

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING
4.00pm 3 JUNE 2009
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL
MINUTES

Present: Councillor Caulfield (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Simpson (Opposition Spokesperson)

PART ONE

1. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1 (a) Declarations of Interests

1.1 There were none.

1 (b) Exclusion of Press and Public

1.2 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (“the Act”), the Cabinet Member 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 business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and 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).

1.3 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting held on 29 April 2009 be agreed and signed by the Cabinet Member.

3. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 There were none.

4. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

4.1 **RESOLVED** – All items were reserved for discussion.

5. PETITIONS

5.1 There were none.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

6.1 There were none.

7. DEPUTATIONS

7.1 There were none.

8. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

8.1 There were none.

9. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

9.1 There were none.

10. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

10.1 There were none.

11. SUPPORTING PEOPLE STRATEGY - ANNUAL UPDATE 2008/09

11.1 The Cabinet Member considered the annual update of the 3-year Supporting People Strategy, 2008-11 (for copy see minute book). Appendix One gave an overview of key achievements and Appendix Two detailed progress made against all objectives and Strategic actions in year 1 (2008-09) of the Strategy.

11.2 The Team Manager – Supporting People explained that the Supporting People grant allocation had been reduced by 11.5% over the three year period 2008-2011. Contracts with external providers delivered support to 5171 vulnerable services users in Brighton and Hove. The preventative nature of the support made savings by preventing people going into crisis.

11.3 The Cabinet Member commented that it would be necessary to ensure that the reduction in grant allocation did not affect the excellent service being provided.

11.4 Councillor Simpson mentioned an issue of concern to some residents in sheltered housing. They believed funding for the strategy would be used not only for them but also for people in the wider community. They felt they would not receive the full value of the money paid to them.

11.5 The Cabinet Member replied that Supporting People included the wider community as well as sheltered housing tenants.

11.6 The Team Manager – Supporting People explained that there had been some pilots with Older Peoples Services so that more people in the community could access these

services. This would prevent isolation for older people in the wider community. She considered it essential that access was improved for older peoples' services.

- 11.7 The Head of Supporting People & Lead Commissioner for Learning Disabilities explained that the initiative was in response to older people who needed low level support who did not live in sheltered housing. Over 80% of older people live in the community and it was important for low level services to be available to them. The pilots could also improve the service provided for sheltered housing tenants through links with the wider community. Staff were consulting with residents and obtaining feedback. Staff would ensure that it worked for people in sheltered schemes by trying different approaches.
- 11.8 Councillor Simpson stressed that the issue for tenants in sheltered housing was how the service was being paid for and that they perceived that the money belonged to them.
- 11.9 The Head of Supporting People & Lead Commissioner for Learning Disabilities clarified that the funding was linked to the service being provided. It was a preventative service which was there to meet the needs of the local community.
- 11.10 The Cabinet Member acknowledged the concerns of tenants but agreed that the funding was not ring fenced for certain categories like sheltered housing. She reassured tenants that the service would not suffer as a result of making it available to the wider community.
- 11.11 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendation:
- (1) That the report and progress made on delivering strategic actions of the Supporting People Strategy to date be noted.

12. SINGLE HOMELESS STRATEGY

- 12.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing which set out the Single Homeless Strategy as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report (for copy see minute book). The Single Homelessness Strategy had been developed to address the citywide issues in tackling single homelessness, rough sleeping, and street based anti-social behaviour.
- 12.2 The Housing Options Manager, Vulnerable Adults Team explained the key themes and strategic objectives of the Single Homelessness Strategy as set out in Section 4 of the report.
- 12.3 The Cabinet Member remarked that this strategy would continue the good work that had already been carried out in tackling homelessness. There was an issue regarding funding after the third year and she hoped that this matter would soon be resolved. She passed on her thanks to all the staff involved.
- 12.4 Councillor Simpson congratulated officers. The success of the earlier phase of the strategy had been significant.

12.5 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendation.

(1) That the Single Homeless Strategy 2009–14 as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

13. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2009/10 REDUCTION IN RENT INCREASES

13.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing and the Director of Finance & Resources which explained that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2009/10 was approved at Cabinet on 12 February 2009. The report included increases to rents in line with the Government's Subsidy Determination in January 2009. To support tenants, in light of the current economic climate, the Government had now issued a revised Subsidy Determination allowing Councils to reduce rent increases. The current report sought approval to revise the approved rent increases for 2009/10 in line with the Government's proposals (for copy see minute book).

13.2 The Head of Financial Services explained that the £1.98 per week average reduction for tenants would be backdated to 6 April 2009. The loss of rental income for the Council would be reimbursed through Housing Subsidy.

13.3 Councillor Simpson considered the reduction in rent increases to be good news. She also considered the delay in the rent convergence target date from 2012 to 2024 to be good news.

13.4 The Head of Financial Services explained that the government had set a floating convergence date. It was currently 2023/24 but would probably be brought forward.

13.5 The Cabinet Member asked if the council would have more money in the Housing Revenue Account if the proposals were rejected and the rent remained at the current rate. The Head of Financial Services replied that that would not be the case in this financial year.

13.6 The Cabinet Member considered the proposal to be beneficial to all concerned as it would result in tenants paying less and it making no difference financially to the council. She asked how the payment would be backdated. The Head of Financial Services replied that a letter was being sent out to tenants stating that a credit would be shown on their accounts.

13.7 Councillor Simpson considered the proposals would be beneficial to tenants who were not in receipt of housing benefit. This would be welcome in the current circumstances.

13.8 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendation.

- (1) That Cabinet be recommended to approve the amendments to individual rent increases and decreases in line with rent restructuring principles as determined by the latest Government Subsidy Determination issued in May 2009.

The meeting concluded at 4.32pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

