

Brighton & Hove City Council

**SPECIAL
POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

4.00pm 17th January 2008

HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Oxley (Chairman); Councillor Mrs. Brown (Deputy Chairman), Councillor Mrs. Mears (Deputy Chairman), Councillors Elgood, Hamilton, Hawkes, Kemble, Morgan, Mitchell (OS), Norman, Mrs Norman, Randall, Taylor, Theobald and Wrighton.

PART ONE

ACTION

134. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

(A) Declarations of Substitutes

134.1 Councillors Morgan and Norman declared that they were attending the meeting as Substitute Members for Councillors Meadows and Peltzer Dunn respectively.

(B) Declarations of Interest

134.2 Councillors Kemble, Norman and Hamilton declared that they had a personal interest in Item No 141, 'Wind Turbines at Kings House' as (respectively) Chairman and Members of the Planning (Applications) Sub-Committee.

134.3 (C) Exclusion of Press and Public

The Committee considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in Section 100B (3) or 100 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item 143, in part two of the agenda.

135. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS.

The Chairman stated that he had nothing to report on this occasion.

136. CALLOVER

136.1 **RESOLVED** – That with the exception of the items reserved (and marked with an asterisk), the recommendations and resolutions contained therein be approved and adopted without debate.

***137. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2008/09**

137.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance and Resources that presented information (required as an example for legal purposes) on the amount that would be raised by setting a one pound council tax (for copy see minute book).

137.2 Councillor Hamilton noted that the use of 'Band D' houses as a baseline example was unhelpful as it probably did not represent an average figure.

137.3 Councillor Randall noted that the council should be ready and able to demonstrate its support for persons in need of financial assistance. Chairman accepted that this was the case and paid tribute to the officers who worked in support of residents in financial difficulties.

137.4 **RESOLVED** –

(1) That the report of the calculation of the council's tax base for the year 2008/09 be approved;

(2) That the Collection Rate remains at 98%;

(3) That pursuant to the Director of Finance & Resources report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the amounts calculated by Brighton & Hove City Council as its council tax base for the year 2008/09 shall be as follows:-

(3.1) For Brighton and Hove whole – 93,350.27

(3.2) For the Royal Crescent Enclosure Committee – 29.07

- (3.3) For the Hanover Crescent Enclosure Committee – 40.79
- (3.4) For the Marine Square Enclosure Committee – 77.45
- (3.5) For the Parish of Rottingdean – 1,481.15

- (4) That for the purposes of Section 35(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 the expenses of meeting the special levies issued to the council by the Enclosure Committees shall be its special expenses.

***138. PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2008-2011**

- 138.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance and Resources that detailed the financial implications of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlements for the next 3 years. It also provided an update on the projected budget gap before savings for 2008/09 incorporating the latest information on the estimates of resources and spending (for copy see minute book).
- 138.2 Councillor Randall felt that the settlement was disappointing and that the council was penalised by the current spending formula. He was concerned about the implications of the concurrent conclusion of funding to projects in Neighbourhood Renewal and the Eb4u area. Chairman shared the concerns.
- 138.3 Councillor Hamilton noted some financial benefits to the council; including areas in 'Children, Families and Schools'.
- 138.4 Councillor Mitchell noted that the previous Administration had also faced challenging budgets and had managed to find 11 million pounds worth of savings without affecting front line services. She welcomed the move to three-year term settlements and felt that this would give more stability and the chance to better plan resources. Councillor Mitchell welcomed the transitional grants designed to assist in diffusing the impact of the overall settlement.
- 138.5 Chairman noted that the opportunities to further slice budgets were limited and that, though transitional grant funding was welcome it was limited.
- 138.6 Councillor Hawkes noted the improvements that had been bought about in Hollingdean due to the 'Working Neighbourhood Fund'; including improvements in community safety, mental health and educational attainment. She also noted the specific budgets for help in developing and improving Primary School stock in the city,
- 138.7 Councillor Theobald noted the national funding picture arguing that as more funding was provided to the north, councils in the south fared less favourably. He noted the savings made by the previous Administration commenting that it was impossible to keep reducing budgets and maintain services. He noted a recent conversation with Government Ministers about the budgetary

situation; conciliatory words had been spoken, but no action had yet been forthcoming.

138.8 **RESOLVED –**

(1) That the impact on the council of the provisional grant settlements for the next 3 years as set out in the body of the report and the projected budget gap for 2008/09 as set out in paragraphs 3.26 to 3.31 be noted.

(2) That the impact on the council of the provisional capital settlements for the next 3 years and the potential costs to the general fund if all the allocated borrowing is used as set out in paragraphs 3.35 to 3.36 be noted.

***139 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2008/09 – LIFE EVENTS**

139.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance and Resources that set out proposed fees and charges for 2008/09 for the Bereavement Services section and changes to the fees structure for the Registrars section (for copy see minute book).

139.2 Councillor Elgood was concerned about the proposed increases in charges for Bereavement Services and the Registrars section. He suggested that the issue should be re-examined on a cross-party basis.

139.3 Councillor Morgan was concerned that the proposed charges could lead to a two-tier service, penalising families on lower incomes.

139.4 Councillor Hamilton stated that the increase in fees represented a massive percentage increase. He argued that the majority of couples wanting to use the Registrars service would be excluded from the cheaper option due to the number of persons wishing to attend the event.

139.5 Councillor Theobald noted the financial impact for the city as a whole and balanced the use of the cities facilities by visitors with the cost and benefit to local residents. He felt that Government had offered a very poor settlement and that increasing charges to cover cost was realistic.

139.6 Councillor Taylor suggested deferring the item to allow officers to prepare a report recommending an inflation linked increase.

139.7 **RESOLVED** – That the fees and charges as shown in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 of the report be not approved.

***140. CIRCUS STREET AND PRESTON BARRACKS**

140.1 The Committee considered a report of Acting Director of Cultural Services that set requested to appropriate the land at the Circus Street and Preston Barracks sites for planning purposes (for copy see minute book).

140.2 **RESOLVED**

(1) To exercise the city council's powers of appropriation under section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972 so that the land at the Circus Street site (as identified on the plan at Annex A of the report) is appropriated for planning purposes;

(2) To exercise the city council's powers of appropriation under section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972 so that the land at the Preston Barracks site (as identified on the plan at Annex B of the report) is appropriated for planning purposes; and

(3) To note the progress made in respect of the Circus Street development proposals.

Note: Councillors Taylor, Randall and Wrighton wished it recorded that they had voted against recommendation 2.2 above.

***141. WIND TURBINES AT KINGS HOUSE**

141.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance and Resources prepared in response to a letter from Councillor Mitchell to the 29th November 2007 Policy & Resources Committee meeting. The letter requested a report to this meeting setting out proposals for the re-submission of the planning applications to the next available meeting of the Planning Applications Sub Committee (for copy see minute book).

141.2 Councillor Mitchell was concerned that the report did not address all the points that had been raised by her letter.

141.3 Councillor Mitchell stated that she wished to move an amendment to the recommendations in the report so that recommendation 2.4 was deleted and replaced by a new 2.4 as follows:

~~2.4 "That Policy & Resources committee receives a full appraisal of these options from the Sustainability Commission before agreeing to re-submit the planning applications for Wind Turbines at King's House in order to ensure that this is a fully informed decision."~~

New Recommendation 2.4

2.4 "That Policy and Resources Committee instructs officers to bring forward proposals for a balanced and costed programme of measures to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from council owned buildings to the Policy & Resources Committee for consideration and that as part of this process the planning applications for the King's House wind turbines be re-submitted for a decision to the Planning Applications Sub-Committee by the end March 2008."

141.4 Councillor Hawkes formally seconded the amendment.

141.5 Councillor Randall asked if the reference to 'council owned buildings' in the amendment included the councils housing stock. Councillor Mitchell supposed that it did.

141.5 The Director of Finance & Resources noted that the initial scope for carbon management had excluded the councils housing stock because of the Stock Options process that had been in operation at the time the programme was developed. Following the conclusion of the Stock Options review the housing stock had been included in the calculations.

141.6 Councillor Elgood suggested a cross-party working group look at the implications of climate change. He supported the amendment.

141.7 Councillor Wrighton noted that she had been present at the Sustainability Commission meeting that had previously considered the wind turbines. She noted the concerns of residents and the need to demonstrate value for money. She supported the amendment.

141.8 Councillor Hamilton felt that the issue had been discussed and

debated enough to warrant a formal decision without further delay and was frustrated by the delay.

141.9 The Chairman noted that an amendment had been moved and put it to the vote, which was carried and became substantive (4) of the resolution recorded below.

141.10 **RESOLVED –**

- (1) That commitment to the Carbon Management Programme (CMP) and reducing the Council's carbon dioxide emissions and energy bills be reconfirmed.
- (2) That the new national and local initiatives to reduce carbon emissions and improve energy efficiency since the original CMP Strategy and Implementation Plan was approved, be noted.
- (3) To note that there are a range of options available to the Council to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from civic buildings with different advantages and disadvantages and which provide different levels of value for money to the council taxpayer.
- (4) That officers be instructed to bring forward proposals for a balanced and costed programme of measures to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from council owned buildings to the Policy & Resources Committee for consideration and that as part of this process the planning applications for the King's House wind turbines be re-submitted for a decision to the Planning Applications Sub-Committee by the end March 2008.

142. ITEMS TO GO FORWARD TO COUNCIL

142.1 The committee considered whether any items should be submitted to the 13th March Council meeting for information in accordance with Procedure Rule 20.3a.

142.2 **RESOLVED –** That no items be referred to Council other than those identified by the respective report of the need to be submitted to Council for approval.

PART TWO SUMMARY**143. INSURANCE TENDER FOR MAIN PROPERTY PORTFOLIO, MOTOR, LIABILITY AND LEASEHOLDER COVERS COMMENCING ON 1 APRIL 2008 – EXEMPT CATEGORY 3**

143.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance & Resources, regarding insurance cover for the council's property portfolio, motor, liability and leaseholder risks following two separate tendering exercises. The property portfolio incorporates additional risks including, but not restricted to, business travel, money, contract works, business interruption, engineering and fidelity guarantee.

143.2 **RESOLVED** – That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

144. PART 2 ITEMS

144.1 The committee considered whether or not any of the above items should remain exempt from disclosure to the press and public.

133.2 **RESOLVED** – That item 143 contained in Part 2 of the agenda and the decisions thereon remain exempt from disclosure to the press and public.

The meeting concluded at 5.15pm.

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of

2008