

## Comments from the PCT

Thank you for asking us to comment on the Council's new democratic arrangements.

The PCT is involved with the Council in number of areas specifically:

- Local Strategic Partnership groups including the Healthy City Partnership and the City Inclusion Partnership.
- Joint Commissioning Board
- Children and Young Peoples Trust Board
- Overview and Scrutiny Committees

We broadly welcome the new arrangements as they give a focus to discussions about services that impact on both of our organisations. Particularly an increased emphasis on the 2020 Community Partnership and the Community Plan. Ensuring that all partners are able to contribute to the priorities of the City is a welcome step forward.

Executive function:

- The role taken by the Cabinet member for Community Affairs, Inclusion and Internal Relations has been a welcome improvement, and we have been able to see clear benefits from having both a key leadership role in this area and a strong officer team.
- Progress has been made in making the CYPT and Joint Commissioning Board more effective, by improving governance arrangements. The PCT does however need to ensure that the Councils Forward Planning arrangements are fully integrated into our own planning and governance structures.

Overview and Scrutiny

- The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee role continues to be a key scrutiny function supported by a very able scrutiny team. We had hoped that the new governance structures would enable the Council to provide increased support for officers to enable Councillors more fully engage in the scrutiny role.
- Further discussion is required about how the PCT can be effective in contributing to the Children and Young People scrutiny process.

Given the changed nature of other Councillors' roles we had anticipated that there would be an increased emphasis on the role of 'Community Councillors'. We believe this could strengthen links with local communities

the NHS. It is hoped that as the system continues to develop, there will be an increased link to how the PCT engages with neighbourhoods and Councillors.

### **Brighton and Hove Federation for the Disabled**

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to take part in your 6 monthly review. I have consulted Trustees and Staff of the Federation as to how the constitutional changes have impacted upon us as an organisation.

The consensus seem to be that it is really early days and at the moment, most people have not really felt that the changes have impacted on how they work with the authority. However during this time of change, we are pleased to report, that we have been consulted and have been able to influence some of the structures and processes that have been put in place to support the new constitution, for example the new City Inclusion Partnership and the Community Engagement Framework.

The Federation is a partner organisation and benefits from a collaborative way of working with Council Members and Officers. We look forward to strengthening this relationship and to work with the authority to ensure that the voices of Disabled People are heard and are able influence how services are improved and delivered in the future.

### **Arts Commission**

I consulted with the executive committee of the Arts Commission about the review. The members gave overall support to the cabinet system but were unclear about policy direction. Under the committee system the Arts Commission was able to give ongoing reports to committee. That contact appears to have been lost. The executive would welcome an opportunity to continue a line of communication.

### **Eco-Logically**

We understand that you are seeking views on the new constitution adopted in 2008 (source: 'City News', December 2008). In particular the 'Cabinet System' that replaced the former Committee Structure' on 15 May. We are primarily interested in effective management of the natural environment across the whole city jurisdiction and in increasing awareness and appreciation of this irreplaceable resource by residents and visitors. Close involvement with the council's Wildlife Advisory Group (WAG) has provided one mechanism for progressing this interest.

The WAG previously reported to the then 'Sustainability Commission' and **Eco-Logically** regularly attended the quarterly meetings.

However, under the new Cabinet System it has been difficult to engage effectively with the nominated members and appropriate officers. This is of particular concern as one intention was to achieve better representation for local people, to seek agreement on proposals to local government which improve the sustainability of local communities (Sustainable Communities Act, 2007). So far the Cabinet System has significantly failed in this respect. For example, the Sustainability Cabinet Meeting (8 October 2008) was very poorly publicized with a handful of councillors attending and only three local residents present! There were no formal opportunities to raise questions in advance, and it was only through the Chair's extremely helpful direction to address this glaring shortfall that comments were sought after AOB. Similarly at the 12 January 2009 City Sustainability Partnership meeting there was no allocated opportunity for residents to raise issues. In fact people who were not sitting at the main table initially had to stand as there was no seating provided, even up to five minutes before the meeting started!

Finally, the Partnership meetings are held between 5.00 and 7.30pm. Previous Sustainability Commission meetings were held at a similar time and refreshments were provided for those attending. This greatly helped to foster a relaxed and effective meeting where all those attending could concentrate and focus on contributing most usefully. Regrettably refreshments were not provided at the last Sustainability Partnership meeting apart from a pitifully small quantity of tea and coffee. Whilst this last detail is clearly not as critical as the first three issues raised, it is perhaps indicative of the way implementation of the new council constitution is treating those elected members and specialists who are providing their time and expertise wishing to improve the quality of life across Brighton & Hove.

We hope these comments will be considered in detail. If you wish to discuss any aspects further please contact **Eco-Logically** at the above address.

