

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Proposal to Discontinue BHCC Support for the Older People's Council (OPC)</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>9 February 2017</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance &amp; Law</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Giles Rossington</b>	<b>Tel: 29-5514</b>
	<b>Email:</b>	<b>Giles.rossington@brighton-hove.gov.uk</b>	
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 This report presents a proposal for the council to discontinue the provision of administrative and financial support for the Brighton & Hove Older People's Council (OPC), this in accordance with a staged process which will provide the OPC with the opportunity to investigate alternative sources of funding, if it wishes to do so.
- 1.2 As the OPC was originally established by a Policy & Resources Committee (P&R) decision (in March 2001), any final decision to discontinue support will need to be taken by Policy Resources & Growth Committee (PR&G).

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Committee agrees the proposal to discontinue BHCC support for the OPC from April 2018, in accordance with the staged process outlined in the report.

**3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Brighton & Hove Older People's Council (OPC) is a directly elected body which lobbies for the interests of older people in the city. The city council agreed to establish the OPC in 2001, basing it on a Danish model of elected Senior Citizens' Councils.
- 3.2 The OPC existed in shadow form until 2003 when the first citywide OPC election took place. OPC elections have subsequently taken place every four years (to coincide with local government elections).
- 3.3 When the OPC was established, P&R agreed that the council would provide administrative support, defray member expenses and cover election costs on an ongoing basis. These costs were then estimated at £23,000 p.a. This broke down into: £8000 admin support; £5000 member expenses, admin and meeting costs (member expenses for travel, venue hire, print & design cost for the annual

report and print costs for meeting papers); £10,000 election costs (averaged across the four year election cycle).

- 3.4 The OPC was initially supported by Adult Social Care (ASC) officers. In 2013 this responsibility was transferred to the council's Overview & Scrutiny Team (O&S). Accordingly, ASC permanently transferred £9K pa to the O&S team budget to cover some of the admin support and member expenses, with election costs assumed to be covered corporately by the elections team.
- 3.5 Going forward, there is an unfunded pressure of around £5K p.a. for OPC expenses. In addition, the four-yearly OPC elections need to be paid for. The cost here depends on how many, if any, of the nine city OPC wards are contested. Electoral Services estimates a cost of circa £40K if all wards were to be contested. This represents a financial pressure of up to £10K p.a. averaged across the electoral cycle. There is therefore a total unfunded pressure of up to £15K p.a. in addition to the cost of officer support.
- 3.6 When the OPC was initially created, the policy context was one of burgeoning interest in directly elected community representative groups. However, as far as Officers are aware, the Brighton & Hove OPC remains the only directly elected body representing older people's interests in the UK.
- 3.7 The OPC is therefore unusual in that no other body in the city is directly elected in the same way through Council run elections; and the OPC receives a level of direct corporate support that is not available to other similar representative groups.
- 3.8 It is therefore proposed that the council ceases providing the support it currently gives to the OPC by providing administrative support, defraying expenses and meeting costs and funding citywide elections. It is proposed that this will be achieved via a transitional process which will see funding cease by April 2018. The OPC would be free to continue operating, but would become entirely self-funding from that time in line with other community representative organisations operating in the city. This will bring the OPC in line with other similar organisations in the City.
- 3.9 **Transitional Arrangements:** it is proposed that transitional administrative support continues to be provided during 2017/18, giving OPC members time to review whether they wish to undertake routine administration tasks (e.g. arranging and minuting meetings) or to make alternative arrangements. It is also proposed that, in order to facilitate the move to a self-supporting model - the OPC will in addition be offered a one off £5K transitional payment for 2017/18 to cover in-year expenses. It is further proposed that the OPC have access to meeting facilities in Hove Town Hall during the one year transitional period where these do not clash with Council meetings.
- 3.9 These transitional arrangements are proposed in order to give the OPC the opportunity to seek other funding, including the yearly grants programme from the Council (subject to later budget-setting), although any such applications must be considered in accordance with the criteria applied to all applications. During this transitional period, the council's Communities team will support the

OPC with the usual grant funding service to assist them in accessing alternative sources of funding.

#### **4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

4.1 The council could:

- Continue to meet OPC costs going forward. However, this would entail an annual cost pressure of up to £5K p.a. in addition to election costs of up to £40K every four years. This will also result in officer support equivalent to approximately £8k being diverted from focusing on organisational priorities which will create real pressure on officers' time.
- Cease supporting the day-to-day running of the OPC but continue to fund citywide elections at a cost of up to £40K every four years. However, the OPC would be a local and national outlier in terms of its electoral status.
- Continue to support the day-to-day running of the OPC going forward but discontinue support for election costs. However, this would leave an unfunded pressure of up to £5K p.a. plus £8k officers' time diverted from other priorities.
- Cease to support all OPC activities and decline to provide any transitional support for the OPC to assist it in becoming self-supporting. However, this would risk the OPC failing to successfully move to a self-supporting model (assuming this is what OPC members would wish to attempt).

#### **5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

5.1 Members of the OPC including its Chair have been informed of these proposals. The OPC are against the proposed withdrawal of support in accordance with the transitional arrangements described here and have made representations to Group Leaders. However, for the reasons set out in this report – including the objective of bringing the funding arrangements into line with those which the Council has with other organisations in the area, it is recommended that that members agree the proposals together with the transitional arrangements which will give the OPC the time to explore sustainable long term arrangements..

#### **6. CONCLUSION**

6.1 It is proposed that the council ceases supporting the OPC from 01 April 2018, in the meantime providing transitional support in the form of administrative support as well as expenses (£5K for 17/18) so as to facilitate the OPC in becoming self-supporting after that date. This would address budget pressures and put the OPC on an equal footing with other city representative bodies.

#### **7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

##### Financial Implications:

7.1 The cost of supporting the Older People's Council (OPC) is currently between £0.004m and £0.005m per annum. This is unfunded, and is a pressure that needs to be found within existing resources. Additionally the council has committed to fund the OPC elections, which last time cost under £0.004m. However, if the commitment was retained, and if each ward was contested, this would be

expected to cost £0.040m every four years. This is also unfunded and would be a pressure on the Electoral Services budget.

*Officer consulted: Peter Francis*

*Date: 17.01.17*

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The decision in 2001 to provide support toward the cost of running the OPC and conducting its elections has been reviewed in light of the changes in circumstances outlined in this report. The Council is not under any legal obligation to make financial contribution to or otherwise provide ongoing support to the OPC and the transitional arrangements whereby it is proposed that funding will be withdrawn – this in accordance with a staged process which gives the OPC time to explore alternative arrangements and funding sources - discharge the Council's general duty to act fairly. As a result the proposal to withdraw financial support is lawful.

*Officer consulted: Victoria Simpson*

*Date: 11.01.17*

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 Should the OPC cease operating there would potentially be a detrimental impact on older people, as this is the group that the OPC lobbies for. However, this impact would be ameliorated should the OPC continue as a self-supporting organisation. Equally, council and other statutory sector providers have a range of links with voluntary and community sector organisations working with and representing older people across the city and these links remain unaffected, enabling a range of older people's voices to be heard. The current situation, where the OPC receives support that is not available to other representative bodies, could be seen as unfairly favouring one legally protected group over others.

An equalities impact assessment was undertaken and identified some issues which are set out in the appendix with proposed mitigating action.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 None identified.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.5 None identified.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Appendix 1 – Equalities Impact Assessment

