review of the Draft Medium Term Objectives 2011- 2015**

Thank you for your letter dated 16 September outlining the thoughts of the Overview & Scrutiny Working Group that have reviewed the Council's Draft Medium Term Objectives for the period to 2015. Even though most of the objectives stem directly from the Conservative Party Manifesto on which 40 of our Councillors stood, it is helpful to gain the input from the Working Group before we publish a policy programme for the next three and half years.

I am pleased that the Working Group appear to be supportive of the overall thrust of the medium term objectives – although given that they do derive from our manifesto anything else would be quite a surprise !

Many of the points the Working Group makes are valuable and can easily be accommodated in the document. There are, however, a few suggestions where there are subtle nuances that need to be thought through. For ease of reference I will respond to each of the points you make in the order of your letter.

General

- a) Agreed.
- b) Confirmed, although not all of the ten new priorities, notably the one on housing, sit as comfortably under the six over-arching priorities as they did in the last Council.
- c) This is an area where we need to be careful. I accept your point that the Council's role is to facilitate rather than specifically to deliver, but the actual wording of the objective is "*work with the Bracknell Regeneration Partnership and other landowners to deliver comprehensive regeneration, including (was "and in particular")*" - deliver a new Waitrose store.

By taking the objective and the indent together it is clear that this is a multi-agency approach - and the Council deserves credit for its part in making things happen. Adding "facilitate" again to the indent would just repeat the point already made in the initial statement.

- d) Agreed, we will group them more effectively to reflect the six over-arching themes.
- e) Agreed.
- f) See (c) above.
- g) Agreed.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

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- h) I believe the Working Group may be being too cautious here. It is our clear aim to regenerate Bracknell Town Centre and I anticipate that we will make substantial progress towards all of the points over the next three years. As such I believe we need a bold unequivocal objective that makes our ambition and intention very clear.
- i) I think the work at Twin Bridges and the implementation of our own office accommodation strategy are both major and essential projects if the town centre regeneration is to go ahead. I believe their importance merits a specific mention.
- j) Noted.
- k) I think this suggestion is missing the point of the objective which specifically states to support our "older and vulnerable residents". Not all of our vulnerable residents are elderly.
- l) Agreed.
- m) See (c) above – although schools and other partners are key to the delivery of many of the indents, the Council has a major role to play in supporting and challenging our schools and a number of the actions within this objective relate specifically to things that can only be undertaken by the Council.
- n) Agreed.
- o) Agreed – I suggest this becomes "work with our communities to be efficient, open, and easy to access *and to provide value for money*".
- p) I think in this context "ensure" refers to what the Council will do for its staff and/or to promote access channels for residents rather than what the residents themselves will do. I do agree that our residents have a choice on whether they act upon it or not, but that is not what these indents are referring to.
- q) Partly agreed. I think there are repeated references to working in partnership throughout the medium terms objectives. For me, serving of residents is implicit in the whole concept of the medium term objectives in that this is our policy programme for our residents for the next four years, but I do agree that a reference to accountability would be useful.

I hope these comments are helpful. Executive colleagues, senior officers and I have certainly found the Working Groups views positive in helping to sharpen the document. In terms of timing, because the MTO's represent a four year policy programme derived from the manifesto on which we were elected five months ago, I would aim to take them to the Executive and the Full Council on the 18 October and 30 November respectively. That would mean that any further Overview & Scrutiny input would need to be informal and would probably be best directed through you as Chairman of the Working Group. I hope that is acceptable and I would be grateful if you could let me know if you are content with that as an approach.

Yours sincerely



**Cllr Paul Bettison**  
**Leader of the Council**

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION 24 NOVEMBER 2011

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### REVIEW OF HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE Assistant Chief Executive

#### 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report introduces the response by the Executive to the interim report of the review of Highway Maintenance, undertaken by a working group of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Panel.

#### 2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission considers the response of the Executive to the interim report of the review of Highway Maintenance, undertaken by a working group of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Panel, and refers it to the Panel for detailed consideration.**

#### 3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Working Group has been re-formed to complete the review of Highway Maintenance, and it meets next on 29 November.

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS/ EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT/ STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES / OTHER OFFICERS/ CONSULTATION – Not applicable**

#### Background Papers

Interim report of a review of Highway Maintenance by a working group of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, July 2011.

#### Contact for further information

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

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28 October 2011

Dear Cllr McLean

**Interim Highway Maintenance Report**

Cllr Mrs Mary Ballin has asked me to pass on her thanks to the Overview and Scrutiny Working Group in preparing an interim report on highway maintenance.

Please find attached her initial response to the recommendations. Hopefully they will be of use to you in preparing your final report.

Clearly, once you have completed the review, the matter will be considered by the Executive as protocol dictates.

Yours sincerely

Vincent Paliczka  
[vincent.paliczka@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:vincent.paliczka@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)  
Director of Environment, Culture and Communities  
Direct Dial: 01344 351750

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In response to the interim recommendations from the work group my initial response, to inform the final report, is as follows:-

## **Interim Recommendations**

- 5.1 As part of the Highway Maintenance and Management Plan, options be explored as to the potential to include percentage targets for the condition to be achieved for each type of highway in the Borough, utilising the SCANNER green/amber/red ratings as the principle driver for determining the resources required for highway maintenance each year, in recognition of the need for a structured, comprehensive and adequately resourced maintenance programme for a highly important and necessary community asset;

### **Response**

**This suggestion will be considered as part of the current development and production of an Asset Management Plan. By presenting the data in a clear and easy to understand way such as this it is hoped that the future planning and budget planning needs will be more transparent to the public. In so doing it is hoped that all will better be able to understand how, where and why the money has been targeted. The Asset Management Plan will include a long-term (20 -25 years) maintenance strategy, based on whole-life costing and levels of service.**

- 5.2 In the event that the Council's available resources do not permit full funding of the highway maintenance programme requirement each year:
- the costs and benefits of alternative funding opportunities, such as borrowing external funds, be explored in recognition of the current low interest rates, the average annual increase of 7% in highway construction costs and the adage 'a stitch in time saves nine';
  - budget consultation papers provide a clear exposition of the impact of under-funding the highway maintenance programme;

### **Response**

**Whilst the current rate of interest is low this might not always be the case. The Council receives funding from Government and in addition to its own funds is investing a substantial sum of money in the network each year. Future funding needs and options such as this may well have to be a consideration in the future but in doing so we will always be mindful of our ability to repay any loans. Once we have better detail as to the condition of the highway network we will be better able to make strategic funding decisions.**

- 5.3 The tackling of the restraints on borrowing and capital expenditure in the current accounting rules and other barriers be explored and include asking the Government to reconsider the current accounting regime referred to in paragraph 4.4 e.g. with a view to allowing borrowing to finance revenue expenditure and spending capital for highway maintenance purposes;

## **Response**

**As comment above. We need to understand fully the cost and needs before we can make informed decisions as to how best to seek to meet the need.**

- 5.4 Full use be made of the 2011/12 highway maintenance allocation of £1.867m together with any other Government monies provided for maintenance purposes to sustain investment in maintenance to avoid deterioration leading to escalation of future maintenance costs and the risk of increased public liability exposure and associated higher insurance premiums;

## **Response**

**The Council has made full use of the highway maintenance allocation of £1.867 in the current year. No money has been diverted for other purposes.**

- 5.5 The Council's new administration review its allocation priorities as part of the LTP process to ensure that such funding is allocated according to greatest need;

## **Response**

**The opportunity for such a review will arise with the review of the LTP**

- 5.6 The process by which the spending of Section 106 monies is formulated be amended to allow for the early involvement of Ward Members and Town and Parish Councillors. This would enable greater transparency in the process of the formulation and prioritisation of local highway schemes prior to the agreement of the LTP by the Executive;

## **Response**

How the Council consults on S106 schemes or the LTP schemes was discussed at the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2009 and subsequently agreed by myself and Cllr McCracken. That clearly defines a role for Ward Members and if they choose, an opportunity to consult with Town and Parish Councils but this is not a requirement of the scheme.

- 5.7 Priority be given to reinstating the surface dressing programme as it represents a relatively inexpensive way of prolonging the life of a deteriorating asset;

## **Response**

**Whilst the budget has not been reinstated the additional funding in the LTP over and above that which we had expected has enabled the use of money for techniques such as this. The officers will continue to have discretion to use their professional judgement as to which type of treatment is best used in any given situation**

- 5.8 Current practices are reviewed as part of the ongoing budget review process to test the merits of contracting additional highway maintenance services, for example design and build, through the current contract with Ringway. Related contractual changes be made should the review establish that such measures will achieve economies without giving rise to unacceptable levels of risk;

**Response**

**The contract with Ringway is due for renewal in 2014. The options available for the delivery of services will be considered as part of that process prior to tendering.**

- 5.9 The practice of securing early contractor involvement to identify cost saving technical solutions and to mitigate any potential problems be continued and developed wherever possible;

**Response**

**Agreed**

- 5.10 The benefits of making greater contractual use of Ringway to provide additional services which complement highway maintenance, such as provision and maintenance of street lighting and traffic signals, be reviewed with a view to identifying economies and to ensuring that the contract provides for the best overall fiscal advantage to the Council and includes sufficient flexibility to allow for the continually changing financial environment;

**Response**

**In the last 12 months or so it has been necessary to extend the use of Ringway not yet as illustrated above but to bring in additional capacity and expertise in a number of areas where it has been prudent to do so. They have also been used to create the new depot in the lorry park.**

- 5.11 All existing and potential opportunities for achieving savings in both client and service costs be explored as part of the contract renewal process. The potential scope, length and method of delivery should be examined through the scrutiny process with a view to helping ensure that the contract as tendered best fits the needs of the community;

**Response**

**Agreed**

- 5.12 Officers should review the current arrangements with Ringway upon completion of the depot and salt barn works and the transfer of the contractor's offices to ensure that the Council maximises the opportunities that arise both in the context of fiscal and value added service delivery; and

## **Response**

**Agreed. The changes have already given rise to direct savings by way of reductions in Ringways overheads that are recharged to the Council. They have also given rise to further savings direct and indirect as they have undertaken the works to the depot and the lorry park without recharging their overheads. Opportunities such as this will continue to be explored and developed where possible/appropriate.**

- 5.13 The existing management arrangements in relation to the split of the highway engineering functions are reviewed in the interests of cost effectiveness and collaboration between the two services to avoid conflicting objectives and to ensure that improvements are designed to take account of future maintenance requirements.

## **Response**

**Every effort is already made to ensure good collaboration and the avoidance of conflicting objectives whether now or in the future. There is a similar need in relation to the potential impact upon other service areas both in the context of what and how work is done but also how it's designed. This 'need' extends to the suitability to adopt land and taking it into maintenance. The Council has recently adopted a new Design Guide with this need very much in mind. As the future of the Council continues to develop all options will need to be kept under review to ensure the most effect methods are used to deliver services within tight budgets and high levels of public expectation. The retendering of the Ringway contract will provide the opportunity to look at issues such as this to ensure that the 'client' function is as efficient and effective as it needs to be.**

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION 24 NOVEMBER 2011

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

#### 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

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

#### 2 RECOMMENDATION

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

#### 3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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

#### **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS/ EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT/ STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES / OTHER OFFICERS/ CONSULTATION – Not applicable**

#### Background Papers

Local Government Act 2000

#### Contact for further information

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

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## OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION

### EXECUTIVE WORK PROGRAMME

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I031578
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**TITLE:** Annual Audit Letter

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To receive the District Auditor's Annual Audit letter.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** None at this time.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

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

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Not applicable.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 15 Nov 2011

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I029821
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Policy on Directed Surveillance and Covert Intelligence Sources

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To approve the Policy on Directed Surveillance and use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** None

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Overview and Scrutiny Working Group.

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Meetings.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 15 Nov 2011

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I030524
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Polling District and Polling Place Review

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** Review required by legislation every four years - Steering Group to report to Council/Executive and consider if any representations should be made for changes to be effected from the publication of the revised register on 1 December 2011.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** To be advised.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** All members of the Council; all main constituency parties; all independent candidates and candidates with no description at the May 2011 elections; all designated polling stations; Age Concern, Bracknell; Acting Returning Officer at both Wokingham Borough Council and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead; Berkshire Blind Society; BFVA; DIS: Course at the Ark Studio; The Look In on the Broadway; Scope

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Stakeholders and interested parties consulted via public notice at Easthampstead House, council web site, letters via post and email.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 15 Nov 2011

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I029705
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Asset Management Plan

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To approve the update of the maintenance section of the Asset Management Plan.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Not yet known

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

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Officers of the Council  
Asset Management Group

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Meetings

**DATE OF DECISION:** 29 Nov 2011

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I031065
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Calculation of Council Tax Base - 2012/13, Local Council Tax Discounts - 2012/13

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To agree the calculation of the council tax base for 2012/13 and the level of local council tax discount for 2012/13.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** To be determined

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

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

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Not applicable.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 5 Dec 2011

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I030458
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** 'All of Us' Community Cohesion Strategy and Equality Schemes Annual Monitoring Report 2010 -11

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To consider the monitoring report which summarises the progress made during 2010-11 in implementing Bracknell Forest Council's "All of Us" Corporate Strategy for promoting Community Cohesion 2008/09 – 2011/12; our second community cohesion strategy. "All of Us" is the Council's overarching Equality Strategy. The report is also the final report on progress made during 2010-11 in advancing equality through implementing the Council's Race, Gender and Disability Equality Schemes.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Within existing budget.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive Member for Council Strategy and Community Cohesion

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Council's Equality Sub-Group  
Community Cohesion and Engagement Working Group  
Overview and Scrutiny Commission

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** The document has been available for comment to the groups as listed.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 5 Dec 2011

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I029731
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Capital Programme 2012/13 – 2014/15

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To approve the draft capital programme for consultation

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

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Targeted consultation exercises will be undertaken with business rate payers, the Senior Citizens' Forum, the Schools Forum, Parish Councils and voluntary organisations. In addition, this report and all the supporting information will be publicly available to any individual or group who wish to comment on any proposal included within it. Internal consultation is via officers, members and more specifically the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and its panels.

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** The Council's web site, a dedicated mailbox and a letter to all business ratepayers.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 13 Dec 2011

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I028539
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Corporate Performance Overview Report

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To inform the Executive of the performance of the Council over the second quarter of 2011/12 (September-November 2011).

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** No financial implication.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** None

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** None

**DATE OF DECISION:** 13 Dec 2011

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I031586
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Designated Public Place Order (DPPO)

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** Recommended that Bracknell Forest Council consults the public over the introduction of a Designated Public Place Order (DPPO) across Bracknell town centre.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Funding for the public consultation and the cost of signs has been secured from an ASB Grant

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive Member for Council Strategy and Community Cohesion

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Public consultation  
Other officers, groups or agencies consulted are Bracknell Regeneration Partnership, Town Centre Manager, Anti-Social Behaviour Sub Group, CSP Executive, BFC Licensing Team

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Email, discussions in meetings

**DATE OF DECISION:** 13 Dec 2011

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I029970
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Neighbourhood Engagement Review

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To decide on the Council's approach to neighbourhood engagement from April 2012.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** To be determined.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** All Members  
Overview and Scrutiny Commission Working Group  
The Executive  
CMT  
Bracknell Forest Partnership Board and wider partnership members  
Parish and Town Councils  
Neighbourhood Action Groups  
Community Associations  
The Federation of Community Groups  
Extended Services Area Partnerships  
Voluntary and Community Sector Groups

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Meeting(s) with interested parties.  
Presentation.  
Website

**DATE OF DECISION:** 13 Dec 2011

<b>REFERENCE</b>	1029737
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Revenue Budget 2012/13

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

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

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Targeted consultation exercises will be undertaken with business rate payers, the Senior Citizens' Forum, the Schools Forum, Parish Councils and voluntary organisations. In addition, this report and all the supporting information will be publicly available to any individual or group who wish to comment on any proposal included within it. Internal consultation is via officers, members and more specifically the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and its panels

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** The Council's web site, a dedicated mailbox and a letter to all business ratepayers.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 13 Dec 2011

<b>REFERENCE</b>	1026355
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**TITLE:** Discretionary Rates Relief 2011

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

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Within existing budget

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

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

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Not applicable.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 30 Dec 2011

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I027764
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**TITLE:** Bracknell Town Centre Regeneration Committee Update Report

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To obtain endorsement and approval to the continuing approach to the Town Centre Regeneration.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Subject to confirmation.

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

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

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Not applicable.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 9 Jan 2012

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I031967
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**TITLE:** Legal Services - Benchmarking & Proposed Resilience Arrangement with Reading and West Berkshire

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To seek approval for entering into an arrangement with Reading and West Berkshire for Legal Services.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Revenue savings anticipated.

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

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Service Efficiency Steering Group, Corporate Management Team

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Service Efficiency Steering Group, Corporate Management Team.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 10 Jan 2012

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I029714
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**TITLE:** Discretionary Rate Relief Review, (Charity & Rural Rate Relief)

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To review all cases where discretionary relief is granted in the first year of a new Council being elected.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Within existing budget

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

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

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Not applicable.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 31 Jan 2012

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I029733
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Capital Programme 2012/13 – 2014/15

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To approve the Council's capital programme

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

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** The report will include the results of the consultations undertaken with business rate payers, the Senior Citizens' Forum, the Schools Forum, Parish Councils and voluntary organisations, the general public, officers, members and the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and its panels.

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** The Council's web site, a dedicated mailbox and a letter to all business ratepayers.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 21 Feb 2012

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I030053
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** ICT Strategy 2011-2015

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To approve the ICT strategy for the borough, to include technology strategy, support for the Customer Contact Strategy and key business/service areas.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** To be determined.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Overview & Scrutiny Commission  
 ICT Steering Group  
 DMT's  
 ICT Operations Group

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Meetings

**DATE OF DECISION:** 21 Feb 2012

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I029729
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Revenue Budget 2012/13

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

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Council's annual budget

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** The report will include the results of the consultations undertaken with business rate payers, the Senior Citizens' Forum, the Schools Forum, Parish Councils and voluntary organisations, the general public, officers, members and the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and its panels.

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** The Council's web site, a dedicated mailbox and a letter to all business ratepayers.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 21 Feb 2012

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I031608
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**TITLE:** Voluntary Sector Core Revenue Grants 2012/13

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** Subject to Service Level Agreements being concluded between the Council and each grantee, grant funding in 2012/13 be awarded.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Contained within the report

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

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Chief Executive's Office  
Borough Treasurer  
Borough Solicitor

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Internal only

**DATE OF DECISION:** 14 Mar 2012

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I027843
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Bracknell Town Centre Regeneration Committee Update Report

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To obtain endorsement and approval to the continuing approach to the Town Centre Regeneration.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Subject to confirmation.

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

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

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Not applicable.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 19 Mar 2012

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I030023
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Bracknell Forest Council Equality Scheme 2012-16

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To approve the Council's equality objectives for 2012-16.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Within existing budget.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** All Members

Overview and Scrutiny

The Executive

CMT

Bracknell Forest Partnership Board and Thematic Partnerships

Parish and Town Councils

Voluntary, Community and Faith Groups

BFC Staff

Bracknell Forest Residents

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Meeting(s) with interested parties.

Presentation.

Website.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 20 Mar 2012

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I029735
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Financial Reporting Process (Budget Book 2012/13)

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To approve the Council's "Cash" Budget Book for 2012/13

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** None at this time

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

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

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Not applicable.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 30 Mar 2012

<b>REFERENCE</b>	1027846
------------------	---------

**TITLE:** Bracknell Town Centre Regeneration Committee Update Report

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To obtain endorsement and approval to the continuing approach to the Town Centre Regeneration.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Subject to confirmation.

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

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

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** N/A

**DATE OF DECISION:** 28 May 2012

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION 24 NOVEMBER 2011

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### WORKING GROUPS UPDATE REPORT Working Group Lead Members

#### 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Working Groups of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, excluding those which have been reported on separately: Office Accommodation Strategy (reported to the Commission at its meeting on 15 September); and the New Medium Term Objectives (covered at agenda item 5).

#### 2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission notes the progress achieved to date by the Commission's Working Groups.**

#### 3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

##### New Performance Management Framework

- 3.1 The Working Group on the New Performance Management Framework, comprising Councillors Virgo (Lead), Angell, Mrs Angell and Leake met the Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Executive on 26 September 2011, and gave its views on the framework. Officers undertook to consider these points further, including measures to speed up the production of reports, including a 'forward look' section, and reviewing the format in six months time.

##### Plans for Neighbourhood Engagement

- 3.2 The Working Group on the consultative document concerning Neighbourhood Engagement, comprising Councillors McLean (Lead), Leake, and Finnie, met the Director of Corporate Services and Head of Community Engagement and Equalities on 12 September. With the agreement of Commission members, the Lead Member sent the attached letter and completed questionnaire to the Leader of the Council on 10 October. A response is awaited.

##### Plans for Sustaining Economic Prosperity

- 3.3 The Working Group on Plans for Sustaining Economic Prosperity, comprising Councillors Virgo (Lead), Angell and Heydon met the Executive Member for Planning, Transport and Economic Development, with officers on 16 June 2011, and gave its views on the draft Economic Development Strategy prior to its consideration by the Executive. The Assistant Chief Executive undertook to amend the draft strategy in a number of respects.

### Regulation Of Investigatory Powers

- 3.4 The Working Group, comprising Councillors Leake (Lead), Angell and Virgo met officers on 18 October to consider the Council's Policy in respect of Directed Surveillance and use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources and the accompanying Executive report, prior to its approval by the Executive. The Working Group raised various issues, which officers undertook to add to the report to the Executive when it considered the Policy.

### ICT Strategy

- 3.5 A Working Group comprising Councillors Heydon (Lead), Angell, Ms Brown, Brunel-Walker, and Gbadebo has been formed to provide Overview and Scrutiny input to the formulation of the Council's new Information and Communications Technology Strategy before its approval by the Executive. The first meeting of the Working Group was held on 10 November.

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS/ EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT/ STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES / OTHER OFFICERS/ CONSULTATION – Not applicable**

### Background Papers

Overview and Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2011-12.  
Contact for further information

Richard Beaumont – 01344 352283  
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Councillor Paul Bettison  
Leader  
Bracknell Forest Council  
Easthampstead House  
Town Square  
Bracknell  
Berkshire  
RG12 1AQ

Date: 10/10/2011

Dear Councillor Bettison,

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD ENGAGEMENT**

As you know, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission decided to form a Working Group to contribute to the formulation of plans for neighbourhood engagement, in the light of the Localism Bill and local developments. The Working Group has met and reached views on the strengths and weaknesses of the five options for neighbourhood engagement, as set out in the completed consultation questionnaire, attached. We would also like to address some additional points to you in your capacity as Executive Member responsible for the Council's arrangements for Community Engagement.

The Working Group strongly supports Option 4 (the Town and Parish/elected Members model). At the heart of this, we firmly believe that Town and Parish councils are the fundamental building block for local neighbourhood engagement. We consider that giving Town and Parish Councils this enhanced role has various advantages, and no particular weaknesses. It would give a single point of focus, it would recognise their democratic mandate, it would empower them to do more within their communities, it would make better use of their infrastructure and capacity, and pushing responsibility downwards would yield better results.

If the Bracknell Forest Partnership and the Executive decide to adopt Option 4, it will be important for the Borough Council to assist them to achieve that through training and other appropriate support. The Council would also need to be mindful that each T&PC is different and consequently they should be allowed some flexibility to determine the most appropriate detailed arrangements for their circumstances.

The Working Group would also comment on two issues which were not the subject of questions in the consultation questionnaire:

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

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- The Working Group would support the transfer of ownership of the Community Halls to the Town and Parish Council, as we believe they would be much better placed than the Borough Council to own and operate them in concert with the Community Associations. We are cognisant of the maintenance backlog with some of the Halls, and the reported unwillingness of one Town Council to take over the Halls, but we would encourage the Executive to find a solution to making the transfer, even if this entails a cost for the Borough Council.
- Notwithstanding that education remains an important function of the Borough Council, we suggest that the Extended Services Area Partnerships should be encouraged to work in close partnership with the Town and Parish Councils.

The Neighbourhood Engagement consultation is very important, and we suggest that you should bring it to the attention of all councillors.

We hope you find these observations and recommendations helpful, and we look forward to receiving your response to this letter.

We anticipate that this letter and your response will be published with the agenda for the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 24 November.

Kind regards,

**Councillor Robert McLean**  
**Working Group Lead Member**

Copies to: Councillors Leake, Dr Barnard, Kendall and McCracken.  
Chief Executive; Director of Corporate Services

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**RESPONSE BY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

**NEIGHBOURHOOD ENGAGEMENT REVIEW CONSULTATION**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**September – November 2011**

**Introduction**

Bracknell Forest Partnership engages with residents at a neighbourhood level through a number of community groups and organizations. Some of these have been provided with a significant amount of officer (and in some cases financial) support.

The Partnership felt that, in the context of the Coalition Government's Localism and Big Society agendas, the reorganization of Thames Valley Police and the health service, as well as this time of austerity, it was appropriate to review the way in which this work is carried out in order to improve its effectiveness and ensure that it provides value for money. At its meeting on 16 December 2010, the Partnership agreed to conduct a review of the way it delivers neighbourhood engagement, and a Neighbourhood Engagement Review was commissioned in order to consider the work of those groups which are provided with support by the Partnership and/or help to set and action community priorities:

- 13 Neighbourhood Action Groups
- 6 Extended Services Area Partnerships
- 14 Community Associations
- 6 Parish and Town Councils

Five options for neighbourhood engagement in the future were put forward in the Review, and these are detailed below.

**The Council's Community Engagement and Equalities Team is consulting on behalf of Bracknell Forest Partnership from w/c 29 August until 4 November 2011 in order to find the most suitable option. We would be happy to receive your views on the strengths and weaknesses of each, and which option you think offers the best model for the future. We will take all the information we receive into account when the final decision is made in December 2011.**

**A summary of the Review can be found on the Council's website at:**

<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/living.htm>

## 2. The five Options for taking forward neighbourhood engagement work:

### Option 1 - No change

- Bracknell Forest Partnership continues to provide support to the groups considered in the review with the same level of resource.
- However, there will be a reduced level of support for Extended Services Area partnerships due to central government grant cuts.

Strengths of this Option? [In places, it has allowed community engagement to succeed.](#)  
Weaknesses of this Option? [Unaffordable, and unsatisfactory value for money. Also, Thames Valley Police have left the Council to provide much of the support.](#)

### Option 2 – Collaboration/mergers

- The organizations involved in neighbourhood engagement activity increase their collaboration and/or merge with each other.
- For example, Neighbourhood Action Groups could collaborate and/or merge with Extended Services Area Partnerships.

Strengths of this Option? [None, other than some saving by servicing fewer NAG's.](#)  
Weaknesses of this Option? [Very difficult to achieve without a lead partner. NAG's have no mandate or accountability.](#)

### Option 3 – Transfer support between partners

- Bracknell Forest Council withdraws its support to the Neighbourhood Action Groups in April 2012 and hands over all responsibility for support for these groups to Thames Valley Police.
- Support continues at the current level for the Community Associations.
- Support for the Extended Services Area Partnerships continues but at a reduced level due to central government grant cuts.

Strengths of this Option? [Reduces the cost to the Council](#)  
Weaknesses of this Option? [Unlikely that Thames Valley Police would want to take over the support currently provided by the Council. Reduced government funding would not sustain this option. Insufficient accountability.](#)

#### **Option 4 – Town and Parish/elected Members model**

- Develop the capacity of Neighbourhood Action Groups and Extended Services Area Partnerships in through 2011/12 to become more independent, with the Council withdrawing support to NAGs in April 2012.
- Encourage groups to work more closely with the Town and Parish Councils in order to tailor engagement processes to meet local circumstances.
- Support continues for the Community Associations and the Extended Services Area Partnerships; the latter likely to be at a reduced level due to central government grant cuts.

Strengths of this Option? **Town and Parish councils are the fundamental building block for local neighbourhood engagement, and they are best placed to determine which engagement format works best in their particular local circumstances. The issues raised at the NAG's rarely require any action by the Police, instead they are for action by residents themselves or the local authorities.**

Weaknesses of this Option? **If the Borough Council withdraws its support, some NAG's may cease to function, and some others may choose to adapt.**

#### **Option 5 – Stop support for neighbourhood engagement**

Bracknell Forest Council stops supporting all neighbourhood engagement groups and/or structures; however, partners continue to engage heavily at a neighbourhood level.

Strengths of this Option? **None**

Weaknesses of this Option? **Partner organisations are probably not inclined to increase their local engagement. The NHS prefers to engage on the basis of larger geographical areas. Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action appears to prefer to engage communities of interest rather than geographical areas. And engaging residents only once every two years is insufficient.**

#### **NOTE:**

**No matter which of these options are chosen, Bracknell Forest Council will work with its partners in order to continue to focus on borough wide engagement, using a biennial household survey.**

Of the five options detailed above, which do you think is most viable given the need to improve the effectiveness of engagement and ensure that it is value for money? (Please tick one box only).

**Option 1**     

(with Borough wide engagement through a biennial household survey)

**Option 2**       
(with Borough wide engagement through a biennial household survey)

**Option 3**       
(with Borough wide engagement through a biennial household survey)

**Option 4**       
(with Borough wide engagement through a biennial household survey)

**Option 5**       
(with Borough wide engagement through a biennial household survey)

Comments on any of the options:

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission strongly supports Option 4 (the Town and Parish/elected Members model). Giving Town and Parish Councils an enhanced role has various advantages, and no particular weaknesses. It would give a single point of focus, it recognises their democratic mandate, it would empower them to do more within their communities, it would make better use of their infrastructure and capacity, and pushing responsibility downwards would yield better results.

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission are supportive of a biennial household survey.

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**Please return this questionnaire by 4 November 2011 to:**

Fiona Heston, Senior Policy Officer  
Community Engagement and Equalities Team, Corporate Services Dept  
Easthampstead House  
Town Square, Bracknell RG12 1AQ

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