

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ORGANISATION COMMITTEE
(URGENCY MEETING)**

5.30PM- MONDAY 30 JUNE 2003

**COMMITTEE ROOM 1
BRIGHTON TOWN HALL**

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Hamilton (Chair), Councillors Allen, Carden, Edmond-Smith, K Norman, Meegan, Simson, Watkins, Williams and Young.

Officers: Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis (Head of Law), Tony Miller (Director, Communications and Democratic Services), Jude Tyrie (Voluntary Sector Unit Manager), Mary van Beinum (Scrutiny Support Officer)

PART ONE

ACTION

1 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1A Declarations of Substitutes

<u>Substitute Councillor</u> Councillor David Watkins Davidson	<u>For Councillor</u> Councillor Dawn
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1B Declarations of Interest

Councillors Watkins, Edmond-Smith and Carden declared personal interests as, respectively, a member of the steering committee of Brunswick Older Peoples' Committee, an invited member of the Hanover Management Committee and on the committee of the Portslade Community Project.

1C Exclusion of Press and Public

1.1 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

100A(3) or 100 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

1.2 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting during consideration of any items on the agenda.

2. REQUEST FOR CALL-IN OF P&R DECISION, 18TH JUNE 2003 RE: DISCRETIONARY GRANTS PROGRAMME 2003 –2004

2.1 The Head of Law pointed out that this was a meeting of the full Overview and Scrutiny Organisation Committee and not as stated on the printed agenda, an urgency sub-committee. An OSOC urgency sub-committee is not established.

2.2 The meeting agreed that all urgency meetings set up to consider items such as call-in requests should be open to all 11 Members of OSOC.

2.3 With the agreement of the Chair Councillor Watkins put forward reasons for the call-in request submitted by Councillor Dawn Davidson (for report see minute book)

2.4 Councillor Watkins had chaired the discretionary grants scrutiny panel which had reported its recommendations in August 2002. The Panel recommended (amongst other things) a revised timetable for the appraisal of applications in future which should include consideration of factors including the extent and timing of Member involvement. The Panel had been reassured that in the new council committee system a cross-party committee would consider funding recommendations in future.

2.5 The response by the Executive committee, agreed in September 2002 accepted the need for a revised timetable for appraisals, to ensure full member involvement.

2.6 Councillor Watkins said the process had run very well in the current round and he welcomed the setting up of a cross-party Member Advisory Panel. However the Advisory Panel should have had the opportunity to consider the details of all 86 outline bids, not only the 58 that had been selected in the Stage one process.

2.7 The Policy and Resources Committee report did not include reasons why 28 of the initial grants applicants had been unsuccessful at stage one.

2.8 Councillor Watkins said the decision should therefore be reconsidered as it went against the spirit of the scrutiny recommendations and executive response regarding member

involvement. In his view an additional meeting of the Advisory Group to look at all the outline bids would not cause a delay to the current grants round but would demonstrate 'full member involvement' in the process as agreed.

2.9 The Committee discussed fully the call-in request. The Director of Communications and Democratic Services told the meeting that the next scheduled meeting of Policy and Resources Committee would be on 16th July, that the revised assessment process had been carried out very thoroughly in line with recommendations of both the Best Value Review and the Scrutiny review and had been very widely accepted within the community and voluntary sector. A delay could cause problems with the schedule for assessing full bids.

2.10 The Voluntary Sector Unit Manager set out the tight schedule not only for the initial assessments, which had been carried out in line with the scrutiny panel recommendations, but also for the second stage. It had not been possible to liaise with Members during the period preceding the postal election. Full reasons for recommendations relating to each outline bid were nevertheless available to Members, all of whom had been invited to ask questions on all the grant applications. It was inappropriate to set out in a public document the reasons why an organisation had not been successful at the first stage.

2.11 The Head of Law said that the Policy and Resources Committee had unfettered discretion including the option to reject the report's recommendations and to ask for more consultation before making a decision on the outline grants applications. The decision had therefore been made legally. The meaning of 'full Member involvement' was not clearly defined.

2.12 Members considered the options; to agree or reject the call-in request and/or other possible ways forward.

2.13 The Committee were generally pleased with the revised process but felt however that it would have been advisable for the cross-party Advisory Group to have been involved sooner. The Committee did not wish to delay the grants assessments for 2004 - 2007.

2.14 Officers and the relevant Member with responsibility for discretionary grants should still in future draw up the lists of those to be invited to the full bid stage and those whose applications would be recommended for refusal, and the cross-party Member Advisory Group should have the opportunity to suggest any amendments before the recommendations are reported to the Executive Committee.

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ORGANISATION URGENCY SUB-COMMITTEE**

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2.15 Following a vote the Committee agreed not to call in the decision and OSOC would instead write to P&R with recommendations for future grants funding rounds.

2.16 **RESOLVED;** (1) That the decision be not called in

MvB/LH

2.17 (2) That a letter be sent to Policy and Resources committee with a recommendation on the future involvement of the Member Advisory Group in the discretionary grants programme. (Letter attached)

The meeting was followed by an informal OSOC scoping meeting for the annual work programme which concluded at 7.10pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2003

To the Chair of Policy and Resources Committee

RE: CALL-IN REQUEST, ITEM 11 (DISCRETIONARY GRANTS PROGRAMME 2004 – 2007) POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE, 18TH JUNE 2003

As you are aware the Overview and Scrutiny Organisation Committee held an urgency meeting on June 30th to consider a call-in request submitted on June 24th by Councillor Dawn Davidson relating to the Policy and Resources Committee decision on 18th June on the discretionary grants programme 2004/2007.

Members discussed the call-in request, the background to it and evidence from Councillor Watkins who chaired the Discretionary Scrutiny Panel (November 2001 – August 2002), together with further information from the officers including the possible effects of delaying the decision.

OSOC felt that the overall process of appraising the outline bids was greatly improved in comparison with the previous round of main grant applications and were pleased with progress achieved in line with recommendations of both the Best Value review and the scrutiny panel.

Following discussion OSOC did not agree to refer the decision back for re-consideration. In this way the current round of grants applications would suffer no undue delay.

Nevertheless OSOC agreed to make a recommendation regarding the involvement of the Members Advisory Group in future grants funding rounds.

It would have been preferable for the cross-party member advisory group that had now been established, to have overseen the assessment of the initial outline bids as well as the full bids. The advisory group should therefore have been established and actively involved earlier in the process.

Officers and the relevant Member with responsibility for discretionary grants should in future still draw up the list of those to be invited to the full bid stage and those whose applications would be recommended for refusal, but the Member Advisory Group should have the opportunity to suggest any amendments before the recommendations are reported to the Executive Committee.

Councillor Les Hamilton
Chair OSOC
3rd July 2003

