

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION
4.00PM 20 JANUARY 2009
BANQUETING SUITE, HOVE TOWN HALL
MINUTES

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

PART ONE

66. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

66a Declarations of Substitutes

Councillor Warren Morgan was substituting for Councillor Anne Meadows and Councillor Watkins for Councillor Elgood.

66b Declarations of Interests

There were none.

66c Declaration of Party Whip

There were none.

66d 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.

67. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

67.1 **RESOLVED;** that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December be agreed and signed by the Chairman.

68. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 68.1 The Chairman pointed out that the meeting was being webcast.
- 68.2 The Chairman introduced the new Head of Scrutiny, Tom Hook who said he was looking forward to working with Members and senior officers in developing Overview and Scrutiny at Brighton & Hove.
- 68.3 Referring to the report presented to the 13 January 2009 Governance Committee on the 'Communities in Control' White Paper the Chairman said the response to the Government consultations, including dealing with appeals from petitioners to local authorities, had been sent without the involvement of the Commission. (Governance Committee Report Appendix 1, Q8 refers)
- 68.4 The Commission agreed to ask for a more detailed report including a general update on current legislation regarding overview and scrutiny.
- 68.5 A date was being arranged for the first scoping meeting of the 4-Member Scrutiny Panel on Dignity and Respect at Work.

69. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- 69.1 There were none.

70. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS/NOTICES OF MOTION REFERRED FROM COUNCIL

There were none.

71. PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT REPORT: QUARTER TWO: 2008 - 2009

71.1 The Head of Performance and Improvement introduced the performance improvement report for Quarter 2 of 2008 /2009 and gave further information on progress where performance was not on track, denoted in colour as 'red' direction of travel. More details including the action plans were available.

71.2 Members were concerned about road traffic deaths, and the potential impact of the recession on key services including drug and alcohol issues, older people's services and on voluntary organisations. Indicators LI 23 - bringing empty properties back into use; NI 163 – working age population qualifications and NI 112 - under 18 conception; were also discussed.

71.3 **RESOLVED**; that officers be asked to report back to the Commission on the potential effects of the recession on performance to include consideration of voluntary, statutory and business sectors.

72. DISCUSSION WITH CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AFFAIRS, EQUALITIES AND INCLUSION

72.1 The Chairman welcomed Councillor Dee Simson to the meeting.

72.2 Councillor Simson outlined her roles which included community relations and equalities and inclusion; these were challenging and involved all services areas. She reminded the meeting that although the local economy was relatively strong, the Reducing Inequalities Review indicated that there were pockets of deprivation in all areas of the city. Prevention work was especially important, such as employment and training for young people and reducing teenage conceptions. A great deal of work was done in the City by the Voluntary Sector.

72.3 The Community Engagement Framework had now been agreed and the Social Enterprise Strategy, with which she was partly involved, had been launched.

72.4 The City Inclusion Partnership had been established and would be taking a strategic overview of inclusion across the City. It would work with the new Equalities Coalition, which would focus on more individual, day-to-day issues.

72.5 Councillor Simson said was pleased that the Communities Team of officers was now established. She had taken over the Community Safety remit, which would give greater coordination with City Inclusion matters within the Cabinet.

72.6 Some Members were concerned at possible effects of transferring funding from wider areas traditionally regarded as deprived to individually targeted initiatives.

72.7 Answering questions Councillor Simson said she did not anticipate that her Chairmanship of the Community Safety Forum would change in this administration, and this would give more continuity than before. A new analysis and data system Brighton & Hove Local Information System BHLIS, would shortly be able to identify the types and areas of deprivation in the City to help enable targeting of services.

72.8 Asked for further details on the potential weakening of the voluntary sector and possible effect of the recession on the Social Enterprise Strategy and funding of youth support work, Councillor Simson said these lay more directly within other cabinet portfolios.

72.9 The BHLIS data system would shortly enable searches by postcode and by ward.

72.10 The Chairman said that the Commission would be interested to hear more about the Equalities Coalition in due course, and thanked Councillor Simson for her interesting update on her wide and complex remit.

73. EQUALITIES AND INCLUSION

73.1 The Head of Equalities and Inclusion introduced the report which had been requested by the Commission of the key achievements over the last six months. The draft remit of the City Inclusion Partnership and its Work Programme that had been discussed at its meeting on 12 January, had been circulated to the Members of the Commission.

- 73.2 Peer assessment for the Equalities standard would be carried out at the end of March and officers were confident in their aiming to achieve level 3. All Council departments were working on their Equalities Impact Assessments to include in their business planning processes. The publicity campaign for the new Equalities and Inclusion Policy would soon be launched.
- 73.3 The Commission was pleased to be told that more stringent regulations meant that with the Licensing Team, A-boards and other obstructions on narrow pavements could now be dealt with. This had been a long-standing issue for some disabilities groups and individuals.
- 73.4 Councillor Simson congratulated the Equalities and Inclusion Team on its overall work and recent achievement of top local authority ranking and third ranking overall in the annual Stonewall workplace equality index.
- 73.5 The Head of Equalities and Inclusion answered questions about bikes chained to railings, badly parked cars and wrongly-sited dustbins which caused obstructions to pedestrians; disabilities training for all staff; Equalities Impacts Assessments (EIAs) and frequency of City Inclusion Partnership (CIP) meetings.
- 73.6 These concerns would be forwarded; EIAs were done for all policy areas and all services were Equalities Impact Assessed every three years. The CIP meets quarterly and the Equalities Coalition would meet more frequently.
- 73.7 The Equalities Coalition was welcomed by the Commission, though some Members felt that some individuals and organisations would benefit from more publicity of events and reassurance of the actions being taken.
- 73.8 The Head of Equalities and Inclusion said CIP would be producing its own additional publicity of events and minutes of meetings.
- 73.9 The Chairman welcomed the report and the new Involvement Officer post. She said it was good to have sight of the CIP work programme and that different partners were taking the lead.
- 73.10 **RESOLVED**; that a further report be requested to a future meeting.

74. OSC WORK PROGRAMME

- 74.1 The Commission agreed to request a report on preparedness in addressing risks and opportunities of a changing climate, and noted that the report of the Scrutiny Review of Dual Diagnosis was in its final stages before being reported to the Commission for endorsement.

75. ITEMS TO GO FORWARD TO CABINET MEMBER, CABINET OR COUNCIL MEETING

There were none

The meeting concluded at 5.05pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of