

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION**  
**17 July 2008**

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**EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF  
ROAD TRAFFIC CASUALTIES**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report invites the Commission to receive and consider the Executive's response to the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) report on Road Traffic Casualties.

**2 SUGGESTED ACTION**

- 2.1 **That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission receives and considers the Executive's response to the Overview and Scrutiny report on Road Traffic Casualties.**

**3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Following the adoption of the O&S report on Road Traffic Casualties by the Environment and Leisure O&S Panel and subsequently the O&S Commission, the Chairman of the O&S Commission formally sent the report to the Executive Member for Planning and Transportation, Councillor Mrs Ballin, on 13 May 2008. In that letter, the Executive member was asked to provide a written response to the report's recommendations, and was invited to present the response to the O&S Commission at its meeting on 17 July. The Report was included in the agenda for the last O&S Commission meeting, on 5 June 2008, and the report's conclusions and recommendations are attached, for information.
- 3.2 The Executive considered their response to this report at its meeting on 24 June.
- 3.3 At its meeting on 23 June 2008, the Environment, Culture and Communities O&S Panel accepted the three recommendations (5.6-5.8) addressed to that Panel.

Contact for further information

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

**Extract From 'Review of Road Traffic Casualties' Report From a Working Group of the Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

**4. Conclusions**

- 4.1 The Working Group found several deficiencies in the nature of the targets set by government in terms of their usefulness in assessing the true performance in RTC reduction. This deficiency is continued in part in the new National Indicators from April 2008. The nature of the BVPI's has somewhat overstated the underperformance against the targets.
- 4.2 As performance against the BVPI's is effectively on a rolling 12 month basis, the impact of the stretched target and the 2006 surge in injury numbers can be expected to cause a continuation of red traffic light BVPI indicators for KSI all- age and SI until the Spring of 2008. As the new National Indicators are on a three year basis, that impact will continue to apply to 2009.
- 4.3 Bracknell Forest's long-term trend in the reduction of road traffic casualties is much better than that required by the national targets, and the long term targets for the Borough are much more stretching than those national targets. Given the increasingly difficult task to further reduce what are already commendably low casualty figures, it is important that the Council's 'stretched targets' are reviewed to ensure they remain appropriate, and we note that this is being discussed with Government in the preparation of the new Local Area Agreement.
- 4.4 With relatively small numbers of casualties occurring, figures in any one year are more susceptible to variation by a high proportion due to chance factors. The Government has decided to average KSIs in this way when reporting the new National Indicators (NI). Given Bracknell Forest's relatively small size and low casualty numbers, measuring all types of casualty cases would benefit from this approach as well.
- 4.5 The reported under-achievement has occurred not in relation to the long-term target, but with the intermediate 2006 targets (see figures 1 and 3). All the in-year 2006 targets were much more demanding than a 'straight-line' reduction to achieve the long-term 2010 target. The reason for this appears to have been that to set a target less demanding than the previous year's performance would not have been appropriate – despite that having been done in previous years. The consequence was extremely demanding targets for 2006, almost requiring the full reduction due until 2010 in just one year. The increased intermediate target was clearly over-ambitious, and possibly the long term target too.
- 4.6 Individual years can contain large percentage variations due to the small actual numbers of casualties (for example, the target for children KSI is no more than 3 each year), making averaged outturns a more appropriate measure of performance than single year targets.
- 4.7 In recommending greater focus on long-term performance, the Working Group are mindful that the Council has no direct control over driver errors – the principal cause of collisions; also that investments in road safety are necessarily long-term in nature as are their returns, and it has to be accepted that there will be fluctuations in individual years. It would therefore be more appropriate to measure and report on outturns in relation to targets over a period greater than one year.

- 4.8 Coroners' verdicts on fatality cases are a useful source of information to understand the full causes of fatalities, and the adjudicated causes should be sought as a matter of routine for all fatality cases.

## **5. Recommendations of the Working Group**

To the Council's Executive, we recommend that:

- 5.1 The Council decides whether to adopt a local performance target for slight injuries, as the Government have ceased requiring this to be measured, and if so, this should be on a rolling three-year average basis.
- 5.2 The Council should consider, with its partners, its long term targets for casualty reduction, as set out in its Road Safety Plan and Service Plan. They need to be challenging yet achievable, and the current 'stretched targets' appear extremely ambitious.
- 5.3 The Council's annual targets should not set a step reduction in any one year, but instead be based on a straight-line reduction to the 2010 'stretched' BFBC targets.
- 5.4 The Council should ask government to change the methodology for computing performance on RTC reductions to take account of (a) growth and other contributory factors (paragraph 3.3 above refers); and (b) incorporating a progress measure against the national long-term target (paragraph 3.4 above refers).
- 5.5 Officers should standardise the form of a note to be issued to Local Members and the Executive Member for Planning and Transportation on the officially recorded circumstances of fatal road collisions and the causes of death issued by the Coroners Service. The Council should also use the information to demonstrate publicly that it has a full understanding of fatality cases and has both learnt what it can, and taken appropriate action in all cases.

To The Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel, we recommend that:

- 5.6 The work of the Working Group be regarded as concluded.
- 5.7 The Environment and Leisure O&S Panel considers mounting a separate and substantive review of operational issues affecting road traffic casualties as part of its work programme, but as a low priority.
- 5.8 This report should be copied to all Thames Valley Highway Authorities for their information and interest.