

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY CABINET COMMITTEE

3.00PM 16 MARCH 2009

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Mears (Chairman), Caulfield and Fallon-Khan

Other Members present: Councillors Steedman and Wakefield-Jarrett

Apologies: Councillor Gill Mitchell (Opposition Spokesperson)

PART ONE

29. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

29A Declarations of Interest

29a.1 There were none.

29B Exclusion of Press and Public

29b.1 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ('the Act'), the Sustainability Cabinet 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 nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press or 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 100I(1) of the Act).

29b.2 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

30. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

30.1 **RESOLVED** – The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2009 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

31. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

31.1 There were none.

32. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

32.1 **RESOLVED** – That all items be reserved for discussion.

33. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

33.1 There were none.

34. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**34(i) Question – sustainable procurement**

34.1 Councillor Steedman had submitted a question asking:

“At the previous Sustainability Cabinet Committee, members discussed the new ‘Procurement Code of Practice – Sustainability’ and rejected proposals for minimum sustainability standards for purchases made by the authority.

Could Cllr Mears please let me know the following information:

- The number of refrigerators, freezers and fridge-freezer combinations; washing machines; electric tumble dryers; combined washer-dryers; dishwashers; lamps; electric ovens; and air conditioners purchased by the Council in the last year and the A++ - G rating given to each product on its mandatory Energy Label?
- The number of cars and vans purchased or leased by the authority during the last year and the A-G carbon emissions rating given to each?
- The amount of a) chicken and b) eggs purchased by the authority/supplied through the Council’s catering contracts in the last year and the proportion of this which was free-range?
- The amount of fish and fish products purchased by the authority/supplied through the Council’s catering contracts in the last year and the proportion which were either Marine Stewardship Council-certified or appeared on the Marine Conservation Society’s ‘Fish to Eat’ list?

The amount of wooden office furniture purchased by the authority in the last year and the proportion of this which was a) Forest Stewardship Council-certified; b) covered by another sustainability certification scheme?”

34.2 The Chairman circulated the following written response:

“This is a very detailed and complex set of questions, which would have required a disproportionate amount of officer time to answer in full detail. But officers have produced the following summary:

- While we have extensive records of the “white goods” bought by the council over the past year on our financial system, this does not extend to their energy ratings.

- The council's Fleet Manager was already undertaking a detailed review of our fleet, purchase and lease arrangements; data for the last year is not immediately available but once the review is complete, we will send you details.
- The amount of a) chicken: 1872 products – diced, strips etc – none of which was free range. b) Approximately 18,000 eggs a very small percentage <1% were free range. c) 2055 fish and/or fish products were purchased by the authority/supplied to the school meals contracts in the last year - none of this was either Marine Stewardship Council-certified or appeared on the Marine Conservation Society's 'Fish to Eat' list.
- On a more positive note, we aim by September 2009 to have gained the Bronze Food for Life accreditation for school meals served within BHCC Primary Schools, which includes the use of eggs from cage free hens. More information can be found at <http://www.foodforlife.org.uk/awards/criteria/bronze>
- Furniture expenditure for the calendar year 2008 was £128,006.58. Suppliers Portsdown Office furniture said all of the wooden furniture we buy is covered by the FSC certification; while Eurotek confirmed that all their wood-based products are accredited with FSC and PEFC certification. Eurotek were also one of the first furniture manufactures to receive FISP award (Furniture Industry Sustainability Program) and in fact have been used as the benchmark of good practice. They have also calculated the carbon footprint of our products.

Looking ahead the Environmental Management System proposed for introduction at this meeting will steadily address any shortcomings in sustainable procurement – this is covered in paragraphs 3.4, 3.5 and 3.10 of the report on the agenda today.”

34.3 Councillor Steedman asked the following supplementary question:

“Do you not agree that by setting minimum sustainability standards for purchases made by the authority, determining such information would become much easier?”

34.4 The Chairman gave the following response:

“A significant amount of work is being done around procurement, with a particular focus on the council's fleet of vehicles. Setting minimum standards could have a negative effect with suppliers doing the bare minimum, instead of striving for higher standards. We want to ensure that we can demand higher standards wherever possible.”

34.5 The Lead Councillor for Sustainability added that the council held open days so that members of the public could utilise old furniture with only a nominal charge made for delivery. This could be seen as the first stage towards recycling in this area.

34.6 The Chairman reiterated that the council was seeking Bronze Food for Life accreditation for Primary schools.

34(ii) Question – peak oil production

34.7 Councillor Steedman had submitted a question asking:

“There are also very real fears in the energy industry and more widely that global oil supply will soon fail to meet demand, putting up prices of oil and gas (the price of which is pegged to oil’s) and leading to potential security of supply problems. Peak oil production is the point at which existing oil reserves can no longer be replaced by new ones. Conventional wisdom has been that the peak is many years in the future, but the International Energy Agency has warned of an oil crunch by 2013. Other authoritative voices warn of severe problems sooner than this.”

So says the draft text of the City Sustainability Partnership’s input to the consultation draft of the Local Strategic Partnership’s refresh of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Could Cllr Mears tell me what preparations her administration has made to protect the residents of the city from the consequences of peak oil, especially, but not exclusively, in regard to:

- the local economy;
- transport;
- energy use and bills for the Council and for local residents;
- planning and the built environment;
- food;
- emergency planning?”

34.8 The Chairman had circulated the following written response:

“The implications of the Peak Oil issue are a matter for national government to advise us on, right across all the sectors you have mentioned.

Any failure of global oil supply or security of national supply chains are matters first to be addressed by central rather than local government, and its plans (e.g. National fuel emergency plan NEP-F) would be implemented if and when the risks were felt to be sufficiently severe.

Business continuity plans for council teams look at how they respond to potential risks and if the global oil supply becomes one of them then teams will consider this how to plan to mitigate any issues for the service.

The council’s emergency plan is similarly based on nationally, regionally and locally relevant risks relating to actual emergencies as defined by relevant legislation / guidance - and is regularly reviewed on the latest information made available.

We are, of course, also supporting local resilience through the Be Local, Buy Local campaign which supports the local economy, local businesses and localised transport.”

34.9 Councillor Steedman asked the following supplementary question:

“Do you not agree that more must be done locally with regard to Peak Oil, and that this Cabinet Committee should ask for a scrutiny investigation to take place?”

34.10 The Chairman advised that the council was restricted to the powers delegated to it by central government and that until clear guidelines had been handed down little could be done at a local level.

35. DEPUTATIONS

35.1 There were none.

36. PETITIONS

36.1 There were none.

37. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

37(i) Letter – reducing the ecological or carbon footprint of the Council’s supply chain

37.1 A letter was received from Councillor Steedman regarding working with the Council’s suppliers to help them reduce the ecological or carbon footprint of the Council’s supply chain (for copy see minute book).

37.2 The Chairman stated that the council had already decided to look into the carbon footprint of its key suppliers by signing up to the Public Procurement Programme run by the Carbon Disclosure Project, which had an international track record in the field. This would start shortly with a focus on ten of the council’s very largest contracts, suppliers would be asked to provide detailed emissions information; which would provide a fuller picture by the summer.

37.3 The Chairman confirmed that officers would report back on this at the Sustainability Cabinet Committee as part of the Carbon Management Programme updates for members.

37.4 The Chairman explained that, over time, the council planned to extend this to more and more of our suppliers as part of the programme. This would be an important but very significant additional burden on suppliers – a substantial proportion of which were local - and one which could not be achieved overnight. Introducing an Environmental Management System would also help us to achieve the goal. In the meantime, with a recession on, the council could not expect instant change from hard-pressed businesses, and while ecological footprinting was very important, it would not yet be a language that most businesses understood. Improving the specification within the council’s own contracts regarding sustainability, especially by asking for environmental management system accreditation from larger ones and carbon emissions data from many more, would ensure that significant improvements were achieved. The council would also look to work with other public sector partners through the LSP.

37.5 **RESOLVED** – That the letter be noted.

38. NOTICES OF MOTION

38.1 There were none.

39. INTRODUCING AN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

- 39.1 The Cabinet Committee considered a report of the Acting Director of Strategy & Governance concerning proposals to introduce an accredited environmental management system (EMS) (for copy see minute book).
- 39.2 The Lead Councillor for Sustainability explained that such a system would ensure that that council could put its own house in order with regard to environmental resource efficiency and lead by example.
- 39.3 The Cabinet Member for Housing supported the need to make progress in this area and queried whether priority areas would need to be identified and what timescales might be proposed.
- 39.4 The Sustainability Coordinator working on the project explained that once a commitment had been given by the Cabinet Committee officers would begin working with senior managers to identify appropriate service areas to pilot the programme.
- 39.5 In response to questions from Councillor Steedman the Head of Sustainability & Environmental Policy clarified that, after work had been done to identify a suitable service area, discussions around resource implications could take place.
- 39.6 The Cabinet Member for Central Services thanked officers for their work on this project and was pleased that a staged approach would be taken in order to ensure that value for money was a key priority.
- 39.7 The Chairman commented that there was a commitment to laying good foundations before launching the pilot and that she was confident that resources would be used efficiently.
- 39.8 **RESOLVED** - That having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Committee accepted the following recommendations:
- (1) That approval be given for the following:
- (a) Development of an Environmental Management Policy
 - (b) Pilot implementation of an environmental management system accredited to the BS EN ISO 14001:2004 standard
 - (c) Consideration then of progression to the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS).

40. SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE THEME 2009/10

- 40.1 The Cabinet Committee considered a report of the Acting Director of Strategy & Governance concerning proposals for the theme of the 2009/10 Sustainability Conference (for copy see minute book).
- 40.2 The Chairman commented that the annual Sustainability Conference offered the ideal opportunity to make the sea a strong focus of the council's work.

40.3 The Lead Councillor for Sustainability added that she looked forward to positive outcomes from the conference and that local school children had been focussing on this topic in recent weeks.

40.4 **RESOLVED** - That having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Committee accepted the following recommendation:

- (1) That officers in the Sustainability Team be directed to organise the next Sustainability conference on the theme of the sea.

41. ECO SCHOOLS PROGRAMME UPDATE

41.1 The Cabinet Committee considered a report of the Acting Director of Strategy & Governance concerning the council's Eco Schools work and how it fits into a wider Environmental Education programme (for copy see minute book).

41.2 In response to queries from Councillor Steedman, the Head of Sustainability & Environmental Policy explained that while relatively few independent schools were signed up, the eco schools programme already seemed to favour those schools with the highest educational attainment and it was therefore important to consider issues around equalities. He added that school registration was visible the Eco Schools website and that any schools not registered may have chosen to take a different approach to sustainability.

41.3 The Cabinet Member for Housing identified that the east side of the city was particularly underrepresented and supported more work being done in the area to effect change.

41.4 The Chairman praised the work being done with the schools and maintained that it was essential that young people engaged in and understood the importance of sustainability at an early age.

41.5 **RESOLVED** - That having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Committee accepted the following recommendation:

- (1) That the report be noted.

42. REPORT OF THE CITY SUSTAINABILITY PARTNERSHIP

42.1 The Cabinet Committee considered the minutes of the City Sustainability Partnership held on 23 February 2009 (for copy see minute book).

42.2 The Lead Councillor for Sustainability confirmed that the City Sustainability Partnership had been gaining momentum through the city-wide involvement and that good work was being done, particularly around the revision of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

42.3 In response to a request from Councillor Steedman, the Head of Sustainability & Environmental Policy confirmed that a revised draft response from the Partnership would be circulated to its members shortly.

42.4 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes be noted.

The meeting concluded at 3.42pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of