

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION
4.00PM 8 SEPTEMBER 2009
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL
MINUTES

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

PART ONE

25. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

25a Declarations of Substitutes

There were none.

25b Declarations of Interests

There were none.

25c Declaration of Party Whip

There were none.

25d 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.

26. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 JULY

26.1 RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July be approved and signed by the Deputy Chairman.

27. PUBLIC QUESTIONS/LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS/NOTICES OF MOTION REFERRED FROM COUNCIL

27.1 There were none.

28. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

28.1 The Chairman confirmed that the informal workshop on the Sustainable Community Strategy as agreed at the previous meeting, would be held on Friday 9 October at 4pm in Brighton Town Hall.

29. PLACE SURVEY

29.1 Cabinet Member for Central Services, Councillor Ayas Fallon-Khan and the Head of Analysis and Research introduced the report on the Place Survey 2008: Findings and Comparator Results.

29.2 There are some significant areas of extremely good results, such as residents being happy with Brighton and Hove as a place to live, and others where more work is needed. Further mapping and analysis could be done if needed.

29.3 Explaining some of the findings in more depth, the Head of Analysis and Research explained that many of the results are based on perceptions which are influenced by expectations and both were difficult to quantify and interpret. For example, our satisfaction levels as a council have stayed relatively stable since 2000 where levels have declined considerably in other areas.. The media and messages about the council also have an effect on perceptions.

29.4 The Commission heard replies to questions about anti-social behaviour, refuse and doorstep recycling collections and getting involved in decisions. Communal bins and the recruitment for a six-month period of a social media officer were also discussed.

29.5 Additional funding from the DCLG had been secured to support community engagement across the City. In line with the duty to involve and promote democracy, the 'Get Involved' day was being planned for 21 November.

29.6 The Chairman asked that the draft City Volunteering Strategy (report paragraph 4.3 refers) be brought to OSC.

29.7 **RESOLVED;** (1) that the report be noted and (2) that the draft volunteering strategy be requested to a future meeting.

30. SCOPING REPORT ON DISABILITIES ISSUES

30.1 The Head of Equalities and Inclusion introduced the report on disability issues.

30.1 Members asked about the built environment and 'Lifetime Neighbourhood' concept, support for Carers of people with disabilities, disabled young people, the staff bus and encouraging people with disabilities to apply for Council jobs.

30.3 The Head of Equalities and Inclusion gave further details and answered questions. HR monitoring information does not specify the type of impairment, though some staff belonging to the Disabled Workers Forum are known to be visually impaired.

30.4 The Commission welcomed the report and agreed that it wished positively to support officers in the good work already being done.

30.5 It was agreed to establish a four-Member Panel to ensure progress on the issues raised about staff disabilities from the Diversity Peer Challenge (as reported to 14 July OSC) and to investigate:

-- issues relating to performance under the Local Area Agreement.

-- action taken by the council to encourage people with disabilities to apply for a job

30.6 Progress from the Equalities and Inclusion Action Plan, was already being monitored via the regular reports within the existing OSC work programme.

30.7 **RESOLVED** - that OSC establish a four-Member scrutiny panel as minuted at 30.5 above.

31. STRENGTHENING LOCAL DEMOCRACY - RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

31.1 The Head of Overview and Scrutiny presented the draft response to the Government consultation on Strengthening Local Democracy that would be considered by the 22 September Governance Committee.

31.2 It was agreed that the Committee would like to see universities in the list of bodies that can be subject to scrutiny committees. This point would be added to the consultation response from ECSOSC.

31.3 In discussing the draft response Members said adequate resourcing of scrutiny was important, as was the need to take scrutiny recommendations seriously.

31.4 **RESOLVED;** that subject to the addition of universities to the list of bodies that can be scrutinised, the draft response to the consultation questions (report Appendix 2) be agreed.

32. SCRUTINY OF BUDGET PROPOSALS

32.1 The Head of Scrutiny outlined the proposed budget scrutiny process and timetable for 2010/2011. At report paragraph 3.5, the 16 January should read 26 January 2010.

32.2 It was asked at what stage Equalities Impact Assessments are being carried out on the budget proposals. Officers would provide a reply.

32.3 Some Members expressed discontent with the timetable for the budget scrutiny seminars; the dates were being circulated to all scrutiny committee councillors.

32.4 **RESOLVED:** that the process for scrutiny of the budget be agreed and that officers be instructed to make the necessary arrangements.

33. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION'S WORK PROGRAMME

33.1 The Commission noted its work programme and the Chairman asked for an additional item; Recovery of Council Tax Arrears, to be added.

33.2 Councillor Mitchell asked if there had been a change in the Council's approach to recovery of arrears, or a different tone or emphasis was being taken in communicating with people. Members questioned whether residents' circumstances were properly taken into account at a time of financial hardship, and what help and advice was available. It was agreed to ask for a report.

33.3 **RESOLVED;** that the Commission request a report on the recovery of council tax arrears.

34. COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN

34.1 The Council's Forward Plan was noted and Members and asked for further information on Corporate Procurement of Energy - Sub 100Kw Energy Contract for 2010 Onwards which was due to be considered at 17 September Cabinet. There was particular interest in sustainability issues.

34.2 There was a query as to why the 'Charter House Hotel – Proposed Future Options' report to 17 September Cabinet had earlier been deferred 'at the request of the Director due to O&S requirements for consultation.' Officers would clarify the reasons for this.

34.3 **RESOLVED** that Members request a report for the next meeting, on the Corporate Procurement of Energy - Sub 100Kw Energy Contract for 2010 Onwards.

35. GP-LED HEALTH CENTRE SCRUTINY REPORT

35.1 Members noted the report of the scrutiny panel scrutiny as agreed at Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8 July.

36. ITEMS TO TAKE FORWARD TO CMM CABINET OR COUNCIL

35.1 The endorsed GP-led Health Centre scrutiny panel report has been sent to the Primary Care Trust.

The meeting concluded at 5.15pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of