

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

OLDER PEOPLE'S COUNCIL

10.00am 17 APRIL 2012

ROOM 126, KING'S HOUSE

MINUTES

Present: Hazelgrove (Chair), Bojczuk (Secretary), Brown, Eyles, Morley, Steer, Terry, Tonks (Vice Chair) Vincent and Wakeling

Also in attendance: Councillor Ian Davey, Councillor Geoffrey Bowden

PART ONE

36. APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

36.1 The Chair Jack Hazelgrove welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Councillor Ian Davey as Cabinet Member and Kat Pearce of Age UK B&H.

36.2 Colin Carden had given his apologies. He was standing down from OPC due to ill health. A collection and card was arranged and an election for Rottingdean and Woodingdean OPC constituency would be investigated. No candidates were known at present.

36.3 Transfer of Colin Carden's OPC responsibilities were agreed: OPC Treasurer - Peter Terry; OPC Observer at Age UK B&H and Pensioner Action monthly meetings - Harry Steer; OPC telephone answering rota - John Eyles.
With thanks to Peter Harry and John for volunteering.

36.4 Jack Hazelgrove put on record OPC's gratitude for Colin Carden's work for older people.

37. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING 20 MARCH 2012 AND MATTERS ARISING

37.1 Amendments to the minutes of the last meeting were:

Page 3 Colin Vincent said he was continuing to consult on the current draft Local Account.

Page 5 last two paragraphs to be deleted.

37.2 Matter arising:

Page 6 Penny Morley thanked officers for information on the changes to the Council budget relating to older people. The information had been circulated; paper copies were available.

38. TRANSPORT ISSUES AFFECTING OLDER PEOPLE

38.1 Councillor Ian Davey said he had been Cabinet Member for Transport and the Public Realm for 11 months; the new committee system structure and roles would be agreed at Council meetings on 26 April and 17 May.

38.2 Councillor Davey set out his vision for a City that looks better, feels better and work better, with less congestion, cleaner air and a better public realm. He wanted to see more people walking, cycling and using public transport, he said.

38.3 Transport was one of the biggest issues for the City. There were particular problems of congestion and air quality. Parts of Lewes Road especially were far from meeting EU air quality targets. Road Safety too was not as good as it should be and not improving as well as we would like. Improving the quality of the public realm was also an important aim.

38.4 Key issues were how to improve traffic flows, improve air quality, reduce the overall amount of traffic and make the best use of road space as possible. At present around 80% of the road space was being used by only 20% of people. The 'ideal' sustainable transport hierarchy gave the order of priority to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport, followed by car use.

38.5 Councillor Davey was generally pleased with progress so far. Around £8million new funding had been awarded to the Council for improvements including Lewes Road (currently for consultation), better buses and cycle lanes on Old Shoreham Road. He described recent work on roads and pavements; decluttering, pedestrian crossings, seating, planters; and outlined improved bus and cycling priorities, new bus shelters and real time bus information.

38.6 Concessionary bus fares for older people would continue though the eligibility age was expected to rise. Most of the Local Transport Plan capital budget was being protected and more funding than previously was being allocated to maintenance including pavements, road surfaces, street lights and seafront arches, all important infrastructure for the City.

38.7 Councillor Davey was looking to introduce 20mph speed limit areas into more residential parts of the city. He referred to other public realm projects that were long-term, including Station Gateway, New England Quarter and Valley Gardens.

38.8 Councillor Davey was especially pleased there would be consultation on improvements in Seven Dials, currently an accident black spot area, where communities could be brought together by improving the road system and reducing the need for railings.

38.9 Councillor Davey answered questions on supported buses, the level of bus fares, parking fees and charges and pedestrianisation:

- results of tendering process for supported bus routes would be known in June/July
- passengers were being encouraged to buy bus tickets at lower prices in advance and on-line. Local Authorities worked in cooperation with bus companies but could not stipulate routes nor charges.

- increased parking charges were effectively an extension of high tariff zones, to areas of high demand including the seafront. Parking fees were much lower outside the central areas of the City and the effects of changes were being monitored. The parking review was seeking views on Controlled Parking Zones and good ideas were being brought forward. Meanwhile areas of parking zones and re-consultation had been prioritised where there was strong resident support.

- the layout of shared road space in New Road was regarded as a good model for elsewhere; a ban on vehicles was unnecessary.

- Some OPC Members spoke strongly about disruption caused by roadworks. In reply, Councillor Davey said Local Authorities were obliged to allow access for utilities to carry out essential works. There had been difficulties in the Ditchling Road area but UK Power Networks had provided a Community Transport bus service. A possible move to a 'permit' system, being piloted elsewhere, was being investigated. Officers worked well to minimise disruption but road space and bus options were limited.

38.10 Answering questions on cycle lanes from Kat Pearce of Age UK B&H, Councillor Davey said the aim was to provide as high-quality cycle infrastructure as possible. Seville had developed an extensive integrated network of separated cycling facilities, catering for less able cyclists including children and older people, he said.

38.11 With regard to Park and Ride, various schemes had been looked at over the years but lack of suitable sites and competition with other priority uses, meant that these had not been possible. It was difficult to see how park and ride could be developed for Brighton & Hove, with the advent of the South Downs National Park.

38.12 Car Clubs were a method to help tackle congestion. Car Club membership in Brighton & Hove was the highest outside London and further work was in progress.

38.13 Other questions covered; monitoring the impact of cycle lanes and other changes, such as introduction of new traffic lights at Grand Avenue/New Church Road; drop-off points at major venues for older people.

38.14 Information on accidents to older people over 60 would be provided.

38.15 Jack Hazelgrove thanked Councillor Davey for speaking to the OPC and answering questions.

39. BUSES IN BRIGHTON & HOVE

39.1 Mike Best, Operations Director of Brighton & Hove Buses, gave a presentation. The national Go-Ahead Group plc owned Brighton & Hove Buses and had a policy of using local brand names, unlike Stagecoach, another national bus operator that arguably was a better known brand name across the UK. Mr Best outlined the company's operations, services and vehicles including luxury coaches, vintage buses and City Sightseeing tours.

39.2 All the routes had to 'stack up' commercially, so that investment could be made into vehicles and services. Other than concessionary fares and partial rebate of fuel duty, bus routes had to 'stand or fall' depending on income from fares alone.

39.3 Of the company's 35 or so routes, only five groups (including As,Bs, etc) – numbers 1,5,7,25 and 49 represented as much as half of the company's business. The number 29, providing a half-hourly service to Tunbridge Wells and number 12 service to Eastbourne every 10 minutes, were popular routes.

39.4 Bus passengers valued most, the frequency of bus services. Along the coast road towards Telscombe Cliffs both reliability and usage had increased hugely since the introduction of bus lanes. Previously arrival times could vary by as much as 25 minutes or more. But there had been a 57% increase in the number of morning peak bus journeys and now, research showed that some 36% of travellers along that route into Brighton use only 0.7% of the vehicles.

39.5 Bus lanes had been developed piecemeal in different areas of the City starting in 1991; and that enabled better traffic management and improved bus services. Bus lanes made a 'step change' to the reliability of buses, resulting in increased usage and creating a system that was now 'fantastic' he said.

39.6 New government funding to the City Council amounting to nearly £4million would be used for further improvements, in Lewes Road from Elm Grove up to Falmer.

39.7 Working in partnership had been a key factor in progress not only on bus lanes, but also on other infrastructure such as raised kerbs and bus shelters. Early adoption of talking bus stops and real time bus information signs and systems, were prime examples of this. Joint working had led to successful funding applications to LSTF, Better Bus Area Fund and the Green Bus Fund.

39.8 Mr Best described the company's bus vehicles, one fifteenth of which were replaced each year. He gave details of how exhaust emissions were going down in recent years amounting to 98% reduction in the case of particulates, for instance. Two hybrid buses at present ran on route number 7. The Green Bus Fund was being used to introduce 11 more hybrid vehicles, on routes 7 and 28.

39.9 The Key card system introduced first in 2011 for University students, could now be used by everyone to buy the cheapest bus fares online at www.buses.co.uk.

39.10 With regard to supported bus services, tenders were to be returned next week and the outcome was expected in June or July. Mr Best listed the current services supported either partly (such as a section of a route or at certain times) or in full. He re-iterated that commercial routes depended on income from fares. The Local Authority would look to fill gaps such as school buses and links between estates.

39.11 Mr Best welcomed suggestions for improvements to services; good ideas came from discussions with bus users, he said. In reply to a question from Kat Pearce of Age UK B&H on the level of bus fares, Mr Best said Brighton fares were 'not bad' in comparison with other areas of the UK. The structure of bus operations in Europe was similar to London in that the local authority designs the networks and issues contracts. More was spent per head on buses in London, albeit indirectly via taxes, than the cost of an annual bus pass in Brighton & Hove and in addition, the passenger still had to pay the fare via an Oyster card. A bus route in London was less dependent on a high level of use, he said.

39.12 He outlined the significant financial implications of a cut in the fuel duty rebate from 1 April and fuel duty rise this autumn.

39.13 The aim was to increase the number of bus passengers. It was difficult to keep prices to minimum, but by using the Key on-line, passengers would not be paying an increased fare this year. Answering a question on how to help visitors and others eg those without access to the Internet to get cheaper fares, Mr Best said this was being considered.

39.14 The Older People's Council heard answers to questions on bus services in Bristol Estate, problems caused by road works in Ditchling Road, and traffic surveys showing whether there was a need for extra buses in Lewes Road.

39.15 The Chair Jack Hazelgrove thanked Mr Best for his presentation and for answering questions.

40. APPROACH TO THE COUNCIL'S CONSULTATION PORTAL TOPICS, THE COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN AND LETTERS TO THE PRESS

40.1 The latest version of the Local Account consultation on social service would be circulated to OPC Members.

40.2 Councillor Geoffrey Bowden gave an update on the New Woodingdean Library and Medical Centre

40.3 Mike Bojczuk would prepare a reply to the Sport and Physical Activity consultation; deadline was not until 31 December. Mike made suggestions as to how consultations can be arranged to develop more of a consensus view.

40.4 It was not easy to present a consensus view on the consultation portal; Councillor Bowden would feed back to the Administration.

41. GREY MATTERS

41.1 Harry Steer reported that at yesterday Grey Matters AGM, Colin Vincent was appointed as Director. Bob Gunnell was Chair, Richard Davies as Vice Chair and Harry Steer was Secretary/Treasurer.

41.2 He reported that Grey Matters was flourishing. It was grateful for the council for a £500 grant. Other than the licence fee, costs were not large. All workers were volunteers. There was no definite information on the number of listeners. Grey Matters makes 4 programmes per month for Radio Reverb and now has links with hospital radio. Jack Hazelgrove is interviewed on OPC proceedings.

41.3 Mike Bojczuk offered to add in a link to Grey Matters on the OPC website.

42. MEDICAL CARDS SCHEME - COULD IT BE REJUVENATED?

42.1 Medical Card scheme was deferred to the next meeting.

43. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS, THE CHAIR, SECRETARY AND TREASURER

43.1 OPC Chair Jack Hazelgrove reported on a meeting with the Council Leader and Councillor Bowden as new Link Councillor for OPC.

43.2 He said there was good support for the suggestion of applying for WHO Age-Friendly City status but there was much work to be done. A working party would be set up.

43.3 Councillor Randall has been asked about holding an Older People's Day; this needed costing.

43.4 Colin Vincent reported back on the Older Drivers event, the Link Steering group and change to Healthwatch, and the final meeting of the Care Homes engagement group and launch of the Care Homes Nursing Competency scheme.

43.3 Penny Morley had been to the Active Ageing participatory day that was useful. She gave an update on potential funding for the Food Waste Trial, due to go to 10 May Cabinet.

43.4 Penny recommended that OPC members fill in a 'Greenstat' survey on local parks in the City. This covers both local parks and the City's overall park service. The website address is: ParksProjects@Brighton-Hove.gov.uk

43.5 Peter Terry was disappointed that there were only 3 display stands at the older drivers safety day. He reported back on changes to public toilets.

43.6 Val Brown updated OPC on the half-day seminar on wellbeing in old age. She would be attending a Hangleton Knoll Project LGBT group, looking at the needs of older people.

43.7 Janet Wakeling updated OPC on recent planning proceedings; former nurses accommodation at Pankhurst Road; and Park House, Old Shoreham Road.

43.8 Mike Bojczuk said experience from Older Drivers Day was that 3 people on the stand was not enough; therefore OPC needed to be well-prepared to make sure of the best representation of OPC at People's Day on 14 July.

43.9 Mike had replied to an Age UK B&H consultation on a Dignity in Care. He would circulate information on Honouring Older People event on 28 April.

43.10 Francis Tonks had been to the launch of the Well-Being publication, and the LINK meeting. He mentioned that the post of Chief Executive of Age UK B&H was being advertised. He was interested in planning proposals for the Ice Rink.

43.11 John Eyles was interested in being involved in Medical Cards initiative.

44. OPC WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE

44.1 OPC agreed to cancel the 22 May session on parking. To add Libraries to 22 May agenda.

44.2 Would like Finance update to be a part of every meeting

44.3 Issues around a by-election would be investigated. Accessibility of polling stations was discussed.

45. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

45.1 There was none.

The meeting concluded at 1.00pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of