

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
11 JUNE 2009
7.30 - 9.30 PM**



Present:

Councillors Edger (Chairman), McLean (Vice-Chairman), Finnie, Harrison, Mrs McCracken, Turrell and Virgo.

Parent Governor Representative Members:

Dr P Josephs-Franks

Also Present:

Councillor McCracken, Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs Birch, Mrs Shillcock, Ms Whitbread and Worrall.
Mr G S Anderson

In Attendance:

Tim Wheadon, Chief Executive
Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services
Victor Nicholls, Assistant Chief Executive
Ian Boswell, Safer Communities Manager
Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Priya Patel, Democratic Services Officer

4. Welcome and Substitute Members

The Chairman welcomed the new members that had recently joined the membership of the Commission.

Councillor Browne attended in place of Councillor Worrall and Councillor Beadsley attended in place of Councillor Mrs Shillcock.

5. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Commission held on 1 April and 6 May 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising

Minute 75: The Commission were informed that Michael Gibbons had now left the Portsmouth Diocese and that the Diocese should be appointing a new representative to the membership of the Commission.

Minute 78: It was reported that the Extended Schools Services Working Group report had been presented to the Executive Briefing by Councillor Mrs Birch and had been well received.

Minute 81: It was reported that the Board of Bracknell Forest Partnership had endorsed the proposed approach to partnership scrutiny at its meeting on 21 May.

6. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor Mrs McCracken declared a personal interest in Item 5: Review of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Theme Partnership, as the spouse of the Executive Member for Public Protection.

There were no other declarations of interest.

7. Review of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Theme Partnership

The Chairman drew attention to the fact that for this agenda item, the Commission was meeting as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee, also that partnership working was more advanced in Bracknell Forest than in many other boroughs. The Chairman and the Lead Officer of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP), outlined the work of the CDRP for members. They reported that the CDRP was a statutory body which started in 1998 and included five organisations as statutory bodies; the Local Authority, Police, Police Authority, Fire Service and PCT. There were also other non-statutory members.

They outlined the six key priority areas for the CDRP which included; i) reducing crime, ii) reducing the perceptions of crime, iii) community issues, iv) reducing the harm caused by drugs and alcohol, v) anti-social behaviour, and vi) regeneration and development. Members noted the connection between these and the Council's own priorities.

Some of the successes of the CDRP included a 20% reduction in recorded crime in 2007-08, improved connections with neighbourhood forums and the local area policing board. Other successes included the Community Nuisance & Disorder Information System, schools knife crime DVD competition, joint tasking and the establishment of an e-safety sub-group.

Some of the challenges for the partnership included funding, the exchange of information and the 'prevent' agenda on extremism and terrorism. Members noted the small upward movement on many crime indicators in the last nine months. If additional funding were to be made available, this might be allocated to more preventative work.

In response to members queries, the Safer Communities Manager informed members that the Prolific and Priority Offenders (PPO) Scheme was an initiative set up by the Government to deal with the small number of offenders who continually committed crime. There were currently 14 PPO's in Bracknell Forest, of these, seven were either in custody or receiving treatment of some form.

The Safer Communities Manager informed members that the CDRP's governance arrangements were sound and that self assessment would be completed shortly.

The Commission agreed that the Chairman, the Head of Overview and Scrutiny and the Safer Communities Manager would meet to discuss how the Commission could effectively scrutinise the CDRP and what areas and issues could potentially be scrutinised.

8. Services for People with Learning Disabilities - Executive Response to Working Group Report

The Commission thanked the working group for a good piece of work and commended the working group for consulting a high number of individuals throughout their review.

Members noted that the Executive response had been considered and accepted by the Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Members also noted that a Working Group of the Children's Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel was reviewing the provision of educational services to people with learning disabilities by Bracknell and Wokingham College. Councillor Virgo stated that the issue around pupils with learning disabilities who were travelling long distances to courses, as a result of Bracknell & Wokingham College not providing courses suited to their needs, had been raised strongly with the Principal of the college.

The Commission noted the response of the Executive to the review.

9. Executive Forward Plan

Members asked if it would be possible to be given more detail on the financial impact of each decision being taken in the Executive Work Programme, to allow them to more effectively scrutinise decisions. The Head of Overview and Scrutiny was asked to find out by consulting the Borough Treasurer, if more detail can be offered in the Financial Impact section of the Executive Report.

The Assistant Chief Executive informed members that the item on Winchester House had recently been removed from the plan.

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny was asked to explore the possibility of arranging another session of member training on finance scrutiny, as members who had attended this training had found it to be useful.

10. Annual Audit and Inspection Letter - For Information

The Commission noted the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter of March 2009 from the Audit Commission, which was considered by the Governance and Audit Committee at its meeting on 29 April 2009.

11. Performance Monitoring Reports (PMR)

Chief Executive's Office

The Assistant Chief Executive reported the highlights for the Chief Executive's Office for quarter four:

- Lots of work around partnerships, much of which had been pioneering,
- Completing the Local Area Agreement refresh,

- Established an economic task group of officers to respond to the recession and challenges faced, this included Chief Officers from each department. A copy of the action plan would be circulated to Members.
- 65 detailed actions had been achieved out of 71.

It was also reported that there had been issues around data quality and that there was now a strategy in place. The strategy would be rolled out and progress would be reported back to the Commission.

In terms of looking forward, the Chief Executive's Office would be completing the Staff Survey, relaunching the CDRP Plan, progressing the Comprehensive Area Assessment and developing the Economic Action Plan.

Corporate Services

The Director of Corporate Services reported the following highlights from the last quarter for the department as well as looking forward at what the department would be doing over the coming months including:

- Legal Services had carried out a lot of work around Corporate Governance, Planning enforcement and Section 106 agreements. Part of the legal team had been transferred to Bracknell Forest Homes.
- The Community Cohesion Strategy and equality schemes would be brought before the Commission in the autumn.
- Planning was underway for the autumn 2009 neighbourhood consultation process.
- Customer Services counters had been consolidated so that only Easthampstead House and Time Square now had reception desks. The counter service at Easthampstead House had also been closed and pay points at Post Offices were operational.
- The department had achieved a 97.5% council tax collection rate, with 78% paying by direct debit.
- Holding the elections to the European Parliament
- Work had been undertaken around the Government Connect initiative.
- The department had a lower than national average staff turnover, staff vacancy and sickness rates. In response to members queries in relation to high sickness rates in two particular sections of the department, it was reported that these were long standing cases of staff with chronic illnesses, which had recently been brought to conclusion.

The Director responded to Members' questions on reception arrangements, Enid Wood House, the Civic Hub review, the Internal Audit recommendation on the Cashiers function, the new civic vehicle and the budget implications of the Pericles IT system.

12. Review of the Council's Older People's Strategy

The Commission noted the letter sent to the Executive concerning the review of the Council's Older People's Strategy by a Working Group of the Commission. The Commission was informed that the Older People's Strategy was due to be considered by the Executive in the following week and that the vast number of recommendations made by the working group had been accepted and incorporated into the report.

The Head of Overview & Scrutiny was asked to investigate the delays and costs of the lifts at Bracknell's train station and to inform Councillor Finnie.

13. **Report of the Working Group on Waste and Recycling Services**

The Commission adopted the amended report of the review of waste and recycling undertaken by a working group of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel for sending formally to the relevant Executive Member.

14. **Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2009/10**

The Head of Overview & Scrutiny reported that the indicative work programme attached to the agenda papers had now been approved by Council. The former Social Care and Learning O&S Panel work programme had been split into Adult Social Care and Children's Services & Learning to reflect the newly constituted panels. Two O&S panels had now agreed their work programmes, one of these had made some minor changes.

It was agreed that once all O&S Panels had commented on their work programmes, a revised overall programme would be brought back to the Commission to be adopted.

15. **Overview and Scrutiny Quarterly Progress Report**

The Commission noted the quarterly progress report on Overview and Scrutiny.

16. **Updates from Panel Chairmen**

Adult Social Care O&S Scrutiny Panel

The Chairman reported that the Panel had recently met at Heathlands with a busy agenda. Some of the major areas that the Panel would be considering would be the Transforming Social Care agenda and Safeguarding Adults.

Joint East Berkshire Health O&S Committee

Councillor Virgo reported that one issue that this Committee was currently considering was car parking charges at hospitals. The Committee had used a Freedom of Information request to glean information from the Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals NHS Trust on this issue. It was found that Heatherwood and Wexham Park hospitals had taken £800,000 in a year in car park charges. The Committee felt that this was not acceptable, particularly in the current climate. It was known that a private company were involved in charges and so the Committee were investigating how much net revenue the hospital actually gained from charges.

CHAIRMAN

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