

OPC minutes

Present: Val Brown, Penny Morley, Mike Bojczuk, Nick Goslett, Katrina Byrne

Apologies: Lynne, Francis, John Eyles

1. Welcome: The Chair thanked everyone for coming to the AGM and welcomed them to the meeting. He will put the Annual Report up on the OPC website.

Election of Officers

Penny Morley proposed the election of Mike Bojczuk as Chair, Colin Vincent as Vice-Chair which was seconded by Katrina Byrne.

Fairness Commission

Julia Reddaway is managing the Fairness Commission in the Policy Team. This is an economically successful and thriving city, but with significant poverty. High housing and living costs were almost equal to that of London. A large number of jobs were in hospitality, tourism and other sectors with relatively low wages. The population was increasing as a lot of people were moving into the city, increasing the demand for services. Central government funding would be reduced each year for at least the next five years. The cumulative effect of welfare reform was very significant.

23% of older people were in receipt of some form of benefit and almost double the amount of Pension Credit claimants than in SE England. Many pensioners had mobility problems, or a disability and limited access to transport.

It has been set up by the Labour administration to take an independent look at fairness, inequality and poverty in the city. The Commissioners are experts in a range of relevant areas, rather than representing particular groups/sectors. Information can be found at <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fairness-commission>

25 Fairness Commissions have taken place, since Islington in 2010. There will be a city wide engagement campaign, including workshops, themed visits and public events to hear the views of residents, service users and groups. The

Commission will make recommendations to the council, its partners and central government.

The Commission will meet in public to hear evidence on:

- Thursday 26 November
- Thursday 10th December
- Wednesday 20 January 2016
- Thursday 18 February
- Wednesday 16 March

These meetings will run from 6-9.30pm in accessible community spaces and be webcast, with details on the website. There is a 'Call for evidence and ideas' and people's ideas and experiences, will be passed onto the Commissioners.

They are asking individuals:

1. How do you think the council and its partners can make Brighton & Hove a fairer place to live?
2. What can residents do to make Brighton & Hove a more fair and equal place to live for everyone?

There is a larger group of questions for groups and organisations. If this applies, please fill in the questions online after talking to other members of your organisation/group especially about how they relate to older people. Please come and watch the public meetings and the OPC can receive progress updates.

Evidence gathered by the Commission will inform the council's budget setting. Where there will have to be reduced spending on services, it will help minimise the impact on those who are struggling. The Neighbourhoods, Communities and Equalities Committee will monitor the implementation of these recommendations.

The recommendations will be made in May 2016 and the final report published in Summer. All libraries will have information about the Commission and the staff can help you complete the online forms.

Q: In the Public Health report most of the statistics are ward based. Can you get data by class, employment etc?

A: The data can be drilled down to smaller areas and can be cross-referenced to different indicators e.g. housing tenure. Please ask Karen Amsden if you want this information.

Q: What do you mean by fairness?

A: Fairness is subjective. If you are on a low income with an electricity metre, you can pay more than if by direct debit, which can seem unfair. The Commission will focus on poverty and where service reductions disproportionately affect the poor.

Q: Will you look at the issue of people entitled to benefits, such as pension credit, that don't claim them?

A: Commissioners will visit advice agencies like the Citizen's Advice Bureau, (CAB) to talk to people including benefits advisors. The CAB work to ensure that everyone receives the benefits they are entitled to. Please submit examples of such cases to the Commission.

Q: Who is funding the Fairness Commission?

A: It is being funded out of the existing budgets and will not impact on service budgets, e.g. using part of the community engagement budget to do this engagement and consultation. We are also asking for help from the voluntary sector organisations.

Q: How much clout will the recommendations have?

A: There is cross-party support for the Commission, and a cross-party set of members sitting as observers (Cllrs Daniel, Littman and Simson). They also sit on the Neighbourhoods Committee who will ensure the implementation of the council related recommendations. The Commissioners will be aware of the budget situation when forming their recommendations.

Q: I welcome a focus on inequality and like the public questions. Will there be a root cause analysis to find out why this inequality is happening?

A: The Commission will ask why this is happening and how to make things better. Service users are best placed to tell the Commission how to improve

services. Commissioners will examine a lot analysis and only make recommendations which are:

- Practical
- Affordable
- Capable of being implemented

There will be a focus on the council's budget.

Q: Do the Commissioners get a fee?

A: They will only receive travel expenses and subsistence. They are volunteers and very committed to the project.

Q: Is this an exercise in making limited resources stretch even further? This could remove the responsibilities from national and local politicians about reducing resources. The council tried to get a response from voters on the budget and now it should be their responsibility.

A: Future budget savings will be more dramatic, so the council cannot do everything and some services will have to be done differently. The council will act as a facilitator, helping the city to deliver services.

Q: Isn't the council already using this kind of evidence when making cuts? Or is the council waiting to see what the Commission find to base its decisions on?

A: The council will shortly be looking at the budget for next year so the Commission will inform the budget process from 2017 onwards.

Cllr Barford spoke in support of the Commission and its ability to develop a strong evidence base. It will be the lynchpin of future decisions, geared towards reducing inequality. Residents need to help the council make tough decisions. This is not a political process and has cross-party support. It is independent of the council and the named councillors are observers.

Q: What about the inequality caused by everything happening on-line? Older people can find it difficult to read on screen. If one is housebound then a very good way of finding out information is by the local radio. The Commission

could also go out to local organisations and the OPC need to take a role in gathering the views of older people.

The chair explained that the OPC appreciated the need to gain the input of older people as well as their carers (typically middle aged people looking after parents). The OPC activities include writing letters to the Argus and contacting local areas such as the Hangleton & Knoll Carer's Centre.

Q: What has been achieved by other Fairness Commissions?

A: Edinburgh used it to change the way the council operated to increase community involvement. Many Commissions have recommended a Living Wage, leading to higher wages there. Some have set up Community Funds to support their most deprived communities. For example, a focus on child literacy support and educational attainment, to lift people out of poverty.

Q: How can one communicate with older and isolated people? The Pensioner newspaper could have played a useful role.

Concerned about the level of rentals to students as they do not pay council tax and bring with them issues of rubbish and noise. The universities seem to be powerful in the city and have such an impact on the neighbourhoods, e.g. the LAT in Elm Grove.

A: This is just the kind of information that the Commission needs to hear about.

Q: Central government cuts are making things worse and will the Commission cover this up?

A: The scale of problems is unprecedented. National and local experts will be looking at this issue and what changes are needed. The more people become involved in the Commission, the more useful their recommendations will be. Even though there are limited resources for this project, we want the whole city to come forward.

Q: Who will bear the cost of analysing the evidence gathered? Will in-house resources be used? Will it be difficult to use the data to analyse trends? What evidence already exists and couldn't common sense be used to resolve the

issues we already know about, such as education and Type 2 diabetes? What outcomes have been achieved?

A: The Research & Analysis team in Public Health has substantial links to the universities. There have been evaluation reports on previous Fairness Commissions, but not seen any analysis yet on outcomes achieved. In the last few years key research has been carried out, including the cumulative impact of welfare reform and inequality in the city. The Commission will also be able to gather the human stories.

Q: Should there be any actions for the OPC to carry out to help the Commission? How could we take these questions out to the wards and reach older people.

The chair spoke of the need for resources, the importance of this project and whether the OPC could act as an observer. The Youth Mayor is one of the Commissioners.

A: The OPC could be valuable as a witness as well as attend the public meetings. The needs of older people were likely to act as a focus in one of the public meetings. The GP sitting on the Commission, Katie Stead, would have experience of many of the issues facing older people.

Julia Reddaway finished by offering to report back on the progress of the Commission.

Care Act

Brian Doughty explained that he was providing an update on the implementation of the Care Act (Part One) since 1st April 2015. The council had done a significant amount of preparatory work and was 97% compliant with the 'must do's. Which had involved a tremendous effort. The other 3% would be done once the situation arose, because they were cross-border cases. The 'should do's' needed to have decisions made about their appropriateness or priority, but there was still room for improvement. Services for carers are continuing, to offer support and reduce the impact of the changes. The Act has meant that can charge for deferred payments, but this activity was down.

There was independent advocacy, but it was a big commissioning issue to ensure there were sufficient advocates and these resources were used appropriately.

A key role was to ensure that the right advice and information was provided at each stage. Comprehensive advice needed to be offered in a range of formats, alongside the website, e.g. leaflets. The website had been revamped (using MyLife) and there had been a dramatic increase in hits since April. A dedicated team were engaging with users and carers to develop and test the website.

There needed to be a focus on prevention and reablement. These services can have the greatest impact, but Adult Social Care (ASC) could not provide them alone. A citywide approach was needed.

Since April 2015 actions included redesigning the assessment service to look at the role of qualified professionals (such as social workers and occupational therapists) and the tasks they carry out (such as deprivation of liberty and safeguarding). The workforce was being reshaped to ensure there was the right number of professionals. For the first time safeguarding adults was a statutory duty on councils. Brighton & Hove had a safeguarding adults board, with an independent chair who also chairs the safeguarding children's board.

Part 2 of the Care Act has been deferred by government until 2020. A relief as the council was unsure how it could have met the additional demands, at a time of diminishing resources. So no responsibility to assess self-funding and not picking up responsibility for those with significant capital. People will have to continue to use their own assets to pay for care. There was a concern about the impact of this being deferred for four years, but there may be changes to the thresholds for getting local authority funding. There was currently no indication about the funding going forward, and funding for ASC would not be known until this November.

The council welcomed how positively the staff had responded to the Care Act, for example their awareness of the new responsibilities and focussing on better outcomes. It was a good start to the journey.

Questions

Q: Welcome an emphasis on prevention, but it is always difficult to set aside funds for this. What measures will you take to keep this emphasis?

A: We will always respond to emergencies. We are working with Public Health (who have money & resources) and the third sector to develop preventative services and the Better Care Fund. A lot can be done without dipping into the ASC fund, by drawing on the city's assets.

Q: This is trying to implement the impossible. A crisis of care is happening with increasing costs and decreasing resources. There is a National Pensioner Convention meeting on October 23 to look at this. What were the flaws of Part 2 of the Act?

A: These proposals meant that the council would have had to set up a Care Account even for those who were buying care privately. When more than £72,000 had been spent by the individual, then government would have to step in. This has been deferred to 2020 to re-evaluate. There were not the people and resources to assess and set up Care Accounts. If this was implemented in 2020, hopefully they would be given sufficient time and resources.

Q: Does increasing demand and reduced services lead to greater use of A&E services? Are the cost savings to the council being picked up by the health service and how are these effects being linked up?

A: There is a joined up approach using the Health & Well-Being Board. This was not an issue of volume but complexity. The people who need our services, really need them and they are costly to provide. If the resources are not made available then the system will break down.

Q: Could you give an example of safeguarding? Which kind is most prevalent?

A. This can include protecting vulnerable people from sexual or physical abuse or financial pressure. I could make a presentation about this to the OPC as this is our most important role. Before April 2015 the process was very timetable driven, but now it is tailored to individual need. The Care Act dropped the local authority role to investigate, but now we work with people to find out what they want to happen. The majority of cases refer to

poor care in care settings or their own home, the remainder mainly relating to physical and financial abuse.

Q: As a member of Age UK (who provide independent advocacy) and only has a paid member of staff for 14 hours per week, wanted to query why there must be a paid member of staff to respond to the Care Act

A: I would also question this regulation.

Q: I understand that the delay in implementing the £72,000 cap has resulted in £6bn savings, where has this gone?

A: The means testing threshold has also been deferred, so no relief is being given for older people (a result of the Dilnot Report looking at people losing their homes to pay for care). The Living Wage will have a significant impact on local authorities and the cost of care. In other ways the Living Wage will help stop so many people leaving the sector due to low wages. The council needs to help lobby government about how it can meet these costs. The caps have not been reviewed for years, but a review of income levels could be announced in November.

Q: There is a concern that the third sector may not sufficient resources to provide the information and advice needed. Is this made worse by the overspend in ASC?

A: There is a statutory duty on the council to meet eligible care needs, which can be done in a range of ways. The council is working to address this overspend, including scrutinising how to best meet eligible needs. This will involve difficult decisions. In some complex cases it can now be cheaper to go into residential care. But if the situation carries on the council will go bankrupt.

Q: Do you have the resources to inspect services and ensure that people are making best use of these services e.g. not getting carers they don't need?

A: There are no resources to inspect. ASC assess people to enable them to get the services they are entitled to, and do reassess to see if getting the right services.

Q: What will the redesigned service look like?

A: The assessment services will be reduced as we ask the 3rd sector to take on greater responsibilities. The more qualified staff will focus on the most complex cases which could be a danger to themselves.

Q: A question for the Fairness Commission: if the focus is on complex and difficult cases, will this reduce services for those in lesser need?

A: We will be asking the 3rd sector to carry out the simpler tasks such as assessment, rather than get it done by a qualified social worker and the council will quality assure them.

Q: Will you ask organisations like RSLs to help and can they refuse to?

A: While RSLs can refuse, we need to get them on board.

Q: Even if you involve the 3rd sector, the council will still be responsible for assessing clients. Will there be an appeal mechanism if you are not happy with a voluntary sector assessment?

A: The responsibility rests with the council even if another organisation helps them discharge their duty. This can be done using the ASC complaints process, which works well. There is also a need to quality control to ensure that services are effective.

Minutes of previous meetings

Matters arising

These included:

- An application for funding of £550 has been completed and the results are due in October.
- The chair is awaiting a response from Denise D'Souza and Tom Scanlon and will chase up. He is also to make contact with opposition councillors.
- The OPC to contact Karen Amsden if they want facilitation support, to consider potential projects including the Fairness Commission.
- It was suggested that new members needed mentoring.

- The OPC to determine who will be the representative for each relevant committee.
- The need for engaging with social media/digital inclusion

It was agreed that it would be beneficial to use the October meeting to resolve these issues and determine the work programme.

Secretary's report

SECRETARIAL REPORT - SEPTEMBER 2015

- **Brighton & Hove Mental Health Strategy & Happiness** - went to event held on the 26th August with a range of stalls & information re: services including support for dementia.
- **Older Peoples Day** - liaised & met with Age UK & Brighton University and organised rooms for joint panel on the 1st October at St Johns at 11.00 and Patching Lodge at 3.00 to discuss care issues for older people.
- **Local Action Team - London Road** - attended meeting of local group which had reports on local crime and discussed a range of local issues. Concerns about funding for the future raised.
- **Age Friendly City Steering Group** - represented OPC at meeting on 2nd September about Active Ageing. Presentations about the need to keep active and events across the City circulated. & older adults any amount of physical activity has some health benefits. Good practice can be everyday activities such as shopping, housework & gardening. Information circulated.
- **Closure of Doctors surgeries** - Goodwood Court - went with Vice Chair to a meeting with the CCG on the 3rd September to discuss the impact of closure on older patients and how this should be avoided in the future.
- **Age Friendly City Forum** - meeting held on 7th September. Annie Alexander spoke about the future of AFC work as a strategic approach to make services inclusive and the Council strategy on Health & Well Being that is under discussion. Harriet Knights spoke about the sugar debate across the City and how sugar reduction could be achieved.
- **Review of Bus Services funded by BHCC** OPC has been asked for views on current supported services and we need to respond. Have spoken to the co-ordinator and they are keen for responses on current services which cover 16/16A/66/37/37B/47/52/56/57/72/74/75/76/76A/91/95/95A & 77/78/79. These services are well used by bus pass users.
- **Meeting with Leader of Council** - needs to be rescheduled
- **Annual Report** - Thanks to the Chair for all his work on this - OPC members contributed but he pulled it all together
- **Safeguarding Adults** - Harry Steer was representative on this and OPC need to appoint a new representative.
- **National Pensioners Convention** - Parliamentary Lobby on Care & Pensions on the 4th November.
- **City Wide Connect** - East was held on 9th September and Lynne was attending. The North/Central is on the 23rd September & West is 30th September.

- **Community Transport** - Lynne contacted and they are happy to provide a presentation to OPC. Currently negotiating Easylink shopping service with BHCC for older people with mobility problems
 - **Hedgcock Fund** - Chair has submitted a bid on officer advice
 - **OPC members Report** from Lynn Shields about activities undertaken for the OPC - to be included in the minutes.
 - **New Community Equipment Service** - OPC members were concerned about the changes to the NHS equipment service. We have been invited to visit the new service located in Hove and I have confirmed that we would like to find out about the service and its accessibility. We await a date.
 - **Shaping the research agenda for older people as self funders: insights from collaborative research** - OPC members have been invited to an event on Wednesday 28th October at 9.30 at Brighthelm. Members should confirm to **E.Ward@brighton.ac.uk** by 30th September if they are able to attend.
- Invitations to a range of events**
- **Bereavement support group for people 50+** - being run at St Johns on Fridays 1.30 to 3.00 for 6 weeks contact 01273-729603
 - **Age UK** - 50th Anniversary - 2nd September at Emporium London Road
 - **Mayors charity event** on 10th September at Carousel Kings Arches at £25.
 - **Strike a Light** - Arts & Heritage events in September & Oct. Project manager at Fabrica
 - **Proposed Closure of Crown Post Office** - Brunswick - OPC member/s supported campaign against closure
 - **LAT - Portslade** - minutes of meeting & notice of 21st September meeting
 - **Theatre Royal** - Information re group discounts - for groups 10+
 - **Contemporary Dance Classes** - for 60+ years 12.45 to 2.15 Thursdays at Marina Studios, 11 Mermaid Walk, Brighton. It is £90 for 12 sessions (discount for pension credit) 07780-708864
 - **Falls Prevention Needs Assessment Workshop** on 14th October at 9.30 to 1pm at Brighthelm
- Newsletters**
- **Age Action Alliance** - Age Action Alliance Money Matters Working group want to promote awareness of Pensioner Credit & increase take up
 - **Later Life** - reported on Age UK report that eligible pensioners have £3.7 billion unclaimed in Pensioner Credit & Housing Benefit
 - **Brighton & Hove Chamber of Commerce** - various events across the City
 - **Fabrica** - Daytime events including visit to the Keep

