

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION
4.00PM 7 SEPTEMBER 2010
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL
MINUTES

Present: Councillors Mitchell (Chairman); Pidgeon (Deputy Chairman), Elgood, Kennedy, Morgan, Older, Peltzer Dunn and Wakefield-Jarrett

PART ONE

24. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

24.1 The Chairman reminded the meeting that the proceedings were being webcast and recorded.

24a Declarations of Substitutes

There were none.

24b Declarations of Interests

Councillor Elgood declared a personal interest in item 29, as he had been a candidate in the General Election.

25c Declaration of Party Whip

There were none.

26d 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.

25. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 JULY 2010

25.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 20 July were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

26. CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS

26.1 The Chairman welcomed everyone back after the summer break.

27. PUBLIC QUESTIONS/LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS/RREFERRALS FROM COMMITTEES/ NOTICES OF MOTION REFERRED FROM COUNCIL

27.1 There were none

28. REPORT OF THE DEMENTIA SELECT COMMITTEE

28.1 Councillor Pat Hawkes, Chairman of the Select Committee on Dementia introduced the report of findings and recommendations. The report would pass to the Joint Commissioning Board; was the first example of how the scrutiny function will inform the Intelligent Commissioning process.

28.2 The Select Committee was a timely scrutiny linked with both the recent national dementia strategy and the re-design of the local Dementia Care pathway. Councillor Hawkes emphasised that dementia touched many people in some way but until relatively recently it was not talked about. The role of carers was especially important, she said.

28.3 It was essential that the issue of dementia returned to scrutiny not only for tracking on-going progress against the recommendations, but also to be kept informed more generally.

28.4 Councillor Hawkes thanked all the Members and officers who supported the Select Committee.

28.5 Members of the Commission welcomed the report and discussed awareness and communications about dementia, advantages of early diagnosis of dementia, the role of General Practitioners, the role of carers and types of support and care available.

28.6 **RESOLVED:** that the Select Committee report on dementia be endorsed.

29. ELECTION PROCESSES

29.1 The Head of Life Events, gave a presentation on the conduct of the May 2010 General Election and the measures taken to ensure a safe result in the three tightly-fought constituencies. He explained the scale of the event and the large amount of activity in the period leading up to the Election.

29.2 Temporary staff were trained to staff a mini-call centre to answer questions on key issues such as the location of polling stations, queries on polling cards and postal votes. A lesson learnt from this election was the large increase in email volume so extra capacity may be needed in future to give a faster reply to e-mails.

29.3 Enough ballot papers were printed to allow for a 100% voter turn-out; this avoided problems that had been experienced by some other local authorities.

29.4 Regarding postal votes; the legislation had changed since the last parliamentary election, making the verifying of postal votes more complex. This was to prevent abuse. However it meant that the process of dealing with postal votes takes longer. A trained team verified and processed 100% of postal votes once the voting papers started to be received back.

29.5 On polling day postal votes can be received at polling stations until 10pm. The opening and verifying process is open to candidates and agents. In the event the total number of postal votes had risen to 32,000. The large number of postal votes received coupled with the longer processes for verification caused the declaration to take longer than it had done previously at a parliamentary election.

29.6 Hand-delivery of voting cards by experienced staff had been found to be preferable to using the Royal Mail.

29.7 All polling stations should have been accessible however there had been some difficulties with wheelchair access in some stations; advice and guidance had been provided by the Health and Safety and Risk Assessment Teams. The Returning Officer (the Chief Executive) and Deputy Returning Officers had visited numerous polling stations on polling day. A full review of polling stations is due to be done in 2011 – 2012.

29.8 The 65% turnout had been slightly higher than the national average.

29.9 The Head of Life Events also described the pro-active work under way to help increase voter registration; for example with Universities, Homes in Multiple Occupancy and residential care homes and introduction of registration via phone and internet.

29.10 Answering questions the Assistant Director, Customers & Information (Deputy Returning Officer) welcomed the scrutiny and stated that everybody had worked hard to deliver three safe results for the City, and that was the most important outcome. From the outset the Returning Officers had expected that the count would take a long time. Postal votes took time to verify. However the thorough election planning process meant that three safe results had been delivered, and there had been no re-counts or other issues encountered by some local authorities. The time taken was around the national average.

29.11 It was agreed that communication at the count could have been improved ; it was a learning point for the future. Candidates, agents, poll and count staff and others had all been invited to provide feedback, and the responses had been very helpful.

29.12 Of 145 polling stations, only 3 were temporary buildings.

29.13 The elections team would try to resolve known issues before May 2011 local elections. These included: using a car park nearer to the Brighton Centre if count staff are likely to leave in the dark; the process for issuing replacement polling cards; use of temporary buildings as polling stations/ use of sustainable electricity generators.. Officers would provide an update on Individual Voter Registration.

29.14 The AD replied to questions about the Council's liaising with adjoining constituencies and responding to inappropriate behaviour at polling stations. She said legislation was in place for anonymous voting in some circumstances

29.15 She said that it was always the decision of the Returning Officer to decide whether to hold the count on the day of the election or the following day. He had personal responsibility to deliver a safe result for the election, but did listen carefully to views before making his decision.

29.14 **RESOLVED** 1) that the information be noted

2) That an informal update be provided to Members on voter registration

30. UPDATE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES - HOSC

30.1 Councillor Garry Peltzer Dunn Chairman of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee described the work of HOSC in the past 12 months.

30.2 HOSC had concluded scrutinising the NHS 'Fit For the Future' plans to reconfigure acute healthcare in West Sussex which had involved joint working with scrutiny members from West Sussex, East Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire and Portsmouth.

30.3 Other issues investigated included

- South Downs Health Trust's integration with West and East Sussex community care providers to form a Sussex wide community care trust;
- Local NHS trusts' applications for Foundation Trust status;
- Local dental services;
- Breast screening services;
- NHS Brighton & Hove's annual operating plan;
- Out Of Hours GP services
- Hospital car parking.

30.4 Issues on the horizon included:

- Plans to reconfigure Sussex mental health services, moving more activity from acute hospitals to community settings;

- The '3T' development of the Royal Sussex County Hospital, turning the hospital into a regional hub for specialist services, trauma care and teaching;
- Changes outlined in the recent health white paper: 'Equity and Excellence,' including the abolition of PCTs and SHAs, GP commissioning and the creation of local authority hosted Health and Well-Being boards to co-ordinate GP commissioning and drive the public health agenda.

30.5 For reasons set out in the following report, Item 31, scrutiny of alcohol-related hospital admissions would be delayed.

31. SCRUTINY PANEL ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

31.1 The Head of Scrutiny introduced the report on potential subjects for scrutiny review within OSC remit, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report and the Addendum following consultation during the Summer.

31.2 Members discussed these in detail and agreed that a scrutiny panel on 'A Living Wage for Brighton & Hove' would be established first. When this had been completed 'Pro-active Sharing of Information on Vulnerable People' would be investigated by a further Panel.

31.3 Other topics regarded as suitable for inclusion on the work plan included: Council Buildings, Council Forward Plan; Better Ties Between City partners and the City Universities; Councillor Ward Surgery Review; Review of BME communities to get their voice heard and How/When the Council publishes information plus the licence terms it uses.

31.4 The Commission considered that other avenues were more suitable for reviewing the Future of Pride.

31.5 RESOLVED;

- (1) That Scrutiny Panels are established under OSC own remit on i) A Living Wage followed by ii) Sharing of Information on Vulnerable People
- (2) That the consultation responses be noted for panel work to be taken forward to individual scrutiny committees for agreement based upon appendix 2
- (3) That work on the panel on Alcohol Related Hospital Admissions be delayed
- (4) That the panel update attached as appendix 4 be noted.

32. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME

32.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission noted the Annual Work Programme.

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

33.1 It was noted that the report of the Select Committee on Dementia would be passed to the joint Commissioning Board.

The meeting concluded at 6.00pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of