

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

OLDER PEOPLE'S COUNCIL

10.15am 21 JANUARY 2014

JUBILEE LIBRARY JUBILEE STREET BRIGHTON BN1 1GE. TEL: 01273 - 290800

MINUTES

Present: Mike Bojczuk (Chair), Jack Hazelgrove, Francis Tonks, Val Brown, John Eyles, Harry Steer and Colin Vincent

Co-opted Members: Penny Morley, Janet Wakeling and Sue Howley

Others Present: Councillor Geoffrey Bowden, Bea Gahagan (Age UK, Brighton & Hove)

PART ONE

41. WELCOMES AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair, Mike Bojczuk, welcomed everyone to the meeting. The theme of the meeting was housing and the discussions may contribute to the criteria for the Age Friendly City. It was agreed to take Procedural Business and discussion of the minutes of the last meeting at the end.

42. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

Taken at the end of the meeting. Apologies from Marion Couldery.

43. MINUTES

The discussion of the draft minutes was taken at the end of the meeting.

The following amendments were agreed:

Para 37.1 add apologies from Councillor Geoffrey Bowden;

Para 40.0 add information on the Planning Committee attended by Janet Wakeling (see below).

Para 40.3 amend to say that "Progress has been made with the Age Friendly focus group".

Para 40.6 amend to read ASCHC

Matters arising from the minutes:

Para 40.3 there are two seats on the roundabout at Seven Dials but none on the Rosewalk on the Level.

Para 40.5 – the safeguarding report will be brought to a later meeting.

Karen Amsden wanted to apologise because the final section of the OPC update was lost when the minutes from 17 December 2013 were put up on Modern.Gov. The missing section should have read as:

PM: Reported that a recent meeting with the Leader of the council had covered the draft budget, Age Friendly city and winter planning. Representation on the Transport Commission was still to be resolved. The OPC response on polling has been submitted.

JH: reported on the Preston Barracks project including community transport and social housing.

MC and MB: Suggested a wider OPC discussion/campaign on transport, e.g. 20mph. Could include making views known to council and the Argus.

EB (Age UK): Update on Aging Better in Jan 2014. Co-ordinated transport to medical appointments has been identified as a big issue. HS to remind CCG of the role of Bluebird and also volunteers. Need to map these services.

JW: Updated on the all-day planning meeting attended, including items on the City College development (Phases 1 &2) and the creation of a new shopping lane from North Street to Meeting House Lane.

MB: South East Forum on Ageing (SERFA) had been focussing on the White Paper on Ageing and Care Bill. AgeUK also identified a looming care crisis and is developing an advocacy service, to provide information on how to blog and contribute. Encouraging 2 OPC members per month to contribute to Grey Matters, please email Mike or Harry.

44. HOUSING AND OLDER PEOPLE

Councillor Bill Randall, Chair of Housing Committee

The city depends on older people in a lot of ways and the challenge is often to get younger people involved. Nationally there is an ageing population but in Brighton & Hove there is a lower than average number of people over 60 but a higher proportion who are over 80. In 30 years time, there will be further challenge when the vast numbers who are now 30 become 60.

The council has 855 sheltered flats and all but two of the schemes are self-contained. These two are older schemes where flats share bathroom facilities. One of these, Sanders Court will be upgraded this year. Evelyn Court in Portslade is a very nice scheme with an allotment and green space but it is a challenge to amend the facilities. The ideal would be to extend it to add extra facilities.

Maintaining independence for as long as possible is key and the Third Sector plays an important role. The challenge is that demand is rising whilst the budget is declining. The partnership with adult social care is improving and one example is the Brookmead scheme. This will be 45 Extra Care flats and will be the biggest and will be the biggest council housing scheme built in Brighton and Hove for many years and is supported by a £2.4 million grant from the Homes and Communities Agency. The scheme is the fruit of a housing partnership, the first, between housing and adult and social care who are sharing the rest of the capital cost. Adult and social care expects to save £300,000 a year by using this scheme rather than placing older people needing support in the private sector.

In the housing budget, there will be charges in the tower blocks for lift services (85p per week) and electricity (£1 per week). Housing Benefit will cover the charges for all but 1,400 of the 5,400 tenants affected. 70% of tenants are on benefits. The money will be used for maintenance and lift replacement. A lift replacement programme is under way. The new eco-lifts, some of which have been installed, have a very short pay-back time. In a different approach to housing older people, Birmingham has converted several tower blocks into sheltered housing. It has selected blocks in flat areas of the city, near bus routes, chemists, doctors and shops.

Brighton and Hove is one of a handful of local authorities that still has scheme-based management of its sheltered housing. Charges for this service have not been increased since 2003, and a rise of £2.21 a week is proposed in this year's budget, followed by a rise of £2.42 a week in each of the next two years. Of the 885 sheltered tenants, 812 will have these charges paid by Housing Benefit. Their position of the others will be assessed. Some of the may move into benefit because of the increase.

The subsidy system for housing has changed radically over the years and reduced enormously. This has meant that housing associations are borrowing more and charging more. Government guidance says the housing associations must charge 80% of the market rent. Rent for a two bedroom flat is around £800/month. Who will house the poor? There is a real problem coming with those on low incomes being unable to afford social housing. There is a smarter use of the HRA to support other departments. £145k is supporting a number of existing grants (for example, Hangleton & Knoll project, Crewe Club, Whitehawk Inn etc).

Following a question on tower blocks with only one lift, Cllr Randall agreed that it was a problem and the housing team and councillors give as much support as possible to tenants when there is a problem with the lift.

The issue of the increasing number of those aged 85+ was discussed and what extra provision there would be for those people.

Issues arising out of the visit to sheltered housing included how the council set their criteria, how to get all older people involved in activities with others, and design issues such as where to keep mobility scooters? Councillor Randall explained that the Chartered Institute of Housing had been conducting a review of sheltered housing and Peter Huntbach would be providing more information later in the meeting. There is some storage for mobile scooters but there are health and safety issues to address.

Following a question on why student housing is being built, Councillor Randall explained that financial institutions will invest in student housing and it will help to regenerate London Road.

Student housing is key to the sites on Circus Street Market and Preston Barracks. It also helps release family houses. Brighton & Hove's housing problem needs to be looked at with neighbouring authorities.

A question was asked about whether there has been any work done on what different types of housing are required for future years. Peter Huntbach, Older Persons Housing Manager, B&HCC said that was part of the review undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Housing.

There was a discussion about planning applications and the percentage of affordable housing – which has dropped over the years. Why does student accommodation have to be in the city centre? Student housing can have a large impact on an area.

The comment was made that the 'right-to-buy' scheme had a devastating effect on communities and still caused problems.

Geoff Raw, Executive Director of Environment, Development & Housing, B&HCC

The challenge for the housing team was to provide practical solutions to service users and afford politicians options wherever possible. The financial context is challenging with budget reductions over the next five years. Half of this comes from reductions in Government grants and the rest from rising cost pressures and demands. The council is thinking about creative and enterprising ways to address this budget challenge. Engaging local stakeholder groups and service users are central to this. There is a refresh of the Housing Strategy underway and the council is keen to make it more practical, clear and related to resources available to deliver on objectives.

The state of the economy in the city is an important backdrop and the health of the economy has an important bearing on levels of social need. The city has borne the recession well with comparatively low rates of unemployment. Two important economic drivers are the creative digital sector and the seafront economy. Housing teams were meeting with Health and Social Care to talk about commissioning and delivering together. The push from government is to reduce the rising costs of health and social care with an ageing population who are living longer and to look at more creative ways of reducing costs and better integrating services. They are looking to move away from long term residential care which is very expensive and move to more independence and people staying at home. The aim is to give better quality care to an aging population and manage the budget demands on services. If this doesn't happen, the adult social care budget will overwhelm all other budgets. What are the solutions – extra care, or more life time homes. Housing has been allocated £1m for regeneration and there is a regeneration board (Chaired by Cllr Randall) looking at what opportunities there are in council estates to rebuild or remodel.

What operational models of service work?

New forms of technology provide an opportunity. What technology will work for an aging population? There is a huge opportunity – how can we use the expertise in the city?

One of the challenges is the growing elderly population with more complex needs. Some people may have addiction issues, mental health problems, anti-social behaviour etc.

Following a question on 'decent' stock, 99% of council stock meets the decent homes criteria. The problem lies in the private sector and the city has a much larger percentage of private

sector housing than other areas. There is a stronger regulatory regime in place in some areas, for example on the Lewes Road. They are trying to both manage and work with landlords to ensure safety measures are in place. There are fewer grants available for improvements for private sector landlords and there is a question whether care agencies should put money into, for example, improving the homes of vulnerable people to reduce hospital admissions. There is also the issue of fuel poverty and making properties more energy efficient. B&H is working with West Sussex and Carillion, a private company, to improve energy efficiency by working with local contractors – this depends on meeting the ‘golden rule’ of energy savings paying the capital improvements.

Councillor Randall raised the issue of grants and how to bring empty homes into use. Many have not been taken up as they have to charge 80% of the market rent. The issue of previous unethical disreputable landlords was raised – whilst there are some not very good landlords, nothing as bad as years ago.

Bea Gahagan of Age UK, Brighton & Hove noted that there needs to be a balance between new technology and human contact. Carers need to be valued more highly. This was agreed.

Geoff Raw noted that they would welcome input from the OPC into the draft housing strategy which is managed by the strategic housing partnership. A public debate has been agreed. It was suggested that there was a workshop arranged with housing officers and the OPC in the next six months to ensure early input.

Peter Huntbach, Older Persons Housing Manager, B&HCC

The council is the largest provider in the city with 23 schemes of various sizes and ages. The smallest has 15 flats and the largest more than 100. There are no longer any shared toilets and lots of facilities have been upgraded. They are also piloting a scheme of sprinklers in Somerset Place in Kemp Town. There is a need to think about what stock is required in the future.

The sheltered housing schemes includes a site-based scheme manager – when many other areas stopped using scheme managers, B&HCC retained them. They are the basis of the service. There are challenges and opportunities. There is increasing diversity in the older population as life expectancy is longer. There is a greater age range of people than there used to be with different needs. Older people have more complex needs that in previous years but there is also better awareness of health impacts and what is preventable. For example, work with cancer screening may improve prevention and catch cancer earlier.

There is an opportunity for sheltered housing providers to look and see what they can do differently. There is the issue of whether the eligibility criteria is right – sometimes the younger people have the highest needs. Also loneliness is an issue they are more aware of. How can you create a sociable community? What is the role of the scheme manager in this? The Chartered Institute of Housing worked with the residents to see what they wanted going forward. Issues coming forward were around eligibility, upkeep of stock, diversity of the population in sheltered housing. It would be useful to get views from the OPC.

Following a question on how active ageing was encouraged, there are good links with the Third Sector and others. Patcham High School played ping-pong in one scheme, Age UK came in to show how to use the Wii in another. They are keen to work with other agencies. Older people

themselves are also an asset and can organise activities themselves. The challenge is to see things more creatively and holistically and look at well-being and happiness.

It was suggested that the OPC could input into the interim Chartered Institute of Housing report when it was available. OPC members who went on the visit to sheltered housing found it very helpful and informative and would like to continue the links made.

The Chair noted that he was working on a Google map for the website that will show where sheltered accommodation is.

The idea of sheltered housing as a social hub was discussed but there can be tensions between this idea and safety issues. People are now working more collaboratively and creatively than in previous years. Issue around co-ordination between different sheltered homes and how to work on more sociable communities was discussed. There is a need to look at each scheme and create a sociable community.

Following a question on community safety, the sheltered housing team work with East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and there is CCTV installed as well as a care providers' scheme.

The Chair thanked everyone for a most useful and informative session.

45. OPC WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE

Updates from members

SH was working on the March issue of Pensioner magazine. They had a grant to set up the website and have volunteer to bring in advertising. Everyone will be emailed to see who wants to be involved in a virtual focus group for the website. The Age Friendly Focus Group meeting was very good.

JE attended the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee and will report back on the Hove Station scheme at the next meeting. This scheme had now been approved as a neighbourhood scheme.

FT attended the visit and the Age Friendly meetings. The Community Safety Forum was being reorganised and the People's Day meeting was yet to happen. There were no new calls on the phone line. It was agreed that FT would monitor the phone line in February. An Indian restaurant has offered to host a benefit to raise money for the Pensioner.

CV attended a meeting of health professionals on the end of life care procedure and they are looking at new ways of running palliative care locally. CV attended the ASCHC who asked for OPC input. A mechanism was required so OPC input can be given in the future.

MB will discuss with Giles Rossington how to see what is on the horizon. MB has been updating the website. MB attended the SE England Forum on Ageing and a senior Lecturer in Design at the university has offered to come and talk about design and older people at a future meeting.

PM attended the Age Friendly City Forum and the sheltered housing visit.

HS was still waiting to hear if they had the grant for Grey Matters Productions. HS will bring a full report on this to the next meeting.

JW attended Planning Committee on 8 January where Enterprise Point and 16-18 Melbourne Street were agreed. One was a 5 storey building with 15 residential units with offices underneath. The other was for 58 flats. There would be 15 affordable housing units in total. No decisions have been made on landscape or appearance. JW went on the visit.

VB went on the visit.

MB suggested future areas included palliative care, Healthwatch, Age Friendly City and the Forward Plan.

46. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

The meeting concluded at 1.10pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

