

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.00PM 22 JUNE 2009

BANQUETING ROOM, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Morgan (Chairman); Davis, Drake, Rufus, Wells, Older and Kitcat

PART ONE

1. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1a Declarations of Substitutes

Councillor Averil Older was acting as substitute for Councillor Tony Janio; Councillor Jason Kitcat was acting as substitute for Councillor Ian Davey. Councillor Smart gave his apologies.

1b Declarations of Interests

There were none.

1c Declaration of Party Whip

There were none.

15d 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.

2. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 MARCH 2009

3.1 The minutes of the meeting were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

3.2 **RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2009 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

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

4.1 The Chairman stated that this was the first letter that the Committee had received and said he had asked officers to prepare a brief response in time for this meeting. Councillor Morgan invited the wildlife group representatives to speak about the letter.

4.2 Mr Bangs said in his opinion the decision to end the grass collection service on mown conservation grasslands was a stealth cut related to increasing costs, which had been expected to be a one-off only. The increase in budget for mowing amenity grasslands was welcomed but the reduction in downland conservation management had adverse implications for core wildlife sites; however ‘the circle could be squared.’ National policy encouraging social enterprises had not been taken into account in tendering for composting services and the City’s application for Biosphere reserve status would be badly affected, he said.

4.3 Ms Taylor of the Friends of Hollingbury and Burstead Woods referred to the internationally rare chalk grassland supporting a wonderful biodiversity. She said for 20 years the Council had worked with the voluntary local conservation groups to conserve and enhance this but grazing was not suitable for every situation. Ms Taylor highlighted some problems of conflicting interests for example separating sheep and dogs, costs of fencing, shepherding, moving sheep, removal of droppings and questioned whether costings for grazing had been compared with other options.

4.4 Ms Taylor said the issue needed to be addressed urgently as biodiversity would reduce as a thatch of uncollected mowings built up. Ms Taylor outlined a composting service used on the Isle of Wight and handed details to the scrutiny support officer.

4.5 Councillor Rufus commented that continuity of care was important and individual management plans were needed for each site. He remarked that the City did not have a biodiversity action plan.

4.6 The Countryside Manager welcomed the opportunity to thank volunteers for their work and said that issues raised by the increase in costs of cutting collecting and composting sites, together with opportunities for increasing grazing of many sites along with continued mowing of others would be addressed in due course by the proposed draft grazing plan to be considered by the Cabinet Member.

4.7 **RESOLVED** That the Chairman write to Environment CMM on behalf of the Committee with a request urgently to review the downland mowing policy on a site by site basis.

5. NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

5.1 The Head of Environmental Health and Licensing introduced the report; all appendices were in the Members' rooms. He said the service was proud to achieve Beacon Status for managing the night time economy and were developing further; for example by entering into a national learning exchange held in York.

5.2 Members congratulated the Head of Environmental Health and Licensing and the Team, noting especially that noise complaints from licensed premises had declined and that Brighton & Hove was the only city outside London to operate a commercially viable night time bus service.

5.3 Mr Matthews of the Licensing Strategy Group outlined the consultations for instance, on limiting numbers of people gathering outside licensed premises.

5.4 The Chairman asked if, because of the low cost of alcohol in supermarkets and off licences, alcohol-related incidents were being displaced from pubs and clubs to homes. The Head of Environmental Health and Licensing said that the licensing strategy group had information that people were tending to stay at home and drink more. Domestic violence was often alcohol-related and alcohol was a very common factor in noise nuisance.

5.5 Existing controls were being applied effectively; these allowed for both a light touch and more serious powers with police back-up where necessary. Future licensing legislation was expected to take health impacts more into consideration.

5.6 Chief Inspector Mills said that police and trading standards officers were testing licensed premises for sales to underage people and where there were failures, awareness raising was done on site. Operation Park was part of a national programme dealing positively on younger people and alcohol focussing at known hotspots during the summer and at weekends.

5.7 Answering a question about the number of applications for new licenses the Head of Environmental Health and Licensing said this was continuing to increase. There had been 84 new applications in 2008 and this was part of a similar trend since 1980.

5.8 Police representatives were asked about zero tolerance to minor offences. Police Sergeant Wauchope summarised the approach used – from 'tone setting' in the early evening, wearing high visibility clothes and giving advice, to dispersing groups and arresting and dealing in custody with major offenders. Where possible there was intervention at an early stage and it was important for residents to give early information to the police.

5.9 The Committee discussed with Mr Gilada of the Taxi Forum/Sudanese Taxi Forum and Mr Matthews, the distribution of taxis at night and the role of marshals, formerly employed at taxi ranks to help arrange large taxi queues and assist disabled users. The Head of Environmental Health and Licensing referred to the potential for CCTV cameras in taxis as used in some other cities, for driver safety and as a community safety measure.

5.10 Committee noted that nationally Brighton & Hove was in the worst quintile for alcohol-related harm and that the east of the city was not as well served for night time buses as elsewhere.

5.11 The Chairman thanked all the contributors to the discussion.

5.12 RESOLVED – that the officers and Council’s partners be thanked for their work in achieving Beacon Status.

6. DRAFT WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

6.1 The Head of Strategy set out the context of the Waste Management Strategy and Consultation plan; landfill sites closing with no plans for new sites; European Union landfill tax and possible fines; national recycling targets; and costs lower for recycling than for disposal.

6.2 In 2002 – 2003 as much as 85% of household waste had been landfilled. Now, recyclables were collected from over 90% of households and household waste recycling in total had increased to 28%. The amount of household waste was reducing and the proportion sent to landfill had been reduced to 44%.

6.3 The Draft Waste Management Plan dealt with municipal waste which is mainly household waste. The council had no direct responsibility for business waste. The Strategy had been developed in-house with technical support from a research consultancy reviewing best practice from the UK and abroad.

6.4 If everyone recycled all the materials for which there is a collection service, the recycling rate would increase to 37%, he said.

6.5 Answering questions the Head of Strategy agreed the 32% recycling and composting target for 2012/2013 did not seem ambitious. However the targets were not aspirations and had been set based on what could realistically be achieved. People did want to recycle and compost more but the City produced relatively little garden waste.

6.6 For dealing with food waste further feasibility studies were to be done and this was welcomed. Independent research showed that food waste collection in areas of high density housing (city centres) was difficult, participation rates were higher in areas with fortnightly refuse collection and the best environmental option for dealing with food waste was not yet clear-cut.

6.7 Regarding the effect of communal bins on recycling rates; the collection rounds for refuse and for recycling did not match up geographically so it was difficult to make direct comparisons. Recycling rates were thought to be lower in the city centre which may partly be due to faster turnover of residents (who would not necessarily know how to access services) and lack of storage space for recycling boxes. Communal recycling was to be subject to a trial. This was welcomed by the Committee.

6.8 No date had yet been set for working with supermarkets; waste minimisation was one of the most difficult areas for the Council to influence.

6.9 Tetrapak constituted less than 1% of the waste stream and had to be transported to Scandinavia for processing.

6.10 The Committee acknowledged that local authorities were limited in the action they could take but some Members felt that the strategy should go further. Points made included:

- a) Too much emphasis was being put into communications which would not necessarily increase recycling rates
- b) Opposition to energy recovery
- c) Analysis of residual waste produced in Brighton & Hove did not match with assumptions about food waste analysis in the Beyond Waste revised life cycle analysis (Appendix 1 Policy 4)
- d) Future recycling/composting targets including for 2020/21 appear to be weak
- e) Strategy needs to be more adventurous if future extra EU landfill fines of £150 per tonne are to be avoided.
- f) Residents want to be engaged with the strategy and additional ways of doing this should be used.

6.11 Members were particularly concerned that the best use is made of food waste.

6.12 It was agreed that a map showing charity shops in the city would help to increase re-use.

6.13 Timing of commercial waste collections were discussed; 6am collections could wake residents although collections during the day would result in bins being on the street during busy times having a negative impact on business.

6.14 RESOLVED - that the above comments including dealing with food waste be forwarded for inclusion as the Committee's response to the Waste Management Strategy and Consultation Plan.

7. SPD LONDON ROAD JOINT SCRUTINY WORKSHOP SUMMARY

The summary of the SPD London Road joint scrutiny workshop was noted. The spelling of Councillor Melanie Davis was corrected.

8. SCRUTINY OF CRIME AND DISORDER MATTERS

8.1 The Lawyer introduced the report on Scrutiny of Crime and Disorder Matters recommended by Governance Committee and adopted by Council on 28/30 April respectively.

8.2 The Committee saw a role for a fully constituted overview and scrutiny body in holding to account the actions and decisions of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). Members felt the Community Safety Forum (CSF) was limited as to how it can hold the CDRP to account.

8.3 However Members were concerned about ECSOSC capacity to fulfil the full statutory obligations placed on them by this arrangement.

8.4 Members wished to avoid duplication between the CSF and the statutory Crime and Disorder Committee, and wasted effort stemming from (i) CDRP members having to account for themselves twice on the same issue; and (ii) the public or councillors having to table the same issue twice.

8.5 Following discussion it was agreed to amend recommendation 2.

8.6 **RESOLVED** – (1) that the report on establishing a Crime and Disorder Committee be noted
(2) that ECSOSC agree to an officer-led 6-month review of the practical implementation of CDRP scrutiny arrangements put in place by Council on 30 April 2009, and instruct officers to seek agreement from the CSF to the same.

9. ECSOSC DRAFT WORK PLAN 2009 - 2010

The draft work plan was noted.

10. ITEMS TO TAKE FORWARD TO CABINET MEMBER, CABINET OR COUNCIL

Item 4 – Downland Mowing, would be taken forward to Environment Cabinet Member Meeting.
Item 6 would be taken forward for inclusion as the Committee's response to the Waste Management Strategy and Consultation Plan.

The meeting concluded at 6.30pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of