

**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