

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
2.00pm 5 NOVEMBER 2012
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL
MINUTES

Present: Councillor Morgan (Chair)

Also in attendance: Councillor Cox (Deputy Chair), Brown, Buckley, Farrow, Hawtree, Marsh and Cobb

Other Members present: Councillors Leo Littman

PART ONE

22. APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

22.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting especially Councillor Amy Kennedy and including Colin Vincent, representative of the Older People's Council.

22.2 Councillor Ben Duncan was substituting for Councillor Matt Follett. Councillor Amy Kennedy was substituting for Council Alex Phillips. Councillor Denise Cobb was substituting for Councillor Ken Norman.

23. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2012

23.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September were agreed and signed by the Chair.

24. CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS

24.1 Councillor Warren Morgan said he was angered and upset by the recent ill-advised and unhelpful local and national media coverage of the work of the Trans Equality Scrutiny Panel. He was a Member of this Panel.

24.2 An injudicious discussion with a journalist by a Panel member had led to 'awful' consequences, he said. This was despite the fact that the Panel had worked actively from the start to build trust with the Trans community and had agreed that particularly careful media handling would be needed on such a personal and sensitive subject.

24.3 The Trans Equality scrutiny report was still being drafted and would be brought to 28 January OSC to be endorsed. The Panel had a continuing commitment to tackling trans inequalities, discrimination and transphobia. As part of this it was essential that there was fair

and accurate media reporting about this and the Panel would be working together to achieve this.

24.4 All scrutiny panels needed some privacy to enable their draft findings and recommendations to be discussed before being agreed, and only then released. So a written protocol on handling the media would now be drawn up for all Panel Members to agree at the scoping stage of all scrutiny reviews.

25. PUBLIC AND MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

25.1 No letters had been received.

26. CITYWIDE PARKING REVIEW

26.1 Programme Manager and Policy Development Officer Owen McElroy gave a detailed slide presentation of the Citywide Parking Review (CWPR). He outlined the history of Decriminalised Parking Enforcement from 2001 when Brighton & Hove became one of the first local authorities to introduce DPE. Owen McElroy set out the purpose of the review, terms of reference, 3-stage consultation process, some of the main issues raised with officer responses, the results of a local highways authorities best practice survey, current parking arrangements in the City.

26.2 The terms of reference of the CWPR were set out in the agenda papers; it was for Transport Committee scheduled for 15 January 2013 to agree recommendations for parking policy and a new resident parking scheme consultation timetable.

26.3 The CWPR included extensive community engagement followed by the main consultation phase followed by the current stage of analysing all correspondence and the results of postal questionnaires sent to 6,000 households.

26.4 The Programme Manager gave details of the reasons for discontinuing parking vouchers and the drawbacks of the 'light touch' parking areas U and W. The 116,000 penalty notices issued during 2011/2012 brought in an income of £18million, resulting in a £9 million surplus after costs, that was mostly allocated to concessionary bus passes for the elderly & supported bus services, he said.

26.5 The Transport Committee report was not yet drawn up because analysis the consultation and surveys was still under way but to date, some of the main geographical areas of concern to residents were: Bakers Bottom; Hanover and Elm Grove where 75% of residents had previously voted against controlled parking; Hove Park ward especially north of Hove Park and up to Woodruff Avenue; Lewes Road triangle; Portslade South, south of the railway line; Preston Park Triangle including Stanford Avenue and Preston Drove; and West Hove, west of existing zones Z and W up to Boundary Road.

26.6 An indication of some of the main subjects raised by residents have so far included (with examples);

- Verge and pavement parking, especially in Patcham, Varndean and Mile Oak. Some local authorities ban parking on wide amenity verges using new DfT-approved signing.

- Waiting lists for parking permits, eg Zones Y and Z have 12 month waiting lists. Residents meetings in Brunswick and Adelaide have considered merging zones with adjoining zones, or using the seafront for resident parking, though this would adversely affect the visitor economy.
- Displacement parking from existing schemes and under-use of streets. The City has few natural parking boundaries, though (to some extent) railway lines, the Downs and dual carriageways can act as boundaries. Some streets are under-utilised eg in light touch areas or where people do not wish to leave their cars because of security concerns.
- Light touch schemes and controlled hours. There has been no evidence so far to suggest any change to current policy. Light touch schemes are unlikely to be extended. They tend to lack flexibility, can be detrimental to businesses, clinics, surgeries; do not enable pay and display options, are not self-financing and cost as much as other schemes. Similarly there is little demand to change the hours of controlled parking, although in some areas people returning home after 8pm can have difficulty finding a parking place.
- Enforcement. Some residents are asking to increase enforcement activity in outlying areas, particularly on zig-zag lines around schools and shopping areas. Technology such as automatic number plate recognition and CCTV as used by some other local authorities is one potential option.
- Sustainability and Parking. It has been estimated that some 17 – 20% of all traffic movements around the city are in search of parking places. There are suggestions for encouraging car clubs and low-emission vehicles; electric vehicles are not currently in common use and can be more costly to buy.
- Technology and Parking. In response to demand the council has introduced parking payment via credit card eg on the seafront and Grand Avenue, Hove. Some other local authorities have introduced mobile phone payment. 'Smart' GPRS-enabled phones for Civil Enforcement Officers, with links to permit databases, would enable the integration of technologies and increase value for money.
- Disabled access issues. Individuals and disability access groups have asked for individualised residents permits and exclusive bays. A few local authorities have introduced these though they can be costly and take some time to implement.

26.7 This was the most extensive parking review ever undertaken in the City; in addition to responding to on-going public opinion, officer advice would be to undertake a minor review after 5 years and a major review after 10 years.

26.8 Views of OSC, ward councillors and party leaders would be taken into account in drafting the Transport Committee report.

26.9 It was noted that at report paragraph 5.2 the penultimate line 'Eastwards' should read 'Westwards.'

26.10 The Programme Manager and Lead Commissioner City Regulation and Infrastructure Mark Prior answered questions:

A) Re: The value of using consultants; there were considerable demands on officer time and resources in consultation with residents on parking schemes. Mott McDonald had a long history of working with Brighton & Hove City Council and other local authorities in support of residents' consultations. They brought experience from other highways authorities and novel approaches to parking. Total spend included the postal survey and the is likely to be close to the original budget of £25,000, much less than some other local authorities had spent on their reviews.

B) Re: Novel approaches and blue skies thinking; suggestions including from previous scrutiny workshops on the CWPZ had all been investigated, such as removal of all controlled parking zones (CPZ), making the entire city a CPZ, buffer zones and measures to manage congestion and demand for parking spaces. Any pilot had to be resourced; and would need to be self-financing when a final scheme was implemented. Other local authorities operated at 80% parking space capacity; most of Brighton & Hove schemes were at 100%.

C) Re: Completing the CWPR before introducing new parking schemes; 2011 Environment Cabinet Member meeting had agreed to treat certain areas as urgent within the timetable existing at that time, in parallel with the CWPR process. Owen McElroy said that the CWPR had taken on a life of its own, with residents, Members and stakeholders raising issues that mattered most.

D) Re: The extent of the residents' questionnaire survey; this has been the largest ever parking review, involving 'almost everyone.' The 6,000 addresses were selected at random and the outcome would be statistically significant. There would be little utility in sending out more questionnaires. Moulsecoomb residents had the opportunity to reply to the consultation on the football stadium parking survey as well as the CWPR and this was clear in the publicity.

E) Re: Enforcement and times of parking enforcement; most parking schemes applied only up to 8pm. NSL was contracted to enforce parking restrictions between 7am and 12 midnight including eg double yellow lines.

F) Re: Parking on verges; Ward Councillors had been asked about parking on verges; some did not wish to ban parking on verges where there was no alternative for local residents.

G) Re: Motorcycle Bays; these would be included at Transport Committee.

H) Re: Traffic and congestion; these were dealt with through the Local Transport Plan process. Journey planning and new technology for traffic signals could be looked at as part of this.

I) Re: Consistency across the City in finding pay and display spaces; it is important that signage is clear; however every street has different circumstances eg road width and buildings layouts.

J) Re: Parking near schools, doctor surgeries and parking over dropped kerbs used by disabled people and people pushing buggies and wheelchairs; there was a potential option to for strengthening enforcement in these circumstances. Schools can apply for one permit per 6 teaching staff. Some other local authorities allow for parking permits for patients of doctor's surgeries.

26.11 Some members felt that the proposed scheduled of 5-yearly minor- and 10-yearly major-reviews would be inadequate, and proposed a rolling review.

26.12 The Chair Councillor Warren Morgan asked how displacement parking can best be prevented.

26.13 Another Councillor noted that parking was at the top of residents' concerns, the subject of more e-mails as all other topics put together; and that everyone can make their views known.

26.14 Key issues to be referred to Transport Committee;

- the importance of preventing displacement parking
- use of mobile phone technology eg for making payments and to identify localities of car parking spaces
- better use of other new technologies in line with other innovative highways authorities
- enforcement of restrictions including outside of parking zones
- republicising that non-car-owning-residents are entitled to buy scratch cards for visitors
- more information on the number of cars owned in each Ward, and how people use their cars ie whether for short distances and if there are alternatives.
- the schedule for future parking reviews and links with parking policy development

26.15 The Chair Councillor Warren Morgan thanked the officers for their work on the CWPR and thorough presentation of the main issues.

26.16 RESOLVED that comments and suggestions above be referred to Transport Committee.

27. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME SCRUTINY PANEL

27.1 Councillor Graham Cox presented the Council Tax Support Scheme Scrutiny Report as a Panel Member. He thanked the Panel Chair Councillor Alex Phillips, who had given her apologies for this meeting. Thanks were also due to the other Panel Members; Councillor Anne Pissaridou and Rosemary Friggens, President of the East Sussex Credit Union who was an invaluable co-optee, plus all those who submitted their evidence.

27.2 The Panel was set up at as requested by the Council Leader Councillor Jason Kitcat to consider draft proposals for a new council tax support scheme from next April.

27.3 This was a controversial subject but the Panel was able to agree an all-party report after hearing from a range of witnesses, looking at other Councils' proposals and debating our proposed scheme.

27.4 The proposed scheme was summarised at report paragraph 1.6. Councils had limited flexibility in the design of their schemes, not least because pensioners currently receiving CTB will continue to receive their existing entitlement.

27.5 The Local Government Finance Bill was now in its final stages so this was a moving situation with significant new developments announced since the report was drafted eg on a

possible £100 million of new government funding for the scheme. This was now being looked at by the officers.

27.6 The Panel's first recommendation was that consideration be given to funding the gap (that was then £1.5 million) from savings elsewhere in the Council's budget. The latest developments could in fact reduce that funding gap and make that recommendation more easily achieved.

27.7 The Panel did agree that the suggested scheme could not be significantly improved upon within the existing constraints, despite concern about the negative impact on vulnerable residents due the extent of the funding shortfall – then £1.5million - at that time.

27.8 The Panel acknowledged the importance of financial and digital inclusion. Digital inclusion was especially a double-win situation that would help not only those applying for council tax support and other forms of benefits but also job-seekers; because 90% of jobs now required IT skills.

27.9 As the Council Tax scheme was only a relatively small part of welfare reforms the Panel recommended a further scrutiny review, when the wider changes are implemented.

27.10 Other recommendations referred to:

- communicating the changes clearly and thoroughly, especially to 'hard to reach' groups
- monitoring the impact of the changes once implemented
- making further representations over more local flexibilities within the council tax framework as a whole.
- closer involvement of landlord representatives in the City's welfare reform group.

27.11 The Chair Councillor Warren Morgan thanked the Panel Members and officers. He referred to the June 2012 OSC workshop that had emphasised the need for a joined-up approach to the impact of welfare reform, debt prevention measures and support for vulnerable residents who may otherwise be tempted to turn to loan sharks.

27.12 Councillor Graham Cox answered questions on: the challenges of giving early advice, answering queries and collecting small amounts from residents who had not previously paid council tax; the ability of people to pay; how the scheme affects employment policy; the impact of the scheme that would only be known after it had been introduced; and helping people who do not have internet access.

27.13 The Chair of OSC Councillor Warren Morgan confirmed that the review would come back for monitoring at a future meeting of the Committee .

27.14 RESOLVED; 1) that the report be endorsed and referred to Policy and Resources Committee.

2) that the impact of wider welfare reforms including financial and digital inclusion, be the subject of a further scrutiny review, once implemented.

28. OSC DRAFT WORK PLAN/SCRUTINY UPDATE

28.1 The Head of Scrutiny Tom Hook updated OSC on current scrutiny reviews and the committee's draft work programme.

28.2 The Alcohol scrutiny review would start this municipal year.

The meeting concluded at 4.00pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of