

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION
4.00PM 16 MARCH 2010
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL
MINUTES

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

PART ONE

79. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

79a Declarations of Substitutes

There were none

79b Declarations of Interests

There were none

79c Declaration of Party Whip

There were none.

79d 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.

80. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 26 JANUARY 2010

80.1 **RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2010 be agreed and signed by the Chairman.

81. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

81. There were none

82. PUBLIC QUESTIONS/LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS/NOTICES OF MOTION REFERRED FROM COUNCIL

82. There were none.

83. TARGETED BUDGET MANAGEMENT 2009 - 2010 MONTH 9

83.1 The Acting Assistant Director, Financial Services, introduced the Targeted Budget Monitoring (TBM) Month 9 report that had been presented to 11 February Cabinet meeting.

83.2 He answered questions on the effect of the suspension of parking charges during the adverse weather in January, funding for building schools for the future, concessionary fares and vacancy management.

83.3 RESOLVED; that the report be noted.

84. THE COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN

84.1 The Head of Democratic Services gave a presentation on the Forward Plan and Late Items List using the browsing and interaction options using the e-version on the Council's website. He demonstrated the links to the reports decisions and minutes, and Forward Plan history. The information was kept updated; all Councillors were e-mailed with new Forward Plans, and all Councillors could opt in to a notification when a new decision was made.

84.2 Edition 22 appeared as the appendix in the agenda papers. Edition 23, covering the period from April to July 2010 had now been published; on 15 March. Late items were those that had been notified but has missed the publication date; these are published as soon as they area received.

84.3 Members noted that the website appeared to be aimed at members of the public and made a number of suggestions to help make the Forward Plan more user-friendly:

- a) To name the Plan 'Forward Plan of key decisions' to clarify what it is; and indicate that previous decisions can also be viewed on earlier Forward Plans
- b) To include a link to the Forward Plan on the front page of the Council's website to make it easier to find
- c) To add a section on decision-making and democracy near or at the front page
- d) To add a brief synopsis on the gist of the decision made, or to be made
- e) To 'Headline' some of the key decisions taken
- f) To enable a search based on road name as well as Ward name
- g) To enable a search based on topic area
- h) To include more detail on reasons for deferral or lateness

84.4 Members noted that no key decisions delegated to officers had been included in recent editions of the Forward Plan

84.5 RESOLVED; that officers be requested to progress development of the Council's Forward Plan as minuted where possible.

85. PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

85.1 The Head of Scrutiny introduced the report on the Scrutiny Panel Annual Work Programme. He told the meeting that the Adult Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee had recently established a scrutiny panel on autism which did not appear on the list of Panels, tabled at this meeting.

85.2 With regard to urgent issues at report paragraph 3.5, he clarified that each overview and scrutiny committee could in exceptional circumstances, establish urgent reviews (which may involve re-scheduling their work plans) without the agreement of OSC. This was agreed by the Commission.

85.3 Members acknowledged that the timeframes for scrutiny reviews varied according to the subject matter etc, but suggested an indicative time limit of around 3 months after the final meeting, for scrutiny Panels to report back to the Parent Committee. This would expedite the flow of information into the Council's policy-making. It was noted that according to the Constitution the Executive Member or Cabinet was to consider a scrutiny report within two months of it being submitted.

85.4 The Commission agreed that inviting non-Council representatives to serve on Scrutiny Panels was a positive development. This expertise was unpaid. It was intended to continue to involve independent reps where possible.

85.5 Members discussed managing public expectations and allocating priorities to different subject matters based on the criteria at report paragraph 3.12.

85.6 RESOLVED: That subject to the provision for urgent business in minute 85.2, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission agree a process for developing an annual work programme for scrutiny panels as outlined in this report.

86. BUDGET SCRUTINY FEEDBACK

86.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission considered feedback on the scrutiny of budget proposals 2010-2011 and commented on the budget scrutiny processes for this year.

86.2 Members stated that officers had been helpful in providing budget information in good time to specially convened meetings of each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Scrutiny comments had been taken into account in the final budget papers and this also was a positive step compared with 2009 – 2010 budget scrutiny.

86.3 It was acknowledged that the adverse weather in January had caused disruption to some of the budget scrutiny meetings.

86.4 Members asked for early information to be available for the 2011/12 budget and noted that budget scrutiny meetings might need to be arranged accordingly.

86.5 A key recommendation from OSC had been for Equalities Impact Assessments to be carried out for future budget rounds.

86.6 It was noted that services were increasingly being provided from pooled budgets and strategic commissioning; for the future, it was requested that scrutiny of budget processes for partnership organisations be included in scrutiny work programmes.

86.6 **RESOLVED;** (1) the improved process for scrutinising budget proposals 2010-2011 be welcomed

(2) budget scrutiny in future be extended to partner organisations.

87. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PLAN

87.1 The Head of Scrutiny introduced the report on the Scrutiny Panel Annual Work Programme.

87.2 Noting the large number of items scheduled for the following OSC meeting, 27 April, it was agreed to postpone three reports: Climate Change, Complaints and Community Engagement Framework.

87.3 **RESOLVED;** that the report be noted

88. ITEMS TO GO FORWARD TO CABINET MEMBER, CABINET OR FULL COUNCIL

88.1 There were none

The meeting concluded at 4.55pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of