

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Agenda Item 101

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Update on Current Scrutiny Panels
Date of Meeting: 10 March 2009
Report of: Acting Director of Strategy & Governance
Contact Officer: Name: Tom Hook Tel: 29-1110
E-mail: Tom.hook@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report provides Overview and Scrutiny Commission members with a summary on the work that the various ad hoc panels are currently undertaking.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That members:
- Note the work of the six ad hoc panels
 - Instruct officers to provide six monthly updates on the work of the panels
 - Provide guidance on areas where ad hoc panels could most productively focus their efforts to feed into the work planning process for 2009/10

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to establish ad hoc panels to look at issues of concern in more detail than the usual cycle of Committee meetings allows. The constitutional requirements relating to ad hoc panels are appended as Appendix 1.
- 3.2 In its role as coordination body the Overview and Scrutiny Commission should maintain an overview as to the work of the ad hoc panels as a whole.
- 3.3 There are currently six ad hoc panels in existence:
- Older People and Community Safety
 - Dual Diagnosis of Mental Health and Substance Misuse
 - Environmental Industries
 - Dignity at Work
 - Reducing alcohol related harm to children and young people
 - Students in the Community

- 3.2 The suitability of a number of other issues is currently being evaluated to see where ad hoc panel intervention could add most value. This will be undertaken as part of the process of developing work plans for each committee for 2009/10.
- 3.3 A brief summary of the work of each ad hoc panel is attached as Appendix 2. Each ad hoc panel reports its findings to the parent Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 None

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Recommendations from ad hoc panels may have financial implications for the Council. These will need to be evaluated on an issue by issue basis. In addition the resources required to support ad hoc panels need to be considered.

Finance Officer Consulted: Anne Silley

Date: 2nd March 2009

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Recommendations from ad hoc panels may have legal implications for the Council. These will need to be evaluated on an issue by issue basis.

Lawyer Consulted:

Date:

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Work of the ad hoc panels may impact upon the Council's policies on equalities especially where they look at issues such as Dignity at Work.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Work of the ad hoc panels may impact upon the Council's policies on sustainability especially where they look at issues such as Environmental Technologies and climate change.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 Work of the ad hoc panels may produce recommendations that relate to crime and disorder, for example the panel looking at Older People and Community Safety or Reducing alcohol related harm to children and young people.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 Recommendations from ad hoc panels may have Risk and Opportunity Management implications for the Council. These will need to be evaluated on an issue by issue basis.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 Recommendations from ad hoc panels may have Corporate / Citywide Implications for the Council. These will need to be evaluated on an issue by issue basis.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Extract from Brighton and Hove City Council constitution relating to ad hoc panels
2. Summary of the work of each ad hoc panel

Documents In Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

1. Minutes of various ad hoc panels and overview and scrutiny committees available on the Council website.

Brighton and Hove City Council Constitution

PART 6.1 Overview and Scrutiny Terms Of Reference and Procedure Rules

5. Ad Hoc Overview and Scrutiny Panels

- 5.1 Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee may appoint Ad Hoc Panels to carry out short, sharply focused pieces of scrutiny work. These may be on issues specific to the Committee but not large enough to warrant a full blown Select Committee approach. As a guide, the work of these Panels should be capable of being conducted within 3 meetings or less.
- 5.2 Ad hoc Overview and Scrutiny Panels will not have Sub-Committee status and the political balance rules in section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 will not apply, but they will normally be established on a cross-party basis.
- 5.3 Membership of the Ad Hoc Panels will be agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee appointing it, taking into account the expertise and experience of available Members, and that no Member may be involved in scrutinising a decision in which he/she has been involved.
- 5.4 When a Member requests for a matter to be scrutinsed, that Member should not normally be appointed as a Member of the ad hoc panel scrutinising the issue. This would not preclude the Member from giving evidence as a lay or an expert witness.
- 5.5 There shall be no provision for substitute Members to attend meetings of Ad Hoc Panels.
- 5.6 Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall ensure that the number of Ad Hoc Panels which it appoints does not exceed the capacity of the Member and Officer resources available to support their work.

Appendix 2

Older People and Community Safety (Environment and Community Safety OSC)

Councillors Mo Marsh (Chairman) Amy Kennedy, David Smart and David Watkins plus Mr John Eyles, a co-optee from the Older People's Council.

Established following Age Concern raising the matter at the Community Safety Forum. The Panel will investigate concerns that older people may have about safety and perception of safety in the community and then make recommendations on practical measures that can be taken to help older people feel safer. At present the Panel is at the stage of inviting people's views, gathering information and identifying witnesses.

A second scoping meeting is being held on 20 March and public meetings are planned for 24 April, 22 May and 3 July in different venues across the city.

Students in the Community (Adult Social Care and Housing OSC)

Councillors Anne Meadows (Chairman), Georgia Wrighton, and Tony Janio.

The Adult Social Care and Housing Committee set up an ad hoc panel to look at the subject of student impact on residential neighbourhoods. This was identified as a particular need through the Committee's consideration of work on the draft housing strategy, and the fact that there was not a specific student housing strand.

The panel met four times in public, with the first meeting purely for members of the public and students to express their views. This was really valuable as it made sure that the panel members were aware of the wide range of student impact issues from the outset. In addition, the panel received 42 individual letters and emails from residents, and a representation from David Lepper MP on behalf of 87 residents from the Elm Grove area of Brighton

The panel had a number of invited expert witnesses to each of the subsequent three meetings, and heard from a total of twenty expert witnesses, including the UK's leading expert on student impact, local police, CityClean, Environmental Health, planning, housing strategy, landlords & both universities (who were represented at senior management levels.)

The panel also benefitted from positive extensive press coverage; stories appeared in the Argus after each meeting, which helped to remind the public that the panel was taking place, and how to contact the panel with comments. In addition, student impact was the subject of a 'Friday Inquisition' on the Argus's website, where members of the public emailed in their questions about student housing and Councillor Meadows and representatives from both universities publically responded to the questions.

The panel has now concluded its public meetings and evidence gathering. A draft report and recommendations will be discussed at the ASCHOSC meeting on the 5th March.

Also on the 5th March an initial scoping report will be presented to the ASCHOSC on possible topics for a future ad hoc panel. Possible topics are:

- Housing adaptations
- Future funding of adult social care
- Dementia Strategy

The verbal update will be provided to the Commission on the outcome of the 5th March meeting.

Dignity at Work

Councillors Gill Mitchell (Chairman), Paul Elgood, Brian Pidgeon, Vicky Wakefield-Jarret.

At its meeting on the 8th December the OSC agreed 'That a 4-Member scrutiny panel be established to make recommendations regarding the Draft Dignity and Respect at Work Policy' to ensure early member input into the development of a Dignity at Work Strategy.

The panel had its first scoping meeting on the 24th February and has arranged a further scoping meeting prior to three further public meetings.

Reducing alcohol related harm to children and young people

Councillors Ann Norman (Chairman), Juliette McCaffery, Ben Duncan

The panel was established to make practical recommendations by examining the costs, social and economic outcomes and reasons for the increasing levels of alcohol related harm suffered by children and young people in Brighton and Hove.

It is also examining the impact of the Licensing Act 2003 on the availability to and consumption of alcohol by those aged under 18 in the city.

The Panel have had 4 meetings and gathered evidence from Sussex Police, Council Officers, the Primary Care Trust, NHS, Head Teacher, Trading Standards and Licensing and Licensed Retailers.

Further evidence is being sought from other local authorities and partnerships, parents forum and then to write the report and agree the recommendations with the relevant organisations.

Environmental Industries (Culture, Tourism and Enterprise OSC)

Councillors Bill Randall (Chairman), Melanie Davis, Steve Harmer-Strange.

The Scrutiny Panel has had two private scoping meetings at which they elected a Chairman and discussed at length the terms of reference, the potential outcomes and witnesses.

The formal title of the inquiry is "*Environmental Industries Enquiry – Capturing the potential and economic benefits for Brighton & Hove*"

The terms of reference are:

"The Panel will explore the growth potential of environmental industries in Brighton & Hove. It will consider the economic, environmental and employment benefits to the city and what actions should be prioritised by the Council and its key partners to support high growth potential existing businesses in the sector, diversifications of others into the sectors work, and attract inward investors."

The inquiry is very timely. The issue of the support and encouragement for environmental industries has been the subject of many announcements and initiatives by all political parties nationally. Within Brighton & Hove it is also a key area. One of our main corporate priorities is to: 'Protect the environment while growing the economy'. A number of potential witnesses have already been approached who are keen to be involved in the enquiry.

The dates for the public evidence sessions are:

12 March 2009 at 10am

31 March 2009 at 1pm

23 April 2009 at 10am

13 May 2009 at 10am

Dual Diagnosis of Mental Health and Substance Misuse

This Panel was initiated by the former Overview and Scrutiny Organisation Committee to investigate problems associated with people who have co-existing mental health and substance misuse issues. Dual Diagnosis is an important issue, as sufferers are amongst our most vulnerable and our most challenging citizens. More effective treatment of Dual Diagnosis will better the lives of everyone in the city, as it will impact upon chaotic and anti-social behaviour as well as improving things for sufferers themselves.

The Panel has taken evidence from officers of Housing Strategy and the Children's Trust, from NHS managers and clinicians, from the commissioners of city mental health and substance misuse services, from 'third sector' organisations such as the Women's Refuge and Oasis, from independent supported housing providers, and from people with a Dual Diagnosis, their families and carers.

Panel members have agreed a range of recommendations for improving city services for people with a Dual Diagnosis, and these recommendations are currently being shared with our partners across the city before being formally presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission.