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# Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/08

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## Further Information

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For further information on the work of Overview and Scrutiny in Bracknell Forest, please visit our website on <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/scrutiny>

## **1 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FUNCTION**

This Annual Report, on the Overview and Scrutiny function of Bracknell Forest Borough Council, is submitted to Council for consideration under the terms of its Constitution.

In this last year we have seen the consolidation and development of the scrutiny process, that was started under the leadership of my predecessor, Councillor Michael Sargeant, and which has been reported upon with favour recently by a Corporate Performance Assessment inspection team.

This municipal year's work was helped from the start by the previous administration identifying a number of issues for scrutiny, which ensured that newly elected Panels had something to build on from the start. These were developed and added to, creating a challenging programme of reviews that are now being worked upon. By necessity this work will continue into the next municipal year.

An encouraging aspect of this part of the Council's commitment to transparent and efficient administration (amply demonstrated by its achieving a 4-star grading recently), is the way by which Members are now engaged in scrutiny. I believe the Executive has recognised the contribution scrutiny can make to its decision-making responsibilities and that this input has had some influence and impact; which is outlined in the individual Panel reports in this document.

Another important development is the way in which both Panels and the Commission have been asked to look at emerging matters outside the planned programme. Although this places pressure on members to respond quickly we have coped successfully so far. In this respect it is important that sufficient flexibility is allowed in the work programme to ensure that responses of this kind are effective and have value and my colleagues and I are conscious of this.

I am also aware of the added pressures placed on our small Overview and Scrutiny team of officers at times. The professional way in which they support and advise the scrutiny working groups is excellent and they deserve much credit for this. A case does exist for additional resource to be committed to enhance the scrutiny commitment, and I am encouraged that changes are in train to address this and to tackle the growing agenda which Government has signalled with the scrutiny of partnerships.

In conclusion, I believe the value of this service has been well-demonstrated over the last year and that our Overview and Scrutiny performance will go from strength to strength. Our procedures must adapt and develop to the changes taking place around us and I have every confidence in our ability to do this.

I commend this report to the Council.



**Councillor RC Edger OBE**  
**Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Commission**

**April 2008**

## **2 STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AT BRACKNELL FOREST**

### **Legal and Constitutional Background**

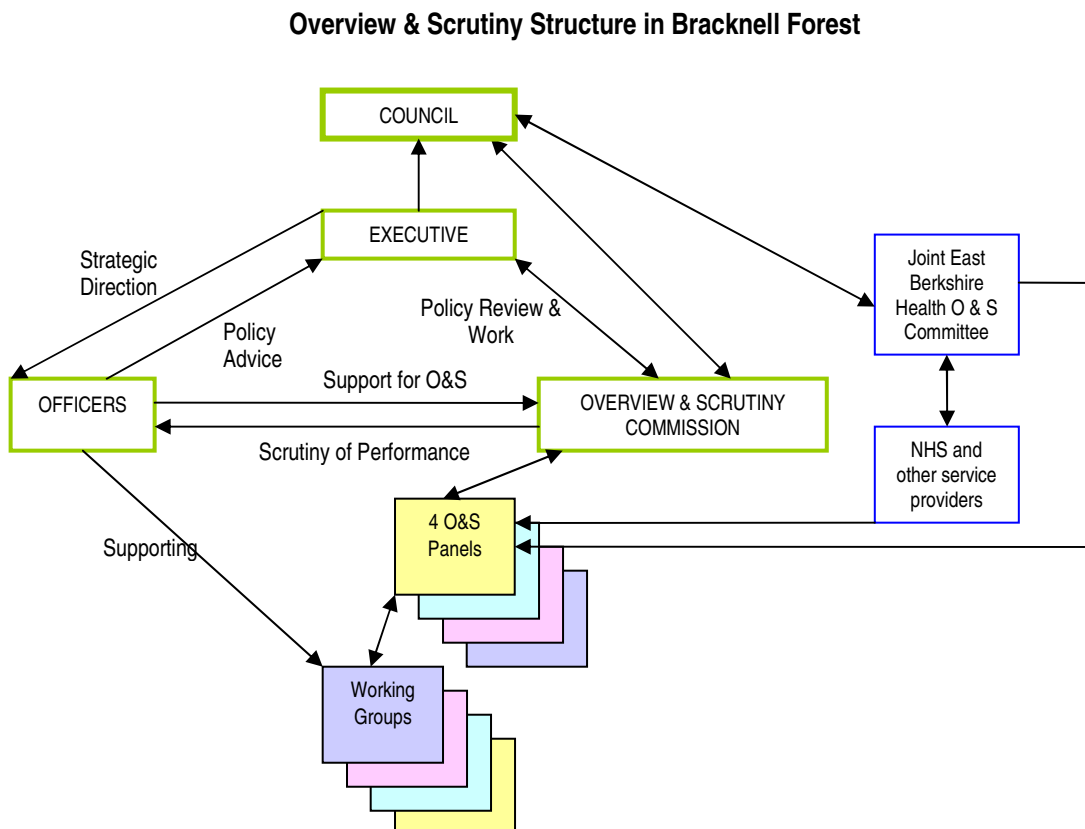
2.1 Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) has been a legal requirement on Local Authorities since 2001, under the Local Government Act 2000. Parts 3 and 4.8 of the Council's Constitution set out the framework for Overview and Scrutiny at Bracknell Forest. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Panels have two main functions, namely, holding the Executive to account ("scrutiny") and conducting policy reviews into areas of the Council's services with a view to making recommendations for improvement ("overview"). Operating in a similar vein to select committees in the House of Commons, the work of Overview and Scrutiny falls broadly into the following areas:

- Holding the Council's Executive (its main decision making body) to account in the public interest to enable more transparent and effective decision making. This includes the power to 'call-in' unimplemented decisions and refer them back to the decision maker for reconsideration with possible suggestions for improvement.
- Supporting the development of effective policies and initiatives which have a beneficial impact on the community through policy review and development. Policy reviews are generally undertaken by working groups of the Commission and Panels comprising a small number of Councillors and co-opted members who, with the support of officers, undertake investigative work, consult stakeholders, take evidence and carry out occasional site visits before formulating recommendations for improvement.
- Contributing to continuous improvement in services through monitoring quarterly departmental performance reports and the implementation of improvement plans.
- Having a positive impact on the work and outcomes of external agencies and providers of public services. Although work to date has concentrated mainly on health providers, the scrutiny of other organisations which provide services to residents of the Borough is increasing, in line with legislation and government policy.
- Aiding Councillors in engaging with their communities and playing the role of community representatives and leaders.

Overview and Scrutiny is non-partisan, and a consensual approach is adopted by members. Its main value is in holding the Council and other service providers to account, rigorously monitoring performance, and in its capacity to inform and influence the actions of the Council and its partners. This is all aimed at helping to make sure that Bracknell Forest residents get good and improving services and a better quality of life.

## Overview and Scrutiny Structure

2.2 The following diagram depicts Overview and Scrutiny's structure and relationship with the Executive, officers, and external organisations.



2.3 The Overview and Scrutiny function at Bracknell Forest is coordinated by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission. The coordination role of the Commission includes developing a work programme of overview and scrutiny reviews and policy development projects and, with Council approval, appointing a number of Overview and Scrutiny Panels. There are currently four Overview and Scrutiny Panels, namely Lifelong Learning and Children's Services, Adult Social Care and Housing, Environment and Leisure, and Health. This structure is kept under review to ensure it remains efficient. The O&S Commission and Panels establish Working Groups as necessary to progress specific reviews, and the Working Groups in 2007/08 are listed in Appendix 2.

### Organisation of Overview and Scrutiny Work

2.4 In addition to its coordination and general role, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission specifically concentrates on the activities of the Chief Executive's Office and the Corporate Services Department, with the same functions as the

Panels below; it acts as the Council's audit committee; and it undertake its own cross-cutting reviews when required.

2.5 The terms of reference of the Lifelong Learning and Children's Services, Adult Social Care and Housing and Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panels are:

- To conduct identified scrutiny reviews or policy development projects preparing evidence based reports with recommendations for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.
- At the request of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, to review decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any Council functions and to consider any matter affecting the Borough or its inhabitants.
- To monitor performance through the Council's Quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports, questioning the relevant executive portfolio holders and senior officers reporting to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission where necessary.

2.6 The Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel undertakes all the statutory functions of a scrutiny committee in accordance with section 7 of the Health and Social Care Act 2001 relating to reviewing and scrutinising health service matters.

2.7 The work of the Commission and Panels is steered by a work programme which is agreed by the Commission at the beginning of each municipal year in consultation with the Executive and Corporate Management Team. The work programme features policy reviews and performance monitoring in relation to policy objectives, performance targets and particular service areas through regular performance/audit reports and budget consultation and monitoring. The Work Programme is flexible, allowing the addition of new reviews as the need arises.

2.8 To facilitate the well-informed, smooth and effective working of O&S, Bracknell Forest has developed a number of arrangements including:

- Induction and refresher training for Members on O&S, this having been particularly important for newly elected Councillors in 2007.
- Quarterly meetings between each O&S Chairman, Vice-Chairman, relevant Executive Portfolio holder and Director, to discuss recent and planned O&S activities in each Panel's/Commission's area, and for agenda planning purposes.
- Quarterly reports to the Corporate Management Team on all O&S activity, and published with the Commission and Panel meeting papers.
- An O&S 'Protocol' setting out the various responsibilities of O&S Members, Directors and other officers in regard to the production of reports and other working arrangements.
- Having departmental link officers on all O&S reviews, to brief Members and to advise on the focus and methodology for reviews.
- An enhanced and more informative section on O&S on the Council's website.

- Engaging independent experts to assist O&S Members on specialised reviews, and bringing partner organisations such as Town and Parish Councils into our reviews as appropriate.
- Developing our external contacts on O&S. For example, Bracknell Forest hosted a visit from O&S Members in Herefordshire County Council; we have regularly attended South East Employers and Centre for Public Scrutiny conferences; we presented to O&S members and officers from the West Berkshire councils our experience of the Joint East Berkshire Health O&S Committee; and we visited Wycombe District Council to relate how our O&S function works.

2.9 The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Members also take their work out into the community. For example in 2007/08, the Lifelong Learning and Children's Services Panel had a meeting in Garth Hill college and had a tour of the new development site, a Working Group met some of the Carers in the Borough at a tea party at a local church, and another Working Group visited Bracknell Leisure Centre to see at first hand the provision of leisure facilities for adults with learning disabilities.

*Councillors visiting Bracknell Leisure Centre*



2.10 Bracknell Forest's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements were independently assessed by the Audit Commission in 2007/08 as part of the Corporate Assessment of the Council, and their report of February 2008 made the following comments:

*“Overview and scrutiny is good, rigorously challenging performance and this leads to improved services. This is evident in the recent improvements made in adult social services and in the robust challenge it is pursuing to increase health funding for the area.*

*The Councils overview and scrutiny function provides good challenge to the Council Executive and this has been used effectively to review and maintain focus on priority areas such as in environmental issues and in improving adult social services and health funding.*

*Scrutiny is effective in challenging and supporting policy development.*

*Scrutiny capacity to challenge and support the Council's executive is good. It has good officer support and engages actively in the scrutiny of performance and decision-making."*



**3 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION**  
**Chairman – Councillor Bob Edger OBE**  
Vice Chairman – Councillor Clifton Thompson



The Commission met five times in the 2007/08 municipal year in addition to an Annual Meeting held for the purpose of appointing its Chairman and Vice Chairman. Details of the Commission's membership and dates of meetings are in Appendix 1. The work of the Commission during the year, summarised below, centred on corporate issues. Through co-ordination of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, including consideration and approval of the work programme, the Commission also maintained coverage of the full range of the Council's activities and those of its Health partners.

Overview and Policy Development

The Commission reviewed and approved reports raised by Working Groups of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Panels for the onward consideration by the Executive, including: reviews of Healthcare Funding; the draft Health and Well Being Strategy, and the Council's Medium Term Objectives. In all cases the Commission was satisfied with the response received from the Executive. It also contributed to, and monitored the progress of important Council policy areas, such as the Community Cohesion Strategy, Neighbourhood Action Groups and the ICT Strategy. The Commission received briefings on Community Safety, the Local Area Agreement and legislative changes in prospect concerning the scrutiny of partner organisations, these being continuing matters for attention.

Performance Monitoring

Commission members reviewed the performance of the Corporate Services Department and the Chief Executive's Office, mainly through their Quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports, allowing them to question Executive Members and officers in detail about the trends, pressures and priorities for these areas. They also maintained a rolling review of the Council's Corporate Performance Overview quarterly reports. The Commission's conclusions and recommendations were wide-ranging, for example asking the Council to provide further information on proposals to maintain the commercial heart of Bracknell town centre during its regeneration, crime rates, and residents' satisfaction with bus services. Members were generally reassured by the high standards of performance set and adhered to, and will continue to keep under review the few exceptions encountered, such as the need to speed up the roll-out of the Council's strategic risk management arrangements.

Holding the Executive to Account

The Commission kept a watching brief on the Executive's decisions and forward plan, raising various issues including the Neighbourhood consultation process, and it had no occasion to make or review any "call-ins" during 2007/08. The Commission was pleased that Executive Members regularly attended its meetings.

The Commission received the Executive's responses to the Overview and Scrutiny reports on the reviews of Libraries, Youth Provision, Anti-Social Behaviour, and Healthcare Funding, and discussed those responses directly with the Executive

members and officers concerned.

### Budget Consultation

The Commission considered the Council's budget proposals for 2008/09 and questioned officers on them, and in the consultation response drew attention to: the need to correct some fees; the need for further information on some fees; and a request for a larger budget to support Overview and Scrutiny work.

### Working Groups

The Commission established three Working Groups to progress the scrutiny of specific issues:

#### Medium Term Objectives

Established to review the Council's proposed new high-level corporate objectives for 2008-2011, the Working Group made a number of recommendations to revise the draft Medium Term Objectives, most of which were accepted by the Executive. This review demonstrated how Overview and Scrutiny makes a constructive input to the formulation of Council policies, and how we have influenced important issues in a timely way through proactive engagement with the Council's political and operational leadership.

#### Healthcare Funding

This need for this review arose from the Berkshire East Primary Care Trust disclosing that Bracknell Forest had been under funded since 2002 by about £4m annually, by reference to the government formula for Primary Care Trusts. The report of the Working Group made a number of recommendations to the PCT and the Council's Executive Member, and the Commission was satisfied with their responses. We also drew the Commission's concerns to the attention of the Borough's Members of Parliament, and these were subsequently raised with the government's Health Minister. The Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel is continuing to monitor the healthcare funding for the Borough.

#### Scrutiny of the Local Area Agreement

A Working Group was formed to provide an input from Overview and Scrutiny into the Council's consultation on the 'Improvement Themes' for the new Local Area Agreement (LAA) from April 2008. The Working Group intends to continue its work to review the wider governance and other arrangements for the LAA.

### Audit and Inspection

Two members of the Commission continued to act as Lead Members on audit issues.

Commission members regularly reviewed reports by the Council's internal and external auditors, and paid particular attention to the relatively few issues of concern in those reports. The Commission was encouraged by the very positive annual report on governance, also the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter by the External Auditors, and the Internal Audit Annual Assurance Report and Statement on Internal Control.

The Commission wrote formally to the Council's internal audit contractors about delays in progressing internal audit work due to under-resourcing and received positive reassurances that the necessary resources would be deployed in future.

The Commission received a presentation from the District Auditor of the Audit Commission on their audit approach, consequent on the transfer of external audit appointment from KPMG.

A further meeting of the Commission is scheduled to take place on 13 March 2008 before the end of the current municipal year and it is anticipated that the meeting will consider the Internal Audit Plan for 2007/08, the draft Annual Report of O&S, the annual report on Community Cohesion, the Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring Reports, and a Procurement update report.

Looking to the future, a range of strategic reviews which it is believed the Commission could usefully pursue in the 2008/09 municipal year is set out in Appendix 3.

#### 4 ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Chairman – Councillor Alan Browne

Vice Chairman – Councillor Ian Leake



The Panel will have met four times during the 2007/08 Municipal year in addition to an Annual Meeting held for the purpose of appointing its Chairman and Vice Chairman. Details of the Panel's membership and dates of meetings are set out in Appendix 1. The work of the Panel during the year, summarised below, centred on the Council's Social Services and Housing Department, which provides a wide range of adult social care and housing services to residents of the Borough including the vulnerable.

##### Overview and Policy Development

Panel members were kept informed of proposals to transfer the Council's housing stock to Bracknell Forest Homes, reviewed implementation of the Supporting People Action Plan and were updated on the review of the Adult Treatment Plan by the Drug and Alcohol Action Team. Members also visited Social Services centres and services in the Borough.

##### Performance Monitoring

The performance of the Social Services and Housing Department was reviewed by the Panel primarily through its Performance Monitoring Reports which gave Members an opportunity to question the Executive Member and officers in detail about the trends, pressures and priorities for this service area. This led to a number of questions and requests for further information and action including the take up of Direct Payments, the length of stay in temporary accommodation, partnership working and inspection of the Council's housing stock prior to transfer. Performance was also reviewed through monitoring the action plan for adult social care and consideration of the Commission for Social Care Inspection's annual review meeting and performance rating. The latter reflected the remarkable improvement in performance achieved during the course of one year leading to Social Services being awarded a grading of two stars out of a possible maximum of three and being ranked as the 18<sup>th</sup> best performer in the Country.

##### Working Groups

The Panel established three working groups to review the following areas:

Carers – This Working Group is exploring the nature and range of information describing services available to carers, assessing the accessibility of services to support carers and examining the delivery and quality of services to carers. The review is progressing well and the Working Group has interviewed internal and external witnesses and spoken to a group of carers. It is anticipated that the review will be completed in summer 2008.

Social Care Modernisation Agenda – This review seeks to build Members' understanding of the social care modernisation agenda, which provides for adults with learning and other disabilities and seeks to offer them greater choice and

independence in their lives, and to assess the Council's progress in implementing this modernisation agenda, with particular reference to adults with learning disabilities in the light of the 'Valuing People' guidance from the Department of Health and best practice nationally. The Working Group has made good progress and is expected to conclude its work in summer 2008.

Care Homes – The purpose of this Working Group is to explore the operation of the Council's Care Homes and establish how the Council satisfies itself that Council-supported Care Homes are run well and to recommend actions to address any identified service shortcomings. The review is in its early stages and has commenced with visits to Social Services centres and services.

#### Holding the Executive to Account

The Panel kept a watching brief on the Executive's decisions and reviewed relevant Executive forward plan items at each meeting. It has not had occasion to make or review any 'call-ins' during 2007/08 to date.

#### Budget Consultation

The key themes and priorities for the Social Services and Housing Department as outlined in the Council's draft budget proposals for 2008/09 were examined by the Panel. Members sought clarification as to whether fees charged to the Adult Social Care section were levied on an hourly or weekly basis.

A further meeting of the Panel is scheduled to take place on 11 March 2008 before the end of the current municipal year when it is anticipated that the Panel will consider departmental performance through the Performance Monitoring Report for the third quarter of 2007/08, part II of the Director of Social Services and Housing's action plan, Executive forward plan items and a progress report on the Panel's working groups will be received.

Looking forward, a range of strategic reviews which the Panel could usefully pursue in the 2008/09 municipal year is set out in Appendix 3.



*Panel Members meeting the Council's award-winning Adult Social Services Dementia Team*

## 5 ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

**Chairman – Councillor Marc Brunel-Walker**

Vice Chairman – Councillor James Finnie



Three meetings of the Panel took place during the 2007/08 Municipal year in addition to the Annual Meeting, which was held for the purpose of appointing its Chairman and Vice Chairman. A further meeting of the Panel is due to be held in March 2008. Details of the Panel's membership and dates of meetings are set out in Appendix 1. The work of the Panel during the year, summarised below, centred on the Council's Environment and Leisure Department, which provides a wide range of important front line services to millions of people and businesses every year.

### Overview and Policy Development

Panel members contributed to the development of the Council's Local Development Framework, and were kept informed of developments on Emergency Response planning, the Best Value Review of Leisure Services, the Community Arts Development Plan, the outcome of Mystery Customer Visits and the Corporate Travel Plan.

### Performance Monitoring

The Panel reviewed the performance of the Environment and Leisure Department mainly through their Performance Monitoring Reports, allowing it to question Executive Members and officers in detail about the trends, pressures and priorities for this major service area. This gave rise to a number of issues which the Panel have kept a watching brief on, including for example the 'bring banks', and staff turnover and sickness absence rates.

### Working Groups

The panel established three Working Groups to progress the scrutiny of specific issues:

Waste Review This strategic review of waste disposal, refuse collection and recycling includes the examination of progress of the new waste Private Finance Initiative Re3 contract and also the experience of the first year of the Alternative Bin Collection (ABC) scheme. The Working group has made good progress, and is likely to conclude its work in May 2008.

Street Cleaning/Street Scene This group is reviewing the standard of street cleansing throughout the Borough with a view to identifying measures to reduce the amount of litter. As a possible second stage to the review, this might extend to consider the wider environmental aspects of the street scene and possible improvements. The Working Group is likely to conclude its work in the summer of 2008. The membership of this group and the Waste Review group includes Councillors from the Borough's Town and Parish Councils, who have made a very valuable contribution.

Road Accident Casualties In response to a request from the Council's Executive, and in partnership with Thames Valley Police, this group is reviewing the reported

performance on road accident casualty rates. This should result in a fuller understanding of the true performance trends, and inform the development of improved means of performance measurement. The Working Group plans to conclude its work in Spring 2008.

Holding the Executive to Account

The Panel kept a watching brief on the Executive's decisions and forward plan, and were pleased that Executive Members regularly attended meetings of the Panel. The Panel did not have occasion to make or review any 'call-ins' during 2007.

Budget Consultation

The Council's budget proposals for 2008/09 were reviewed by the Panel. It considered that the Environment and Leisure Department provide good value for money, but noted inaccuracies in some fee rates, for subsequent correction.

Looking to the future, a range of strategic reviews which the Panel could usefully pursue in the 2008/09 municipal year is set out in Appendix 3.

**6 HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK**  
**a) HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**  
**Chairman – Councillor Ian Leake**  
Vice Chairman – Councillor Alan Browne



The Panel met on three occasions during the 2007/2008 year, with the final meeting scheduled to take place on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2008. In addition, an Annual Meeting was held for the purpose of appointing the Panel's Chairman and Vice Chairman. Details of the Panel's membership and meeting dates are in Appendix 1. The statutory remit of the Panel is to monitor the work and performance of the Berkshire East Primary Care Trust (PCT) and to hold it to account for proposed or actual changes in service provision. This year the Panel has focused on the PCT budget and related issues, campaigning for the 'health space/complex' in Bracknell and providing input into the 'Right Care, Right Place' NHS consultation process. A further important task was providing strategic input into the Health and Wellbeing Strategy document of the Borough Council.

Overview and Policy Development

- (i) The Panel made strategic input and direction into the development of the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the Borough (see below).
- (ii) The Panel took part in the continuing work of the Berkshire East Primary Care Trust and their consultation "Right Care, Right Place", before the development of the Trust's commissioning strategy which was published in May 2007. Further work will be done on the commissioning strategy now it has been published.
- (iii) The Health Panel asked the O&S Commission to establish a working group to look at health funding issues. Members of the Panel took part in the working group of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to look at the concerns of past under-funding and possible insufficient future funding. The final report of the group was referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, confirmed by the Health Panel which put forward its observations on the report, after which it was submitted to the PCT, the Council's Executive Member, also Members of Parliament for the Borough, and the report was subsequently raised with the government's Health Minister.
- (iv) In examining the PCT's budget the panel raised questions relating to the drug budget, the availability and provision of drugs, funding for a 'health space/complex', the 'continuing health care' funding problems and the Minister's confusing statement and the release of about £10m from the Strategic Health Authority's budget.

Performance Monitoring

- (i) The Panel were again involved in the Annual Healthcare check system, run by the Healthcare Commission for assessing and reporting on the performance standards within the PCT and NHS Trusts in Bracknell Forest. Trust performance was assessed against the 24 core standards provided by the Government, covering the seven key areas of safety; clinical and cost effectiveness, governance, patient focus, accessible and responsive care, the care environment, amenities and public health. This contributed to the Healthcare Commission's assessment of the PCT's performance.



- (ii) The Panel raised concerns about the temporary closure of the maternity unit at Heatherwood Hospital during August and requested the Chief Executive of Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospital Trust to explain the situation. This response, together with the stated reasons for closure, will be re-examined in the light of new information provided by the national media in relation to the stated reasons for the closure.

#### Working Groups

- (i) A Working Group of the Health Panel undertook detailed analysis of the council's draft health and wellbeing strategy. Various meetings culminated in a report in November 2007 which advised the Executive on the Panel's views of the development of the draft Strategy to ensure it met the needs of the borough's residents. The report was taken back to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel, and the Overview and Scrutiny Commission. The Panel's recommendations were subsequently adopted and a positive response received with regards to its contribution to the Strategy.
- (ii) A working Group has been set up to look at the Borough's Extended Schools and Children's Centres. The Group has met with several professionals working in the furtherance of children's centres and towards the end of the municipal year are planning to visit schools and area steering groups to look at provision, the associated challenges and involvement of health care professionals.
- (iii) A third working group was initiated to look at various aspects of concern to residents: the work is beginning with scrutiny of the 'out of hours' General Practitioner service.

#### Holding the Executive to Account

- (i) As the vast majority of the Panel's work is associated with the provision of services by the PCT and NHS Trusts, there has been no reason for the Panel to make or require a "call-in procedure" during the year.
- (ii) The Executive responded positively to the guidance and work of the Panel in development of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the report on Healthcare Funding.
- (iii) The PCT and the NHS Trusts have been called to account for their activities on a number of occasions during the year and the Panel has forcefully expressed the desires of the Council and residents on these occasions. This included reminding an NHS Trust of its obligations to consult the Panel on service changes, in line with the established protocol.

#### Budget Consultation

During the year the Panel maintained ongoing monitoring of the Berkshire East Primary Care Trust's budget. Particular reference has been made to the areas of their budget relating to the supply of drugs, the funding of continuing care, querying exactly how much of the funding allocation would be provided for the Borough. The Panel noted, with some concern, that the release by the SHA of some £10 million previously withheld from the PCT's budget had been returned. It appeared that while this fact was not reported to the panel, the money seems to have been used to achieve a 'balanced budget' with no additional services provided.

A further meeting of the Panel is scheduled to take place on 6 March 2008, i.e. before the end of the current municipal year. It is anticipated that the meeting will consider issues raised at previous meetings for follow up action, LINKs information, the Healthcare Commission's Annual Health Check, feedback from the current stage of the Right Care, Right Place consultation as well as hearing from Governors of Frimley Park Hospital. Monitoring the PCT budget and the funding of the 'health space/complex' remains a key priority.

Looking forward, a range of strategic reviews which the Panel may pursue in addition to its current ongoing work for the 2008/09 municipal year is set out in Appendix 3.

## **b) JOINT EAST BERKSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **Chairman – Councillor Ian Leake**

Vice Chairmen – Councillors Asghar Majeed (Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead) and Robert Plimmer (Slough Borough Council)

This Committee, formed jointly with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Slough Borough Council, commenced formally in January 2007. The Committee's membership is set out in Appendix 1. The Committee's role is to carry out health scrutiny reviews and consider health issues across the whole of the Berkshire East PCT's area. A Joint Constitution for the committee has been established and the Committee is chaired on a rotational basis annually, with a Bracknell Forest Borough Council Councillor chairing the Committee initially.

The Joint East Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee have met on three occasions during 2007/2008 with the final meeting scheduled to take place on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2008. Details of the Joint Committee's membership and dates of meetings are in Appendix 1. The work of the Joint Committee during the year, summarised below, focussed on health issues of concern and priority relating to the development of health services, health policy and the structure of their supporting organisations serving east Berkshire.

<p><u>Overview and Policy Development</u></p> <p>The Joint Committee took part in the Right Care, Right Place consultation and formed a Joint Committee with Buckinghamshire County Council to be formally consulted on the issues of reconfiguration of services in the east Berkshire area.</p> <p>The Joint Committee has received various reviews of the services provided by the PCT and is particularly concerned about alleged health inequalities within the area and how the PCT is going to obtain and distribute additional funding to service these perceived needs.</p>
<p><u>Performance Monitoring</u></p> <p>The Joint Committee was also involved in the Annual Healthcheck system, forming a working group to look at the joint responses that could be made on the performance of the NHS Trusts in East Berkshire against the 24 core standards provided by the Government.</p>
<p><u>Working Groups</u></p> <p>The Joint Committee formed a working group to look at the issue of discharge procedures from hospitals in the area. The work of the group is ongoing and is hoping to report later this calendar year.</p>
<p><u>Holding the Executive to Account</u></p> <p>This matter is not applicable to this committee.</p>
<p><u>Budget Consultation</u></p> <p>This matter is covered in the Policy development section. Again, the Committee</p>

were surprised and disappointed to learn that the Ministers statement alleging additional funding for Continuing care was just 'paper money'. No real additional resources have been provided.

Further meetings of the Committee are scheduled to take place on 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> March 2008 before the end of the current municipal year. It is anticipated that the meetings will consider issues raised at the previous meetings for follow up, and in addition, LINKs information, the annual Healthcare Commission Healthcheck and feedback from the current stage of the Right Care, Right Place consultation.

## 7 **LIFELONG LEARNING AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**Chairman – Councillor Mrs Gill Birch**

Vice Chairman – Councillor Ms Denise Whitbread



The Panel has met on three occasions to date during the 2007/08 Municipal year, one of which was at a local secondary school to give members an appreciation of the development proposals for the site and give them an opportunity to engage more closely with the community. In addition, an Annual Meeting was held for the purpose of appointing its Chairman and Vice Chairman. A further meeting of the Panel is due to be held on 26 March 2008. Details of the Panel's membership and dates of meetings are set out in Appendix 1. The work of the Panel during the year, summarised below, centred on the Council's Education, Children's Services and Libraries Department, which provides a wide range of important front line services to the community.

### Overview and Policy Development

Panel members were kept informed of proposals to development Garth Hill College and its site, the placement of looked after children, the refresh of the Children and Young People's Plan and staff recruitment and retention. Members commented on library proposals for the new civic hub and overviewed the development of library and community / voluntary sector grant policy stemming from the overview and scrutiny reviews previously undertaken in these areas.

### Performance Monitoring

The Panel reviewed the performance of the Education, Children's Services and Libraries Department mainly through its Performance Monitoring Reports, allowing Members to question Executive Members and officers in detail about the trends, pressures and priorities for this major service area. This gave rise to a number of questions and requests for further information including the number of users accessing the libraries on-line system, the take up rate of school meals, comparative figures on the number of young people not in education, employment or training in Bracknell Forest and figures relating to the number of fixed term exclusions from the Borough's schools and boys' attainment levels. Performance was also reviewed through consideration of the Annual Performance Assessment Letter for Children's Services and the Ofsted Report on Adult and Community Learning.

### Working Groups

In addition to the review of extended services and children's centres being undertaken jointly with the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel, a working group of this Panel has been reviewing the impact of the growing number of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) in the Borough's schools. This has involved identifying the key issues for schools arising from the increasing number of EAL pupils and focusing on addressing a high priority issue and recommending actions to tackle it. As part of its review work the Working Group is visiting local schools to interview teachers and pupils.

Holding the Executive to Account

The Panel have kept a watching brief on the Executive's decisions and reviewed relevant Executive forward plan items at each meeting. It has not had occasion to make or review any 'call-ins' during 2007/08 to date.

Budget Consultation

The Panel considered the key themes and priorities for the Education, Children's Services and Libraries Department as outlined in the Council's draft budget proposals for 2008/09 noting the low level of Government grant and a continuing reduction in specific grants. Areas highlighted by the Panel included funding to completely refurbish a school kitchen and remedy heating problems at Portman Close; the significant drop in school exclusions indicating that the funding committed to this area had been well spent; and a reduction in the rental of CD/DVDs from libraries. Some of the funding towards delivering the Council's pledge that every school in the Borough was a good school had come from external sources.

Looking forward, a range of strategic reviews which the Panel could usefully pursue in the 2008/09 municipal year is set out in Appendix 3.

## 8. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

### Budget Scrutiny

- 8.1 Scrutiny of the Council's budget proposals is an important annual task for Overview and Scrutiny. We intend developing our approach to this, using budget scrutiny training for Members, and adopting a thematic approach to key budget issues, for co-ordinated reviews across the O&S Commission and the Panels. We regard this to be particularly important given the continually growing pressures on the Council's budgetary position.

### Overview and Scrutiny of Partner Organisations

- 8.2 The Overview and Scrutiny function is expanding due to the *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act*, also in relation to the Bracknell Forest (Local Strategic) Partnership, as required by the Partnership's Governance Protocol, which states: '*The Council shall facilitate the scrutiny of the work of the Partnership through its Overview and Scrutiny process. The process shall include scrutiny of the membership of the Partnership and how organisations and individuals are selected for representation*'. There is also an on-going government review of the local accountability arrangements for the Police. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission will continue to keep abreast of developments in this field, and adjust the work programme as necessary. Currently, the Commission has established a working group to contribute to the development of the new Local Area Agreement, and to provide a continuing input to the governance and other arrangements for the Bracknell Forest Partnership.

### Structure of Overview and Scrutiny

- 8.3 Recognising the restructuring of the Council from three Service Departments to two from April 2008, the provisions of the *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act*, also prospective further changes to legislation surrounding the scrutiny of Partner Organisations, the structure of the Overview and Scrutiny function in Bracknell Forest requires reviewing. This is appropriate for the incoming Overview and Scrutiny Commission to consider. The Commission will consult interested parties on any proposal, and any restructure of O&S would require Council approval to a change to the Council's Constitution.

### Indicative Work Programme for 2008/09

- 8.4 The indicative work programme for Overview and Scrutiny in 2008/09, set out in Appendix 3, aims to continue the strategic and effective approach to O&S coverage. The work of many of the Working Groups currently in progress will extend into the next municipal year, we must be mindful of the limitations on both Members' and Officers' time, and we also need to allow space for additional review topics which experience tells us will arise during the year. The indicative work programme will be considered by the newly appointed Commission and Panels after the Council's Annual Meeting in May, and the ensuing programme will be subject to consultation with the Council's Executive and Corporate Management Team, as required by the Constitution.

**Membership and Meeting Dates - Overview and Scrutiny Commission, O&S  
Panels and Joint East Berkshire Health O&S Committee**

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Members: Councillors Edger (Chairman), Baily, Mrs Beadsley, Mrs Birch, Browne, Brunel-Walker, Finnie, Leake, McLean, Thompson (Vice-Chairman), Ms Whitbread, and Worrall.

Church Representatives:  
Mr Anderson and Mr Gibbons

Parent Governor Representatives:  
Mr I Sharland, Vacancy

Meeting Dates: 23 May, 7 June, 19 July, 13 September, 22 November 2007,  
17 January, 13 March 2008

Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Members: Councillors Browne (Chairman), Baily, Blatchford, Dudley, Harrison, Leake (Vice-Chairman), Simonds, Turrell and Mrs Shillcock.

Tenants and Leaseholders Panel Representative:  
Mr R Gristwood

Meeting Dates: 23 May, 19 June, 25 September 2007, 10 January, 11 March 2008

Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Members: Councillors Brunel-Walker (Chairman), Mrs Angell, Beadsley, Finch, Finnie (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Fleming, Mrs McCracken, McLean, and Mrs Ryder.

Meeting Dates: 23 May, 4 June, 11 September 2007, 2 January, 3 March 2008

Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Members: Councillors Leake (Chairman), Mrs Angell, Baily, Browne (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Shillcock, Thompson, and Virgo.

Co-Optees: Mrs Isabel Mattick (Patient & Public Involvement Forum), two vacancies

Meeting Dates: 23 May, 14 June, 6 September, 6 December 2007, 6 March 2008



Lifelong Learning and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Members: Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Mrs Barnard, Mrs Beadsley, Burrows, Mrs McCracken, Osborne, Mrs Ryder, Ms Whitbread (Vice-Chairman), and Ms Wilson.

Church Representatives:  
Mr Anderson and Mr Gibbons

Parent Governor Representatives:  
Mr I Sharland, Vacancy

Teacher Representatives:  
Mrs Draper, Miss Richardson, and Mr Wheaton

Meeting Dates: 23 May, 4 July, 19 September, 19 December 2007, 26 March 2008

Joint East Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Members: Councillors Leake (Chairman), Browne, and Mrs Shillcock (Bracknell Forest BC); Councillors Majeed (Vice Chairman), Mrs Evans and Mrs Napier (Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead); Councillors Plimmer (Vice Chairman), Mrs Coad and Mrs Dodds (Slough Borough Council)

Meeting Dates: 21 June, 20 September 2007, 10 January, 20 March 2008

**Overview and Scrutiny Working Groups In 2007/08**

<b><u>Overview and Scrutiny Commission</u></b>	
<b>WORKING GROUP</b>	<b>MEMBERS</b>
Medium Term Objectives	Thompson (Lead), Mrs. Birch & Browne
Healthcare Funding	Edger (Lead), Leake, Beadsley, Browne
Scrutiny of Local Area Agreement Process (including O&S input into the draft LAA)	Edger (Lead), Beadsley & McLean
<b><u>Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel</u></b>	
<b>WORKING GROUP</b>	<b>MEMBERS</b>
Carers	Mrs. Shillcock (Lead), Simonds & Turrell
Care Homes	Browne (Lead), Baily & Blatchford
Social Care Modernisation Agenda	Leake (Lead), Mrs. Shillcock & Virgo
Supporting People	Mrs. Shillcock (Lead) & Browne
<b><u>Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel</u></b>	
<b>WORKING GROUP</b>	<b>MEMBERS</b>
Strategic Review of Waste	Brunel-Walker (Lead), Mrs. Angell, Beadsley, Mrs. Ryder, Mrs. McLean (Binfield), Wade (Crowthorne), Allen (Sandhurst) & Ms Healy (Warfield)
Street Cleaning / Street Scene	Finnie (Lead), Finch, Mrs. McCracken, Leake (Binfield), Mrs. Thompson (Crowthorne), Mrs. Cupper (Sandhurst), & Parks (Warfield)
Community Arts Development Plan	Mrs. Fleming, McLean & Finnie
Road Accidents	Finch (Lead), Mrs. McCracken, McLean, and Virgo. Richard Owen, Thames Valley Safer Roads Partnership
<b><u>Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel</u></b>	
<b>WORKING GROUP</b>	<b>MEMBERS</b>
Patient Focus	Mrs. Mattick, Leake (Lead), Virgo Mrs. Angell

Health and Wellbeing Strategy	Leake (Lead), Thompson, Virgo
Extended Services & Children's Centres (Joint with LL&CS OSP)	Leake (Lead), Mrs. Birch, Mrs. Angell, Mrs. McCracken, Burrows, Beadsley
<b><u>Joint East Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee</u></b>	
WORKING GROUP	MEMBERS
Hospital Discharge Procedures	Baily, Mrs Coad (Slough Borough Council), Mrs Napier (Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead)
Annual Health Check	All committee members allowed to contribute
<b><u>Lifelong Learning and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel</u></b>	
WORKING GROUP	MEMBERS
English as an Additional Language	Mrs. McCracken (Lead), Burrows, Ms Whitbread & Mr. Ian Sharland
Extended Schools & Children's Centres (Jointly with Health O&S Panel)	See Health O&S Panel

**Indicative Work Programme for Overview and Scrutiny in 2008/09**

The determination of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for the forthcoming year is a matter for the newly appointed members of the Commission and its Panels. To help inform that decision, and having taken note of the future developments set out in section 8 of this report, our experience and the views offered by others, the current members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission set out below an indicative programme of the main topics which we consider are worthy of review. The proposed indicative work programme below will necessarily be subject to refinement and updating. It will also require consultation with the Executive and the Corporate Management Team, as required by Part 3 (2.2) of the Council's Constitution.

The work programme for the Joint East Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, of which Bracknell Forest BC is a member, is determined separately by that Committee.

<b>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION</b>	
1.	<b>Co-ordination of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels</b>
2.	<b>Routine Monitoring of the performance of the Council's corporate functions</b>  To include the Bracknell Town Centre regeneration and the building of the new Civic Hub.
3.	<b>Audit Committee duties</b>  To include the review of plans and the reports of both internal and external audit.
4.	<b>Periodic review of the Council's strategic risk management arrangements</b>
5.	<b>Working Group on the Local Area Agreement</b>  To carry out an on-going review of the new Local Area Agreement and the activities of the Bracknell Forest (Local Strategic) Partnership
6.	<b>2009/10 Budget Scrutiny</b>  Note – each of the O&S Panels will also scrutinise the budget proposals in their departmental areas.
7.	<b>Exercising pre-decision scrutiny by reference to the Executive Forward Plan</b>
8.	<b>Review of the Council's Reorganisation</b>  To review the delivery of the Council's reorganisation from three Service Departments to two in April 2008.

<b>ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL</b>	
1.	<b>Monitoring the performance of Adult Social Services and Housing</b>
2.	<b>Monitoring the implementation of the action plans for Supporting People and Adult Social Care</b>
3.	<b>Review of action taken in response to the Panel's report on Anti-Social Behaviour</b>
4.	<b>Exercising pre-decision scrutiny by reference to the Executive Forward Plan</b>
5.	<b>Carers</b>  To complete the work of the working group undertaking a detailed review of the Council's arrangements for carers.
6.	<b>Care Homes</b>  To continue the work of the working group on Care Homes in the Borough.
7.	<b>Social Care Modernisation Agenda</b>  To complete the work of the working group undertaking a detailed review of the Council's implementation of the social care modernisation agenda, with particular reference to services for adults with learning disabilities.
8.	<b>The Council's Strategic Housing Function</b>  Following the transfer of the Council's housing stock, to review the Council's strategic housing role, including the interface with Registered Social Landlords and addressing the Borough's needs for Affordable Housing.
<b>ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL</b>	
1.	<b>Monitoring the performance of Environment and Leisure services</b>
2.	<b>Exercising pre-decision scrutiny by reference to the Executive Forward Plan</b>
3.	<b>Contributing to the development of the Community Arts Development Plan</b>
4.	<b>Strategic review of waste</b>  To complete the work of the working group undertaking the review of the new waste Private Finance Initiative RE3 contract and the experience of the first year of Alternative Bin Collection.
5.	<b>Street cleaning / street scene</b>  To complete the work of the working group undertaking a detailed review of the Council's performance in this area.

6.	<b>Road Accident Casualties</b>  To complete the work of the working group undertaking the review of road accident casualties.
7.	<b>Climate Change and the Nottingham Declaration</b>  To review progress on implementing the actions flowing from the Council signing the Nottingham Declaration, and in applying the new performance indicators set by government.
8.	<b>Leisure Trust</b>  To monitor developments on the potential creation of a Leisure Trust.
<b>HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL</b>	
1.	<b>Monitoring the implementation of the Borough's Health and Well-Being Strategy</b>
2.	<b>Monitoring the Berkshire East Primary Care Trust's budget for health care in the Borough</b>
3.	<b>Extended Schools/Children's Centres</b>  To complete the work of the working group undertaking a detailed review of Extended Schools/Children's Centres jointly with the Lifelong Learning and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
4.	<b>Patient focus</b>  To complete the work of the working group undertaking a detailed review centred on General Practitioner services.
5.	<b>In conjunction with the Joint East Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, monitoring the performance of the Berkshire East PCT</b>
6.	<b>Contributing to the annual 'Health Check' process and responding to consultations by the PCT and NHS Trusts operating in the Borough.</b>
7.	<b>Maternity Services</b>  To review the quality and operations of maternity services in the Borough, with reference to the latest Healthcare Commission's assessment that Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals Trust give a 'fair performing' service.
8.	<b>The PCT's New Commissioning Strategy</b>  To monitor the Berkshire East PCT's Commissioning Strategy, following the 'Right Care Right Place' consultation.

<b>LIFELONG LEARNING AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL</b>	
1.	<b>Monitoring the action taken by the Executive to earlier reports by the Panel</b>
2.	<b>Monitoring the performance of Education, Children's Services and Libraries</b>
3.	<b>Exercising pre-decision scrutiny by reference to the Executive Forward Plan</b>
4.	<p><b>Refreshed Children and Young People Plan 2007</b></p> <p>To complete the work of the working group reviewing the refreshed Children and Young People Plan with particular reference to 'English as an Additional Language' (EAL).</p>
5.	<p><b>Extended Schools/Children's Centres</b></p> <p>To complete the work of the working group undertaking a review of Extended Schools/Children's Centres jointly with the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel.</p>
6.	<p><b>Adult Learning</b></p> <p>A strategic review, with particular reference to the new funding arrangements.</p>

Note – This programme may need to be amended to meet new requirements arising during the year.