

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.00PM 21 JUNE 2010

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Morgan (Chairman); Janio (Deputy Chairman), Davis, Drake, A Norman, Rufus, Smart and West

Also present: Councillors Simpson, Watkins and Phillips

PART ONE

1. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1.1 The Chairman welcomed Councillors Mrs Ann Norman and Pete West as new Members of the Committee.

1a Declarations of Substitutes

There were none.

1b Declarations of Interests

Councillors Davis and Mrs Norman declared personal and non-prejudicial interests in item as they served on the South Downs Joint Committee.

1c Declaration of Party Whip

There were none.

1d Exclusion of Press and Public

In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was 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 100I (1) of the said Act.

RESOLVED: That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 The Head of Community Safety handed around a short reply to a question from the previous meeting, as minuted at 55.3.

2.2 **RESOLVED**; that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 April be agreed and signed by the Chairman.

3. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 The Chairman stated that the report of the scrutiny review of Support Services for Victims of Sexual Violence would be considered after item 6. The Head of Community Safety would present item 5 'Community Safety Forum Update.'

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS/LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS/NOTICES OF MOTION REFERRED FROM COUNCIL

4.1 A public question about toilets from the Local Involvement Network had been received. An officer reply was tabled at the meeting.

5. DISCUSSION WITH CHAIRMAN, COMMUNITY SAFETY FORUM

5.1 The Chairman reminded the meeting that the Committee had asked for items to be added to the Community Safety Forum agenda (minutes 55.7 and 59.7 refer).

5.2 The Head of Community Safety, replying to a question, said there was general guidance on Local Action Teams (LATs) available on request. This included only one sentence on Charing LATs; that the Council would like a LAT Chair to be resident in the area. The Head of Community Safety reassured the Committee that there was no intention to change this. The local network of 40 LATs that had grown over many years was arguably one of the most successful in the country.

5.3 **RESOLVED**; that the report be noted.

6. CHALK DOWNLOAD RESTORATION IN WILD PARK LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

6.1 Councillor Simpson introduced the report on Chalk Downland Restoration following her letter which appeared as Appendix 4. She circulated photographs of cleared areas.

6.2 She said that the officer report was helpful and showed the wide extent of consultation that had taken place. However Councillor Simpson said that she and colleagues had been contacted by large numbers of people who were concerned at the appearance of the areas where scrub had been cleared. She questioned whether wellgrown trees needed to be cleared and said that people interested in conservation had asked about the effects on bird and other wildlife populations.

6.3 Councillor Simpson said that there was unhappiness about the way some of the work had been done. A scrutiny review would involve more consultation and include the views of groups such as the Friends of Wild Park and those who opposed the works. This would give greater public assurance about how the Council works, she said.

6.4 The Council's Ecologist, Matthew Thomas, explained the reasons why the ancient chalk grassland is internationally important. He said scrubland typically becomes invaded by opportunist species which quickly move on. This particular area was one of Brighton & Hove's most important sites; the plan is to reverse the decline and improve the environment for chalk grassland species.

6.5 The Assistant Director, CityClean and CityParks clarified that the next stage of work depended on funding from Natural England. She was aware that there had been some concern about the works and there were to be further discussions before the next round of formal consultation took place.

6.6 Members were pleased at the proposals for future consultation set out in the report. The Committee discussed whether or not the matter would benefit from scrutiny action such as a 1-day Panel meeting, taking into account the degree of opposition, the extent of consultation, possible lessons to be learned and the future plans for consultation.

6.7 On balance the Committee did not agree that scrutiny input was necessary at this stage. However acknowledging that the chalk habitat would take some time to grow, the Committee suggested that more could be done in future to prepare people in the early stages to indicate how the area would look at the start of works. Members asked for an informal briefing to a future meeting.

6.8 **RESOLVED;** (1) that no formal scrutiny activity is needed.

(2) that an informal briefing be brought to a future ECSOSC meeting

7. REPORT OF THE WINTER SERVICE PLAN SCRUTINY REVIEW

7.1 Councillor Warren Morgan, Chairman of the Scrutiny Review on the Winter Service Plan introduced the Panel's report. The Panel had been set up following unusual cold weather conditions during December 2009 and January 2010, and disquiet about the council's response to this. The second spell of snow had been dealt with more successfully than the first and experience was being taken into account in revising the Winter Service Plan.

7.2 The Panel had considered written and verbal evidence in a single meeting; the first time a scrutiny review had been completed in one day. It fell to the Executive, not scrutiny, to respond to individual complaints.

7.3 Councillor Morgan thanked his colleagues, those who had given evidence and scrutiny officers who had worked on the Panel.

7.4 ECSOSC commented on the recommendations regarding communications, helping residents, prioritising pedestrian networks and specialised vehicles.

7.5 **RESOLVED;** (1) that the scrutiny panel report be endorsed.

(2) that the report recommendations be referred to the Council's Executive and to the appropriate partner organisations

(3) that monitoring outcomes of agreed recommendations be added to the ECSOSC work plan.

8. REPORT OF THE 20MPH SPEED LIMIT/ZONES SCRUTINY REVIEW

8.1 Councillor Pete West, Chairman of the 20mph speed limits/zones scrutiny review introduced the Panel's report by summarising the reasons for the review, the evidence heard and describing the main recommendations on speed reduction initiatives in some areas of the City. Support from residents would be key to success, he said.

8.2 Causes of collisions and effects on road safety plus environmental implications had been investigated and the Panel undertook a visit to Portsmouth where 20mph restrictions had been introduced in 2007-08.

8.3 Councillor West thanked his colleagues who served on the Panel, all those who gave evidence and the scrutiny officers who supported the review.

8.4 The ECSOSC Chairman thanked the panel for their cross-party working. The committee noted bus company views and commented on the possible costs of schemes, how they would be enforced and the processes for consultation. Interpretation of what might constitute a residential area was discussed and environmental implications such as the potential effect on air quality and traffic congestion.

8.5 Some Members wished specifically to exclude the possibility of a speed limit of 20mph across the whole city. It was pointed out that a pilot, shown to be successful in one area would likely encourage residents elsewhere to support a reduced speed zone.

8.6 Following a vote the Committee approved the report.

8.7 **RESOLVED** (1) that the scrutiny panel report be endorsed

(2) that the report's recommendations be referred to the Council's Executive and to appropriate Partner organisations

(3) that monitoring of the outcomes of agreed recommendations be added to the ECSOSC work plan.

9. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SUPPORT SERVICES FOR THE VICTIMS OF SERIOUS SEXUAL ASSAULT

[This report was considered after item 6 on the agenda.]

9.1 Councillor David Watkins the Chairman of the Scrutiny Panel on Support Services for Victims of Sexual Assault introduced the report. He said the recommendations, which included four on commissioning, reflected the seriousness of the evidence that had been received. The information had been particularly disturbing. Women men and children could be affected and often had to live with the effects for many years. There were high levels of under-reporting locally and nationally. Councillor Watkins commended the work already in progress and said it was important that all agencies were fully aware of what goes on in the community.

9.2 Councillor Watkins especially thanked all those who gave information to the scrutiny review, colleagues who had also served on the Panel and also the Scrutiny Assistant.

9.3 ECSOSC Chairman also thanked the Panel Members who had worked on such a serious matter. He said this was one of the finest examples of what scrutiny can achieve.

9.4 Members of the Committee discussed possible measures to help prevent sexual violence, clarification of the personal and financial cost estimates, and the levels of under-reporting. The Head of Community Safety noted that sexual violence had been a priority within the Community Safety Strategy only since 2008. Alcohol misuse was also recognised as a high priority for the Community Safety Partnership. There was no research-based evidence that economic changes were an additional factor; however in the context of domestic violence poverty had been shown to increase stresses in families. Working towards developing training and employment opportunities would help sex workers move away from prostitution.

9.5 Councillor Alex Phillips who had been a Member of the Scrutiny Panel referred to: the estimated £60 million total monetary cost of sexual offences for 2007/08 with each rape estimated to cost £76,000; no stability in funding for support services; and recommendation 6 which asks for the capacity of local independent support services to be strengthened.

9.6 Councillor Phillips asked that an extra recommendation be added; that the Chief Executive be asked to write to the Government to request yearly ring-fenced funding to support those who experience sexual violence.

9.7 The Head of Community Safety commented that intelligent commissioning pilot work on domestic violence and alcohol and drugs, to be run during the summer would include comprehensive needs analysis of sexual violence in the city as well as making recommendations about levels of investment that in the most cost effective way could address concerns about funding levels.

9.8 Some Members argued that the scrutiny report should include a recommendation on funding of these support services. However it was agreed that the financial implications were not within the direct remit of this Committee. Actions supported by evidence and recommended by scrutiny were to be funded in ways to be identified by the Executive and partner agencies. Report paragraph 5.1 refers.

9.9 The Committee agreed that the minutes of this meeting including Councillor Phillips' comments at 9.5 and 9.6 above would be taken forward.

9.10 **RESOLVED** (1) That subject to 9.9 above the Scrutiny Panel report as attached at Appendix 1 be endorsed.

(2) That the report recommendations be referred to the councils' Executive and to the appropriate partner organisations.

(3) That monitoring of outcomes of agreed recommendations be added to the ECSOSC work plan.

10. ECSOSC DRAFT WORK PLAN 2010 - 2011

10.1 In considering the draft work plan the Committee requested an officer report to a future meeting on pedestrian crossings.

10.2 Members asked how locations are chosen and prioritised, how they are funded, how many have been installed in recent years and whether there was a limit on the numbers introduced in any one year.

11. ITEMS TO REFER TO CABINET MEMBER, CABINET OR FULL COUNCIL

11.1 The Committee noted that the three scrutiny reviews would be referred to the Executive and partner organisations.

The meeting concluded at 6.40pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of