

**EXTRACT FROM THE DRAFT PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON THE 21 OCTOBER 2010****BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL****4.30pm 21 JULY 2010
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL****DRAFT MINUTES**

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

PART ONE**27(C). CONNEXIONS****40(A). CONNEXIONS**

27.23 The Mayor stated that in view of the high level of interest in the issue affecting the Connexions Service, he had decided that it would be appropriate to take both the petition, Item 27(c) and the notice of motion, Item 40(a) together in one debate. He noted that under the Council's petition scheme, if a petition contained more than 1,250 signatures it could be debated by the Full Council and such a request had been made in respect of the petition concerning Connexions.

27.24 The Mayor welcomed Mr. Knutson to the meeting and invited him to present his petition.

27.25 Mr. Knutson thanked the Mayor and outlined the history behind the petition, which had resulted from the proposal to cut the service and which he presented on behalf of the past, present and future users:

"Brighton and Hove city council has announced £700,000 of cuts to the Connexions service to be implemented by March 2011.

This will mean a substantial reduction of the frontline connexions service, or even the complete closure of the service. We are deeply concerned about the implications of this decision. Quite apart from the impact on the frontline staff, all of whom are very skilled and qualified in working with young people, we are extremely disturbed about the potentially very damaging impact these cuts will have upon the future and wellbeing of the young people living in Brighton and Hove.

To be substantially reducing the level of support to young people at the very time when more advice and support is needed in these difficult economic times, we feel is very short-sighted. Young people are the country's future and to reduce the level of support available to them, we feel is a very damaging development.

We call on the council to rescind this decision and explore other means to meet the budget cuts without impacting the frontline services.

Your support would be very much appreciated. Please sign our petition to save the Connexions service in Brighton and Hove.”

- 27.26 Mr. Knutson stated that 2,885 people had signed the petition in support of maintaining a valuable front-line value for money service. He did not believe the service could be put back into schools and asked that the council review the decision and ensure that young people had someone to go to for help and advice outside of the school environment.
- 27.27 Councillor Hawkes then moved the Labour Group's notice of motion, which called on the Cabinet to continue with the Connexions Service whilst undertaking a review and bringing a report to a future meeting.
- 27.28 Councillor Mitchell formally seconded the motion and stated that she believed the decision had been taken in haste without fully accounting for the staff and service implications of such an action.
- 27.29 Councillor Brown thanked Mr. Knutson for presenting the petition and stated that the council had been faced with a 28% cut in the Area Based Grant it received from the Government and as such had had to look at where savings could be made. The Connexions Service overall budget was £2m and therefore it was felt that this could be reduced proportionately and the remaining £1.5m budget used to support a redesigned service. She also wished to confirm that at present things remained as they were and no changes had been made as a consultation process was about to begin. She also stated that she wished to withdraw the Conservative Group's amendment to the petition as the Group would be supporting the Labour notice of motion.
- 27.30 Councillor Fryer stated that she felt to date the staff had been treated badly and the council could face legal challenges to the proposed action and lack of completing an equalities impact assessment. She therefore wished to move an amendment to the report on the petition and add a further two recommendations at 2.2 and 2.3 of the report as follows:
- “That the Cabinet reconsiders its in-year budget cuts to ensure that Connexions services are protected; and
- That the Cabinet immediately holds discussions with Connexions staff about how to approach the impending cuts from central government without compromising the quality of the service.”
- 27.31 Councillor Phillips formally seconded the amendment.
- 27.32 Councillor Fryer stated she wished to move an amendment to the notice of motion, which she believed added weight to the motion itself.

- 27.33 Councillor Phillips formally seconded the amendment and stated that she believed the decision to cut the service had left the futures of young people uncertain and with no support. The service was needed if vulnerable young people were to be given every opportunity to succeed and feel that they had someone to help them. She believed that there was a choice on how to meet the savings that were required and maintain the service rather than simply cut it and place future costs on other services.
- 27.34 Councillor Kemble stated that Connexions was a nationally recognised service, however it had not been as good as it could be and that a proposed redesign based on the £1.5m budget was the best way forward. There were other services that supported young people and he believed that these could be utilised more effectively.
- 27.35 Councillor Hamilton stated that he believed there was a need for the Connexions service and expressed his concern over the proposal to rely on the schools to fulfil the role as they would need greater resources. He also believed that one of the strengths of the service was that it was based outside of the schools so that young people felt confident to use it.
- 27.36 Councillor Elgood stated that it was a flagship service which needed to be retained and noted that the council now had the opportunity to set priorities with the removal of ring-fencing and therefore suggested that the service should be maintained.
- 27.37 Councillor Cobb stated that she was aware of people who had not received the support they had expected and had found it difficult to access the service. She believed that there was a need to review what was provided and how, in order to meet the needs of those who required support.
- 27.38 Councillor Simson stated that the service was not being closed and remained in operation. There was a need to review how it was to be provided in view of the reduction in the budget provision and hopefully this would ensure that a more effective service was provided.
- 27.39 Councillor Mears stated that many authorities were in a similar position to the council in terms of the savings that had to be made. The Administration was looking across all areas of the council to find ways of reducing costs and the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People was fully aware of the concerns raised and was in the process of consulting with the staff affected.
- 27.40 Councillor Janio noted that a total of £1.5m remained in the budget for the service and suggested that this could be utilised effectively once the consultation and redesign of the service had been completed. The aim had to be to ensure that young people were given the support for and opportunity to get on in the world of work.
- 27.41 Councillor Brown restated that £1.5m was held in the budget for the Connexions Service and that the service had not been stopped to date. The consultation process was due to start in November and she hoped that it would result in a way forward for the service. She would much prefer not to have to make any cuts; however there was a need to account for the reduction in the area based grant provision. She was happy to accept the first Green amendment to the report on the petition but not the second and as such

asked that they be taken individually. She could not support the Green amendment to the notice of motion.

27.42 Councillor Hawkes stated that she hoped the consultation process and redesign proposals would involve all those with an interest in the matter so that the situation that had resulted would not be repeated and things could be taken forward.

27.43 The Mayor thanked Mr. Knutson for attending the meeting and presenting the petition. He noted that a request had been made to take the Green amendments to the report on the petition separately and put the first recommendation to the vote which was carried. He then put the second recommendation to the vote which was lost. He therefore moved that the report and the recommendations as amended be approved.

27.44 **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the petition be referred to the Cabinet for consideration; and
- (2) That the Cabinet be requested to reconsider its in-year budget cuts to ensure that Connexions services are protected.

40(a). CONNEXIONS

40.1 The Mayor noted that the Conservative Group's amendment had been withdrawn and that a Green Group amendment to the Labour Group's Notice of Motion had been moved and put it to the vote which was lost.

40.2 The Mayor then put the following substantive motion as unamended to the vote:

"This council recognises and values the work of the Brighton and Hove Connexions Service that provides high quality, impartial guidance to 13 – 19yr old young people relating to personal development, training and careers and seeks to ensure that young people make a smooth transition to adulthood and working life. It also recognises the specialist work undertaken with young people who have special educational needs.

This council acknowledges that the work of the Connexions Personal Advisors has directly contributed to the reduction in entrants to the Youth Justice System and numbers of teenage pregnancies in the city, where the council's own performance indicators demonstrate falling numbers.

In addition, there have been early signs of a welcome reduction in the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training. (NEET).

Therefore, this council expresses its great concern at the total reduction of £700,000 funding to the Connexions budget that has put the jobs of up to 40 Connexions workers at risk as well as significantly reducing the service to young people and jeopardising the progress made.

It calls on the Cabinet to continue the Brighton & Hove Connexions Service while urgently carrying out the following work:

- To properly examine the government proposals for the future of careers guidance and support contained within the Education Bill, due to be published in Autumn 2010.
- To fully consult with schools as to their capacity and willingness to take on this work and the implications for the transfer of statutory responsibilities.
- To carry out an Equality Impact Assessment to show how the impact of closing the Connexions service will affect service users, particularly those with SEN.
- To take into account the implications of the Government spending review.
- To bring forward a report to Cabinet that sets out how a personal development, careers advice and training guidance service will be maintained in the city and supported so that young people can be best helped to make decisions affecting their future.”

40.3 **The motion was carried.**

