

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION
4.00PM 3 FEBRUARY 2009
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL
MINUTES

Present: Councillors Mitchell (Chairman); Bennett, Mrs Cobb, Elgood, Meadows, Morgan, Older, Pidgeon (Deputy Chairman), Randall, Wakefield-Jarrett and Mrs Norman

PART ONE

76. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

76.1 The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Budget meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, especially the Cabinet Member for Finance Councillor Jan Young and senior officers.

76.2 Councillor Mitchell reminded the meeting that the proceedings were being filmed and the webcast would be archived.

76a Declarations of Substitutes

Councillor Ann Norman was substituting for Councillor Trevor Alford.

76b Declarations of Interests

There were none

76c Declaration of Party Whip

There were none.

76d Exclusion of Press and Public

In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was 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 100I (1) of the said Act.

RESOLVED: That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

76e Access to Information Procedure rules – Special Circumstances

Under the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules, the Council is required to make reports which do not contain confidential or exempt information available for public inspection at least five clear working days before the meeting. However, by virtue of section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, an item of business may be included with less notice where the chairman of the meeting is of the opinion, by reason of special circumstances, that the item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency. The special circumstances in question must be specified in the minutes.

In this instance, the special circumstances are that the budget reports items 77, 78 and 79 had not been finalised by the despatch deadline because certain detailed budget and council tax information was only recently available.

77. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2009/2010

77.1 The Cabinet Member introduced the draft Housing Revenue Account Budget 2009 – 2010 and there was a discussion of the key issues.

77.2 RESOLVED; (1) That the summarised areas of comments made by the Commission attached below, are taken forward to the 12 February Cabinet meeting

78. GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2009/2010

78.1 The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the draft proposals for the General Fund Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2009 – 2010 and there was a discussion of the key issues.

78.2 It was suggested that 'fees and charges' reports previously taken to Cabinet Member Meetings as per paragraph 3.32 of the report, be attached to the report when it is presented to Cabinet and Council. This was agreed.

78.3 RESOLVED; (1) That the summarised areas of comments made by the Commission as attached below, are taken forward to the 12 February Cabinet meeting

(2) that the 'fees and charges' reports previously taken to Cabinet Members Meetings as per paragraph 3.32 of the report be attached to the Report when it is presented to Cabinet and Council.

79. CAPITAL RESOURCES AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2009/2010

79.1 The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the draft proposals for the Capital Resources and Capital Investment Programme 2009 – 2010 and there was a discussion of the key issues.

79.2 The Commission then considered the overall process of the scrutiny of the three reports. There was a question as to whether alternative budget proposals would be brought forward for scrutiny.

79.3 This was the first time that the drafts had been considered by Overview and Scrutiny before being presented to the Cabinet and it was generally felt that the discussion had been positive and constructive.

79.4 Members discussed the timing of the publication of the reports, noting that there had been only one full working day to read the papers before the meeting. It was agreed to make a recommendation on the timely involvement of the Commission in the 2010/2011 budget setting process.

79.5 On behalf of the Commission the Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and senior officers for their helpful information and replies to questions.

79.5 RESOLVED; (1) That the summarised areas of comments made by the Commission as attached below, are taken forward to the 12 February Cabinet meeting.

(2) That the Committee meeting and budget setting timetables for 2010/11 allow for the full and timely involvement of OSC in the budget setting process.

(3) That a report be brought to a future OSC meeting on budget setting processes in other local authorities, including the role of overview and scrutiny, and stakeholder and public engagement.

The meeting concluded at 5.55pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION BUDGET MEETING
3 FEBRUARY 2009

Areas of Comment on Budget Proposals Reports; Summary For Cabinet
12 February 2009

Order of comments as per agenda and reports

ITEM 77 Housing Revenue Account Budget 2009 - 2010

- 1) Overall salary costs and vacancy management; when will reviews be completed?
- 2) Importance of Gas Inspections
- 3) What proportion of tenants will have rises in rents?
- 4) How will heating charges change?
- 5) Reduction in Supporting People charges
- 6) There seems to be a significant reduction in expenditure on programmed premises repairs

Also pleased that high rent increases are not going ahead

ITEM 78 General Fund Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2009 - 2010

- 1) Concern about funding of primary compared with secondary schools
- 2) What are the staff implications of the proposed savings?
- 3) What is the likely level of government HIV/Aids support grant?
- 4) Would like further information on what the Targeted Mental Health in Schools grant is spent on
- 5) Why are there historic public health deficits and how will they be funded?
- 6) Questions and clarifications relating to
 - The effect of no inflationary increase on the Supporting People grant
 - Delivering the Adult Social Care financial recovery plan for 2008 – 2009; Implementing Value For Money recommendations and the Personalisation Programme
 - Reducing the number of assessments that do not result in a service
 - Top-slicing of Social Care Reform grant
 - Concerns about re-ablement and self-directed support against assessed needs
 - Are all high and medium cost care packages reviewed regularly?
- 7) Learning Disabilities Services
 - Concerned about shortfall of £400,000 and why was the demand not predicted?
 - What will be the effect of the Financial Recovery Plans for Learning Disability Services?
- 8) Questions and concerns regarding
 - Pressures on Integrated Community Equipment Services

- Reduction in HIV/Aids budget
 - Reduction in Care support worker posts
- 9) Concern about provision for Looked after Children and how staff restructuring will impact upon progress
- 10) What are the service and staff implications of the CityClean savings and was the customer satisfaction with refuse service completed before or after the reorganisation of rounds in October 2008?
- 11) Can an above-inflation rise be considered for beach hut fees and charges?
- 12) Why are fees and charges for cosmetic piercing and local markets so high?

In particular, pleased to see

- a) Local Authority Business Growth Incentives measures to help local businesses
- b) Taxi vouchers for those unable to use free bus pass
- c) Personalisation of social care budgets
- d) Hove library opening half day on Mondays for a trial period
- e) Access point for Adult Social Care
- f) Active for Life and Environmental Improvement Team funding to continue.

General

Would like to see investment in biogas and/or waste technology.

Would prefer more clarity with regard to: Council's current reserves; budget pressures on Integrated Community Equipment Services; and the continuing funding for implementing Community Safety, Crime Reduction and Drugs Strategy.

**ITEM 79 Capital Resources and Capital Investment Programme
2009 – 2010**

- 1) What reassurance is there that capital receipts are realistic in current climate?
- 2) Would like more information on the Information Communications Technology (ICT) Fund
- 3) Would like more information on the potential capital receipts from Local Delivery Vehicle
- 4) Will the Bandstand eventually generate revenue?

Pleased to see capital receipts from government £27 million

General

Feels that wording could be clearer that the capital programme is being fully funded.

Would like to see more reference to sustainability; (this would be considered when looking to replace fleet/council vehicles.)

