

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION
4.00PM 15 JULY 2008
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL
MINUTES

Present: Councillors Mitchell (Chairman); Pidgeon (Deputy Chairman), Alford, Mrs Cobb, Elgood, Meadows, Morgan, Older, Randall and Wakefield-Jarrett

PART ONE

15. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

15a Declarations of Interests and Substitutes

There were none.

15b Exclusion of Press and Public

In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

RESOLVED: That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

16. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

16.1 At Minute 7.4 a briefing note from the Director of Finance and Resources was circulated on the respective roles and responsibilities of the Audit Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Commission in respect of Finance.

16.2 At minute 11.5 a reply from the Director of Adult Social Care and Housing was tabled regarding the query on the personalisation of adult social care.

16.3 RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2008 be agreed and signed by the Chairman.

17. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

18. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

19. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

There were none.

20. NOTICES OF MOTION REFERRED FROM COUNCIL

There were none.

21. THE CORPORATE PLAN; FEEDBACK ON CABINET CONSIDERATION OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMENTS

21.1 The Head of Scrutiny presented the report which demonstrated how overview and scrutiny could influence Cabinet reports.

21.2 RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

22. DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

22.1 The Senior Policy Development Officer presented the report on the development of a Community Engagement Framework and gave an example of how it could be used by a particular service. A recent workshop had been attended by two Commission Members.

22.2 The report enabled overview and scrutiny formally to be part of the development of the framework and to help drive the future agenda regarding policy outcomes and priority actions once these are agreed.

22.3 Some Members commented that much work on consultation policy had been done and that practical outcomes now needed to be demonstrable. Many areas of good practice were already in use.

22.4 The possible use of national and regional funding streams already available for third sector work with communities was questioned.

22.5 Several areas for priorities were suggested including a common research protocol, improving coordination of work 'on the ground,' and participatory budgeting.

22.6 Replying to a perception that the paper seemed inaccessible and included jargon, the Officer said it had been produced together with the community and voluntary sector organisations. This version was aimed at the organisations already engaged with the process and a summary was available. The priority actions would be agreed by all the members of the Local Strategic Partnership.

22.7 The OSC considered how overview and scrutiny fitted as an engagement activity and agreed it should undertake a monitoring role of the use and outcomes of the framework. All Councillors are invited to an event on 8th September after the close of consultation on 5th September.

22.8 RESOLVED (1) To note the progress to date on developing the Framework

(2) To put forward priority actions as minuted at 25.5 above

(3) To agree to receive feedback on the consultation and the final version of the Framework at a future meeting

(4) To monitor the practical use of the Framework when agreed, and its outcomes.

23. THE COUNCIL'S EQUALITIES AND INCLUSION POLICY

23.1 The Head of Equalities and Inclusion presented the report on the Council's Equalities and Inclusion Policy which had been considered by the Equalities Forum and was due to be considered by the Cabinet meeting on 18 September.

23.2 Many equalities activities had been mainstreamed but examples of good practice were not necessarily recognised or improved consistently. A draft Equalities Scheme outlining departmental actions to support the council's target to achieve level 3 of the Equalities Standard by 2009 was also provided.

23.3 The Commission wished to help shape the Policy. Some Members felt that although 'excellent,' some of the aspirations had been developed over some years and needed to be practised more widely.

23.4 The Commission felt that 6-monthly reports would be needed and that if the actions were re-ordered chronologically they would be simpler to monitor.

23.5 Progress on improving performance in areas related to employment were raised as a concern.

23.6 The Head of Equalities and Inclusion said it was important that the Council's managers, and those who were delivering services on behalf of the council, were fully competent in dealing with equalities matters. The Dignity at Work policy would be checked by the Audit Commission, as part of the forthcoming review of governance arrangements.

23.7 Asked about the membership of the City Inclusion Partnership (CIP) the Head of Equalities and Inclusion said that this was established as part of the wider constitutional changes and was agreed by full council in April, following cross-party consultation. OSC took the view that the CIP Chairman should be independent from the Council.

23.8 RESOLVED – (1) That the views of OSC be compiled and presented to Cabinet for consideration along with the Equalities and Inclusion Policy at their September meeting.

(2) that twice-yearly reports on progress towards Equalities Scheme targets, including employment practices, be presented to the OSC.

24. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

24.1 The Senior Performance Analyst presented the Council's Annual Report of Performance. To enable full scrutiny of performance information Chairmen of the respective scrutiny Committees should receive performance reports relating to their own service areas.

24.2 The Assistant Director, Improvement and Organisational Development said this was the last time the government required performance to be reported in this way and that future performance reports would be on a reduced set of indicators, Local Area Agreement targets and corporate health measures.

24.3 Members asked questions on school exclusions, recycled waste, older people helped to live at home, numbers of abandoned tenancies, social services and reporting of crime. Replies to these queries would be referred to their respective Committees.

24.4 The Commission asked for a further breakdown of information available on the numbers of staff from an ethnic minority among the top 5% of earners.

24.5 The Chairman of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee asked for details of looked after young people in education, training or employment. Reporting on performance on schools exclusions was also queried.

24.6 RESOLVED – that the Commission ask for further information to be supplied, as minuted above.

25. TARGETTED BUDGET MANAGEMENT MONTH 2

25.1 The Director of Finance and Resources referred Members to the paper on the respective roles and responsibilities of the OSC and the Audit Committee in respect of finance. (See minute 16.1). Detailed briefings on finance matters could be arranged as necessary, either on an individual basis or collectively.

25.2 The Director of Finance and Resources introduced the TBM report. Members said this was a good report and noted that it had been produced earlier than before in the financial year, and it was not unusual to forecast significant overspends at this stage.

25.3 The Commission discussed the key variances and the Director answered questions for example on parking and energy costs. The financial recovery plans were- being worked on and would be reported to Cabinet. The Chairman asked that it also be presented to the Commission.

25.4 Members agreed that the Council's energy costs were an important issue and asked for the matter to be included as part of the Commission's work planning process.

25.5 Comments were made on costs of home care services, and current forecast overspends including Section 75 budgets.

25.6 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Commission notes the Cabinet resolution as outlined in the report.

(2) that the financial Recovery Plan in relation to S75 partnerships be reported to the Commission

26. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PLAN

26.1 The Interim Head of Policy outlined the Work Plan which would be reported to each meeting as part of the performance management process for Overview and Scrutiny.

26.2 RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

27. ITEMS TO GO FORWARD TO CABINET OR THE RELEVANT CABINET MEMBER MEETING

28. ITEMS TO GO FORWARD TO COUNCIL

The meeting concluded at 5.40pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of