

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
FINANCE CABINET MEMBER MEETING
4.00pm, 18 JANUARY 2010
COMMITTEE ROOM 1, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Young (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Hamilton (Opposition Spokesperson, Labour)

Other Members present: Councillors Fallon-Khan and Harmer-Strange

PART ONE

24. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

24a Declarations of Interest

24.1 There were none.

24b Exclusion of Press and Public

24.2 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ('the Act'), the Cabinet Member for Finance considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during an item of business on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press or public were present during that item, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information (as defined in section 100A(3) of the Act) or exempt information (as defined in section 100I(1) of the Act).

24.3 **RESOLVED** – That the press and the public be not excluded from the meeting.

25. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

25.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2009 be approved and signed by the Cabinet Member as a correct record.

26. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

26.1 There were none.

27. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

27.1 All the items were reserved by the Cabinet Member.

28. PETITIONS

28.1 There were none.

29. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

29.1 There were none.

30. DEPUTATIONS

30.1 There were none.

31. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

31.1 There were none.

32. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

32.1 There were none.

33. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

33.1 There were none.

34. INCOME COLLECTION AND RECOVERY 2009/10 - QUARTER 3

34.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Finance & Resources, which updated the Member on the income collection and recovery performance for 2009/10 as at quarter 3 (December 2009) and highlighted the improvement and best practice actions (for copy see minute book).

34.2 The Cabinet Member stated that the report provided assurance to Council Tax payers, citizens and businesses that the council kept on top of its income collection performance and, in this way, it helped reduce any potential impact on future Council Tax levels by collecting and recovering income and debts effectively. She noted that performance continued to hold up relatively well and that Council Tax, business rates and other forms of income collection remained largely on target despite the difficult economic conditions for many people and businesses.

34.3 The Cabinet Member congratulated the income collection teams for continuing to improve the information and services available to customers and noted that she was pleased to see that new processes were being developed to enable quicker capturing and sharing of information, which could provide potentially quicker access to benefits for housing tenants and other benefit applicants.

- 34.4 The Assistant Director, Financial Services, referred to paragraph 3.8.3 of the report and indicated that this section should be deleted from the report. He stated that the information therein referred to an older report and was not relevant to this current report. The Assistant Director also referred to the information given on sundry debts and housing benefit. He stated that there were no real concerns in those areas at this stage, as they were expected to meet the targets.
- 34.5 The Opposition Spokesperson commented on the direct debit performance and noted that the take up for this service had not increased as much as it had been predicted. He also referred to housing benefit charges and sought clarification as to whether there was a directive to establish when people were contacted for making payments.
- 34.6 The Assistant Director indicated that the service had a charter mark, which explained to customers when any recovery would be made. He noted, however, that he did not have much information about what those deadlines were and agreed to find out the information and convey it to the Opposition Spokesperson directly.
- 34.7 The Opposition Spokesperson also sought clarification about the regulation in place in terms of time limit before the council contacts residents to pursue arrears. The Assistant Director explained that there was no time limit as such, since the council could collect arrears for as much back as necessary.
- 34.8 **RESOLVED** - That the report be noted.
- 35. VALUE FOR MONEY - PHASE 2 UPDATE**
- 35.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Finances & Resources concerning the Value for Money, which updated the Cabinet Member on the council's phase 2 programme for ensuring value for money across all of its services (for copy see minute book).
- 35.2 The Assistant Director, Financial Services, noted that there were many initiatives progressing together and that it was important that they continued to run in parallel in order to achieve a better outcome.
- 35.3 The Opposition Spokesperson referred to the estimated savings indicated in paragraph 3.3.3 of the report. He noted the current difficult financial times and felt that any meaningful savings would have to be properly assessed in due course.
- 35.4 **RESOLVED** - That the continued progress of the Value for Money Programme into phase two be noted.
- 35.5 The Cabinet Member indicated that today's meeting was the last of the Finance Cabinet Member meetings and that, from now on, all finance matters would be considered at the meetings of the Cabinet. The Head of Law clarified that there was a further Finance Cabinet Member Meeting scheduled for March 2010 before it is taken over by Cabinet.

The meeting concluded at 4.15pm

Signed

Cabinet Member

Dated this

day of