

**SOCIAL CARE & LEARNING OVERVIEW &  
SCRUTINY PANEL  
25 MARCH 2009  
7.30 - 9.55 PM**



**Present:**

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Mrs Angell, Mrs Barnard, Mrs Beadsley, Dudley, Harrison and Osborne  
Miss V Richardson, Teachers' Representative

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Ms Whitbread, Kensall, Mrs McCracken, Mrs Ryder, Turrell and Ms Wilson  
Mr G S Anderson, Church Representative  
Dr P Josephs-Franks, Parent Governor Representative  
Mr I Sharland, Parent Governor Representative

**Also Present:**

Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview & Scrutiny  
Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Scrutiny)  
Lesley Heale, Director of Social Care & Learning  
David Jones, Senior Lifelong Learning Officer  
Katharine Simpson, Democratic Services Officer  
David Watkins, Chief Officer: Performance & Resources  
Bob Welch, Chief Advisor: Learning & Achievement

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

The Panel noted the attendance of the following substitute member:

Councillor Harrison for Councillor Turrell.

**54. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings of the Panel held on 17 December 2008 and 17 March 2009 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

**Matters Arising**

Social Care and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel Meeting 17 March 2009:  
Minute 52

The Director of Social Care and Learning clarified the purpose of Contact Point to the Panel. Contact Point was an electronic database that had been developed following the Climbié enquiry. The database contained details of every child in the country and provided appropriately accredited professionals and voluntary sector workers who had concerns about a child with information about which authorities and professionals had come into contact with the child.

The information contained on the database was covered by the Data Protection Act and safeguards were in place to prevent unauthorised access to data.

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

Councillor Mrs Birch declared a personal interest as her spouse was the Executive Portfolio Holder for Adult Services, Health and Housing.

Councillor Mrs Barnard declared a personal interest as her spouse was the Executive Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People.

There were no indications that members would be participating whilst under the party whip.

**56. Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

**57. Performance Monitoring Report**

The Director of Social Care and Learning presented the Performance Monitoring Report (PMR) for the Social Care and Learning Department.

Key highlights for the Department during the third quarter of 2008/09 included: the results of the external inspections of Adult Services which received a three star outstanding rating (the highest rating possible) and Children's Services which received a three star good rating, the development of commissioning strategies for sensory needs and people with dementia, the successful Ofsted inspection of College Hall Pupil Referral Unit and the appointment of 15 family support advisors to work in 22 of the Borough's schools.

Through proactive management of services and preventative work, there was a forecast underspend of £450,000 in the revenue budget.

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

- The demand lead nature of the provision of educational placements for students with special educational needs meant that it was not always possible to accurately predict demand. Work to improve placement provision had resulted in fewer placements having to be made outside the Borough and a resulting underspend of £156,000 which would be used to compensate for overspends in previous years.
- Connexions had been asked to investigate possible causes of the increasing numbers of 16 to 18 year olds not in employment, education or training (NEET) and the detailed results of their findings would be circulated to the Panel. Connexions had been commissioned to provide some provision in Wokingham however one of their providers had concluded that the provision was being provided in the wrong place.
- The NEET cohort was a priority group for the Borough and a working group would be looking in detail at how performance in this area might be improved.
- Secondary schools continued to experience difficulty recruiting high quality specialist maths and science teachers and head teachers were working to address this particular area.

- There had been a decline in the number of Key Stage 4 modern foreign language courses as these were no longer compulsory. Detailed information was available from the Chief Officer: Learning and Achievement.
- Work to recruit an officer to manage the contracts for external placements of looked after children was ongoing. An internal candidate had been identified but training them to the standard that the specialised position required would take time.
- Work was taking place to align Council and partner organisations' data sets so that a detailed picture of needs in the Borough could be developed.
- Annex C Action 9.5: Provide advice and support to vulnerable people to help maintain them in their own homes would include those individuals and families of working age with disabilities and adults with mental health difficulties. The challenge for the Department was ensuring that information about the options available to people was disseminated thoroughly.

#### **58. Presentation on the 'Grow Our Own' Project**

David Jones, Senior Lifelong Learning Officer, gave a presentation and circulated information on the work of the Grow Our Own Project.

The Grow Our Own project was set up in 2005, as a partnership between Bracknell Forest Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, to provide employment support and training to local residents to enable them to gain new or better employment both as an immediate response to new jobs, or with a view to becoming job ready in the future. Grow Our Own was not a stand alone project rather it worked with other groups and agencies to identify where value could be added to existing services and what additional support, help or infrastructure was required to assist their clients to gain employment.

The Project was funded by a combination of funding from the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and both unitary authorities. The slow progress of the regeneration of Bracknell Forest had meant that it had not been possible to use Section 106 funding to match fund SEEDA's contribution; consequently the project had to date only been fully operational in Windsor and Maidenhead.

A bid for Section 106 funding, currently ring fenced for employment training and improving skills, was being prepared by the Lifelong Learning Team, for submission to the Executive and full Council for approval. If successful this would be used to match fund SEEDA's contribution and fully implement the project in Bracknell Forest from August 2009.

The Panel thanked David Jones for his presentation and wished the Lifelong Learning Team well with the project. It was agreed that an update would be given to the Panel once the project was up and running in Bracknell Forest.

#### **59. Approach to Overview and Scrutiny of Bracknell Forest Partnership**

The Panel considered a report detailing the proposed approach to overview and scrutiny of the Bracknell Forest Partnership. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission together with the Health and Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panels had also been invited to consider the proposed approach in the interests of uniformity.

The suggested approach served to implement the recommendations contained in the Overview and Scrutiny Report on the Local Area Agreement in 2008. Whilst the Council held the statutory lead for overview and scrutiny of partnerships, the partnership was particularly strong in Bracknell Forest and representatives of partner organisations would be involved in the process to ensure that a genuinely collaborative approach was developed, that the goodwill and co-operation of partners was secured and for the process to benefit from the wider sharing and application of knowledge and different perspectives.

The Panel were informed that the governance protocols of the Bracknell Forest Partnership stated that the Council would facilitate the scrutiny of the Partnership through its overview and scrutiny process and that this would include scrutiny of the membership of the Partnership and the way organisations and individuals were selected for representation.

The Panel endorsed the proposed approach to Overview and Scrutiny of the Bracknell Forest Partnership as set out in Annex 1 of the report.

#### **60. Services for People with Learning Disabilities**

The Panel received the outcome of the review of services for people with learning disabilities undertaken by a working group of the Panel.

The Panel were informed that since the working group's inception rapid changes in government policy in relation to modernising social care and the adoption of the Bracknell Forest 14-19 Years Education Plan during the past year had significantly overtaken the subject matter of the Working Group's review. However, the Working Group had identified a number of issues that remained relevant and it had been decided that rather than writing a full report a letter would be sent to the relevant Executive Members summarising these findings.

The Panel noted the contents of the letter and its appended summary relating to the review of services for people with learning disabilities and commended it to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission for adoption and sending formally to the relevant Executive Members.

The Chairman thanked the Working Group for their work.

#### **61. Executive Response to the English as an Additional Language Report**

The Panel noted the Executive Portfolio Holder for Education and Libraries' response to the review of the implications of English as an additional language in Bracknell Forest schools undertaken by a working group of the Panel.

The Panel thanked the Executive Member for his detailed response.

#### **62. Update on Working Groups**

The Panel received a report providing an update on the Panel's Working Groups and noted that the Panel had now completed all outstanding review work from the previous year's work programme.

### 14 -19 Year Education Plan

The working group was progressing well, with fortnightly meetings taking place. Meetings would be arranged with local employers and businesses to ascertain how they would work with the Council to help implement the 14 -19 Years Education Plan.

The Panel noted the report.

#### 63. **Overview and Scrutiny Quarterly Progress Report**

The Panel considered a report outlining the activities of all the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panels and the Commission over the past quarter and summarising significant national developments in overview and scrutiny and seeking agreement to the Panel's indicative work programme for 2009/10.

The Panel were informed that the implications that the Police and Justice Act 2006 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 would have on the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function were being examined.

Work to fill the two vacancies on the Panel for Social Care Representatives had been delayed and complicated by a number of factors. The matter would be pursued once the possible restructure of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels had been agreed.

The Panel:

- i. Noted the overview and scrutiny activity over the period November 2008 to January 2009.
- ii. Noted the national legislative developments in overview and scrutiny set out in section 3 of the report.
- iii. Endorsed the draft indicative work programme for the panel for the 2009/10 municipal year

#### 64. **Executive Forward Plan**

The Panel noted the items on the Executive Forward Plan relating to the Social Care and Learning Department.

#### 65. **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

**RESOLVED** that pursuant to section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 and having regard to the public interest, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of item 14 which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of that Act:

(3) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority).

#### 66. **Update on the Re-roofing of The Pines School**

Following the exclusion of the public and press, the Panel considered a report outlining the issues that had arisen in connection with the re-roofing of The Pines School.

The Panel noted that the project management of the re-roofing of the school had not been sufficiently robust to prevent problems escalating and that steps had been taken to remedy this and prevent the situation reoccurring elsewhere.

The Panel supported the recommendations contained in the report and felt that, as the matter raised concerns about the robustness of the procurement process the Overview and Scrutiny Commission might be interested in reviewing it.

**67. Parent Governor Panel Representation**

The Chairman informed the Panel that Ian Sharland had resigned from his position of Parent Governor at Crown Wood Primary School and consequently was no longer eligible to sit on the Panel.

It was agreed that a letter would be set by the Chairman, on behalf of the Panel, to Ian Sharland thanking him for all his work for the Panel and that a replacement Parent Governor Representative be sought.

**CHAIRMAN**