



MINUTES OF THE OLDER PEOPLE'S COUNCIL MEETING 10 .6.2025

Present: Mary Davies (chair) ,Stephen Lindley, Peter Huntbach, Jayne Stephens, Jerry Thomas, Claire Burchill, Maxine Thomas, Sue Bowes, Ty Galvin, Mona Mc Donnell, Angela Stretton, George Coombs, Malcolm Campbell, Tina Cox, Ali Mohammed, Trisha Rendel, cllr Theresa Mackey, Val Cane, Francesca Vickers, Lina Talbet, Bernadette Kent, Michael Creedy.

Apologies: Sara Fulford, Keith Jago, Davina De Laszlo, Marion Adler, Mo Marsh, Jackie Yeates, Sian Berry M.P, Peter Kyle M.P, Chris Ward, Alad Boyd, Julia Ingle, Joyce Gould, Maggie Stewart, Kenneth Norman, cllr Kerry Pickett, Doug Thompson, Jo Clarke, Valerie Mainstone, George Vaz, cllr Maureen Winder.

Introductions, Inclusive statement and Meeting expectations were facilitated by Mary Davies (chair).

1. Claire Burchill Speaker from the East of the city Community Development Team on their role of how they help to get things going for community groups in Brighton.

Claire outlined that she has worked for the East of the city's community development team along with colleagues who work across other areas of the city, for the past nineteen years and that the Community Development Team has been established for twenty five years to identify priority and needs as it was agreed there was a need for community voice. Claire gave detailed examples of the work involved covering diverse areas such as ;fundraising, managing community space, funding bids, understanding governance and supporting groups in their initial start ups. One example given was the need for a community voice in health promotion and in response to this need the East Health Forum was started two years ago lead by residents identifying service gaps and to assist in making improvements. The Community Development Team work with other groups such as Ageing Well and Claire gave examples of gardening groups that were helped in getting established. A question from an attendee concerned how they were funded and was answered that this comes from the council and that they help groups look for funding streams and grants and foundations and then community groups do their own funding bids.

There are forums in every part of the city covering: cancer, mental health, diabetes and loneliness. Claire said they have a huge amount of data and we are there to upskill ,signpost and support community groups. One of our OPC members who had come to one of the forums asked Claire to talk about the Health forum which she did outlining how they work in partnership with local G.P's and practitioners who do outreach work, Mind, the Carers centre, Healthy lifestyle team, community groups and trustees. Also energy companys like Best Go in supporting approaches in getting energy costs down .The meetings are open to anyone interested in health. Claire gave the example of piloting an open access drop in to see GP's which developed from problems in accessing GP appointments. The health hub at Robert Lodge which has been going for over six months now and hopefully if it is continued to be supported with funding will be able to keep going providing benefit advisors, a frailty Team, Mental health team and Mobility team.

Exemplifying how working in dialogue with what the community wants in how services are shaped, Claire provided examples of how this worked in practice with the example of the provision of ear syringing which came from asking the community what they wanted, the result proved a high demand for this service.

2. The second speaker was Sue B from Sussex Defend the NHS together with Cllr Ty Galvin speaking about a Peoples' plan for the hospital at Elm Grove.

It was firstly outlined that the NHS had announced the closure of the hospital before lockdown and the selling of the site for housing. Cllr Ty Galvin outlined the history of the hospital and how it had been gifted to the people of Brighton in 1865 and given to the NHS as a public asset in 1953 later becoming the property of the Trust. The peoples' plan as outlined would provide affordable housing, all fully costed which was explained in detail, with a health hub and mixed community space for activities. Cllr Ty Galvin explained in detail and exemplified the difficulty of progressing affordable housing in providing the example of Circus street where the promise of 400 affordable homes had resulted in the materialisation of only four. The next open meeting of this group being 24th June was introduced and explained. The main difficulty has been getting information out of the NHS and getting them in dialogue as there has been no other indication other than their selling to private development. Ali Mohammed from Age UK added that what is considered affordable housing is 80% of the market rate which led to some discussion concerning the opposition to building social housing and the need for a big campaign with agreement from attendees concluding that what had been gifted to the people of Brighton should benefit the people of Brighton. Questions were raised concerning if there was any legal document in 1953 when it was bequeathed to the NHS and the importance of researching into this. Peter Huntbach affirmed the councils commitment to social housing in expanding hidden homes, buying back properties lost for social housing.

3. Mary Davies (Chair) provides an update on Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Dementia care beds the loss of which means Dementia care is outsourced to Uckfield and Worthing with all the implications for visiting families having to travel out of their area to visit relatives. The chair outlined in the many letters written how she got nowhere pursuing this matter with HCR or with Age UK or Alzheimer society who do not deal with local issues but only national campaigns. The Argus were also contacted and showed some interest. The basis of the complaint being EIA's have not been done. There is a scheduled meeting with John Childs on the 4th of July with the chair and Sara Fulford joint secretary of the OPC attending. It is the intention of the OPC to continue to take the issue of EIA's forward.

4. The minutes of the last meeting were read and agreed which also included in it the giving of notice of resignation of the OPC treasurer Michael Creedy as from the AGM in October.

5. Feedback from representatives at the scrutiny meetings of the Council. Theresa M. mentioned that Mo Marsh was on the health scrutiny and reported that there was a new chair of Health cllr Wilkinson working on the next agenda. Mary D. on place and People commented on how well Sara Fulford had spoken at these. Theresa spoke of the new help desks at libraries and how they were additional. An attendee commented at Jubilee library it was very I.T specific with a lack of privacy for private conversations. Michael Creedy drew attendees attention to Age without limits events and the ageing well website to locate more information.

6. The chair gave some feedback on the campaigns OPC were running. The loss of dementia beds, with transport the distance between bus stops for example from the clock tower to Waitrose, and access to public toilets. There is a national campaign on toilets given so many public toilets have been lost in recent years – around 40%. The British toilet association want to make it a statutory duty to provide toilets. Mary D, commented that because there is no statutory duty it is an easy target for cuts when councils are pressed to save money.

Maxine Thomas from Age uk commented on food access services the demand for which had increased by 50% this year. Research has shown that new people are being placed in Brighton from other areas, with a 13% increase in vulnerable housing and for people just out of hospital it is now possible to give them a voucher to access emergency provisions.

7. Finances and Website it was outlined what funding was received through the Fairness Fund and the pressure of the deadline for receipts and how the OPC had made a purchase of an Owl to facilitate hybrid meetings which would help OPC to reach out to those unable to attend meetings. Michael Creedy (treasure) outlined what had been spent and what was left which was £2995.

8. AOB Mary Davis mentioned the next OPC meeting is the 22nd July and the AGM in October is part of the well being festival. Theresa M. mentioned she was trying to get someone to come from Silver voices. Peter Hunbatch commented on Health counts data which is produced every ten years in summary it is showing the worsening of health inequalities..