

Item 31 – Appendix 1

1. Living Wage for Brighton and Hove

Suggestion:

Review of the costs and benefits to the council/city of introducing a Living Wage for all council employees and those employed by companies contracted by the council.

Background:

There is a significant amount of research already on this topic nationally:

- Joseph Rowntree report, 2010, Minimum Income Standard that one cannot live an adequate life on the minimum wage
- 57% of British children living below the poverty line in Britain live in households where at least one adult is in work (Fair Pay Network)
- Four London councils (Ealing, Lewisham, Tower Hamlets and Southwark) and a number outside London (Manchester, Glasgow, Norwich and Oxford) have passed motions to implement a Living Wage.
- Equality angle. There is evidence that this is also an issue which affects women disproportionately: women are three times more likely to be in low paid employment than men (Fawcett Society).
- Case studies from <http://www.livingwageemployer.org/case-studies-2/> include evidence that:
 - Turnover amongst staff has more than halved
 - Morale has been raised
 - Productivity has improved; attitudes are more flexible and positive
 - Service has improved: our help desk gets far fewer complaints
- This is an issue which is reported to significantly affect those in low paid council work most and disproportionately affects women and children (http://www.fairpaynetwork.org/index.php?page=low_pay_victims). However, there is an argument that poor pay also has a negative knock on effect on Brighton's local economy as a whole, in that increases in the wages of the poorest are far more likely to be recirculated around the local economy than spent abroad or elsewhere in the UK.

Possible scope:

This review would examine its feasibility examining:

- (a) What this will cost
- (b) What savings may be made (in terms of benefits to low waged individuals which would not apply to those on the Living Wage; and in terms of increased staff retention and morale)
- (c) How many council employees are currently below a Living Wage
- (d) How many are on the National Minimum Wage

- (e) How many employees of companies contracted by the council are currently below a Living Wage
- (f) How many employees of companies contracted by the council are on the National Minimum Wage
- (g) What are the job titles and wages of those in categories (c) and (e) and the companies they are employed by
- (h) At what level a living wage for B&H would be set at (£7.85 in London, £7 Oxford)

A review could consider whether introducing a Living Wage would encourage people who are currently unemployed and caught in the 'benefits trap', reluctant to take very badly paid jobs, to take jobs; and what the estimated savings on job seekers allowance and increased employment might be.

Witnesses:

- Professor Peter Ambrose, University of Brighton
- Council employees
- Campaign groups
- Other local authorities/companies that have introduced a living wage/ decided not to

Outcomes:

- Pros and cons as to the idea of a living wage including costs
- Practical issues that would need to be overcome if it were found to be a good idea

2. Pro-active sharing of information on Vulnerable People

Suggestion:

Proactive information sharing for vulnerable people - how effective is it and how can it be further improved?

Background:

A number of different agencies/organisations keep lists of 'vulnerable' people. This includes BHCC adult social care services, BHCC housing, NHS Brighton & Hove and East Sussex Fire Authority. It also includes the major utility companies.

People may be classified as vulnerable for a number of reasons (there is no universally accepted definition of vulnerability, and different organisations may interpret vulnerability differently). For example, a person with a physical disability which limits their mobility may be at particular risk from a house fire since they may be unable to leave their home without assistance. If the Fire Service know that there is a vulnerable person at a particular address, then they can respond appropriately.

In other instances, it may be inappropriate to pursue payment of bills etc aggressively – and particularly to discontinue utility supplies etc (e.g. a person may have learning disabilities or mental health problems which make it difficult for them to respond to requests for money/make it unsafe to cut off their utilities. If utilities, council tax etc are aware of this they can choose to chase debt in a more appropriate manner – e.g. by liaising with someone's support worker etc.)

It is evident that registers of vulnerable people have an important role to play in ensuring that vulnerable individuals are able to lead independent, safe lives.

However, whilst a number of organisations maintain registers of vulnerable people, there is currently relatively little sharing of data, even across the public sector. Inevitably this means that there is a great deal of duplication going on – with a number of organisations each maintaining their own databases. It also means that a large number of people are likely to appear on one database but not others, with the risk that they will require interventions from services which do not realise they are vulnerable. In addition, this means that carers/support workers face an unnecessarily Sisyphean struggle to register people as vulnerable, particularly people whose conditions regularly change/deteriorate.

There is therefore an obvious case to be made for moving to some kind of shared vulnerability register. This would surely reduce costs, reduce needless duplication, make the customer experience more pleasant and make it much more likely that vulnerable people receive the services most appropriate for them. It therefore tallies with the current council initiatives to improve the customer experience and gain better value for money. In addition, the notion of the city commissioning a single integrated service to replace a number of discrete services matches precisely with the aims of the intelligent commissioning initiative.

There are obvious obstacles here also – client confidentiality, the fact that people may be vulnerable in some ways but not others, the question of who should host a shared database and how they should be recompensed, the problem of IT compatibility across organisations etc – but these are all the type of issues which might benefit from being explored via a panel.

Possible scope:

This could include a review of the potential for multi agency 'one source' home safety/health support for vulnerable people and look at the concept of 'Added Value' to communities (i.e. the collective worth of effective multi-agency working for a particular vulnerable group). The council is already looking into how its own departments link up to share information about vulnerable people, a wider remit for a scrutiny panel could help push the concept of this 'Golden Thread' further forward, enabling partners to explore how we currently share information about vulnerable

people and work with them pro-actively to improve their safety and quality of life and what improvements are needed for collective overall benefit.

This theme could be closely aligned with the council's priorities around improving health and well-being. While provision of good neighbourhood services is important and will continue, the City will be bringing together public, private and voluntary sector work to provide better joined-up services for the most vulnerable families and households.

The normal scrutiny panel set-up (3-4 meetings in public) should be sufficient to deal with this issue.

Possible Witnesses: BHCC ASC, BHCC emergency planning, BHCC housing management, NHS Brighton & Hove, South Downs Health Trust, Sussex Partnership Trust, Utilities, BHCC Council Tax, BHCC Benefits, ESFA, Police Authority, SECamb, 3rd sector representative organisations (MIND, Alzheimer's Society, Autistic Society, RNIB, RNID), CVSF

Outcomes:

Recommendations on the development of improved cross-agency information sharing.

3. Developing Better Ties between City Partners and the City Universities

Suggestion:

We need to establish whether we access our two University research and development facilities as much as we might in terms of helping us to commission and deliver, as appropriate, real societal behavioural change to help us meet cash savings in the future through lower dependency on access to our services. Are we capitalising on the net worth of intellectual knowledge available locally?

We understand that this is already starting to happen in some areas of the City, with Total Place trialling work with drugs and alcohol abuse. It is important to work proactively, to drive out problems at source with our partners, rather than having to deal with the more expensive end results, such as arson, road traffic collisions, etc.

Background:

There is already a well developed practise of co-working between city public sector organisations and Brighton & Sussex Universities, particularly via the LSP. However, this is mainly at a strategic level. What this scrutiny request appears to be identifying is the potential to develop better links at a 'service' level, matching university research and teaching foci with related work by city partners. There are clear opportunities here: for partners to get access to relevant university research, and perhaps to steer or even part-commission some of that research in order to obtain useful data. There are potential

opportunities for the universities too – in terms of accessing public sector data resources, providing placements for under/post graduate students etc.

This is by no means an original idea – there are already examples of city partners working effectively with university departments – for instance, the council’s research team has close links with the universities; the University of Brighton urban geography department does a good deal of co-working with the council’s Housing Strategy department and with the Strategic Housing Partnership; the joint council/PCT public health team has excellent links with the universities etc.

However, it is probably fair to say that these relationships have developed in a fairly piece-meal way: there has been no systemic attempt to match university research with public sector provision across the various organisations, and there is no clearly defined pathway via which one city organisation might attempt to synchronise research with another.

The council’s Value for Money programme aims to provide city residents with better value services by reducing waste and duplication within the council. Closer working across city public sector organisations and the city universities could have a similar beneficial effect: making best use of city resources, and potentially reducing costs for individual partners, if some usefully symbiotic working could be facilitated.

The council’s move to a commissioning model is also intended to reduce duplication and ensure the best possible use of city resources. A scrutiny panel exploring how best to utilise the resource of the city’s universities might be a valuable contribution to the development of this commissioning model.

Partner priorities in the current economic climate are bound to feature better co-working in order to deliver quality services for less.

Similarly, the financial squeeze on universities and the increasing need to be shown to offer students a practical, work-oriented learning experience should mean that universities are receptive to the general idea of co-working at a departmental level.

Scope:

A scrutiny panel would first need to establish what existing links there are between the city universities and city public sector partners, and get some idea of where there already exists really effective co-working. It would be very important that this topic was approached both from the perspective of the public sector and the perspective of the universities – closer ties could only realistically be developed if there were incentives for both sides to engage. This might take a little time,

although it is obviously something for officers to do rather than members.

Members would then look at some of the existing effective partners, seeking to develop recommendations to improve partnership relations/make the process of building partnerships easier.

Possible Witnesses:

ESFA; Police Authority; Council Executive; University of Sussex executive; University of Brighton Executive; NHS Brighton & Hove; People from partner/university departments with well-established co-working set-ups; student unions

Outcomes

Whilst one could imagine this becoming a very involved piece of work – looking at setting up complex organisational structures to facilitate better town-gown co-working etc – current economic circumstances make this rather unlikely (i.e. there's no money for new services, and limited opportunity for spend to save initiatives...). It's much more likely that members would want to focus on making some practical suggestions to foster better co-working arrangements (and maybe set out some visions for future development). This should be readily achievable within the normal 3-4 meeting scrutiny panel time table.

4. Future of Pride

Suggestion:

The Trustees of Pride have approached the council requesting that an independent scrutiny review be undertaken. Scrutiny has no formal powers to review Pride; however informal discussions with the Pride Chair and other Trustees have identified that a scrutiny review could provide a platform for debate on some of the challenges facing the event.

Scope:

This could be seen as facilitating a city-wide conversation. An indicative list of issues that could be included in any review is outlined below:

- 1) General funding issues.
 - a. Should there be a charge to enter Preston Park?
 - i. Level of charge - voluntary/suggested/compulsory?
 - ii. Cost of policing this (fencing/stewards etc)
 - b. Sponsorship arrangements
 - c. Cost of running stalls/tents/catering etc
 - d. What is the economic value of Pride to the city?
 - e. Should businesses that benefit from the event contribute more to its organisation?
 - f. Tendering processes
- 2) Is Preston Park the right place for the event?
 - a. Not big enough?

- b. Should it be fenced off?
 - c. Pros/cons of other locations?
- 3) Stalls within Preston Park?
 - a. Need for a main stage?
 - b. Toilet facilities
 - c. Refuse disposal/recycling
- 4) Organisational capacity of Pride
 - a. Number of staff
 - b. Cost of running event/revenues received
 - c. Membership of Board
- 5) Is the event too commercial – does it need to become more community focused? If so, how? Is it no-longer LGBT focused? Advocacy role beyond the main event?
- 6) Balance between the park and the parade?
- 7) Health impacts – drug/alcohol use especially teenagers
- 8) Policing/community safety issues/clean-up arrangements

Given Pride is an annual event, any review would need to be completed fairly rapidly to allow sufficient planning time for any agreed changes to be made. This could be accomplished by holding 3-4 meetings in early October with a view to reporting early November. Witnesses could be drawn from participating community groups, charities, businesses, volunteers and public sector bodies.

Recommendations would probably be primarily directed towards Pride. The Trustees have indicated recommendations would be voted upon by the wider Pride membership, rather than just be kept as a Board decision.

A review of Pride would be a new development for scrutiny and there are questions as to how this would work and whether the scrutiny function is best placed to conduct the review. To date no other major external events have been subject to formal council scrutiny in this manner. In deciding whether to scrutinise Pride, members will want to reflect that the council has a number of roles to play with regard to Pride; as landowner, licensing and highways authority, events calendar, equalities, cultural offer for example.

Prior to the Pride event this year, the Leader of the Council successfully hosted and chaired three meetings with cross party Councillors, community group representatives and Trustees from Pride in order to facilitate the resolution of some specific issues. In addition to these, the Leader agreed to host one further meeting following Pride to evaluate the event and discuss the way forward for future years. The council could also support a non-council led review to be undertaken with funding and input to the specification.

If Members were minded to look at Pride through a scrutiny panel this would need to dovetail with other review plans.

Outcomes:

Recommendations to Pride on the future of the event.

5. Councillor Ward Surgery Review**Suggestion:**

Review of Members ward surgeries including security, location, publicity, support.

Background:

The majority of Councillors hold regular surgeries to allow residents to raise issues of concern. Surgeries are often held in community venues around the city, with Cllrs either working alone or in small numbers.

Scope:

Issues that could be covered include:

- 1) Survey all BHCC Councillors – how they currently operate surgeries. What's good, what's not etc
- 2) What do other councils offer in this regard?
- 3) Possible options for improvements
 - a. Coffee mornings?
 - b. Use of social media
 - c. Different locations
 - d. Publicity

This could primarily be a desk based undertaking with Members meeting once most of the research has been produced. This would allow for a short focused panel.

Outcomes:

Suggestions for ways to develop/improve/support Members surgeries

6. Locally Devolved Power**Suggested topic:**

Scrutiny into ward devolution - what are the costs and benefits, the models from elsewhere, etc. For example, a panel could consider community committees which can spend money locally on environmental improvements etc, using profits from Controlled Parking Zones for example. In addition, some areas e.g. Oxford have community planning committees for some planning applications, and this could be considered too.

The Strengthening Communities Review currently being undertaken by the Communities and Equalities Team is looking at a range of issues including local decision-making. It is suggested that this review should report before any scrutiny work is undertaken to avoid duplication.

Members may wish to return to this issue following the publication of the review.

7. Review of mechanisms for BME communities to get their voice heard

The Strengthening Communities Review currently being undertaken includes work on how BME groups are supported and mechanisms for getting their voices heard. Any scrutiny intervention should therefore wait until this review is concluded.

8. Impact of budget reductions on the third sector

OSC established a panel to review the societal impacts of the budget reductions at its July meeting. This panel will want to talk to third sector representatives. It is also suggested that Members will want to consider the role of third sector representatives within the budget scrutiny process in December/January.

9. Impact of Section 106 Agreements

This is on OSC work-programme for October already. Members will be able to undertake more detailed scrutiny if desired once the initial report has been published.

10. Review of the policy of mainstreaming equalities

OSC has developed a watching brief over equality issues with six-monthly updates on work being undertaken across the council and city. As OSC Members will be aware the council is working to achieve 'Excellent Level' of the Equality Framework for Local Government by December 2010. The action plan for the Single Equality Scheme, which OSC has been monitoring, outlines the actions being taken to reach this standard.

OSC could almost already be seen to be undertaking continual review of equality policy through its proactive monitoring role. Where issues/areas for improvement have been identified, for example through the peer review, these are being addressed; the obvious example being the scrutiny panel on staff disabilities. If there are specific areas where Members feel that mainstreaming has been unsuccessful these can be reviewed.

Members can continue to review equality policies through the regular monitoring and decide on specific interventions as the need arises.

11. Council Forward Plan

Every item on the Council's Forward Plan needs to be assigned to one of the Scrutiny Committees on date of first publication (according to a scheme (to be published) to match FP items to relevant/responsible Scrutiny Committees) so that, at each Scrutiny Committee meeting, there is a standing Agenda item to consider all assigned additions to the FP since the last meeting of that Committee, and to determine, for

each new item, whether the Cttee wants more information, whether it already wants to initiate scrutiny, or whether it is satisfied that it wishes to take no further action prior to the Cabinet (or Cabinet Member) making the planned Decision.

OSC considered the Council's Forward Plan at its March meeting and work is ongoing to improve its utility. The number of pre-decision items being tabled at O&S Committees is already increasing. The move to the Intelligent Commissioning model should ensure that O&S is involved in the development of needs assessments and service plans at an early stage.

12. Council Procurement

With particular regard to sustainability. This is a huge area for improvement. Officers agree the need for significant movement. A review could help transform BHCC into a model spender.

It has been agreed that Sustainable Procurement will be a standing item on the Sustainability Cabinet Committee Agenda. Additionally work on procurement is ongoing as part of the move to Intelligent Commissioning. It would therefore seem sensible to wait to see what developments these two initiatives result in; this issue could usefully be added to the OSC work-programme for mid-2011.

13. Review of the council consultation processes and procedures

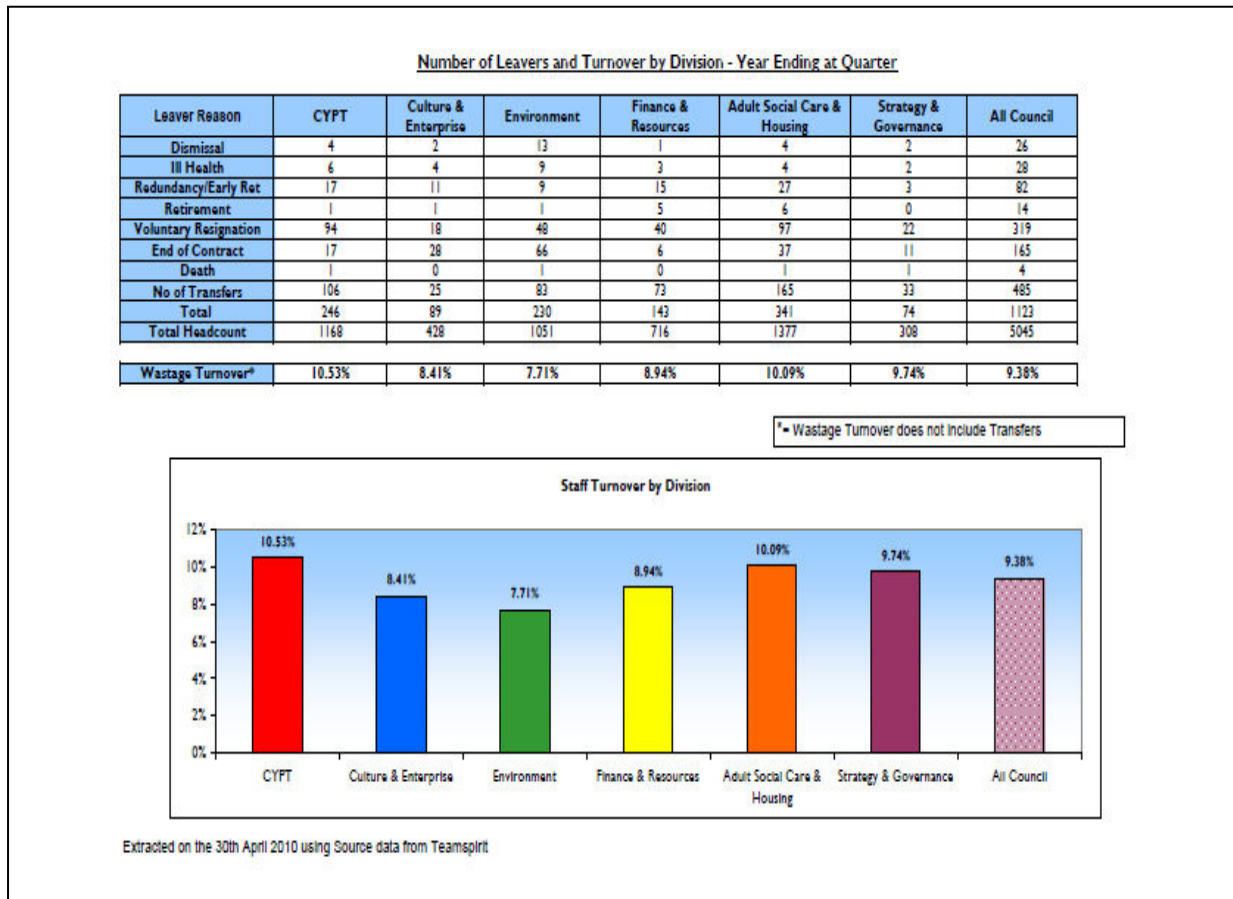
Review of consultation procedures across the council highlighting the

- a. the difference between providing information and consulting*
- b. the outcome of consultation – were any policies or implementation strategies changed as a result of consultation*
- c. who is consulted and on what?*

At its last meeting OSC considered paper on the Community Engagement Framework, which relates directly to how the council consults with residents and local communities. OSC has agreed to have regular updates on the implementation of the strategy which will allow members to review consultation processes and procedures.

14. Staff Retention

Information from HR, as displayed below, indicates there is not a problem with staff retention within the council. Monitoring is in place across all directorates which would flag if this were to become an issue.



15. How /when the council publishes information plus the license terms it uses

The topic relates to the new government requirements for councils to publish their spending information, amongst other things. The council produces a wide variety of data from recycling statistics, licence applications to webcasts. At the moment these are all copyrighted - however, as other public sector bodies are doing - they are publishing the data under more permissive licences which allow free re-use of the data, which makes sense given that it was paid for by the tax payer.

This is a topic of significant interest to the new media community here in the city. An example of a body promoting this approach is the Open Knowledge Foundation, <http://www.okfn.org/>

The council provides significant amounts of information on its website, in hard copy and in response to specific enquiries. The copyright of that information is generally retained by the council.

Organisations such as the Open Knowledge Foundation aim to promote:

- Free and open access to material
- Freedom to redistribute material
- Freedom to reuse the material
- No restriction of the above based on who someone is (e.g. their nationality) or their field of endeavour (e.g. commercial or non-commercial)

This issue could be looked at in a narrow manner, i.e. copyright issues, or more broadly at accessibility and transparency. The more narrow issues, whilst important are probably too focused for scrutiny work however accessibility, transparency and open governance are topical issues with the Government currently promoting 'armchair auditors' and requiring public bodies to publish expenditure over £500.

Initially it is suggested that this item is placed on OSC's work-programme for 2011 once details regarding how the council publishes it's expenditure over £500 have been released. Cllr Elgood submitted a question to July's Council meeting regarding this issue. This and the response are set out below:

Councillor Elgood

"What progress is being made to implement the requirement by the coalition government to publish all items of spending over £500 and to publish all tender documents in full?"

Reply from Councillor Young, Cabinet Member for Finance.

"The Administration has two options available to it with regards to publishing all council spend over £500. The first would be to generate a report from our creditor system which would consist of raw spend data extracted from invoices paid. We are in a position to do this now subject to ensuring that the appropriate data protection issues are addressed (for example – the publication of individual carer details that currently appear on the system).

However, raw data is sometimes difficult to interpret into meaningful information and the Administration want to ensure that the public have information that is easy to understand and means something to them. Therefore we are currently in discussions with an existing supplier who can provide an innovative web-based solution which has been designed to improve the accessibility and relevance of data. This solution will present the information in a user friendly way and data will also be categorised, therefore providing the public with information that will be useful to them such as spend per full time employee, spend with small and medium sized enterprises, spend relative to the number of households, working population, persons of pensionable age and number of children that make up the resident population. There is also the facility to make comparison between authorities of differing sizes.

This solution would be accessed via the Council's website and will be free to the public. It is being offered to the Council at no cost. I am discussing the options with officers and hope to start publication shortly.

The publishing of tenders and contracts over £500 is much more complex however. We have a number of contract registers across the council and therefore it is a large resource intensive task to bring these together and identify the full list of documentation over this low level of spend. The need to have a comprehensive central repository of tender and contracts documentation has already been identified and the sourcing of this forms part of the Procurement work stream under the VFM project.”

