

Minutes from Brighton and Hove Older People's Council (OPC)

Meeting 18/03/2025

Present: Mary Davies (chair) , Michael Creedy (Treasurer), Angela Stretton (executive) , Doug Thomas (executive), Bernadette Kent (joint secretary), Val Cane (executive) , Ty Galvin (cllr), Kerry Picket (cllr), Jacqueline Yates (member), Peter Huntbach (senior housing), Malcolm Campbell, Charles Foley, Gus Watcham, George Coombs, James Verguson, Janice Verguson, Mrs Galvin, Eduardo Villela, Glenda Freeman, Philip Messent, Anthony Price, Shirley Ford, Mave McGaynor Lewis Smith. Joining the hybrid meeting on line included: Sara Fulford (joint secretary) Marian Adler (executive) Anthea Ballam (chair of inter-faith contact group) Jen Murray, Davina De Lazlo

Apologies included: Theresa McKay (executive) Kieth Jago (executive) Fran Vickers (member) Mo Marsh (executive) Jo Clark (Age uk.) Robert Brown, Ms Ali (Age Uk) Maxine Thomas, Jacob Allen (cllr)

Mary Davies (chair) welcomed new attendees and outlined the OPC ground rules and respect for diversity . Introductions were made and the speaker introduced.

1 Dan Wilkinson invited speaker from the Carers centre in Brighton speaking about the services the Carers centre provides. Dan outlined the history of the carers centre which had been running since 1988 as a peer support group and has expanded since then to have several projects running. He explained that its purpose is to support carers, and this can sometimes be for short periods, for example when someone is incapacitated temporarily by an accident or illness , or it can be for long and ongoing need for care. The carers centre functions as a source of information and advice and works in partnership with other groups. There is a carers hub-where the centre provides coffee mornings and peer support groups; the support is varied and can be by phone or in person. The carers centre also provides carers assessment -to assess the carers ability to provide the care needed.

Care in Sussex is organised in regions with West Sussex and East Sussex care and Dan comes from the carers centre providing care for the city of Brighton and Hove. Dan went on to outline in detail the projects running in Brighton and Hove beginning with the Young carers project for the 6- 16 age group, the young adults 18-25 years project, the adult carers group and the working carers group exemplifying the challenges carers in these groups face and the support the centre provides. He also gave information about the workers they have in hospitals to help prepare for coming home and the Project "Change ahead "supporting mental health related issues across all ages and the "End of Life" project - in the process of being re-named which offers support and respite care and also the Bereaved carers group.

There is a carers card which carers can get offering discounts and free access to leisure facilities in the Brighton and Hove area . My Health Matters is linked to the carers as well as providing keep-fit funding and opportunity for breaks.

The carers centre has a website which is in the process of being updated. Fact sheets, leaflets and digital support is provided at the carers centre which is also tied in with National carers charities. Peer group support has always been a central core in their work with regular coffee mornings, monthly book clubs, online meditation and yoga groups as well as Autism and Learning support groups.

Following the talk there was a lot of discussion and questions and answers coming from the lived experience of attendees many of whom had been or still were carers. Questions were raised about the governments P.I.P. cuts which would affect carers and what the funding sources were for carers. Dan answered that funding comes through the NHS, the council and also charitable organisations supporting peer group support through their donations. Under the new funding contracts carers will not be able to offer as much as they do now. Kerry Pickett (cllr) wanted to know if the carers operated as a drop in and was informed it was not a drop in centre, one needed to phone or contact them through carerscentre.org on line. TyGalvin (cllr) wanted to know if the council funding was for five years and was informed it operated on a four years plus two, which was explained. As attendees wanted to know about volunteering opportunities with the carers Dan explained he was the volunteer co-ordinator and to contact him and look at information provided on the website too. Michael Creedy (executive) wanted to know if the carers were familiar with gig-buddies, as older people can miss out on music events too. Questions and discussion was raised about how the carers could develop in the future and the overall demographic of carers. Dan mentioned that carers in Brighton reflect the diverse population in the city with one in seven people being carers. Their definition of a carer is if you provide care that the person could not live without. Many do not recognise that they have a caring role, especially when they are family members. Looking after the carers' own health is important.

As many attendees had personal experience of caring the discussion was well informed and important points raised such as Mary Davies (chair) on the legal status of being a carer and how being next of kin helps in this. Sara Fulford spoke about the difficulties of fighting ones way through the system and allowances at a point when vulnerable with your life turned upside down and the difficulty of getting much needed respite care which was echoed by many attendees. Dan explained the funding for respite is expensive – and is not part of their remit : It is the ethos of the carers centre to look after carers. There is respite for health and well-being for attending a doctor's appointment or a group but the carers allowance is one of the lowest payments given. Other agencies may provide respite.

A lot of questions and discussion centred on issues raised in the lived experience of attendees particularly with hospital discharge and how they were being directed to family or friends for support and Dan answered that currently the carers have four members of staff at hospitals but that is about to be cut. Angela Stretton (executive) raised the important and shocking question of what happens to those who have nobody to care for them? Due to time constraints Mary Davies (chair) had to bring this discussion to a close.

Many thanks were extended to Dan for his talk and for his work and to support carers. The carers centre is based in Isetta square. Information is on their website carerscentre.org.uk. Queries and referrals can also be made by phone on 01273 746222.

2 OPC's ongoing campaign on the provision of Dementia beds in Brighton and Hove Mary Davies(chair) confirmed the closing of Dementia beds at Mill View with residents needing to travel as far as Uckfield or Worthing with this declining access to dementia beds in Brighton and Hove happening at a time when the older population is in fact increasing. An Equality impact Assessment on age has been asked for and the Healthtrust has said this has been done and although Mary Davies (chair) has chased this up twice none has been forthcoming. Kieth Jago(executive) put in a freedom of information request. Apparently a screening tool was used which showed up three negative impacts so it is clear a proper quality Impact Assessment on Age has not been done as the consequences for older people, dementia patients and their carers have not been considered and been totally overshadowed by the screening tool highlighting a positive impact for mental health. The discussion centred on how to use the Quality Impact Assessment as a tool and it was suggested that the OPC could do its own Equality Impact Assessment. Kerry Pickett(cllr) raised the issue of who at the council is responsible for Impact Assessments as given different officers for housing and healthcare it is unclear if there is an officer for Impact Assessments. The chair suggested **as a point of action in advancing our campaign the mechanism of addressing questions to the Equalities department at the council** and also added a cautionary note that although the Equalities Act makes it a duty the only requirement of the council is to have a regard to it.

3The OPC campaign on keeping public toilets open: in responding to discussion on this Sara Fulford(joint secretary) reminded that the OPC approach had been in collaboration with other organisations such as Acorn. Marian Adler (member) commented on the disgusting condition of the toilets at the rotunda at Preston Park on the need for them to be usable and not just open. Kerry Pickett(cllr)reminded members that there is no statutory obligation on this which is why cash strapped councils find it easy to close toilets. As the Victorian ethos of public provision was referenced in the discussion which concluded with Malcolm Campbell(attendee) advocating on the need for public toilets to be a legal requirement exemplifying campaigns like change.org campaign for toilets to rectify the Victorians not making this a statutory obligation as the cultural milieu of that time made the need for such basic provision obvious and not requiring statutory mandate.

4 Feedback from Place and People scrutiny meetings:these were attended by executive members Sara Fulford, Val Cane , Angela Stretton and Mary Davies (chair) e.g with the budget meetings and the over 500 page document attending this being the focus of discussion. They commented that in discussion a lot of things were put forward and not accepted at the full budget meeting. Sara Fulford(joint secretary) commented on the onerous job of trying to read this document on line to track where the cuts in adult social care are buried. They questioned that this would have no impact on older people.

The closing of publicly run dementia beds and the de-commissioning of additional beds for dementia care for other use as deeply concerning. Five posts in home care services are being cut and the Public Health Budget is also being cut. On the difficulty of voicing concerns which were raised by attendees Kerry Pickett(cllr) responded by saying that Democratic services make it clear that at most meetings you should be able to have a deputation of between five to ten minutes to say what you want to say. As library hours are also to be cut with some subject to closure the discussion highlighted how libraries are a valued community resource- a place to go to, providing toilets- **and an EIA on libraries to profile who is using them was suggested.**

5 Updates on OPC campaigns on digital exclusion and parking noted that the twelve machines around the city with payment by card will be reviewed but it is unclear how it is to be reviewed. Concerning the ongoing campaign of the OPC for paper parking vouchers in shops Angela Stretton (executive) at place scrutiny received an affirmative acceptance in principle of voucher parking from Trevor Newton with the short- term introduction of it around Hove Park. Michael Creedy (executive) raised doubts about being listened to on this issue given the long term agenda to get rid of all non- digital options: after his attempting to get parking vouchers at the Town Hall as there was nobody to speak to. Angela Stretton(executive) reminded that during covid all offices to get parking vouchers were closed and have not been re-opened. Kerry Pickett(cllr) commented on the National policy of digitalization and staff not being replaced after covid. Ty Galvin(cllr) on pursuing voucher parking reminded that Sainsbury had said they would sell them in their shops if they were able to advertise on the back which would be a cost effective means of making voucher parking available to residents and he continues to pursue this. Mary Davies (chair) when attending Place scrutiny meetings had raised the importance of the need for face to face contact with Council services and has been informed that accessibility for Brighton and

6 AOB, Website and phone updates. Appreciation given by OPC members to Doug Thomas (executive) on the work on the website and posting of new pages . **A phone has now been purchased** and messages need to be put on it with dates of forthcoming meetings before it becomes fully operational. Michael Creedy (treasurer) gave the purchase cost of the phone as £426 with a monthly sim card cost of £6. The OPC funds stand at £4,961.68. Mary Davies(chair) explained to new attendees that the award given to OPC enabled it to have a phone. Val Cane(executive) said there was a taster day of things you can do at Moulscombe "Active for Ever" 26th March between 10 am- 1. Ty Galvin(cllr) spoke in detail of the Brighton General Hospital Campaign for renovation for 500 council eco-friendly homes. Bernadette Kent(joint secretary) mentioned the OPC demonstration attended by OPC members outside Hove Town Hall during the budget meeting. Thanks were extended to attendees and the meeting closed with a reminder that the next open meeting at Brighton Council building in Batholomew Square of the OPC is on **Tuesday April 29th 2pm-4p.m**