

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**COUNCIL****4.30pm 16 JULY 2009****COUNCIL CHAMBER, BRIGHTON TOWN HALL****MINUTES**

Present: Councillors Mrs Norman (Chairman), Peltzer Dunn (Deputy Chairman), Alford, Allen, Barnett, Bennett, Brown, Carden, Caulfield, Mrs Cobb, Davey, Davis, Drake, Duncan, Elgood, Fallon-Khan, Fryer, Hamilton, Harmer-Strange, Hawkes, Hyde, Janio, Kemble, Kennedy, Kitcat, Lepper, Marsh, McCaffery, Meadows, Mears, Morgan, K Norman, Older, Oxley, Pidgeon, Randall, Rufus, Simpson, Simson, Smart, Smith, Steedman, Taylor, C Theobald, G Theobald, Turton, Wakefield-Jarrett, Watkins, Wells, West, Wrighton and Young

PART ONE**1. STATUTORY OR VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE BY COUNCILLORS OF INTERESTS IN MATTERS APPEARING ON THE AGENDA.**

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES.

2.1 The minutes of (a) the Special Meeting and (b) the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on the 30th April 2009 were approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record of the proceedings.

2.2 The minutes of the Annual Council Meeting held on the 14th May 2009 were approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record of the proceedings.

3. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS.

3.1 The Mayor called for a minute's silence as a mark of respect for the deaths of former Mayor, John Blackman and former Brighton Borough Councillor Doreen Radford.

3.2 The Mayor presented Councillor Geoffrey Theobald with two prestigious awards on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council. The first, a Civic Trust national award, which saw New Road recognised for design excellence alongside 28 other public realm and architectural projects including St Pancras Station and the Kew Gardens Treetop

Walkway. The second was a Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), sponsored Civic Trust "special award" for New Road in the "streets" category.

- 3.3 The Mayor also presented two national awards to Councillor Pidgeon, given to the Council by the UK Centre for Economic & Environmental Development in June for the Talking Bus Stops Project, which was the winner in the "Improving Public Services" category and was also overall winner of the E-welling being awards.
- 3.4 The Mayor then welcomed, David Beevers, the Keeper of the Royal Pavilion to the meeting, who was responsible for the award winning exhibition "*Chinese Whispers*" which ran from May to November last year at Brighton Museum & the Royal Pavilion. The Mayor then invited Councillor David Smith to come forward and present David Beevers with the Museums & Heritage Award for the best temporary/touring exhibition of 2008.
- 3.5 The Mayor then invited Kim Philpott, manager at the council's Homebase Support for the over 18s to come forward, and offered her personal and the Council's congratulations for receiving the prestigious Home Care Manager Award at the National Home Care Awards.
- 3.6 The Mayor then gave an update on the issue of swine flu and the precautionary action being taken by the council in conjunction with the Primary Care Trust.
- 3.7 The Mayor stated that she had agreed to the holding of an Extraordinary Council Meeting on the 19th November 2009, to consider the submission and adoption of the Core Strategy, and asked Members to note the date in their diaries."

4. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS.

- 4.1 The Mayor invited the submission of petitions from councillors. She reminded the Council that petitions would be referred to the appropriate decision-making body without debate and the councillor presenting the petition would be invited to attend the meeting to which the petition was referred.
- 4.2 Councillor Davis presented a petition signed by 971 residents concerning the number of Primary School places available in the city.
- 4.3 Councillor Davis presented a petition signed by 268 residents concerning a request for traffic calming measures in Clarendon Road, Hove.
- 4.4 Councillor Marsh presented a petition signed by 78 residents concerning Kingspan developments.
- 4.5 Councillor Barnett presented a petition signed by 14 residents concerning a request for 20mph zones in Hangleton & Knoll.
- 4.6 Councillor Kemble presented a petition signed by 197 residents concerning the need for a safe crossing in New Church Road.

- 4.7 Councillor Duncan presented a petition signed by 93 residents concerning the Bowling Green in Queen's Park, Brighton.
- 4.8 Councillor Davey presented a petition signed by 184 residents concerning the number of school places in the BN3 post code area.
- 4.9 Councillor Brown presented a petition signed by 34 residents concerning ball games and the public open space in Queen Caroline Close.
- 4.10 Councillor Randall presented a petition signed by 50 residents concerning car dealers in Elm Grove.
- 4.11 Councillor Bennett presented a petition signed by 37 residents concerning trees in Woodland Avenue.
- 4.12 Councillor McCaffery presented a petition signed by 136 residents concerning the parking consultation exercise in
- 4.13 Councillor McCaffery presented a petition signed by 81 residents concerning parking in lower Waldergrave Road.

5. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

- 5.1 The Mayor reported that three written questions had been received from members of the public and invited Mr. Pennington to come forward and address the council.
- 5.2 Mr. Pennington asked the following question:

"In March 2008, I attended public meetings about the Disabled Access Advisory Group and assurances were given that disabled groups and individuals would continue to have a meaningful voice in this city, following the subsequent closure of DAAG.

Will the council please repeat those assurances, with examples of how disabled groups and individuals can have a meaningful voice in this city?"

- 5.3 Councillor Simson replied, "I do want to assure you that this Council is committed to ensuring that disabled people will be enabled to have a meaningful voice in Brighton & Hove and we are working to promote the involvement of disabled people across all the council's activities. To this end we have, with the PCT, funded the Get Involved Project organised by the Brighton & Hove Federation of Disabled People with an overall aim of increasing visibility and influence of disabled people locally. This project supports a diverse and representative group of disabled people to hold public bodies to account by questioning key staff on elements of their Disability Equality Schemes, followed by joint problem solving.

Other activities by the Get Involved Project include:

A database of organisations and individuals wanting to engage with the council on particular issues.

Regular engagement with members of Montague House and Sensory Services.

Contributions to Brighton & Hove City Council's Equality Impact Assessments including the Physical Disability Strategy and Street Licensing.

Joint workshop for Federation staff and volunteers around how to ensure involvement in Equality Impact Assessment to make sure it is meaningful and productive.

LGBT-specific disabled people's group launch and Winter Pride event held.

A network of disabled people available to officers who need site visits (for example - a visit to Eastbourne to look at their accessible beach), focus groups on street licensing and taxi consultation and other engagement opportunities like the Waste Management Strategy.

Our planners are working with the Get Involved Group too in order to establish a structured way of obtaining feedback, both on long-term strategy and individual development projects. Planners recognise that disability should be built-in from the start – not bolted-on at the end. In addition to all this, all Directorates continue to support and engage with disabled people through our public consultations and service-user groups.”

5.4 Mr. Pennington asked the following supplementary question,

“At what stage will the Federation become involved again on the Planning Committee?”

5.5 Councillor Simson replied, “As I do not sit on the Planning Committee I am not aware of that but I can tell you that planners, as I have said, are now working before the Planning Committee. They want to have input from the disabled groups long before the Planning Committee ever sit, so that any issues can be dealt with right at the start of planning applications rather than at the end.”

5.6 The Mayor thanked Mr. Pennington for his questions and invited Mr. Hawtree to come forward and address the council.

5.7 Mr. Hawtree asked the following question:

"Would Councillor Smith please tell us whether, and how, he envisages such devices as the Kindle forming part of the public library system?"

5.8 Councillor Smith replied, “Thank you for your question about the Kindle, which is one of a number of portable ebook reading devices that are now available on the market. The Libraries Plan has committed us to researching how we can modernise our Libraries Services, and we will be looking at the feasibility of introducing ebooks in the future. There are issues of compatibility of different systems, and the need for enough books to be available as ebooks, to be considered. We will be seeking to balance the desire for early adoption with a long term sustainable ability to support as wide a variety of

electronic reader devices as possible. Ebooks certainly look like an exciting new way of making books available, which we would like to provide for our library users.”

5.9 Mr. Hawtree asked the following supplementary question,

“It’s a very large subject and I think Dan Brown’s new novel will galvanise it - there’s a lot of controversy over that - but it is a subject which brings many subjects to mind and I have been prompted to ask this question by the book I most recently read Hephzibah Anderson’s recent book ‘Chastened’ in which she says, ‘one couple I know traded lingering looks, smouldering looks and finally words, a folded slip of paper was passed like in a play or perhaps a classroom in one of the world’s most romantic places, the New York Public Library’s 42nd Street branch, but their’s is an increasingly rare story; for more and more couples it starts with a click, a mouse click’.

Councillor Smith I am not so sure if it’s going to be an entirely digital world. We have seen the rise of the ‘slow movement’ beside processed food, radio is now outstripping television, downloads are making people seek out live concerts more and more and I think there are printed leaflets swirling around Goldsmid, so it’s a very wide ranging subject.

With all these thoughts in mind Councillor Smith could you tell us which book you most recently read and in which format?”

5.10 Councillor Smith replied, “How to win an election. I am sure if you went to our poetry classes they would be quite happy to hear you speak but being serious more and more people, especially of the younger generation, I know my grandsons who are aged five, six and seven, are on their computers and look things up on there. I am sure, like Volk’s Railway is still there as a lovely place to go and the ride to go on, you will have the main monorails coming in the future.”

5.11 The Mayor thanked Mr. Hawtree for his questions and invited Ms. Calder to come forward and address the council.

5.12 Ms. Calder asked the following question:

“Councillors can be proud of the role they played in safeguarding St Peter’s Church, traditionally used for civic ceremonies. Holy Trinity Brompton’s rescue package has been accepted. However, the Diocese has closed both church and hall while repairs take place - pending the start-date of HTB’s priest in late October. This planned four month closure was opposed by most of the congregation, who felt it would be distressing to parishioners and put church and contents at risk. What steps can Councillors take to safeguard building and contents - and protect from damage or dispersal items of religious, historic or civic value?”

5.13 Councillor Mears replied, “Thank you for your question. I’d like to start by saying how important we feel faith communities are to Brighton & Hove. This Administration is committed to building a city around shared values and shared aspirations and we believe that participation of faith groups is essential if we are to achieve our goals by bringing different communities together.

St Peter's Church is one of the most dramatic and beautiful buildings in Brighton & Hove and is seen by many as the city's 'cathedral'. We have been very concerned about the building for some time and were delighted to hear that a future had been found through Holy Trinity Brompton.

As you have indicated we have been, where appropriate, active in supporting efforts to secure a future for St Peter's. As part of this we have met with various key stakeholders and liaised directly with the Diocese. For example, as part of this work we have written to the Church Commissioners requesting that the Book of Remembrance continues to be maintained within the church.

We have also recently met with Archie Coates, the future Vicar, to discuss their plans including restoration work and the conservation of the church's historic and civic items. During this meeting I suggested an exhibition of these items could be organised by Holy Trinity as part of the activities they will be undertaking to re-open the church in the autumn. In terms of next steps I plan to write formally to the Diocese regarding the matters of concern you have raised. In addition I will be offering practical support in the form of a photographic survey, carried out by our Museums Service, to document individual items of historic significance found within St Peter's Church."

5.14 Ms. Calder asked the following supplementary question,

"Thank you very much, that's very encouraging. As you say St Peter's is often referred to as Brighton's 'cathedral' and like All Saints in Hove it's traditionally been used for major civic ceremonies and to celebrate events of national importance. I would like to know is it this Council's intention to continue to use St Peter's Church for civic ceremonies and events of national importance?"

5.15 Councillor Mears replied, "It is certainly our intention to ensure that happens. We have talked with Archie Coates, the new vicar, and I have to tell you he is very, very keen to become part of the community. He knows of you very well and he is very keen to meet up with you and have these discussions. I think he totally recognises the importance of St Peter's and, you know, the impact it has on the city and wants to bring the community into the church and around that area. I have every confidence that St Peter's under Archie Coates' direction will actually take that forward.

I would also like to say on behalf of the city actually, thank you for all your work that you have done around St Peter's. You have raised its profile; you have worked so hard to ensure that it is in people's minds and it is well focused and I have actually shared all that with Archie Coates, so he is well aware of the real support from the community around St Peters, so a big thank you to you as well."

5.16 The Mayor thanked Ms. Calder for her questions.

6. DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

6.1 The Mayor reported that one Deputation had been received and invited Ms Howard as the spokesperson for the deputation to come forward and address the council.

6.2 Ms Howard thanked the Mayor and stated that:

“The issue of road safety in Chalky Road and Fox Way is one that presents an ongoing concern for many. We do appreciate the measures that have already been put into place such as the flashing LED light and the 20mph zone but we feel that these need to be seen as a starting point which can be built on rather than a completed project.

We hope that we have demonstrated both the need and the benefits of the provision of an additional ‘green man’ crossing system and we have many other ideas such as painting ‘20mph’ actually on to the road surface, adding railings at any crossing points and the removal of some pinch points that cause many problems rather than solves them.

We really feel that if we are going to promote sustainable transport from an early age within schemes such as healthy routes to school, bike it, walking buses, etc, the environment in which we are expecting people to travel needs to be made as safe and user friendly as possible. I, as do many others within the local community, look forward to working with you all in order to make this happen.”

6.3 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald stated that “I am well aware of the situation in Chalky Road, indeed there was at least two petitions that came to my Cabinet Member Meeting from Councillor Alford and I think from a Councillor on that side drawing my attention to the situation, particularly after the very sad death of Henry.

I went up to Chalky Road and I stood there with our Road Safety Officer and Councillor Alford for at least half an hour trying to consider what we could actually do in this situation. I watched the movements, I watched the buses coming up and down, I watched people coming off the buses and at that time I think officers were thinking, well we are not sure that 20mph would really suit the situation but I was quite adamant here that I really did think the 20mph should be put in and I was very pleased when officers did that. It is possible, you refer to the other accident, that the fact that this was 20mph may well have made that injury less severe than it was.

The problem here, and I am sure you recognise that, is what I have already alluded to that there are a number of desire lines and it all depends where the pedestrians cross the road. It’s quite a long strip as you know and if you stand there you can see some pedestrians crossing the road at point A, others at point B, others at point C and others further along the road. Now, that means that any formal crossing would probably only suit one set of people, the other sets of people because it wouldn’t be on their desire line wouldn’t use it, so that is the problem that we actually have here.

Having said all that the Road Safety Team have been up there since this other accident. They have reviewed the location and they are looking into this again to see whether there is anything that we can really do to alleviate the situation there, so I must just leave it at that particular stage, you know, what you are saying is well understood and I certainly sympathise with the situation there. It’s just that there are so many desire lines there and buildings in different parts of the road that people wish to actually go to that makes it extremely difficult to know what you can do to alleviate the situation.”

6.4 The Mayor thanked Ms Howard for attending the meeting and speaking on behalf of the deputation. She explained that the points had been noted and deputation would now be referred to the Environment Cabinet Member Meeting for consideration. The persons forming the deputation would be invited to attend the meeting and would be informed subsequently of any action to be taken or proposed in relation to the matter set out in the deputation.

7. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS.

7.1 The Mayor reminded the council that councillors' questions and the replies from the appropriate councillor were now taken as read by reference to the list included in the addendum, which had been circulated as detailed below. She also noted that Councillor Mitchell had asked for her question in relation to communal bins, Item 7(i) to be withdrawn.

7.2 (a) Councillor Fryer asked:

"How many council assets worth less than £1m have been disposed of since May 2007 and what is their total value?"

7.3 Councillor Fallon-Khan replied:

"There have been a total of 9 disposals worth less than £1m that took place between May 2007 to the present date, with a total sum of £2.085m being received."

7.4 Councillor Fryer asked a supplementary question, "There are fears that we are selling off the family silver and that these decisions are being made by one Member only, often behind closed doors. My question is does Councillor Fallon-Khan think it appropriate to have a report which addresses the long-term impact of this loss of council assets, including the reduction in rental income for the council and containing strategies for compensating these losses?"

7.5 Councillor Fallon-Khan replied, "First of all, it isn't selling off the family silver and also coming to a Cabinet Member, in this case the Cabinet Member for Central Services, it actually makes sense, because the Government have put authorities under pressure to speed up the processes to make them much more efficient otherwise they become very cumbersome and they take a long time. At the same time any property disposal or acquisition can be brought to Cabinet and we are quite happy to bring anything to Cabinet to be as open as we can. That's all I have to say on it."

7.6 Councillor Cobb asked a further supplementary question, "Is the Cabinet Member able to tell me what the value of disposed assets worth less than £1m was in the years prior to 2007?"

7.7 Councillor Fallon-Khan replied, "In 2003-2005 there were twenty-two disposals to the value of £3.2m and from 2005-2007 there were twelve disposals to the value of £3.7m."

7.8 (b) Councillor Fryer asked:

“Councillor Oxley mentioned at the last Full Council meeting that Members were not often putting in questions to Cabinet and Cabinet Member meetings. Can we receive confirmation that Cabinet Members will always endeavour to provide timely, comprehensive and detailed answers to any questions posed at any council meeting?”

7.9 Councillor Mears replied:

“It has always been the intention of this Administration to operate our Constitution in an open and inclusive way. I can confirm that Cabinet Members will always endeavour to provide timely, comprehensive and detailed answers to any questions posed at any council meeting.”

7.10 Councillor Fryer asked a supplementary question, “The Webcasts will testify that many answers Members receive are of poor quality, this includes one word answers, answers which direct Members to officers when often the questions were put because Members wanted public and detailed answers. A recent Cabinet meeting question about a report which was one and a half years overdue, the response was, we are looking into it and Cabinet Members have even refused to answer some Member’s questions. How can we take seriously this important democratic channel?”

7.11 Councillor Mears replied, ““The point I think Councillor Fryer is trying to make is about clarity about questions. We do have Opposition Councillors, as we all know, who are quite fixated about particular issues and we do have a large number of questions that come forward, particularly around one issue.

Now, I am sure Councillors would agree in this Chamber that after 30 or so times asking the same relevant question or similar to, bearing in mind officers’ time that’s taken up to do that, that is not actually the best value for council taxpayers’ money.

There also is the issue that Cabinet Members do have their CMM’s where actually councillors can come and ask questions and I think if you look at the records, Madam Mayor, you will find they don’t actually take that opportunity. To stand in Council and say Cabinet Members do not answer questions I find rather vague, Councillor, because you do have the opportunity to come to Cabinet/CMM’s and ask your questions quite openly.”

7.12 Councillor West asked a further supplementary question, “Am I right in understanding Councillor Mears’ answer is that she puts a fairly low level limit on the price of our democracy because through Members’ questions of the Executive we are holding them to account. Clearly she doesn’t agree that’s important for us to be doing on behalf of our constituents.”

7.13 Councillor Mears replied, “I think actually Councillor West has quite missed the point. Some questions that have been coming to Cabinet Members have been very technical, extremely technical and I would assume that Opposition Members would want a correct, technical response.

Bearing in mind there are no notices of supplementary questions and they are very technical, I believe serving Opposition Councillors and every Member of this Council

should have the correct answer. If it is very technical I am sure Councillor West would agree with me that it's really important that officers actually answer that so they have the absolute detail. I do not believe that is not giving a correct answer. I am sorry Councillor West takes that opinion."

7.14 (c) Councillor Morgan asked:

"Will Councillor Caulfield commit to installing a ramp in Tilgate Close, Craven Vale as soon as possible so that ambulance crews can access the many disabled, elderly and unwell tenants and residents who live there?"

7.15 Councillor Caulfield replied:

"1-15 Tilgate Close is a row of terraced houses, 9 of which are owner occupied and 6 let to council tenants. It is cut into a steep hillside and accessed by one of several staircases. As such, the properties are not suitable for people who have restricted mobility. A detailed assessment of each households access needs is being arranged, to assess the need for ramped access and any other internal adaptations required. Housing Officers are arranging an assessment of tenant's needs, and will also write to the owner occupiers, inviting any who require internal or external adaptations to contact the Adult Social Care 'Access Point' for an assessment. This needs assessment will include liaison with emergency services around access.

If need is demonstrated, then a study will be commissioned to establish the practical and cost implications of providing ramped access. Given the very steep gradient, planning requirements and building regulations, this may be quite complex. If, on conclusion of these processes, it is determined that providing ramped access is needed, practical and cost effective, then all residents will be consulted. If this project were to go ahead, then owner occupiers may be required to contribute to the cost of providing a ramp."

7.16 Councillor Morgan asked a supplementary question, "I am just very grateful for the response to this question which was meant for the CMM actually and would just thank her for the response."

7.17 Councillor Wells asked a further supplementary question, "Would Councillor Caulfield agree with me that Councillor Morgan, having been a Ward Councillor for East Brighton for a number of years now, has had ample opportunity to raise this issue with you, Councillor Caulfield, before now and indeed raise it with the previous Chairman of the Housing Committee, Councillor Mears, and with her predecessor, former Councillor Don Turner?"

7.18 Councillor Caulfield replied, "Yes, I am always happy to hear from Ward Councillors if they have particular issues around housing, whether that's an issue that's been ongoing or whether it's a new issue, so I am always pleased to have questions come to the CMM."

7.19 (d) Councillor Kennedy asked:

“Can the Cabinet Member for the Environment tell me whether the new controlled parking scheme in Preston Park (the park itself) and associated landscaping improvements (including a new pedestrian access ramp into the park at the northern end of Preston Park Avenue) will be going ahead or not?”

7.20 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald replied:

“At this stage there are no plans to introduce parking controls in Preston Park. We will monitor the situation when the Controlled Parking Zone comes into force in Preston Park Avenue.

Separate to this I will ask officers to look into the possibility of installing a new access ramp into the park at the northern end.”

7.21 Councillor Kennedy asked a supplementary question, “That is excellent news regarding the access ramp and I thank the Cabinet Member for Environment for his answer, as he will no doubt be aware that residents and staff from nearby nursing homes for the elderly have been campaigning for this access ramp for twelve years now and he will remember that I submitted a petition on this matter to Council last October signed by 324 people.

The installation of this access ramp will make a huge difference to the lives of the elderly residents with limited mobility in the area. Is the Cabinet Member for Environment able to give me an idea of the timescales for the implementation of this access ramp?”

7.22 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald replied, “You are very kind to thank me for the answer but if you actually look at the answer I do refer to the fact that I have asked officers to look into the possibility of installing this ramp, so as it’s a possibility I have to look at resources but we are looking at the possibility.”

7.23 (e) Councillor Kitcat asked:

“Could Councillor Theobald update the council on the current average waiting times for public calls and also emails to CityClean to be answered?”

7.24 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald replied:

“We have implemented significant changes to the refuse and recycling rounds and introduced communal bins. This has been a huge undertaking affecting every single household in our city. It has resulted in annual savings to the council taxpayer in excess of £1 million and cleaned up our streets. As a result of these changes Cityclean has experienced high call volumes over recent months.

The average speed of answer in the Cityclean call centre peaked at 6.52 minutes in February of this year. We have continued to experience high call volumes since then

but I am pleased to report that most recently waiting times are nearly halved to 3.44 minutes.

The response rate to e-mails is currently 15 working days but we expect response rates to go down to 10 working days or less within the next four weeks. Measures are being put in place throughout July and August to reduce waiting times further.”

- 7.25 Councillor Kitcat asked a supplementary question, “Can I start, Madam Mayor, by warmly welcoming Councillor Theobald’s change of heart in choosing to answer my questions at this meeting.

I hope he will agree that the current response rates are not good enough, however, I don’t agree with the statistics on the response rate for emails. He claims 15 working days response rate but I have a long list of residents who claim they are not getting an answer after six to eight weeks of waiting after having contacted Cityclean many times. His response is that measures are being put in place to resolve this matter.

I wonder if we could actually be told what those measures are and actually get a little bit of detail.”

- 7.26 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald replied, ““I am not sure exactly what the supplementary question was, Madam Mayor. All I can say is that I am always pleased to answer questions, political questions, but questions which I think are more properly directed to officers, like nuts and bolts and such matters are the sorts of questions that could be dealt with by email or by telephone.

I wonder, Madam Mayor, if I could just, and I’m sure Councillor Kitcat won’t mind me using this, say something today about the very tragic death of the young man. I am a father of children of the same sort of age and I am sure every Member of this Council was absolutely devastated, as I was, to learn of his sad death and we all know to what I am referring. I do want to make the point that the involvement here was a commercial undertaking and dealt with at a site that this council does not tip at, i.e. in Newhaven.

I am devastated as I have already said, I think it is absolutely tragic, I think it’s dreadful and I know all Members of the Council will join with me, as you will Madam Mayor, in expressing our sympathy to the family but it didn’t involve this council. I just wanted to make that clear because there seem to be some people who think that Cityclean were involved, that certainly was not the case, Madam Mayor.”

- 7.27 Councillor Kitcat requested a point of order and asked “Thank you, Madam Mayor. I share Councillor Theobald’s shock and expression of sympathy for the loss of life involved but as he said he didn’t remember the question, I would just like to remind him that I was asking for the measures being taken to improve the response time for City Clean’s email and phone lines and I wonder if he now, being reminded, could answer the question?”

- 7.28 Councillor Theobald replied, “Madam Mayor, we know and I have said this time and time again in this Chamber that we have gone through the most fundamental changes in the service, probably ever and obviously it follows that there would have been a very considerable number of emails and a very considerable number of telephone calls. As

the service has settled down it is obviously possible to answer these messages quicker and I do say that in my answer.”

7.29 (f) Councillor Kitcat asked:

“Is Councillor Theobald aware that the new communal bin lids are getting bent to render their modifications useless? Does he believe that at £25 per new lid they present good value for money?”

7.30 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald replied:

“The communal bins are under warranty and where they have broken they are being replaced at no cost to the council. Therefore, the premise of Councillor Kitcat’s question is incorrect. The introduction of communal bins has significantly cleaned up our streets which is a priority for this Administration.”

7.31 Councillor Kitcat asked a supplementary question, “Councillor Theobald’s written response, for which I am again most grateful, sort of misses the point because talking about warranty is not the point I am trying to make.

These were new lids replacing the original ones and they were £25 each, additional cost. My point is, in my supplementary question, does Councillor Theobald believe that the Conservative Administration’s claims to openness and transparency are justifiable when the cost to the council of £25 per new lid, the so-called Mark 2, could only be obtained through Freedom of Information requests following his refusal to answer my questions at Council and Cabinet meetings. Does Councillor Theobald believe that the Conservative Administration’s claims to openness and transparency are justifiable due to the Freedom of Information Act requests required?”

7.32 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald replied, “You know, I will be criticised but my answer to this is ‘yes’. I can’t say any more.”

7.33 (g) Councillor Morgan asked:

Can the Cabinet Member state categorically that the Administration have not asked the Probation Service to use their Community Payback team of offenders on community service sentences to undertake work that would otherwise be done by city council staff, and can he/she confirm that the Community Payback team should work solely in communities on projects identified by residents that are not within the remit of council departments?”

7.34 Councillor Simson replied:

“Since the launch of the Community Payback Scheme in 2005/06 the Council has worked in close partnership with the Probation Service to the benefit of the city, its communities and the offenders alike.

As many Councillors will be aware the scheme offers unpaid work placements on projects not only within the community but influenced by them and supplements that already planned and carried out by the council. Residents take the lead on identifying projects to improve their areas and the communities which have been harmed by crime benefit directly from the work

In the period of Jan-May 09 the city benefited from 18,000 hours of unpaid work placements – this included work on many of our housing estates carrying out environmental improvements, the painting of car parks, the sea front railings, subways and underpasses. This work would not have been completed without this project in place.

We are continuing to improve the processes by which communities can nominate projects for their neighbourhoods, for example through the excellent network of Local Action Teams. This is a developing project and officers from both the council and the Probation Service will continue to work to ensure the city, its communities and the offenders gain maximum benefit.”

7.35 Councillor Morgan asked a supplementary question, “I am grateful for the response from the Cabinet Member and for her comments on this subject at the recent Community Safety Forum but I would like further assurance that the Community Payback Team will focus on additional work identified by communities and that no council jobs are at risk or are not being filled from offenders doing the work of staff and that some clear guidelines will be put in place on this issue?”

7.36 Councillor Simson replied, “Yes, I can give that assurance. I am really grateful to Councillor Morgan for his question because it has given us the opportunity to really raise the profile of this scheme which is so vitally important in this city. As well as providing value for money, this project is proving to be a key action in our campaign to reduce the fear of crime and reduce vandalism. It’s really important that we use these people in the correct way. It’s also giving them an opportunity in some cases to learn skills which is really important.

On the subject of the seafront railings because that was one of the things that Councillor Morgan picked up, I did have a very interesting email this morning from a group of community activists from one of our churches, Hollingbury Baptist Church, who actually do community work throughout their summer period, and they too have recognised the state of our seafront railings which were very poorly maintained under the current Administration and they themselves are going to be painting some of those railings by Holland Road next week so I think that the use we have made of our Community Payback people to enhance those railings for our community, which wasn’t from a request by local traders, has proved very successful.”

7.37 (h) Councillor Meadows asked:

“Would the Leader of the Council please clarify how close this council is to acting on the report on Student Housing in the city and recommendations suggested by the Adult Social Care & Housing Scrutiny Committee?”

7.38 Councillor Mears replied:

“The Strategic Housing Partnership is one of the family of partnerships reporting to the Local Strategic Partnership. Owing to the importance of strategic housing issues to the city, the Strategic Housing Partnership is chaired by the Leader of the Council. Membership includes universities, National Federation of Residential Landlords, and a representative from Brighton and Hove estate agents as well as other key stakeholders.

The Strategic Housing Partnership has been looking at the issue of student housing and its impact upon the city for some time. This is in order to inform development of both the Citywide Housing Strategy and planning policy. The Partnership is working with researchers from the University of Brighton on the development of a Student Housing Strategy to look at student housing and student populations in Brighton and Hove, the benefits and challenges and strategic objectives moving forward.

As part of this work, and following Cabinet recommendation that the Strategic Housing Partnership consider the recommendations of the Adult Social Care & Housing Overview & Scrutiny report, the Partnership considered the scrutiny report at its meeting on 19 May. This was in order to ensure that the draft Student Housing Strategy took into account recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Report.

At the Strategic Housing Partnership meeting of 19 May, the Partnership agreed that members would take time to fully consider the Scrutiny Report prior to a further discussion on this and the final Student Housing Strategy draft at the next meeting on 28 July.”

7.39 Councillor Meadows asked a supplementary question, “

“Thank you, Councillor Mears, for your very long reply but I actually asked a very simple question which was: ‘when are the council going to accept any of the recommendations from the Student Vocation Panel? You haven’t responded to that question with a date for Cabinet. However, I have noticed that even though this Conservative Council have not accepted the recommendations, the officers of this council are already starting to use them to great effect.

In the July edition of the City News there is a section on page 10 which calls on students to take advantage of a special bulky waste collection service or you suggest they can take them to a waste recycling site or you could donate items to charity and recycle them. Those are recommendations from the Student Vocation Panel, Recommendations 17, 18 and 19 as I recall, all of 2.6 and 2.7 of the Recommendations state that students were not aware of their options for recycling and disposing of bulky waste collections so I am very pleased that even though you haven’t accepted them your officers have.

Would you share I and many residents disappointment that you are trying to implement them through the back door instead of admitting that the Panel did some great work on this subject that could indeed help frame sensible policies for this council?”

7.40 Councillor Mears replied, “

“Firstly, I would like to respond to Councillor Meadows as Chairman of the Strategic Housing Partnership.

I did feel right at the very beginning when Scrutiny took this process on that it was such a shame that Councillor Meadows didn't, in fact, come to talk to the Strategic Housing Partnership. She would have learnt then that actually we have been doing this work for quite some considerable time, so there is a tremendous overlap, so there is a concern there. Following Cabinet's recommendations to the Strategic Housing Partnership to consider the recommendations coming from the scrutiny report, Dr Dan Smith of the University of Brighton has undertaken an initial cross referencing exercise to ensure that the draft Student Housing Strategy being put together by the Strategic Housing Partnership encompasses recommendations arising from the scrutiny report.

Aside from three specific recommendations from scrutiny requesting lobbying from Cabinet Members on specific issues, Dr Smith advised all recommendations were covered and I would just like to add the point that Councillor Meadows has raised about students being targeted for recycling, actually this is something that's been going on for a long time. Even in the previous Administration students had been targeted to ensure that they recycled and put their rubbish out appropriately and her Administration ensured that that was happening, so I think we need to get this into context.

I am sure Councillor Meadows would be really pleased to know that the University of Brighton working with the Strategic Housing Partnership are actually doing a very important piece of work around student accommodation and the effect right across the city as to where these sites are located but the University does take seriously, and Sussex University, the concerns of residents in the city as does this Administration, so, yes, there has been a tremendous amount of cross-party work on this and I know Councillor Wrighton has been actively involved, particularly as it has encompassed part of her Ward.

I am slightly taken aback by Councillor Meadows' comments, I think, you know, this piece of work has been ongoing for quite some considerable time. I am sorry that she feels she is not getting the response that she feels she is entitled to but I can assure her that working with the Strategic Partnership and the Universities and the Ward Councillors we will endeavour to ensure that the recommendations are taken forward.”

7.41 Councillor Wrighton asked a further supplementary question,

“Residents in Wards most affected will be bracing themselves for the start of the autumn term after a brief respite over the holidays. Can Councillor Mears reassure those residents that this Administration both understands the problems they face and is committed to ensuring that council service delivery is appropriately directed to improve their quality of life?”

7.42 Councillor Mears replied,

“Absolutely, and also the Cabinet Member for Housing. It actually affects her Ward, so she takes this issue really seriously, as do the Universities. That is why working with

them, because that's what we need to do to ensure that, particularly starting a new University term, we actually address this problem.

The Universities are really keen to ensure that they work with the residents, with Ward Councillors and the Administration, and Councillor Wrighton I am more than happy, should there be meetings, and Councillor Meadows, because obviously Councillor Meadows has a real concern around this, that you have a briefing from all the meetings that take place to ensure that you are kept fully informed."

7.43 (i) Councillor Mitchell asked:

"Is the Cabinet Member for Environment aware that many of the lids on communal bins are now falling off in to the collection vehicle as they are emptied and what steps is he taking to rectify this situation?"

Note: The question had been withdrawn by Councillor Mitchell.

7.44 (j) **Councillor Mitchell**

"Could the Cabinet Member for Central Services confirm that he and his colleagues are now being served hot lunches on the days of their private Cabinet Member Meetings at the taxpayers' expense?"

7.45 Councillor Mears replied:

"It has been standard practice under this Administration and the previous Administration for the Cabinet (formerly Committee Chairs) to meet prior to our regular meeting with the Council's Management Team. I can confirm that lunches - sometimes hot, sometimes cold - are provided to Cabinet Members in between these two long meetings. In addition, I can confirm that lunches were also provided to former Labour Leaders of the Council and Committee Chairs (including Councillor Mitchell) at their equivalent private meetings."

7.46 In view of Councillor Mitchell's absence, and having sought approval from the Mayor, Councillor Hamilton asked a supplementary question on her behalf, "I would like to thank Councillor Mears for answering Councillor Mitchell's question that was addressed to Councillor Fallon-Khan. Can I just add also there is a reference to hot food; the Labour Leadership Team never had hot meals at their meetings.

Contrary to Royal Town Planning Institute recommendations the Conservative Members of the Planning Committee hold a party pre-meeting. Can she confirm that food is provided for this pre-meeting despite the fact that ample food is provided for all Members of the Planning Committee in Committee Room 2?"

7.47 Councillor Mears replied, "With regards to the specific point that Councillor Hamilton has raised about do the Conservatives have any extra food, my understanding from my colleague, who is the Chairman of Planning, advising me that they do have some sandwiches.

Could I just go back to the original question that was raised by Councillor Mitchell as to the ordering of hot food, and bearing in mind that the previous Administration, and we follow the same practice as they did around a management meeting which normally could go on for between four, five, six hours, we actually do have lunch, a working lunch and I would also like to confirm that the amount we have actually spent is £70.60. We have checked that with the caterers.

Just so the Council is aware, during 2006 the previous Administration, they actually spent £917.80, so we actually have, just so you know what we eat, I don't want there to be any confusion that you think we have this luxury hot food. We have bread, bowls of tuna, chicken, ham, coleslaw, crisps and water and the hot food, occasionally we have a bowl of chips, so, you know, I don't actually class that as a hot meal."

7.48 Councillor Hamilton moved a point of order, accepted by the Mayor and stated that "Written down on the sheet is the answer to the first question. I asked a supplementary question, I don't get a proper answer to my supplementary question but we get an additional answer to the first question. Is that permitted? Can anybody come back and answer the second question when we're on the supplementary? I think it's completely out of order."

7.49 Councillor Mears replied, "Unless I got the supplementary wrong, my understanding was that Councillor Hamilton asked whether the Planning Committee had any extra food other than any that was provided for the Planning Committee and I did answer to say, yes Conservative colleagues do when they have a pre-meet have some sandwiches, not hot food."

7.50 Councillor Fryer asked a further supplementary question, "I'm actually going to change my supplementary question because this is quite alarming. We've just had confirmation that the Conservative Group have planning pre-meets which is in breach of Royal Town Planning Institute Guidelines and that's very alarming. Can you confirm that that's the case?"

7.51 The Mayor stated that she did not feel the supplementary question related to the original question and therefore ruled it out of order.

7.52 **(k) Councillor Mitchell**

"Could the Leader of the Council please state how much the council is paying the consultant Craig Melvyn for all work carried out for the council, including the story-telling work at the recent staff conferences and who agreed to this recruitment?"

7.53 Councillor Mears replied:

"The company MMeye, and Craig Melvin were commissioned (not recruited) to produce city stories – representative snapshots of individuals and businesses in the city - in order to supplement other sources of information such as statistical data and consultation findings. The outcomes from this project are intended to bring to life, and to illustrate the council's work and to provide real life examples to support priorities in the Corporate

Plan. All of the stories gathered represent specific demographic groups in Brighton and Hove or service users.

Funding for his work came from the Director of Strategy and Governance Initiatives Budget. The total cost of the commission to source, produce, perform and provide all material to BHCC was £10,000. Hosting and additional work carried out for the staff conference was not directly funded through this commission and was provided as a goodwill gesture. A provider was sought who had experience in this very specialised area, who had worked with other Local Authorities, and who had a detailed knowledge of the city. MMeye fitted these criteria and Craig Melvin's appointment was made on this basis. The appointment was approved by Alex Bailey, then Director of Strategy & Governance."

7.54 In view of Councillor Mitchell's absence, and having sought approval from the Mayor, Councillor Hawkes asked a supplementary question on her behalf, "Thank you Councillor Mears for your answer. I appreciate that the Acting Chief Executive will be happy to provide any further information we need in writing. However, as Leader of the Council and a person who has lived in the city for a number of years, don't you agree that it would have been more genuine to have used real stories from real residents in the city rather than paying an outside company and the professional storyteller, Craig Melvin, to make up tales about our great city? I, for one have got plenty and I'm sure you have too."

7.55 Councillor Mears replied, "Thank you, Councillor Hawkes, for your question. With the issue regarding real stories, I actually met him down the market and he did ask me about my view on Brighton.

If I could just put some context into why this was brought forward. At the last Staff Conference last year staff made it very clear that they found Staff Conferences, they lasted a week and it wasn't really what they wanted to see, so the decision was taken to try and make it different for staff because it is a Staff Conference and at that Conference there were stories told from around the city and they are genuine stories but also what came out of that was a graffiti wall for staff and this is something totally different. It meant that staff at that time could listen and on the way out or during it actually go and put on the graffiti wall exactly what they thought.

Now, all that's been collated as part of the change in the way the Staff Conference was brought forward, so I recognise Councillor Hawkes' concern around using real people. As Councillor Hawkes knows because she is partly embedded into the city there are so many people in the city that have so many stories actually if you started to, I don't think we'd ever finish the Conferences, we'd have been there still now, so I do take your point but it was a cross section across the city."

7.56 **(I) Councillor Hamilton**

"Could the Cabinet Member for Environment confirm that the rent for some Council owned seafront shops are being increased by up to 300%, how many shops/businesses are going to be involved and could he also provide the figures for the average rent increase, the maximum % and actual cash increase?"

7.57 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald replied:

“I can confirm that rent reviews and lease renewals have been undertaken in respect of a number of seafront properties and to date those that have been negotiated and agreed all fall below a 300% increase.

The rent review date, the method for agreement and basis of the review are set out in the lease terms and therefore rent reviews are negotiated as they become due rather than a set amount per year. To date officers have successfully undertaken and completed nine reviews/lease renewals and a further sixteen are still under negotiation.

A review (or lease renewal) is not bench marked to a percentage or RPI but to a market rate and a rental valuation is carried out in accordance with RICS (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors) guidance notes taking into account the terms of the actual lease. The RPI approach is occasionally specified in some leases and a profits (of the business) approach can apply in others but the vast majority are on the basis of market evidence from similar properties with a similar use. Tenants are advised to seek professional advice from a chartered surveyor because negotiations can be complex and require an understanding not only of the business, the property, the lease and valuation but also property law and the numerous legal cases that can influence the whole process of review/lease renewal. In the case of a rent review, if the parties are unable to agree, the lease provides for the matter to be referred to a third party (Arbitrator or Independent Expert) and for a lease renewal the matter would go to Court for a decision. In such circumstances the importance of professional representation for the tenant is even greater.”

7.58 Councillor Hamilton asked a supplementary question, “It was interesting this evening that when we had question (b) from Councillor Fryer we were told that the Administration always gives comprehensive and detailed answers, it’s a pity I haven’t got one here for this particular question. I asked for the average rent increase. Is that given? No. I asked what the maximum percentage increase is. Is that given? No. I asked for the maximum actual cash increase. Is that given? No.

I wasn’t asking for any particular details of any particular companies so there is no confidentiality to be breached in that particular situation and I am disappointed that that answer is the same as I got when I sent an email in, so there is no advance on that.

I will ask a question though. This says there are increases up to 300%, it doesn’t say how big they are. I would like to ask Councillor Theobald, how can you reconcile this action with the Tory Administration’s claim to be doing all that it can to help local businesses during these difficult financial times?”

7.59 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald replied, “I am really quite surprised at those comments from Councillor Hamilton because Councillor Hamilton is always lecturing this Council on good financial management and such like.

Now, Councillor Hamilton, I mean this is something that I do know about: when you’re dealing with rent reviews and lease renewals you deal with them on an individual basis. Now some leases could be for 21 years, so you could go 21 years without a rent review,

you could go 10 years, you could go 5 years but the fact of the matter is, as I have explained in this question, the tenant will instruct a surveyor, the council will instruct a surveyor and they will endeavour to negotiate this in exactly the same way as any other shop, whether it's private, public or whatever nature. That is how it works. If both sides cannot agree, so in other words if the tenants think that the council are asking too much or if the council think that the tenants aren't paying sufficient then if it is a rent review it will go to an independent expert or an arbitrator and both sides will then put their case and the adjudicator will come to the result. If it is a lease renewal it then goes to the County Court for it to be decided there.

Now each case as I say is dealt with on its merits, the basis of rental value is market evidence, so that if one shop is exactly the same as another then you would expect that shop to pay the same rent. But I am sure Councillor Hamilton if anything because of the fact that this council has not had a seafront surveyor for a while we have got a little bit behind on some of these rent negotiations. That is why you can find that some increases are marginally more than other increases but as I have said there are no increases that are of 300%.

I am quite happy to discuss these matters at further length with Councillor Hamilton at any time."

- 7.60 Councillor Kitcat asked a further supplementary question, "Madam Mayor, Councillor Hamilton now shares my experience of struggling to get answers to questions. Not only did I not get details of the measures to reduce the waiting times for Cityclean but now Councillor Hamilton's very clear questions for the average rent increases and the maximum percentage increases have not been answered. The council has persisted in using an outside consultant to manage seafront rent valuations and negotiations despite extensive criticism from business owners who have detailed their grievances to officers many times. The main criticisms are that the consultants valuations are wildly optimistic compared to those by independent surveyors and ignore the actual turnover figures provided by business owners. With the consultants saying the council needs to ask for a 300% rent increase, because what they ask I admit is not what they agree but what they ask, it's very unlikely that expensive arbitration can be avoided.

Why does the council continue to persist in using these consultants?"

- 7.61 Councillor Theobald replied, "I did explain that for about 12 months we have been endeavouring to employ a seafront surveyor or another surveyor. We got to the stage of interviews, a position was accepted and that particular person then withdrew so we had to start again.

Now, we therefore used consultants but as I tried to explain to you consultants, rental values, I mean one can ask what one likes on these sorts of issues; it is what can be determined by evidence. If a tenant thinks that the council or indeed any tenant anywhere thinks that any landlord anywhere is asking too high a rent or it cannot be justified, as I have explained, it then goes to an independent expert and that person will inevitably be appointed by the President of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in London and both sides then give a written case as to why the rents should be that way or it should be the other way. That is the reason we use consultants and now I am

delighted to say we have a surveyor in place who will join the surveyors' team at this council and will then continue with the rent negotiations along the seafront.

I am sure Councillor Hamilton would be the first to complain if we said right we won't trouble with any rent reviews or any rent increases. We would certainly be in trouble with the District Auditor for value for money; we would be in trouble with the Government, so whereas I certainly don't believe that one should be asking for excessive rents, if the rents we ask for are justified by market value that is what one deals with, what is the market value and the market value as I have tried to explain in that argument is done by our President or its done by a profits method."

7.62 (m) Councillor Carden asked:

"Is the Cabinet Member for Environment aware that a significant number of street lights in North Portslade are left permanently on and what steps is he taking to rectify this problem?"

7.63 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald replied:

"I am aware that there has been a problem with day burning lights in Fox Way, Foredown Road and Forge Close. This arose as a result of repair work carried out by EDF. The council's own lighting contractor, Colas, has reported to us that they corrected this situation by installing a controlled circuit for this area on 1 July.

These lights are part of the city's older cable network which uses a centralised light sensor to turn on and off a whole network of lights. If there is a localised fault, as there was recently in Portslade, EDF do not reinstate the link to the central sensor, but repair the fault in such a way that leaves the lights permanently on. The electricity used by day burning lights is not paid for by the council, but every effort is made to rectify such faults as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, officers are not always notified by EDF on the occasions that this occurs. They therefore rely on Colas' regular city-wide inspections, and reports from members of the public."

7.64 Councillor Carden asked a supplementary question, "Thank you for my reply Councillor Theobald, I do appreciate it. It's very nice to see the lights working in part of Portslade.

My supplementary question is: will you please do something about the street light by the Church of the Good Shepherd as every time I attempt to go down the road the same person has a go at me about that light that has been permanently on for two years, so please, please, please attempt to do something about that light and give me the chance to peacefully walk down the road?"

7.65 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald replied, "I mean obviously we will look at this and try and deal with it as quickly as possible but again I think I ought just to explain the cable network that this Administration has inherited is extremely old. You could make the argument that more resources should have been put into it over the years so that our cable network would have been up to date.

What is happening is, we are trying to catch up and to replace a certain amount each year and that is why we run into these sorts of problems. Had that not been and the cable had been properly updated during the last twenty years then we wouldn't be in the situation that we find ourselves in now."

- 7.66 Councillor Alford asked a further supplementary question, "Having carried out my very own energy audit of each and every light in North Portslade, I found the sum number of three to be burning throughout the daytime hours. Obviously perhaps not quite as concerning as we had been led to believe.

My question to the Environment Cabinet Member is: would he agree with me that the original question is perhaps alarmist and wildly inaccurate and what is his view on what is significant?"

- 7.67 Councillor Theobald replied, "I mean one is one too many but three certainly I wouldn't regard as significant. I have tried to explain, in response to the last question, that had proper resources been put into the cable network over the last ten/fifteen years then – well this has been a Unitary Council since 1997 and East Sussex County Council was controlled by the Labour/Liberal Administration for five or six years before that so, quite frankly, my twenty years point the finger directly there. Frankly, Madam Mayor, I have tried to explain we are trying to upgrade the network, resources permitting, each year they are improved."

- 7.68 (n) Councillor Elgood asked:

"Could the Cabinet Member for Environment kindly update the council on progress with the proposed extension of the ban of Estate Agents Boards?"

- 7.69 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald replied:

"The council's proposal as approved at the Environment Cabinet Member Meeting last year is now with the Government's Regional Office for determination by the Secretary of State.

Ordinarily I would expect a decision within 2 months. However, on this occasion, you may recall that the Brighton & Hove Estate Agents Association did not give its support to the proposal and has indicated that they will wish to make further representation to the Secretary of State. I am aware that there was all-party support for the proposal and very much look forward to a positive outcome."

- 7.70 Councillor Elgood asked a supplementary question, "I am grateful for the response from the Councillor. It is an important move initiative for residents in Wards such as mine and so in order to see progress as quickly as possible can I ask how long it took to submit the applications to the Secretary of State?"

- 7.71 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald replied, "I can't answer that question. All I know is that this is something, and you know this Councillor Elgood, that I am particularly keen on. Obviously it is something I think should happen and as soon as I could I brought this in

and I know I had your support and that of very many residents. I very much hope that the Government will agree with us and that we can bring this in but at the moment we are in the hands of the Government.”

7.72 (o) Councillor Elgood asked:

“How many parking fines have been taken to appeal since April 2008?”

7.73 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald replied:

“921 cases were taken to appeal at the Traffic Penalty Tribunal from 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2009. This equates to less than 1% of all Penalty Charge Notices issued and this is in line with other Local Authorities.”

7.74 Councillor Elgood asked a supplementary question, “I am grateful for the response from the Councillor. Of course one appeal is too many, let alone 921. Can I ask when this contract is next up for renewal and will the Administration be considering some kind of in-house operation in the future?”

7.75 Councillor Theobald replied, “It’s about another two years but it’s actually irrelevant to the PCNs.”

7.76 (p) Councillor Hamilton asked:

“At the Planning Committee on July 1st, when you spoke and voted against a planning application to provide 39 units of affordable housing, you said that it was 2 and 3 bed units, not 1 bed units that were needed. Do you accept that this application would have provided 19 x 2 bed and 4 x 3 bed units, and that any addition to the city’s social and intermediate housing stock, including 1 bed units, is to be welcomed?”

7.77 Councillor Mears replied:

“I accept that this scheme incorporates a mix in terms of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom homes as is required under our Local Plan Policy HO3. There is however evidence of significant pressure for larger family homes and housing affordability is a major issue for the city, particularly for families.

The city’s Strategic Housing Market Assessment (June 2008) shows that there is a role for planning in influencing the mix of dwellings where there are gaps in the choice of homes that are available and suggests planning should look to address ‘bias and broad imbalances’ in the existing stock through new residential developments. The study shows that within the city’s housing stock there is a ‘bias’ towards smaller homes and recent residential development in the city has reinforced this trend. This points to a lack of ‘choice’ in terms of property types and sizes available to current and future households and particularly of family sized dwellings which is what we seek to address.

The targets recognized in the emerging Local Development Framework Core Strategy preferred options and Affordable Housing Policy give a clear indication of our preferred approach where for the city as a whole we want to see the housing mix to be achieved from new build to be 30% 1 beds, 45% 2 beds and 25% 3 beds.

However, Members of the Planning Committee have to judge each individual application on its merits and while as an administration we encourage the development of family housing we do need a mixture of affordable accommodation in the city. The recommendation from officers on this particular application was to refuse it and as we are still within the appeal timeline I cannot comment on this particular application.”

- 7.78 Councillor Hamilton asked a supplementary question, “I would like to thank Councillor Mears again for answering the question that I, in fact, addressed to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Maria Caulfield. The question related not to the actual decision of the Planning Committee but I addressed it specifically to Councillor Caulfield to give her the chance to elaborate on the comments she made at that meeting that we didn’t really have need for any more one bedroom units. Can I therefore just read out from the Homemove Magazine where I looked at one of the recent magazines where there were five one bedroom flats on offer, they attracted 587 bids and four of those five went to a priority A applicant.

Can I ask please whether Councillor Mears agrees that we should welcome all units of affordable housing, including one bedroom units?”

- 7.79 Councillor Mears replied, “As you know Councillor Hamilton, as a Member of the Planning Committee, the recommendation from officers was to refuse this planning application: the reasons being there were no open spaces for families to use for children to play and the density of the scheme in their view was to excess.

I think we need to really take stock as to what is happening in the city, Councillor Hamilton, and I am actually answering this question as Chairman of the Strategic Housing Partnership because the targets emerging from the Local Development Framework Core Strategy for options on affordable housing policy gives very clear indications of the approach for the city that we need a mix of housing, particularly new build around family homes.

Now, we do have subsequently in the city for many years many applications for one bedroom properties as you quite rightly say but we do have an absolute need for family homes. We have real pressure within the city. We are actually losing families out of the city. A lot of these are our key workers and one bedroom accommodation is not suitable for them. We are also putting quite a lot of pressure on neighbouring authorities, particular Adur, who are taking our young families because we are not actually able to house them, so yes, the Homemove magazine does show a number of one bedroom properties, you are absolutely right Councillor Hamilton, but I think you would agree with me they are not suitable for young families or any families with children.

The question around do we need to change and look at where we are with one bedroom properties in the city, Councillor Hamilton I am sure you would agree with me, particularly as a Ward Councillor you know in your Ward you have families that need to move around family accommodation, so I think as an authority we do need to be very

careful that we ensure from now, bearing in mind the large number of planning applications that previously have been agreed for one bedroom properties, that we actually take stock and ensure that we can provide accommodation suitable for families in the city.”

7.80 Councillor Kennedy asked a further supplementary question, “Would the Leader of the Council agree with me that the provision of affordable housing in Brighton and Hove should be viewed more in terms of providing decently sized housing for both families and single people to meet the needs of all the city’s residents and less in terms of a box ticking exercise to meet Government targets, which so often results in sub-standard schemes for poky accommodation, lacking in amenity space such as the application referred to by Councillor Hamilton?”

7.81 Councillor Mears replied, “I could not agree with you more. I do not believe it’s right that developers assume that we would allow our residents in this city to live in small boxes. I have seen applications where the accommodation, if provided, would be so small if the resident actually managed to move into it, which with some of them are doubtful, and take any furniture, they would actually have to slide round the walls because there is no room to actually live in the accommodation, so I could not agree with you more.”

7.82 (q) Councillor Meadows asked:

“Could the Cabinet Member for Sport please confirm that residents, over 16 and under 60, in Moulsecoomb and Bevendean are eligible for free swimming lessons?”

7.83 Councillor Smith replied:

“As we are one of only two authorities fully implementing the scheme in Sussex I would like to clarify that the Free Swimming Programme is available at the King Alfred, Prince Regent and St Luke’s swimming pools for all of the city’s residents aged 16 or under, or aged 60 and over (not over 16 and under 60 as per your question).

The programme enables free swimming in general public sessions in accordance with the pool timetables but does not include swimming lessons. However, a proposal for a new scheme by the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) to provide some funding towards free swimming lessons is in the process of being launched. Officers will meet the ASA in the near future with partners from the Primary Care Trust to obtain more information about the possible scheme including match funding requirements.”

7.84 Councillor Meadows asked a supplementary question, “Thank you Councillor Smith for your response. Yes, I can see that councillors are open to making mistakes and it should have read sessions, not lessons but what I would really like to know is whether the Cabinet Member will be asking his Conservative colleague to correct her mistakes, or was it a mistake, when she wrote in black and white, or blue and white in this case, to residents in Moulsecoomb and Bevendean saying and I quote: ‘This Council has provided free swimming for the over 16s and the under 60s unlike many other neighbouring authorities.’

My first thought and question has been raised with me by residents who wanted to know how they could access this free service for the rest of the population in Moulsecoomb and Bevendean. My second thought and question was that I also felt that other Councillors may ask to have the same offer for their constituents. However, if you are saying that Councillor Caulfield has made a mistake and will put that in writing then I need to know whether the correct information will go out to residents telling them of her mistake and that they will not be getting the free swimming sessions for the over 16s and the under 60s that she told them about.

Furthermore will she be telling them the truth at all and admit that it was indeed the Labour Government and the Primary Care Trust that has provided free swimming sessions for the under 16s and over 60s? Will she also inform them that the Government and the PCT has indeed paid for all of those expenses so that it will not fall on the council taxpayers of this city as officers have already confirmed it to me?"

- 7.85 Councillor Smith replied, "I think the answer to one part of the question about a leaflet that went round and they were very proud to see that the people of Moulsecoomb and Bevendean read the leaflets that come round the estates there and notified of that mistake and I think it was after so many there that at once it was rectified and sent to the public in some areas that it was a mistake.

Obviously I am answering the question that was given to us and we have got the answer there. They made the mistake whether it was deliberate or not they said swimming lessons when we don't do swimming lessons, it's swimming sessions there, so basically speaking it was a leaflet sent out, whether it was right or wrong, it was rectified and I think the question that was put to me wasn't to the benefit of the citizens of this Council."

- 7.86 Councillor Fallon-Khan asked a further supplementary question, "Unlike Councillor Meadows I will just ask one question and that is: could the Cabinet Member say how successful these sessions have been since its inception?"

- 7.87 Councillor Smith replied, "As a leading city and one of only two in Sussex that are doing free swimming for the 16s and under and over 60s we are very proud of the record. We have had over 4,000 youngsters apply for free swimming and over 2,000 adults and it fits in nicely with our plan for this city to have at least half an hour's exercise five days a week by all the citizens of this city and some of you, there's no-one under 16, are over 60, I hope you are taking advantage of this scheme and going swimming."

- 7.88 (r) Councillor Davis asked:

"What are Brighton & Hove City Council's projected figures for the number of children needing primary school places for 2009, 2010, and 2011 across the city?"

- 7.89 Councillor Brown replied:

"The data we use for planning is based on the home addresses of all children registered with GPs in the City. This allows us to look at numbers living in the city as a whole and also at numbers living in wards or postal areas. Not all children living in the City and registered with a GP take places at maintained schools. On the basis of school census

numbers in recent years compared with GP data we estimate that the equivalent of 88% of GP registered pupils will seek a maintained school place. For the years in question this gives the following expectation of Reception pupil numbers for the City as a whole.

2009 2521 (this is the number of places actually allocated rather than an estimate based on GP data)
 2010 2556 (88% x 2905)
 2011 2783 (88% X 3163)”

- 7.90 Councillor Davis asked a supplementary question, “I want to thank Councillor Brown for her figures, though I don’t think they are incredibly enlightening. I think everyone here is in no doubt that the demand for primary school places, in some parts of the city, is now rapidly outstripping the number available. I think there are a thousand signatures and the deputation outside proves the point. We have been pressing for many months asking for Hove to have a new school using Government money on offer but it’s the immediate future that concerns many parents most.

In London this week temporary classrooms are being found to ease the crisis there, so my question is: what is the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People doing here and now for our city’s children, what options is she exploring to find temporary classrooms, even closed down private schools or church halls and find more places for the many parents who have nowhere to send their child or children this September?”

- 7.91 Councillor Brown replied, “Thank you Councillor Davis for your question but you are being really misleading there. There is plenty of space in this city for every primary child to go to school this September. The places may not all be where we would like them to be but they are there and it’s not a question of what I’m going to do by September but it’s a question of what we’ve already done since we have come into Administration.

When we first came into Administration we realised there were not going to be enough primary places in this city so we set to work immediately to rectify that and as you know last year we put an extra class in West Blatchington and we also temporarily then put an extra class in Davigdor. I have just recently made that class permanent and it means that this year will go all the way through the schools which means that in Davigdor and Somerhill we will be catering for an extra 200 children.

Now, I know not everybody’s got a place where they would like it and I’m really sorry about that but a lot of the people you are talking about live quite near other schools which may be slightly outside the BN3 area, so they’re not all having to travel vast distances and we have since we’ve been in power done quite a lot about providing extra places.”

- 7.92 Councillor Kemble asked a further supplementary question, “I think it’s a shame at this time that Councillor Davis for one reason or another is trying to ramp up primary school admissions.

My question is: would the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People agree with me that this Administration has provided more and continues to provide additional places in our primary schools more than the previous Labour Administration had done since the foundation of the city council in 1997?”

7.93 Councillor Brown replied, "Thank you Councillor Kemble, in fact I think I have already answered that question by explaining how many extra places we have put across the city in the previous two years."

7.94 **(s)** Councillor Davis asked:

"Has the Cabinet Member met recently with the owners of the Engineerium to progress the re-opening of this world famous collection and museum?"

7.95 Councillor Smith replied:

"The owner is currently still doing refurbishments on the Engineerium. His plan is to open it in the latter part of 2010."

7.96 Councillor Davis asked a supplementary question, "Thank you Councillor Smith for your reply. I am delighted to hear that the Engineerium is going to be opened. I think what we would really like to hear is a real date and when we might know that date?"

7.97 Councillor Smith replied, "I don't know off-hand but we did have a site visit round there and it was fantastic the amount of work that has been done on it, new roofs and everything else there.

Obviously the owner's ambition is to open it next year, we don't know the date yet but obviously we've had the tour round there. Unfortunately, I don't think you were able to come on it. We had a very good tour there by the owner and he went right into everything there and his ambition for the future is to make it an Engineerium for everybody in the city and the world-wide renown."

7.98 **(t)** Councillor Marsh asked:

"Would the Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Employment and Major Projects, agree with me that especially in these difficult economic times, the Council should make every effort to encourage businesses/developers/service providers etc. who wish to maximise opportunities to both employ local people and provide much needed amenities for local residents?"

7.99 Councillor Kemble replied:

"The council is committed to increasing opportunity for its residents, particularly in the area of employment. We recognise that the key to creating sustainable employment is by supporting and growing the local business base."

7.100 Councillor Marsh asked a supplementary question, "Thank you very much indeed Councillor Kemble for your reply which I was very grateful to receive, and I am delighted that you support the opportunity to grow and support the local business base.

Could you tell me when this Administration will support and grow the local business base of Kingspan by identifying an alternative site for them which will be fit for purpose for their expanding business and thus releasing the current site they occupy in my Ward which can then be developed to provide further sustainable employment and much needed amenities for my local community in Moulseccomb?"

7.101 Councillor Kemble replied, "I confirm that there are ongoing negotiations between Kingspan and council officers about the location of a suitable site. I don't propose to comment on individual businesses in this particular Chamber but as soon as a proposition comes forward to officers it will come to me for a decision and I will make the appropriate decision based on the information that I have."

7.102 Councillor Kitcat asked a further supplementary question, "I hope the Cabinet Member will recognise the importance to employment the seafront traders provide to this city and will support their rent negotiations. I also wonder, given the importance this Administration have put on American Express to provide future employment, would he share my concern over their cuts to pension contributions and the effective cut in the value of employment to our local residents working for American Express?"

7.103 Councillor Kemble replied, "Thank you Councillor Kitcat. Can I confirm to Councillor Kitcat that this Administration is fully supportive of all types of businesses that want to do business with the city. I am not in a position to comment on a private business's personal pension arrangements."

7.104 (u) Councillor Taylor asked:

"The council is to implement its new equal-pay proofed future pay scheme from Jan 1 2010. Can the Leader of the Council confirm how the council will react to staff who are unwilling to sign their new equal-pay-based contracts of employment?"

7.105 Councillor Mears replied:

"We are working hard to ensure that we will emerge from the equal pay negotiations with the Trade Unions, with a set of proposals acceptable to the majority of staff. At this stage it is therefore not appropriate for us to pre-empt those negotiations, nor would it be fair on the staff who may be affected."

7.106 Councillor Taylor asked a supplementary question, "Councillor, you may have seen the Evening Argus on Saturday where it was reported that 821 staff members would suffer a decrease in wages as a result of the future pay implementation from January 1 2010. Further the Argus report revealed that the council's negotiating team is suggesting that any staff who refuse to accept their new contracts at a lower rate of pay be issued with notices terminating their employment within three months.

I have a question in three parts and the first part is: I would like to offer Councillor Mears the chance to confirm or deny that this provision has now been agreed. The second question or second part of the question is would Councillor Mears not agree with me that threatening to sack staff who do not accept pay cuts will damage industrial relations and increase the risk of disruptive disputes and, finally, as the Leader of the Council will

she now rule out the termination of employment contracts to staff unwilling to accept pay cuts?"

7.107 Councillor Mears replied, "I am sure Councillor Taylor will share with me my real concern that for whatever reason, or wherever from, a supposed report, and I can only assume it's a supposed report because I haven't seen what the Argus received, should be sent. It's just the fact that our staff are being discussed in the Argus around a really sensitive issue that affects them directly, that people feel it is appropriate, for whatever reason, to contact a local paper and, I'm not sure, I don't know what was sent to the Argus but they certainly printed a story. I, and I am sure Councillor Taylor would agree with me, think that is quite disgraceful because we are entering into negotiations with recognised Trade Unions on the proposals for future pay and we are working jointly with the Unions for a considerable period before that to ensure that we actually work this through for the benefit of our staff.

Now, I am quite aware that there is a lot of politics around that. I am sure that Councillor Taylor would agree with me that actually this is such a sensitive issue that really these negotiations should be played out with the Unions, the recognised Unions, and the council officers and not played out in the local press.

Now, you asked me a specific question around whether I would agree to one particular route. I actually can't agree with anything Councillor Taylor at this moment in time. The reason being, and I am sure you would agree with me, that we are entering negotiations with the Unions. You do not go into negotiations with a done deal. You go into negotiations to discuss how you are going to take it forward. Now this is a really, really serious issue for staff in this council and I am really disappointed, really disappointed that whoever felt it was their right to talk to the Argus and on whatever report or whatever they said to the Argus for it to be put in the press. I am actually sure Councillor Taylor you would agree with me this is not, not the correct way that we as an organisation should be consulting with our Unions for our staff."

7.108 (v) Councillor West asked:

"As the Cabinet Member with responsibility for environmental services, is Councillor Theobald satisfied with the mediocre 68% user satisfaction rates for waste and recycling? If not, what will he do to improve on this?"

7.109 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald replied:

"I am pleased to say that levels of resident satisfaction with refuse and recycling has been increasing year on year. In fact the recent 2008 Place Survey indicated that 70% of residents are satisfied with the refuse service and 68% with the recycling service.

We are not complacent and we are committed to improve services for our residents. We have been implementing significant changes which will save just short of £1m per annum and communal bins have a significant impact on cleaning up our city centre streets. I accept these changes have been difficult ones for residents and for staff.

Of course, we want to improve customer satisfaction levels with the service and this is our focus now that we have a service which is more affordable. With communal bins we will have cleaner streets, with the waste strategy proposals we will have a better recycling service and increased recycling levels. It is a commitment of this Administration to make difficult decisions to improve services for residents. We will continue to focus on improving the refuse and recycling services.”

- 7.110 Councillor West asked a supplementary question, “Can I thank Councillor Theobald for his long answer to both my questions. It’s quite an unusual thing to happen but thank you very much. I am surprised though that Councillor Theobald seems content that at the last count a third of residents, almost, expressed discontent with the waste and recycling services, a figure I suspect is likely to worsen after recent events.

Will he and his pledge to improve services recognise the importance of effective communications with residents and does he agree that in order to get greater buy-in and understanding from residents this council needs to publish a regular newsletter dedicated to waste and recycling and delivered to all households? If not, why not, and what will he do otherwise to improve communications that will help raise our unimpressive recycling rates?”

- 7.111 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald replied, “I would love the situation to be that we would have a 100% satisfaction rate but when one bears in mind that the Place Survey took place in 2008, towards the end while we were in the middle of all the changes, and then one considers what the situation was in 2003 and in 2003 the satisfaction rate for refuse collection was 46% and for doorstep recycling 50%. In 2006 it was 66% for refuse collection and 68% for doorstep recycling, so we are moving upwards. Now, I dare say that once everything has settled down, it pretty well has, that I would hope that the survey would go up even higher than the figure now but if you consider that it was 46% in 2003 and 70% towards the latter part of 2008 when the survey was undertaken, that is a great step forward.

As far as communications, I think that was the other point that Councillor West mentioned, we do convey to our residents through City News and we have got a communications strategy as well.”

- 7.112 Councillor Janio asked a further supplementary question, “Does the Cabinet Member for Environment have any figures for recycling rates across the city, particularly those before 2007?”

- 7.113 Councillor Theobald replied, “I did give the recycling rates in 2003 which was 50% doorstep recycling but I don’t have that figure here. I’m sorry, the figure was 14% and has now gone up to virtually 30%, so that has doubled.”

- 7.114 **(w)** Councillor West asked:

“Does Councillor Theobald think recycling food waste, which makes up a third of domestic waste, could make a vital contribution towards meeting recycling targets and public aspirations for moving towards zero waste?”

7.115 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald replied:

“Our recycling rates are at their highest levels ever thanks to the efforts of our residents. Initial figures for 2008/09 indicate we recycled and composted in excess of 29% of our waste.

I fully agree that the amount of food waste we throw away is unsustainable – 33% of our waste is food much of which could have been eaten. We have carried out a lot of research into food waste collection and to make this work and make it affordable we would have to move to fortnightly refuse collections. We will not do this. Residents are entitled to a weekly refuse collection service.

Instead we will develop campaigns to reduce the amount of food residents throw away, which I’m sure you will agree is the most sustainable option for dealing with food waste. We are also proposing to subsidise food composters and wormeries to enable residents to compost their own food waste at home.”

7.116 Councillor West asked a supplementary question, “Is Councillor Theobald familiar with existing food waste recycling services around the country in places like Richmond and Ludlow, which in the case of Ludlow has been successfully turning 4,000 tonnes of food waste per year into energy and fertiliser? Will he agree to visit these schemes or schemes like these to see for himself their potential and the potential that they hold for this city?”

7.117 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald replied, “Interestingly enough, one of my good friends, Councillor Paul Bettison who is the Leader of Bracknell Forest Council, they do actually do what you want them to do. They do do a food waste collection but I have to tell you the collection is based on a fortnightly cycle, so food and other matters are collected once a fortnight. Now, quite frankly, I do not believe that the residents of Brighton and Hove would wish to see a fortnightly collection and that is the direction we will go in if we were to follow your suggestion of food waste.

I would just also make the point that food waste collection would require in excess of £1m capital investment and over £1m revenue investment year on year and I think you would agree with me that those sorts of sums, bearing in mind what is going to happen, particularly after the next General Election when we can all expect a change of Government, but whatever Government is there the situation for local government will not be an easy one.”

7.118 Councillor Kitcat asked a further supplementary question, “I’ll take Councillor Theobald’s answer as a no then that he won’t visit. Just to clarify, most authorities collect food weekly and I wondered if he could just clear up because his response in today’s agenda states the reason that he won’t consider food waste is due to the need for fortnightly collections but the waste strategy which he approved at a consultation and Cabinet Member meeting which I did attend, Membership note, was the reason they weren’t going to look at food waste collection was because it wasn’t sustainable in terms of carbon emission savings, so what is it, is it carbon emission savings or is it because you don’t want to go to fortnightly collections? Why are you ruling this out now?”

7.119 Councillor Theobald replied, "I am quite happy to go and visit as many authorities as I have the time to be able to go along and do. Yes, it may well be if I am in the area I will go to Richmond-upon-Thames and the other authority. I am quite happy to ask officers with the technical expertise to go to Richmond-upon-Thames to visit there and certainly for when I am next in the area.

There are a number of reasons, and I have given you two reasons and another one in the waste strategy where I do not think at the present time moving over to that food waste collection that you are talking about would be ideal at the present time. I have given you two, if not three reasons."

8. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, CABINET MEMBER MEETINGS AND COMMITTEES.

(a) Callover

8.1 None of the items on the agenda were reserved for discussion:

(b) Receipt and/or Approval of Reports

8.2 The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that the Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report and Counter Fraud Strategy, Item No's 9 and 10 respectively, on the agenda with the recommendations therein be approved and adopted.

(c) Oral Questions from Members

8.3 The Mayor noted that there were no oral questions.

9. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT.

9.1 **RESOLVED** – That the Annual Report of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission be noted.

10. COUNTER FRAUD STRATEGY - REFERRED TO COUNCIL FOR INFORMATION.

10.1 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

11. NOTICES OF MOTION.

(a) Tackling Unemployment Through Social Housing.

11.1 The Notice of Motion as detailed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Randall and seconded by Councillor Wrighton.

11.2 Councillor Caulfield moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Kemble, which was accepted by Councillor Randall.

11.3 The Mayor then put the following Notice of Motion as amended to the vote:

“This council believes that social housing should be seen as a gateway into employment, training and education for unemployed people who are housed by the city council and housing associations working in Brighton and Hove.

This Council welcomes the work already being carried out to establish a positive link between social housing and employment in the City. This includes: the Places for Change programme, local apprenticeship opportunities in the new housing repairs and maintenance contract and innovative use of the allocations policy to promote social mobility amongst working households.

It notes the success of the London-wide Housing Employment Connections programme, which has adopted a joined-up approach to housing, training and job opportunities, principally through the Choice Based Letting system.

It therefore asks the Cabinet to consider the possibilities of introducing the Housing Employment Connections programme in Brighton and Hove”

11.4 **The motion was carried.**

(b) Making the Most of Wasted Spaces.

11.5 The Notice of Motion as detailed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Randall and seconded by Councillor Kennedy.

11.6 Councillor Smith proposed an amendment, seconded by Councillor Older, which was accepted by Councillor Randall.

11.7 The Mayor then put the following Notice of Motion as amended to the vote:

“This council applauds the success of groups making use of empty spaces and buildings to the cultural, commercial and community benefit of the city, notably:

- Andrew Comben and the Brighton Festival for the inspirational use of the market building to house Anish Kapoor’s *The Dismemberment of Jeanne D’Arc*
- The Guerilla Gardeners who have turned an eyesore into a community landmark with their rescue of the derelict garage site in the Lewes Road
- The Brighton University art students who converted the Old Music Library into an art gallery for the Brighton Festival
- Slack Space Brighton, which is bringing empty shops and offices into use for small traders across the city.
- The Bristol Estate Artists’ Studio project.
- The conversion of disused buildings, such as bin stores, on some of the Council’s

housing estates.

- The Cyberden I.T. training facility at St. James House.

It therefore asks the Cabinet to further examine the possibilities of helping these and other groups in their efforts to make the most of wasted spaces to help the city out of the recession.”

11.8 **The motion was carried.**

(c) Save Our Local Newspaper and Local Independent Newsagents.

11.9 The Notice of Motion as detailed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Mitchell and seconded by Councillor Hawkes.

11.10 The Mayor then put the following Notice of Motion to the vote:

“This Council notes the cross party EDM 1424, that seeks to support the National Federation of Retail Newsagents and the Association of News Retailers’ serious concerns about *“the recent consolidation of the newspaper and magazine distribution market and the likely emergence of two regional monopolies; values the important role of independent newsagents and is concerned that these changes in the market may force many to close, restricting consumer choice and harming local communities, as well as causing up to 2,800 job losses in news distribution branches across the UK..”*

The Council also notes that independent newsagents are closing at a rate of more than one a day, which will threaten thousands of jobs throughout the Country. With the monopoly of the two distribution giants, Smiths and Menzies, our local newsagents are now becoming powerless against increased prices.

The Council recognises that the worrying decline of locally written media across the country has spread to Brighton and Hove with the proposed closure of the printing works at the Argus offices in Hollingbury, with up to 53 local jobs being lost.

This Council acknowledges the significant contribution that local newsagents bring to communities throughout the City and values the importance of local news and requests that;

- The Acting Chief Executive writes to the Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform to request that the Office of Fair Trading looks urgently at these recent developments in the distribution market and takes action to safeguard competition for the benefit of consumers, independent newsagents and distribution employees alike.
- The Acting Chief Executive write to Newsquest Sussex and the Editor of The Argus, expressing the Council’s concern over the recent job losses and to;

- Emphasise the value that the Council places on locally written media
- Expresses concern at any attempts to regionalise the City's press coverage."

11.11 **The motion was carried.**

(d) Support the 'Great British Refurb' and the Creation of More Eco-Jobs and Training in the City.

11.12 The Notice of Motion as detailed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Turton and seconded by Councillor Mitchell.

11.13 The Mayor then put the following Notice of Motion to the vote:

"The Council welcomes the Great British Refurb that is planned across the country and the subsequent creation of jobs and training opportunities across the City.

The Council recognises that the refurbishment of Britain's schools, public buildings and council housing to improve energy efficiency has had received wide ranging support. The Renewable Energy Association has called the Government's plans 'very positive, visionary and ambitious and the Local Government Association has called the plans a 'a major step forward' and the LGA have asked that energy suppliers pay a £500m annual charge to help fund a home insulation programme that would save 10 million households £280 a year on their energy bills, and create up to 20,000 new eco jobs.

Key proposals of the Great British Refurb include;

- Finance packages to install energy efficiency measures and low-carbon heat and power sources would be offered to householders. Repayment from part of the savings on energy bills would be linked to the property, rather than residents.
- Combined with guaranteed cash payments by way of a Renewable Heat Incentive and a Feed-in Tariff for small scale electricity generation, the payback for homeowners who switch to low-carbon technologies and save energy would start from day one.
- Options for improving the delivery of energy efficiency advice and measures, including establishing a central coordinating body funded by energy companies and working to Government-set targets.
- Rolling out low-cost home energy audits, developing a qualification for energy advisers, and establishing an accreditation scheme for installers.

The Council accepts that it will also have a large role to play in developing renewable and low carbon heat and electricity, such as district heating schemes and asks:

- (a) The Cabinet Sustainability Committee to consider its responsibility to ensure;

- Local schools, colleges and universities take full advantage of any future qualifications and apprenticeships linked to the instalment of environmentally friendly technology in the City's homes,
 - Local people are kept informed of the benefits of the Great British Refurb, such as any paybacks for homeowners who switch to low carbon alternatives and training opportunities in green industries, through council publications such as the website and City News,
 - Work with local energy companies based in the City, as well as government departments to guarantee the best options, in terms of energy packages, training opportunities and jobs for residents and young people in the City,
- (b) The Council asks the Cabinet to consider whether there is a wish for any involvement in the roll out of the Great British Refurb, particularly with regards to any future skills and training initiatives, and
- (c) That the Acting Chief Executive write to the Department of Energy and Climate Change to outline the Council's support for the scheme."

11.14 **The motion was carried.**

(e) Protecting Public Services.

11.15 The Notice of Motion as detailed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Steedman and seconded by Councillor Kennedy.

11.16 The Mayor then put the following Notice of Motion to the vote:

"As a result of the economic troubles facing the UK, more and more people are turning to public services for support. However, in the context of current budget deficits, some commentators argue services are likely to experience real term budget cuts over the next decade. Making sure that vital front-line services which support the most vulnerable in our society have adequate funding is crucial to helping people across the UK weather the economic storm.

* This council notes that the UK economy is experiencing grave difficulties:

- The overall unemployment rate in the UK in June reached a 12 year high of 7.2 per cent. (In Brighton & Hove more than 7000 people claimed Job Seekers Allowance in May 2009.)
- The Financial Service Authority found in the same month that house repossessions are up 62 per cent in the last year.
- The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in June revised down its forecast for the UK economy in 2009. It warns that the UK is in "a sharp recession" with output set to contract by 4.3 per cent in 2009, worse than its previous forecast of a 3.7 per cent fall.

- * Further, this council notes that periods of economic downturn often feature a rise in health, welfare and social problems, and that the more vulnerable members of society are likely to be disproportionately affected:
 - 2008 saw 2.1million more prescriptions of antidepressants in England than in 2007.
 - 66 per cent of Relate Centres (the UK's largest provider of relationship counselling) across the country have seen an increase in demand for their services.
 - Shelter has seen a 250 per cent increase in the number of calls to its free helpline regarding mortgage arrears over the last year.
 - The attorney general, Lady Scotland, has warned that domestic violence will rise with increased financial worries. (Rise, formerly known as the Women's Refuge Project in Brighton, says it is handling an average of about two dozen new referrals a month and the trend is up on last year.)
 - Ministers have conceded that the recession will make it more difficult for the government to meet its pledge to end child [poverty](#) (1 in 5 children in Brighton and Hove are growing up in poverty).
 - The Prime Minister has said: 'historically, in tough economic times, there has been a rise in crimes of violence and theft.'
- * Further, this council notes that
 - Brighton and Hove is ranked as the 79th most deprived local authority in England - so falls within the most deprived 25 per cent of all authorities in England.
 - 15 of the city's 164 'super output areas' (SOAs) fall within the 10 per cent most deprived SOAs in England, with 8 SOAs falling in the 5 per cent most deprived. Deprivation in the city is allied to health inequalities (particularly around mental health), drug, alcohol and substance misuse and child poverty.
 - The city's most recent Local Government Finance Settlement (which funds nearly 50 per cent of the council's net budget) saw Brighton & Hove City Council receive the minimum increase each year, known as a "grant floor increase", which is likely to continue for many years ahead. The grant increase for 2009/10 is 1.75%, well below the national average increase for Unitary Councils of 3.4%.
- * Therefore this council resolves to request the Acting Chief Executive to write to the Chancellor, Alistair Darling MP and the Shadow Chancellor, George Osborne MP requesting that they:
 - commit to protect funding for frontline public services
 - take into consideration Brighton & Hove's unique problems in any future financial settlement decisions."

11.17 **The motion was carried.**

(f) Metering Water Supply in Flats.

11.18 The Notice of Motion as detailed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Duncan and seconded by Councillor Kitcat.

11.19 Councillor Caulfield proposed an amendment, seconded by Councillor Janio, which was accepted by Councillor Duncan.

11.20 The Mayor then put the following Notice of Motion as amended to the vote:

“This Council notes:

Basing charges for domestic water on the readings of a water meter is likely to result in a decrease in water bills, in some cases this has been reported to be as much as 60% a year.

Further, by creating a financial incentive to reduce water consumption, the installation of a water meter usually results in a marked reduction in annual household water consumption.

But Southern Water – the principal supplier of water to households in the city – has been either unable or unwilling to install individual water meters in a large number of flats owned by this council.

This means tenants and leaseholders living in council-owned blocks are likely to be paying more, on average, for their water, than those living in private houses – and have no direct incentive to try to reduce their water consumption.

Recent projections of the city and region’s climate predicted a large reduction in rainfall in coming decades – whilst the city’s population is set to increase: this is almost certain to increase pressure on supply, pushing up costs and requiring ongoing reduction in consumption to avoid interruptions in supply.

This Council resolves:

1. To support the principle that charges for water should be made more fair: that the charging structure should be based on three key principles: (a) bills should reflect the amount of water actually used, (b) Southern Water should reward households for taking steps to reduce their water consumption, and (c) Southern Water should ensure that water is available for all, all the time, and that no-one chooses to use less water than they need for their health or welfare in order to reduce bills.
2. To recognise and welcome the work already being done on this issue by tenants and staff working in the housing directorate, as well as the city’s High Rise Action Group and members of the Older Person’s Council and the Sheltered Housing Action Group.

3. Support the principle that all residents should have the opportunity of having individual water meters fitted, where this is technically possible, with the cost borne by the water company – and that where this is not possible fairer charges for water should be applied.
4. To support the principle that calculating water charges on the basis of the number of bedrooms in a residence rather than occupancy constitutes discrimination against single people as a class and an unfair pricing policy.
5. To request the Acting Chief Executive to write to Southern Water (sending a copy to industry regulator Ofwat), urging the firm to rethink its policy on charging for water at unmetered properties, specifically that information is sought about the number of people living in a particular property and adjustments made to ensure water bills are cut for single and two-person dwellings, and that no charges for surface drainage are made to those living in properties with ‘soakaways’
6. To request the Acting Chief Executive write to the city’s MPs with a copy of this Notice of Motion, urging them to support the principle of fairer charges for water.”

11.21 **The motion was carried.**

12. REFERRED NOTICES OF MOTION REPORTED TO COUNCIL FOR INFORMATION ONLY.

12.1 The Mayor noted that the Notices of Motion relating to (a) Neighbourhood Policing, Council Services and Local Action Teams (LATS) and (b) Support Apprenticeship Programmes in Brighton and Hove, as detailed in the agenda had been referred to the Cabinet meeting held on the 21 May 2009, and the decisions taken were being reported back to the council for information in accordance with Procedural Rule 24.

12.2 **RESOLVED** – That the information be noted.

The meeting concluded at 8.35pm

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of

2009