

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

4.00pm 27 MARCH 2013

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor West (Chair), Councillor Sykes (Deputy Chair), Mitchell, Cobb, Cox, Deane, Pissaridou, G Theobald, Hawtree and K Norman

PART ONE

53. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

53(a) Declarations of Substitutes

53.1 Councillor Hawtree was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Wakefield. Councillor Ken Norman was present as substitute for Councillor Janio.

53(b) Declarations of Interest

53.2 Councillor Cox declared an other diclosable interest in relation Item 58(a) as his partner was an allotment holder.

53(c) Exclusion of press and public

53.3 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (“the Act”), the Committee 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 business to be transacted or the nature of proceedings, that if members of the press and 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 100(I) of the Act).

53.4 **RESOLVED-** That the press and public not be excluded.

54. MINUTES

54.1 **RESOLVED-** That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 February be approved and signed as the correct record.

55. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS CITY SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIP MEETING- FOR INFORMATION

- 55.1 **RESOLVED-** That the minutes of the previous City Sustainability Partnership meeting be noted.

56. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 56.1 The Chair provided the following Communications:

“As this is the final Environment & Sustainability Committee before the formation of the new combined Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee, I would like to take this opportunity to thank members of the Committee and substitutes who have contributed to our work together. We have taken a number of initiatives forward this year, not least the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and the promising Communal Recycling Scheme.

I do hope that there will not be a loss of focus on the areas of work we have been covering when the new committee has to tackle its enlarged agenda. That said there are linkages between the areas of work that will hopefully benefit from closer association.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank officers for all their hard work and support too, and I propose we take a vote of thanks”.

57. CALL OVER

- 57.1 **RESOLVED-** That all items on the agenda be reserved for discussion.

58. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**(a) Petitions****(i) Stop fencing in Tenantry Down for grazing- Sue Grimstone**

- 58.1 The petitioner did not attend the meeting therefore a response would be provided in writing. The Chair also read out the response at the meeting as follows:

“I absolutely agree that sites such as Tenantry Down must be accessible the public and I am pleased to say that sheep grazing does not stop the public from using the site for recreation. All it means is that we ask dog walkers to have their dog on a lead when the sheep are on site. This works well in other areas such as Beacon Hill, Green Ridge, Sheepcote where public continue to enjoy those valuable green spaces. Indeed I understand that some of the dog walkers who use Tenantry Down, think the fence is an improvement as, when the sheep are not there, they can take their dogs off the lead safely – knowing they cannot run into the traffic.

We are blessed with our beautiful Downland countryside within and around the city and our chalk grassland, its flora, fauna and wildlife, have developed because of many centuries of sheep grazing. Unfortunately 97% of the flower rich downland grassland disappeared in the last century and the remaining 3% is under threat from spreading scrub. Conservation, by returning to sheep grazing is the best way of enhancing and

preserving our chalk grassland. Mowing is crude method which causes greater disruption to wildlife and is also a costly option particularly when we consider the grants we receive from Natural England through our Higher Level Stewardship scheme to introduce grazing. And of course, many people do enjoy seeing the sheep. We have 100 plus lookers all keeping on eye on the well being of our sheep and a dedicated twitter account informing people of movement of the sheep. We did include Tenantry Down in the Whitehawk Hill consultation which was an extensive process”.

58.2 **RESOLVED-** That the petition be noted.

(ii) **Allotment plot chopping in Brighton and Hove- Gary Johnson**

58.3 The petitioner did not attend the meeting therefore a response would be provided in writing. The Chair also read out the response at the meeting as follows:

“As you are aware, the council has been letting smaller allotment plots for a numbers years now and as well as being of a manageable size producing food for many, this has allowed us to increase the number of people able to have an allotment and grow food. We are looking at new allotment sites but these will not be able to deal with even a quarter of those people on the waiting list for an allotment.

I am very pleased that the meetings with the Allotment Federation on the strategy are going well and at the Allotment Federation AGM it was really positive to hear the progress made – for example agreeing excellent objectives for the strategy. My view has been that all issues and ideas should be discussed at the strategy meetings – everything should be on the table as we work out ways to meet the objectives. I think it is right that the issue of plot size has been raised at those meetings and it is important to look at the impacts of plot splitting, enlarging or choice will have and for further discussions to take place.

It also extremely important that we consult allotment holders, those on the waiting list and residents on that strategy. With that in mind, I don't think it is right to make changes in policy until we have had that consultation but please let's keep the dialogue going through the strategy meetings”.

58.4 Councillor Theobald stated that he hoped there could be flexibility in the plot sizes available. He asked if discussions with the Allotment Federation were ongoing.

58.5 The Chair confirmed that discussions were ongoing. The Chair added that a pragmatic approach to plot sizes had been undertaken in an attempt to meet demand which had still not been achieved. He stated that he was open-minded as to plot sizes available but there was an requirement of the council to meet the demand too. The Chair supplemented that the outcome of the allotment strategy was still unknown at this stage.

58.6 Councillor Theobald noted his support for the Chair's statement.

58.7 Councillor Mitchell asked when the Draft Allotment Strategy would be published.

58.8 The Chair stated that as the process would be led by the Allotment Federation and sufficient time would be needed for discussion, he was unsure of a timescale for publication at this stage. The Head of City Infrastructure added that, subject to

discussions, it was likely that there would be a city-wide consultation in the summer of 2013 with the draft Allotment Strategy possibly published sometime in 2014.

58.9 **RESOLVED-** That the petition be noted.

59. ITEMS REFERRED FROM FULL COUNCIL

(a) Petitions

(i) Street Lighting Nevill Close- Councillor Bennett

59.1 The Committee considered a petition referred from the meeting of Full Council on 31 January 2013.

59.2 The Chair provided the following response:

“Officers have received a number of requests from this area for additional lights and are currently in the process of working through these. Works orders have been raised and work is in progress for an additional column at the Court Farm Road end. A new lantern will also be installed to the existing unit and it is hoped that this will provide a sufficient improvement for local residents”.

59.3 **RESOLVED-** That the petition be noted.

60. MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

60.1 No items were received.

61. OFFICIAL FEED AND FOOD CONTROLS SERVICE PLAN 2013/2014

61.1 The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director, Place that sought agreement to the Official Feed and Food Controls Service Plan for 2013/14.

61.2 The Chair stated that the report was important and one which the council were required to agree annually. The plan set out the approach taken by Environmental Health & Licensing and Trading Standards to ensure food supplied in the city was safe and to also help promote healthy eating habits. The Chair added that with tourism contributing £400m a year to the local economy, instilling public confidence in food safety in the city was of paramount importance. He supplemented that there were many challenges with the work from overcoming some language barriers, responding to the requirements of the new Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, to maintaining a risk based approach to intervention and responding to complaints and requests for advice. The Chair stated that he was particularly interested to note the good partnership work of the Healthy Choice Awards in promoting healthy menu options, and the awareness raising work of the Curry Chef of the Year competition.

- 61.3 Councillor Mitchell noted that workloads were increasing in what was already a challenging area. She asked if the Food Safety Team was sufficiently resourced to meet these challenges.
- 61.4 The Head of Regulatory Services replied that whilst there were currently sufficient resources, the possibility of an increase in work nationwide over 2013-14 related to food controls could pose a challenge.
- 61.5 Councillor Sykes re-iterated Councillor Mitchell's concern for adequate provision of resources. Councillor Sykes referred in particular to the rise in food business premises.
- 61.6 Councillor Deane thanked the officers for producing an excellent report which demonstrated the provision of a high quality service. In particular, Councillor Deane noted the high satisfaction demonstrated in the responses to the post-inspection questionnaires from traders.
- 61.7 **RESOLVED-** That the Committee agrees the Official Feed and Food Controls Service Plan 2013/2014 set out in the appendix to this report and recommends it to Full Council for approval.

62. QUIET AREAS REPORT

- 62.1 The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director, Place that provided the findings of the Noise Action Plan produced by DEFRA for Brighton Agglomeration and the findings of the Brighton & Hove City Council report identifying proposed quiet areas. The report requested that the identified open spaces be proposed to DEFRA as quiet areas and that the designated quiet areas be included and considered in the next local planning policy document and inform the Local Transport Plan (LTP) policy. The report was supplemented by a presentation by the Head of Regulatory Services.
- 62.2 Councillor Hawtree stated that a distinction needed to be made between noise and sound as sometimes external sounds were necessary particularly to visually impaired people.
- 62.3 Councillor Theobald queried the necessity of producing the report and its consideration by Committee. Councillor Theobald stated that he had a number of doubts about the instigation of quiet areas amongst others; the contradiction in designating a quiet area in a space that had a number of events such as the Royal Pavilion and how quiet areas would be enforced.
- 62.4 The Chair stated that there were a number of positives to the report. The report did not address the general noise of events but the impact of transport related noise and its impact on people's health and wellbeing. The Chair added that quiet areas also had a positive effect for those with hearing issues.
- 62.5 Councillor Cox stated that he had concern that the report had been produced purely on an ideological basis and he had concerns that there was no specific cost to the implementation of quiet areas.

- 62.6 The Chair replied that there were no significant costs and the recommendation was that the results of the Noise Action Plan be recognised in other areas of work such as local planning and the LTP. The Chair added that, as was explained in the report, this was centrally a protection issue about how noise was managed.
- 62.7 Councillor Deane noted her concern for an increase in noise problems associated with aircraft and the expansion of Shoreham Airport.
- 62.8 The Chair then put the recommendations to the vote with the following result:

For: 4
Against: 6

- 62.9 **RESOLVED-** That the recommendations are not carried.

63. COMMUNAL REFUSE COLLECTION IN HANOVER, ELM GROVE

- 63.1 The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director, Place that set out the results of the public meeting on communal refuse collection in the Hanover and Elm Grove areas held on the basis of the recommendation of the Committee at their meeting on 6 February 2013.
- 63.2 The Head of City Infrastructure provided a brief introduction to the report. She explained that the public meeting had been held on the 5 March 2013 and was attended by approximately 100 residents as well as ward councillors for the area and relevant officers. The majority of people at the meeting decided against proceeding with communal refuse collection in the area and this was a viewpoint now shared by the ward councillors for the area.
- 63.3 Councillor Cox asked how many residents had been consulted and how many had responded to the consultation.
- 63.4 The Head of City Infrastructure clarified that approximately 1500 households had been consulted with a response rate of 44%.
- 63.5 Councillor Cox noted his concern that 100 residents at a public meeting had overturned the views of the consultation which had a marginal result.
- 63.6 The Chair clarified that the Committee had received a report on the outcome of the consultation and had agreed to listen to the views of a public meeting on possible ways forward. The public meeting was clear in its view that residents did not support the communal recycling scheme and ward councillors also no longer supported the proposals. The Chair added that the trial scheme in Washington Street and Coleman Street had been well received and could continue.
- 63.7 Councillor Cox queried why there was no reference in the report to the equalities implications upon visually impaired and disabled people in continuing the current scenario of refuse obstacles and rubbish build-up on the pavement.

- 63.8 The Head of City Infrastructure stated that the report was an assessment of the service currently undertaken. She added that a risk assessment had been conducted as part of the evaluation for the need for communal refuse in the Hanover and Elm Grove area that had identified potential improvements for access and safety for visually impaired and disabled people linked to the introduction of communal refuse.
- 63.9 Councillor Theobald noted that if 44% of residents had completed the consultation, it might be expected that the 56% that had not would be in favour of the introduction of communal refuse collection.
- 63.10 The Head of City Infrastructure replied that the response rate was high for a consultation and assumptions should not be made on the opinion of those that had not replied.
- 63.11 The Acting Assistant Head of Law clarified that as per the report presented to the Committee at its meeting in February 2013, the consultation documents had been sent to 1,367 households with 605 responses. The results indicated 48% of households in support and 46% against. Due to the closeness of the results, the Committee agreed at its February meeting to hold a public meeting to further discuss the issue with residents.
- 63.12 Councillor Hawtree noted his disappointment that the Labour & Co-operative Party had campaigned against communal refuse collection in the Hanover and Elm Grove wards. Councillor Hawtree suggested encouragement of composting as an alternative to communal refuse collection.
- 63.13 Councillor Cox stated that the previous Conservative administration had demonstrated leadership qualities in going ahead with communal refuse collection despite strong opposition. He believed that many people in those areas were now in favour of communal refuse collection. Councillor Cox indicated that he believed the current administration were also required to make tough decisions and that they may come to regret not proceeding with communal refuse collection in Hanover and Elm Grove which he believed would do a disservice to the majority of people in those wards.
- 63.14 Councillor Mitchell clarified that the Labour & Co-operative Party had not campaigned against the scheme but had referred residents to the number of car parking spaces that would be lost as this had not been highlighted in the consultation documents. Councillor Mitchell noted that she was pleased this issue had been included in the current city centre communal recycling consultation documents.
- 63.15 The Chair stated that the consultation and public meeting had demonstrated that there was an insufficient mandate to introduce communal refuse collection in the Hanover and Elm Grove areas. He believed it would be unwise to ignore the views of residents and ward councillors and to do so would foster negativity and resentment of the authority.
- 63.16 The Chair then put the recommendations to the vote with the following result:

For: 6

Against: 4

63.17 **RESOLVED-** That the Committee notes the outcome of the consultation in relation to the proposed communal refuse bins in Hannover and Elm Grove and agrees not to proceed with extending the scheme in this area.

64. ITEMS REFERRED FOR COUNCIL

64.1 No items were referred to Full Council for information.

The meeting concluded at 5.30pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of