



A Review of Partnership Scrutiny in Bracknell Forest



Overview & Scrutiny Commission
November 2010

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Acknowledgements

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission would like to express its thanks and appreciation to the many people in partner organisations, also Bracknell Forest Councillors and officers for their co-operation and time in the extensive overview and scrutiny work involving the Bracknell Forest Partnership in 2009-2010.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) work by Bracknell Forest Council ('the Council') involving the Bracknell Forest Partnership ('the Partnership') in 2009-10. As Local Strategic Partnerships across the country are a relatively recent development, this has been a new field of endeavour, covering a very wide range of public services to Bracknell Forest's residents.
- 1.2 Partnership working is a strength in Bracknell Forest, and the approach we have taken in this first year has been to build on that by reinforcing the Partnership's governance. We have concentrated on: systematically gathering information; building knowledge and understanding of the Partnership's extensive activities; and in developing constructive relationships. The hallmark of our work has been, '*Scrutiny of the Partnership by the Partnership*'. Our planned approach to the work is set out in section 2 of this report, and section 3 summarises what we found during the course of the year.
- 1.3 The work has been carried out by the Council's O&S Commission and three of our O&S Panels. It has been overseen by our newly formed '*Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group*', made up of the Chairmen of our principal partner organisations and the Chairmen of our O&S Commission and Panels. I must thank all of them in particular for their guidance and leadership of this work. This report also fulfils the duty of the Partnership O&S Group to issue an annual report.
- 1.4 This review was one of the most extensive pieces of work we have run in Overview and Scrutiny in Bracknell Forest. It has also been ground breaking, and we were pleased to see the recognition by the Centre for Public Scrutiny for our innovative approach. We set out to support the Partnership's journey of improvement through constructively scrutinising the partnership's policies, plans and achievements, to serve and empower the Bracknell Forest community, and to hold decision-makers to account. I think we have achieved that. It has been a very interesting review and we believe it has had useful outcomes. Our conclusions are in section 4, and our recommendations are in section 5.
- 1.5 Looking ahead, we will refine our next steps in the light of the responses we receive to the recommendations in this report. We must be mindful of the intense resource constraints on all public sector organisations and competing priorities for O&S work. Having achieved our initial objectives, and unless extra resources are provided, at this stage we envisage running a low level of partnership O&S work in the future.

Councillor Bob Edger OBE
Chairman, Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group
Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Commission

2. The Planned Approach To Partnership Scrutiny

Background

- 2.1 The need for a planned approach to the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) of the Bracknell Forest Partnership ('the Partnership') was recommended in a report by a Working Group of the O&S Commission in September 2008¹. That review had started with O&S wishing to contribute to the policy decisions on what should be the most important targets to include in the Partnership's 'Local Area Agreement' (LAA)². The key objectives of that Working Group were to:
- Ascertain examples of good practice of scrutinising LAA's;
 - Explore with partners how O&S could be used in a positive and meaningful way in relation to the LAA;
 - Establish effective arrangements for O&S of the LAA and the Sustainable Community Strategy³.
- 2.2 The September 2008 report contained a number of recommendations to the Partnership Board and the Council's Executive, among others. These included recommendations on the broad approach to O&S of the Partnership. The report was welcomed and all the report's recommendations were accepted.
- 2.3 After further research and consideration, a detailed approach to the O&S of the Partnership was designed. As this proposed a role for the O&S Commission and Panels, they were all formally consulted at their public meetings in the early months of 2009. With their agreement to the approach, this was then taken to the Board of the Bracknell Forest Partnership, and agreed by them at their Board meeting on 21 May 2009.

The Key Drivers to the Planned Approach

- 2.4 The approach to the O&S of the Partnership was driven by three important factors:

New Legislation and Government Guidance

The commencement date for the O&S provisions in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 was 1st April 2009. To prepare for this, Communities and Local Government (CLG) commissioned the Centre for

¹ 'Local Area Agreement – A Report by a Working Group of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission' September 2008. Available on the Council's Website <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk>

² Local Area Agreements are three year negotiated agreements between upper tier councils (Unitary and County) and central government. Each agreement sets out a series of targets which a council, together with its partners, must deliver.

³ The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) sets the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental well-being of a local area, typically for 10-20 years, in a way that contributes to sustainable development. The current SCS for Bracknell Forest can be viewed on the Council's website.

Public Scrutiny to draft best practice guidance for those issues which relate to the local authority scrutiny function, which had not yet been issued.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 is complex legislation which, among many other matters, set out to strengthen scrutiny. The Act requires that, 'Relevant partner authorities' must provide information to O&S Committees. The Act empowers O&S to publish reports, and if so, the Executive, within two months, must consider the report and any recommendations, and respond indicating actions to be taken. Once a report has been written, O&S may require relevant external partners to have regard to the report in exercising their functions. This applies where the report relates to a local improvement target which relates to the relevant partner, and is specified in the LAA. The Act excludes issues relating to crime and disorder (see below); neither does it apply to Primary Care Trusts (PCT's) – where local authorities have separate powers of statutory scrutiny.

The Police and Justice Act 2006 contains a requirement on local authorities to scrutinise Community Safety Partnerships. The O&S provisions of the Act came into force in 2009, requiring councils to establish Crime and Disorder Committees, amongst other matters.

Emerging National Best Practice

The O&S of Local Strategic Partnerships was a new issue, and in advance of the government guidance there was very little information available on what constituted best practice nationally. The University of Birmingham's⁴ earlier advice on the O&S of LSP's was:

- It is probably the cutting edge of local government scrutiny currently
- It is an extremely hard challenge for scrutiny
- Partnership scrutiny is not easy to do, since LAAs are the results of delicate negotiations by partnership bodies
- Most of those involved are not very familiar with scrutiny – but some are (e.g. health)
- At the point where a partnership has just sat round and agreed targets, scrutiny may not be the first thing on their minds
- To make it work will need good preparation and diplomacy and goodwill on all sides – to get in early and demonstrate that they are additional
- Take great care
- Go for process rather than detail at first
- Win confidences if you can
- At an appropriate time, conduct full investigations around particular targets
- This to include getting inspectorates to appear as witnesses
- It could be fraught but ultimately it can be very rewarding indeed
- LAAs raise similar issues to scrutiny of performance
- Initially, probably concentration of scrutiny on the process rather than the targets themselves.

Birmingham University had identified two county councils, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, which had made innovative progress in scrutinising their LAAs/LSPs. The information on those two councils was taken into account. It

⁴ The University of Birmingham's INLOGOV unit is one of the leading authorities on local government O&S

was notable that the O&S groups formed in both cases had very few representatives of the wider partnership, membership being confined mainly to county and district councillors, and in one case independent community representatives. The two groups had reviewed issues including the selection of the LAA improvement targets, governance arrangements and performance management. They reported that the lessons learnt included: timing is everything, preparation is key, resourcing was a problem (both member and officer time), building a shared understanding of scrutiny and of the LAA; relationship building, being alert to the politics, and awareness that their model is not perfect.

The Foundation set in the 2008 O&S Review of the Local Area Agreement

The recommendations of the report by a Working Group of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on the LAA in September 2008, all of which were agreed, are referred to in paragraphs 2.1-2.3 above. The main conclusion of that report was that the Council's O&S function, in concert with those exercising similar roles in partner organisations, needed to support the Partnership's journey of improvement through constructively scrutinising the partnership's policies, plans and achievements. The aim for this O&S work was to serve and empower the Bracknell Forest community by stimulating public engagement, influencing plans and outcomes, and holding decision-makers to account.

The Planned Approach in More Detail

- 2.5 It was recognised at the outset that the approach to the O&S of the Partnership would need to be refined on the commencement of legislation and the issuance of government guidance, as well as in the light of practical learning and experience. The agreed approach comprised the following:
- (i) Within the Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission would lead in coordinating the O&S of the Bracknell Forest Partnership, and together with the O&S Panels and partner representatives (see below) would carry out that work.
 - (ii) Effective collaboration with partners is clearly vital to the success of O&S of the Partnership. Whilst the Council has the statutory lead, involving partners' representatives is seen to be essential to secure the goodwill and cooperation of partners, and to realise the benefit of wider sharing and application of knowledge and different perspectives. The O&SC would therefore approach the Boards or other governing authorities of the partner organisations (excluding The Town and Parish Councils Liaison Group, Government Office for the South East and the South East England Development Agency) making up the Partnership Board (the PCT, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority, the Thames Valley Police Authority, Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action, and the Bracknell Regeneration Partnership) to form a non-statutory Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group for the Partnership. Each organisation would be asked to nominate to the Group a representative from amongst their Non-Executive Directors, or equivalent positions of those charged with holding the executive of their organisations to account.

(iii) In view of the Council's statutory duties relating to the O&S of LSP's, also the Council's O&S duty set out in the Partnership's Governance Protocol⁵, the Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group would be led by the Chairman of the Council's O&S Commission, and its membership would also include a representative of each of the O&S Panels. The broad purpose of this group would be to agree and coordinate a constructive programme of O&S of the Partnership's arrangements and performance, to participate in individual O&S reviews as appropriate, to review Partnership's annual report on the progress of the LAA, and to report at least annually. The exact terms of reference for the Group would be determined by the Group.

(iv) With the involvement of the Partnership O&S Group, the O&S Commission and Panels would commence a structured programme of information gathering and initial analysis of the Partnership's affairs. This would concentrate on the Theme Partnerships, where the detailed partnership work was designed to take place. This work would be apportioned as follows:

O&S Commission – Bracknell Forest Partnership Board, the Town Centre Partnership, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, and the Economic and Skills Development Partnership.

Environment, Culture and Communities O&S Panel – the Strategic Housing Partnership, the Cultural Partnership, the Transport Partnership, and the Climate Change Partnership.

Social Care and Learning O&S Panel (subsequently the Children, Young People and Learning O&S Panel) – the Children's Trust, and the Early Years, Child Care and Play Partnership.

Health O&S Panel (subsequently the Adult Social Care O&S Panel) – the Health and Social Care Partnership.

(v) The information gathering would comprise initially asking the Chairmen and Lead officers for the ten Theme Partnerships to complete a questionnaire, and then for the responses to the questionnaire to inform individual meetings by the Commission/Panel concerned with the Chairmen and lead officers for each of the Theme Partnerships, individually. These were to form part of the public meetings of the Commission and Panels throughout 2009/10, and members of the Partnership O&S Group would be encouraged to attend and observe those meetings.

(vi) The structured series of meetings with the Chairmen and lead officers of the Theme Partnerships would contribute to relationship building, which is important, and the Commission would look to see how this can be developed further.

⁵ The BFP Governance protocol 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'.

- (vii) The purpose of the questionnaire to be sent in advance of the meetings would be to gather all the basic information on the work and organisation of each Theme partnership, to make best use of members' time at the ensuing meetings. The draft questionnaire was also agreed at this stage.
- (viii) The Commission would receive and consider the quarterly performance progress reports on the Local Area Agreement and these would be circulated to the O&S Panels for information.
- (ix) The Commission, in consultation with the Partnership O&S Group, the Panels, and Partnership's Board, would issue a progress report on the work set out above, by April 2010⁶. This would probably include a series of observations and recommendations. At that stage, the intention was to refine the approach to the continuing O&S of the Partnership, with reference to the outcome of the legislative process and any new government guidance, and recommend to the O&S Commission and the Partnership O&S Group any particular O&S reviews for inclusion on the O&S Work Programme.

2.6 The Planned approach was applied and the outcomes of that work are summarised in the following section 3 of this report.

⁶ The planned date of April 2010 could not be met as some Theme Partnership representatives asked for later meeting dates.

3. Progress In Partnership Scrutiny

Reviewing the Bracknell Forest Partnership's Theme Partnerships and Board

- 3.1 The main element of our scrutiny of the partnership in 2009-10 has been a structured review of the Theme Partnerships, also the Partnership Board. This was broadly as planned at the outset, except that the Transport Theme Partnership had ceased to exist in practice, and the meetings with two Theme Partnerships were delayed at the request of officers.

Gathering Information Using Questionnaires

- 3.2 In line with the planned approach, the Chairmen and Lead Officers of the Partnership Board and the Theme Partnerships were asked to complete a questionnaire to provide a structured set of information. The completed questionnaires were published in advance of the ensuing meetings, and can be viewed on the Council's website. The information gathered from the questionnaires is summarised in Appendix 1.
- 3.3 Our main observations from the completed questionnaires are:
- (i) All but two of the Chairmen, and all of the Lead officers were from Bracknell Forest Council. We acknowledge that the government's instructions require Councils to take the lead, but it seems to us that this unequal leadership does not create a partnership in the full sense of the word.
 - (ii) Where the Council filled these positions, there was a lot of variety, with Chairmen positions being filled by Executive Members in some cases, and the Chief Executive or a Chief Officer in others. Similarly, Lead Officers were filled by a range of officers from Chief Officers, to Heads of Service, to (originally) an Assistant Policy Officer in one case.
 - (iii) The Theme Partnerships which responded indicated that they meet quarterly. However, we noted that some had met more frequently, and a few less frequently (the Town Centre and the Health and Social Care Theme Partnerships).
 - (iv) Terms of Reference had been produced by all partnerships who returned their questionnaires with the exception of the Town Centre Partnership, where the role and membership of the Theme Partnership was under review. Further, our questionnaire appeared to have caused the Terms of Reference and the membership of the Strategic Housing Partnership to be revisited.
 - (v) Whereas the Partnership Board has published agendas and minutes of its meetings for some years, none of the Theme Partnerships published minutes of their meetings. Whilst accepting that there is a need to protect commercially and other sensitive material, such cases are rare in the Partnership and this seems to us to fall short of the Council's commitment to open government. We understand that this was under review at the time of writing this report.

- (vi) The major achievements of the Theme Partnerships varied. For example, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership recorded impressive and sustained achievements, whereas none were reported by the Town Centre Partnership, and the more recently established Climate Change Partnership reported no particular achievements other than its establishment in March 2009.
- (vii) The Theme Partnerships varied widely in terms of their stage of development. For example, four partnerships reported that they were in the early formation stages, even though some had been in existence for some years.
- (viii) Some Theme Partnerships reported there were no major obstacles to their success, and the picture elsewhere was mixed, with more externally-driven macro-economic and other issues than internal issues within the Partnership's control, which tended to be centred on finance and co-operation of all the parties concerned.
- (ix) The membership of the Theme Partnerships, along with arrangements for appointing members varied between partnerships. We did not regard this to be of concern, though we observe that there is some tension between - on the one hand - having a large partnership membership so as to include everyone connected with a topic, and on the other hand having a small enough membership so as to be able to reach agreement and embark on action without too much delay.
- (x) Fewer than half of the Theme Partnerships had carried out a self-assessment of governance arrangements. This was a fairly new requirement.
- (xi) There are sound arrangements for making, recording and tracking decisions. However, the Theme Partnerships were not publishing details of their decision making.
- (xii) Each of the partner organisations appears to have good arrangements for accountability within their own organisation, and there is accountability from each Theme Partnership to the Partnership Board. We were encouraged by the response by the Partnership Board to our questionnaire that *'Overall accountability is now a role for Overview and Scrutiny.'*
- (xiii) Very few Theme Partnerships had carried out a formal risk assessment. By contrast, the Partnership Board had completed a risk assessment, it maintained a risk register, and it operated risk action plans.
- (xiv) There are good arrangements for setting performance targets and performance management generally, with an appropriate focus on and escalation of those targets showing as 'Red' in the Partnership Performance Overview Report. A good example of this has been the concentrated activity around the underperformance on the target for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

- (xv) There is not much evidence of the Theme Partnerships comprehensively demonstrating the value for money achieved by them, or to publicise all their important achievements.
- (xvi) Whilst there is evidence of shared financial planning between partners, pooled budgeting was at an early stage.
- (xvii) The Theme Partnerships had few measures to promote accessibility for the public. For example, none of the meetings are open to the public and there was not a consistent policy of publishing plans or minutes of meetings. However, we applaud the Partnership's decision to develop its own website.
- (xviii) The Theme Partnerships offered few views on how O&S could assist in their development and the achievement of objectives. The Partnership Board representatives said O&S could usefully help to strengthen communications and work planning, and links between Theme Partnerships.

Public Overview and Scrutiny Meetings

- 3.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Panels met the Chairmen and Lead Officers of the Partnership Board and Theme Partnerships during the course of public meetings in 2009-10, focussing on its governance, performance management, financial management, and related issues with reference to the comprehensive questionnaire sent in advance of the meeting.

The discussions took place on the following dates:

O&S Commission	
11 June 2009	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
28 January 2010	Bracknell Forest Partnership Board
27 May 2010	Economic and Skills Development Partnership
28 October 2010	Town Centre Partnership
Adult Social Care O&S Panel	
1 December 2009	Health and Social Care Partnership
Children, Young People and Learning O&S Panel	
16 September 2009	Children and Young People's Trust
20 January 2010	Early Years, Childcare and Play Partnership
Environment, Culture and Communities O&S Panel	
8 September 2009	Cultural Partnership
8 December 2009	Climate Change Partnership
12 January 2010	Strategic Housing Partnership

As noted in paragraph 3.1 above, no meeting could be held with the Transport Theme Partnership as it had ceased to exist. We return to this in paragraph 3.37 below.

The minutes of each of these public meetings can be viewed on the Council's website. The main issues discussed are summarised below.

Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

- 3.5 Meeting as the Council's statutory 'Crime and Disorder Committee', the Overview and Scrutiny Commission met the Chairman and Lead Officer of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) on 11 June 2009. The Chairman and the Lead Officer of the CDRP outlined its work, reporting that the CDRP was a statutory body which started in 1998 and included five organisations as statutory partners: 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.
- 3.6 Members were informed that 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.
- 3.7 In response to Members' queries, the Safer Communities Manager said 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 O&S Commission Chairman had a follow-up meeting with the CDRP lead officer in July to explore O&S prospective reviews. These included:
- The CDRP's involvement in Neighbourhood Action Groups and Neighbourhood management
 - Making an input to the Strategic Assessment of Crime and Disorder for East Berkshire.
 - To be formally consulted on the annual updating of the CDRP Plan.



Partnership Scrutiny in Action: The Council's Crime and Disorder Committee meeting the Chairman of Thames Valley Police Authority, the Assistant Chief Constable and a local Police Inspector for Bracknell, May 2010

- 3.8 It was clear to us that the CDRP is the most well-established and productive of all the Theme Partnerships. It seems to us that the main reasons for this are: strong leadership (by the Council's Chief Executive), a statutory remit, dedicated officer support for the Theme Partnership, a dedicated funding source, and above all the clear commitment and motivation from the partner organisations, due we think to them depending on the shared endeavours of all to achieve their own goals.

Bracknell Forest Partnership Board

- 3.9 On 28 January 2010, the O&S Commission met the Chairman and Lead Officer of the Bracknell Forest Partnership (BFP) Board, to discuss the Board's governance, performance management, financial management and related issues. Members were informed that the Partnership encompassed the Partnership Board which met monthly and drove the business, and ten individual Theme Partnerships. The Partnership Board included representatives from: NHS Berkshire East (Primary Care Trust); Bracknell Forest Council; Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action; Bracknell Regeneration Partnership; Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service; Thames Valley Police; Town and Parish Liaison Group; Government Office for the South East (observer); and South East England Development Agency (observer)⁷.
- 3.10 The Partnership Board Chairman informed the Commission that he considered the Bracknell Forest Partnership to be one of the most well evolved partnerships in terms of governance and effectiveness. He explained that the role of the Partnership's Board was akin to the Council's Corporate Management Team, and it concentrated on major issues including the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Local Area Agreement and co-

⁷ The Partnership Board has since been expanded to include Bracknell Forest Homes.

ordination of performance. There was a high level of agreement on the common agenda of the major issues facing the borough and it was a productive forum.

3.11 In the ensuing discussion, Members were informed that:

- (i) The Executive Officer of Sandhurst Town Council represented the Parish and Town Councils on the Partnership.
- (ii) The Partnership's minutes were currently published on the Council's website but the Partnership was investigating establishing their own website.
- (iii) The main costs of the partnership related to staff time so each organisation funded itself. There was one member of staff supporting the Lead Officer and £100,000 had been top-sliced from the Local Public Services Agreement (LPSA) Reward Grant for the Council to provide secretariat and research support. There was a small amount of funding for which the Partnership could bid annually and this helped towards venue costs, etc.
- (iv) The Partnership kept an overview of the work of the Theme Partnerships and would deal with any performance issues. A recent example was concerning the increased number of young people who were NEET (not in employment, education or training).
- (v) The Partnership was not a statutory body but partners had a statutory duty to co-operate and relationships within the Bracknell Forest Partnership were sound.
- (vi) Under section 12 of the Partnership agreement and protocol there was no mention of the successful working of the BF Partnership Scrutiny Group as it was a new arrangement. This would be included in the annual update.
- (vii) It was noted that in the completed questionnaire, question D5 'How does the public know that the partnership achieves value for money?' remained unanswered. The Partnership Board Chairman thought the public were more interested in outcomes than in processes and he cited as an example of partnership success 'Operation Ladybird' led by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership whereby the number of burglaries reduced drastically.

We conclude that the Partnership Board is well led and receives good officer support. It meets regularly and has evolved to become effective, with clear indications of widespread 'by-in' from the Council's various partners.

Economic and Skills Development Partnership

3.12 On 27 May 2010, the O&S Commission met the Lead Officer of the Economic and Skills Development Partnership, together with the Council's Head of Regeneration and Enterprise. Members were informed that this new partnership was still in its developing stage. The Lead Officer gave a presentation on the partnership outlining that its purpose was to sustain and promote Bracknell Forest's thriving economy and to promote skills and availability of local people to fill local jobs, as a key element of sustaining the local economy. Members come from different sectors of the borough and included the Council, Bracknell Regeneration Partnership, the Federation of Small Businesses, Bracknell Chamber of Commerce, Government Office for

the South East, South East Economic Development Agency, Business Link, Connexions and Grow Our Own.

- 3.13 Members were informed that the Partnership's Key aims were to: engage with local businesses; tackle barriers to economic success; help residents through the recession; participate in the skills issues forum; track local economic information; work with surrounding areas to sustain the local/ Thames Valley economy; lead the production of an economic assessment; and help to discharge statutory functions. The Partnership's action plan themes were: providing community leadership; tackling unemployment and developing skills; supporting local businesses; and providing housing advisory services. Members noted the individual action plan items detailed in the presentation.
- 3.14 Members were advised that the Partnership's next steps were: to carry out a local economic assessment; to develop a local economic strategy (which Bracknell Forest had not had since 1998); and to support local residents and businesses. Members were reminded of the economic indicators published on the website, and noted that Bracknell Forest had the highest number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Berkshire, also that Job Seekers Allowance claimants had increased significantly. Members received answers to a number of questions concerning: helping smaller businesses through existing networks; Credit Union development; funding and operation of the Future Jobs Fund; employment for the occupants of the anticipated new houses; diversifying Bracknell Forest's economy; empty office space; the loss of manufacturing in the area and the need for more manual and semiskilled employment; and the loss of retail employment.
- 3.15 The O&S Commission were impressed by the range of planned activity in this partnership, but we doubt that the financial and human resources being deployed by the Council are commensurate with that scope or the scale of the challenge facing our local economy. The Commission asked for a progress report in six months in relation to business growth.

Town Centre Partnership

- 3.16 On 28 October 2010, the O&S Commission met the Assistant Chief Executive, in the absence of the Chairman and Lead Officer of the Town Centre Partnership. This meeting has been delayed at the request of officers, due to a change of key personnel. The Commission was informed that the purpose of the Town Centre Partnership was to keep the town centre vibrant and alive. We were advised that the partnership was in the early stages of development and new terms of reference would be agreed in November. The Commission was encouraged by the strength of the initial membership, also the planned activities for the Partnership; these included:
- Review the short term improvements to physical fabric
 - Review car parking
 - Develop business plan
 - Assessing viability of housing
 - Events and promotions
 - Planning application for re-modelling of Princess Square entrance
 - Transport/rail/Airtrack

- 3.17 We were encouraged to see the drive to instil a new impetus into this very important partnership. However, we are disappointed and concerned that there has been such delayed progress in getting this theme partnership up and running, when the Council and the Bracknell Forest Partnership have had the development of the town centre fit for the 21st Century as being in their top priorities for many years.

Health and Social Care Partnership

- 3.18 At its meeting on 1 December 2009, the Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel reviewed the Health and Social Care Partnership. The Director of Adult Social Care and Health, who was the Lead Officer of the Health and Social Care Partnership Board (HSCP), gave a presentation in respect of the Board which covered its terms of reference, key areas of activity, links with other groups, minutes of past meetings and agenda items for the next meeting. It was explained that the HSCP was a forum for information sharing and monitoring performance in the health and social care remit, and the Chairmanship of the HSCP alternated between NHS Berkshire East, the local primary care trust, and the Council's Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing, who was currently chairing the Board.
- 3.19 Having considered the presentation, the Panel:
- Queried the low level of elected member representation on the HSCP;
 - Requested a briefing in respect of changes to mental health services at Glenfield House in Bracknell. A report on the practice issues was subsequently circulated to Members of the Panel;
 - Requested receipt of the Partnership's quarterly newsletter which contained the views of all Partnerships. As a result, Panel Members were included in the newsletter circulation; and
 - Noted that the HSCP was supported and facilitated to work within current policy frameworks.

Children and Young People's Trust

- 3.20 At its meeting on 16 September 2009 the Children, Young People and Learning O&S Panel met with the Chairman and Lead Officer of the Children and Young People's Trust. The Panel received a presentation outlining the purpose of the Trust, partnership working, changes to such trusts, key work areas, the Children and Young People's Plan, governance, commissioning and safeguarding arrangements, needs analysis and future challenges for the Partnership. The Panel noted that the purpose of the Children and Young People's Trust was to improve the well-being of all children and young people, improving prospects for the future and redressing inequalities between the most disadvantaged children and their peers. The Trust was a local area partnership which brought together key local agencies, some of which were under a statutory duty to cooperate. The key focus of the Trust concerned outcomes and making these the best they possibly could be for children and young people.

3.21 The panel noted that new legislation was to be introduced which would place the Children and Young People's Trust on a statutory footing and change the way in which the associated board operated. There would be a strong emphasis on commissioning and performance, and safeguarding would be high profile.

3.22 Key work areas of the Children and Young People's Trust were:

- The Children and Young People's Plan which was currently being reviewed and rolled over. A new plan developed from the new legislation and guidance was to be in place by 2011.
- In terms of governance, the Trust would have greater focus on wider accountability arrangements and be held to account over the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan priorities and LAA targets.
- Commissioning services for children, young people and their families.
- Safeguarding children.
- Carrying out a local needs analysis to ensure that the plans and priorities of the Trust were relevant to local needs and priorities.
- Future challenges for the Trust included the direction of policy, uncertainty of funding, implementation of joint commissioning and introduction of performance management systems.

3.23 The Panel noted that:

- There were five outcomes from the Children and Young People's Plan annual performance assessment. Of the 5 outcomes 1 was rated excellent and 4 were rated good. The Trust planned to work with partners on all areas to improve outcomes.
- Performance management structures would be reviewed to make sure that the Trust was providing value for money.
- The Trust would be assessed on how well it worked with its partners.
- The Trust needed more engagement with young people and planned to arrange meetings to allow representatives from the Youth Forum, young carers and children with disabilities to attend meetings.

Early Years, Childcare and Play Partnership

3.24 On 20 January 2010 the Children, Young People and Learning O&S Panel met the Chairman and Lead Officer of the Early Years, Childcare and Play Theme Partnership (EYCCPP). The Panel received a presentation regarding the EYCCPP outlining the development of the Partnership since its establishment in 1997, key duties, priorities and challenges for the future. The EYCCPP was formed as the result of a requirement from Government on all local authorities. In 1999 the age range on which the partnership focused was expanded to include children 0-14 years, and up to 16 years for children with Special Needs. The Partnership changed its name to reflect this

becoming the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, later changing to the EYCCPP.

- 3.25 Members were informed that the Partnership's duties were to ensure all funding supported the delivery of the Government's Ten Year Strategy for Childcare and Choice for Parents: the best start for children. Funding should also support duties set out in the Childcare Act 2006 and Local Authorities' requirements. The key priorities for the EYCCPP were: Children's Centres; Childcare Sufficiency and Access; Outcomes Quality and Inclusion; Graduate Leadership; Every Child a Talker – from April 2010; and Play Strategy Development. The future work for the Partnership included the development of two further Children's Centres, extending the free entitlement of Early Education and Childcare, targeted funding for Two Year Old Early Education, securing graduate early years professionals and developing more accessible play opportunities for all children and young people. Members were informed that there was a high level of trust between members of the Partnership, its sub-groups and service providers.
- 3.26 Arising from discussion with the Chairman and Lead Officer of the Partnership, the Panel noted that: the EYCCPP's Terms of Reference and membership were reviewed on an annual basis; the provision for Two Year Olds focused on engaging with the most vulnerable children; and 50 places were available across the Borough for vulnerable children referred for extra development support. Members noted that the Partnership received no direct funding, however it supported and advised the local authority who received direct funding for Early Years and Childcare and Play development.
- 3.27 The Panel congratulated the EYCCPP team on a partnership which has progressed from strength to strength creating additional capacity for the delivery of projects for children in the Borough and ensuring resources were targeted in important areas during the current economic downturn.

Cultural Partnership

- 3.28 On 8 September 2009 the Environment, Culture and Communities O&S Panel met the Chairman and Lead Officer of the Cultural Partnership. The Panel noted that the key focus of the Cultural Partnership was to drive forward the Council's Cultural Strategy and allow assessment of the progress made against targets in the Strategy. It was suggested that a mechanism by which the Environment, Culture and Communities O&S Panel could be made aware of developments in the Cultural Partnership should be developed. The Panel congratulated the Cultural Partnership on a successful and valuable partnership that brought together many different aspects of the Borough.

Climate Change Partnership

- 3.29 On 8 December 2009 the Environment, Culture and Communities O&S Panel met the Chairman and Lead Officer of the Climate Change Partnership (CCP). Members received an oral presentation from Ann Symonds, Chairman of the CCP, highlighting Bracknell Forest's approach to climate change and the work of the Partnership to date. The Panel noted that the main focus of the CCP was to promote a reduction in Carbon Dioxide CO₂ emissions and to reduce waste. Encouraging businesses and residents was key to achieving both these goals. The CCP was established in March 2009 and had held 4

meetings at which around 15 representatives from 28 organisations in the Borough attended.

- 3.30 The Panel noted that involvement and awareness raising of climate change matters with young people was an important area of focus. The CCP supported the Eco Schools Program and would be meeting with children in 2010 to promote climate change work further. In Bracknell Forest over 50% of the schools were taking part in this initiative and Sandy Lane Primary School was the first school to be awarded the Eco Schools Green Flag award. Further to a request, Panel Members subsequently received a list of the schools participating and not participating in the Eco Schools Project in Bracknell Forest. The CCP intended to develop any initiatives that came out of the Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen and take them forward in the Borough where appropriate.
- 3.31 We welcome the progress made by the Climate Change Partnership, and look forward to seeing much more progress towards the bold vision of the Nottingham Declaration which the Council's Leader and Chief Executive signed in February 2007. In that statement, the Council acknowledged *'the increasing impact that climate change will have on our community during the 21st century and commits to tackling the causes and effects of a changing climate on our city/county/borough/district.'* The Council committed to *'Work with central government to contribute, at a local level, to the delivery of the UK Climate Change Programme, the Kyoto Protocol and the target for carbon dioxide reduction by 2010.'*

Strategic Housing Partnership

- 3.32 On 12 January 2010, the Environment, Culture and Communities O&S Panel met the Chairman and Lead Officer of the Strategic Housing Partnership (SHP). The Panel received a presentation from the Chief Officer: Housing on the SHP, including details of its main aims and the work it undertook across the Borough. The terms of reference of the SHP had been recently reviewed and a list of membership created. The election of a Chairman for the Partnership would be held on 25 March 2010.
- 3.33 Members were informed that the main aims of the SHP were to:
- Enable the efficient operation of the housing markets in Bracknell Forest;
 - Regularly assess housing market intelligence in the Borough in order to establish interventions to improve the operation of the housing markets;
 - Identify market weaknesses or failures and propose partnership solutions.

The SHP reported on 11 National Indicators and 2 Local Area Agreement target National Indicators, NI 154 and NI 155.

- 3.34 It was noted that the SHP needed to be more strategic to identify where partners could intervene to improve operation of the housing market, e.g. a

rent in advance deposit process, Council mortgage provision and to work closely with other partnerships such as the Climate Change Partnership.

- 3.35 The Panel noted that the SHP would promote any development in the Borough regardless of who the development was provided by. It was noted that representatives from the various industries would be representing the industry as a whole and not their particular organisation. There were industry forums in place which could feed back to the SHP on specific issues.
- 3.36 The Panel remarked that they looked forward to seeing the SHP evolve. We note that the partnership toolkit specifies particular requirements for 'significant' partnerships. The Housing and Climate Change Partnerships have been designated by the Council department concerned as insignificant, which we frankly doubt. We also note that the Partnership had not met for some time, and it seems that our approach with our questionnaire generated a revival of the Strategic Housing Partnership, including a refresh of its terms of reference and membership. We trust that it will not lapse in the future, as the provision of adequate and affordable housing is and will always be very important for the people of Bracknell Forest.

The Transport Theme Partnership and the Infrastructure Reference Group

- 3.37 The Bracknell Forest Partnership literature current at the time we designed our approach to O&S of the Partnership showed that its structure included a Transport Theme Partnership. Accordingly, we made enquiries as to who the Chairman and Lead Officer were, and asked for our questionnaire to be completed. After some delay, we were informed that the Transport Theme Partnership had been dormant for about two years, and it was being effectively replaced by a newly formed 'Infrastructure Reference Group' with a wider remit, but outside the structure of the Bracknell Forest Partnership.
- 3.38 We are concerned that a significant Theme Partnership could effectively cease functioning, seemingly due to lack of support and interest, and that the published information on the Partnership was allowed to remain significantly out of date.
- 3.39 Council officers have advised that the Infrastructure Reference Group (IRG) was established in January 2010, consisting of both internal and external infrastructure providers, covering physical, social and green infrastructure. Officers did not intend that the IRG should meet formally but members are to be engaged with via different communication media as appropriate. Members of the IRG have provided substantial information on the infrastructure areas they are responsible for. This information has included existing and planned provision of infrastructure and the infrastructure requirements to support the Borough's new housing up to 2026. This wide informal grouping of infrastructure providers and interest groups is planned to be engaged with the Council in order to prepare an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) to support the Council's work on allocating sites for future development in the Borough. Officers have advised that the IRG will not have meetings or a Chairman, though the Council does hold themed meetings with particular groups of providers on themes like sewage treatment and water supply. Officers also advised that they had appointed consultants to assist with work on the IDP, and they would be contacting all the main external infrastructure

providers seeking information needed for the IDP and letting them know about forming the IRG and that they will be included in it unless they request otherwise.

- 3.40 Officers have advised that the purpose of the IRG is to help the Council in developing future policies for the location of development within the Borough, and that it is essential that there is effective engagement with a wide variety of infrastructure providers. Infrastructure in this context embraces not only transport and utilities, but also education, open space, libraries, community facilities, emergency services and others. This engagement is important in order that there is the best possible understanding of relevant issues to determine where development should go in the Borough and how the infrastructure needed to ensure it can be effectively accommodated will be provided. In this way it will ensure that future development will achieve the Partnership's vision for the future and ensure the creation of sustainable communities. The IRG has been established to enable this engagement to take place in an effective way using methods that suit its membership and provide the information we need. The IRG has an extensive membership list drawn from officers across the Council, also the major transport, public utilities and health service providers.
- 3.41 We do not challenge the need for the IRG, but we are concerned that it fails to give any focus in the Bracknell Forest Partnership to transport issues which affect all residents and which are so important for the Borough's economy and quality of life. We would therefore encourage the Partnership Board to review how major Transport issues can be kept under review and considered appropriately by the Partnership.

The Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group

- 3.42 In line with the agreed approach to Partnership Scrutiny, in June 2009 the Council approached the Chairmen of the main service delivery organisations represented on the Board of the Bracknell Forest Partnership, inviting them to nominate one of their Non-Executive Directors or equivalent post holders to join the newly-formed Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group. The Council's O&S Panels were similarly invited to nominate one of their Members to join the Group.
- 3.43 The partner organisations and the O&S Panels duly made their nominations and the group was formed, comprising:

Organisation	Nominee
Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action	Joyce Ward, Chair
NHS Berkshire East	Sally Kemp, Chair
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service	Councillor Paul Bryant, Chairman
Thames Valley Police Authority	Khan Juna, Chairman
Bracknell Forest Council: Overview and Scrutiny Commission	Councillor Bob Edger, Chairman
Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel	Councillor Chris Turrell, Chairman

Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel	Councillor Mrs Gill Birch, Chairman
Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel	Councillor Jim Finnie, Chairman
Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel	Councillor Ian Leake, Chairman

3.44 Bracknell Regeneration Partnership informed the Council they were supportive of the Group's creation, but were unable to put forward a nominee.

3.45 Officer support has been provided to the Partnership O&S Group by the Council's O&S officer team. As part of this, on 10 September 2009 the Council's Head of Overview and Scrutiny gave a presentation to the quarterly meeting of the Bracknell Forest Partnership on the plans and progress of partnership O&S. Officers from the Council's Partnerships and Performance team have also regularly attended the Group's meetings.

3.46 The Partnership O&S Group met four times in 2009-2010:

- At the Group's initial meeting on 28 September 2009, the main items considered were: discussing and agreeing the broad purpose and value to be obtained from forming the Group; electing Councillor Edger as Chairman; receiving a briefing on the structure of the Bracknell Forest Partnership; receiving a presentation on the approach being taken to O&S of the Partnership, progress to date and future plans; agreeing the Group's Terms of Reference (the finally agreed Terms of Reference are at Appendix 2); and considering future activities for the Group.
- On 15 January 2010, the main items considered by the Group were: considering the Bracknell Forest Partnership's Annual Report and making suggestions for its improvement; considering the Quarter 2 Partnership Performance Overview Report and asking for further information and analyses; receiving the results of the Area Assessment element of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment; and having a progress update on the O&S reviews of the Theme Partnerships.
- On 14 May 2010, the main items considered by the Group included: considering the Quarter 2 Partnership Performance Overview Report and asking for further information; exchanging information on the financial pressures facing Thames Valley Police and the Primary Care Trust in particular; reviewing the action plan for the Comprehensive Area Assessment, also the update of the LAA; and discussing the role and evolving activities of the Group.
- On 22 October 2010, the main items considered included: a briefing by the Chairman of the Bracknell Forest Partnership Board on developments arising from new government policy; a briefing by the Chair of NHS Berkshire East on the future arrangements for the NHS; considering the latest Partnership Performance Overview Report, also the annual report of the Partnership; and agreeing this progress report on partnership scrutiny.

- 3.47 The Group is still in its early stages, but has proved useful, particularly in terms of: achieving and maintaining a collaborative consensus over the approach being taken to Partnership O&S; facilitating the exchange of views on the Partnership's performance; serving as a useful information exchange between the organisations represented; and forging governance links between the organisations. It has been particularly valuable to have gathered together those people charged with holding to account the various Executives leading the delivery of public services in the first full year of partnership scrutiny. Nevertheless, the overall impact of the Group is not yet fully clear, and the feeling of its members is that if the Group is to move forward it would benefit from a focussed review and proof that it had secured change.
- 3.48 We note that there have already been O&S reviews which have included coverage of partner organisations. Examples include the role of Thames Valley Police in our review of Road Traffic Casualties, the role of the Director of Public Health in our review of Preparedness for Public Health Emergencies, our review of the Bracknell Healthspace, and our current review of Safeguarding Children includes coverage of the role of the Police and the Primary Care Trust's Health Visitors.
- 3.49 Whilst there are partnership-oriented topics which could usefully be reviewed in detail by the Group, experience shows that all reviews must have sufficient officer resources to support them if they are to be completed well and within acceptable time bounds. The Council has had to reduce its O&S officer team as part of its overall cost savings programme, such that a review of this sort, also the general support to the Partnership O&S Group, could only be achieved by additional resources or by re-deploying scarce resources from mainstream O&S work.

Centre for Public Scrutiny

- 3.50 As we considered that our approach to O&S of the Partnership had been innovative and had worked well in practice, we put this forward for the annual 'Good Scrutiny' awards by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, in June 2010. The judges gave our entry a commendation, *'because the group has created a powerful, independent and respected resource which is able to feed into the development of strategic planning. It also shows a commitment to partnership working and to the continuous development of scrutiny'*.

4. Conclusions

General

- 4.1 A huge effort has been made by the Council and its partners to build effective strategic partnership working in Bracknell Forest. In the most important respects, this has been successful and of lasting benefit to the Borough and its residents. In view of the diversity of interests and the scarce resources available, this has been a major achievement, and owes much to the personal leadership of the Council's Chief Executive in the Partnership's Board and more than one of the Theme Partnerships. Its success has also relied on very professional and effective support provided by the dedicated officer team in the Chief Executive's Office.
- 4.2 This has been a very interesting and extensive Overview and Scrutiny review, carried out over a whole municipal year and involving almost all arms of the O&S Commission and Panel structure. Alongside that, and with the willing co-operation of our partners which we greatly appreciated, we developed and launched an innovative partnership Overview and Scrutiny group. Most councils are still at early stages in partnership O&S. The complete exercise has been a major development for O&S in Bracknell Forest and has promoted joint working both within and outside the Council.
- 4.3 Our conclusions on the first year of partnership scrutiny are set out below, and these form the basis for the recommendations we make in Section 5 of this report.

Review of the Theme Partnerships

- 4.4 We are concerned that all but two of the Chairmen, and all of the Lead officers for the Theme Partnerships were from Bracknell Forest Council. It seems to us that a partnership in the full sense of the word should have some of these positions filled by partner organisations' representatives (paragraph 3.3(i)).
- 4.5 The Council has made a varied choice of postholders to fill Chairmen and Lead Officer positions in Theme Partnerships. Chairmen positions have been filled by Executive Members in some cases, and the Chief Executive or a Chief Officer in others. Similarly, Lead Officers were filled by a range of officers from Chief Officers, to Heads of Service, to (originally) an Assistant Policy Officer in one case. Whilst we are not suggesting there should be 'one size fits all', the variety seems very wide (paragraph 3.3(ii)).
- 4.6 Our questionnaire appeared to have caused the Terms of Reference and the membership of the Strategic Housing Partnership, also the Town Centre Partnership, to be revisited (paragraph 3.3(iv)).
- 4.7 Whilst we applaud the Partnership's decision to operate its own website, and we commend the measures taken by the Partnership Board itself to operate openly, we consider that the Theme Partnerships should operate with more

commitment to open government. In particular, the Theme Partnerships should follow the example set by the Partnership Board and publish its programme of meetings, agendas, and minutes. We note that the Partnership Board holds an annual public event, and the Theme Partnerships should similarly commit to meet publicly occasionally. We acknowledge a need to protect commercially and other sensitive material, but expect these instances to be rare (paragraph 3.3(v)).

- 4.8 We are concerned at the lack of visible major progress and achievement by the Climate Change Partnership since its establishment in March 2009, given its substantial and time pressured remit (paragraphs 3.3(vi), and 3.31).
- 4.9 The Theme Partnerships varied widely in terms of their stage of development. For example, four partnerships reported that they were in the early formation stages, and it seems to us that only some of this is explained by some Theme Partnerships having been created or reorganised recently (paragraph 3.3(vii)). We are particularly disappointed and concerned that there has been such delayed progress in getting this Town Centre theme partnership up and running, given its hugely important objective for the community (paragraph 3.17).
- 4.10 We are concerned that fewer than half of the Theme Partnerships had carried out a self-assessment of governance arrangements or risk assessments, though we note that these were fairly new requirements, and we acknowledge this is less of an issue for partnerships without dedicated funding (paragraph 3.3(x and xiii)).
- 4.11 The arrangements for decision making and performance management arrangements were sound (paragraph 3.3(xi and xiv)).
- 4.12 More might be done to comprehensively demonstrate the value for money achieved by the Theme Partnerships and to publicise their achievements (paragraph 3.3(xv)).
- 4.13 The review has elicited very few views from the people we met on how O&S could assist in their development and the achievement of objectives (paragraph 3.3(xviii)).
- 4.14 It was clear to us that the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) is the most well-established and productive of all the Theme Partnerships (paragraphs 3.5-3.8).
- 4.15 Our review found clear evidence of good leadership by the Partnership Board, which also demonstrated continuing and effective oversight and challenge for the Theme Partnerships.
- 4.16 There is an impressive range of planned activity in the Economic and Skills Development partnership, but we doubt that the financial and human resources being deployed by the Council are commensurate with the scope or the scale of the challenges facing our local economy (paragraphs 3.12-3.15).
- 4.17 We commend the Early Years and Childcare and Play Partnership team on a partnership which has progressed from strength to strength creating additional capacity for the delivery of projects for children in the Borough and

ensuring resources are targeted in important areas during the current economic downturn (paragraphs 3.24-3.27).

- 4.18 We are concerned that the significant Transport Theme Partnership ceased functioning, apparently due to lack of support and interest, though we acknowledge that this received the attention of the Partnership Board. It was unsatisfactory that the published information on the Partnership was allowed to remain significantly out of date, by showing that this Theme Partnership was still in existence (paragraph 3.37-3.38). We acknowledge that the Partnership Board, in its annual review of the Local Transport Plan, gives some Partnership attention to transport issues which affect all residents and which are so important for the Borough's economy and quality of life.

The Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group

- 4.19 The Partnership O&S Group is still in its early stages, but has proved useful, particularly in terms of: achieving and maintaining a collaborative consensus; facilitating the exchange of views and information; and forging governance links between the organisations. It has been particularly valuable to have gathered together those people charged with holding to account the various Executives leading the delivery of public services in the first full year of partnership scrutiny. Nevertheless, the overall impact of the Group is not yet fully clear, and if the Group is to move forward it depends on proper resourcing, and would benefit from a focussed review and proof that it had secured change (paragraph 3.47).
- 4.20 The Council has had to reduce its O&S officer team as part of its overall cost savings programme, such that we could not resource such a review, nor continue to support the Group in its current form, without redeploying scarce resources from mainstream O&S work. We also need to be mindful of: the view of most Theme Partnerships that there is no need for specific O&S activity in their areas; the acute and growing pressure on the human and financial resources of all the organisations represented on the Group; competing demands for O&S activity; and changing requirements. Separate from the partnership-orientated O&S work, the Council can and should continue to review partner organisations' activities when they are an integral part of an O&S review of NHS services or the Council's own activities (paragraph 3.48).

5. Recommendations

It is recommended to the Leader of the Council, as Executive Portfolio Holder for the Bracknell Forest Partnership that:

- 5.1 The Council should review whether the variety in the choice of postholders to fill Chairmen and Lead Officer positions in Theme Partnerships is justified (paragraph 4.5).
- 5.2 The Council continues its strong and effective leadership of the Bracknell Forest Partnership, whilst encouraging the Council's partners to take a more active role in chairing the Theme Partnerships and providing officer support to them (paragraph 4.4).

It is recommended to the Board of the Bracknell Forest Partnership that:

- 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).
- 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).
- 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 to commit to meet publicly occasionally (paragraph 4.7).
- 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).
- 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).
- 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).
- 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).
- 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 (paragraph 4.14).

- 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).
- 5.12 The published information on the Partnership should be kept up to date in all significant respects (paragraph 4.18).
- 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).
- 5.14 The Partnership Board should consider providing resources for O&S Officer support for a continuation of Partnership scrutiny.
- 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.
- 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.

It is recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission that:

- 5.17 This report is updated after the meeting with the Town Centre Partnership, expected on 28 October 2010 (paragraph 3.16) – [note – this report has since been updated].
- 5.18 The Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group, having fulfilled its initial functions regrettably can no longer be supported unless and until new resources are made available. In future, the group should exist in a reference capacity only, meeting exceptionally if required. Similarly, the resource constraints mean that O&S reviews of partner organisations' activities should only be carried out when they form an integral part of an O&S review of the Council's own activities, or NHS services (paragraphs 4.20-4.21).
- 5.19 The approach to O&S of the Bracknell Forest Partnership should be reviewed in the light of the responses to this report's recommendations and in the event that: the powers or funding of the Bracknell Forest Partnership grow; or priorities change; or more resources become available (paragraph 5.14); or in two years' time at the latest.

6. Glossary

APA	Annual Performance Assessment
BFC	Bracknell Forest Council
BFP	Bracknell Forest Partnership
BFVA	Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action
BRP	Bracknell Regeneration Partnership
BCS	British Crime Survey
CADIS	Community Nuisance & Disorder Information System
CCP	Climate Change Partnership
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CEO	Chief Executive
CfPS	Centre for Public Scrutiny
CLG	Communities and Local Government
CMT	Corporate Management Team
Council	Bracknell Forest Council
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DMT	Departmental Management Team
DOH	Department of Health
EAL	English as an additional language
EYCCPP	Early Years, Childcare and Play Theme Partnership
GOSE	Government Office for the South East
HSCP	Health and Social Care Partnership Board
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	Infrastructure Delivery Plan
IRG	Infrastructure Reference Group
IT	Information Technology
JAR	Joint Area Review
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
LA	Local Authority
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
NHS	National Health Service
NHS BE	NHS Primary Care Trust for Berkshire East
NEET	Not in Employment Education or Training
O&S	Overview and Scrutiny
O&SC	Overview and Scrutiny Commission
Partnership	Bracknell Forest Partnership
PPOR	Partnership Performance Overview Reports
PCT	Primary Care Trust
RBH	Royal Berkshire Hospital
RBFRS	Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service
SEEDA	South East England Development Agency
SHP	Strategic Housing Partnership
TOR	Terms of Reference
TVP	Thames Valley Police

PARTNERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS

	CHILDREN'S TRUST PARTNERSHIP	CLIMATE CHANGE PARTNERSHIP	CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP	CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP	EARLY YEARS, CHILD CARE AND PLAY PARTNERSHIP	ECONOMIC AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP	STRATEGIC HOUSING PARTNERSHIP	TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP	BRACKNELL FOREST PARTNERSHIP BOARD
Chairman	Councillor Dr Gareth Barnard (BFC)	Ann Symonds	Timothy Wheadon (BFC)	Cllr Iain McCracken (BFC)	Gareth Barnard (BFC)	Timothy Wheadon (BFC)	Irene Douglas	Simon Hendey (BFC)	Tim Wheadon	Timothy Wheadon (BFC)
Lead Officer	Martin Gocke (BFC)	Colin Griffin (BFC)	Ian Boswell (BFC)	Mark Devon (BFC)	Karen Frost (BFC)	Victor Nicholls (BFC)	Glyn Jones (BFC)	Clare Dorning (BFC)	Richard Haynes (BFC)	Claire Sharp (BFC)
Number of times Partnership meets in a year	Not stated	Quarterly		Not stated	Quarterly	Quarterly	Quarterly			
Terms of reference	Yes	Yes	The TOR are currently under review following recommendations from the Deloitte audit report	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Please see terms of reference (in preparation)	Please find attached the Memorandum of Agreement, Protocol and Work Programme for 09/10
Partnership's Major Achievements	Please see attached Children and Young People's Plan Review Document, this details progress made in the last year against the key priorities for the CYP Trust through the leadership of the Partnership.	Established March 2009	1. 20% reduction in British Crime Survey crime (BCS) crime in 2007 – 08 2. The establishment of a e safety group to address internet crime 3. The Community Nuisance & Disorder Information System (CADIS) ASB data base and national recognition in 2008 4. Knife Crime DVD following schools competition	Please refer to pages 39-47 of the Life is for Living Cultural Strategy publication for 2008-2012. This section highlights key progress made by the group since 2002. (Hard copy to be sent, further copies available)	Has contributed, for over ten years, to a well regarded Early Years Childcare and Play service. Some of major achievements include, Children's Centres, wide spread ongoing consultation, conferences, strong integrated working, EAL project, quality training programme.	A production of a monthly economic indicators report and priority action plan all within weeks of the Council adopting a new overarching priority	Co-ordination of elements of Health and Social Care activity. Commissioning strategy consultation. Healthspace and JSNA developments. A successful conduit for sharing information. Providing a forum for discussion and ensuring on-going monitoring of issues.	The SHP steers the delivery of the Bracknell forest housing strategy. Therefore, achievements such as exceeding the national indicator for delivery of affordable housing in 2008/9 can be seen as an achievement but overall the production of the new housing strategy which is supported by all partners is a major achievement.	The partnership has only recently been refreshed; A work programme is being developed for consideration by the partnership at its next meeting.	Developed Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and Local Area Agreement (LAA) Launched Community TV for Bracknell Forest

	CHILDREN'S TRUST PARTNERSHIP	CLIMATE CHANGE PARTNERSHIP	CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP	CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP	EARLY YEARS, CHILD CARE AND PLAY PARTNERSHIP	ECONOMIC AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP	STRATEGIC HOUSING PARTNERSHIP	TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP	BRACKNELL FOREST PARTNERSHIP BOARD
Stage of development?	Partnership has been established as a Trust from 1 April 2008 and is delivering shared outcomes through the Children and Young People's Plan priorities.	Early formation – Launched 24 th March 2009	Fully developed but continued development	End of the first strategy – probably at the stage of delivering shared outcomes.	Fully developed	Early formation	Developing shared outcomes	Early formation	Early formation	Fully developed, although always considering ways to improve further
Any major obstacles towards the partnership's success?	There is a significant national driver to ensure that the Children's Trust is responsible for developing pooled budgets and more effective joint commissioning, and performance monitoring to improve outcomes for children and young people. A key area of development will be around commissioning / joint commissioning and securing the engagement / cooperation of partners in ensuring we meet the identified priorities and improve outcomes. New legislation is expected in the Autumn which places the Children's Trust on a statutory footing.	Potential reluctance for business and community to engage. Ability to establish a consistent and practical message to encourage participation.	Information exchange Health Service data on assaults. Minimal funding.	The Cultural Partnership is not mandatory –could be deemed less important.	None	The future of the global economy	None identified	There are no major obstacles but the current state of the residential market makes joint working problematic.	The principal barrier to improving the town centre vitality remains economic conditions, a challenge nationally, rather than one limited to Bracknell alone.	Major obstacles are set out in BFP's strategic risk register. (Attached) Key risks include economic climate, commitment of partner resources and continuity of Board members/support officers.
List the current members & the organisations they represent	Within TOR.	Mailing list attached	Within TOR	Within TOR.	Within TOR	Within TOR	Within TOR	Within TOR	See Terms of Ref	Within TOR

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Describe arrangements for appointing members	Core membership is prescribed by Guidance from the DCSF	Representatives of any relevant organisation may join (not individuals in private capacity)	Within TOR	Within TOR.	If a new area of work is being developed which entails working with other partners then a representative would be invited by agreement of the partnership	Within TOR.	The partnership itself decides on its membership and which organisations/bodies should be represented. The organisations/bodies are then responsible for appointing their representatives.	Within TOR	See Terms of Ref	TOR
Minutes	Minutes for 5 meetings in 10 months (July 08 – May 09)	Minutes received for April and May 2009.	Attached. [emailed separately to Members]	Minutes received for 5 meetings between July 08 and May 09	Minutes received.	Minutes for 4 meetings in 9 months (Sept 08 June 09)	Minutes received for 4 meetings in 18 months (June 08 and Sept 09)	Minutes received	Refocusing meeting held July 2010 to set the scene for the next formal session of the partnership.	
Recent self-assessment of governance arrangement, or any plans to do so.	See attached Governance Document	Draft TOR reviewed and amended by members 28/05/09	No self assessment in the last 3 years. No current plans	Non mandatory partnership – unclear on self assessment.	The partnership is a consultative /advisory body that does not make decisions but does affect decision making.	Recently undertaken through the production of the TOR	The partnership reviews its terms of reference on an annual basis.	There has not been a self – assessment and given the new TOR have only recently been adopted it would be too early to propose an assessment.	None undertaken; governance arrangements are being established as part of the refresh of the partnership.	Self assessment last undertaken in Autumn 2009 (available on request).

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How are decisions made? A scheme of delegation that makes clear who can take decisions?	Not stated	Majority of member representatives present	Decisions can be made at the CDRP Executive held 4 weeks in advance of the full CDRP. Votes taken are on a simple one person one vote system Decisions can be taken by sub group Chairs.	Decisions are made by members of the Partnership as a whole, under the leadership of the Chairperson.	N/A	Decisions are made in the overall interests of the partnership	Decisions are taken at Board meetings by a simple majority as detailed in the terms of reference.	There is no scheme of delegation. Decisions are acted upon by partners in line with their own governance arrangements	Decisions will be taken by board members only and by agreement of the chair.	This can be found in the TOR. Memorandum of Agreement, Section 8: 'The BFP Board will endeavour to reach consensus on matter for decision. Where votes are invoked, each representative shall have one vote, carrying equal weight. Decisions will be made on a simple majority basis and will require a quorum of 4 members, as set out in the BFP Protocol.'
How are decisions recorded?	Minutes	Minutes	Minutes	Minutes	N/A	Minutes	Minutes.	Minutes.	Minutes	Minutes
Who makes sure decisions are acted upon?	Lead Member and Director of Children's Services have joint accountability.	Chair	Review of minutes by Chairs and review of sub group minutes by full CDRP	Chair/Lead Officer/Co-ordinating Officer	N/A	Lead officer	Lead Officer or whoever an action is allocated to and follow up reports given at successive meetings.	Actions are reviewed at each meeting	Lead officers of action groups	The Board revisits previous minutes at each meeting to ensure that the actions have been carried out.
How the partnership is held to account, and by whom	See attached Governance Document	Director: Environment, Culture & Communities – responsible to CMT. Overview by Bracknell Forest Partnership.	Partnership is held to account by the Chair and its own membership in addition to accountability to individual organisations. Performance is monitored by GOSE O&S Committee of BFC oversees	Represented on the main Partnership Board, O&S.	N/A	Quarterly performance reports to the BFP board including LAA performance	The BFP receives quarterly newsletter updates from each themed partnership which highlights the recent partnership work. The BFP also reviews the performance of themed partnerships through the quarterly	As discussed above the decisions are taken by partners via their own governance arrangements so accountability is via those mechanisms.	Quarterly performance reports to the BFP	Each partner representative is accountable to their own organisation, each of which has its own accountability arrangement. Overall accountability is now a role for Overview and Scrutiny. The MoA specifies that if a

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			CDRP BFP responsible for LAA targets				performance monitoring of the LAA. If indicators fall into the 'red' category, members of the themed partnership will be requested to attend a BFP meeting to explain why.			partner is going to make a decision that will adversely impact on delivering the SCS or will negatively impact on other partners, that fact needs to be made explicit in reports to their decision making body.
Has the Partnership itself carried out a formal risk assessment of the Partnership?	This has not yet been undertaken	No	Risk management contained within the CDRP 3 year plan www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/crime-and-disorder-reduction-partnership-plan-2008-to-2011.pdf	No formal risk assessment – but they consider this inappropriate due to non statutory role.	N/A	Not as yet. Early stage in the partnership's development which has been focused on the 'forming' stage	No.	No.	As part of the BFP risk management assessment	Yes. Risk register attached and action plans are available on request.
Arrangements for setting output/outcome targets, and details of 08/09 targets	Priorities are identified in the Children and Young People's Plan which are linked to LAA targets, National Indicators and other plans and strategies.	Partnership in formative stage – No targets set to date.	The CDRP has a statutory 3 year CDRP plan which contains an up to date action plan which is also published on the internet www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/crime-and-disorder-reduction-partnership-plan-2008-to-2011.pdf	Potential actions are contained in the Cultural Strategy 2008 – 2012.	The partnership works on the Early Years Childcare and Play strategic targets	1) Key targets in the LAA 2) Action plan agreed (with priority actions separated out)	LAA targets form the basis of performance. Progress is tracked from the core group partnerships via annual reports.	Targets are discussed at the meetings but negotiated with the GOSE outside the SHP meeting. In 2008/9 the following targets were set: NI 143 – offenders under probation supervision living in settled accommodation at the end of their order or licence, NI 46 Young offenders access to suitable accommodation	Targets to be agreed by lead officers of action groups and to be reported and agreed by the board.	BFP Board co-ordinates all LAA targets.

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			LAA targets have been agreed by BFP The targets with milestones are contained within the CDRP plan					NI 187.1 Tackling fuel poverty % of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a low energy efficiency rating, NI 187.2. Tackling fuel poverty % of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with an assessed SAP rating of > 65., NI 145 adults with learning disabilities in settled accommodation, NI 147 care leavers in settled accommodation, NI 149 adults receiving secondary mental health services in settled accommodation, NI156 number of households living in temporary accommodation, NI 154 net additional homes provided, NI 155 number of affordable homes delivered gross, NI 159 supply of ready to develop housing sites.		
Arrangements for monitoring and reporting progress against targets	This has been undertaken mainly on an annual basis, through the review of the Children and Young People's Plan. However areas of concern are brought to the attention of the Children's Trusts for discussion and resolution where possible. New inspection	See above	LAA monitoring process by Ch/Execs office of BFC RAG system of reporting progress to CDRP Executive. Full CDRP reviews those targets which are Red	Collect and collate feedback from members to form an overview of progress, enabling further discussion during Partnership meetings.	Updates and highlight reports are given to members at every meeting. Detailed action plans are shared. Regional advisors monitor and grade progress.	1) Part of the partnerships performance monitoring every quarter (for LAA) 2) Action plan monitoring at each meeting	LAA performance monitoring.	Targets and progress against them are reported at each meeting	Progress against the work programme will be considered at each meeting.	Partnership Performance Overview Report (PPOR) discussed quarterly by BFP Board. Rigorous challenge to underperformance – recognised by GOSE.

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	processes through the APA and JAR have strengthened this also.				Minutes are reported to the Children's Trust.					
How does the partnership agree action on targets that are not likely to be met?	See above.	See above	Full CDRP discusses Red targets and agrees resources and plan of action to address poor performance	Explore options for trying to move forward. If actions are deemed unrealistic, may agree to remove/amend the action.	N/A	Through discussions at the partnership meeting involving robust challenge from the chair	Decisions made through discussion at meetings.	Actions are agreed with partners to address targets where performance is unlikely to be achieved.	Through board-level discussion.	Those targets showing as 'Red' in the PPOR are discussed in detail, including request for presentation of remedial action from relevant theme partnership.
Demonstrate publicly that the partnership adds value?	Not stated	See above	Communications plan Extensive use of the media Plan and action plan published on BFC Crime & Disorder reduction Team pages of internet Annual conference	An annual report will be published on the Executive Work Programme.	The network of providers that meet regularly are given information about the partnership. Parents that attend the meeting and other events through Children's Centres, early years provision etc are made aware of the partnership and its role.	Through the work of the BFP and the partnership newsletter, available on the BFP website	BFP has a Communications Group that ensure the work of the partnership is publicised.	There is no evidence of public perception of the partnership	Communications is part of the developing work programme.	Quarterly newsletter, articles in Town and Country, Community TV, Annual Report.
How does the public know that the partnership achieves value for money?	Not stated	If the partnership utilises public money, it will account for it. All other inputs are made voluntarily by members.	Communication bulletins, BFC website CDRT pages, Council members as observers on CDRP, Bracknell Forest Partnership news letter, CDRP news letter, Community TV	As above.	Via publicity statements from the chair in Town and Country and local newspapers.	Through the work of the BFP and the partnership newsletter, available on the BFP website and the 'Beat the Credit Crunch' website	Through publicity of the work being carried out.	There is not a test of value for money at present	Communications is part of the developing work programme.	Not stated

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Contribute accounts of success to the BFP's communications group?	Not to the Communications Group directly, however a number of successes have been reported directly to the BFP	This is the intention.	Yes. Quarterly feedback	The chairman of the Cultural Partnership sits on the Council's Strategic Partnership.	Updates are given when requested and news articles are given for the themed partnerships newsletter.	Yes through the 'Beat the Credit Crunch' website	Yes, through a quarterly newsletter.	No.	Communications is part of the developing work programme	Yes. The Communications representative is Helen Barnett from BRP.
How is the partnership funded? (on the basis of the last financial year)	The partnership itself is not directly funded. There are a range of funding routes through key initiatives which contribute to the "whole" delivery of the Children's Trust	£5,000 "new burdens" award by CMT for promotional work	Safer Stronger Communities Fund of £118,240 for 2009-10 (revenue £81,608 and capital £36,632) BFC £14,720 1.5 FTE posts (BFC)	There is no specific budget for this Partnership, a small amount to cover meeting room hires etc. Potential actions identified in the Cultural Strategy 08-12 will be delivered from the resources individual members.	There is no direct funding. Sure Start funding provides travelling and other expenses for the voluntary sector representatives and parent/carers who attend meetings. When conferences or away days are planned the expenses for that are covered by Sure Start funding.	Last financial year – partners organisation staff time Note that this financial year a small (£37k) budget has been allocated for initiatives	The partnership has no budget, Democratic Services administer the meetings.	Funding is via partners individual budgets – there are no pooled budgets	At this stage, there are no separate funds for the partnership. Resources are currently limited to officer and partner time. The development of the work programme will identify additional resources needed.	Support for BFP in terms of Lead Officer/Clerk is provided by BFC. Partners part fund this from 09/10 through top slice of LPSA2 reward. Projects, for example Community TV, have individual joint funding agreements.

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Who decides on how to spend the money?	Main spending is via Commissioning Task Groups of the Children's Trust, which have delegated responsibilities covering key areas of national strategy and policy.	Majority decision at meeting	CDRP Executive make recommendations for approval by full CDRP	N/A see above	Lead Officer and Chair	Partnership members	N/A	Partners make decisions on their own budgets	Subject to resolution of the above, TC Partnership Board members except where formal partner organisation approvals are needed.	Any joint funding is agreed for specific projects only. The Board agrees allocation of Area Based Grant – largely based on spending commitments to date.
Can the money be reallocated? If so, who can authorise this?	Money is identified by Government for particular purpose / initiatives that impact on the wellbeing and outcomes for children and young people. The Children's Trust Executive could authorise re-allocation, but only within the boundaries of the approach to commissioning [see attached Joint Commissioning framework], and in response to identified needs and priorities.	Approval required through Community and Environmental Development Team Leader and if a significant departure, Chief Officer: Planning and Transport.	Yes, Chair of CDRP	N/A see above	N/A	Chair	N/A	Partners have offered views on the allocation of the Council's resources	Subject to resolution of how the TC partnership is funded above, TC Partnership Board members except where formal partner organisation approvals are needed.	See above.
What are the financial reporting arrangements?	The Children's Trust itself does not hold the funding; this is allocated via various grants and core funding and is monitored in line with Council and partner processes.	Through lead officer's departmental budget	Finance report to CDRP Executive for approval by full CDRP	N/A see above	The Lead Officer has monthly financial monitoring meetings with the departments finance officers. Quarterly finance reports are	Through the Council's financial reporting system and action plan monitoring each quarter	N/A	There are no financial reporting arrangements	To be confirmed, but expected to be through the usual partner financial reporting arrangements	Reported on project by project basis to BFP Board.

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					sent to Sure Start.					
Communications policy?	Not stated	No formal policy. May use BFC's Climate Change web pages. Quarterly reports to BFP	Not stated	No – individual press releases will be issued where relevant.	BFC Policy	No		No	Being developed as part of the partnership work programme.	Yes. BFP Communications Strategy and Identity Guidelines. (Both available on request).
Achieve accessibility for the public?	Not stated	Partnership meetings are open to representatives of relevant organisations but not members of the public.	Not stated	Meetings not in public. But membership is open to interested stakeholders	Minutes logged on public website (but meetings are not public)	Meetings are not open to the public		Meetings are not open to the public	Meetings are not open to the general public	The quarterly BFP meeting is open, there are regular website updates including a newsletter and Community TV (which is also now available in a web version on the website)
Is there a complaints and suggestions process the public can use?	Not stated	No formal process. Can correspond with Chair or PFP.	Not stated	No. Customer Services details are given on Cultural Strategy website page.	BFC complaints procedure. On the Early Years Childcare and Play website there is a drop box where the public can email us (or ring us) with suggestions, comments or complaints.	N/A		No	Not appropriate at this stage in the partnership's development	No
Does the partnership have any views on how O&S can assist in its development and achievement of objectives?	Not stated	O&S must recognise that the climate change partnership is not a statutory partnership with shared objectives. While it can support and further BFC's objectives, it will rely on its relevance to and support from	Take performance reports from CDRP and ask questions as necessary	Not at the current time.	We would need to take this to the partnership for comment	At this early stage, the partnership needs to continue to focus single-mindedly on action to support local residents and Bracknell Forest economy		It is too early to comment on this. The SHP will be asked their views at the next meeting.	Not at this stage.	Strengthen communications and work planning, and links between theme partnerships.

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		diverse organisations to succeed.								
Any suggestions for O&S reviews to be considered for the partnership O&S programme?	This may be determined through ongoing links to the BF Partnership performance monitoring and reporting, identifying and highlighting areas where outcomes are not as good as they could be, for example young people not in employment, education or training.	O&S of the Council's Climate Change Strategy will contribute to the Partnership's objectives.	Not stated	Not at the current time, other than to ensure reviews take into consideration the nature of the Partnership.	Not stated	It would be valuable to review potential areas for O&S reviews towards the end of the financial year		As above.	As above.	See above.

Note - No questionnaire was sought from the Transport Theme partnership, as it was no longer in existence.

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE PARTNERSHIP OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY GROUP (Approved 15 January 2010)

1. Context, purpose, aims and objectives

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act empowers Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committees to carry out O&S of partner organisations' activities relevant to the Local Area Agreement (LAA)⁸. Other legislation also applies, specifically in relation to National Health Service Organisations and partner organisations in Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships.

The Bracknell Forest Partnership (BFP) Governance protocol 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'.

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission (O&SC) of Bracknell Forest Council believes that effective collaboration with partners is vital to the success of O&S of the Partnership. Whilst the Council has the statutory lead, the O&SC believes that involving partners' representatives is essential if it is to secure the goodwill and cooperation of partners, and to realise the benefit of wider sharing and application of knowledge and different perspectives. The O&SC has therefore approached the Boards or other governing authorities of the partner organisations (excluding Government Office for the South East and the South East England Development Agency) making up the BFP Board (the Primary Care Trust, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority, the Thames Valley Police Authority, Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action, and the Bracknell Regeneration Partnership) to form a non-statutory Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group for the Partnership.

The aims and objectives of this group will be to:

- (i) Engender a partnership-oriented approach to the O&S of the Partnership's activities, through a forum at which all partners' views are valued.
- (ii) Be consulted and make an input to the planning of O&S reviews affecting the Partnership.
- (iii) Participate in individual O&S reviews as appropriate.
- (iv) Review the Partnership's annual report on the progress of the LAA.

⁸ The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 is complex legislation which, among many other matters, sets out to strengthen scrutiny. Much of this will depend on regulations and guidance, which have been delayed. The Act requires that, 'Relevant partner authorities' (a number of public bodies are listed in the Act) must provide information to O&S Committees. The Act empowers O&S to publish reports, and if so, the Executive, within 2 months, must consider the report and any recommendations, and respond indicating actions to be taken. Once a report has been written, O&S may require relevant external partners to have regard to the report in exercising their functions. This applies where the report relates to a local improvement target which relates to the relevant partner, and is specified in the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The Act excludes issues relating to crime and disorder; neither does it apply to Primary Care Trusts (PCT) – where local authorities have separate powers of statutory scrutiny.

- (v) Monitor the Partnership's performance, by reference to the quarterly Partnership Performance Overview Reports (PPOR).
- (vi) Review any Area Assessments by the inspectorates on the Partnership⁹.
- (vii) Report at least annually to the Bracknell Forest Partnership Board, partners, the Council and the public.

2. Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group Principles

The partnership O&S group will observe the same governing principles as the Partnership itself, acting in the best interests of the partnership as a whole and specifically supporting sound governance of the partnership through effective Overview and Scrutiny.

3. Structure and membership

The Membership will comprise:

- One nominee each from NHS Berkshire East, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority, the Thames Valley Police Authority, Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action, and the Bracknell Regeneration Partnership, selected from amongst their Non-Executive Directors, or equivalent positions of those charged with holding the executive of their organisations to account.
- From Bracknell Forest Council, the Chairman of the Council's O&S Commission (who will be Chairman of the Partnership O&S Group) and a representative of each of the four O&S Panels.

4. Roles and responsibilities

[To be developed in due course]

5. Resources and administration

Administrative support will be provided by Bracknell Forest Council unless the partnership O&S Group decides to make other arrangements. All of the members of the group will need to identify how they will support the agreed objectives of the group, but this is not expected to amount to more than individuals' time. At all times any funding or resource will remain the responsibility of the member organisation.

6. Working arrangements

Quarterly closed meetings will be held in places that are accessible and acceptable to all members. The agenda and papers will be circulated one week in advance. The meetings will be formally minuted.

⁹ The first Area Assessment is expected in December 2009. It is coordinated by the Audit Commission and it looks at the difference local public services are making to the quality of life in an area, both now and in the future. The area will be defined on the basis of the LAA, although issues that may be considered will not be restricted to LAA targets and could cover several areas. The assessment will look at the contribution of all key partners - including the council and those with a duty to co-operate with the LAA - and will be based on three key questions:

- How well do local priorities express community needs and aspirations?
- How well are the required outcomes and improvements being delivered?
- What are the prospects for future improvement?

7. Decision making process

Partners shall bring along their own expertise to the decision making process, but decisions will be taken in the overall interest of the Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group's objectives.

The Partnership will endeavour to reach consensus on matters for decision. Where votes are invoked each representative shall have one vote, carrying equal weight. Decisions will be made on a simple majority basis and will require a quorum of 4 members. The Chairman will have a second, casting vote.

8. Duration and termination

The Partnership O&S Group may be dissolved by mutual consent of all partners if such time arises where this is the appropriate cause of action. Upon termination of the Agreement, the partners agree to co-operate with each other to ensure an orderly wind down of the Partnership arrangements so as to minimise disruption to all members. At dissolution, partners may need to inform the funders; provide appropriate final reports and inform all stakeholders as appropriate.

9. Risk management

Not applicable.

10. Communication

The Partnership recognises the agreed Bracknell Forest Partnership Communications Strategy and associated Identity Guidelines. All external communications concerning the Partnership O&S Group's activities will be agreed by the Chairman.

11. Equalities and diversity

The Partnership O&S Group is committed to promoting community cohesion and equality for all in the borough, as reflected in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Public bodies have a legal duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and promote good relations between people. These duties apply to the Partnership O&S Group.

12. Conduct and behaviour

Members of the Partnership O&S Group are to act in good faith at all times and in the best interests of the Group's aims and objectives, and be open about any conflict of interests that might arise.

Within Partnership O&S Group meetings, declarations of interest and provision for withdrawal from meetings should be made orally or in writing prior to each meeting.

All Partnership O&S Group members must work together in a harmonious relationship based upon mutual respect, courtesy, trust, honesty and understanding

of each others roles. This should prevail in all meetings and contacts, whether formal or informal.

13. Dispute resolution

With goodwill, respect and integrity on both sides, there ought to be very few occasions when a disagreement between members of the Partnership cannot be resolved amicably. If there is a serious dispute of substance it should be discussed, in the first instance, between the members concerned. If such discussions should not produce an acceptable settlement, reference may be made to the Chairman of the Partnership, but this should be seen as a last, rather than a first resort. If the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily after reference to the Chairman, it may be referred to an expert selected by mutual agreement by the parties involved.

14. Audit and scrutiny

All members of the Partnership O&S Group shall abide by the extant and nationally recognised procedures, guidelines and standards for ensuring probity and good governance in public life.

The meetings of the Partnership O&S Group can be observed by any individual who has received permission from the Chairman of the Group to attend. The Partnership O&S Group shall report progress annually to the Partnership Board and the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commission. The Partnership O&S Group shall carry out an effectiveness self-assessment annually.

15. Fraud

The Partnership O&S Group is wholly opposed to all forms of fraud, corruption or theft and will not tolerate fraud in any form in the administration of its responsibilities, from any members. Action will be taken against anyone who attempts to defraud the Partnership O&S Group by deliberately falsifying, substituting or destroying records for personal gain; intentional breaches of financial regulations and procedures; the offer, giving or acceptance of inducements to influence action or decisions, or by abuse of position as a Member of the Partnership O&S Group to benefit friends, family or others. This includes the use of deception with the intention of obtaining an advantage, avoiding an obligation or causing loss to another party. The Partnership O&S Group will treat attempted fraud as seriously as actual fraud.