

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

NEIGHBOURHOODS, COMMUNITIES AND EQUALITIES COMMITTEE

4.00pm 25 JANUARY 2016

SOUTH PORTSLADE COMMUNITY CENTRE, CHURCH ROAD, PORTSLADE

MINUTES

Present : Councillors Daniel (Chair); Councillor Moonan (Deputy Chair), Simson (Opposition Spokesperson), Littman (Group Spokesperson), Barnett, Gibson, Hill, Horan, Lewry and Taylor

Invitees: Hanan Mansi (HOPE Sussex), Joanna Martindale (H K Project) and James Collis (Sussex Police)

Apologies: Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Bell and Claire Holloway (Clinical Commissioning Group)

PART ONE

40 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

40a Declaration of Substitutes

40.1 Councillor Taylor was in attendance in substitution for Councillor Bell.

40b Declarations of Interest

40.2 There were none.

40c Exclusion of Press and Public

40.3 In accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the Act"), the Committee considered whether the public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any item of business on the grounds that it is likely in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during it, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act.

40.4 **RESOLVED** - That the public be not excluded during consideration of any item of business on the agenda.

41 RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ABUSE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS: COMMISSIONING AND PARTNERSHIP PRIORITIES - PRESENTATION & REPORT

41a Presentation by Survivor of Domestic Abuse

- 41.1 Madeleine Hunter introduced herself and gave a presentation based on her own experiences and drawing out common threads in the experience of survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Madeleine referred to her own situation and explained that having broken from and come through an abusive relationship she now worked for RISE and for a Lewes based group, in the case of the latter seeking to raise awareness of this issues in rural communities and in assisting victims on their journey through and to the other side of abuse and was committed to raising awareness of the needs of those who had suffered abuse and the support available to them.
- 41.2 A common experience of all survivors was that in the aftermath of abuse the impact on victims and their families lasted for a very long time after the chain of events which had acted as a catalyst in seeking help. That journey was slow and draining for all concerned and still had an effect on herself and her children daily, notwithstanding that they had rebuilt their lives over several years now. In her own case, she realised afterwards that she had been subjected to sustained verbal abuse for a number of years which had eroded her self-esteem and confidence and that she had not recognised this as abuse until it had become physical. She had found the Police sympathetic but had found in common with many victims that they felt overwhelmed and then became swamped by the process and found themselves almost to be on trial as they struggled to deal with paperwork, case conferences and practical issues whilst trying to maintain some normality and to move on with their lives.
- 41.3 In her own case her ex-partner had been clever and manipulative (as perpetrators often were), she had felt heavily scrutinised, especially by her own social worker until she had been subjected to a tirade of abuse at a case conference and had finally felt that she was believed.
- 41.4 The Committee thanked Madeleine for her courage in coming forward and in sharing her experiences, which were enlightening and also highlighted the need to raise awareness of these issues which were often hidden and could go unreported until victims had reached the point of desperation. It was really important that information was out there which enabled victims to feel they could come forward and would receive the assistance they needed.
- 41.5 The Chair stated that it appeared clear that as well seeking to ensure that the multi-agency/professional involvement which might be necessary was streamlined. It was also vitally important that the support offered was appropriate to each individual/family, there would be differing individual needs and it must to be recognised assistance offered needed to be person specific.

41.6 **RESOLVED** – That the content of the presentation be noted.

41b Responding to Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Commissioning and Partnership Priorities - Report

41.7 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Public Health summarising the work undertaken in relation to Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA and Rape, Sexual Violence and Abuse (RSVA), describing the extent and impact of these crime types in the city and commissioning and partnership priorities.

41.8 The Violence Against Women and Girls Commissioner, James Rowlands, introduced the report explaining that the City had a Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy which set out an approach to DVA and RSVA, as well as other forms of VAWG. This was consistent with the approach which had been taken by HM Government in their action plan “Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls”. The overarching outcome of the strategy was to realise the aspiration that residents and communities were free from VAWG crimes, specifically by: holding perpetrators to account, decreasing social tolerance and acceptance and to increase people’s ability to have safe, equal, violence-free relationships.

41.9 The Chair, Councillor Daniel, commended the report which set out the extent and impact of these crime types in the city and the commissioning and partnership priorities which had been identified and flowed from them. Councillor Moonan, the Deputy echoed the comments made by the Chair and the Committee concurred in that view.

41.10 Councillor Horan alluded to paragraph 3.26 which referred to the financial risks and implications which would arise in consequence of the predicted reduction in funding for 2016/17, asking whether and what contingency arrangements were in place to address this. Joanna Martindale sought clarification in respect of the same matter. Councillor Littman stated that it was important that this important work as underlined by the presentations given that afternoon was not undermined or compromised as a result of lack of funding.

41.11 Councillor Gibson stated that it was also important to link into the work carried out in schools to ensure awareness of this issue.

41.12 Superintendent James Collis stated that it was intended to seek to protect delivery of these services from the Police’s perspective. It was also explained that alternative/new funding streams were currently under investigation. The Chair, Councillor Daniel, stated that she was minded to submit a letter to the Home Office, and to the Police and Crime Commissioner emphasising the importance of this work and the need to ensure that its effectiveness was not compromised due to lack of funding. As a result of discussion it was agreed that there was cross-party support for approach suggested by the Chair and that a letter should be sent on behalf of the Committee in those terms.

41.13 Councillor Daniel also requested that a further update report be provided to the Committee later in the year updating on the current position and detailing the potential consequences of any funding short-falls.

41.14- **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Committee notes the current work in the city in relation to Domestic Violence and abuse (DVA) and Rape, Sexual Violence and Abuse (RSVA); and

(2) That the Committee notes that the reporting of DVA and RSVA is increasing and that:

- While a re-commissioned specialist service is in place this is likely to operate within a reduced joint commissioning budget and will require outcomes to be prioritised;
- There is a risk to the sustainability of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process.

(3) The Committee also agree that a letter be sent to the appropriate Minister indicating Cross-Party support of the Committee for protection of Home Office funding for this important work, a copy also to be sent to the local Police and Crime Commissioner; and

(4) A further update report to be provided to the Committee later in the year updating on the current position and detailing the potential consequences of any funding short-fall.

41c Launch of “The Portal” (New Specialist Service) – Presentation by Representatives of RISE and the Survivors Network

41.15 A joint presentation was given by Gail Gray, the Chief Executive Officer of RISE and Fabia Bates Director of the Survivors Network.

41.16 It was explained that “The Portal”, which had been designed to meet diverse needs and to link existing services to provide support for survivors of abuse and violence. The important headline message to victims was that domestic abuse or sexual abuse and violence could happen to anyone and that victims were not alone, there were those who understood, that victims were believed and that they should not suffer in silence. It was recognised that a critical longer term aim was to seek to ensure that perpetrators were held to account and that survivors were not “re-victimised”.

41.17 The Portal had been designed to deliver a transformational specialist service via pooled resources, shared learning and removal of existing silos. The Portals key functions were to provide an integrated domestic violence and sexual violence service, a single point of contact/access, web based/remote access, triage, allocated case co-ordinators, comprehensive needs and risk assessment and a single case management system. Gender specific services would also be provided, a BME worker, Male worker, LGBT worker, children and young people’s worker and the ability to provide support and assistance to families who had complex needs.

41.18 The Chair commended the tremendous work which had been carried out stating that there were a number of key pointers which could be drawn out from this, namely, that it was important to prioritise with individuals on the issues which were important to them, it had been recognised that this would be differ between one individual and family and another. It was also important to involve community leaders, to facilitate the creation of

leaders from those who had been effected and to look at how the council could work most effectively with non-profit organisations. If a strapline/link highlighting the Portal could be added to Members signatures this would publicise it and she would discuss the practicalities of whether/how this might best be achieved with Democratic Services.

41.19 Both Gail Gray and Fabia Bates stressed the importance of co-ownership/working and co-operation and collaboration by all who had a locus in provision, particularly in the current financial climate in order to optimise funding opportunities in order to provide the focused support that was needed.

41.20 Councillor Simson was in agreement that it was very important to publicise the Portal and the services to which it gave access.

41.21- **RESOLVED** – That the content of the presentation be noted.

42 MINUTES

42.1 **RESOLVED** – That the Chair be authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2015 as a correct record.

43 CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS

43.1 The Chair explained that the meeting was being recorded and would be capable of repeated viewing via the subsequent on-line webcast. The Chair gave the following communications:

South Portslade Community Centre

43.2 The Chair wished everyone a New Year as she had not seen all Committee Members already and that was the Committees' first meeting of the New Year (its fourth in total). The Chair hoped that all had, had the opportunity to rest and relax over the festive period and to recharge for the year ahead and welcomed everyone to this venue in South Portslade.

It had already been a busy year and the Chair outlined some of the work which had been undertaken to date.

City Employment and Skills Plan

43.3 The development of the "City Employment and Skills Plan" was in full swing, which whilst not the responsibility of this committee was off keen interest as its focus this time was on our city's residents furthest away from securing and sustaining employment. The Chair stated that she was particularly pleased that just last week there had been a specific event for BME people in the city to look at the barriers to employment they faced. This was combined with the opportunity for BME people to meet with members of the Fairness Commission and give their experiences of the city and how we can make it a fairer place. It was understood that it gave the commissioners and our own economic development officers lots of food for thought and importantly the information shared by the participants on housing and older people would be feed into the two remaining

public meetings of the fairness commission - the one in February dealing with Housing and the final public meeting in March on older people and wellbeing.

Fairness Commission

- 43.4 Indeed, the Fairness Commission had been in the thick of it at the moment with the commissioners visiting many groups, organisations and activities across the city including the Carers Centre, The Purple People Kitchen (Portslade Town Hall), Lunch Positive, and Deaf COG to name but a few. Seeing how much they're covering and how committed they were to their role on the Commission the Chair wished to place on record her thanks for the time and energy the commissioners had been giving.

Holocaust Memorial Day

- 43.5 It was noted with sadness that Holocaust Memorial Day fell on January 27. This year was the 71st anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, and would also be the 21st anniversary of the Genocide in Srebrenica, Bosnia. Each year the memorial day had a theme, this year's was "Don't Stand By". An apt theme which resonated with the challenges the world faces today. The Brighton and Hove Holocaust Education project had been organising, with other local projects and schools a range of events. A vigil had been held at the Friends Meeting House the previous day with another to take place on Tuesday afternoon at the Old Court Room in Brighton, there would be a schools event followed by a lead discussion open to the public.

February - LGBT History Month

- 43.6 As the end of January already was fast approaching the Chair wished to remind everyone that February was LGBT history month. The theme this year was, "Religion, Belief and Philosophy". Members were urged members to read the recent Transgender Equality report released two weeks ago by the Women and Equalities Committee. It made over 30 recommendations in a wide range of policy areas that echo many of the issues brought forward by the city's own "Trans Needs Assessment". It was great to see this raised at national level and receiving the profile it deserved. It was interesting to you read the summary which started with "Fairness and equality are basic British values". It was also interesting to note that Maria Caulfield currently MP for Lewes and ex-Brighton and Hove City Council Conservative Councillor had held the portfolio for housing when the Conservatives been in Administration 2007-2010)
- 43.7 Whilst not quite February, the Chair also wished the City's Chinese community a happy new year in two weeks' time Monday 8th February, noting that it was the year of the Monkey.

- 43.8 **RESOLVED** – That the Chair's Communications be received and noted.

44 CALL OVER

- 44.1 All items on the agenda were reserved for discussion.

45 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

- 45.1 The following petition which had been presented at Council on 17 December 2015 was considered.

“We the undersigned are pleased to hear that 5 Syrian refugee families will soon be arriving in Brighton and Hove. But given the scale of the current refugee crisis, we could do much more. We have the experience of welcoming 79 Oroma refugees in 2006 and an upsurge in offers of help from individuals and existing and new organisations working with refugees. We urge Brighton and Hove Council to bring in far greater numbers of Syrian refugees as soon as possible.”

(916 signatues)

- 45.2 Ms Senker the lead petitioner was invited by the Chair, Councillor Daniel to speak for 3 minutes in support of the petition and made the additional points in respect of this matter. Ms Senker amplified on the matters raised in the original petition urging that the issue be treated as a matter of extreme urgency and that priority be given to the manner in which refugees were considered for housing, empty properties, spare rooms etc., and that the number admitted to the city be re-assessed. In Ms Senker’s view the matter had moved forward since it had been considered at Council, the plight of such individuals was now more desperate.
- 45.3 The Chair then responded in the following terms.

“The Syrian Resettlement Programme is to bring a total of 20,000 Syrian refugees to the UK during the course of this parliament (ie up till 2020). Brighton & Hove City Council has so far welcomed three households (two of them with complex needs) and is committed to participating in the programme over the long term, working with a growing number of private landlords who are willing to offer affordable sustainable accommodation to refugees. We currently have two further confirmed offers of accommodation at affordable rents and are matching households to those properties with the intention of bringing those households over at the end of January or beginning of February.

We intend to increase our pro-active capacity to advertise and secure more suitable property in the city at affordable rents using funds available to us from the Home Office.

It is not possible for the council to give a definitive number of ‘places’ that it can offer the Home Office as our response will depend on appropriate accommodation being available. The Council also continues to assist homeless Syrian households who have arrived here independently as it would any other homeless families.

We are working with a wide range of organisations to ensure that the refugees who have arrived, adults and children, have the best chance of integrating here long term and contributing to the life of the city. We are enormously grateful to all those who have offered to help in many ways. The council is also supporting the existing Syrian community to organise and form an association that is able to support new arrivals.

Brighton & Hove City Council, alongside other local authorities, is advising and supporting central government to develop the systems they need to respond quickly to offers of accommodation as they become available across the South East where vacant affordable properties are so scarce.”

45.4 The Chair responded further to the additional points raised, of which she had not been given prior notice, re-iterating, that whilst there was a willingness to assist, the needs of refugees could be complex, it was not necessarily appropriate or desirable, although laudable, to house lone young people in spare rooms in people's houses, without fully assessing their needs first. Many residing in the city were in severe need of good quality affordable housing and the council was seeking to address this in concert with other agencies, those coming to the city would not be given higher priority than those living in the city and who had ties to it and had been identified as high of high priority on the Housing Waiting List. It was important to note that the city had been commended for its welcoming and inclusive approach. A number of authorities who did not have a comparable lack of housing had shown themselves to be dilatory/unwelcoming.

45.5 **RESOLVED** – That the content of the petition and response given be noted.

47b Written Questions

45.6 There were none.

47c Deputations

45.7 There were none.

46 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

46a Petitions

46.1 There were none.

46b Written Questions

46.2 There were none.

46c Letters

46.3 There were none.

46d Notices of Motion

46.4 There were none.

47 COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CRIME IN BRIGHTON & HOVE - INFORMATION UPDATE TO NOVEMBER 2015

47.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Public Health describing recent activities and progress relating to priority areas in the Brighton & Hove Community Safety and Crime Reduction Strategy. A statistical analysis was also included which provided an update for key crime groups for 2015/16 up to November 2015.

- 47.2 The Head of Community Safety, Peter Castleton, explained that this was the first report that had been prepared for consideration by the Neighbourhoods Communities and Equalities Committee and that it was intended to produce a similar report for consideration by the Committee at six monthly intervals. The format for the report had been based on that previously used for the Community Safety Committee, however, feedback regarding the content and style of the report would be used to shape and develop future reports. Graphs had been provided showing monthly crime data from April 2011 to November 2015 and set out recent data in the context of both longer term trends and also seasonal crime cycles where that was applicable.
- 47.3 The Head of Community Safety was accompanied by Superintendent James Collis who was in attendance on behalf of the Police when giving his presentation. It was explained that following a period of sustained reduction in crime there had been a small increase in some areas. This was due in part although not wholly, to increased reporting, for instance in relation to domestic violence and to changes to the manner in which some crimes were recorded. Having reached a plateau over successive recent years, there had also been an increase (though small) in relation to some types of crime. Superintendent Collis stated that notwithstanding budget pressures the Police were committed to delivery of core services, and went on to explain, that HMI had instituted further changes to the manner in which crime figures were recorded.
- 47.4 Councillor Horan welcomed the report stating that if future reports could include details in relation to cyber bullying/crime. This was an insidious and apparently growing crime, with victims often initially unaware that they were being targeted. Councillor Horan's comments were acknowledged and it was agreed that the practicalities of so doing and how this information could best be presented in a meaningful way would be explored.
- 47.5 Councillor Gibson noted what had been said in relation to the manner in which figures were collected and recorded and asked for confirmation of when these changes had come into effect. It was explained that the changes had been advised in 2015 and were still being implemented. Councillor Gibson stated that in future reports it would be beneficial for Members if greater explanation could be given as on the face of it some of the increases appeared to be greater than might be expected, even taking account of changes to and increased reporting.
- 47.6 Councillor Simson, referred to the way in which the figures were presented, requesting that it was important when there were changes in how reported crime was recorded that explanation was given in the text or footnotes to the tables and that a basis for comparison was retained. During her period as Chair of the Community Safety Forum (to which these figures had previously been reported), when such changes had occurred it had been difficult to make comparisons in a meaningful way between the figures as previously recorded and under the new methodology. Although not doubting the explanations given for the changes, it would give a measure of reassurance if comparisons could continue to be made. Councillor Simson also stated that it would be helpful if better comparator authorities could be cited, whilst realising that this was prescribed, in her opinion, they were very different to Brighton and Hove.
- 47.7 In answer to questions in relation to the recording of drug/substance abuse related deaths it was explained that fluctuations in these figures related to the manner in which these needed to be recorded by the coroner's office.

- 47.8 Councillor Hill referred to the high incidence of “used” needles found around the city, seeking information regarding measures being taken to manage this and to improve on the current situation, given that residents often expressed concern about the public safety issues which arose. The Head of Community Safety, Peter Castleton, explained that, currently city pharmacies did not appear keen to operate needle exchange schemes, however measures to address this problem were being investigated e.g., the practicality of providing drug litter bins. The Chair, Councillor Daniel, stated that this was an issue of concern, especially in relation to the city’s parks, open spaces and other areas visited by families with children. It would be valuable to Members if information how this matter was being tackled could be provided in future reports to the Committee.
- 47.9 Councillor Simson referred to the reference in the report to the introduction a “Late Night Levy.” A decision had yet to be made by the appropriate committee (the Licensing Committee (Licensing Act 2003 Functions)), on whether to consult regarding introduction of a Levy and subsequently to introduce one. It was not certain that a Levy would be introduced and Councillor Simson would be very concerned if strategies referred to were predicated on that. Superintendent Collis confirmed that notwithstanding budgetary constraints in consequence of reduced funding, the Police remained committed to addressing issues associated with the City’s late night economy and protecting the vulnerable, based on funding as it stood currently.
- 47.10 Joanna Martindale referred to the role played by Local Action Teams (LAT’S), enquiring regarding the level of financial and other support available to them. The Head of Community Safety explained that the council was unable to provide financial support towards their running costs, LAT’s were however being signposted towards funding streams which could be available to them, advice was also available in helping them to run effectively and efficiently. Joanna Martindale responded that it appeared that not all LAT’s were aware of the position in relation to funding and this suggested that information could have been communicated more clearly. The Chair stated that engagement with the third sector and other partner organisations in order to continue to deliver to communities against a backdrop of significant funding reductions was on-going and an integral part of the Committees’ ethos.
- 47.11 In answer to further questions, it was explained that it was recognised that some LAT’s appeared, notwithstanding the differing communities across the city, to operate more effectively than others. Whilst not seeking, to be proscriptive advice was available to all, and all were encouraged to have adopt a constitution and acknowledged best practice, in order to formalise and have clarity regarding their operation. It was clearly understood that it was important to harness the energy and local awareness of LAT’s and to harness that collaboratively.
- 47.12 **RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report be noted, the general structure of the report as presented, be agreed as a template for future reports to the Committee, taking on boards the feedback received in relation to inclusion of information in relation to cyber bullying/crime, the manner in which data was presented and the comparators used.

48 THE POWER OF VOLUNTEERING

- 48.1 The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive detailing the rationale for and asking the Committee to sign up to “The Power of Volunteering”, the new volunteering pledge for the City.
- 48.2 The Head of Communities and Equality, Emma Mc Dermott explained that the previous volunteering strategy “Joining the Dots” had been developed in 2010 and had provided a detailed understanding of the volunteering situation and priorities within the city. “The Power of Volunteering aimed to build on that work and to act as a call to action for public service organisations and voluntary sector organisations as well as businesses and individuals to engage with volunteering. This new pledge had been developed by the city wide volunteering champions group on behalf of Brighton and Hove Connected (the city’s Local Strategic Partnership). This group consisted of representatives from across the public, community and voluntary sector and had been responsible for the city’s previous volunteering strategy “Joining the Dots”.
- 48.3 Councillor Moonan welcomed the report which she considered represented an important piece of work which going forward would provide an updated strategy which would seek to ensure that the valuable resource provided by those carrying out volunteering work in the city was maximised.
- 48.4 Councillor Hill also commended the report citing the improvements that could be effected to a community as a result of work carried out by volunteers for instance in her own ward where the community café in Hollingdean had use of use of a Council building and provided a much valued community hub. A lot had been learned up which could be applied elsewhere across the city, and there were areas where improvements could be effected.
- 48.5 Councillor Littman welcomed the report, stating, however that it was important that the current level of support to voluntary groups be sustained. In the face of continuing budgetary pressures year on year, it was important that the Council did not make commitments/raise expectations which could not be met.
- 48.6 Councillor Gibson sought information regarding the structures in place to deliver the arrangements outlined. Essentially he considered that there needed to be twofold at both a formal and informal level. Overall, it was important to foster a greater sense of neighbourliness within communities, which would in turn help to achieve better outcomes.
- 48.7 The Chair agreed that work did need to be carried out both formally and informally and that “space” needed to be allowed in order for that to happen. The work being undertaken and in signing up to the “Partnership” Pledge marked the start of that process. Ultimately, due in part to the on-going pressures that had been identified, very different mechanisms and working practices needed to be put into place.
- 48.8 The Head of Communities and Equalities, Emma Mc Dermott, stressed that the “Power of Volunteering” aimed to build on the work carried out to date and to act as a call to action for public service organisations and voluntary sector organisations as well as businesses and individuals to engage with volunteering.

48.9 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Committee agrees to sign up to the Partnership Pledge (“The Pledge”) included in the “Power of Volunteering” document set out in appendix 1 to the report on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council;

(2) That the Committee endorses the Council’s involvement in the Volunteering Champions Group to support the co-ordination and promotion of volunteering across the city; and

(3) That the Committee notes that a further report will be brought to Committee by the Assistant Chief Executive on council plans to support and develop volunteering activity as part of the action plan developed from the pledge.

49 ITEMS REFERRED FOR FULL COUNCIL

49.1 There were none.

49b Venue for Next Meeting

49.2 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Monday 14 March at the Valley Social Centre, Whitehawk Way, Brighton.

The meeting concluded at 7.20pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of