BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION

4.00PM 15 DECEMBER 2009

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Mitchell (Chairman); Bennett, Elgood, Meadows, Older, Pidgeon (Deputy Chairman), Randall, Janio and Taylor

Also Present: Councillors Fallon-Khan and Young

PART ONE

53. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

53a Declarations of Substitutes

53a.1 Councillor Meadows was substituting as voting member for Councillor Morgan. Councillor Janio was substituting for Councillor Peltzer Dunn. Councillor Taylor was acting as substitute for Councillor Wakefield-Jarrett.

53a.2 Councillors Alford and Morgan gave their apologies

53b Declarations of Interests

53b.1 There were none.

53c Declaration of Party Whip

53c.1 There were none.

53d Exclusion of Press and Public

53d.1 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.

53d.2 **RESOLVED:** That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

58. SCRUTINY OF DIRECTORATE BUDGET STRATEGIES

58.1 The Chairman welcomed Cabinet Members Councillors Young and Fallon-Khan to the meeting. Councillor Young introduced this item, stating that scrutiny comments would be considered carefully, however Departments had little flexibility in achieving a balanced budget.

58.2 Councillor Fallon-Khan outlined the service pressures for the Finance and Resources Directorate. Reduced income such as from business rents and commercial rates was largely due to the effects of the recession.

58.3 Responding to questions the Director, Finance and Resources told the meeting that it would take time and money to deliver significant savings. More effective procurement, rationalised office accommodation and better use of ICT were being considered. A consultancy would be looking to achieve significant future savings under Value for Money (Phase 2) and initiate project management across the Council. This would be progressed by an in-house implementation team.

58.4 Replying to queries she explained the resources available to cover risks as set out in Table 4 of the report, pointing out that £1 million is proposed to be set aside for Looked After Children. Additional proposals for CYPT savings will be presented at the 5 January CYPOSC budget meeting.

58.5 The Director explained the Equalities Impact Assessment process that had been used for the budget proposals. Information on this could be presented before the final budget report to Council is produced.

58.6 Using an external firm to review single person Council Tax discounts was debated at length and questions on the approach to the process were answered in detail. The report on Council Tax Collection Policy appeared as Item 60 later on this agenda.

58.7 Asked about the anticipated borrowing for operational vehicles the Director said that this would allow for savings and reduction in the carbon footprint via a more central procurement policy. The Director was asked that this be reported to the Sustainability Partnership.

58.8 Information as requested on payments made to consultancies would be made available.

58.9 The Commission asked for more information on budget pressures from staff sickness and absence.

58.10 Councillor Fallon-Khan highlighted the budget proposals for Strategy and Governance Department. He expressed his congratulations to the officers including the legal team who were embracing new ways of working and working hard to achieve the best Value for Money within a tight budget at a time when income was falling.

59.11 The Director, Strategy and Governance answered questions on Members Allowances (inflationary increase being proposed) and the deletion of two Assistant Director posts in the Department to give flatter management structures (Head of Policy and Head of

Improvement & Organisational Development). A reduction of one post in the media team was proposed.

58.12 He said Performance would be reshaped, and Information and Analysis and Policy brought together.

58.13 Savings were planned by amalgamating some software licences and other supplies and services.

58.14 There was concern about the proposed move of the Brighton History Centre. Councillor Randall as Chair of Culture Tourism and Enterprise O&S Committee was asked to follow this up.

58.15 **RESOLVED**

a) That the following requests/issues be followed up:

- Early information on CYPT savings proposals before presentation at CYOPSC 5 January 2010 meeting
- Further information on how the budget proposals were Equality Impact Assessed
- A report on operational vehicles to be presented to the Sustainability Partnership
- Information on payments to consultancies and budget pressures brought about by staff sickness are provided to OSC members
- CTEOSC to follow up issues raised on the Brighton History Centre

b) That 26 January 2010 OSC receive comments from the O&S Committees relevant to their remits to be incorporated into a single scrutiny response to the budget.