

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
FINANCE CABINET MEMBER MEETING
4.00pm, 12 OCTOBER 2009
COMMITTEE ROOM 3, HOVE TOWN HALL
MINUTES

Present: Councillor Young (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Hamilton, Opposition Spokesperson, Labour

Other Members present: Councillors Fallon-Khan

PART ONE

12. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

12a. Declarations of Interest

12.1 There were none.

12b Exclusion of Press and Public

12.2 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ('the Act'), the Cabinet Member for Finance considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during an item of business on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press or public were present during that item, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information (as defined in section 100A(3) of the Act) or exempt information (as defined in section 100I(1) of the Act).

12.3 **RESOLVED** – That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

13. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

13.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2009 be approved and signed by the Cabinet Member as a correct record.

14. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

14.1 There were none.

15. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

15.1 All items were reserved by the Cabinet Member.

16. PETITIONS

16.1 There were none.

17. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

17.1 There were none.

18. DEPUTATIONS

18.1 There were none.

19. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

19.1 There were none.

20. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

20.1 There were none.

21. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

21.1 There were none.

22. INCOME COLLECTION & RECOVERY 2009/10 - QUARTER 1

22.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Finance & Resources, which updated the Member on income collection and recovery performance for 2009/10 as at quarter 1 (June 2009) and highlighted the improvement and best practice actions (for copy see minute book).

22.2 The Cabinet Member explained that the income collection reports complemented the Targeted Budget Management reports and paid particular attention to the performance of the teams responsible for collecting and recovering income. She noted that these regular updates served to give public assurance that business, services users and citizens paid their debts promptly and where this did not happen, the council could take quick and effective recovery action. She noted that the council was also mindful of the fact that some people and businesses may struggle to pay and, where this was the case, the council would support them by putting payment plans in place where it was possible.

22.3 The Cabinet Member also noted that, overall, all income collection areas were performing well given the current economic climate, and the one area where performance was below target would be kept under review.

- 22.4 The Opposition Spokesperson, Labour, enquired whether there had been an increase in the direct debit take up on Housing Rents since the Direct Debit campaign that had taken place in the previous year.
- 22.5 The Assistant Director Financial Services reported that there had been an increase in take up from 23% to 26%. He noted that even though the increase had been relatively slow, it was steadily improving.
- 22.6 The Opposition Spokesperson referred to paragraph 4.2 of the report and sought clarification as to the reasons why the delays in processing safe custody customs occurred in the Adult Social Care section.
- 22.7 The Assistant Director Financial Services explained that the delays were due to internal processing, but that cash had actually been received. He noted that the DWP had changed its processing system and the way in which electronic data was provided and that this had had an impact on transferring the information to the council's systems and, consequently, to debtors' accounts.
- 22.8 **RESOLVED** - That the report be noted.

23. VALUE FOR MONEY - PHASE TWO

- 23.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Finance & Resources, concerning phase two of the Value for Money programme. The report updated the Member on the council's programme for ensuring value for money across all its services (for copy see minute book).
- 23.2 The Cabinet Member drew attention to the challenges that the council, and other organisations, currently faced financially and noted that the council would see its current grant allocation either frozen or reduced while, at the same time, the demand for services would continue to increase.
- 23.3 The Cabinet Member pointed out that against the above background, the council required a robust response and planning which could help preserve the delivery of key services to the most vulnerable people in the city. She noted that officers were carrying out a council-wide review of all services to assist the city with finding savings, whilst also positively challenging the way it provides services to ensure they were delivered in the most cost effective and efficient way. She further noted that officers had already a number of other work-streams that would support this programme and help deliver better services, better value and a better customer experience.
- 23.4 The Opposition Spokesperson noted the formula grant detailed in page 20 of the report, which was assumed to be 0% for the next 3 years. He accepted that whatever political party that came into legislation in the next year would face a challenging task in terms of the savings proposed and indicated in the report.
- 23.6 **RESOLVED** - That the continued progress of the Value for Money Programme be noted.

The meeting concluded at 4.15pm

Signed

Cabinet Member

Dated this day of