

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL**

**4.30pm 20 JULY 2023**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL**

**DRAFT MINUTES (Extract)**

**Present:** Councillors O'Quinn (Chair), Atkinson, Bagaeen, Evans, Fishleigh, Fowler, Grimshaw, Hamilton, Meadows, McNair, Robins, Sankey, Shanks, C Theobald, West, Wilkinson, Williams, Alexander, Allen, Asaduzzaman, Baghoth, Burden, Cattell, Czolak, Daniel, Earthey, Gajjar, Galvin, Goddard, Goldsmith, Helliwell, Hewitt, Hill, Loughran, Lyons, McGregor, McLeay, Miller, Mistry, Muten, Nann, Oliveira, Pumm, Robinson, Rowkins, Sheard, Simon, Stevens, Thomson and Winder

**PART ONE**

**6 DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.**

- 6.1 The Mayor reported that two deputations had been received from members of the public and invited Victoria Taylor as the spokesperson for the first deputation to come forward and address the council. The deputation related to flooding at Park Crescent.
- 6.2 Councillor Rowkins replied, it is a sad fact that our response to the climate emergency will need to include mitigating the effects of more regular extreme weather events. Sudden, severe rainfall the likes of which we saw on June 20th is happening more often, and the flooding you describe here illustrates that we are not sufficiently prepared. That morning, I woke up to social media posts from within my ward of wheelie bins being washed, at high speed, down Elm Grove in what can only be described as a deluge. As a result of this event, reports of flooding were received from locations across the city. The Council, as the Lead Local Flood Authority, has commissioned a Section 19 report under the Floods and Water Management Act to investigate the event and its effects across the city. Early indications are that this was well in excess of what would be considered a "one in ten years" event. It is also clear that these 1 in 10 events are now occurring every 2-3 years. The report will also consider the response of the Risk Management Authorities, including the council and Southern Water in their capacity as maintainers of the sewers. It is clear that residents in Park Crescent have borne the brunt of this and other events. We will be looking at what improvements can be made at higher elevations in order to reduce the volume of water reaching the area during heavy rainfall. In the meantime, I have asked officers to explore what short-medium term measures might be possible, including the steps you have outlined. Whilst I understand the motivation for residents to take steps to ameliorate the problem, we would ask them not to remove manhole covers. It will not help with flood alleviation and risks raw sewage spilling into the street. In addition, it places the

public and staff attending the scene at risk of falling through uncovered openings in the road.

- 6.3 The Mayor thanked Victoria for attending the meeting and speaking on behalf of the deputation. She explained that the points had been noted and the deputation would be referred to the Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee for consideration. The persons forming the deputation would be invited to attend the meeting and would be informed subsequently of any action to be taken or proposed in relation to the matter set out in the deputation.
- 6.4 The Mayor then invited Victoria Smith as the spokesperson for the second deputation to come forward and address the council. The deputation related to the closure of Mile Oak Library.
- 6.5 Councillor Pumm replied, closing libraries is not easy for me or any member of the Labour administration, but Brighton & Hove City Council is having to make tough choices about how services are run across all departments. We are aware that Mile Oak Library was not only a library, but also a warm place and a community facility. The cost-of-living crisis is far from over and we want to make sure there is a replacement before winter. Mile Oak has lost a community resource, and as Chair of the Community Safety Committee, I know how important they are. I will be meeting with ward councillors to urgently look for spaces that can serve the community. However, I would like to explain why we had to make this tough decision: A savings plan for the city's library service was agreed by councillors at the Brighton & Hove City Council budget meeting in February 2023. This included the closure of Mile Oak Public Library and a reduction in staffed hours in six community libraries. Staffed hours at community libraries changed on 1 July with a saving of £46,000 per annum. Mile Oak Public Library will close on 21 July, providing a saving of £35,000 per annum in staff and premises costs. The decision to close the library was based on the low number of customers using Mile Oak compared to the city's other libraries, and the challenges and costs of running the service within the premises of the local school. The library averaged 150 visits per month between April 2022 and March 2023, down from 3,500 per month five years ago. The average cost per customer visit is £19.02, compared to 78p across the other Brighton & Hove libraries. The Library Service completed a public consultation on the closure of the library from 9 May to 5 June. It asked about the needs of current and potential Mile Oak library customers and alternative options to meet them. There were over 200 responses and, whilst the majority were not in favour of closing the library, most of the current customers already use other libraries in the city, many of which are accessible seven days a week through the use of Libraries Extra. Many customers use the e-library collection as well as the physical stock. There were no viable suggestions for making the savings without closing the library. While I understand that this is disappointing, I will now focus on saving the remaining infrastructure of the libraries. The results of the consultation contributed to the Equality Impact Assessment, completed by the Library Senior Management Team. Areas of impact were identified and the service is working to implement mitigations to minimise these. Portslade and Hangleton Libraries are both within 2 miles of Mile Oak Public Library. They are both open 7 days a week with a mix of staffed and unstaffed access. There are bus links to these libraries from Mile Oak and also to the large library in Hove. The library digital offer is increasing, with a huge range of ebooks, audio books, magazines and newspapers available for free, including collections for children and young people. The library team continue to work closely with schools and community groups in the area to explore ways to promote the Home Delivery Service for

residents who would find it hard to travel to one of the other libraries and to provide events and access to library materials. The library team are investigating the option of locating a small community collection in a publicly accessible building in the Mile Oak area, which has worked well in other areas of the city as a supplement to the standard offer.

- 6.6 The Mayor thanked Victoria for attending the meeting and speaking on behalf of the deputation. She explained that the points had been noted and the deputation would be referred to the Equalities, Community Safety & Human Rights Committee for consideration. The persons forming the deputation would be invited to attend the meeting and would be informed subsequently of any action to be taken or proposed in relation to the matter set out in the deputation.

The meeting concluded at 22:36

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2023

