



**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
20 MARCH 2014
7.30 - 9.00 PM**

Present:

Councillors Leake (Chairman), Angell (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Birch, Ms Brown, Finnie, Gbadebo, Harrison, Heydon, Mrs McCracken, McLean and Sargeant
Rev N Parish, Church of England (Oxford Diocese)
Mr R Briscoe, Parent Governor Representative

Executive Members:

Councillors Brunel-Walker

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Baily and Virgo

In Attendance:

Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Victor Nicholls, Assistant Chief Executive
Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services
David Cook, Chairman, Economic and Skills Development Partnership

59. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission held on 30 January 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

There were no matters arising.

60. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor Mrs Birch declared an interest as the spouse of the Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Health and Housing.

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

61. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

62. Public Participation

There were no representations submitted under the public participation scheme.

63. Economic and Skills Development

David Cook, Chairman, presented a report setting out the work of the Economic and Skills Development Partnership since the Partnership's last update to the

Commission in March 2013. The report included updates on key actions, an overview of its current priorities, a summary of future plans and a summary of key performance data relating to the local economy.

It was noted that the Partnership was business led with representation from 3M, Waitrose, Bracknell Chamber of Commerce and the Transport Research Laboratory on its membership. It was reported that the Partnership had made considerable progress over the past year. Of the Group's 46 agreed actions, 35 were either complete or on track however due to resource issues some of the outstanding actions had been reshaped or postponed until such time as resources were available for example the roll out of a marketing plan intended to raise awareness of Bracknell Forest as a place to do business had been delayed. The business community was aware of Bracknell Forest and wanted to engage more with the Council.

Key priority areas for the Partnership were;

- Business retention
- Engagement with businesses
- Attracting new businesses to the area
- Supporting small businesses, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs
- Encouraging people to recognise that supporting businesses was everyone's job

Arising from the Commission's questions and comments the following points were noted:

- Recruitment for a new Economic Development Team was taking place and it was hoped that once the Team was in post work would progress
- The Government definition of 'Superfast' Broadband speeds specified speeds of 24 megabytes however this was significantly lower than the general public's expectation of speeds in excess of 100 megabytes
- The Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership, which had received increased funding, looked at the economics of the Berkshire Thames Valley region as a whole while the Partnership focused on Bracknell Forest. The two organisations worked together to encourage business growth, investment and economic development in the region
- The proposed development of a co-ordinated impartial centre for careers advice would take the form of a 'one-stop' shop in the town centre with advisors from a range of organisations including NACRO, Advizor, Job Centre Plus and Bracknell and Wokingham College
- Encouraging South West Trains and Network Rail to install reliable wi-fi on their trains would help those using the service
- Provision of free wi-fi internet access in the regenerated Bracknell town centre would be a key piece of work to encourage people to Bracknell
- There needed to be greater focus on the STEM subjects, Science, Maths, Technology and Engineering in educational settings
- Softer skills for example team working, project working and communications skills were considered by employers to be as important as formal qualifications
- A Sub-group of the Partnership had been exploring the subject of apprenticeships and were trying to ascertain what business requirements were
- A key aspect of the City Deal project would be the creation of 1,500 work experience placements and 300 new apprenticeships across Berkshire

- The Borough had received a low ranking for the numbers of residents who were classified as being part of the economically active workforce. It was agreed that would be investigated and further information sent to members
- The cost base related to the overall cost of a business locating itself in an area
- The Local Futures rankings where positive for Bracknell Forest in many ways
- Whilst Bracknell Forest had a high level of corporate space it had low levels of availability and range of industrial and commercial space and this impacted in the Borough's ranking for its infrastructure
- Members thanked the Partnership for the work that it and the Thames Valley LEP were doing to improve journey times by rail to London Waterloo
- Crossrail would be a challenge to maintaining Bracknell's position in terms of train access to central London
- Members observed that Bracknell was less congested than Reading and encouraged officers to develop schemes to assist the movement of people around the Borough for example by using cycle ways

The Commission thanked David Cook and the Assistant Chief Executive for their update.

64. Appointment of Children's Social Care Representative

The Commission received a report seeking approval to co-opt a Children's Social Care representative on to the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

In 2010, it was decided that it would be appropriate for the externally drawn membership of the Panel to reflect the scope of the Panel's work and it was agreed that the Panel's membership would include a children's social care representative. The previous co-optee had resigned on 6 September 2013. Following a subsequent recruitment exercise one nomination had been received and the Commission were invited to consider her nomination to the vacancy.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission co-opt Catherine Barrett as a non-voting co-optee member on the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny panel, for a period expiring on 31 May 2015.

65. Executive Forward Plan

The Commission received, and noted, a report summarising the Executive Key and Non-Key decisions relating to corporate issues.

66. Quarterly Service Reports 2013/14

The Commission noted the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the Quarterly Service Reports for the third quarter of 2013/14 (October to December) relating to the Chief Executive's Office and the Corporate Services Department.

67. Corporate Performance Overview Report 2013/14

The Commission considered the Corporate Performance Overview Report detailing Council performance during the third quarter of the 2013/14 financial year (October to December 2013). Arising from Member's questions and comments the following points were noted:

- Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action had completed their reorganisation and it was considered that the level of risk attributed to a potential failure of the voluntary sector umbrella was now reduced
- The Local Government Association Equality Framework Peer Review was a four yearly review that examined and measured how well the Council met the standards contained within the Equalities Framework. It was an important review process that informed key inspections in other areas of the Council's work. Once the review had been completed an action plan would be developed to address any concerns identified. It was agreed that the Review Report would be circulated when it was available
- The figures for Indicator L035: Income from Leisure Facilities were cumulative figures
- The issues raised by Children, Young People and Learning staff in their exit interviews would be followed up , and more information would be provided to members on the level of staff turnover

68. Work Programme and Panel Activity Update

The Commission received a report providing an update on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2013-14 and Panel activity, with particular reference to the Working Groups of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

It was noted that the work stream activity of all Panels was on track. It was expected that the Commission Working Group reviewing the Re-Localisation of Business Rates would hold their first meeting in May 2014.

The Commission noted the report.

69. 2013/14 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

The Commission was informed that the first draft of the 2013/14 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report had been circulated to Commission Members for comments prior to consultation with the Corporate Management Team and the Executive. It was due to be submitted to the Full Council meeting on 30 April 2014.

CHAIRMAN