

Brighton & Hove City Council
Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report 2009/2010



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Brighton & Hove
City Council

Foreword by Cllr Gill Mitchell

Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

I'm delighted to present the 2009/2010 annual report of Brighton and Hove City Council's scrutiny function.

Throughout the year scrutiny has been looking at some of the key issues facing residents in the city. Whether the challenge posed by a changing climate, the immediate issues raised by the severe snow that so badly affected the city or what support we offer to victims of sexual violence, scrutiny councillors have been working with experts in the field, local delivery partners and residents to develop innovative recommendations to improve local services.

Whilst there have been a number of excellent pieces of work during the year the scrutiny function must continue to develop and respond to the challenges we face as a council and city. Tightening public finances and significant change within the council itself mean that Overview and Scrutiny has a more important role than ever in ensuring decisions taken on behalf of our residents are robust.

On behalf of all members involved in Overview and Scrutiny I would like to thank residents, local partners and witnesses who have freely given their time over the course of the year.



Cllr Gill Mitchell
OSC Chair

“...the scrutiny function must continue to develop and respond to the challenges we face as a council and city”

Overview and Scrutiny Committees



Overview and Scrutiny Commission (OSC)

Gill Mitchell
Chair OSC



Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ASCHOSC)

Anne Meadows Chair
ASCHOSC



Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)

Garry Peltzer Dunn
Chairman HOSC



Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CYPOSC)

Averil Older
Chairman CYPOSC



Environment and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ECSOSC)

Warren Morgan
Chair ECSOSC



Culture, Tourism and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CTEOSC)

Bill Randall
Chair CTEOSC

The Commission (OSC)

Balancing the role of overall scrutiny coordination with an overview of equalities, sustainability and central services the Overview and Scrutiny Commission has looked at a range of issues during 2009-2010.

‘Pre-decision is the key. The more items we get prior to Cabinet, the more value scrutiny adds. It really is that simple! This happened really well with the new budget scrutiny process but could be expanded to all Cabinet decisions.’

– Cllr Gill Mitchell, Chair of the Commission

OSC has been able to comment upon and inform drafts of the Volunteering Strategy, Third Sector Recovery Plan, Single Equality Scheme and the Sustainable Community Strategy.

OSC has also led on the implementation of a new and more thorough budget scrutiny system, which was able to influence the final budget agreed by council.

Chairs of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee are invited to update OSC on their work-programme, share good practice and discuss areas of concern. OSC also receives regular updates on the work of the scrutiny panels – information on which is contained throughout this report.

Scrutiny Review – Street Access Issues

Following concern from Councillors, interest groups and members of the public, a review was undertaken into the accessibility of the city’s highways. Focusing mainly on items such as advertising boards placed upon the highway by traders, the review has recommended improved enforcement practices and tighter conditions for licenses.

‘We’ve sought to strike a balance between business interests and accessibility needs of the public. The current policy seems reasonable to us so long as there is increased enforcement to back it up.’

– Cllr Sven Rufus

Scrutiny Review – Staff disabilities

How does the council support its disabled workers? What are their concerns and how can they be addressed?

Scrutiny Review – Dignity at Work

This panel was convened to support the development of a comprehensive policy to eradicate bullying and harassment in the council.

‘This is a real step forward for the council. Those responsible for its development should be congratulated; it now must be fully integrated into the standard workings of the council.’

– Cllr Gill Mitchell

‘There’s lots of good practice already evident within the council; this report aims to support efforts to make us excellent. This is a challenge the council can and should meet.’

– Cllr David Watkins

Health (HOSC)

HOSC members have continued to work on developing excellent relationships with our counterparts in neighbouring authorities. The past year has seen the successful conclusion of the major joint scrutiny of the 'Fit For the Future' plans to reconfigure hospital services across West Sussex and Brighton & Hove. Local NHS Primary Care Trusts eventually agreeing to retain their current level of hospital capacity in line with Joint HOSC recommendations.

'We have sought to develop our work-plan with partners to ensure we get the right mix of policy development initiative and service reviews. We enjoy a good relationship with the PCT which means we do get to input into key policy areas. However where necessary we're not afraid to ask challenging questions. We're enjoyed strong support from LINK representatives who are actively involved in the work of HOSC and a number of the scrutiny panels'

– Cllr Garry Peltzer Dunn, HOSC Chairman

Scrutiny Review – GP-Led Health Centre

Locally, the HOSC has continued to progress its positive, but sometimes challenging, relationship with city NHS trusts. Specifically, HOSC has carried out a thorough examination of NHS Brighton & Hove's procurement of a Brighton & Hove GP-Led Health Centre.

'Really valuable piece of work, providing informed and robust challenge to the PCT'

– Amanda Fadero, Chief Executive of NHS Brighton & Hove

'This was a good example of the PCT positively responding to the challenge from scrutiny'

– Cllr Trevor Alford

Adult Social Care and Housing (ASCHOSC)

ASCHOSC has a very wide scope and is responsible for a diverse range of services. Therefore each meeting starts with a succinct training session, linked into items that are scheduled for review later on in the work-programme. ASCHOSC has looked at some big issues including safeguarding, personalisation, the council's housing strategy and the carers strategy; it has also had 'question and answer' sessions with the Cabinet Members for both Adult Social Care and Housing.

ASCHOSC held a one-off workshop that heard from learning disability service users and providers. Members split into groups and visited a series of stalls to create an environment conducive to informal and productive discussion.

'We deal with services supporting some of the most vulnerable groups in the city and have looked at those issues that make a real difference to people's quality of life'

– Cllr Anne Meadows, Chair of ASCHOSC

Scrutiny Review – Dementia

The Dementia Select Committee has examined the issue of dementia in terms of the care pathway, following people's journey from diagnosis, through various types of treatment and support, to end of life care and family bereavement.

The Committee has made a number of practical recommendations to help make the dementia care pathway easier to navigate. These include suggestions for improving diagnosis, providing better sign-posting to support services, valuing and supporting carers and ensuring that services for people are locally available. The recommendations are intended to inform the work of health and social care professionals, who are currently involved in a re-design of the dementia care pathway.

'The Select Committee on dementia has made a number of practical recommendations, designed to make it more straight-forward for people with dementia to be supported in the ways which will best enable them and their carers to live lives of quality and dignity'

– Cllr Pat Hawkes

Environment and Community Safety (ECSOSC)

ECSOSC provided comments on the Draft Waste Management Strategy and held a joint workshop with CTEOSC to enable scrutiny input prior to public consultation on the London Road Supplementary Planning Document.

ECSOSC also has responsibility under new legislation as the Crime and Disorder Committee from April 2009.

The Committee receives regular updates from the Community Safety Forum and holds twice-yearly discussions with the Environment Cabinet Member.

The Committee also looked at, and praised outstanding achievements in, a number of areas including:

- Night-time economy (Beacon status)
- Roadworks (joint working arrangements)
- Policing the use of drugs (Operation Reduction)
- Young people and concessionary bus fares

Scrutiny Review – Older People and Community Safety

What are the concerns of older people? What makes them feel safe? How can the council and partners support them more effectively? Evidence heard indicated that communication, knowing where to go for help, combating doorstep crime and community support schemes are key factors.

‘There are some very practical and positive steps that have been identified as a result of this report that mean the council and other agencies working with older people can enhance their quality of life and make them feel safer’

– Cllr Mo Marsh

Scrutiny Review – Support Services for Victims of Sexual Violence

This review focused on how victims of sexual violence are supported across the city and whether there is adequate provision of the necessary services. This has given us the chance to work closely with partners in the public and third sectors. The review has identified that there is a need for an increased channelling of resources to this area, and that partners in the city need to work together to support victims further.

‘A very valuable piece of work which will challenge the council and its partners to develop the support offered to victims of sexual violence’

– Cllr David Watkins

‘A really thorough and positive experience, they took the time to contact and gather a very broad range of knowledge and experiences’

– Lisa Dando, Director of Brighton’s Women’s Centre

Scrutiny Review – Winter Service Plan

(How we responded to the snow)

This short sharp scrutiny review looked at our response to the severe winter weather and has put forward ideas on how to improve things for next time. Many of these ideas have built upon the changes already implemented between the snowfalls of Christmas and the New Year.

These include more flexible staffing arrangements to support the gritting crews and call centre staff; improved communication with residents both before and during the heavy snowfall and how we can work better with partners to identify key hotspots within the city.

‘We’ve come up with a number of recommendations designed to increase the capacity of council services at key times, provide residents with more information as to what’s happening, and we are asking for investment in more up-to-date equipment’

– Cllr Warren Morgan

Scrutiny Review – 20 mph Speed Limits

The panel concluded that there should be an increase in the number of areas that have a speed limit of 20mph. The panel found that when introduced in the right areas 20 mph speed limits and 20 mph zones can be used to not only increase safety for all road users, preventing accidents and reducing speeds, but bring about benefits in health and quality of life.

Therefore 20 mph speed limits should be introduced on all residential roads, on roads where there are high numbers of vulnerable road users such outside schools, routes to schools, on roads next to parks and playgrounds, sports and leisure facilities, community buildings, older people's care homes, local shops, on roads which are primarily for residential use, as well as on busy shopping streets.

'We're supporting a general increase in the number of areas within the city that have 20mph limits but only where they meet set criteria and following extensive consultation with local residents. We have received wide ranging support for decreasing speed limits to help reduce accidents and to make roads safer and more welcoming for all road users'

– Cllr Pete West

Culture, Tourism and Enterprise (CTEOSC)

CTEOSC has been involved in policy development on the Royal Pavilion Garden Strategy, Mobile Libraries, Economic Strategy, and the Cultural Strategy. Other issues looked at include VisitBrighton contact arrangements, golf course contract tendering, sports facilities in the city, and major projects. External speakers included Andrew Comben, Chief Executive, Brighton Dome and Festival, Fred Hasson, of the digital gaming company Redbedlam, and Tim Hutchings who organised the Brighton Marathon.

‘The development of environmental industries is seen as one of the key drivers for ending the world recession’

– Cllr Bill Randall

Scrutiny Review – Environmental Industries:

Seeking to capture the potential and economic benefits of environmental industries

The Panel heard from 21 organisations, local and national experts, including the city’s two universities, the Brighton & Hove Economic Partnership and key businesses in this growing sector such as BioRegional. It was able to conclude that the growing sector provides an important enterprise and employment opportunity for the city, with specific recommendations as to how the council and other partners could support the growth of the sector. The review was described as:

‘An impressive piece of partnership working... a model for how to tackle other knotty issues facing the city’

– Tony Mernagh, Executive Director of the Brighton and Hove Economic Partnership

‘Delighted that the Scrutiny Panel and the University were able to work so constructively together’

– Colin Monk, Pro-Chancellor University of Brighton

Children and Young People (CYPOSC)

‘We’ve sought to more closely align CYPOSC’s agenda with those major issues upon which the CYPT and Cabinet Member are focusing in order to influence policies as they are developed.’

– Cllr Averil Older, Chair of CYPOSC

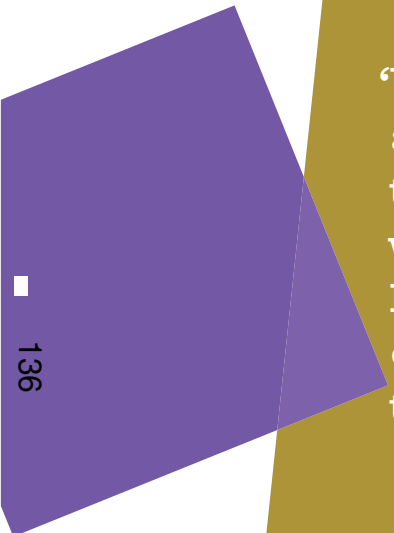
CYPOSC enjoyed early input into the drafts of the Children and Young People’s Plan and has been grappling with a number of the key issues facing the CYPT such as safeguarding and budget constraints.

Following requests from the Community & Voluntary Sector Forum (CSVF) in relation to therapeutic services for disabled children CYPOSC reviewed the issue, raising its profile and leading to a business case for extra investment being developed and a subsequent injection of funding.

Five members of the Youth Council have joined CYPSC, (with two members sitting on the committee on a rotating basis) providing a strong voice for the youth of the city, offering a fresh perspective on a wide number of issues and undertaking demanding questioning. Youth Council representatives on CYPOSC said:

‘We work together as youth councillors to come up with questions that are important to young people and we feel our contribution is taken very seriously’

‘I have been a member of CYPOSC for the past year and love being part of it. I have learnt so much from it. I love the debating, enjoy attending the meetings and am encouraged to ask questions that are important to young people’



Scrutiny Review – Reducing alcohol related harm to Children and Young People

Councillors investigated the reasons for the higher than average, and worsening, levels of alcohol related harm suffered by children and young people in Brighton and Hove and the availability, and consumption, of alcohol by those aged under 18 in the city.

Evidence was taken from the police, trading standards and licensing officers, CYPT representatives, public health professionals from NHS Brighton & Hove, a consultant paediatrician, head-teachers, and representatives of the major supermarket and off-licence chains. The 11 recommendations have been agreed by the CYPT Board and Licensing Committee.

**‘ This panel stimulated
debate on a very
complex issue.
Parents, teenagers,
retailers & public
services all have a role
in the solution’**

– Cllr Anne Norman

Scrutiny Review – School Exclusions

The panel sought to review links between exclusions from school and a range of issues, including how schools manage interventions for children at risk of exclusions and the experience of those excluded and their parents.

**‘There is some very good practice evident
with schools across the city; however more
focus is required on children with SEN who
are at much higher risk of being excluded’**

– Cllr Rachel Fryer

Call-in requests

Call-in is a process by which Overview and Scrutiny Committees can recommend that a decision made, but not yet implemented, be reconsidered by the body which made the decision. Call-in does not provide for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to substitute its own decision, but merely to refer the matter back to the decision-maker. During 2009/10 there were four call-in requests; details of these are outlined below.

ECSOSC -

Pedestrian Network Phase 2

Members were concerned over the consultation that had been carried out in relation to an extension of pedestrian network. Whilst not referring the decision back to Cabinet, ECSOSC did want extra informal consultation undertaken.

ECSOSC -

City Parks Downland Management

This decision was challenged and referred back to cabinet on the basis of:

- Lack of consultation with local conservation & wildlife groups;
- Lack of information in the CMM report relating to cutting and composting of sites not being grazed;
- Lack of analysis in the CMM report on the lack of impact of the Downland Mowing Policy on a site by site basis.

Having taken into account ECSOSC's recommendations and the additional information the Cabinet Member confirmed his original decision.

OSC -

Three-Year Strategic Grants 2010-13:

Decisions on Full Bid Applications

The Overview & Scrutiny Commission recommended that a policy and methodology review should be undertaken of the Three Year Grants by the Communities Team, with the Member Advisory Group, and this should be referred to Scrutiny in advance of commencement of the next Three Year Grant process. Also that the Communities Team and other relevant officers explore, as a matter of urgency, alternative sources of funding for the Crew Club, the Bridge, and other projects which had received no funding via this round of grants.

ECSOSC -

Hangleton Bottom – whether the decision should have been put on the Forward Plan

The decision was not referred back to the Cabinet Member Meeting.

Focus for 2010/11

Scrutiny Review Consultation

Consultation is currently underway to produce a priority list of scrutiny reviews to run from September 2010. Partners, residents, Members and officers are all being asked to suggest topics for scrutiny reviews.

Intelligent Commissioning

Under the Intelligent Commissioning Model the role of scrutiny will change, as it seeks to influence policy and service development through the commissioning process. To meet this challenge scrutiny ways of working will have to become more flexible.

Partnership Focus

Scrutiny will also continue to develop as a more external looking service with stronger links into partnerships, greater

use of co-optees on committees and panels, and increased opportunity for partners to influence the scrutiny work programme.

Working with the Universities

The scrutiny function has been developing links with the City's universities. Throughout 2009/10 Professor Gordon MacKerron has been chairing a scrutiny panel on climate change and MA students have used the scrutiny process as a case study on decision-making and resident involvement in democratic processes. Additionally from January 2011 final year undergraduate students will be offered the chance to undertake internships within the scrutiny team. Initially two students will provide research and policy support to scrutiny panels from January – May 2011. If successful the number of placements offered may be increased.

