

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
2.00pm 26 JANUARY 2015
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL
MINUTES

Present: Councillor Mitchell (Chair)

Also in attendance: Councillor Janio (Deputy Chair), Brown, Wilson, Bowden, Hawtree, Powell, Summers and Simson

PART ONE

38 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

33.1 Cllr Simson attended the meeting as a substitute for Cllr Ken Norman.

33.2 There were no interests declared; no member declared that they had been subject to a party whip; and the press & public were not excluded from any part of the meeting.

39 MINUTES

34.1 RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the meeting of 20 October 2014 be agreed as an accurate record.

40 CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS

35.1 Cllr Janio asked for it to be noted that he believed that OSC should be chaired by the official opposition group, the Conservatives, rather than as currently, a representative of the Labour Group.

41 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

36.1 There was none.

42 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

37.1 There were no member questions.

43 REPORT OF THE 2015-16 BUDGET SCRUTINY PANEL

- 43.1 Cllr Mitchell, who had chaired the budget scrutiny panel, told the committee that the panel had been struck by the complexity of this year's budget planning and by how much good work was taking place. Moves to protect and coalesce the council's 'intelligence' functions were also welcomed by the panel. However, panel members had concerns about the cumulative impact of the savings plans, and about assumptions that as yet unspecified service changes would deliver significant in-year savings.
- 43.2 Cllr Simson agreed that the budget sessions had been very informative: it was good to see so much starting to happen. However, it was disappointing that the lead members for some service areas had been unable to attend the panel's evidence gathering meetings. It was also disappointing that Community Works had not been able to participate in the formal budget scrutiny panel process to the same extent as in previous years.
- 43.3 Cllr Hawtree noted a dichotomy between the civilised and consensual tone of the budget scrutiny report and the tone of debate at previous budget council meetings. Cllr Summers agreed that it was unfortunate that budget debate too often ended in party political wrangling and was reported so negatively in the local media. It would be useful if the media reported the findings of the budget scrutiny panel, since it would show how hard the council was working to make the organisation more efficient.
- 43.4 Cllr Mitchell told the committee that it was important that new members were thoroughly briefed about budget and other financial matters – this should be included in the new member induction programme, and potentially also in the sessions currently being run for aspirant new members. Cllr Wilson noted that training on budget issues would have been useful to her; as a member who joined the council following a by-election she had not gone through the new member induction process.
- 43.5 **RESOLVED** – that the budget scrutiny panel report be endorsed and referred to Policy & Resources committee for consideration.

44 REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY PANEL ON SOCIAL VALUE

- 44.1 This item was introduced by the panel Chair, Cllr Bill Randall, who told the committee that this was one of the most important pieces of work he had been involved in during his 12 years as a Councillor.
- 44.2 The council is already very active in recognising and encouraging social value, as evidenced by the weighting of the recent contract for domestic violence services (with 70% of the contract award based on quality and social value). However, more can be done to ensure that the council adopts a consistently positive approach to social value, following the good practice established locally by the Clinical Commissioning Group. This is particularly important in the context of significant funding reductions, and in terms of the move away from grants in favour of commissioning.
- 44.3 Cllr Randall thanked the other panel members, Cllrs Anne Meadows and Dee Simson, noting that there had been unanimity throughout the panel process. He also thanked Julia Riches from the scrutiny team for her work in administering the panel and writing the panel report.

- 44.4 Cllr Simson agreed that this had been an important and necessary piece of work, and one which all council departments needed to take on board.
- 44.5 In answer to a question from Cllr Mitchell about measuring social value in contracts, Cllr Randall told members that this was tricky, although there had been recent progress nationally. However, it was important to persevere in developing methods to measure and evaluate social value. When tendering, commissioners need to be able to factor in the value of community trust in well-established services, and the importance of 'sticky money' (i.e. of contracting with local bodies which re-invest in the local community). Contracting purely on the basis of cost risks missing really significant added-value, particularly in terms of community & voluntary sector services.
- 44.6 Cllr Janio told members that he supported social value, and would like to see much more use of it – for example through communities taking over community assets.
- 44.7 Cllr Randall welcomed cross-party support for the concept of social value, noting that it was an idea that reached across party political boundaries. The 'Social Value' Act itself originated in a private member's bill from a conservative MP in response to the loss of the 'Bombadier' contract to foreign competition.
- 44.8 RESOLVED** – that the scrutiny panel report be endorsed and referred to the relevant policy committee for consideration.

45 TRANS EQUALITIES SCRUTINY PANEL: ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

- 40.1 This item was introduced by Nicky Cambridge, People & Place Coordinator; and by Dr Sam Hall, Chair of the Clare Project (a local Transgender support group).
- 40.2 Ms Cambridge told members that this was the Year 2 monitoring report for the Trans Equalities scrutiny panel. Work supporting the Trans community has moved on considerably from the original focus of the scrutiny panel, and is now very much community-led.
- 40.3 The only red (RAG ratings) remaining relate to specialist NHS services for gender re-assignment. There is very limited local influence on these services, which are commissioned on a sub-regional basis, but to a nationally-set formula. However, the council and representatives of the local Trans community have met with the NHS England Surrey & Sussex Area Team to discuss issues. Also, the Brighton & Hove Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has responded very positively to the panel report and has included services for Trans people in its Annual Operating Plan – almost certainly the first CCG to explicitly acknowledge Trans health needs in this way. Dr Hall added that whilst there is currently not much opportunity to locally influence nationally commissioned services, such as those for gender reassignment, it may be possible to develop a local offer which reduces the need to do so.
- 40.4 There is also a somewhat mixed picture in terms of the panel recommendations concerning training. HR have not fully implemented the panel recommendations here, instead focusing their training offer on key teams. However, the training that has been delivered has been very well-received and some teams have found it so useful that they have themselves commissioned additional training.

- 40.5 Dr Hall told the committee that the Trans community welcomed the scrutiny process, which had played an important role in building trust and raising the profile of Trans needs. Going forward, key to the council delivering high quality services to its customers is ensuring that internal equalities issues are being handled effectively. Training is therefore critical, and needs to be mandatory.
- 40.6 Dr Hall also told members that the current Trans needs assessment was likely to identify significant gaps in terms of healthcare, mental health, and wellbeing.
- 40.7 Dr Hall suggested that the council should attempt to showcase the Trans equalities scrutiny nationally. Ms Cambridge agreed, noting that there was a potential opportunity to build on the work of the panel and on subsequent work by the Trans community and the council's Communities team, by holding a conference in Brighton which would highlight the city's approach as best practice in engaging with Trans people.
- 40.8 Cllr Bowden stated that this was an important report – the first time that the needs of the Trans community have been properly recognised. Much more needs to be done to address transphobia however, and the message must be disseminated more widely – for instance to the local business community via the Chamber of Commerce. The LGB community needs to consider its own attitudes to Trans people also.
- 40.9 Cllr Janio agreed that this was an excellent report; it is good that we are challenging national policy on behalf of local people.
- 40.10 Cllr Powell echoed previous comments and asked whether it would be possible to re-run the recent Trans awareness training following the council elections in May 2015. Ms Cambridge responded that 12 members had attended the recent training session, and that it was intended that this would be run again post May as part of new member induction.
- 40.11 Cllr Powell proposed that future monitoring of this issue should be undertaken either by the Health & Wellbeing Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HWOSC) or by the Health & Wellbeing Board (HWB). The Acting Head of Scrutiny responded by informing members that a report would be presented to the March OSC and HWOSC meetings, detailing plans for the future monitoring of scrutiny panel reports, including the panel on Trans Equalities.
- 40.12 RESOLVED** – That OSC members have considered and commented on the Trans Equalities implementation report, and have noted the progress made to date.

46 TRAVELLER STRATEGY SCRUTINY PANEL: ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

- 46.1 This item was introduced by Andy Staniford, Housing Strategy Manager; Sheila Peters, Traveller Liaison Service; and by Paul Ransom, Sussex Police.
- 46.2 Mr Staniford told the committee that, whilst the focus of media attention was inevitably on illegal encampments, the main focus of the Traveller Strategy was in fact on reducing inequalities experienced by Gypsy & Traveller communities. There had been excellent

work in this respect in recent months, particularly in terms of the development of a dedicated local education service, and with the CCG and Sussex Police both prioritising Traveller issues.

- 46.3 In response to a question from Cllr Hawtree on 'van dwellers', Mr Staniford told members that people living in vans are not officially categorised as Travellers (although 'new age Travellers' may be). The council is developing a van dweller protocol, although the need to focus resources on illegal encampments has delayed this.
- 46.4 Cllr Summers told members that, for ward Councillors, Traveller issues posed both a local and a citywide challenge. The recent member decision to reject proposals for a temporary transit site is a good example of members prioritising local concerns over wider strategic goals, and risked increasing problems across the city.
- 46.5 Inspector Ransom told the committee that community liaison has improved recently, although engagement with Local Action Teams (LATs) was still patchy in some areas. Liaison between police services across Sussex has also improved, with more consistent decision-making across the county, and shared best practice – for example learning from East Sussex on how to use 'Section 62' orders more effectively. However, decisions on encampments need to be taken in light of the local circumstances, so there will never be absolute consistency across Sussex.
- 46.6 In response to a question from Cllr Simson on cross-border cooperation, Inspector Ransom told the committee that it was not possible to re-locate an encampment across local authority borders. In any case it would generally not be appropriate, as most Travellers encamping in Brighton & Hove are local families.
- 46.7 In answer to a question from Cllr Simson on Traveller education, Mr Staniford told members that there had been some disruption to the service following the decision to establish a local service rather than sharing a service with East Sussex. Things have subsequently settled down, but a marked improvement in attainment is unlikely until the permanent site is established.
- 46.8 RESOLVED** – that the report be noted.

47 IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE ON TOILET SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 47.1 This item was introduced by Jan Jonker, Head of Strategy & Projects, Environment.
- 47.2 Mr Jonker told members that this was the first annual monitoring report of the Public Toilets scrutiny panel. There was generally very good public toilet provision in the city, although funding would be a major issue going forward. The council has drafted an action plan in response to the scrutiny recommendations and work is ongoing on surveying toilets and developing an investment strategy. Charging for some public toilets is currently being trialled. Although charging may help off-set costs, the need to have an attendant nearby (e.g. to assist people if toilet barriers stop working) means that city toilets will never be self-funding. The council is also exploring options to reduce water use in toilets and to develop an app detailing city toilet locations. However, it appears that there is no realistic prospect of being able to use the 'late Night Levy' to part-fund city toilets.

- 47.3 In response to questions about the 'Use Our Loos' scheme, Mr Jonker told the committee that there had been a good deal of work to encourage businesses to sign up to the scheme, but there was little enthusiasm for it. There may be opportunities to access other toilet facilities (for example in GP surgeries), and these are being actively explored.
- 47.4 In answer to a question from Cllr Simson about the sign advertising Norton Road car park toilets, Mr Jonker told members that he would check whether the sign was accurate and ensure it was amended if not.
- 47.5 RESOLVED** – that the report be noted.
- 48 EQUALITY AND INCLUSION POLICY PROGRESS REPORT**
- 48.1 This item was introduced by Emma McDermott, Head of Communities; and Sarah Tighe-Ford, Equalities Coordinator.
- 48.2 Ms Tighe-Ford told members that significant events in the past year included the formation of the EQUIP group and the council's ranking as the top local authority in the annual Stonewall index of LGBT friendly employers.
- 48.3 In response to a query from Cllr Powell as to why the Cllr Equalities champions were not invited to join EQUIP, Ms McDermott responded that, whilst all political groups are represented on EQUIP, the equalities champions were not explicitly invited. This is something that will need to be considered going forward. Cllr Simson suggested that equalities champions could be invited to join EQUIP for issues that were particularly relevant to their portfolios.
- 48.4 In answer to a question from Cllr Bowden about Stonewall, Ms Tighe-Ford told members that it was unclear why the council had not been placed on the Stonewall top 100 last year, although the council has challenged Stonewall about this. The council will need to consider the cost of Stonewall in future years, although the work with regard to the Stonewall index is used to inform other equalities work.
- 48.5 Cllr Bowden commented that he found Stonewall's attitudes to Trans people outdated and unhelpful. Ms Tighe-Ford noted that the council have challenged Stonewall on this, asking them what they are doing to help other local authorities improve their understanding of Trans issues.
- 48.6 In response to a question from Cllr Summers on a faith staff forum, Ms Tighe-Ford told members that staff forums were established by staff willing to set up a group. To date there had been little interest from staff in doing this – but the Equalities team would support a group if there was enthusiasm for it.
- 48.7 RESOLVED** – that the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

