

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**  
**SCRUTINY PANEL ON THE BUDGET PROPOSALS**

**2.00pm 9 JANUARY 2012**

**COMMITTEE ROOM 1, HOVE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor K Norman (Chair), Mears, Mitchell, K Norman, Pissaridou, Summers and Sykes. CVSF Co-optee Joanna Martindale

**Other Members present:** Councillors Ben Duncan Geoffrey Bowden

**PART ONE**

**20. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS**

20.1 There were no declarations of interest or declarations of party whip.

**20.2 RESOLVED:** that the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

**21. CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS**

21.1 Councillor Ken Norman, Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Panel, welcomed everyone and reminded the meeting of the aims of the Panel:

**22. WITNESSES**

22.1 The Chair Councillor Ken Norman invited Cabinet Members Councillors Geoffrey Bowden (GB) and Ben Duncan (BD) to introduce the budget proposals for their portfolios. Cabinet Members answered Panel questions together with officers Strategic Director David Murray (DM) and Finance Manager Anne Silley (AS).

22.2 **Councillor Geoffrey Bowden** (GB) said local authorities were in an unprecedented situation, having to do more with less, continuing to provide services for those in most need and minimising job losses. The proposals were to maintain the cultural offer that was critical to the wellbeing of the City's residents and tourists. Some local authorities were closing libraries; in Brighton & Hove no libraries were planned for closure this year.

22.3 **Councillor Ben Duncan** (BD) said key principles included protecting the vulnerable, enhancing environmental sustainability and listening to people's views. Proper scrutiny was helpful and constructive ideas were especially welcome he said. Though these budget lines were generally relatively small, the scope and reach of the effects was large and the impact high.

22.4 Cabinet Members answered questions accompanied by officers Strategic Director David Murray (DM) and Finance Manage Anne Silley (AS).

22.5 GM: Sports Development Fund – what options have been considered? (p97). Seafront Properties – is there good evidence for this anticipated income in the timeframe? (p98). Restructure Library service; what is the intention re opening hours? Would the hours all be the same? Staff costs could reduce but what about overheads? Is this sustainable? How do DAAT team reductions fit with Intelligent Commissioning pilot work? (p100)

GB: We can keep all 14 libraries open by making some costs savings in equalising branch library opening hours. There will be a new library in Woodingdean. Libraries are used ‘outside hours’ for other purposes as well.

Yes we are confident in getting good incomes from The Wheel and from marketing the Peter Pan site. These will act as extra attractions for this part of the City. Sport England funding is also possible.

22.6 MM: Disappointed in reduction in sports development and mobile library. Shorter library opening hours will affect communities including learning/use of IT. How many vacant or non-vacant posts will be lost?

GB: These are difficult choices. We would like to hear constructive suggestions. The mobile library is near the end of life and costs £77k per year. A replacement would cost £120k. 865 people use it; 70% of whom already use static libraries and only 3 are housebound, who are served by our delivery service. All the remaining users are within 1 ½ miles of a static library. We are looking to develop libraries into access points/community hubs. There is a range of other providers of IT training, including the Third Sector.

Healthy lifestyles are important and we are planning that Take Part Festival of Sport will continue. We are looking at opportunities for other funding streams.

I can’t say how many posts are at risk; we will be going to consultation with the public and with staff.

DM: There has been much good work within the Sports Development Fund but that model will not be fit for purpose in 3 years’ time. We are looking at realigning sports and coaching development, looking at other funding potential.

We are looking at all our buildings and expect libraries to continue to play a key role.

Where income estimates have been quoted in the proposals, these are not just rough figures but they are tested eg against national benchmarks. We have tried to avoid overestimates.

22.7 MM: concerned about reducing library hours and removing visitor information centre from Royal Pavilion (p102)

GB: We would like to extend library hours, but we have to use the budget effectively We have looked at the data including useage rates and plan to contact councillors in affected wards early in the process.

22.8 OS: When will the mobile library be lost?

GB: Woodingdean is having use of the mobile library in 2012/13 to provide temporary provision.

22.9 AP: Removal of Visitor Centre and use of 'satellite' premises? (p102) Reduced maintenance of King Alfred Leisure Centre?

GB: Subject to consultation, bring Royal Pavilion café to ground level for better access and to enhance shop business, freeing upstairs space for exhibits. Some partners eg hotels will welcome satellite visitor centres.

A capital sum has been set aside for the wet area of the pool that should reduce maintenance needs.

22.9 OS: How likely is a VAT cultural exemption for Royal Pavilion?

DM: We are optimistic and this should be resolved by end of financial year.

22.10 Chair KN: Will the satellite centres be staffed?

DM: We plan to continue providing visitor information and looking at different methods (such as on the Pier, visitor guides etc) and how best to meet the demand.

The new Seafront Strategy confirms the key importance of the seafront.

GB: New technology is another important way to bring information and services to residents and visitors

22.11 GM: Not convinced about removing VIC from Pavilion eg it is an important focal point for visitor arrivals. What about a kiosk, space in a local store or other fixed focus.

Is there a solution for retaining mobile library which has a substantial number of users. It lends itself eg to a co-operative provider?

DM: Visitor information centre proposals are for 2013-2014 and aimed at improving an already good service.

GB: We are open to ideas. High capital costs of mobile library but would like to explore options eg third sector.

22.12 JM: Concerned about poor adult education for the future in statutory and voluntary sectors. We need to look together at resourcing of training provision, especially in the Community and Voluntary Sector. CVS already provides services in library buildings. We should be looking at a wide range of potential services and the possibility of matched funding. The Communities and Equalities team are key players.

GB: We would like to discuss this.

DM: Volunteering opportunities are being developed too.

## Communities and Community Safety

22.13 AP: Equalities savings of £200K (p97) is not clear

GM: In view of the scale of the drug problem, how has the outcome from the IC pilot influenced the DAAT savings proposals (p100)? Are there more community safety synergies with YOT and other services?

BD: The approach taken is 'how to preserve and build on a service that is working well' rather than 'how much can we squeeze any service into a budget?' The Community Safety team programmes eg Family Intervention Project, Communities Against Drugs and DAAT provide measurable outcomes. Reduced funding of Sussex Police will have a large impact in the next few years and responsibility for delivery and funding of some community safety work is moving to local authorities.

There is scope for restructuring and working eg with YOT. Also via Public Health funding, Louise Casey, European and other funds. The majority of FIP funds is spent on just a few families.

There have been, and continue to be, significant changes to these service areas since these proposals were first drafted; eg the papers do not include any external funding.

DM: eg there will also be new opportunities via the Police and Crime Commissioner

22.14 MM: Equalities savings of £200K (p97) is not clear. The EIA refers to the end of the pilot. Has the £200K Communities budget line been spent? How does this link with CYP budget, and what has been achieved?

GM: It is the transfer of this budget that needs clarification.

BD: A written reply will be given.

22.15 OS: The second and third bullet point on p94 re 'reduction in specific grant funding' and 'tackling inequality and neighbourhoods?' Also as Community Safety savings are relatively small on a large budget (p100) - is greater investment needed for 'at risk' families? How can we fill the gaps?

BD: We can mitigate some of the impact of austerity/changes to housing benefits but it is not realistic to increase every budget as we would like. We are looking at how to get the most out of commissioning eg working with PCST and Neighbourhood Policing Team and refocusing community development work.

Our grants programmes are key to supporting many organisations and there are examples of an average 11x social return on investment. We are working closely eg with BHT and through the Advice Partnership re homelessness.

22.16 JM: It is helpful that the effect on resilience of CVS organisations is being acknowledged (p93). Our services often impact on equalities, one of the Council's corporate priorities. What thought has been given to increasing spend in the Third Sector? That does not seem to be reflected in the budget papers. I'm concerned about the effect of reductions in Annual Grants

budget and City Communities Fund amounting together to £85k (p101) which seems to take away about a quarter of grants that are available to the very smallest organisations and will have a considerable impact. The priorities for this expenditure need to be more clearly justified.

I think the small savings from staff ( p97) would have a greater impact if spent externally.

This is a continuing theme – does CVS face disproportionate cuts? I'm grateful for the work now being done to draw out the figures for us, because until now expenditure and return on investment have not been recorded in that way. We think there should be continuous monitoring to show the real financial and social value of the Sector. We have evidence to demonstrate the impact and in an earlier session it was interesting to hear that Economic Development do not. We have a large reach on a small spend.

BD: We are carrying out SROI studies to measure outputs and I'm not convinced that Communities and Equalities are being disproportionately cut; these services do need to be protected. We are taking a realistic approach reducing expenditure and taking the impacts into account. There is still a range of grants available amounting to around £1.5m annually but they are not immune from savings although we are restricting the reductions as much as we can. The 2-year budget process still allows for flexibility. For example Community Development commissioning cannot be fixed too far in advance.

The Access Manager post is already vacant and by working differently we've been able to ensure that those services are unaffected. It is difficult to disagree with that approach.

DM: There is still some way to go in working with the CFVS; the Council has to be clear about what it is buying and that commissioned or procured services are as effective as possible. This requires more joining up. We also need to be clear what lies behind various costs. For example, one Authority (Lambeth), passports significant funding to CFVS to run its services – but that includes services like libraries so figures are always worth delving into.

22.17 JM: Core investment by the Council to the sector allows additional funding to be leveraged in. Various funding opportunities are being lost in this way for training provision for instance. A community organisation, once lost, is unlikely to revive. There should be strategic agreement on the priorities that need support and sustaining.

DM: We recognise the worth of the sector and that's why we continue to be keen to work with agencies like CVSF. We also recognise that the sector itself needs to change because many agree that, for example, consortia ways of working - that streamline how the Council and other partners work with a sector that is currently vibrant and diverse, but complex and fragmented - needs to happen.

22.18 MM: The whole picture needs clarity because the voluntary sector has to make plans.

BD: Cabinet will be considering the grants programmes

22.19 AP: Reducing allocation to FIP would have a disproportionate effect on women as seen in the EIA (p224)

BD: This is a good example of our approach to an area that is an absolute priority; working with families with the greatest problems and leading to the greatest expense; making proposals,

assessing the impact and looking at alternative funding or provision. This work is not being reduced but done differently by closer integration with Partners. These budget line proposals give bald figures and it is a rapidly changing picture since the papers were drafted. We're adopting strategic ways to reduce domestic violence at little cost and showing measurable outcomes

22.20 AP: So what has changed?

BD: The figures are presented by budget streams and not individual projects. We are actively looking for external matched funding for work with at risk families. Some of the EIAs will be developed further. Also, some responsibilities will change from November with the advent of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

22.21 MM: But none of these needs are new, so what is the timescale?

DM: Services for some vulnerable families are very costly. Government funding is being discussed at SLB later today. We want to take a fresh look at the families concerned at the same time building on what we already have. We have to be sure of the outcomes needed locally for the City, not only the outcome needed nationally

22.22 JM: What is the effect of the new public health budget? How will it be used? Will scrutiny get information?

BD: The public health budget is not yet known. 2012-2013 will be a 'shadow' allocation and the funding will be ring-fenced. The information will be provided if it's available before this scrutiny panel ends.

22.23 GM: Members will need to be sure exactly what is being proposed.

22.24 Chair Councillor Ken Norman thanked everyone for attending and answering questions, especially members of the public present.

**23. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

23.1 Members noted that the next meeting on 20 January would be a non-public meeting to consider draft Panel recommendations.

23.2 Additional Papers had been circulated to Members as follows:

- Letter re; Music Service
- Letter re: Community Transport and
- CVSF Position Statement.

The meeting concluded at 4.15pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of