

Brighton & Hove City Council

City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

4.00pm 14 November 2023

Council Chamber, Hove Town Hall

Minutes

Present: Councillor Rowkins (Chair) Fowler (Deputy Chair), Pickett (Opposition Spokesperson), Alexander, Burden, Galvin, Muten, Robinson, C Theobald and Winder

Other Members present: Councillors

Part One

22 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

22(a) Declarations of substitutes

22.1 There were none.

22(b) Declarations of interest

22.2 Councillor Winder declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 32 due to being a member of a community group based at The Level.

22.3 Councillor Fowler declared a pecuniary interest in Item 30 due to being a shop owner in the proposed T-Zone area. Councillor Fowler would leave the Chamber during discussion of the item.

22(c) Exclusion of press and public

22.3 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the Act"), the Committee considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during an item of business on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present during that item, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information (as defined in section 100A(3) of the Act) or exempt information (as defined in section 100(I) of the Act).

22.4 **Resolved-** That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting.

23 MINUTES

23.1 **Resolved-** That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as the correct record.

24 CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS

24.1 The Chair provided the following communications:

“Since the last meeting of this committee, this administration has continued to work tirelessly on our priorities and those of our residents – restoring basic services and cleaning up the city and our neighbourhoods.

Improving the reliability of our refuse and recycling collections has been a top priority, and I’m pleased to say that our new afternoon collection crew has completed its first week of service. They provide a great deal of additional operational flexibility; last week they collected from West Hove, Hollingbury, Portslade and the city centre – refuse and recycling, kerbside and communal.

Today we will be approving another expansion in our recycling service – the second such improvement since taking office 6 months ago. This expansion is focussed on our recycling drop off points and will see 54 new bins for food and drink cartons being added to locations around the city.

We will also be rolling out 21 new containers for waste electrical items. We currently have only 2 such containers, and the only option for residents who do not live near to either of those is to take these items to one of our two Household Waste Recycling Centres. In other words, drive it to the tip. Consequently, a significant amount of electricals end up in household waste, despite containing a range of materials that can be reused.

Last week, Cllr Fowler and I visited Light Brothers in Lewes, our contractor for the processing of waste electricals. We met staff and saw first-hand the range of materials that can be extracted for recycling, including a variety of metals and the lithium from batteries. They are also able to extract any harmful materials to be disposed of safely and responsibly.

We will be reviewing the impact of these new containers and aim to add a further units in due course.

Following the success of our first Big Clean Up weekend in the summer, which saw councillors leading clean-up events in their wards, we are now holding another event, this time focussed on the city centre. On Saturday November 25th, councillors will be leading teams in the area around Brighton Station, as well as St James’ Street, West Street and other high footfall areas. We’d love to welcome anybody who would like to come and join, and residents can find details by contacting either me or their ward councillor.

Today, we’re also bringing forward proposals to increase fines for environmental offences, including graffiti tagging, which has blighted the city for so long. Recently, we have successfully identified taggers and have sent them out to clean it up and paint it out. Since the election in May, we have identified and fined 15 taggers, compared to only 5 in the same 6-month period last year.

Later this month, on November 21st, we’ll be holding the first event in our Re-Imagine Brighton & Hove series, focussed on tagging. The event will bring together residents, businesses, community groups, councillors & officers, police and others to gather views and ideas to help inform our Graffiti Tagging Reduction Strategy, which will come to this committee in the new year.

Having reopened the vast majority of the city’s public toilets, we are very pleased to be bringing forward plans for a brand new toilet and café at one of the city centre’s most used parks, The Level. Questions will rightly be asked about the existing building, the former Velo Café, and its attached public toilet. Serious issues with the plumbing and

drainage that stem back to the design and construction have meant that the building is currently unusable, and the costs involved in bringing it back to life are extremely high. The old toilets, tucked away in a discrete external corner of the building, were blighted by drug use and antisocial behaviour. On top of that, the rent was too high and caused successive businesses to struggle. Suffice it say, the project was not a success. We are now actively exploring options for the building, but the scale of the work required and the costs involved mean that sadly it will be some time before it can be repurposed. What we are proposing today will restore public toilet facilities to the park quickly by refurbishing one of the two period pavilion buildings to become a new public toilet, managed and monitored by an adjoining café. We have already had several expressions of interest in running this new venture, and residents in the area are very pleased that we are taking this action”.

25 CALL OVER

25.1 All items on the agenda were reserved for discussion.

26 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

26.1 There were none.

27 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

b) Member Questions

1) Storm Ciarán

25.1 Councillor Pickett read the following question:

“What effort was made by the Council to inform the public, in good time, about possible preparatory actions needed to cope with the impact of Storm Ciarán? For example, at what point before the storm were residents told to not leave bins out? At what point was it communicated publicly by the Council that public toilets would be closed?”

25.2 The Chair provided the following reply:

Thank you for your question.

When the Amber weather warnings were first issued on Tuesday 31 October, social media posts from the Met Office and the Environment Agency were shared on the council’s X (formerly known as Twitter) and Facebook accounts advising people to be prepared for bad weather and to keep an eye on the forecast.

Information about the changes to services, including the suspension of refuse and recycling collection rounds and the closure of toilets were kept up to date on a dedicated storm web page from Wednesday lunchtime, once decisions were agreed by services and advice issued by the Local Resilience Forum.

A note and a link to this page was put up as a banner on every page of the council’s website advising people that they could find information about service changes due to the storm. Social media posts were also shared throughout the day on Wednesday and Thursday, directing residents to the page for more information. They covered the latest

advice and changes to services including bin collections, cancellation of planned events, health advice, seafront safety, travel advice and road closures.

Information was shared by local partners including East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, NHS Sussex, and was reported on by local news, TV and Radio.

A message was also added to the Environment Contact Centre telephone line for the duration of Thursday 2 November, notifying residents of the suspension of waste collections, with an explanation of when they would instead be collected.

We would of course like to have been able to give more notice of service interruptions, but weather unfortunately does not bend to the will of human schedules. Operational decisions need to be made on the basis of the best possible information, which in the case of severe weather often means the previous day or indeed on the day. It goes without saying that the safety of our residents and staff is always the primary factor”.

25.3 Councillor Pickett asked the following supplementary question:

“Does the Administration feel it could have acted sooner with messages considering how dangerous the storm was?”

25.4 The Chair provided the following reply:

“My view is that we put out information as best as we could on all channels. Thankfully the storm event was not as severe as predicted it might be”.

2) Brighton Reimagined

25.5 Councillor Pickett read the following question:

“With regard to your planned Brighton Reimagined meetings, the first meeting is about graffiti. As this is a council event, many questions present themselves: what is the budget and where is it coming from? How will findings be used? How is the council ensuring a plurality of diverse voices are represented at these meetings? How does this relate to the recently published graffiti strategy and consultation? How was it decided this was the most pressing environmental issue to cover in a community meeting?”

25.6 The Chair provided the following reply:

“Thank you for your question. I actually counted 5 questions, but I will exercise my chair’s discretion and answer them in turn.

There is no dedicated budget for the Reimagine Brighton & Hove events. As far as possible, the events will be delivered at zero cost. Where some expenditure is unavoidable, such as the hiring of community space or providing printed promotional materials, the costs will be covered by the Policy & Communication Teams’ budgets.

The findings will be used to inform the updated Graffiti Tagging Reduction Strategy and Action Plan, which will be brought to a future meeting of this Committee for approval.

In terms of diverse representation, a comprehensive invitation list was created, which includes a variety of businesses, community groups, faith groups, developers and so on.

The event has been promoted publicly through email marketing and social media channels.

The event has been shared with Community Works, which supports charities, volunteers, businesses and the public sector across the city, and has a membership of over 500.

The council's Community Engagement Team has also shared the details of the event with their networks.

If anyone would like to attend that hasn't received details of the event, they can contact Lucie Spicer. lucie.spicer@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

As far as graffiti being one of the early events: The report that came to the last committee was an update on the delivery of the 2018 Graffiti Reduction Strategy and was seeking approval to begin consulting on ways to improve the Strategy. This event forms part of that consultation and seeks to broaden how we gather view and ideas from residents, with a focus on real conversations.

The timing of the Reimagine events broadly coincided with plans for a review of the Graffiti Tagging Reduction Strategy and offered an opportunity to engage with communities on a high-profile issue whilst also complementing the planned consultation work. The three further events will look at the cost of living, safety in the city and health and wellbeing".

25.7 Councillor Pickett asked the following supplementary question:

"How are young people specifically being engaged?"

25.8 The Chair provided the following reply:

"I can find out. Our approach is to invite as broad a range of people as possible. If there are any groups beyond the ones I've listed, I'll come back to you directly".

3) Flooding

25.9 On behalf of Councillor Meadows, Councillor Theobald read the following question:

"In November 2000 a scrutiny was requested and granted to look at the flooding across the city including Patcham. During the panel discussions the Southern Water Waste Water Manager advised the Panel "that the storm water network was neither designed nor expected to cope with the volume of surface runoff and groundwater infiltration carried by the system towards the end of 2000". The Waste Water Manager also reported that the "main strategic sewer network was sufficient for the needs of extrapolated local population levels for the next 20 years".

23 years on with the flooding and sewage levels in Patcham rising it is clear that that the sewer system is no longer sufficient for Patcham's needs, so my question would be what actions is the council going to take, as many of the actions from the scrutiny were not completed".

25.10 The Chair provided the following reply:

"As the Lead Local Flood Authority, we have a responsibility to manage flooding from surface water and ground water. We do not have responsibilities for the sewer itself becoming overwhelmed. However, as the surface water is discharged into the sewers further down the catchment, we have a responsibility to work in partnership with Southern Water to manage the ongoing flood risk within the city.

As part of our ongoing activities, we are talking with Southern Water and looking at ways to work collaboratively to deliver solutions to the flooding issues. The council is actively seeking opportunities for SuDS and other nature-based solutions to reduce the amount of surface water entering the sewers.

I share your concerns on flooding in the city. It is worth pointing out that, frighteningly, the types of weather we now experience are different to those in 2000, with what was considered a 1 in 10-year event now occurring every couple of years.

Next Monday, I am meeting with officers to review our strategy for Flood Risk Management around the city and will be seeking to identify what more we can do. It is worth noting, though, that as with so many other council activities, maintaining our existing infrastructure is extremely challenging after 13 years of Tory cuts. We all want to see things improve, so I trust that you'll join me in voting Labour at the next general election".

25.11 Councillor Theobald asked the following supplementary question:

"Has the council done anything to take preventative flooding measures in Patcham such as issuing sandbags?"

25.12 "I've met with Patcham residents and have asked for a meeting with officers. It is spectacular what residents there have done on this matter. In terms of practical measures, I will look and what can be done and come back to you directly".

28 OFFICIAL FEED AND FOOD CONTROLS SERVICE PLAN 23/24 - MID YEAR REPORT

25.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Housing, Neighbourhoods & Communities that set out the Official Feed and Food Controls Service Plan 23/24, Mid Year Report.

25.2 Councillors Pickett and Theobald asked questions on the report.

25.3 **Resolved-**

1) That the committee notes the contents of the Official Feed and Food Controls Service Plan, Mid Year Report set out in the appendix to this report.

29 IMPROVING RECYCLING POINTS

29.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Economy, Environment & Culture that sought approval to rollout additional carton and WEEE containers across the city to increase the opportunities for recycling.

29.2 The Head of City Environment Strategy & Service Improvement explained the following correction to the report:

"Crown Street has now been excluded from Table 1 and Table 3 of Appendix 1. This means that a carton container will not be placed at this location. It also means that a

waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) container will not be placed at this location. Crown Street was included by mistake and officers are sorry about this.

This does not affect the recommendation at 2.1. There had been a miscount in the number of containers to be rolled out and with the removal of Crown Street, the total number of carton containers remains 54. Again, apologies for this oversight.

Where there are changes to the report are 3.2, 3.6 and 7.1.

3.2 should read "There are currently 30 containers across the city for residents to use. The audit identified opportunities for an additional 54 containers to be rolled out across 49 locations. 47 of these will be in new locations (some with multiple bins) and two existing locations will have an extra container."

3.6 should read "There are currently only two WEEE containers for residents to use across the city. This has reduced considerably over the last few years due to vandalism, with people breaking into the containers to access the equipment. The audit identified an additional 57 locations for WEEE containers".

7.1 should also reflect the 57 locations for WEEE containers, rather than 58 in the last sentence".

29.3 Councillor Pickett moved the following motion to amend recommendation 2.1 and 2.2 as shown in bold italics below:

2.1. That Committee agrees to ***a consultation on the*** rollout ***of*** an additional 54 carton recycling containers to recycling points across the city.

2.2. That Committee agrees to ***a consultation on the*** rollout ***of*** 21 new WEEE containers to recycling points across the city.

29.4 Councillor Theobald formally seconded the motion.

29.5 Councillors Fowler, Pickett, Muten Galvin, Robinson, Theobald and Alexander asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

29.6 The Chair then put the motion to the vote that failed.

29.7 The Chair then put the recommendations to the vote that were approved.

29.8 **Resolved-**

- 1) That Committee agrees to rollout an additional 54 carton recycling containers to recycling points across the city.
- 2) That Committee agrees to rollout 21 new WEEE containers to recycling points across the city.

30 ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT FRAMEWORK UPDATE

30.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Economy, Environment & Culture that sought approval to update the Environmental Enforcement Framework and related activities.

30.2 Councillors Pickett, Theobald and Robinson asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

30.3 Resolved-

- 1) That Committee notes the results of the public consultation on extending time-banding zones across the city in Appendix 1.
- 2) That Committee approves the expansion of time-banding zones to the roads detailed in Appendix 2 (a map is available in Appendix 3).
- 3) That Committee notes the objections received to the extension of the flyering licence area as detailed in Appendix 4.
- 4) That Committee agrees to extend the flyering licence area to the roads detailed in Appendix 5.
- 5) That Committee agrees to increase the Fixed Penalty Notice amount for some environmental offences as detailed in paragraph 3.21.
- 6) That Committee approves the updated Environmental Enforcement Framework (tracked changes version) as detailed in Appendix 6.
- 7) That Committee notes the implementation of other offences following previous committee approvals as described in paragraphs 3.24 and 3.25.

Note: Councillor Fowler left the Chamber during discussion and voting on the item.

31 THE MACLAREN PAVILION

31.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Economy, Environment & Culture that sought approval to change the MacLaren Pavilion into a split-use café and public toilet facility to provide alternative public toilet facilities at The Level.

31.2 Councillors Fowler, Winder, Theobald and Pickett asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

31.3 Resolved-

- 1) That Committee agrees for the MacLaren Pavilion to change to a split-use café and public toilet facility, which is subject to planning approval.

32 ITEMS REFERRED FOR FULL COUNCIL

25.1 No items were referred to Full Council for information.

The meeting concluded at 5.25pm