

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION
4.00PM 10 MARCH 2009
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL
MINUTES

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

PART ONE

92. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

92. There was none.

93. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

93.1 RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meetings held on 20 January 2009 and 3 February be agreed and signed by the Chairman.

94. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

94.1 Councillor Mitchell stated that the meeting was being webcast. Item 99, Adaptation to Climate Change would be considered after item 96.

95. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

95. There were none.

96. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS AND NOTICES OF MOTION REFERRED FROM COUNCIL

96.1 Councillor Elgood set out the reasons for his letter requesting a report on how Recommendation 10 of the 2006 Access scrutiny panel is being implemented. The recommendation related to clear pathways for pedestrians.

96.2 Residents were increasingly concerned about obstructions on the highway and people with disabilities were finding obstructions such as A Boards hazardous. Western Road, Church Road, St James Street and London Road were particularly affected and although commercial areas needed to thrive there should be a better balance, he said.

96.3 Good work had been done in difficult circumstances by officers, the Equalities Forum and the Access Scrutiny Panel but since writing this letter Councillor Elgood was now asking for a scrutiny panel to be established to look again at the matter of highways obstructions and especially the Equalities implications.

96.4 A number of Members had similar concerns and mentioned other areas of the City where there seemed to be a need for greater control over A-boards and other pavement obstructions.

96.5 The Committee asked for a report back to the next meeting on action taken regarding Recommendation 10 and agreed to set up a Scrutiny Panel, at a time to be decided.

96.6 RESOLVED: (1) that officers be asked to report to the next OSC meeting on the implementation of Recommendation 10 of the 2006 Access scrutiny panel.

(2) that a Scrutiny Panel be established at a time to be decided.

97. PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT REPORT, QUARTER 3

97.1 Councillor Fallon-Khan, the Cabinet Member for Central Services introduced the performance Improvement report, Quarter 3. He said the Council had for the first time achieved 4* overall performance rating from the Audit Commission.

97.2 He and the Senior Performance Analyst answered questions on some of the key indicators including prolific and priority offenders, first time entrants to the youth justice system, people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents, rough sleepers, take-up of Warm Homes energy efficiency programme, LGBT hate crimes and incidents, equality standards, talking therapies, direct payments, top 5% staff from ethnic minority or with a disability, carbon dioxide emissions, children bullied at school and teenage pregnancies.

97.3 The officers would provide Members with further details where the information was not available at this meeting.

97.4 RESOLVED: That the Commission notes

- (1) Progress against the LAA outcomes and proposals for remedial actions against the indicators that are significantly off track.
- (2) The Change in national performance management framework from CPA to CAA from April 2009.

98. TARGETTED BUDGET MANAGEMENT MONTH 9 REPORT TO CABINET

98.1 The Head of Financial Services, Corporate and Environment, introduced the report which has been presented to 12 February Cabinet on Targeted Budget Management Month 9. He said a number of pressures had stabilised since Month 6 and in particular a reduction in the number of looked after children had helped to show an improved position in the overall forecast outturn.

98.2 The Director of Community Care answered questions on Older Peoples' Services and said that there had been significant fluctuations in the number of clients and unit costs had been reduced.

98.3 The Head of Financial Services, Corporate and Environment, gave additional information on energy costs, Disability Discrimination Act access works, parking penalty charge income, concessionary bus fares and the ring-fencing of the housing enablement budget.

98.4 There would be a written response regarding farming diversification and gas installation inspections.

98.5 RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

99. ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

99.1 The Head of Sustainability introduced the report which set the context for the recommendations to establish a scrutiny panel to scope what work needs to be done to make good progress in planning for a changing local climate; and to consider whether a Select Committee is required to ensure good progress continues.

99.2 The Committee noted that there was already good local experience in managing risks relating to climate change and that a number of other local authorities are making good progress against the new National Indicator NI 188.

99.3 Members considered whether such a Scrutiny Panel or Select Committee might duplicate work already being done elsewhere at officer and/or Member level or if it would undermine the newly-formed Citywide Sustainability Partnership. There was also a question as to whether the setting up of any Panel should await the publication of the UK Climate Impacts Programme modelling service (UKCIP 08).

99.4 Most Members spoke in favour of the proposal and in particular supported working across Council service areas including key Partners. It was agreed that a Scrutiny Panel would help maintain a comprehensive approach to planning for full service delivery adaptation and resilience and that this need not wait for UKCIP 08.

99.5 RESOLVED: (1) That a Scrutiny Panel be established to scope what work needs to be done to make good progress in planning for changing local climate.

(2) That Panel will consider as one outcome whether or not a scrutiny Select Committee is required to ensure good progress in this work continues.

100. SCRUTINY LEGISLATION UPDATE

100.1 The Head of Overview and Scrutiny presented the report summarising the main areas of legislative changes that will impact upon the work of overview and scrutiny in Brighton and Hove.

100.2 The Head of Overview and Scrutiny answered questions on the Councillor Call for Action (being implemented from April this year) Crime and Disorder Committees and e-petitions.

100.3 The changes were not anticipated to have a major impact on resources but the costs of any proposed new scrutiny committee on community safety would have to be assessed, he said.

100.4 Members commented that the changes would strengthen the role of scrutiny and ward councillors.

100.5 RESOLVED: that officers be instructed to provide updates on future policy and legislative developments in this area.

101. UPDATE ON CURRENT SCRUTINY REVIEWS

101.1 Members considered the update on current scrutiny panels and were asked to give their views on scrutiny within Brighton & Hove.

101.2 Councillor Meadows Chairman of the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee said she felt scrutiny was not afforded the importance it should have under the Council's Cabinet arrangements.

101.3 She stated in strong terms that she was not content with the level of Departmental officer support and said there were difficulties with agenda planning and late reports which impacted on the effectiveness of the Committee.

101.4 As Chairman of the Panel on Students in the Community Councillor Meadows said after an initial positive start to the Panel's work, the handling of the draft findings and recommendations had not gone well. In her view scrutiny had a 'long way to go.'

101.5 Councillor Randall spoke as Chairman of the Culture Tourism and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Panel on Environmental Industries. He said the officers he worked with were very helpful and supportive.

101.6 Scrutiny, holding to account and especially call-ins could be challenging for officers and Members but Councillor Randall expressed the view that that scrutiny had a positive role, giving an opportunity for improvement and contributing to policy development. Overview and scrutiny was in a good position to help work with different sections of the community.

101.7 Councillor Wakefield-Jarrett expressed the view that scrutiny was developing quite well. She asked for the City Inclusion Partnership minutes to be circulated to the Members.

101.8 Councillor Elgood thought that after a slow start the Overview and Scrutiny Commission had done good work particularly regarding the call-in of the cabinet decision on the Ice Rink and scrutiny of the budget.

101.9 Councillor Older, Chairman of the Children and Young Peoples' Overview and Scrutiny Committee stated she had no specific problems in an area of work that was new to her and she had very good support. Councillor Duncan as representative of the second minority group was now being invited to CYPOSC agenda planning meetings as well as Councillor McCaffery.

101.10 Councillor Cobb said she felt it was helpful to have the relevant senior officers present at member meetings.

101.11 The Chairman said OSC did not have problems although major documents at short notice are a challenge.

101.12 RESOLVED: (1) that the work of the scrutiny panels be noted
(2) That officers be instructed to provide six-monthly updates on the work of the Panels

102. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PLAN

102.1 The Commission noted the work plan.

103. ITEMS TO BE TAKEN FORWARD

103.1 There were none

The meeting concluded at 5.35pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of