

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

OLDER PEOPLE'S COUNCIL

10.00am 22 JANUARY 2013

JUBILEE LIBRARY

MINUTES

Present: Jack Hazelgrove (Chair)

Also in attendance: Francis Tonks (Vice-Chair), Mike Bojczuk, Val Brown, John Eyles, Peter Lloyd, Penny Morley, Kat Pearce, Colin Vincent

PART ONE

100. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

The Chair, Jack Hazelgrove, welcomed council members and attendees to the public meeting. The main agenda item was a presentation on the council's budget proposals

Peter Lloyd was attending on behalf of Sue Hawley, Pensioner Action

Kat Pearce attended as a representative of AgeUK Brighton & Hove

Apologies: Peter Terry, Janet Wakeling, Marion Couldery, Councillor Geoffrey Bowden, Isla Robertson, Sue Howley.

101. MINUTES

The Chair had made some changes to the minutes prior to the meeting; no further changes were made.

102. LETTERS TO THE PRESS

Penny Morley had written to the Argus about the proposals for bowling greens and the Concessionary Card, both of which were counter to the Active Ageing approach. The letter was published on 15 January 2013; Councillor Geoffrey Bowden wrote a response to the letter which was published later that week.

103. 2013/14 BUDGET PROPOSALS

2 - James Hengeveld, Head of Finance, BHCC, introduced the budget proposal papers and answered questions from OPC members and attendees.

Questions and comments included:

- Is it true that Brighton and Hove has received a lower settlement than other comparable authorities?

A -yes that is the case, due to a number of factors including grant levels being based on 2003 census figures, which showed Brighton and Hove's population as lower than it now is. However, the council has been successful in bidding for some other grants and funding from central government.

- Does academy school funding affect the grant given to local authorities?

A - Yes, a significant amount of money was top sliced from local authority budgets to cover capital costs for academies and free schools. However if this money is not taken up, it is likely that some of the budget would be returned to local authorities.

Q -what does the council spend on consultants and consultation?

A - This is often the subject of Freedom of Information requests - JH will circulate the information to all members and add to the minutes. Unsure of the spend on consultation, although the budget consultation process cost £25,000.

Q - What is happening with the Social Fund - is it true that it is returning to the council at the 2006 levels? What effect will this have on council services?

A - It is true that this is returning at 2006 levels, it will mean prioritising applications to make best use of the money and try and access other discretionary funds to make sure that work is not duplicated.

Q - Is Tourist Tax still an option?

A - Do not know whether this is legally an option but it has been ruled out locally in any case

Q - What is the situation with grants to community and voluntary sector organisations?

A - It has been protected - the CVS is valued highly by the administration and the council as a whole

Q - With Universal Credits, there is a strong likelihood that Housing Benefit will not be passed on to the council. Have any contingency plans been made?

A- (from Jugal Sharma Lead Commissioner Housing) its estimated that £18 million will not be passed on to the council when Universal Credits are introduced. This is £18 million that cannot be spent on other services or housing needs. However there is a more pressing and urgent need which is the anticipated rise in homelessness due to Housing Benefit changes coming in to force on 1 April 2013. Some private rented accommodation rents are being capped by up to £300 per month. This is going to have huge impacts on housing demand.

Q - How are changes to council infrastructure etc costed?

A - doesn't think that they are costed separately, they are absorbed into other costs unless explicitly stated eg voluntary severance pay amounts.

The Chair thanked James Hengeveld for his presentation and information.

Denise D'Souza, Director of Adult Social Services, and Councillor Rob Jarrett, Chair of the Adult Social Care Committee gave an overview of the Adult Social Care budget strategy

approach, with a focus on preventative services as well as telecare, personalisation and reablement. Over the past few years there has also been a shift from placing people into residential care into alternative accommodation, including the provision of Extra Care accommodation. This is better for residents and better use of resources too. However there is still a great demand for Extra Care housing, anticipating a need for a further 150-180 units this year to stay on top of demand.

The council still needs to do more on technology and supported housing; this is where savings can be made in future.

Questions and comments:

Q- the OPC really welcomes personalisation, its a much more flexible and personalised approach. How are home carers (within and outside the council) managed?

A - There are approx 11500 home visits per week; all services are carefully monitored and there is a low level of complaints. It should be noted that over the snowy weekend, both council and independent sector carers went out of their way to deliver services, often taking twice the time as usual to get to a call but attending all of their appointments. The council is looking into how to recompense the workers for their dedication and hard work.

Comment - there needs to be a way to rebuild community care, so that neighbours look out for one another

Cllr Rob Jarrett - the general policy aim is to maintain current services under increasing financial pressures. Last year the budget was protected which gave a good starting point for this year's budget approach, but there will be a 7% saving this year. Adult Social Care is exploring different ways of delivering services -it may mean looking at how buildings, transport, staff etc are all used.

Agrees that it would be hugely beneficial to reinvigorate communities and neighbourliness although this would be a long term approach. There is an intention to involve service users to a greater extent too.

With regard to homecare workers, 90% of services have been contracted out. The council cannot afford to bring it back in house or to pay much more. However in the last retendering exercise there was an assumption that staff would be paid the Living Wage or above. He knows that rates of pay are increasing for some, if not all of the independent sector staff.

Q- Are companies asked to keep continuity of care staff where possible? It makes such a difference to have the same person

A - until recently, there was an incentive in contracts for continuity of staff. This was removed in the last tender process as it is assumed that companies understand the need for continuity. Service providers are tracked electronically to monitor this.

Comment- the OPC has observer status on the Adult Care committee but this should be extended to other committees and on to relevant scrutiny panels eg budget scrutiny to see that every effort is made to maintain services for the elderly

RJ - the administration does have a commitment to greater pre-budget consultation; the CVS represented all of the various community groups in the city on the budget scrutiny process but comments have been noted and will be passed on.

104. CHIARA NEGRINI, UNIVERSITY OF KINGSTON

Ms Negrini introduced her PhD project to the OPC, asking for volunteers to take part in a week long research project. She is researching how urban spaces are used by older people, both in Brighton and in Hackney. It's hoped that her work will help to make communities work better for everyone.

Some attendees expressed an interest in taking part.

The Chair invited Ms Negrini to attend a future meeting to talk about her findings and invite other committee members to take part.

105. AGE FRIENDLY CITY- UPDATE

Mike Bojzcuk updated the Council on the Age Friendly City work.

There was a steering group on 27 November 2012, set up by the council and including the universities and other partners. Since then, Pensioner Action and Age UK have held AGMs and promoted the Age Friendly city approach.

The current piece of work is establishing a baseline assessment of Brighton and Hove's age friendliness. A website forum has been set up and invited groups have been selected to comment on the WHO priority criteria. At the February meeting, this data will be examined to establish an action plan for how to move forward in improving quality of life for older people. However this is all being done without a budget so things are limited.

It is hoped that the council will consider Age Friendliness in drawing up all its future policies

The Steering Group can apply for grants at a later date, first its important to get the baseline data and suggested improvements sent to the WHO

Comments- can universities and students be called on to take part in the process?

Universities are involved via the Steering Group. There seems to be a growing interest in Age-related studies

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation are involved in age related work and might fund some research.

106. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Val Brown - has there been any update on the filming of the last meeting? TH to chase this up
- The Brighton Humanist Society has been looking for a secular meeting space with disabled access. They used the BMEWF space in Fleet St but it is not at all suitable, the lift is not user –friendly for people with disabilities. Does the council have a list of disabled access meeting spaces?

A - Mike B will investigate and talk to the Federation of Disabled People for their input.

- There is an issue with the Brighton History centre and transport to the Keep. The History Centre has been in the museum for 10 years and been very successful, but BHCC is planning to move it to the Rare Books room at the library and relocate other resources to the Keep. The bus stop for the Keep is advertised but not built yet. There has been very poor consultation and the service will be greatly diminished.

A - the only positive comment that the Chair has is that the bus stop is due to be put in soon

Q - Penny Morley-the cafe at the museum is being closed for 3 months with no alternative provision. This is a real shame.

Penny attends the Economic Development and Culture Committee on behalf of the OPC; she was concerned about the proposals for the concession card, which is only due to go to pensioners who receive pension credits. This is not in line with other authorities, who give concessions to all older people, when they present a bus pass. There are also concerns about the approach to bowling clubs as these appear to be being run down. Both of these are at odds with the Active Aging approach. Penny wrote to the Argus about this, the letter was published on 15 Jan

A report is coming to the next EDC committee about sports availability for the over 60s.

- Comment from attendee- its a real shame that there are not more attendees here, is the OPC meeting older people's needs?

Could OPC agendas be added to the website too? - MB to investigate

The meeting concluded at 1.00pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

