

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

SPECIAL CABINET

10.30am, 31 July 2008

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Brown (Deputy Chairman), Councillors; Caulfield, Fallon-Khan, Kemble, Norman, Simson, Theobald and Young.

Also in attendance:
Councillor Morgan (for the Leader of the Opposition)

Other Members: Councillor Randall.

PART ONE

47 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

47a Declarations of Interests

47a.1 There were none.

47b Exclusion of Press and Public

47b.1 The Cabinet 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 Schedule 12A, Part 5A, Section 100A(4) or 100 1 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

47b.2 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting during any items.

48 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

48.1 Councillor Brown explained that the Leader was on holiday and as such she, as Deputy Leader would be chairing the meeting.

48.2 The Chairman noted that the intention had been to consider the report at the previous meeting of Cabinet, but that the land survey data had not been available. In order to meet Government funding deadlines a meeting had to be held before the next scheduled Cabinet meeting, hence the 'special' Cabinet.

- 48.3 The Chairman explained that, as with any 'special' meeting, there was only one item on the agenda.
- 48.4 The Chairman noted that the report presented to the Cabinet marked the beginning of a process and that opportunities for fuller engagement with the community would be part of the planning process.
- 49 PARTIAL REVIEW OF THE SOUTH EAST PLAN: 'MEETING THE ACCOMMODATION NEEDS OF GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS'.**
- 49.1 The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Environment that informed the Cabinet of work undertaken in accordance with the Partial Review of the South East Plan and the views of the Regional Assembly regarding the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. The report proposed the provision of a small permanent Traveller site to be managed on site and maintained through income from rents paid by the occupants (for copy see minute book).
- 49.2 Councillor Theobald detailed the legal and historical background to the issue, noting the supportive stance of the council as a whole to the provision of a site. He noted general support for the revised Travellers Strategy and the improvements that had been carried out to the Horsdean transit site which had been in a poor condition.
- 49.3 Councillor Theobald noted the additional strength that a permanent site would afford any legal processes and concluded that, in recognition of the extreme sensitivities the issue would be subject to vigorous consultation.
- 49.4 The Chairman invited Councillor Morgan to address the meeting.
- 49.5 Councillor Morgan was concerned about the timing and arrangements of the special meeting and felt that local residents had been denied the opportunity to participate. He noted that the issue had been subject to debate previously and that there was general consensus as to the need for a site.
- 49.6 Councillor Morgan questioned the evidence provided by the report, noting the lack of a map and supporting documentation about the decontamination of the site. He felt that the goodwill of local residents in respect of the current use of the site by travellers was being tested. He concluded that the process was unnecessarily secretive and requested that the report be rejected and referred back pending a more open and transparent consultation.
- 49.7 Councillor Morgan took the opportunity to present a petition signed by 200 persons and an aerial photograph of the site.

'We, the residents of the Wilson Avenue area of East Brighton, call on the cabinet to first consult fully on proposals to create a permanent travellers site on the former BMX track in Sheepcote Valley, and to take into account the view of before a final decision is made.'

- 49.8 The Chairman exercised her discretion in accepting the petition noting that she did not wish to set a precedent for special meetings. The petition was noted and would be forwarded to the next relevant Cabinet Member Meeting for consideration.
- 49.9 The Chairman noted that Councillor Randall had requested to speak and invited him to address the meeting.
- 49.10 Councillor Randall commented that the Green Group supported the principle of providing a permanent site for Travellers, however they were seeking guarantees about the contamination of the site and how effectively this could be dealt with. It was also important that the views of the local community and Gypsy and Traveller groups were sought and that evidence about the non-suitability of other sites considered was shared.
- 49.11 Councillor Simson noted the numerous plans in place to consult with local residents on the issue. She and Councillor Theobald pledged to be as fully engaged with this process as their workload would allow.
- 49.12 Councillor Young noted the financial benefits of working to this Government initiative and the 100% funding that it attracted.
- 49.13 Councillor Fallon-Khan noted that the legal opportunity to provide a permanent site had existed since 2004. He commented on the efficiency and savings to budget that the proposal would deliver and the long-term benefits for the city as a whole. He concluded that the payment of rent and council tax by Gypsies and Travellers at the site would afford greater parity between them and the settled community.
- 49.14 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report:
- (1) That the proposals to meet the current identified accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers within Brighton & Hove be approved;
 - (2) That the preferred site for the provision of a permanent Gypsy and Travellers site with up to 14 pitches, be within the former BMX site off Wilson Avenue, East Brighton;
 - (3) That the granting of Landlord's consent for the use of the land for a permanent Travellers Site with up to 14 pitches be approved; and
 - (4) That the making of an application for 100% grant to the Department of Communities and Local Government be approved.

The meeting concluded at 11.40am

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2008

