

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
29 MARCH 2012
7.30 - 8.20 PM**



Present:

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

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs Birch, Turrell and Ms Whitbread.
Ms S Cauchi, Parent Governor Representative
Mrs C. Murray, Parent Governor Representative
Ms C Mitchell, Children's Social Care Representative

In Attendance:

Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Victor Nicholls, Assistant Chief Executive
Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services

58. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny reported that a summary of actions taken since the last meeting had been appended to the minutes. He reported that with reference to Minute 51, Legal Services had now sent members a web link to access requested Freedom of Information material.

With reference to Minute 56, the Executive were now being consulted on the Commission's Work Programme for 2012-13, and the draft annual report of Overview and Scrutiny had been circulated for members' comments.

59. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest.

60. Public Participation

There were no items submitted under the Public Participation Scheme.

61. Executive Forward Plan

The Commission considered the Executive Forward Plan.

In response to members' queries, the Director of Corporate Services reported that the Customer Contact Strategy was designed to improve the efficiency of the ways in which customers contacted the Council. This included greater use of the website which was more cost effective. A proactive action plan had been developed around this, working with officers from across the Council.

In response to members' queries the Assistant Chief Executive reported that the Bracknell Town Centre Development Agreement might be changed in the future, and it would enable the rest of the development in the Town Centre to go ahead.

62. Quarterly Service Reports (QSR) 2011/12

The Director of Corporate Services reported that the department was generally on track and had met the vast majority of targets for the quarter. The department was in a strong place, had underspent and was progressing well. Staff sickness levels remained low.

In response to members' queries around red indicators in the report, the Director of Corporate Services made the following points:

- (p.5 L076) The Planned Maintenance Spend was slightly lower than targeted this would even out in the following quarter.
- (p.5 L053) Collection of Business Rates was a key economic indicator and was being monitored carefully. 97% had been collected, indicating very good performance. There had been a rise in challenges and complaints from Business Rate payers, particularly around empty property Business Rates. This had generated some investigative and enforcement action.
- (p.6 L085) Debt recovery was not always on a smooth profile. It was noted that in future a target would not be used for debt recovery; figures would be provided to show performance. The Council was performing well in terms of debt recovery.

63. Corporate Performance Overview Report

The following points were made on the Chief Executive's Performance Overview Report for quarter three (October to December) of the 2011/12 financial year:

- Members were pleased to see that individuals who breached HMO Management Regulations were now being prosecuted.
- It was reported that this report was intended to pull together overall key issues from all departments and provide an overview. The report was considered by management teams, the Executive, Overview and Scrutiny as well as being published on the website.
- The Director of Corporate Services and the Assistant Chief Executive stated that they were happy to answer any questions from members around performance reports as soon as they were published.
- Members asked that future reports of crime figures should make it clear that they were recorded crimes.
- The Assistant Chief Executive acknowledged that performance around anti-social behaviour was slightly lower, and summarised the work of the Council and its partners to tackle ASB. It was noted that an Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator had been reappointed.
- Members expressed concern around the performance of schools as detailed in paragraph 3.4 of the report, despite the presence of School Improvement Officers. The Chairman asked that the concerns of the Commission be

conveyed to the Director of Children, Young People and Learning around this. The Chairman also asked to be informed of how many School Improvement Officers were currently employed in the Borough and a summary of their responsibilities.

- Members requested an explanation for underperformance on indicator NI103.2 (SEN Statements)
- Members asked to be informed of the outcome of consideration of using E+ Cards in pay and display (car park) machines.
- It was noted that the rise in the number of Child Protection Plans was not necessarily a negative development; it was possible that more vulnerable children were being reported and monitored than previously.

64. Overview & Scrutiny Bi-Annual Progress Report

The Commission noted the Overview and Scrutiny activity over the period September 2011 to February 2012, set out in Section 5 and Appendices 1 and 2 of the report.

Members' thanked officers for arranging training events delivered by the Centre for Public Scrutiny on questioning skills and on leadership of O&S.

In response to members' queries, the Head of Overview and Scrutiny reported that Councillor McCracken was leading the member only forum around the governance structure issues in the Localism Act.

65. Working Groups Update

The Commission noted the progress achieved to date by the working groups focussing on the ICT Strategy and the Community Infrastructure Levy.

In terms of the Community Infrastructure Levy, the Head of Overview and Scrutiny reported that the Commission Chairman and he had met with the Parish and Town Council Liaison Group to brief them on progress. The Working Group would be meeting next on 18 April.

The Chairman stated that between 3-5 members would be required to establish a Working Group around the Communications Strategy, if members would like to participate they should contact himself or the Head of Overview and Scrutiny. If Commission members were unable to commit, the invitation to join the Working Group would be opened to all non-executive members of the Council.

66. Updates from Panel Chairmen

The Chairman of Environment, Culture and Communities O&S Panel reported that a discussion around winter preparations had taken place at the last meeting as well as changes around Planning legislation. A briefing would take place for all members.

The Chairman of the Health O&S Panel reported that the Health and Social Care Bill had recently received Royal Assent.

67. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 3 May 2012.

CHAIRMAN