

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.00PM 25 JANUARY 2011

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Morgan (Chairman); Janio (Deputy Chairman), Davis, A Norman, West and Older

PART ONE

33. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

33.1 Declarations of Substitutes

Councillor Averil Older was substituting for Councillor Pat Drake.

33.2 Declarations of Interests

There were none

33.3 Declaration of Party Whip

There were none.

33.4 Exclusion of Press and Public

In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was 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 section 100I (1) of the said Act.

RESOLVED: That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

34. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 NOVEMBER 2010

34.1 RESOLVED: that the minutes of the call-in meeting held on 5 October and the minutes of the meeting held on 8 November be agreed and signed respectively by the Deputy Chairman and the Chairman.

35. CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS

35.1 The Chairman paid tribute to Councillor David Smart, who had sadly passed away. He was a hard-working Councillor who had made a considerable contribution to this committee and would be greatly missed. Moves were in hand to create a fitting commemoration for Councillor Smart.

35.2 The Chairman had received a reply to his letter about parking policy from the Environment Cabinet Member. Councillor Theobald was unwell and on behalf of the whole Committee the Chairman wished him well.

35.3 A workshop for ECSOSC on the Local Transport Plan 3 was being held on Monday 31 January at 1pm.

36. PUBLIC QUESTIONS/ LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS/REFERRALS FROM COMMITTEES/NOTICES OF MOTION REFERRED FROM COUNCIL

36. There were none.

37. SCRUTINY OF BUDGET PROPOSALS

37.1 The Head of Planning and Public Protection introduced the report on Budget Proposals for the Environment Directorate.

37.2 The Strategic Director Place and Strategic Director Communities were present with other senior officers to discuss their areas of work and reply to Members' questions. The officers included Lead Commissioner City Regulation and Infrastructure, the Commissioner Community Safety; Head of Environmental Health and Licensing; Head of City Infrastructure and the Head of Financial Services, Environment.

37.3 The Strategic Director Place told the meeting that during the year there had already been preparations for a fall in income across the Council. There had been loss of grant or reduced income in Community Safety, Parking Services and Development Planning. There was still uncertainty around Local Authorities' grant settlements.

37.4 The Head of Planning and Public Protection said the some of the changes made in last year's budget needed time to establish. Therefore for 2011/2012 only limited savings in CityClean waste collection service and little change to parking charges were being proposed.

37.5 These proposals were based on work done earlier in the financial year and further work was needed. The report showed around £2.27 million savings were needed to be found, which would be a challenge for Environment.

37.6 The overall aim for Environment was to achieve saving of 7% in each of the service areas. This broadly would be achieved under these proposals, including for example renegotiating parking enforcement contracts, reducing the use of consultants and making better use of car parks.

37.7 Members asked for a clearer description of the table of budget proposals summary at the end of Appendix 2 and questioned whether there was enough up to date information in the report to enable meaningful scrutiny of the proposals.

37.8 The meeting heard that the Heads of Service had outlined their budget savings, based on the report that was considered by 9 December Cabinet. More savings and increased income were being sought; officers could highlight directions of travel.

37.9 The Head of City Infrastructure told the meeting that relatively small savings this year by CityClean would be achieved by vacancy management, the benefit of newly introduced equipment in street sweeping, changes to the 'In Bloom' competition arrangements and consistency in funding of hanging baskets. There were no significant changes planned for the waste or recycling collection services; recycling was constrained at present by the materials that the materials recycling facility can receive; costs of diesel had risen and there were changes to where 'red' diesel can be used.

37.10 Replying to questions the Lead Commissioner City Regulation and Infrastructure told the meeting that the Council was working with the Car Club owners on charging for parking bays and expanding into other areas of the City.

37.11 There was new government guidance on concessionary bus fares and this area now formed part of the corporate critical budget. Officers were working with corporate finance and the bus operators, he said.

37.12 The Strategic Director Communities said there was considerable uncertainty about the overall level of Community Safety funding for the City. This presented significant challenges especially as the Community Safety services are delivered in partnership with other organisations whose budgets are not synchronised with the Council's budget timetable. However the close working relations in the Community Safety Partnership was an advantage.

37.13 A key budget management principle was to minimise the impact of changes on the community and voluntary sector. At this time when all the Council's work is being reviewed, ways were being considered to link up Community and Equality areas of work.

37.14 The Commissioner for Community Safety explained that the £347,000 identified savings thus far would result from changing working arrangements without impacting on service delivery. It was proposed to look at four teams and to re-prioritise work in the Drug and Alcohol Action Team. It was planned to merge the Environment Improvement Team with the Communities Against Drugs Team and to combine the Hate Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Teams. One or possibly two vacant posts may be held but there would be no reduction in frontline services including casework services to communities.

37.15 Criteria had been agreed in partnership and early intervention would be prioritised. Some savings had been jointly agreed, with the police and probation service taking into their mainstream budgets up to 12 posts previously funded from pooled budgets

37.16 Restructuring and better focussing on priorities would result in better outcomes; for instance in more support for Local Action Teams and for minority groups. Benefits would also accrue from co-location of services.

37.17 The Strategic Director Communities emphasised that parts of the Government settlement were particularly complex and that following the relevant budget lines was a challenge. For example former Home Office community safety grants would now transfer to Children and Young Peoples' Trusts.

37.18 Removal of ring-fencing from Government grants meant more flexibility and also more complexity. Next year's budget proposals would be based on the new Council structure.

37.19 The Head of Planning and Public Protection outlined the measures to help offset the significant loss of the Planning Delivery Grant.

37.20 He reassured Members that all the proposed savings in each area were based on the principle of avoiding impacting on frontline services, customers and stakeholders. Asked about the report's references to reductions in staff, he stated that every effort was being made to avoid redundancies. However some aspects of the reduction in grant funding still needed to be resolved.

37.21 The Committee heard answers to further questions on investment in car parks, parking tariffs for penalty charge notices (PCNs) and the number of parking enforcement officers. The £230,000 'Director' budget line in the adjusted Base Budget 2010/2011 would not appear under the new council structure. The impact of inflation would be absorbed during the year and at this stage, was not expected to be high.

37.22 Councillor Tony Janio, Deputy Chairman thanked the officers for identifying the savings in this report. Members expressed support for the maintenance of car park equipment in-house.

37.23 Councillor Warren Morgan the Committee Chairman felt it would be helpful to include a report on measures to encourage the use of car club vehicles, on the scrutiny work programme for next year.

37.24 He thanked the officers for providing information to the Committee.

37.25 RESOLVED; that the comments from this comment be forwarded to the 1 February Overview and Scrutiny Commission meeting to be incorporated into a single scrutiny response to the budget.

38. PROGRESS ON LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

38.1 Performance Analysts Richard Miles and Dean Austyn gave a progress update on the Local Area Agreement which was in its final year. There was now no performance reward grant and Performance indicators were not a statutory requirement although data would still have to be reported to government departments. Monitoring of performance would be a matter for local choice.

38.2 The City Performance Plan (CPP) scheduled to be in place on 5 April, would be based on measurements yet to be agreed. Work was in progress with Lead Commissioners, Delivery Units and Members. Delivering the action plan would be the responsibility of the Local Strategic Partnership.

38.3 The Committee heard details of the indicators within the remit of ECSOSC as set out in the report.

38.4 Asked how road safety performance might be affected by reductions referred to in the budget report on this agenda under 'sustainable transport', Mark Prior, Lead Commissioner City Regulation and Infrastructure said that meeting the road traffic accident target NI47 was a challenge.

38.5 The underlying trend in reducing casualties was positive, but the precise method of recording casualties used by the Sussex Safer Road Partnership (SSRP) was likely to be affecting the relative performance of Brighton and Hove. This issue would be taken forward in the context of intelligent commissioning.

38.6 The SSRP was conducting campaigns aimed at children and adults, including in schools, was implementing road safety schemes, cycle training and investigating accident hotspots

38.7 As regards cycle training in schools; Cycling England had supported this and would be retained.

38.8 Councillor Janio Deputy Chairman applauded the setting of indicators locally which would enable better monitoring in his view.

38.9 The Chairman stressed the importance of continuity in reliable monitoring. He said 2011 should not be 'Year 0' - meaningful comparisons with previous years' achievements should be readily available.

38.10 RESOLVED that the report be noted.

39. PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS PRIORITISATION

39.1 The Principal Transport Planner introduced the report setting out a new methodology for prioritising pedestrian crossings. The former system had been based on the number of accidents recorded at a location.

39.2 A more robust score-based system was being drawn up, which took into account, numbers of pedestrians and other factors including social issues such as severance, links to schools and perceptions of danger in addition to the numbers of accidents. It would be presented to a future Environment Cabinet Member Meeting for approval.

39.3 Members welcomed the new system which was clearer and asked about the definition of casualties. The meeting heard that road traffic accident casualty statistics were provided by the Police in categories of slight, severe and fatal.

39.4 Asked whether there were any exceptions, the Lead Commissioner said an area identified as a 'blackspot' would be dealt with as a separate road safety issue.

39.5 **RESOLVED**; (1) that the methodology be welcomed
(2) that the methodology be circulated to all members and posted on the Council's website in a suitable format.

40. OFFICIAL FEED AND FOOD CONTROLS SERVICE PLAN

40.1 The Head of Environmental Health and Licensing Tim Nichols summarised the Official Feed and Food Controls Service Plan 2011/2012, setting out the aims and objectives and the levels of inspections, and interventions anticipated during the year.

40.2 There was a large turnover in food businesses in the City, with approximately 300 new establishments likely in any one year. He referred to the activity of the service and outlined food handling and food safety training and promoting health menu options in eateries.

40.3 The Scores on the Doors scheme was continuing to be successful; hygiene standards were continuing to improve and performance in this area was above the national average.

40.4 The Chairman pointed out the importance of this service for the City's tourism, hospitality, conference and retail sectors.

40.5 Members discussed the national regulators Health and Safety Executive which was not expected to change and the Food Safety Agency (FSA). The meeting heard of some concerns on proposals for central government to assume some of the FSA's responsibilities for health and nutrition. Local Authority officers knew the local businesses and were better positioned in the community to provide advice and enforcement.

40.6 Asked about potential budget reductions, the Head of Environmental Health and Licensing said one vacancy had been held and standards could still be maintained.

40.7 **RESOLVED**; that the Plan be supported.

41. HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL SERVICE PLAN

41.1 The Head of Environmental Health and Licensing briefed the Committee on the Annual Report of the Health and Safety Service Plan 2011/2012. The aim was to maintain Brighton and Hove as a fun and safe place to be.

41.2 A customer survey of local businesses had shown that almost all respondents believed health and safety inspection officers were helpful and fair.

41.3 A key focus for work during the year would be work-related violence including in late-night take-aways.

41.4 Members thanked and congratulated the inspection and enforcement officers.

41.5 **RESOLVED** that the plan be supported.

42. DRAFT ECSOSC WORK PLAN 2010- 2011

42.1 Members noted the ECSOSC work plan.

43. ITEMS TO BE REFERRED TO CABINET MEMBER, CABINET OR FULL COUNCIL

43.1 There were none.

The meeting concluded at 6.00pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

