

30 November 2010



Cllr R C Edger
Chairman
Overview and Scrutiny Commission
Easthampstead House
Town Square
Bracknell
Berkshire
RG12 1AQ

Dear Cllr Edger,

REVIEW OF PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY - REPORT FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

On behalf of Bracknell Forest Partnership I am writing to thank you and your colleagues on the Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group for the work that you have done over the past 12 months reviewing the work of the Partnership.

At its meeting on 18 November 2010, the Bracknell Forest Partnership Board considered the report produced by the Working Group and the relevant recommendations set out in Section 5. The Board's response to each of these recommendations is set out in turn below.

Ref	Recommendation	BFP Board Response
5.3	The designations of Chairmen and Lead Officers of the Theme Partnerships be reviewed (as annual re-appointments occur) so as to encourage more of these positions to be filled by partner organisations' representatives. We believe this would assist the sense of having a partnership in the full sense of the word (paragraph 4.4).	Accepted The BFP Board is happy to promote all partners taking the most active roles possible within the Theme Partnerships, and will continue to encourage this. The Council, as the local community leader, has taken the positions it holds to ensure effective leadership and delivery support where other partners are not able to resource this role and will continue to do this where necessary. Where partners can take the lead, however, this will be encouraged.
5.4	The Terms of Reference and the membership of all Theme Partnerships, and particularly the Strategic Housing Partnership, also the Town Centre Partnership, are regularly updated (paragraph 4.6).	Accepted The BFP Board agrees this recommendation in line with the best practice set out in the governance sections of the handbook and toolkit.
5.5	In the interests of open government, the programme of Theme Partnerships' meetings, agendas, and minutes should be published, and each Theme Partnership should be asked	Partly accepted The Board agrees with this recommendation in principle but is mindful that it may not be entirely straightforward to enforce this policy

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	to commit to meet publicly occasionally (paragraph 4.7).	across all the Theme Partnerships due to commercial, practical or other sensitivities. However, the Board will explore this further through the new BFP website.
5.6	The plans, progress and achievements of the Climate Change Partnership are reviewed to determine whether it is visibly on course to help the Borough meet the significant commitments in the Nottingham Declaration (paragraph 4.8).	Not agreed The Climate Change Partnership has held its annual discussion with the BFP Board to discuss progress, and also continues to report good progress in delivering its action plan for the key carbon target through the partnership performance reports. In a presentation at the BFP Group meeting in September 2010 the Climate Change Partnership reported delivery of key projects including Home Energy Monitors, work to improve the energy rating of mobile homes and production of climate change action plans for the Federation of Community Groups. Within the Council alone, carbon use has fallen by almost 2% due to actions being promoted, at least in part, through the CCP.
5.7	The development of all Theme Partnerships, and particularly the Town Centre Theme Partnership, should be periodically reviewed, as some seem under-developed despite having been in existence for some years (paragraph 4.9).	Accepted The BFP Board agrees this recommendation for review of theme partnerships in line with the best practice set out in the handbook and toolkit.
5.8	Following the example set by the Partnership Board, all Theme Partnerships should complete self-assessments of their governance arrangements, also risk assessments, unless the Partnership Board are satisfied there are good reasons not to do so in any particular cases (paragraph 4.10).	Partly accepted The BFP Board agrees this recommendation in principle in line with the best practice set out in the governance handbook and toolkit sections. However it also recognises that this is a matter for decision by each of the individual partnerships and that this best practice recommendation may need to be reviewed as the BFP structure changes to match the new national landscape. In this respect an increase in "informal" partnership working, with less supporting 'bureaucracy' might reasonably be expected.
5.9	The Board should encourage the Theme Partnerships to do more to comprehensively demonstrate the value for money achieved by them and to publicise their achievements, for example by contributing accounts of success to the Partnership's communications group (paragraph 4.12).	Accepted The BFP Board is keen to demonstrate the overall achievements of BFP and tries to do so through newsletters, awards and its annual report. We accept that it is more difficult to demonstrate the link between these achievements and value for money. The Board is referring this recommendation to the BFP Communications Group for further consideration.
5.10	The key factors for the success of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and the Partnership Board should be promoted to the other Theme Partnerships, so as to assist their development and productivity	Accepted The BFP Board chairman will write to each of the Theme Partnership chairmen presenting the report of findings from this scrutiny review and highlighting the key factors of success for

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	(paragraph 4.14).	the CDRP.
5.11	The impressive planned activity in the Economic and Skills Development partnership should be reviewed to ensure that this is commensurate with the resources available to it, and to the scope and the scale of the challenges facing our local economy (paragraph 4.16).	Accepted The BFP Board agrees this recommendation for this review to be carried out.
5.12	The published information on the Partnership should be kept up to date in all significant respects (paragraph 4.18).	Accepted The BFP Board endorses this recommendation and will endeavour to keep all published information up to date.
5.13	The Partnership Board should review how major Transport issues can be kept under public review and considered appropriately by the Partnership (paragraph 4.18).	Not accepted The transport remit of the partnership now falls under the newly established Infrastructure Reference Group and the progress of this group will be reported to the BFP Board in December 2010. This will ensure that transport issues are examined in there more appropriate wider context and represents a significant step forward.
5.14	The Partnership Board should consider providing resources for O&S Officer support for a continuation of Partnership scrutiny.	Accepted The BFP Board gave consideration to this matter at its meeting in November 2010, but agreed that it would be too difficult to find funding for such a resource at this time.
5.15	In the event the resources at 5.14 cannot be provided, the Partnership's Governance Protocol section requiring the Council to facilitate Partnership O&S should be removed (footnote 5), as the only partnership scrutiny in future will be through thematic reviews of the Council's and NHS services.	Accepted The BFP Board will make the required changes to the Governance Protocol.
5.16	The Partnership Board should draw this report to the attention of all the Theme Partnerships, encourage them to discuss the report in their leadership fora, and the Partnership Board should facilitate combined action on the recommendations in this report.	Accepted The BFP Board Chairman will write to each of the Theme Partnership chairmen presenting the report of findings from this scrutiny review and inviting each Theme Partnership to take action as it sees fit.

Yours sincerely,



Timothy Wheaden
Chief Executive

Copies to: Richard Beaumont, Victor Nicholls, Claire Sharp

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