

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**COUNCIL****4.30pm 19 MARCH 2009****COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL****MINUTES**

Present: Councillors Peltzer Dunn (Chairman), C Theobald (Deputy Chairman), Alford, Allen, Barnett, Bennett, Mrs Brown, Carden, Caulfield, Mrs Cobb, Davey, Davis, Drake, Duncan, Elgood, Fallon-Khan, Fryer, Hamilton, Harmer-Strange, Hawkes, Hyde, Janio, Kemble, Kennedy, Kitcat, Lainchbury, Lepper, Marsh, McCaffery, Meadows, Mears, Mitchell, Morgan, Mrs Norman, K Norman, Older, Oxley, Pidgeon, Randall, Rufus, Simpson, Simson, Smart, Smith, Steedman, Taylor, G Theobald, Turton, Wakefield-Jarrett, Watkins, Wells, West, Wrighton and Young

PART ONE**60. STATUTORY OR VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE BY COUNCILLORS OF INTERESTS IN MATTERS APPEARING ON THE AGENDA.**

- 60.1 The Mayor noted that all Members had a personal but non-prejudicial interest in Item 68, Members Allowances report of the Independent Remuneration Panel.
- 60.2 Councillor Elgood referred to Item 71(h) and stated that as a supported of the Trust he had a personal but non prejudicial interest in the matter.
- 60.3 Councillors Young, Fallon-Khan, Kemble, Wells, Harmer-Strange, Simson, Cobb and Peltzer Dunn referred to Item 71(a) and stated that they were involved with small businesses in the city and therefore each had a personal but non-prejudicial interest in the matter.
- 60.4 Councillor Caulfield referred to Item 71(g) and stated that as the Chair of the Stanmer Park Stakeholders Group, she had a personal but non-prejudicial interest in the matter.

61. MINUTES

- 61.1 The Mayor drew Members attention to paragraph 46.8 of the minutes of the last meeting and stated that there was a need to amend them to read, "Councillor Fryer presented a petition which she believed taken together with the petition to be presented by

Councillor Mitchell amounted to over 1,000 signatories, concerning the Tarnar and Eastern Road Partnerships.” He therefore moved that the minutes be agree subject to the amendment proposed.

- 61.2 The minutes of the last meeting were approved as a correct record of the meeting, subject to the amendment outlined by the Mayor.

62. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS.

- 62.1 The Mayor stated that on behalf of all councillors, he wished to thank officers for the magnificent achievement of enabling the Council to be regarded as a 4 star and improving authority in the recent assessment, which he felt, was a compliment to everyone associated with the council.
- 62.2 The Mayor stated that he was pleased to inform Members that the Council had been awarded Beacon Status for the Night-time Economy and had achieved the Investors in People Standard, both of which were a tribute to the hard work and dedication of the officers involved.
- 62.3 The Mayor then invited Councillor Mears to come forward and present the Beacon Award to the Assistant Director for Public Safety, Judith Macho.
- 62.4 The Mayor then invited Councillor Fallon-Khan to come forward and present the liP award to the Assistant Director of Improvement and Organisational Development, Janice Millman.
- 62.5 The Mayor then reminded council that tickets to the Variety Show on the evening of the 20th March in aid of his charities were still available and hoped Members would attend.

63. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS.

- 63.1 The Mayor invited the submission of petitions from councillors. He reminded the council that petitions would be referred to the appropriate decision-making body without debate and the councillor presenting the petition would be invited to attend the meeting to which the petition was referred.
- 63.2 Councillor Kennedy presented a petition signed by 72 residents concerning libraries.
- 63.3 Councillor Hamilton presented a petition signed by 60 residents concerning local amenities.
- 63.4 Councillor Lepper presented a petition signed by 1,710 residents concerning park & ride facilities.
- 63.5 Councillor Elgood presented a petition signed by 9 residents concerning communal bins in Upper Market Street.

- 63.6 Councillor Mrs. Brown presented a petition signed by 57 residents concerning the proposed extension of hours for the Shoreham Waste Station.
- 63.7 Councillor Bennett presented a petition signed by 48 residents concerning a request for a speed camera in King George VI Avenue.

64. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

- 64.1 The Mayor reported that five written questions had been received from members of the public and invited Mr Elkin to come forward and address the council.

- 64.2 Mr. Elkin asked the following question:

"Hove Town Hall Housing Benefit. To reopen the office will cost almost nothing. By opening it 3 days a week (Mon - Wed - Fri) from 10am to 4pm, and I am sure either using staff from King's House or Hove Town Hall to staff it. All it would cost is a few hours, a photocopy machine, and Brighton Town Hall will not be so busy. In Hove there a number of old people (80's & 90's) that find it difficult to get to East Street, nearly three miles away."

- 64.3 Councillor Fallon-Khan stated that "The decision to close the Benefits Enquiry counter at Hove Town Hall was a very difficult one. The closure was proposed because of a reduction in the grant the Benefits Service receives from Central Government. The council believes a comprehensive service is offered by the Revenues and Benefits Team at Priory House, adjacent to Brighton Town Hall. Services are fully accessible to all customers. Facilities are in place to welcome customers with disabilities, including wheelchair ramps and appropriate interview accommodation. Customers aged 60 or over are also entitled to free bus travel. The 11X bus service directly links Hove Town Hall and Priory House.

A telephone enquiry and advice service is available to customers throughout the week between 9.00am and 5.00pm. Additionally, a home visiting service is available to all customers who are not able to come into the office because of a disability or incapacity to travel. Appointments can be made by customers who contact the Benefits telephone enquiry team on Brighton 292000. The service at Priory House is currently experiencing an increase in customers wishing to access the service, which is to be expected in the current economic climate and the council recognises that this has made the office extremely busy. These are exceptional times. From our peaks in January we are now experiencing a gradual decline in demand.

The decision to close the service at Hove Town Hall was made by Councillors at a meeting of the full Council on 28 February 2008, having consideration of all of the above. It was made as part of the council's modernisation of services agenda, with the ultimate aim of achieving value for money across all services.

As a service recently rated at the maximum Four Stars by the Audit Commission in the recent CPA assessment the council has the highest assurance that the Benefit Service is performing well. There are currently no plans to open any further public service offices. However, I would like to assure you that the council will monitor the impact of

the changes to its provision of services and remains committed to providing access to all services in the most cost effective and efficient way.”

64.4 Mr. Elkin asked the following supplementary question:

“In the house that I live in there are six flats, all with elderly people including a 93 year old, an 86 year old and an 83 year old). The 86 year old has just had heart trouble and cannot travel. It is very, very difficult for people to do that. You say about home visits, you cannot get a home visit. We have just had a rent review that starts on 4 May. Now I can get to Brighton but because I am unemployed I walk, that’s two miles there and two miles back, I cannot afford bus fares all the time. With elderly people like that, with a pension and heart trouble and things like that it’s so difficult for them. All you need really is a photocopy machine in Hove Town Hall, where you can ask questions, so it could be photocopied and the photocopy then sent to Brighton.”

64.5 Councillor Fallon-Khan responded, “In terms of being able to get a home visit, we will look into that for you. If it’s alright with you Mr Elkin, I will have a quick chat with you after you leave the Chamber. Obviously, there are rules and procedures on part of the agenda and that is set very widely, so we will look into that for you. If you are a pensioner you can apply for a free bus pass but in terms of the home visits I’ll have a chat with you afterwards and we will see what we can do in the Benefits Team and if there are people that are on benefits that need a home visit we will make sure that they get one.”

64.6 The Mayor thanked Mr. Elkin for his questions and invited Mr. Hawtree to come forward and address the council.

64.7 Mr. Hawtree asked the following question:

"Could Councillor Smith please tell us when work will begin on providing the Jubilee Library with the much-needed, well-filled proper shelving for whose illumination more than two hundred electrical outlets were installed across the ground floor when the building was opened?"

64.8 Councillor Smith stated “I think Mr Hawtree you have been misinformed. There are not two hundred electrical outlets across the ground floor of the Jubilee Library. The floor boxes that people can see are part of the conduit grid that was installed to enable us to be more flexible with the location of the IT points in the building. Only those that are needed for the existing computers have any sockets in them, and the rest of the boxes will only be used if we need to move anything to a new location. The floor boxes have nothing to do with the shelving units that are freestanding across the whole building.”

64.9 Mr. Hawtree asked the following supplementary question:

“In light of this electrical sockets are adaptable and they would certainly suit the shelving which was intended for the building instead of the rather meagre provision which ended up and which needs to be improved.

In light of your apparent unwillingness to provide this shelving, I am wondering whether you are disassociating yourself from David Cameron, whose Culture Spokesman, Ed

Vasey, has recently said in a key library speech on World Books Day: 'It is in books that writers make and have made the most intimate communication, not just in information but in the subtleties and creation of life and experience. Libraries are about books: a library without books, lots of books is not a library.'

Councillor Smith could you reassure readers by offering your view of the emphasis Mr Vasey has made in his keynote speech and whether we can see this exemplified in due course in Brighton?"

64.10 Councillor Smith responded, "We have just had the Local Government Association Culture, Tourism and Sports Conference in the city. Chief Officers and Leaders of Councils all over the country have congratulated Brighton's Library Service on the ability we have to service the public here and if you remember, because you weren't here at the last Council meeting, unanimously this council supported the Library Plan for 2009 to 2012 and a lot of these things will be investigated in the next three years and I will tell you this now, our libraries are good and they are very good in this city."

64.11 The Mayor thanked Mr. Hawtree for his questions and invited Mr. Poole to come forward and address the council.

64.12 Mr. Poole asked the following question:

"Last year, leaflets distributed to residents in East Brighton announced the coming of street bins in the summer of 2009. An illustration showed a bin with a pedal-operated lid, yet rumour suggests those installed will lack this facility and be of inferior design. Will Councillor Theobald state the prices of each design, and the overall saving envisaged by this apparent cutback?"

64.13 Councillor Theobald stated "Thank you for your question. There are no savings as the bins are exactly the same price. Some people had complained that the lids on the bins with a pedal had a tendency to catch in the wind, flap open and cause a banging noise. In Craven Vale and Donald Hall we tried a new design and have had no reported problems. That is why the new design has been introduced: it has nothing to do with the question of price, they are both exactly the same."

64.14 Mr. Poole asked the following supplementary question:

"Lids have been ripped off the new street bins and seagulls trapped inside. Will the council pause in its implementation of these bins until resources allow the purchase of a better design (I accept what you said Geoffrey that they may be the same price) featuring a pedal operated lid rather than squander money on items that are already failing?"

64.15 Councillor Theobald responded, "They are not failing. There are a considerable number of these bins right across the city and obviously we have had to choose what is the type which is going to be the most acceptable to most people and this was the type of bin that came out. As I have said it wasn't a question of price at all. We find the satisfaction rates with the bins themselves, how they work, are extremely high indeed.

In terms of your question the answer is 'no'."

64.16 The Mayor thanked Mr. Poole for his questions and invited Ms. Paynter to come forward and address the council.

64.17 Ms. Paynter asked the following question:

"Can the Administration confirm to me, please, that Corporate Objectives do not take precedence over any legal instruments such as Acts of Parliament, or over-ride adopted long-term policies such as The Local Plan or the emerging Local Development Framework as this would obviously compromise the integrity and effectiveness of professionally trained officers and their recommendations?"

64.18 Councillor Hyde stated that "Of course, I can confirm that. The Council's Corporate Priorities and other policies are subject to Acts of Parliament. They were drafted so as to comply with the law and any statutorily adopted plan such as the Local Plan."

64.19 Ms. Paynter asked the following supplementary question:

"Under the previous Administration differences of opinion over the King Alfred planning application led to three Senior Planning Officers being banned from the planning decision meeting of 23 March 2007 and their quick resignations and departures followed.

Can this Administration assure me that Planning Officers are able to determine planning applications entirely free of pressure from Corporate Objectives and financial incentives from Central Government to deliver affordable housing?"

64.20 Councillor Hyde responded, "As you know my Group were not in Administration at that time and I can assure you that this Administration do not at any time intend to compromise any officer whatsoever."

64.21 The Mayor thanked Ms. Paynter for her questions and invited Ms. Tompkins to come forward and address the council. The Mayor noted that Ms. Tomkins was not present at the meeting and therefore a written response would be given by Councillor Theobald.

65. DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

65.1 The Mayor reported that one Deputation had been received and invited Mr. Chavasse, as the spokesperson for the deputation to come forward and address the council.

65.2 Mr. Chavasse thanked the Mayor and stated:

"Our city-wide deputation flowered from deep-rooted frustrations, although this is not the place to detail its growth. We have been and wish to be positive and we understand that it is now recognised that there are pavement obstruction problems which will benefit from scrutiny. It may not be for us but rather for you to question how an exercise of delegated authority has brought that about but it is central to our presence in your Chamber to emphasise that it is revisited with a consultative open mind. A better process and régime are urgent needs and there is much experience to draw on.

From our own scrutiny it is clear that there is a range of alternative approaches. Many authorities refuse to licence obstructions because that is what they are. Our contribution to your papers gives a glimpse into best regulatory practice: based on significant cross-authority research two salient factors have emerged.

Firstly, that the crucial element for practical and legal reasons is the required amount of genuine free passage space to ensure an object is not an obstruction. Thus a well considered norm for free space around an object seems to be a well defined two metres, which in general meets the special needs of vulnerable and disabled groups and free safe passage for all. Our research shows that two metres solves most of the problems across our city but if fait accompli the proposed tweak régime of an unsafe 1.3 metres will not. Problems at pavement edges and other danger points also require specific attention. With a well defined and more easily enforced two metres most objects now placed on our most dangerously congested pavements would no longer be highway obstructions because they would be located strictly within the private forecourts and not adjacent to a danger point.

Secondly perceptive authorities recognise that obstructions and even some objects, though historically championed, can actually divert local trade and blight visitor footfall. To be a favoured place to be and visit and to maximise the economic benefits of that over-arching policy, and the more so now, our streets must encourage trade for all. The strong opinion that many pavement obstructions deter trade, discourage visitors and reduce community viability is already evidenced as the disabled, elderly people, family groups and visitors avoid or are excluded from hostile, cluttered areas. Thoughtful businesses consider that their neighbours obstructions and sometimes their turf wars harm trade. As potential local customers we agree.

Moreover highway authorities that work alongside robust planning, city centre and destination management are those that combine real control of obstructions with sensitivity to street scenes, conservation and visitor attractions. They have the best methods of assessment and control. Some assess streets by area, by carriageway and obstruction categories, in order to develop a sound basis for controls and their legality which presents a significant challenge to our elementary system for similar street patterns. Some have also polarised attitudes to objects on private forecourts.

Leading authorities, and we would wish to be one, can demonstrate that they do not place uncertain commercial advantage over safe, free passage and do not adopt a low free space denominator that does so. It is evident that our city's tweaking of a one size fits all low denominator just does not measure up to best practice and might have illegal aspects. Hence we ask that new licences should be conditional upon the results of the democratic processes now in train which may also relieve pressures on our council of a legal nature.

We are here to help, Mr Mayor, not to hinder."

- 65.3 Councillor Mrs Theobald stated, "Thank you very much for this deputation which contains interesting information on control of placements on the highway. As you may be aware changes are currently being proposed to the licensing system which aims to increase accessibility and introduce additional controls over traders' placements on the

highway in line with the Disabled Discrimination Act requirements. These proposals will be placed before a Licensing Committee shortly and the council believes they are a necessary improvement. However, as a result of the consultation on these changes Members and officers are proposing a more lengthy review over the coming year which will look into greater depth at the opinions and options of this subject and will include representations from all interested parties. This review will result in recommendations for future changes to the licensing system.”

65.4 The Mayor thanked Mr. Chavasse for attending the meeting and speaking on behalf of the deputation. He explained that the concerns had been noted and the deputation would now be referred to the Licensing Committee for consideration. The persons forming the deputation would be invited to attend the meeting and would be informed subsequently of any action to be taken or proposed in relation to the matter set out in the deputation.

66. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS.

66.1 The Mayor reminded the council that councillors’ questions and the replies from the appropriate councillor were now taken as read by reference to the list included in the addendum, which had been circulated as detailed below:

66.2 (a) Councillor Kitcat asked:

“Can Councillor Theobald detail in what circumstances residents or their landlords are charged by Cityclean for the provision of receptacles for:

1. Waste collection,
2. Recycling collection?”

66.3 Councillor Theobald replied:

“They are not charged unless they are private landlords or managing agents operating businesses and they then pay for their refuse and recycling containers.”

66.4 Councillor Kitcat asked a supplementary question, “The charges that Councillor Theobald refers to in his written response, which are charged for waste receptacles, are charged to the agents and landlords but these are then passed on to residents, Mr Mayor, through their rent or their management fees.

My supplementary question is can Councillor Theobald explain why, while apparently trying to encourage recycling rates, the council is charging for recycling containers to be provided to residents when the 1990 Environmental Protection Act, Section 46, Part 3, clearly permits the council to provide these bins free of charge?”

66.5 Councillor Theobald replied, “The council does not get involved in charges that landlords or managing agents levy against their residents for a range of services in their building: electricity charges, if there’s a lift there, heating charges and such like. That is a matter for landlords and their managing agents and, indeed, leaseholders and tenants.”

66.6 (b) Councillor Kitcat asked:

“Can Councillor Theobald detail the total amount spent by his department on purchases of communal bins in the financial year 2008/9 and also provide the per unit cost paid by the council for each type of model of bin including those with and without foot pedals?”

66.7 Councillor Theobald replied:

“The overall figure is £398,096 to date and I can tell you that both types of bin cost the same, both types cost £819 each.”

66.8 Councillor Kitcat asked a supplementary question, “I am slightly concerned by the written response Councillor Theobald has provided claiming that both types of bins available on the street cost the same, because I have an email here from the Assistant Director for Cityclean of the 17 February saying that the new model bins are more expensive than the old model with the foot pedal. I am distressed that given the difficulty residents are experiencing with these new model bins and that they apparently are more expensive, what his explanation is for that?”

I would like to invite the Cabinet to come and demonstrate the ease of use of these new bins to the residents of Regency Ward. Will the Cabinet accept?”

66.9 Councillor Theobald replied, “Do you know, there are five questions that I have got tonight from Councillor Kitcat and that must have followed another five or ten or whatever it was at the last meeting. Now what I said last time, Councillor Kitcat, was we do have an Assistant Director for Cityclean and I invited you at the last meeting to pick up the telephone and go and meet with her and discuss all these questions with her. She would be delighted to see you.

Now I appreciate that there is a webcam here and I appreciate that my answers are sent round the world on U-Tube so perhaps that might be the reason why: there isn't a camera in Gillian Marston's office as far as I am aware. Could I not suggest that you meet with Gillian on a one to one, take all your questions with you and I am sure like every other Member of this Council, and I have got nods of heads all around this Chamber, when you want an answer, a professional, technical answer, you pick up the telephone and you ask Gillian and she will give it, rather than you coming here asking me.

I suspect, Councillor Kitcat, the reason why the charges are the same, and that is my information, is because the Assistant Director has negotiated a better deal.”

66.10 Councillor Elgood asked a further supplementary question, “Can I, through Councillor Theobald, place on record my thanks for the help of Cityclean officers who have been, you know in fairness, extremely helpful on issues such as locations. We have noticed though in our Ward that since they have been put in we have seen a little bit less activity from the officers and we still have a list of small issues over locations that we are not quite getting the attention we would like to see.

Would the Cabinet Member if I pass the list through to him please help us in alleviating these issues such as that raised within the petition from Upper/Lower Market Street?”

- 66.11 Councillor Theobald replied, “I am extremely fortunate because my Director is not too far away from me. Your list I will hand to her and I am sure tomorrow she will resolve this. I do want to thank you for your kind remarks because the job of dealing with all these changes is not an easy one. I get, as you can imagine, hundreds of emails, many good, some not so good, but it is always appreciated when a Member does thank the officer for responding to something and I thank you very much for that.

I can assure you that if you have got positive suggestions then we will always do our very best to try and meet those positive and helpful suggestions.”

- 66.12 (c) Councillor Steedman asked:

“The Valley Gardens, stretching from the Level to the Old Steine, are a much-loved leisure resource for residents and the gateway to the city for many visitors, yet they are in a poor state of repair, isolated and divided by heavy traffic flows, inaccessible to pedestrians and choked by air and noise pollution.

Fortunately, the Council’s Local Transport Plan outlines a programme of works to transform the Valley Gardens into a fantastic new public space. A revitalised Valley Gardens would reconnect the islands of green space to create a new, accessible public park flowing down to the sea, and prioritise coherent pedestrian and cycling routes, as well as bus transport. It could integrate playgrounds, informal recreation, wildlife gardens and urban food growing.

Can the Cabinet Member for the Environment reconfirm that they are committed to delivering this programme, with works beginning in this electoral term?”

- 66.13 Councillor Theobald replied:

“I entirely agree that the condition and quality of the buildings and public space in this area have been deteriorating over many years and are in great need of improvement. However, how this can be achieved, in terms of creating an acceptable and workable balance of all the demands for movement and access that there is, has yet to be defined and would also need to be rigorously tested to ensure that it would work.

This Administration is aware of the issues and will need to consider the Valley Gardens as part of the development of future programmes of investment for the whole of the city.”

- 66.14 Councillor Steedman asked a supplementary question, “I would like to thank Councillor Theobald for his response, which seems to be a very long-winded way of saying that his Administration is not at all committed to delivering the improvements to Valley Gardens identified in the Local Transport Plan and, in fact, intends to abandon them. Yet Members of the current Administration have, in the past at least, publicly expressed their support for these proposals, which I thought meant that there was cross-party agreement.

Could Councillor Theobald therefore tell me if this is yet another illustration of internal Tory splits and divisions or, alternatively, whether it is yet another example of a Tory u-turn?"

66.15 Councillor Theobald replied, "I think we are in exactly the same situation as the previous Administration. We have to look at the whole situation here in the Valley Gardens and to see exactly what effect that will have on other areas and that is currently what we are looking at."

66.16 Councillor Simson asked a further supplementary question, "Would the Cabinet Member agree with me that we need to have an up to date traffic model for the city as the traffic flows need to be determined before any major improvements take place?"

66.17 Councillor Theobald replied, "The short answer to that one is definitely, 'yes'. I think it is a pity that the previous Administration didn't keep up to date the traffic model. I looked at what is happening in London, I went up and made a particular point to see the testing and how you can test each road and each route and see if you do (a) what the effect is on (b) and (c) and I think that is to the disadvantage of us at the present time but we are working on trying to update the traffic model and this is certainly something which I regard and I am sure this Administration does as a priority."

66.18 (d) Councillor Davey asked:

"Would the Cabinet Member for Environment agree that it is vital that the local authority lead the way and make every effort to encourage its staff to travel by sustainable means such as walking, cycling and by public transport both to work and during the working day wherever possible?"

66.19 Councillor Theobald replied:

"We are very much committed to supporting and encouraging staff to travel sustainably, both for commuting and during the working day.

The Council's Staff Travel Plan offers many initiatives which are having a positive impact across all sections of the Council. These include:

- Interest free loans for bus and train season tickets;
- Discounted bus tickets;
- A corporate contract with City Car Club offering discounted rates;
- A tax-free bike scheme and interest-free bike loan scheme;
- Greatly improved facilities for cyclists (including additional cycle parking and showers) together with beginner, refresher and cycle maintenance training sessions;
- Real-time travel information display screens are soon to be installed at Hove Town Hall and King's House.

As well as working with Council staff, officers run the Travel Plan Partnership which is working with local employers to support them in implementing their own Travel Plans. Officers are already working with 32 of the largest employers in Brighton and Hove and hope to expand this initiative further over the coming months."

- 66.20 Councillor Davey asked a supplementary question, "These are all excellent initiatives and I applaud the officers for their efforts in bringing them forward. Could the Cabinet Member please tell us when the nine pool bikes, presumably bought for staff to use that have been sitting in the King's House bike cage unused since last summer, will be available for staff to actually cycle?"
- 66.21 Councillor Theobald replied, "If you had linked that up to your original first question then I could have answered it but unfortunately I can't but I will be delighted to send you a written response. Could I just make one other point, when you congratulate and say how good these things are, and they are good, it's interesting how it is always the officers and when things aren't quite so good it's the Councillors but I join myself and this Administration with the officers."
- 66.22 Councillor Mitchell asked a further supplementary question, "Given that Councillor Theobald in his answer has just expressed his support for sustainable travel, notably bike travel, could he explain why the proposed and funded cycle route and pedestrian route from the Downs Hotel, Woodingdean crossroads to Sussex University has been abandoned, or seemingly abandoned, after preliminary work had been undertaken?"
- 66.23 Councillor Theobald replied, "I really don't think that has got anything to do with staff travel in the original question."
- 66.24 (e) Councillor Davis asked:
- "Can the Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Tourism outline what steps are being taken to address the gaps identified in the recent Brighton and Hove Sports Audit, namely that Swimming, Indoor Sports, i.e. Badminton, Basketball, Volleyball, Indoor Bowls, and public access fitness activities are all lagging behind when compared to other Local Authorities' provision."
- 66.25 Councillor Smith replied:
- "Thank you for your question on the Sports Facilities Audit. Completion of the audit should be seen as the first positive step to improving the sports facilities in the city. The audit did highlight that the distribution of the facilities is good across the city compared with other cities where facilities are concentrated in the city centre.
- The council has already given a commitment to keeping the King Alfred Leisure Centre open and work has already commenced to secure greater planning contributions for new facilities. The council will also develop partnerships with sports clubs, schools and other organisations to increase access to existing facilities as well as developing new facilities."
- 66.26 Councillor Davis asked a supplementary question, "Councillor Smith I hope you would agree with me that it is a co-ordinated approach that is needed with small sports projects and I wondered if you are able to name some of these smaller sports projects that are ready to apply for funds from Sport England?"
- 66.27 Councillor Smith replied, "I will give you a written answer. Seriously, I don't remember every single organisation in this sporting organisation in this city that has got funds elsewhere. We did give small funds ourselves for people there. We gave 20 of them £500

each for individuals to help them to train for Olympics or specialised sport. We have already done that but must I say from this report we are in partnership with private enterprise in this city. Withdean have got probably the best indoor tennis complex obviously in this region. We have got lots of other ones, sports centres are good, elsewhere there are the private ones, David Lloyd's and that, so there is a lot of partnership.

I want more in this city and I am sure all of us still want more there but I must say that we are trying our best, you know funds are very tight for everyone now. We are keeping the King Alfred open which is a hell of a big expense there and you all know that and it is our target for that but obviously sport, as far as I am concerned, is my number one. I am sure most people in this city want to keep fit and want us to be a sporting city."

66.28 Councillor Fallon-Khan asked a further supplementary question, "When Labour controlled the council from 1986-1997 and Hove 1985-1997 what did they do for the city as regards sporting facilities?"

66.29 Councillor Smith replied, "Very little."

66.30 (f) Councillor Marsh asked:

"Would the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People agree with me that the identification of Government resources to be used in improving the fabric of our schools and helping the local economy is always welcome?"

66.31 Councillor Mrs. Brown replied:

"Resources for improving the fabric of our schools are always welcome and that is why we have developed a clear and strategic capital programme to enhance and improve our school provision. The development of the Academy is on schedule and we have submitted a revised Expression of Interest for Building Schools for the Future.

We are taking a planned and strategic position to ensure capital funds are spent sensibly within the timeframe given but allowing flexibility to support our ambitions for Building Schools for the Future and the Primary Capital Programme."

66.32 Councillor Marsh asked a supplementary question, "Thank you for the explanation Councillor Brown. However, could the Cabinet Member please tell me how I inform my fellow Governors at Bevendean Primary School (who are actually meeting as we speak and I am not able to be with them which is a real shame), that the urgent repairs to the roof and the long awaited refurbishment of the canteen, not to mention the jobs these projects would have created to help local people who need them now, will have to wait for another year for reasons that none of us can understand?"

66.33 Councillor Mrs. Brown replied, "I have always said that this Administration will welcome any monies that can be used for improving our schools and this we will always do but I do believe you are talking about the £9m that we will be discussing later with the Notice of Motion, so I think I'll wait and give a full explanation then."

66.34 Councillor Meadows asked a further supplementary question, "Could the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People tell us why she thinks it is that both of her Conservative counterparts in East and West Sussex were able to make benefit and use of the money that the Government has made available to schools now when the Brighton and Hove Conservatives were unable to do so?"

As a School Governor I know of various primary schools, like Coombe Road, who would love to have made great use of this money and I think they would also like to know."

66.35 Councillor Mrs. Brown replied, "I have said this, I have said it in the Argus and will be saying it again later. We have a planned three year Capital Programme and your Government is always telling us we should keep the money and put it with other funding streams to make best use of it to do major works in this city and that is what we are going to do.

We are a responsible Administration. We are not into quick fixes: we are going to use it to do the best things we can for the children in this city."

66.36 (g) Councillor Kitcat asked:

"Could Councillor Geoffrey Theobald clarify that in his response to my question on communal bin fire safety of 29 January 2009, he does indeed say that the Fire Authority has told the council through Cabinet Member Councillor Kemble that it has no concerns over the communal bins?"

66.37 Councillor Theobald replied:

"I said in response to your question at the January Council Meeting that Councillor Ted Kemble, as the Vice Chairman of the Authority, discussed the communal bin scheme with the Chief Fire Officer some time ago and they are satisfied that the communal bins do not pose an additional fire risk.

The specific locations of communal bins have been determined with Highways and Traffic Engineers who fully consider road safety issues as well as access for emergency services and delivery vehicles. We have not asked the ambulance service, the fire or police authorities to also view the location of each bin."

66.38 Councillor Kitcat asked a supplementary question, "Given Councillor Theobald's written answer, can Councillor Theobald explain why a response to a Freedom of Information request regarding fire safety and bins from the council stated, and I quote: 'We have not been informed by the Fire Authority that they do not have concerns about the bins'?"

66.39 Councillor Theobald replied, "I haven't been informed that they do have."

66.40 Councillor West asked a further supplementary question, "Does Councillor Theobald recognise how frustrated the residents of Central Brighton are about the chaos that he is presiding over with the introduction of these bins and the changes to the recycling and refuse collections?"

Councillor Kitcat is clearly entitled to ask as many questions as he likes. It is his constitutional right and as a Member of the Cabinet can I ask Councillor Theobald if he recognises that, as he is responsible for this service, it would be useful if he better briefed himself and remained calmer when answering questions at Council?"

66.41 Councillor Theobald replied, "I really think that if you want to challenge me politically on a direction, that's fine but when you come up and ask technical questions and my frustration: you know Councillor West, yes there is a frustration. I don't think it's just mine, I honestly think it goes right across the Council. It is because Councillor Kitcat could just pick the telephone up and ring Gillian Marston our Assistant Director and she would give him the answer, rather than just try and catch me out. That is my frustration and I invite any Member of this Council if they do have technical questions, then please copy me in by all means but contact the officer who will be delighted to speak to you.

Councillor West I do not share your view when you talk about chaos, it has settled in very well, it has been a difficult change and I am sure as every month goes by people will recognise the benefits."

66.42 (h) Councillor Kitcat asked:

"Can Councillor Geoffrey Theobald provide a list of the type and models of communal bins used by Cityclean in the city and any other local authorities which use those types and models?"

66.43 Councillor Theobald replied:

"We use model OMB 1800 litre and 3200 litre, and model Spider 1700 litre and 3200 litre."

66.44 Councillor Kitcat asked a supplementary question, "On 29 January Councillor Theobald responded to my question over who he consulted on these new model bins without foot pedals and he stated, and I quote: 'My answer to your point is that we have trialed these various bins, we have actually consulted residents and residents in the main prefer the ones that we are now putting out. We constantly consult with residents, we like to get what their views are and how easy they find them to use. We have trialed them and these are the ones that are preferred.'

This is what Councillor Theobald said and yet when I conducted a Freedom of Information request asking for documentation, photographs or, in fact, any consultation responses at all to this alleged consultation, the council was unable to provide anything at all, so does Councillor Theobald believe that he has acted responsibly in the residents' best interests by imposing these new model bins on them without consultation and will he apologise for the mess he has left them in?"

66.45 Councillor Theobald replied, "Yes and no."

66.46 Councillor Duncan asked a further supplementary question, "When you recommend that if we seek technical information about any of these service deliveries over which you as Cabinet Member preside, would you recommend that we use the 292929 number to get that information?"

66.47 Councillor Theobald replied, "I don't know whether you have email, but if you do have email, then I would suggest because I see all the emails going in and I see the quickness of the responses that come from them, so I would suggest email."

66.48 (i) Councillor Kitcat asked:

"Could Councillor Geoffrey Theobald detail how many streets or parts of streets have been switched from weekly to fortnightly recycling collections? Could details of how these and other waste collection and recycling changes were planned be detailed?"

66.49 Councillor Theobald replied:

"None. Regarding the details of how changes were planned for our 121,000 homes across 3,000 streets, I would recommend, once again, that you meet with the Assistant Director of Cityclean who will explain the planning process in detail to you."

66.50 Councillor Kitcat asked a supplementary question, "My question is whether Councillor Theobald is in control of his Department when three residents have been told by Cityclean operatives that their recycling collections have changed from weekly to fortnightly. Will Councillor Theobald apologise unreservedly for his oversight, failing to ensure proper planning and the disrepute brought on the council by the failures in this collection service."

66.51 Councillor Theobald replied, "Well, we don't agree with that. I understand that you have received a complaint from one person, a person that I think most of us actually know here, a person called Simon Williams and I do believe I think he was a Councillor on this Council and I do believe I think he was a Green Councillor on this Council. He complained that his boxes were not collected and that we must have introduced a fortnightly collection where there used to be weekly. This is not the case, there has been no administrative error.

I find it interesting, I think I am right in saying that the population of Brighton and Hove is 260,000 and how many people is this Councillor Kitcat, three. I rest my case."

66.52 Councillor Oxley asked a further supplementary question, "Would Councillor Theobald agree with me that if the Greens wish to discuss these matters under the political direction of the refuse policy they can easily bring a Notice of Motion to this Council and if they wish to discuss technical matters then they can also do that at a Cabinet Member Meeting and would he invite the Green Councillors to bring forward such a Motion so that we can thrash this out."

66.53 Councillor Theobald replied, "Well, interestingly enough at my CMMs I do have some interesting questions and I am looking across now at Councillor Davey who comes forward quite properly and asks me an interesting question. There are other Members sitting over there who come along, yes Councillor Hawkes, Councillor Mitchell, various esteemed Councillors, all of whom I have enormous respect for come along and ask really excellent questions and I am always delighted to discuss them at those CMMs and I am sure colleagues would nod. The one person who seems to not come along to my CMMs and ask me really interesting questions is Councillor Kitcat.

Councillor Oxley in response to you I would be delighted to see Councillor Kitcat at my CMMs.”

66.54 (j) Councillor McCaffery asked:

“I am sure all Councillors appreciate the weekly information on English Gypsy, Irish Travellers and New Age Travellers in the city, but we lack information on progress on the establishment of 14 pitches, the number identified by SEERA and progress in East and West Sussex who already have 6 sites and 32 pitches and 10 sites and 106 pitches respectively. Both councils are required to add additional sites and pitches.

Would Councillor Mears please inform the council what consultation has taken place with Travellers and their support organisations on size and location of the pitches, what consultation has taken or will take place with residents and what information is being given to all Councillors and whether any additional information will be given to the Planning Committee?”

66.55 Councillor Mears replied:

“Thank you for your question and I am glad to note that the weekly update on current Traveller issues is appreciated. Part of your question relates to East and West Sussex and whilst Councillor McCaffery will be aware that Brighton & Hove worked with East Sussex as part of the regional exercise to determine Gypsy and Traveller accommodation need across the south east, I am sure she will appreciate that this council cannot answer any question relating to how they take this work forward on their behalf.

Regarding our work in Brighton and Hove - it is still early days for this stage of the establishment of a site and we have yet to finally confirm the details and arrangements for the consultations that will be undertaken. I can confirm, however, that consultations will include Travellers and their representative groups as well as local residents and all will be informed of the process and how any views can be included.”

66.56 Councillor McCaffery asked a supplementary question, “Thank you Councillor Mears for answering my question: unfortunately it does, in fact, give us little information. I would also like to say I was not asking for information on East Sussex I was only asking for information on progress in our city.

In relation to progress and information, I would like to ask Councillor Mears when a visit can be arranged for Councillors to a well run, well managed site in West or East Sussex. I know that she herself has visited one and I think it would help all Councillors if they had the same benefit?”

66.57 Councillor Mears replied, “Yes, I am more than happy to arrange a visit: I think it really is appropriate. As I have discussed with Councillor McCaffery, I have made a visit to a neighbouring Travellers’ site. I would also like to invite Councillor McCaffery, because I do respect her involvement with Gypsies and Travellers and I know of her commitment, to work with me on this issue. I think it is something that she would actually bring a lot

of detail and benefit to. The offer is there for Councillor McCaffery and I do hope she takes it up.”

66.58 Councillor Wakefield-Jarrett asked a further supplementary question, “Would the Leader of the Council please tell me what measures were taken to ensure the size of the site allocated was suitable and would she not agree that two smaller sites in different geographical locations may have been more appropriate?”

66.59 Councillor Mears replied, “The number of sites allocated or to be allocated was derived from an assessment from right across the region. As I said earlier in my response to Councillor McCaffery, and I do apologise for not pronouncing her name properly, I am prepared to, and I think it should happen, that we should have a site visit to neighbouring travellers’ sites and I would hope that the Councillor would take the opportunity to come as well.

If the Councillor would like a more technical response, I am more than happy to give a written reply.”

66.60 (k) Councillor Mitchell asked:

“Can the Cabinet Member set out the spending in the current financial year and for the financial years 2009/2010 and 2010/11 on the maintenance for sports changing rooms at council run and managed recreation grounds (i.e. Victoria Park, Portslade; Patcham Place, Horsdean, Old Boat Corner, East Brighton Park, Waterhall, Braypool) where both football and cricket are played?”

66.61 Councillor Smith replied:

“We can break down the costs of cleaning the changing rooms but I will need to ask officers to gather information about building maintenance costs. We have not planned an increase in expenditure on sports changing rooms for the coming budget year and as yet we have not drafted proposals for the 2010/11 budget year. We will, of course, keep the matter under review.”

66.62 Councillor Mitchell asked a supplementary question, “My question did not actually relate to the cleaning of changing rooms and it is unfortunate that no information has been given in response to my question. However, I was wondering if Councillor Smith could outline what measures he is actually taking to move away from this reactive maintenance approach to one of programmed improvements in sports changing rooms and facilities as outlined in the Council’s Asset Management Plan and Fund?”

66.63 Councillor Theobald replied, “All I can say is we work on our Asset Management Programme, presumably exactly the same as your Administration did before. There are obviously competing demands. We were left in a situation with a lot of catch-ups to try and achieve, so I can’t say any more than what it actually says here.

Obviously I would love to do lots and lots of different things but the situation is there is only a certain amount of money. There are other priorities and we have an Asset Management Programme where all these points are put in and I am sure you worked in exactly the same way.”

66.64 (l) Councillor Mitchell asked:

“Can the Cabinet Member set out the spending plans for the maintenance and improvement of cricket pitches at council run and managed facilities over the last financial year and the next two years and what plans have the Administration got to improve changing room facilities over the next two years?”

66.65 Councillor Smith replied:

“Thank you for the question. I will need to ask officers to do some work for you to get the information you require. By way of explanation, our in-house grounds maintenance teams work in areas across a range of sites such as cricket pitches, other sport pitches, parks and other green spaces – so it is difficult to break down the cost of maintaining just one type of site or a site and thus provide the figures you request.

We have not planned an increase in expenditure on cricket pitches or changing room facilities for the coming budget year and as yet we have not drafted proposals for the 2010/11 budget year. We will, of course, keep the matter under review.”

66.66 Councillor Mitchell asked a supplementary question, “It is disappointing that there is no planned increase in expenditure and it is obviously very important to maximize any additional funding. Therefore could Councillor Smith please tell me if the council is working with young people’s groups and getting ready to bid for funding in April 2009 to the Government’s Youth Opportunity Fund and the Youth Capital Fund that does provide improved sports facility funding for sports equipment, sports coaches and so on?”

66.67 Councillor Smith replied, “We had money in this council for sports pavilions and all other activities in the city. If people remember in the late eighties when the Brighton Marina was done, all the muck that was taken out and chalk was put at Waterhall and they gave us half a million pounds for improvements to sports facilities, that’s supposed to have been ring-fenced. It was taken out of that budget by the Labour-controlled Council at that time and put in the General Rate Fund.

That’s a start, just for information purposes about what’s happened in the past. We have been in control of this authority for under two years and what we are doing is, yes, we are working with every group in this city to help them get grants and get extra facilities. We have got a list of things we want doing in this city and we are going to do it. This Administration will do it.”

66.68 (m) Councillor Fryer asked:

“What percentage of eligible residents have taken up the Warm Front scheme and what percentage of the population of Brighton & Hove does this represent?”

66.69 Councillor Caulfield replied:

“Whilst a precise figure for the percentage of Brighton and Hove’s residents who are eligible for Warm Front is not readily available, it is possible to use data from various

sources to produce an estimate. However, before considering the numbers who have taken up Warm Front it is important to bear in mind the fact that changes in circumstances of individual households and changes to properties leads to ongoing changes in the pool of eligible households.

To date it is estimated that the number of households in Brighton and Hove who are eligible for one or more of the main Warm Front measures (loft/cavity wall insulation, central heating, boiler replacement and heating repair) is currently in the region of 4,000.

In addition to this a recent extension of this scheme to include families with children under 16 is expected to reach around another 3,500 families with the new Family Insulation Grant. The grant will initially be available to families living in two-bedroom homes, with a view to extending it to more households as the scheme progresses. The new scheme, operated in partnership with Climate Energy, is part of a local grants programme of more than £1 million a year.”

66.70 Councillor Fryer asked a supplementary question, “Warm Front is a good start in tackling the problem of fuel poverty and climate change but I am really concerned that it appears that we are not actually monitoring its take-up, which is what my question was about. There are many people on low incomes who don’t qualify for Warm Front Schemes and can’t afford to insulate their homes and often there is no offer of incentives to do these new insulation schemes if it is privately rented.

In Conservative-led Kirklees Council they have a free insulation scheme where there have been over 30,000 free insulation measures to date, which is more than the entire population of London. As this involves engaging directly by knocking on people’s doors, this has also led to over 10,000 people getting debt advice checks, over 15,000 people getting fire safety checks and over 67,000 people getting carbon monoxide detectors fitted. These schemes actually save lives. This was achieved with a rise in council tax which was higher than that proposed by the recent Green Group budget and was hugely popular with residents.

I understand that Councillor Caulfield has recently visited Kirklees, does she agree that we should follow in their low carbon footprint and implement a similar scheme here?”

66.71 Councillor Caulfield replied, “The Warm Front Scheme is actually just one of a number of schemes that we run in this council. We do have the Warm Front Scheme but we also have the Warm Homes Scheme. We also have our council housing Insulation Scheme as well, where we put in free insulation, new boilers, new front doors and actually we are going to be announcing next week for the first time solar panels on council housing, so we do have a number of initiatives to help with fuel poverty and insulation.

As you said I have been to Kirklees, only a couple of weeks ago, to see what they did. In regards to the fire checks, actually the Fire Service already provide that free service and do visit people’s homes on a regular basis. I have actually been visited by them myself. There are a number of schemes to help people deal with fuel poverty and fuel insulation and if you do want to talk about your proposals for your 0.5% increase on everybody’s council tax to insulate the homes of people in this city then that was, I do believe, a twenty year programme. What we are doing here is dealing with those in fuel

poverty right here, right now, not in twenty years time and we do not intend to do that by putting people's council tax up.

In addition, to fund that you also wanted to put a car permit tax on residents who had cars older than 2001, which meant an average of about £318 a year for people who are on a low income and can't afford to replace their cars, so your scheme does sound good but actually when you get into the detail is targeting those who can't afford to pay more council tax or to replace their cars. What we are doing is dealing with fuel poverty right here, right now and letting the Government fund some of our fuel incentive schemes."

66.72 Councillor Steedman asked a further supplementary question, "Well, I wish it were the case that we could actually know how many people are benefiting right here, right now, because Councillor Caulfield can't actually tell us. Could Councillor Caulfield tell us what steps are being taken to actually monitor uptake so that in a year's time she can actually tell us how many people have benefited from the initiatives that she so proudly champions?"

66.73 Councillor Caulfield replied, "I can actually tell you, you did just ask for the Warm Front numbers, but I can give you the Warm Homes update. We can also tell you that we have over 12,000 council houses that will be benefiting from the initiatives I have just discussed, so I can give you that information.

We are monitoring not just what we are doing but also the uptake and also increasing the uptake and we are working with our communication teams so that residents are aware of what's available and how to actually claim them."

66.74 (n) Councillor Hawked asked:

"Would the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People explain why on 4 March, when the Government published the list of Local Authorities that had received Myplace funding, Brighton and Hove was not listed. This is a grant which was earmarked as a 100% funded grant to improve the 67 Centre in Moulsecoomb. Did this Conservative led council miss out on much needed government funding for local youth services because the Administration deviated from the government guidelines when applying for the bid?"

66.75 Councillor Mrs. Brown replied:

"The Government announced funding in May 2008 for the Myplace Strategy which is to provide capital funding to build world class youth facilities. A detailed bid was developed in Brighton and Hove through a thorough needs analysis and extensive consultation with partners and young people. The bid fully met the government's guidelines for applications and was agreed at both the Youth and Connexions Board and the Children and Young People's Trust Board in September 2008.

We understand the bidding process was heavily over-subscribed and unfortunately the Brighton and Hove bid was not successful in this round. There is to be another tranche of funding available this year and it is the intention of the CYPT to make another application, having taken whatever feedback is available from the Big Lottery (that

organised the application and selection process) in order to make any necessary refinements to the bid.”

- 66.76 Councillor Hawkes asked a supplementary question, “Thank you for that answer. However, saying that our bid was not successful is a great shame. Would the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People agree that this is a worrying situation? Whilst the authorities in Hastings and Rye and over in Bognor Regis were successful in getting over £5m of money from the Government, this council has failed to bid successfully for better youth services in Brighton.

Could the Cabinet Member therefore confirm whether she will be seeking advice or help from her Conservative counterparts in Bognor and Hastings who were able to put a successful bid together?”

- 66.77 Councillor Mrs. Brown replied, “As I stated in my reply this application did meet the Government guidelines and it was agreed at the CYPT Board which both Councillor Hawkes and Councillor Marsh sit on. The bidding process was heavily over-subscribed: so there were a lot of authorities as well as ours that didn’t receive the money, although our actual record for successful bids is very good and we have done very well with our bids this year.

At the end of the day, Councillor Hawkes, it’s this Labour Government that turned us down, so perhaps the Labour Members would like to explain to their Government.”

- 66.78 Councillor Meadows asked a further supplementary question, “Can the Cabinet Member please confirm that the refurbishment of the 67 Centre in Moulsecoomb now hangs in the balance, because instead of bidding for a share of £110m the council will now be resubmitting a bid for a share of a much smaller pot of £30m?

What would the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People say to young people in Moulsecoomb who will now be concerned that the redevelopment of the 67 Centre has been put at risk by this council?”

- 66.79 Councillor Mrs. Brown replied, “It has not been put at risk by this council, there was this one bid that we did not actually manage to get. Shall I tell you some of the bids we have recently got. The first one is V-Talent and the CYPT was awarded £285,000 from December 2008 to March 2011 to enable us to offer 30 full-time volunteering opportunities to young people aged between 16 and 25.

Secondly, we bid for the Youth Crime Action Fund and have successfully got £700,000 over two years for positive activities for our young children and more detached work, partly in the Moulsecoomb area.

Thirdly, we are the only authority in this country to receive £500 worth of money for a research project funded by the DCSF and delivered by King’s College and the National Academy of Parenting. This is an intervention project called the Functional Family Therapy Programme and this works with young offenders and those at risk of offending.

This shows over the last year we have been highly successful at bidding for grant money but yes, of course, we will put in a bid again for the 67 Centre.”

66.80 (o) Councillor Wakefield-Jarrett asked:

“Could the Cabinet Member for Central Services tell me what proportion of suspected benefit fraud cases are pursued in ways other than through the courts and how this compares to national trends for action by local authorities where benefit fraud is suspected?”

66.81 Councillor Fallon-Khan replied:

“Potential fraud in the housing and Council Tax Benefit system.
There are two aspects to dealing with fraud; Prevention and detection.

Prevention

As a service recently rated at the maximum 4 out of 4 by the Audit Commission in the recent CPA assessment the Council can take assurance that all the correct measures are in place to deter and prevent fraud before it even occurs. This maybe reflected in national statistics. The Department of Work and Pensions operates sophisticated data matching exercises to identify potential fraud discrepancies within welfare benefits, tax and banking records. The ‘hits’ from these exercises are sent to the Council to investigate. While not all ‘hits’ result in the identification of fraud the ratio is a reasonable indicator of potential fraud activity and the effectiveness of fraud preventative work. In Brighton & Hove 2007/2008 the number of ‘hits’ was 36 per 1000 benefit cases, nationally the average was 50. From these figures it may be that Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefit fraud activity is less than the national average. However, the service does not rest on this statistic and all efforts are made and will continue to be made to prevent fraud.

Detection

The Audit Commission rating also gives assurance that the Benefit Service is conducting its fraud investigation to a high standard. The Service applies strict guidelines to make sure that sanction is only sought where it is fair and proportionate. Where high level fraud abuse is clear we do not hesitate to pursue court decisions that we can then publicise as a deterrent to others.

In comparison with the national average, the last figures we have are for 2007/2008: (Although two of the three statistics show the authority as being below the national average, this is to be expected given that Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit fraud activity is assumed to be 28% less than the national average).

We cautioned 61 customers, 2.07 customers per 1000 benefit cases (national average 2.53)

We issued 47 administrative penalties, 1.6 customers per 1000 benefit cases (national average 1.75)

We went to court for 47 cases, 1.6 customers per 1000 benefit cases (national average 1.55)”

66.82 Councillor Wakefield-Jarrett asked a supplementary question,

“I would like to thank the Cabinet Member for Central Services for the detailed response to my question.

Could he tell me what steps are taken to consider the impact on an individual’s life before releasing their details to the press when a benefit fraud is suspected or has occurred?”

66.83 Councillor Fallon-Khan replied, “They have committed a crime, so therefore it is in the public interest, is it not?”

66.84 Councillor Randall asked a further supplementary question, “We share Councillor Fallon-Khan’s desire to cut down on benefit fraud, none of us like people who free-load on the system. However, we believe the council should be sensitive and proportional in its response to these issues.

I wonder if he thinks pursuing a single mother for more than three months, a woman with two children who has gone through a long period of personal homelessness and trauma and was the subject of a three month investigation, which included three interviews under caution and it emerged that the over-payment was £24 over two years. Now this caused this woman and her family an enormous amount of stress and I have to say that the people in the department doing the investigation knew about her circumstances because I told them and I wasn’t happy with their response.

Can he tell me if he thinks this is value for money, if it’s proportional or an act that he and the Administration are proud of?”

66.85 Councillor Fallon-Khan replied, “We do have a strict code of proportionality and also in terms of value for money I think we should remember that the Benefits Team in this Council have just been awarded four stars out of four by the Audit Commission. If you are going to be picking up on individual cases, do you know I am quite happy to come and meet Councillor Randall and perhaps come and meet this lady, I am quite happy to do that.

If you are talking about value for money, the reason that we have taken some of the actions that we have and the reason that we want to have this as one of the priorities that we do is because there is a lot of money that gets wasted from council tax payers and from the council from people who commit benefit fraud or whatever. Now the results that we have got are excellent and I am going to defend this Administration for the last two years for the work that has been done by the officers and by this Administration.

If Councillor Randall wants to talk about a particular individual case I am quite happy to meet him afterwards and we will pursue it from there.”

66.86 (p) Councillor Morgan asked:

“Can the Cabinet Member for Environment confirm that staff employed in council-owned car parks are to be sacked and that in future the car parks will have no staff on duty to

deal with equipment breakdowns, problems with passes and the safety of car park users?"

66.87 Councillor Theobald replied:

"I would like to assure you that there was full consultation with staff and unions regarding the current improvements to The Lanes and London Road car parks. Staff have been supportive of these changes, which will create more local jobs and new opportunities through the introduction of an in-house dedicated Maintenance Team, in addition to the new Control Centre operation. There has been no decision to sack staff.

The new Traffic Control Centre will provide 24/7 customer service to all linked car parks. The Maintenance Team will be well equipped to respond and attend as required. The new access control, CCTV, improved lighting and general upgrading of The Lanes are specifically designed to make the car parks both safe and secure for all customers."

66.88 Councillor Morgan asked a supplementary question, "I am grateful to Councillor Theobald for confirming that the Administration is removing on-site staff from the council's car parks as what it describes as part of its improvements.

Does Councillor Theobald agree with Councillor Mears when she said that car parks at night can be scary, especially for lone women and is he aware of the Home Office studies which show that unstaffed car parks have much higher rates of crime?"

66.89 Councillor Theobald replied, "I think it is a shame, having read your letter in which you refer to Councillor Mears, that you didn't wait for me to answer this question before you actually stated in the local paper: 'Why is Councillor Mears sacking the car park attendants?'. That is not true.

Now, of course, in the old days when I first joined a local authority, if you had written a letter like that to the local paper the Editor would have telephoned me or Councillor Mears, Councillor Mears really because her name is in this, and said would you like to respond to this and it would have gone in at the same time but, of course, those days have long gone. That I think is unfortunate, I would like to see that situation again.

These car parks have been left to rot for the last twenty years, they were an absolute mess, dangerous and very few ladies, I suggest, would go into these car parks at night time. They were certainly unpleasant places but what is interesting is that only Monday night a senior female member of our staff, following the Culture Conference, went to the London Road car park at 11.30 at night and said how safe she felt following these improvements. Now, to me that is very much of a plus.

Within the car parks there are further opportunities for staff, building on an in-house dedicated Maintenance Team, the car parks will be a lot safer. I support everything that Councillor Mears has said. The car parks will be very, very much better, a hundred times better than what they are now with cameras, lighting and, you know, every other thing that you could possibly think of to bring these car parks up to the full standard of what one can see elsewhere."

66.90 (q) Councillor Morgan asked:

“Can the Cabinet Member for Housing confirm that, despite her promise at Council on 4 December last year that two vacant council properties would be returned to use “early in the new financial year”, these family homes in the Manor Farm area of my ward remain empty and are still awaiting repair?”

66.91 Councillor Caulfield replied:

“Since my response to Councillor Morgan’s previous question on this matter, further detailed assessments of the works required on both of these properties have taken place. This includes structural surveys, and an independent survey to establish the possible levels of recharging that could be applied due to damage by previous tenants. Following these a full specification and an estimation of the cost of the works has been drawn up.

68 Manor Way is estimated to require £32,000 of works, of which £5,577 is estimated to be due to damage by tenants, and as such will be considered for recharge.

74 Manor Way is estimated to require £35,000 of works, of which £4,850 is estimated to be due to damage by tenants, and as such will be considered for recharge.

The specification of works on these properties has now been completed and it is planned to engage with contractors to progress these works in as timely a fashion as possible, whilst having regard for the lead-in time required for ordering materials and other preliminary works.

It is still expected that these properties will be brought back into use early in the new financial year.”

66.92 Councillor Morgan asked a supplementary question, “Can Councillor Caulfield confirm that these family homes, which the Conservative Council have left empty now for almost 18 months, are really going to have £35,000 of work done on them in time for the new financial year beginning in three weeks?”

66.93 Councillor Caulfield replied, “I think, Councillor Morgan, you must have misread my answer at the last Council meeting. I said they would be ready in the new financial year, not by the new financial year and, yes, I can confirm that work is planned on those two properties as detailed in my answer. I cannot stand here and listen that we have left those properties empty for 18 months when they were empty for nearly three years under the previous Labour Council.

Let me just say in addition to that: we have empty voids in sheltered housing schemes because they have shared facilities. For those of you that don’t know what shared facilities are, that is where you have to share a bathroom with your neighbours and many of our sheltered housing residents are having to share bathrooms with up to seven or eight neighbours.

We are announcing next week in our Capital Programme that we are going to spend £300,000 to remove shared facilities from Jasmine Court, Hazelholt and Laburnum

Grove, thus speeding up our void turn-around times and preventing voids from being in sheltered schemes in the first place. That is not all: we have found on my personal tour of the sheltered housing schemes seven empty scheme manager flats that have been empty for nearly four to five years. Many of these are two-bedroom flats which could be used in our under-occupancy scheme and will be relet in this financial year, this within 18 months of the Conservative Council.”

67. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, CABINET MEMBER MEETINGS AND COMMITTEES.

(a) Callover

67.1 The Mayor noted that Members had indicated a wish to discuss the reports listed on the agenda and therefore stated that the following items on the agenda would be reserved for discussion:

Item 68 - Members Allowances
Item 69 - Annual Investment Strategy.

67.2 The Mayor also noted that Item 70 – Matters Exempt from Call-in was an information only report and therefore proposed that it be noted.

67.3 It was agreed to note the report.

(b) Receipt and/or Approval of Reports

67.4 The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that Item No's. 68 and 69 had been reserved for discussion.

(c) Oral Questions from Members

67.5 The Mayor noted that there were no oral questions.

68. MEMBERS ALLOWANCES

68.1 Councillor Ann Norman formerly moved the report and the recommendations of the Governance Committee, which were detailed in the extract from the meeting, held on the 10th March and had been circulated as part of the addendum papers. She noted that the Independent Remuneration Panel was undertaking a full review of allowances and was due to report to the council in 2010. In the meantime the only change to allowances was the proposed increase to the Basic Allowance in line with the final salary inflation figure, which would be implemented from the day after Annual Council. She wished to acknowledge the important role of the Panel and to place on record her thanks to the members of the panel for their continued work.

68.2 Councillor Mitchell stated that she wished to add her thanks to the Panel for their work and welcomed what was in effect a freeze on the level of allowances, but hoped that any final decision as to whether or not to accept the increase to the basic allowance would be left to individual Members.

- 68.3 Councillor Mears stated that she wished to thank the Panel for their work and confirmed that the individual members of the Conservative Group had decided that in view of the current economic climate to decline to take any increase in their basic allowances.
- 68.4 Councillor Taylor referred to the extract from the minutes of the Governance Committee and stated that he felt the recommendations took account of the concerns raised. He noted that the level of allowances recommended by the Panel already incorporated a public service discount of 40% and that whilst the actual level of increase was small; there were some Members who would benefit from taking it because of their own financial circumstances.
- 68.5 Councillor Elgood stated that he had noted the recommendations of the Governance Committee and having consulted with his colleague, they would not be taking the increase in the basic allowance for this year in view of the economic situation faced by residents.
- 68.6 Councillor Bennett stated that she supported the comments of other Members and noted that the level of increase would be a lot of money to somebody who was currently unemployed.
- 68.7 Councillor Randall stated that he felt it was important for individual Members to be able to decide whether or not take the increase, as each person would have differing circumstances which they would need to take into account. He also noted that a number of other Members were also in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance and therefore may find it easier on this occasion not to accept the increase in the basic allowance.
- 68.8 Councillor Norman noted the comments and stated that the decision to accept the proposed increase had to be for each individual Member and therefore moved the recommendations of the Governance Committee.
- 68.9 The Mayor noted that the recommendations had been moved and sought confirmation from the council.
- 68.10 **RESOLVED –**
- (1) That the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, as set out in its report be noted;
 - (2) That in accordance with the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel as agreed by Council in April 2008, the level of Basic Allowance be increased by the assumed salary rate of inflation of 2.3% for the municipal year commencing 15 May 2009; subject to individual Members' rights to accept or decline the increase;
 - (3) That the position be reviewed following the receipt of the Independent Remuneration Panel's report in 2010; and

- (4) That the allowance payable to each of the members of the Independent Remuneration Panel continue to be increased by the council's salary inflation assumption of 2.3% for 2009 with effect from 15 May 2009, in recognition of their time commitment and their important role.

Refreshment Break

- 68.11 The Mayor stated that in view of the time and in wishing to give the opportunity for a full debate on the next item, he proposed to adjourn the meeting for a refreshment break.
- 68.12 The meeting was adjourned at 6.30pm.
- 68.13 The Mayor then reconvened the meeting at 7.00pm

69. ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

- 69.1 Councillor Young formerly moved the report, which sought approval to the Annual Investment Strategy 2009/10. She noted that the Cabinet had accepted the recommendations and agreed that they should be put to the council for approval.
- 69.2 Councillor Randall referred to the ethical statement and queried whether the matrix for assessing investments was still being applied.
- 69.3 Councillor Young confirmed that the matrix was still being used.
- 69.4 The Mayor noted that the recommendations of the report had been moved and sought confirmation from the council.
- 69.5 **RESOLVED** – That the Annual Investment Strategy 2009/10 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

70. MATTERS EXEMPT FROM CALL-IN

- 70.1 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

71. NOTICES OF MOTION.

(a) Automatic Rate Relief for Small Businesses

- 71.1 The Notice of Motion as detailed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Fallon-Khan and seconded by Councillor Kemble.
- 71.2 Councillor Hamilton moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Morgan which was put to the vote by the Mayor and lost.
- 71.3 The Mayor then put the following Notice of Motion to the vote:

“This Council notes that:

1. Business rates are the third largest cost to small firms, after salaries and rent. Yet, many small businesses are unaware of, or do not apply for, the rate relief to which they are entitled.
2. In England more than half of small businesses miss out on claiming back up to £1,200 off their business rates.
3. Every year, around £400 million – calculated and ear-marked by the Treasury for eligible businesses – goes unclaimed, even though this money poses no extra cost to the Government or tax payer.
4. Automatic rate relief is currently available to small firms in Wales but not in England.

In January 2009, it was estimated that there were over a 1,000 small businesses in Brighton & Hove that could be eligible for rate relief but were not claiming. This meant that local small firms could be losing up to one million pounds in revenue to the Government.

This Council welcomes the current Administration’s recognition of the low uptake of rate relief by local small firms and the action it has taken to promote awareness and increase uptake.

However, this Council considers that all qualifying small businesses should be entitled to **automatic** rate relief. This would provide them with much needed additional financial resources during the recession. Furthermore, it would save both small firms and local billing authorities’ time and money applying and operating the current complex application system.

Therefore this Council:

1. Supports the automatic rate relief campaign started by the Federation of Small Businesses.
2. Welcomes the ‘Small Business Rate Relief (Automatic Payment) Bill’ tabled by Peter Luff MP and hope to see it made law.

This Council instructs the Chief Executive to:

1. Write to Lord Mandelson, the Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform requesting that he introduce automatic rate relief for small businesses.
2. Write to Brighton & Hove’s three MPs calling upon them to sign the current Early Day Motion supporting the Automatic Rate Relief campaign.
3. Make a letter of support for the Automatic Rate Relief campaign available to download on the Council’s website.

71.4 **The motion was carried.**

(b) Fuel Poverty and Excess Winter Deaths

71.5 The Notice of Motion as detailed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Elgood and seconded by Councillor Watkins.

71.6 Councillor Caulfield moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Ken Norman which was accepted by Councillor Elgood.

71.7 The Mayor then put the following Notice of Motion as amended to the vote:

“This Council notes with regret that according to figures from the Office of National Statistics there were 110 excess winter deaths in the three Brighton and Hove Parliamentary constituency in 2006/7. Most of these deaths are caused by cold homes, or fuel poverty as it is known. Thousands more people suffer from living in poorly insulated homes that leak heat.

This Council welcomes the extensive local grants programme offered by Brighton & Hove City Council to help tackle fuel poverty, which is worth more than £1 million per annum. This includes:

- *the Warm Homes Initiative, which offers free insulation for residents receiving benefits and for those aged 70 and over*
- *the new Family Insulation Grant, which will provide funding for up to 3,500 families in the city to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.*

This Council also notes that David Heath MP (Liberal Democrat), supported by John Gummer MP (Conservative) and Alan Simpson MP (Labour), has tabled the Fuel Poverty Bill, which seeks to develop a strategy to tackle this problem.

The Bill is being promoted by the Fuel Poverty Coalition, a wide range of organisations concerned with the elderly, poverty and the environment – including ACE, Friends of the Earth, Help the Aged, Age Concern and others.

The Bill will reinstate the duty to end fuel poverty. It requires the homes of the fuel poor to be brought up to the minimum energy efficiency standards enjoyed by new homes. It also requires energy suppliers to offer social (i.e. reduced rate) tariffs to vulnerable householders in the short term. The Bill will help to lower energy bills and save carbon emissions.

This Council calls on the city's three MPs to do all they can to assist in the passage of this important legislation *by supporting it through all the relevant parliamentary stages of the Bill. During this process, they should make it clear that the financial burden of any additional energy efficiency work should not fall on local authorities.* Furthermore it requests that the *Acting* Chief Executive writes to the three MPs *who have tabled the Bill* to inform them of the strength of feeling of the Council.”

71.8 **The motion was carried.**

(c) Re-open the Wealden Line

71.9 The Notice of Motion as detailed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Davey and seconded by Councillor Randall.

71.10 Councillor Theobald moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Smith which was put to the vote by the Mayor and lost.

71.11 The Mayor then put the following Notice of Motion to the vote:

“This council notes

1. The frequent severe disruption to train travel caused by engineering works on the line between London and Brighton particularly at weekends.
2. The inconvenience that this presents to travellers and the extra pressure it puts on the areas already congested roads.
3. The adverse effect that this disruption has on the city’s economy by discouraging visitors from coming here at those times and potentially on other occasions as well.
4. The general congestion on the London to Brighton line which acts as a serious bottleneck limiting the number of trains able to serve both Brighton and Hove particularly at peak times, leading to overcrowding.

In order to help address these problems this council would like the government to urgently begin work to reopen the Wealden railway line between Lewes and Uckfield.

In response to a recent No. 10 petition calling for the reopening of this line the government quoted Network Rails 2008 report that showed:

“that there are no physical obstructions which would preclude the rebuilding of the railway between Lewes and Uckfield” and “The total capital cost for these works was estimated at £141.0 million including a 30% contingency allowance.”

The government is currently offering to spend hundreds of millions of pounds to improve transport infrastructure in regions outside of London. This council believes that the priorities for the South East of England should be on public transport infrastructure including rail rather than on building more roads. Previous experience shows that building roads leads to more traffic and more congestion. This in turn raises levels of air pollution and increases carbon emissions. We need to be investing in rail for the future not repeating the mistakes of the past. At £141m this project represents excellent value for money compared to the costs of building more roads.

This council believes that reopening this rail link will.

1. Provide a general boost to the Sussex economy in particular that in Brighton & Hove
2. Relieve pressure on the London to Brighton bottleneck so providing opportunities to improve the train service into the city

3. Provide an invaluable alternative route into the city when engineering works are being carried out on the mainline.
4. Represent a significant shift away from increasing car dependency towards a future grounded in sustainable transport and a low carbon economy.

For these reasons this council calls on the government and particularly Lord Adonis the Minister of State responsible for the railways to begin work as soon as possible to re-open this vital missing link on the regions railway network.

The council therefore asks the Acting Chief Executive and the City's Three MP's to write to Lord Adonis in support of this proposal."

71.12 **The motion was lost.**

(d) Millicent Fawcett and the Fawcett Charter

71.13 The Mayor noted that the notice of motion as detailed in the agenda had been printed incorrectly and the paragraph beginning 'As one of ...' should include the reference to 'ask the Cabinet to consider to:' which was correctly shown in the proposed amendment detailed in the addendum papers.

71.14 The Notice of Motion as detailed in the agenda with the correction outlined by the Mayor was proposed by Councillor Kennedy and seconded by Councillor Wakefield-Jarrett.

71.15 Councillor Mears moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Simson which was put to the vote by the Mayor and lost.

71.16 The Mayor then put the following Notice of Motion to the vote:

"This Council notes that:

1. The Fawcett Society is the UK's leading organisation promoting equality for women. It campaigns for women's representation in politics and public life; equal pay and pensions, and the fair treatment of women in the workplace.
2. Having begun as the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) in 1866, the Fawcett Society takes its name from Dame Millicent Garrett Fawcett, who made it her life's work to lead the peaceful campaign for women's votes.
3. Millicent Fawcett was married to Henry Fawcett, MP for Brighton from 1865 to 1874, and in 1897 she spoke to the NUWSS Conference in Brighton Town Hall.
4. Today the Fawcett Society continues to campaign for equality for women in all areas of life, and is currently calling for employers to sign up to the Fawcett Charter, which represents a coalition of firms and organisations committed to challenging the objectification of women at work. Signatories include BT, Barclays Wealth, Matrix Chambers, and Oxfam GB.

As one of Brighton & Hove's largest employers, with a stated commitment to equalities for all in the workplace, this Council therefore resolves to ask the Cabinet to consider:

1. Signing up to the Fawcett Charter, demonstrating:
 - Support for Fawcett's aim of challenging the objectification of women;
 - A commitment to audit employee expenses to ensure local authority money is not being spent in lap dancing clubs;
 - A commitment to review internal policies and procedures to ensure they adequately address potential occurrences of objectification.
2. Request that the Commemorative Plaques Panel considers erecting a blue plaque outside Brighton Town Hall to honour the memory of Millicent Fawcett.

71.17 **The motion was carried.**

(e) Keep Royal Mail Public

71.18 The Notice of Motion as detailed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Mitchell and seconded by Councillor Lepper.

71.19 Councillor Oxley moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Fallon-Khan which was accepted by Councillor Mitchell.

71.20 Councillor Fryer moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Taylor which was accepted by Councillor Mitchell.

71.21 The Mayor then put the following Notice of Motion as amended to the vote:

"This Council notes the Early Day Motion 428, as supported by the Brighton MPs, which backs a;

"supported vision of a wholly publicly-owned, integrated Royal Mail Group; welcomes the conclusion of the Hooper Report that the current universal service obligation offered by Royal Mail, including six days a week delivery, must be protected and that the primary duty of a new regulator should be to maintain it; further welcomes the recommendations in the Report that the Government should take responsibility for the pensions deficit which followed an extended contributions holiday; endorses the call for a new relationship between management and postal unions and welcomes the commitment of the Communication Workers Union to negotiate an agreement which would support the modernisation of the industry; observes that in 2007 the Government agreed to a £1.2 billion loan facility on commercial terms to modernise Royal Mail operations; rejects the recommendation of the Hooper Report to sell a minority stake in Royal Mail which would risk fracturing one of Britain's greatest public services; further notes that the Government is currently advertising for a new Chair of Royal Mail; and urges the Secretary of State to appoint a Chair and management team who are committed to the principles of a modern public enterprise."

Further, this council notes that the Postal Services Bill as introduced by Business Secretary Peter Mandelson

- represents the part privatisation of the postal services
- has been condemned by union leaders representing the Communication Workers Union, Unite, Unison and the GMB
- and that these same union leaders maintain that the Government's plans break a Labour Party pledge to keep the Royal Mail "wholly" publicly owned. "

This Council notes the cross party support that the EDM has received but acknowledges that it is contrary to Labour Government policy and the content of the Postal Services Bill. It further notes that taking no action to bring additional investment to Royal Mail would have repercussions for all of the City's residents and importantly, including its postal workers.

Asks that this Council seeks to assure postal workers in the City of its support for (i) maintaining the universal service obligation; (ii) ensuring Royal Mail is properly capitalised; (iii) maintaining deliveries six days per week; (iv) adequate funding of Royal Mail pensions.

Therefore, this Council requests that the Acting Chief Executive write to the Business Secretary and the Shadow Business Secretary stating the authority's position.

71.22 **The motion was carried.**

(f) Accept £9 Million for Local Schools

71.23 The Notice of Motion as detailed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Hawkes and seconded by Councillor Mitchell.

71.24 Councillor Mrs. Brown moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Alford which was put to the vote by the Mayor and carried.

71.25 The Mayor then put the following Notice of Motion as amended to the vote:

"This Council supports action to ensure that children will benefit from the £9 million of government funding for local investment in education for 2010/11 for better equipment and new building repairs and improvements.

This Council recognises and supports the boost to the local economy that this kind of work will bring to the City, increasing construction jobs and the amount of work available.

This Council notes that the agreed schools capital programme for Brighton & Hove has been based on drawing down the money over three years in line with the original Government proposals. The Council intends to deliver the projects as outlined in the capital programme as this is in the best interests of the children of Brighton & Hove and will allow the CYPT to spend the money most effectively.

Contrary to recent reports, this Council further notes that the £9 million will still be available to the CYPT in 2010/11, as the Government originally planned.

This Council asks the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People to continue with the current programme of investment in school building and refurbishment programmes which will boost jobs in the City and enhance the educational opportunities of all the city's children."

71.26 **The motion was carried.**

(g) South Downs National Park

71.27 The Notice of Motion as detailed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor West and seconded by Councillor Rufus.

71.28 Councillor Theobald moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Caulfield which was put to the vote by the Mayor and lost.

71.29 The Mayor then put the following Notice of Motion to the vote:

"This council, a long-standing supporter of the South Downs National Park, recognises:

- The vital importance of the South Downs to our tourist economy
- The recreational benefits it offers to local people and visitors
- The additional economic benefits National Park status will bring to Brighton and Hove
- The physical and mental health benefits that access to a high quality landscape will bring to the City.
- The protection National Park status will offer to the fragile and pressured national environment of the South Downs.
- That Brighton and Hove is a natural major gateway to the proposed park.

It notes:

- The Government plans to announce its decision on the South Downs National Park in the 'early summer'
- The efforts of the South Downs Campaign to persuade Ministers to include the chalk hills, The Western Weald, Ditchling and Lewes in the confirmed National Park.
- The need for Brighton and Hove City Council to look beyond designation and plan for the benefits of the National Park on the city.

It therefore resolves to:

- Commend the South Downs Campaign for its tireless work,
- Ask the Cabinet to consider establishing a working group to develop a comprehensive strategy to reap the benefits for the city of a South Downs National Park.

- Ask the city's Chief Executive to write to Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, urging him to include the chalk hills, the Western Weald, Ditchling and Lewes in the confirmed national park.
- Call on the city's three MPs to write to Mr Benn urging him to include the chalk hills, the Western Weald, Ditchling and Lewes in the confirmed national park."

71.30 **The motion was carried.**

(h) Housing and Homelessness Services for Young Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans People in Brighton and Hove

71.31 The Notice of Motion as detailed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Randall and seconded by Councillor Kennedy.

71.32 Councillor Caulfield moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Mears which was put to the vote by the Mayor and lost.

71.33 The Mayor then put the following Notice of Motion to the vote:

"This council:

1. Acknowledges the work of the city's housing services in helping young Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) homeless people in Brighton and Hove.
2. Notes the findings of the report, *Count me in too (LGBT lives in Brighton and Hove)*, which was published in 2008 by the University of Brighton and Spectrum.
3. In particular, it notes the section on homelessness, which reveals that 18 per cent of LGBT young people who have moved to Brighton and Hove in the past five years have been homeless in the city and that many of them have experienced abuse, harassment or violence at the hands of a family member or someone close to them.
4. Also notes that 57 per cent of those who have experienced homelessness in the city told University of Brighton/ Spectrum researchers they would like to see the introduction of specialist LGBT services for homeless people.
5. Notes the successes of the Albert Kennedy Trust, which works in Manchester and London with young people aged 16 to 25 from the LGBT community who are homeless or living in a hostile environment. It provides a programme of training, policy advice, and practical support, which includes supported lodgings schemes, mentoring and befriending services. It has also launched a Quality Assurance Mark, offering a model of best practice to mainstream housing and homelessness organisations.

The council therefore resolves to request the Cabinet member for Housing to consider the possibilities of:

1. Joint working with the Albert Kennedy Trust,
2. Ways in which ways the Trust's services could be used to help young LGBT homeless people in Brighton and Hove."

71.34 **The motion was carried.**

72. PART TWO MINUTES - EXEMPT CATEGORIES 4 & 5

72.1 The part 2 minutes of the Council meeting held on the 29 January 2009 were approved as a correct record of the proceedings.

73. PART TWO ITEMS

73.1 The Council considered whether or not the above item and the decision thereon should remain exempt from disclosure to the press and public.

73.2 **RESOLVED** – That the above item and the decision thereon remain exempt from disclosure to the press and public.

The meeting concluded at 10.10pm

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of