

OLDER PEOPLE'S COUNCIL - OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE.

The Policy Resources & Growth Committee on the 9th February 2017 decided to discontinue BHCC support for the OPC from April 2018, in accordance with a staged process.

The report proposed a transitional period to move to a self-supporting model with access to Hove Town Hall to meeting rooms during 2017/18. The decision would also remove any support for elections, administration, meeting rooms, annual report etc from April 2018.

The OPC wrote to all Councillors prior to the Committee decision outlining our objections. Members of the OPC attended the PR&G meeting and argued against the reports recommendations to the Committee. It is difficult to see how any further lobbying will achieve a change of view by the administration, particularly as two of the three political parties voted to cease support to the OPC. OPC officers have written to the Chief Executive protesting our situation but he did not wish to engage further rather referring us back to politicians stating that the BHCC is not abolishing the OPC.

The administrative support provided to the OPC has gradually diminished in recent years. We have provided our own resources for analysis of the budget, writing to members and organisations, organising meetings outside the formal committees, drafting and printing information, establishing and maintaining the web site, etc.

However, the role of the OPC and its objects as set out in the Constitution are to “inform the policy and decision making of BHCC including service development & delivery and resource allocation with regard to the matters that impact on the the quality of life and opportunities available for older people living in the Brighton & Hove area.” Without the support and co-operation of BHCC it is difficult to see how this remit could continue.

Transition

The officers of the OPC met with Emma McDermott from Communities & Equalities on the 31st July. She suggested that we could buy in some consultancy support to assist us to decide how we might restructure for the future. This could be drawn down from the transitional funding. She suggested that we could be assisted in deciding what an alternative structure that attracted more older people might look like. Community Works was suggested as the possible conduit for this work. We made clear that there are mixed views on the OPC about a possible future without support but agreed to take this proposal back to the OPC for discussion.

OPC Recommendations

OPC members have discussed the options for the future and support **Option 1** below.

There was a view that we should explore all options for continuation in order to ensure that older people have a voice in relation to how the City's resources are spent and services are provided. This would involve continuing current representation such as that on the Health & Overview Scrutiny Committee, Age Friendly City Steering Group, and more recently with regard to Safeguarding.

Options for the Future

1. The OPC meets with relevant voluntary sector organisations (such as Age UK and Community Works) in order to explore creating a newly reconstructed organisation. This would involve drawing down some of the transitional funding to identify administrative support, funding for the future, meeting venues, a new constitution etc. As part of the process adopt a new constitution and structure of representation. This could consider drawing in, perhaps by affiliation, any current older people's organisations that wish to join, to create a new and different structure of representation and activity.
2. Continue as we are until March 2018 meanwhile contacting Councillors to protest about the decision. We would need to decide whether it was likely that they would change the decision and who would undertake this work.
3. Dissolution - Para 16 of the OPC Constitution allows for a simple majority of the OPC to decide on the grounds of expense or otherwise to dissolve. The OPC would then have to send a report to the Council requesting agreement in writing to the dissolution.

OPC September 2017