

Brighton & Hove City Council

Policy & Resources Committee

Agenda Item 36

Subject: Review of Civic Office transport and printing of Committee papers

Date of meeting: 29 July 2022

Report of: Executive Director for Governance, People & Resources

Contact Officer: Name: Elizabeth Culbert
Tel: 01273 291515
Email: elizabeth.culbert@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 A review of the Civic Office security and transport arrangements was requested as part of an amendment at the Budget Council meeting on the 24 February 2022 to establish whether a saving of £17k from the Civic Office budget could be achieved.
- 1.2 The budget amendment also included a proposal to generate additional savings of £11k by removing the facility for councillors to have printed committee agendas and to rely on electronic documents.
- 1.3 The request at budget Council was for officers to bring forward a review of both the above issues to a future Policy & Resources Committee to identify whether such savings could be achieved.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Committee agrees to reduce the Democratic Services printing budget by 11k by implementing the arrangements set out at paragraphs 3.2-3.4 relating to the provision of Committee papers;
- 2.2 That Committee agrees that a further reduction in the Democratic Services budget in relation to the Civic Office support to the Mayor is not be pursued in 2022-2023;
- 2.3 That Committee notes that a wider review of Civic Office functions and budget will be scoped and discussed with Group Leaders and any review reported back to Committee.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 An initial saving of £28k from the Civic Office budget was proposed in the 2022/23 Democratic Services budget in order to meet stretch savings

targets. This was based on the removal of chauffeur support to the mayor. Budget Council did not agree the removal of chauffeur support but agreed that a revised saving of £17k should be considered through a review of the civic office security and transport arrangements, combined with a review of whether the facility for councillors to have printed agendas could be removed, which it was estimated would save approximately £11k.

Printed committee papers

- 3.2 The provision of electronic papers as the expected form of circulation for Council and Committee papers has been previously discussed and agreed by Leaders Group. The majority of councillors now receive their papers electronically. An 11k saving on printing costs is considered to be achievable if the majority of Members continue to receive electronic papers.
- 3.3 A survey of Members has suggested that some Members continue to request hard copies of papers. The reasons for this vary from personal preference to accessibility issues relating to protected characteristics. In order to support the Council to reduce the environmental impact of printing and to achieve the budget savings proposed by full Council from reducing paper copies, it is proposed that hard copies of agendas are not provided unless Members have an accessibility issue relating to a protected characteristic which has been raised and agreed with the Monitoring Officer.
- 3.4 Democratic Services will continue to work to support Members with their transition to electronic copies and to promote electronic papers in all of our work as the expectation.

Civic Office Security and Transport Arrangements

- 3.5 The Civic Office is supported by the Civic Officer Manager, part-time Civic Office Assistant and a full-time chauffeur, with a relief chauffeur on call.
- 3.6 The duties of the full-time chauffeur currently include:-
- Driving the Mayor to/from events
 - Collecting and safeguarding the Mayoral Chains
 - Acting as Macebearer at events
 - Supporting the Mayor whilst on engagements
 - Assisting with visits to the Parlour/Chamber
 - Acting as a photographer during engagements
- 3.7 The hours worked by the full time chauffeur (37 hours per weeks) are worked flexibly and include weekends and evenings. A review of engagements and time spent in supporting the Mayor with these indicates that, if the full time chauffeur role was reduced to achieve the proposed £17k saving, the Council would need to reduce the number of engagements that can be attended and review the use of Mayoral chains and robes at these events.

- 3.8 Increasing the use of relief drivers would not generate a saving as it would mean the Civic Office spending time sourcing and paying for a driver for various engagements week by week. Currently there are often last minute engagements and changes occurring on a day-by-day basis.
- 3.9 A review of Mayoral engagements in 2018-2019 (taking that year as the most recent pre- pandemic year of activity) indicates that 359 events were attended by the Mayor. 387 events were attended in 2017-2018. It is anticipated that the proposed engagements in 2022-23 will be compatible with or exceed the 2017-2018 figures. In some weeks, 65 hours of support were provided by the chauffeur (for example 22-28th July) but in others this was quieter, meaning an average of 37 hours per week were achieved.
- 3.10 As many of these events are booked well in advance and organised following consultation with the Mayor's appointed charities, it is not recommended that significant changes could be made for the 2022-2023 calendar. Subject to consultation with Group Leaders, a wider review of the Mayoral calendar, protocol and role alongside their transport and security could be undertaken to report back to P&R to consider implementation of any agreed changes from 2023-2024.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 It is proposed that a saving of £11k can be achieved from the overall print budget in Democratic Services. The alternative would be not to take this saving and to revert to producing hard copy papers or to do so if requested by any Member for any reason. These are options open to Committee, although are not recommended as this would not support the Council's commitment to reduce the environmental impact of printing.
- 4.2 An additional saving of £17k from a reduction in chauffeur support could be achieved through a reduction by 20 hours from the full time position, leaving a 17 hour part time post. If this option were to be pursued, this would require prior consultation with affected staff and Unions in compliance with the Council's HR policies. If this option were to be considered, it is recommended that this is considered as part of a wider review of the role of the Mayoralty and function of the Civic Office in order to be able to manage the impact of reduced attendance at engagements and to ensure full consultation with affected staff is undertaken.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 It is recognised that other local authorities have opted to not have a chauffeur/macebearer and to rely on the mayor making their own arrangements to attend engagements. Feedback from Brighton and Hove Council Mayors suggests that the support of a full time chauffeur is considered by them to be important to be able to meet the number of engagements they are currently expected to attend, often including multiple events in one day and to support them during these engagements.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 It is proposed that a saving of £11k is taken forward in the 2022/23 budget from the Democratic Services printing budget and that a further saving of 17k is not taken forward in relation to a reduction of chauffeur support to the Mayor for the reasons outlined in the report for 2022-2023 but that a wider review of the Civic Office functions and role of the Mayor is considered by Group Leaders.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The report recommends that further reduction to the Civic Office Support budget is not pursued in 2022-2023 in relation to the associated budget amendment. This will cause an overspend of £0.017m on the Democratic Services budget in 2022/23 due to this saving not being achievable. The council holds a small, recurrent contingency budget to address minor, unexpected in-year costs or liabilities and this can be used to reinstate the budget in this case.

Finance officer Peter Francis:

Date consulted 090622

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 Further consultation would be required in accordance with the Council's HR Policies before taking forward any reduction in staffing.

Lawyer Elizabeth Culbert:

Date consulted 070622

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 In relation to printing, the proposals in this report recommend an approach whereby those councillors who require hard copies papers to enable them to access the documents can do so where they raise accessibility issues relating to their protected characteristics with the Monitoring Officer.
- 9.2 The mayoralty seeks to make a significant contribution to the fundraising efforts of third sector organisations beyond those of the selected mayor's charities.

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 The Mayoral car is a hybrid model and therefore does not add to environmental pollution from fuel consumption. This cannot be guaranteed by the use of alternative transport.
- 10.2 The proposal to ensure that Committee papers are circulated electronically unless accessibility needs are raised with the Monitoring Officer will support the Council's commitment to reduce the environmental impact of printing.

