

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

1.00pm 19 MAY 2025

HOVE TOWN HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBER

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Evans (Chair) Cattell (Deputy Chair), Fishleigh, Fowler, Lyons, Sheard, Sykes, Winder and Grimshaw

Co-Optees present: Mark Strong (CVS), Doug Thomson (Older People's Council)

PART ONE

45 MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

45.1 The chair answered the question as follows: Thank you to Cllr De Oliveira for his question. Public trust and transparency are incredibly important, and I think amongst the main reasons that we are having this call-in, so I am grateful to him for raising this. However, as this question is directed at cabinet, it is not for me as Chair of the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee to say how cabinet will do anything. The relevant cabinet member, Cllr Jacob Taylor, is here today and has agreed to answer Cllr De Oliveira's question.

Cllr Taylor said: Thank you Cllr De Oliveira for submitting the question. A lot of the substance will be answered in the presentation. I agree that these are the assets of the city council and therefore the people of Brighton & Hove and have been acquired and held over many years. As Councillors we are stewards of these assets. I take that, cabinet takes that, and the whole council takes that extremely seriously. When considering our assets, the use of assets and how we can unlock sites for housing, we have to consider those issues very carefully and also balancing it with the financial needs of the council. In terms of trust and transparency, the process that was gone through has followed the constitution, which is that the report went to cabinet where there was a distinction between part one and part two which we will explore and now the decision is being called-in where it will be further scrutinised, and those are the processes for ensuring that decisions are made properly and are transparent. There is a balancing act on what is included in part one and part two reports and I've no doubt that members will have questions on that today.

46 CAPITAL ASSET STRATEGY

46.1 Cllr O'Quinn presented to the committee. The main points of the presentation were: Grounds for call-in were that there may not have been sufficient evidence to make the decision, and may not have been sufficient consultation made with stakeholders; Without knowing the additional details in part 2 papers of the cabinet meeting it is not possible to know the level of information and if that was enough for the decision to be made. Those making the

call-in felt that some of the strategic decisions could have more details and more consultation including with cabinet members. Cllr O'Quinn said she would like to see more checks and balances to protect officers of any accusations of wrongdoing. She also felt that there was a real need to consult widely.

46.2 Cllr Taylor presented to the committee. His main points were: that there is an unbelievable lack of land available for housing in the city; the city was in a housing crisis that is creating problems with affordability, fewer pupils in schools, thousands on housing waiting lists, and street sleeping; the high cost of construction; the need to set a balanced budget; the Council's low levels of reserves; the need to consider the best use of land and its use for housing; the consequences of not getting capital receipts, which would be cuts to services; the guiding principles of the council, being housing first

46.3 The committee questioned the cabinet member. Questions and comments included: modelling of future site usage and potential future value; involvement of councillors; modelling of outcomes of decisions; concerns around the future of particular sites in part 1; why certain details are in part 2, such as the names of the properties; why the council can't develop sites; if the council is confident that it will get market rate for the sites; what oversight there is to ensure valuations are really independent; future proofing for potential future use; if there would be equality impact assessments carried out; if community use could be considered for certain sites; concerns around if the market value was correct if selling to a current tenant; yields from certain properties might be higher on the open market; the involvement of planning in discussions so far; if independent valuations were independent of both the council and the agent selling the land; the need for public involvement; the possibility of covenants to restrict future use or sell on clauses.

46.4 Members agreed to go into confidential session to discuss the part 2 report.

46.5 The committee returned to public session, with Cllr Cattell chairing as Cllr Evans had to leave during the confidential session.

46.6 **Resolved-**

That the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee agrees to determine that the challenge to the decision called-in should be taken no further and the decision may be implemented

The meeting concluded at 3.53pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of