

Brighton & Hove City Council

City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

4.00pm 19 September 2023

Council Chamber, Hove Town Hall

Minutes

Present: Councillor Rowkins (Chair) Fowler (Deputy Chair), Pickett (Opposition Spokesperson), Alexander, Burden, Galvin, Meadows, Muten, Robinson and Winder

Other Members present: Councillors

Part One

11 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

11(a) Declarations of substitutes

11.1 Councillor Meadows was present as substitute for Councillor Theobald.

11(b) Declarations of interest

11.2 There were none.

11(c) Exclusion of press and public

11.3 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the Act"), the Committee considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during an item of business on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present during that item, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information (as defined in section 100A(3) of the Act) or exempt information (as defined in section 100(I) of the Act).

11.4 **Resolved-** That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting.

12 MINUTES

12.1. **Resolved-** That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as the correct record.

13 CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS

13.1 The Chair provided the following communications:

“Last week, I had the pleasure of speaking at the launch of Brighton & Hove’s City Downland Estate Plan at Waterhall, attended by many here in the room today. The plan itself is a rare thing indeed – a long-term vision that enjoys support from a large number of stakeholders. Few people realise that 44% of Brighton & Hove sits in the South Downs National Park, and most of it is publicly owned. As custodians of this stunning landscape, we have a great deal of responsibility, and incredible opportunities in terms of carbon neutrality, biodiversity, sustainable local food production and public access to nature. 78% of the Downland Estate is farmland – in fact as an authority, I’m told we own more farmland than East and West Sussex combined – and a key part of the plan is to move away from the intensive farming methods of the late 20th century towards a more sustainable future. I’m very pleased to be working with members of the Downland Advisory Panel, and their expertise and experience will be crucial in meeting the plan’s objectives.

Today we are bringing a report on Waste Reduction and Recycling to the committee. Myself and administration members recently visited three of the key sites that make up our waste management infrastructure; the Materials Recovery Facility in Hollingdean, the Energy Recovery Facility in Newhaven and the In-Vessel Composting Facility in East Sussex. It was an illuminating visit for many reasons, but one of the most striking things about it was seeing the amount of contamination rolling past us on the conveyor belts and the number of people employed to pick it out. It was yet another reminder that we have a long way to go. Our contamination rate stands at almost 14%, compared to an average of 5%. Our recycling rate – the percentage of our overall waste collected for recycling – stood at only 30.1% in 2021-22, leaving us languishing in the doldrums of the DEFRA league tables. I can report today that the recycling rate fell further to 28.3% in 2022-23. Things have clearly been going in the wrong direction.

Today we will be asking committee to approve the introduction of metal lids into the glass recycling stream – the first in a series of moves this administration will be making to expand the provision in Brighton & Hove. We will also be seeking approval to begin a focussed, ongoing communication and messaging campaign to reduce contamination, increase recycling and bring the amount of waste we produce as a city down. It is little wonder we have such a contamination problem. People move to the city, almost always from places with better recycling than we have here, and are faced with scarce information and bins with very little meaningful guidance or colour-coding. I’m please to say that we have now created a new Waste Minimisation Officer position within the council, and that officer started yesterday. Improving this service is a top priority for this committee and we are pleased to have begun the process.

Since this committee last met, we have continued to reopen and refurbish public toilets around the city, including 8 more in our parks, taking the total number of available toilets to 33. There are still sites that remain closed, most notably at The Level and Royal Pavilion Gardens, and we are actively working on plans to restore toilet provision at those vital locations as soon as possible.

Finally, at our last committee meeting, members approved further funding for the playground refurbishment programme, the benefits of which we have seen during the summer, with sites like Top Park on Whitehawk Way now boasting much improved equipment, and much better inclusion for children with disabilities. Work has now begun at Queen’s Park and Hollingdean Park and I’m very excited to take my son to those playgrounds when they’re completed”.

14 CALL OVER

14.1 All items on the agenda were reserved for discussion.

15 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

There were none.

16 ITEMS REFERRED FROM COUNCIL

(a) Petitions

(1) Re-open the Pavilion Garden Toilets

16.1. The Committee considered a petition referred from Full Council that requested the re-opening of the Pavilion Garden toilets.

16.2. The Chair provided the following response:

“Thank you for your petition.

You will know from our early action on getting toilets reopen that we view these facilities as a priority for our residents and visitors.

I completely share your frustration around the delay with regard to the toilets at the Pavilion Gardens, and let me assure you that this is not due to a lack of will on our part. We need to be able to open the toilets in a way that is safe for both the public and our staff. The concerns around antisocial behaviour – which, by the way, are based on previous incidents including assaults, as well as weapons and needles being found – mean that we can’t risk opening them without a consistent security presence, which is of course very expensive. As you are no doubt aware, the council is currently in a serious financial position and so we need to think creatively.

The latest news is that we asked Royal Pavilion Museums Trust to share some of the responsibility for these toilets in order to help us get them open, but I have heard yesterday that unfortunately they are not able to do so.

We are still actively exploring potential solutions to getting the site reopen.

In the meantime, we have reached an agreement with Brighton Dome and, from October 2nd, members of the public can use the toilets there.

The signage at the Royal Pavilion Garden toilet will be updated and improved to advise members of the public where the alternative provision is and how to access it. This will be a large, specifically-designed sign on the building, rather than the current signage”.

16.3. **Resolved-** That the Committee note the petition.

(b) Flooding at Park Crescent

16.4. The Committee considered a deputation referred from Full Council that requested various actions to combat flooding on Park Crescent.

16.5. The Chair provided the following response:

Thank you for your deputation.

The update I have had from officers is that they now estimate the event that caused the flooding in June this year was a 1 in 100-year event. They inform me that the highways

drainage system is capable of handling a 1 in 10-year event, and consequently the system was overwhelmed. However, what is clear is that these extreme events are fast becoming more regular, with what was a 1 in 10 is now happening every couple of years.

I'm told the introduction of more gullies to Elm Grove will not help with such extreme events, as they discharge into the Southern Water sewer, which will also become overwhelmed in such an event.

That said, I'm aware that the June event was not an isolated incident, and that other floods have happened in the area. I know there will be anxiety among residents and so in the immediate term, I have asked for drain clearance to be carried out in the area as a priority.

I do need to just reiterate, as I did at Full Council, that residents should not remove manhole covers, as that risks allowing sewage to spill out on to the street, as well as creating a hazard in the form of an open hole obscured by surface water.

The long-term solution in the area will be found further up Elm Grove by taking water out of the system using a sustainable drainage solution. We also need to take a strategic view of the wider area in order to manage surface water in a way that is resilient to more regular extreme events.

16.6. The Chair moved a motion to request an officer report on the matter.

16.7. Councillor Galvin seconded the motion.

16.8. The Chair put the motion to the vote that carried.

16.9. **Resolved-** That the Committee receive a report on the matter.

17 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

There were none.

18 CITY ENVIRONMENT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE

18.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Economy, Environment & Culture that provided an update on the City Environment Improvement Programme since the previous update in March 2023.

18.2 Councillors Robinson, Burden, Pickett, Muten, Winder, Fowler and Meadows asked questions on the report and contributed to the debate.

18.3 **Resolved-**

1) That Committee notes the report and the Programme Update in Appendix 1.

19 GRAFFITI TAGGING REDUCTION STRATEGY - ROUTE TO IMPROVEMENT

19.1. The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Economy, Environment & Culture that provided an overview of the activities delivered since the Graffiti Tagging Reduction Strategy was agreed. The report is also sought approval to undertake a

public consultation and a series of engagement events to take steps to improve the Strategy and its delivery.

19.2. Councillors Meadows, Pickett, Winder, Robinson and Burden asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

19.3. **Resolved-**

- 1) That Committee notes the activities completed to deliver the Graffiti Reduction Strategy as set out in the report and Appendix 1.
- 2) That Committee agrees for a public consultation and a series of engagement events to take steps to improve the Strategy and its delivery as set out in paragraphs 3.31 to 3.38.
- 3) That Committee notes a further report will be brought to a future meeting following the public consultation and engagement events with a refreshed Strategy for approval.

20 WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING

20.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Economy, Environment & Culture that set out the council's plan for achieving Waste Minimisation and outlined the campaign to improve messaging and education relating to waste and recycling in Brighton & Hove. The report also provides an update on introduction of the government's Environment Act and Waste Prevention Programme and highlights recent changes to recycling services in the city, including the ability to recycle metal lids and an increase in the number of carton recycling bins.

20.2 Councillors Fowler, Alexander, Meadows, Robinson, Winder and Pickett asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

20.3 **Resolved-**

- 1) That Committee notes the report and Appendix 1.
- 2) That Committee approves the introduction of metal lids from glass bottles and jars into glass recycling collections and further notes that this will be communicated to residents at set out at paragraph 3.15 of the report.
- 3) That Committee approves the start of a concerted Council information and behaviour change campaign to reduce the volume of waste produced across Brighton & Hove, to increase the levels of reuse, to increase the levels of recycling and reduce contamination of recycling bins as described in paragraphs 3.20 and 3.21 of the report.

21 ITEMS REFERRED FOR FULL COUNCIL

21.1 No items were referred for information.

The meeting concluded at 5.30pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of