

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

30 NOVEMBER 2005 AT 5.00 PM

COMMITTEE ROOM 1, BRIGHTON TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Edmond Smith (Convenor), Councillors Barnett, Battle, Cobb, Davidson, Forester, Hazelgrove, Mallender, Pidgeon and Mrs Theobald (OS)

Also present: Chris Todd

PART ONE

40. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

40a Declarations of Substitutes

40.1 Councillor Barnett for Councillor Oxley.
Councillor Pidgeon for Councillor Kemble.

Mark Strong sent his apologies. The Convenor sent him and his partner congratulations on the birth of a son.

40b Declarations of Interest

40.2 There were no declarations of interest.

40c Exclusion of Press and Public

40.3 The Committee considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in Section 100A(3) or 100 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

40.4 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting during consideration of any items on the agenda.

41. MINUTES

41.1 **RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2005 be approved and signed by the Convenor (also see paragraph 42.4 below).

42. CONVENOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

42.1 The Head of Sustainability & Environmental Policy updated members on matters arising from the minutes. He and the Deputy Leader of the Council would be attending a local authority conference in Nottingham to follow up the signing of the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. The council's next annual Sustainability Conference had now been provisionally set for 20 April 2006 and would focus on Water. He added that there would also be a Water event for the general public in Brighton & Hove on 3 and 4 June 2006, potentially in partnership with the Environment Agency, Southern Water and The Argus, with whom he was meeting shortly.

42.2 The Convenor advised that the renewable energy micro-generation motion passed by council had been adopted and one of the private members bills had been passed in Parliament.

42.3 The Head of Planning Strategy reported that the way forward, if the council wished to achieve a percentage of renewables in smaller developments, would be to amend the SPD Sustainability Checklist and the SPD on Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. However, both had been adopted relatively recently and were not in the extensive programme for Local Development Framework documents; so this would require extensive consultation and his section did not have the capacity at present to undertake the work involved.

42.4 Merton Council's 10% on-site renewables requirement was to be the focus of a South East planning seminar on December 12. The Head of Sustainability & Environmental Policy and the Head of Planning Strategy would both attend. It was agreed that they should report back to the next meeting.

42.5 It was felt that the minutes of the previous meeting did not adequately reflect the Commission's appreciation of the sustainability measures built in to Westergate House. Members wished it to be recorded that they congratulated those involved in the project, which had recently received a regional award for renewables in a commercial development.

42.6 The Convenor stated that climate change was currently in the news. She had attended three events on climate change in ten days: the Campaign for Climate Change; the University of Sussex SUSS IT project to help businesses to be more sustainable; and a conference organised by River Ocean and supported by the EU, SEEDA & the council, which had been well attended by community associations.

42.7 The Convenor invited all present to a members' seminar on the city's draft Climate Change Action Plan on 1 December.

43. LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

43.1 Simon Newell updated the Commission on the latest activities of the LSP, the Strategic Housing Partnership and the Transport Sub-Group.

44. REVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

44.1 The Commission considered a report of the Director of Strategy & Governance inviting comments on the draft revision of Brighton & Hove's Community Strategy "Creating the City of Opportunities" (see minute book).

44.2 Members were concerned that the council committees, particularly Housing, Environment and Culture & Tourism, had not had the chance to consider the draft document. One member stated that Brighton & Hove offered many tourism jobs, but they were poorly paid compared with the high cost of living. She added that the draft strategy emphasised pubs and clubs but contained nothing for children. A member referred to the need for trains to carry bicycles. Another member felt that Equalities issues were not adequately addressed, including the need for speaking bus-stops to help blind and partially-sighted passengers.

44.3 The Convenor had drafted her comments before the meeting and they had been circulated to members. Members agreed that they reflected the commission's views. It was considered that there was a need for the strategy to adequately address the really big challenges such as climate change and water shortage. Members regretted that there was no overview and little connection between themes in the document. They felt there was a need for an introduction or a paragraph setting the background to sustainable development and a sustainable city. There was also agreement that it was essential to achieve added value rather than referring solely to projects already planned or in place. The document should promote a sustainable city with a view to achieving this within 20 years. The Commission considered that the Community Strategy should accord with the Core Strategy for the LDF, which demonstrated a better understanding of sustainability and that it should undergo a Sustainability Appraisal.

44.4 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted and the Commission's comments as set out above and in the Convenor's paper be forwarded to the council's Policy Team before 16 December.

45. INTERNAL REVIEW OF THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

45.1 The Commission considered a report of the Director of Environment concerning the findings and recommendations arising from the internal review of the Sustainability Commission (see minute book).

45.2 The Commission noted that several internationally recognised sustainability experts lived in Brighton & Hove, who would give their advice freely. Members considered that it would be better to have a pool of experts who could be called upon as appropriate rather than a regular panel.

45.3 It was agreed to explore the possibility of different formats for future meetings, but because members' diaries fill rapidly, it would be best to compile the programme of dates at the beginning of the council year. Members agreed that there should be an annual induction to the Sustainability Commission, which existing members as well as new ones could be invited to attend.

45.4 The Head of Sustainability & Environmental Policy undertook to report to the next meeting on changes to the Terms of Reference and Co-opted Membership.

45.5 **RESOLVED** – That:

1. An advisory pool consisting of local experts on sustainability issues should be appointed to draw on their international and national experience to advise the Commission on sustainability issues.
2. The Commission could explore alternative meeting formats for specific items that would encourage greater application of innovative thinking and Best Practice.
3. The Commission should investigate the reasons for limited engagement with business sector and consider ways in which existing work in this area can be built upon.
4. The Communications Team should support the Commission in steering how the council promotes sustainability and consider ways of reaching new audiences.
5. The role of co-optees should be clearly defined in the terms of reference which should also define for how long an individual is co-opted onto the Commission.
6. Updates on past Commission meeting items could be provided on request to communicate successes and identify areas for additional action.
7. All new members and co-optees should be offered an induction to the Commission and additional support (when appropriate) to support their involvement with the Commission.

46. ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

46.1 Bill Purvis, Environmental Policy Officer for High Peak Borough Council - a Sustainable Energy Beacon Council - made a presentation on Environmental Management Systems. He recommended the Eco Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) which helped focus on energy efficiency. His authority had improved environmental performance and reporting steadily over five years. The advantages of adopting the scheme were: Gershon efficiency savings, sustainable procurement, engaging stakeholders and improving communications; community plans (LDF and SD indicators); and the ability to comply with environmental legislation.

46.2 It was agreed that officers should work with Mr Purvis to produce a scoping review for an environmental management scheme for the city council. The report was likely to come before the Commission in early spring 2006.

47. WILDLIFE ADVISORY GROUP: MINUTES OF 1 NOVEMBER 2005

47.1 The Commission considered a report of the Director of Environment presenting the minutes of the Wildlife Advisory Group meeting of 1 November 2005 (see minute book).

47.2 Members approved the proposal to produce a simple leaflet regarding the danger to wildlife from domestic cats. It was suggested that the leaflet should also refer to neutering cats and the danger of cat faeces to children and should be produced in consultation with the council's Communications Team.

47.3 The Commission also endorsed the call for the proposed Open Spaces Strategy to be progressed as a matter of urgency.

47.4 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Wildlife Advisory Group be noted.

48. SCOPING OF THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OF THE CORE STRATEGY

48.1 The Commission considered a report of the Director of Environment informing members about the process for ensuring sustainability is at the heart of the Core Strategy development plan document of the council's Local Development Framework (LDF), and recommending amendments to the scoping of the sustainability appraisal of the Core Strategy development plan document (see minute book).

48.2 A co-opted member stated that the AONB and National Park were a key part of the core strategy. He stressed the importance of the landscape and improving access to it. He stated that other key issues relating to water were permeability and replenishing the aquifer. Planning Policy officers responded to questions about the core strategy's relationship to other strategies and members reiterated their concern that the draft Community Strategy was less sustainable than the LDF Core Strategy. The officers agreed to meet and discuss how the two approaches could converge.

48.3 **RESOLVED** – That the amendments set out in Appendix Two of the report be endorsed as the Commission's official comments on the scoping of the sustainability appraisal of the Core Strategy.

The meeting concluded at 7.10 pm.

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2006