

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.00PM 10 NOVEMBER 2008

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Morgan (Chairman); Janio (Deputy Chairman), Davey, Davis, Drake, Rufus and Smart

PART ONE

30. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

30A Declarations of Substitutes

30.1 There were none

30b Declarations of Interests

There were none

30c 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.

31. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2008 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

32. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

32.1 The Chairman reminded the Committee of the Joint workshop with the Culture Tourism and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the London Road Supplementary Planning Document to be held on January 7th. A start time of 3pm would be convenient for the Members present.

32.2 The Chairman also noted that he had received complaints from residents about missed waste collections and would be asking for information at the next Committee meeting.

33. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

34. PERFORMANCE REPORT

34.1 The Head of Performance and Improvement Barbara Green introduced the report on the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Environment service block and gave details on the table of indicators. Further performance reports were scheduled for this Committee for January and March meetings.

34.2 Asked about satisfaction with waste collection, she said the 68% was based on a survey undertaken in 2006; a local survey in 2007 showed a satisfaction rate of more than 77%. As regards Indicator E12, reducing road casualties, she said actions were being taken.

34.3 The Chairman said he would like more information on waste collection in discussing performance at the next meeting.

34.4 Committee asked how satisfaction levels were measured and why and how some indicators were adjusted for deprivation. More information would be provided.

34.5 RESOLVED – (1) That the Committee be updated on the Council's performance against the Environment CPA service block and continue to monitor performance.

(2) That Committee approve the plan to bring performance reports before them as follows:

Q2 Performance report – meeting of 26 January 2009

Q3 Performance report meeting of 23rd March 2009.

35. STREET LIGHTING

35.1 The Chairman welcomed Mr Nigel Hall of EDF to the meeting to discuss street lighting. EDF is the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) for Brighton and Hove.

35.2 The Head of Network Management introduced the report. The street lighting service had been moved to 'Network Management' in April. Action was being taken to improve performance and business processes including staff support were being updated. Brighton and Hove had a wide variety of street lighting columns and a high proportion that were more than 40 years old; this caused complex difficulties.

35.3 Members noted that lighting provided by Council Housing or Housing Associations was not within the remit of Highways. The Highways specialist contractor Colas was set up for

working only on the road network. The Senior Engineer, Highways and Streetworks said that all Highways street lighting was numbered and marked.

35.4 The Committee expressed the view that customer service could be improved by simplifying the process for reporting lighting faults wherever they occur.

35.5 Replying the questions on rising energy prices and the environmental and financial costs of street lighting, the officers said faulty lights needed to be given first priority and day burning lamps would be dealt with as soon as possible.

35.6 Meanwhile a number of more environmentally-friendly initiatives such as lower-wattage lamps and solar powered options were being investigated and more cost-effective alternatives would be introduced where possible. However the financial cost of repair/maintenance and replacement of lighting columns was significant.

35.7 Mr Hall thanked the Committee for inviting him to discuss street lighting and referred to his paper that had been circulated with the agenda. He said Local Authorities had common issues, especially with rising energy costs, and it was important to develop energy efficient lighting schemes. He also pointed out that heritage stock usually had heritage cables.

35.8 He said EDF had done a lot of work this year towards 'Excellence in Unmetered Connections.' There were more staff working on repairs, different work practices and changes to contracts. Other major steps forward were the new Service Level Agreement and a new system of performance reporting. As regards Communications, bi-monthly meeting with officers are being scheduled.

35.9 Mr Hall said this had been a challenging year. He had had positive feedback and he felt there was the basis of a good working relationship between EDF and the Council.

35.10 Answering questions Mr Hall said unmetered connections were normal practice, where the loading was steady. The new service standards published by regulator Ofgem applicable to all DNOs were 'stretched' in certain areas – for example emergency attendance within 2 hours could be a challenge

35.11 The Committee noted that EDF own the power cable, electricity supply system and plant and the Council owns the street lights. The maintenance contract with Colas was due to expire in 4 – 5 years.

35.12 Members remarked that street lighting in itself did have equalities implications in that it can enhance the quality of life for people using the public highway especially those with visual impairment.

35.13 The Committee considered whether to set up a scrutiny review, in good time before the current maintenance contract expires, to including different lighting options and best practice elsewhere.

35.14 Taking into account the new team, new service level agreement, new performance monitoring system and current trials with lights it was agreed to ask for an officer progress report in one year.

35.15 The Chairman thanked Mr Hall for speaking to the Committee.

RESOLVED (1) that the contents of the report be noted.

(2) that a progress report, including simplifying fault reporting, be requested to a meeting in one year.

36. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT 2008

37.1 The Head of Transport Strategy and Projects and Head of Transport Planning introduced the report that will be considered by the Environment Cabinet Member at the meeting on 11 December.

37.2 Members were particularly concerned about the number of road casualties and heard about the measures being taken to reduce casualties. This included prioritisation of resources to addressing problems at the highest risk sites – currently based on a programme agreed by Environment Committee in 2006.

37.3 Officers answered queries as follows:

1) Q Is the Rapid Transport System viable? Why would it cost £13million? How are major developments along the way, factored into the feasibility?

A A business case has been submitted to the Government, including transport modelling, indicating the positive economic case for RTS. This addressed issues such as practical delivery, operation and patronage and value for money. Investment would be needed in both road and passenger infrastructure and vehicles. The current option seeks to use buses which also allows the possibility to convert to an alternative system, if appropriate

2) Q Can the Council have any control of bus routes in the City – eg along the seafront, north-south routes, and east-west other than via Palmeira Square and Churchill Square?

A Bus services are provided in accordance with current legislation – which provides for a deregulated and commercial operating environment. Therefore it is the bus operators who identify, register and run bus routes, rather than Local Authorities.

3) Q Why are there not more bus services on the outskirts of the City?

A As referred to previously, bus routes are run on a commercial basis, and therefore less busy areas/routes/times are unlikely to fulfil this requirement. This may include some areas outside the central area. A small number of services that are deemed to be 'socially necessary' by the council, and may therefore serve the outskirts of the city or operate at less busy times of the day, are contracted out and supported financially by the council to enable them to operate. The Council's Bus Strategy can be made available on request.

4) Q Is it possible for a private promoter to introduce a Monorail to complement the rapid transport system?

A Yes, potentially.

5) Q What is the latest on Park and Ride?

A Park and Ride remains a priority and part of the council's overall transport strategy although no preferred site has been identified. Discussions are on-going with the administration with regard to development and potential delivery of park and ride.

6) Q What is the role and remit of the Traffic Commissioner and what approaches can be made to him?

A This would be forwarded to Members.

7) Q Continuing concerns have been expressed about the safety of cyclists with regard to the new cycle lanes in Grand Avenue; what is being done?

A Officers are undertaking a post-implementation review. After analysis in the coming weeks, some modifications may be made to the scheme. Further information to be forwarded to the Committee.

8) Q Figures have previously shown a doubling in the number of cycling trips. What progress are we making?

A For some surveys, counts of traffic/people (including cyclists) have been undertaken 'by hand.' Working more closely with Cycling England, new automatic traffic counters have been installed to collect data and enable a more valid and robust baseline to be set and therefore valid comparisons to be made in future.

37.4 Officers would provide the Committee members with a briefing note on the key elements of the Local Transport Bill, soon to receive Royal Assent and become an Act.

37.5 The Committee wished to add Buses, Cycling and Rapid Transport System to the Committee's Work Plan.

37.6 RESOLVED; (1) that the comments/queries made at this meeting be taken into account by the Environment Cabinet Member.

(2) That further information on Traffic Commissioners, Grand Avenue cycle lanes review and Local Transport Bill, be forwarded to the Committee Members as minuted above

37. INTEGRATED TRANSPORT

The Head of Transport Strategy and Projects gave a presentation on Integrated Transport in Brighton & Hove.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

38. OLDER PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY - PROPOSAL FOR A SCRUTINY PANEL

38.1 The Committee agreed to set up a scrutiny panel on Older People and Community Safety. Councillors Mo Marsh Bill Randall, David Smart and David Watkins would serve on the Panel and the Older People's Council co-optee would be John Eyles.

38.2 It was noted that individual older people as well as agencies would be invited to contribute to the review.

38.3 RESOLVED: (1) that a cross-party scrutiny panel on older people and community safety be established.

(2) that the panel comprise four elected BHCC councillors and one non-voting co-optee of the Older People's Council

(3) That the remit of the Panel as set out in Appendix 1 be agreed

(4) that Help the Aged be added to the list of initial consultees.

39. ECSOSC WORK PLAN

39.1 Members noted that there were a number of issues they wished to pursue and they would need to prioritise items for consideration at future meetings.

39.2 An officer report on allotments would be brought to the January 26 meeting.

39.3 The Chairman asked for additional information on missed waste collections, particularly in the East Brighton area, to be included in the next meeting.

39.4 The Committee was asked to forward comments/queries regarding buses to the Scrutiny Support Officer, for an officer report to a future meeting.

40. ITEMS TO GO FORWARD TO CABINET, CABINET MEMBER OR COUNCIL

Comments on Item 37, the Local Transport Plan progress report 2008 to be taken forward to the Environment Cabinet Member Meeting

The meeting concluded at 6.40pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

