



**Brighton & Hove  
City Council**

# **COUNCIL ADDENDUM**

**4.30PM, THURSDAY, 20 OCTOBER 2022**

**HOVE TOWN HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBER**



# ADDENDUM

ITEM		Page
35	<b>WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS.</b>	5 - 32

Written questions from councillors, together with the responses from the Leader of the Council and/or Chairs of the relevant committee



# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Council

## Agenda Item 35

**Subject:** Written questions from councillors.

**Date of meeting:** 20 October 2022

**Report of:** Executive Director for Governance, People & Resources

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**Ward(s) affected:** All

### For general release

The following questions have been received from Councillors and will be taken as read along with the written answer detailed below:

#### 1. Councillor Grimshaw

Removal of flooring and furniture in housing – The minutes of the Housing Committee held on 22 June 2022, presented to Housing Committee on 28 September 2022, under clause 10.4 read as follows:

“10.4 Councillor Evans was informed by the Assistant Director Housing Management that the removal of flooring was not done automatically when tenants move. Furniture recycling project was being expanded and flooring was being left in place now. The service has changed.”

With this in mind, can the Chair of Housing Committee please confirm the date that the furniture recycling project was expanded and flooring was being left in place as of?

Can the Chair of Housing please explain the process of how recycling is carried out? Does an officer attend properties and make judgements about what can be kept? If it is agreeable, for example, that flooring can be kept, who receives this information and how is this passed on to operatives who are tasked with clearance of properties?

What household items and items in the garden are considered as useful and beneficial to be kept in place? Can I have a list please? Is this list open to common sense situations where, for example, say a rotary washing line is left in a garden but it is not on a list, can an officer make the decision to keep it for the benefit of the new homeowner and to minimise waste? And if this decision is made who is responsible for ensuring it is kept and who has oversight?

Is the Chair of Housing aware of any properties where the recycling project guidelines have not been adhered to and why? Who checks up on properties to see if guidance has been followed and completed?

Is there a difference between recycling in council-tenanted local authority property and those being bought back under the Buy Back Scheme?

Does the Chair of Housing agree that items such as blinds, curtain poles, laminate flooring, vinyl and garden sheds and washing lines etc. are all items that could be considered to be of huge benefit to future tenants and that asking those selling back to BHCC under the Buy Back scheme to remove them is utterly wasteful and contributes to requests to the Brighton Fund where families frequently ask for help – especially with flooring?

**Reply from Councillor Gibson / Hugh-Jones, Joint Chair of the Housing Committee**

Thank you for your question.

We are mindful of the need to reduce waste, reuse items and recycle as much as is possible when we undertake works to Empty Homes and Buy Back properties. In both cases the Housing Estate Services will visit the property first to change locks. At this time they will see if any of the remaining furniture is of a safe reusable quality. This furniture will be removed, stored and made available to tenants who are in need, this includes incoming tenants.

We also ensure that existing fixtures and fittings are retained where they are of adequate quality, this includes fixed furniture, tenant installed kitchens and floor coverings. There are reasons floor covering may be removed, such as for substantial works. External features such as sheds will not be removed unless they are in poor condition or impact the amenity of the garden.

Following the initial visit, the property is reviewed by a Supervisor to identify any works that are required to ensure that it meets the Council Lettable Standard.

**2. Councillor Grimshaw**

Do Brighton & Hove City Council provide any supported housing accommodation for vulnerable people that qualify for 'Exempt Accommodation'? If so can I request an update of which of the providers and which accommodation this is and how many residents are housed with 'exempt accommodation' in the city and the financial impact?

**Reply from Councillor Gibson / Hugh-Jones, Joint Chair of the Housing Committee**

Exempt accommodation is accommodation that is exempt from the benefit cap or from the local housing allowance cap – so the full rent is eligible to be paid by the state where someone is in receipt of welfare benefits. In addition where a claimant is on Universal Credit but is living in exempt accommodation their rent is paid by Housing Benefit (Local Authority managed) and not via the housing element of Universal Credit. If there are other financial aspects of supported accommodation of which you would like to know the impact (e.g. learning disabilities, mental health), please clarify and we would be happy to provide more detail. 'Exempt accommodation' is

defined as being either: a resettlement place; or accommodation which is provided by a county council, housing association, registered charity or voluntary organisation where that body, or person acting on their behalf, provides the claimant with care, support or supervision.

Glenwood Lodge and New Steine Mews Hostel are the only BHCC in house provided exempt accommodation services. Currently there are 72 bedspaces in these two properties.

The majority of housing projects in city that are deemed exempt accommodation are not provided by BHCC but by other providers including Housing Associations and Trusts, Registered Providers and other organisations. BHCC commission some of these through Housing, and HASC, some are not commissioned but BHCC may place people with them from time to time and some are not commissioned or used by BHCC.

### **3. Councillor Grimshaw**

Please can the Chair of Housing explain why Councillors no longer receive two-weekly Homemove advert cycle updates? Can this situation be rectified and updates sent as previously?

Can the Chair of housing give an update on any issues with residents accessing Homemove - as social media feedback is showing there are a lot of accessibility issues with people being locked out and unable to bid for various reasons?

#### **Reply from Councillor Gibson / Hugh-Jones, Joint Chair of the Housing Committee**

Councillors have previously been advised they can access the fortnightly properties advertised on Homemove direct whenever they wish. A password is not required. Any councillors requiring help with this should contact the housing team for assistance.

There are no issues with residents accessing Homemove. Over the weekend of 8 October, the website was being updated, during which time, people couldn't access it. This was completed on 10 October and can again be accessed. This update did not disrupt a bidding cycle.

### **4. Councillor O'Quinn**

What has been the cost of the materials and human resources put in place to support Homewood School since it was placed in special measures in late 2021?

#### **Reply from Councillor Allbrooke, Chair of the Children, Young People & Skills Committee**

Homewood College provides education for some of our most disadvantaged children and the council has prioritised support for this cohort of children and young people. Several teams from across the Council have given significant

extra support from within existing resources to Homewood College since it went into special measures in December 2021. These include Finance, Human Resources, Access to Education, Safeguarding, Educational Psychology, School Improvement and Governor Support Teams. It is not possible to quantify the cost of the additional support that has been provided across each of these service areas.

The school received a £70K allocation of financial support for curriculum support and in recognition of the specific nature of the school's remit, profile of pupil need and geographical location.

The council has also directed additionally purchased school partnership adviser and officer time to support the school at an estimated total cost of £20K. Building and capital works at the school since the Ofsted inspection to address safeguarding issues have cost £135,000 which comes out of the educational capital expenditure grant

**5. Councillor O'Quinn**

Will the pruning of street tree side shoots, some of which are now mini-hedges, take place this Autumn and if not, why not?

**Reply from Councillor Davis / Heley, Joint Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

Thank you for your question.

Removal of basal growth around street trees is continuing into the Autumn and Winter. The programme will focus on streets whose trees are due to be inspected and pruned over the next six months, where necessary. City Parks will continue to address other areas across the city where this is posing a problem with ad hoc works programmed in alongside the other tree works which require action.

**6. Councillor O'Quinn**

A number of drains are blocked by weeds and soil in Goldsmid Ward and other areas of the city. In heavy rain these drains will be unable to divert water as they should and this will cause flooding. What is the planned schedule for dealing with this issue?

**Reply from Councillor Davis / Heley, Joint Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

Thank you for your question.

In the Goldsmid Ward there are five Street Cleansing Operatives who keep the area clean and undertake weeding as part of their daily tasks. If there are weeds growing around the drain or is litter that needs to be cleared that has been missed, please do report the location to the Street Cleansing Team for them to attend. If the weeds are growing from the drain due to silt blockage, this will need to be addressed by the Highways Department.



There are approximately 20,000 gully's in the City, these are cleaned on a cyclical schedule on a risk based approach, taking in to account historical silt levels, at six, twelve and eighteen monthly intervals.

The gully's in Goldsmid Ward are cleaned at twelve and eighteen monthly cycles, eighteen monthly in February this year and the twelve monthly in May, there were some jammed grids and some blocked by parked cars, we also have some issues with tree roots causing heaving in the channel.

We have not had any reports of flooding in Goldsmid Ward relating to weeds and soil in gully's.

We would be glad to hear where these gulleys are and we can send an ad-hoc gully emptying gang to deal with them.

## **7. Councillor Wilkinson**

Can the Co-Chairs of the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee explain why they have decided to limit the number of member-involved written questions at recent meetings and is this decision replicated in other council committees and council?

### **Reply from Councillor Davis / Heley, Joint Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

As members will know, ETS Committee is one of the busiest Committees of this Council. As Co-Chair, it is my aim to ensure that as much public engagement can be undertaken in the Committee as possible, whilst also allowing time to perform the key decision making role that the Committee has. In order to manage the volume of business, we have tried to balance the time spent on public and member engagement with the time spent on the consideration of the reports. My first ETS meeting as Chair lasted seven hours. As you know, most ETS meetings last in excess of four and a half hours, with roughly the first two hours being dedicated to member and public involvement. This is a significantly higher proportion of time spent on public and member engagement items than any other Committee of the Council. That is a reflection of the interest from our residents in the issues that we are responsible for, and we want to continue to encourage that high level of interest. However, we also have a responsibility as a Committee to make considered, lawful decisions on the many reports that come before us. To do that, we need to ensure adequate time is allowed to perform our duty and properly debate these reports. The decisions taken on these Committee reports are what leads to projects and priorities actually being delivered. Without those decisions, we are simply a 'talking shop' - and that is not what any of us are here for I am sure.

In terms of the management of member engagement at other Committees, the Council's Constitution is clear that Chairs have a wide discretion in relation to the conduct of their meetings. The volume and complexity of items coming forward to each meeting will vary and it would not therefore be appropriate to adopt a 'one size fits all' approach to these meetings. We need to be able to adjust our approach based on the volume of business so the meeting can be conducted and concluded within a reasonable timeframe. One way of

achieving this is to limit the amount of time spent in answering member questions in the Committee itself. Members have many other avenues open to them to seek information, for example, you are also able to access information directly through officers or through raising matters with us as Chairs and we will be happy to respond.

## **8. Councillor Wilkinson**

The national Green Party co-leader recently said that he would back Brighton and Hove's Green administration if it held a referendum to raise council tax by more than 3%.

Has the administration given any consideration to raising council tax by more than 3%?

### **Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council**

After more than a decade of Conservative government cuts, over £100m has been axed from Brighton & Hove's budget, which means we face stark choices about what we can do with the money we have. Unlike government departments, councils have to set a balanced budget each year, but this becomes harder and harder with less funding, year after year.

Successive governments have also failed on their promise to address the long-term funding of vulnerable adults, forcing the burden of taxation onto local Council taxpayers. The Local Government Association comments that the current Conservative plans will leave councils 'facing a funding blackhole.

In a media interview Adrian Ramsey, co-leader of the Green Party stated that it was a decision for councillors, not him, as to whether they have a council tax referendum. If local councillors find they need to increase council tax in order to pay for crucial services, then it's right they should put forward that proposal.

For ten years councils have had increases in council tax capped to 2%, except for an additional 1% allowed in 2019/20, and this year, councils have been permitted to increase council tax by an additional 1% to spend only on Adult Social Care. Three in four councils do this.

The effective running of a city involves making difficult decisions. As we await the Chancellor's Fiscal Plan at the end of October it is important that we keep sensible options on the table, however I understand that an excessive increase in council tax would come at a time when the disastrous Conservative mini-budget is really hurting residents in the pocket, whether that's their rent or mortgage increasing or the price of goods mushrooming. Which is why, at this moment, we will not be seeking to increase council tax beyond the maximum permitted by government despite the fact that inflation is running at over 10%.

We are doing all we can to help those on low incomes and, despite government cuts, have increased the discount on council tax for residents

on the lowest incomes. We continue to provide hardship funds, welfare advice and increased funding for emergency white goods such as fridges.

**9. Councillor Wilkinson**

The cost-of-living pressures currently facing councils are immense with many facing considerable challenges in sustaining essential services because of the rising costs of energy and other inflationary pressures. Many of these, for example libraries, leisure centres and community hubs-are the very services that people depend on to stay healthy and connected, and to access advice and support.

Will the Leader of the Council confirm that there will be no cuts to the city's library services, including to the splendid renaissance style Carnegie Hove library?

**Reply from Councillor Osborne / Powell, Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee**

You will be aware that in the report to July Policy & Resources Committee, estimates of the costs, demands and resources for next financial year were provided based on the information available, including making some assumptions around government funding support for which we still have no information. This indicated potential budget shortfalls (or gaps) of £13million in the best case, to £21million at the midpoint, up to £31million in a worst-case scenario.

Officers were instructed by Policy & Resources Committee to develop savings proposals to address the projected budget shortfalls and were tasked with developing minimum proposals of £13million together with further proposals to reach a midpoint shortfall of £21million. This process is and proposals will be brought forward through both the Draft Budget and Final Budget at December and February Policy & Resources Committee and Budget Council respectively.

Without additional government grant support and/or flexibility provided to councils to consider higher council tax increases, the budget shortfall is likely to be at the midpoint or higher. This will mean some very difficult choices needing to be made and in such a scenario the council will need to prioritise statutory and critical services and consider which services it can no longer afford to run itself. After 12 years of Conservative austerity there are little non statutory services to cut. I am proud that we have supported our libraries throughout this period, and I will be doing everything I can to protect this valuable service as far as possible and which will, of course, be a decision for all councillors at Budget Council.

**10. Councillor Wilkinson**

In light of the cost of living crisis, what plans does the Council have to (a) support residents to access help with energy bills and (b) to help the extremely large number of residents who very likely will not be able to afford to heat their

homes, in particular how vulnerable residents will be supported and whether 'warm banks' in Council-owned buildings are being planned?

### **Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council**

Information in relation to your question is set out in the report provided to Policy & Resources Committee on 6 October 2022 and which is also on the agenda for this Council meeting.

It sets out that we are looking at the feasibility of utilising council-owned buildings as warm spaces and are working with the Community & Voluntary Sector to determine what they may be able to offer. This work is now in progress. Councillors who wish to support our residents should review this report at the earliest possible opportunity.

We have also set up website pages offering help with fuel bills and signposting people to financial and energy advice and support .. Please see '**Help if you're worried about money**' <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/household-support-fund>

At the Policy & Resources Committee, in the same report, the committee also approved an allocation from the Household Support Fund to further improve information on the website and develop a communication and awareness campaign, including a leaflet to all households in the city, to provide further awareness of financial support and advice available from the council and its partners, including support for energy bills and energy saving advice.

### **11. Councillor Wilkinson**

Will the Leader of the Council explain what help is being considered by the council for people who find themselves struggling with the rising cost of living but are not in groups previously classed as vulnerable?

### **Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council**

I fully appreciate that there are a lot of people who are just outside of any entitlement to welfare benefits who are also struggling with the cost of living.

For this reason we have extended the support provided by the Council Tax Reduction scheme to provide some support to those who may be just outside of the benefit system and have invested a further £360,000 in the scheme to underpin this.

The allocation of the third tranche of the Household Support Fund, approved by the Policy & Resources Committee on 6 October, also includes extended provision for those 'Just About Managing', but not in receipt of benefits, by providing a further £40,000 to support our Local Lift-Up scheme in partnership with MoneyAdvicePlus which provides both financial capability advice and grants.

We are also working in partnership with Citizens Advice and the Brighton & Hove Food Partnership to promote the Cost of Living Charity which has now raised well over £43,000. We have set aside a small amount of money from

the third tranche of the Household Support Fund to further promote this charity via a household leaflet drop and other communication and media campaigns.

At the 6 October Policy & Resources Committee, the committee approved an allocation from the Household Support Fund to further improve information on our website and develop a communication and awareness campaign, including delivery of the leaflet to all households in the city, to provide further awareness of financial support and advice available from the council and its third sector partners regarding managing finances, support for energy bills, and advice on energy saving.

We have also led by example in the city regarding the pay of our lowest paid staff and have now implemented an improved pay offer for those on the lowest grades to provide additional help. This will abolish the lowest pay scales and offers a package benefitting 3,800 staff. We would urge all employers across the city to sign up to the Real Living Wage as a minimum or, like the council, go a step further to help those on lower pay.

We will of course also be lobbying government to provide additional support to help people through the cost of living crisis and have set out our lobbying strategy in the cost of living report considered and approved by Policy & Resources Committee on 6 October and on the agenda for this Council meeting.

## **12. Councillor Wilkinson**

Will the Leader of the Council outline what steps the administration is taking to support disabled people who are disproportionately affected by the rising cost of living?

### **Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council**

Information in relation to your question is set out in the report provided to Policy & Resources Committee on 6 October 2022 and which is also on the agenda for this Council meeting.

The Equality Impact Assessment provided as an appendix to the cost of living report clearly recognises the additional impacts on disabled people. This is reflected in the approach to referrals to all hardship funds where disability will be a key consideration for prioritising the allocation of funds and providing straightforward referrals to support and advice through our own Community Hub and our third sector partners.

The allocations from the third tranche of the Household Support Fund include significant additional funds for distribution via our Local Discretionary Social Fund, as well as through Community Organisations and through other schemes such as Warmth for Well-being. The council also has existing hardship funds provided from its core budget.

### **13. Councillor Wilkinson**

Is the council considering grant funding to organisations working with those affected by the cost-of-living crisis, such as food services, money and debt advice organisations, networks for older people and vulnerable adults and those working with families in need?

#### **Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council**

Information in relation to your question is set out in the report provided to Policy & Resources Committee on 6 October 2022 and which is also on the agenda for this Council meeting.

The allocation of funds from the third tranche of the Household Support Fund from October will continue the support for emergency food partners, continue support for money and debt advice, including cases linked to mental health issues, and will provide extended funding for a range of Community Organisations as did the earlier April to September Household Support Fund. The full details of allocations of the £2.140 million fund are set out in the cost of living report to 6 October Policy & Resources Committee.

The council also continues its support for third sector advice agencies including £450,000 to support our money advice partners who are a key point of referral including for the local Lift-up scheme for those struggling but not on benefits. The council has also very recently set up an extra emergency food fund of £30,000 available to support vulnerable people most at risk of food insecurity.

### **14. Councillor Grimshaw**

Procurement – At At P&R on the 29th July 2022, the recommendation from the cross party working group looking to procurement recommended that any future procurement that affects people with protected characteristics and will have impact politically on the city should involve councillors. Also Community Wealth Building must be taken into account.

Has this taken place with the procurement of the old brewery Portslade? Why have third sector organisations in the city lost contracts to a charity from the north of England?

#### **Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council**

The procurement of Mental Health Supported Accommodation in Portslade is a joint procurement with NHS East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group with the city council's contribution being significantly smaller than that of the NHS. To ensure full member oversight, the procurement process and approach was considered by the member Procurement Advisory Board on 19 April 2021 which approved the approach and evaluation criteria, including a 15% Social Value weighting.

The report was then considered by the members of the council's Adult Social Care & Public Health Sub-Committee who also approved the procurement process and approach and delegated authority to the council's Executive Director of Health & Adult Social Care to conclude the procurement on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council in partnership with the NHS.

There were 4 lots, two of which have been awarded to local organisations and two to national charitable providers, both of whom have also provided services within the city and are currently recruiting locally for roles to support delivery of the contract.

## 15. Councillor Fishleigh

How much Council Tax was billed for 2022/23 and to how many homes in the marina, Roedean, Ovingdean, Rottingdean and West Saltdean? Please would you break out the info by area.

### Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council

The data held by the council is held at Ward level and all of these areas come under the Rottingdean Coastal ward. Unfortunately, splitting information below this would require manually mapping every street to the relevant area. However, the information below is based on a high level analysis of the areas and should provide a broad comparison for illustrative purposes.

<b>Rottingdean Coastal Ward</b>	<b>Households</b>	<b>2022 Council Tax Charge</b>
OVINGDEAN	488	1,185,258.52
ROEDEAN	320	731,981.56
MARINA	1,040	2,079,269.13
ROTTINGDEAN	1,561	3,252,720.47
SALTDEAN	2,759	4,957,396.74
ROTTINGDEAN COASTAL (OTHER)	1,202	2,072,048.75
<b>TOTAL ROTTINGDEAN COASTAL</b>	<b>7,370</b>	<b>£14,278,675.17</b>

More information on Council Tax can be found on the council's web site:

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-budget/cost-our-services-2022-2023>

This web page shows that it costs £842.1m in the current year to provide all services, or approximately £2.3m per day. It also shows how this is funded by government grants, rents, fees & charges, investment income and taxation. With regard to Council Tax it can be seen that this funds approximately 19%, or less than £1 in every £5, of the cost of services.

## **16. Councillor Bell**

### **Twin Victoria monuments**

There is concern for current state of the city's heritage in the Old Steine Gardens and Victoria Gardens precinct and a strong sense among residents and their associations that this council has stopped caring for our heritage.

Under this Council, the City's twin Victoria monuments have been allowed to enter into disrepair and veterans have reported that the Old Steine War Memorial has not been cleaned ahead of important commemorations on several occasions.

The Twin Victoria monuments include the Victoria Fountain and the Queen Victoria Statue. The Victoria Fountain dates back to 1846 and the Victoria statue to 1897. The Fountain was last restored between 1990 and 1995, when it was reopened by Prince Charles on his visit to the City. This is recorded in a plaque at the base of the Victoria Fountain.

The Victoria Fountain (a grade II listed structure) was last switched off by the Council in 2019 at the end of the summer season. It was not switched back on because it was found to be listing and tilting. This situation was not helped when the Council allowed a giant ferris wheel and other heavy fairground equipment to be stationed next to the fountain during last year's Brighton Christmas Festival. After the equipment was removed a sinkhole and several depressions appeared in the surface of the fragile Old Steine Gardens, which had been turned into a muddy quagmire. It seems there was little thought for the Victoria Fountain which was known by the council to be tilting and in need of repairs. This caused public outcry from the Old Steine Community Association.

In the 2022-3 City Budget, £250,000 was secured to fix the Victoria Fountain. A timeline was set out by the Council in its February briefing for undertaking this work. It was stated that between June and November the following would be undertaken:

Contract mobilisation, site set up for works, hoardings erected, crane moved in. Fountain to be dismantled in specific order for repair by specialist sub-contractor. Electrical and water repairs to be carried out.

Fountain to be re-assembled in specific order.

The plan was for the site to made good in December.

It would appear the council is behind in this repair schedule as there are currently no signs of any hoardings at the site and the Fountain still sits covered in weeds and graffiti, awaiting repairs.

Further up Valley Gardens, the Victoria Statue has also fallen into disrepair and there have been a number of reports in the press recently following the arm of the statue falling off. There has been no explanation from the Council as to why this occurred.



Monuments such as the Victoria Fountain and Statue are highly valued by local residents and visitors to the city alike and a source of city pride. For most local authorities, such wonderful heritage assets would be looked after and be centrepieces of public parks.

It is a great shame that the Council is not maintaining or looking after its heritage. Under this Council we have seen an the city's historic lamps put up for sale on facebook marketplace and Madeira Terraces fall further into delapidation.

The Conservatives want to see a city that respects its heritage. My belief is, if you don't respect the past, then you have no investment in the future.

Can the Chair please outline:

- a) What is the current status of the budgeted work to repair Victoria Fountain?
- b) What was the cause of the damage to Victoria statue? Has CCTV been reviewed to determine what caused the damage?
- c) What is the current status of the work to repair Victoria Statue?

**Reply from Councillor Osborne / Powell, Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee**

Thank you for the questions on the Victoria Fountain, Old Steine Gardens and the Queen Victoria Statue in the Victoria Gardens precinct which have with separate update responses

The council is proud of its unique heritage assets across the city and these two are fine representatives in this area. Both have current plans to care and maintain them, bringing them back into good condition.

For clarification the Old Steine war memorial was cleaned and repaired early September this year. All war memorials will be cleaned and prepared ahead of the remembrance commemorations in November as is done annually.

**Victoria Fountain**

The Victoria Fountain, Old Steine is temporarily propped and has been made safe following the specialist local civil and structural engineers, Hemsley Orrell Partnership (HOP)'s condition report that identified structural problems in early 2020. HOP were commissioned for further in-depth surveys of the structure in 2021 following delays in carrying out these surveys during the pandemic lockdowns and to specify the repair works for all the specialisms associated with the project. HOP have been appointed to carry out the major refurbishment and repairs required to renovate the Victoria Fountain which are now programmed to start in 2023 following unsuccessful attempts at tendering the contract. It is part of HOP's brief to

assess the ground conditions to ensure safe working conditions to include the crane that will be needed for the Fountain refurbishment project.

Tendering difficulties have been experienced with the project against the background of nationally spiralling construction costs and lack of construction specialisms and skills. We have had two unsuccessful tendering attempts; both were via the Council's existing frameworks agreements and a specific list of contractors recommended by the external structural consultant. A third tendering exercise agreed with Corporate Procurement, has completed and two tender returns have been received which are currently being analysed. A budget has been identified for the project and the works and costs are being evaluated as part of the tender analysis. The intention is to appoint the successful contractor in early November aiming for a start on site mid-December, and a completion of the refurbishment project by the end of March. However, this will be dependent on the confirmation of the costs and funding, with the timeline being dependent on weather conditions and the volume on 'unknowns' as until we crane the upper parts of the structure out, we will not know the full extent of the condition and deterioration of the cast iron structure and the mechanical services.

The Council also commissioned engineering company HOP to investigate the appearance of the sink hole at the Old Steine Gardens following the removal of the Christmas market and funfair. A report to the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee in November will include the report findings and explain subsurface voids or anomalies, sometimes referred to as 'swallow' or 'sink' holes. A combination of historical evidence, subsurface surveying and visual assessment can establish the likelihood, or future risk, of further such voids occurring.

The structural engineer also assessed the Victoria Fountain and verified that the issue here is with the superstructure, corroding bolts and services above ground, which are not related to the site geology.

#### Queen Victoria Statue

The damage to the Statue was reported on the 21<sup>st</sup> September and having liaised with the Royal Pavilion Trust the cause is unknown. The parts are in safe storage and we have received a specialist stone contractors report and quote to carry out the repair, rake out the joints and clean the statue and plinth. We have appointed the contractor to do the work which is to start on the 24<sup>th</sup> October.

## 17. Councillor Nemeth

### Public Toilets

In its briefing on 6<sup>th</sup> October the Council announced that it would be closing 10 of the City's public toilets over the course of the winter season, which the Council defines as the period between 1 October 2022 and Good Friday (7 April 2023). The reason given was 'the measures are needed to effectively manage the public toilet budget'.

These 10 public toilets that the council is closing for the next 6 months are listed as:

- Blaker's Park
- Easthill Park
- Queen's Park
- Rottingdean Recreation Ground
- Royal Pavilion Gardens
- Stanmer Village
- The Level
- Vale Park
- West Pier Arches
- Wild Park

In addition to these 10 closures, the Council has stated that a further 3 public toilets will also close while awaiting refurbishment (King's Esplanade in Hove, Saltdean Undercliff and Station Road in Portslade).

This means that 13 out of the city's 31 public toilet blocks (over 40% of the City's public toilet facilities) will be closed to the public over the next 6 months.

This is unacceptable and has not been properly explained by the Council. Other Councils are keeping their public toilets open and in good condition all year round. Brighton & Hove City Council is classified as a high taxing local authority and charges some of the highest council tax rates in the country. Residents should be receiving a better service for their high council tax contributions.

This follows the summer when there have been recurring stories in the local newspaper of the poor state of the public conveniences

Will the Chair:

- a) Provide a further explanation as to why Brighton & Hove City Council is closing 40% of its public toilets over the next 6 months;
- b) Advise if any other measures will be put in place to compensate for the closures; and

- c) Outline which public toilets are due to be upgraded over the next 12 months and whether this includes the notorious Pavilion Gardens toilets?

**Reply from Councillor Davis / Heley, Joint Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

Thank you for your question.

For clarity, the council is currently responsible for 36 toilet sites across the city.

Four are usually closed in winter months.

Two are closed for refurbishment.

A further 11 have been closed.

19 sites are currently open – just over 50% of the portfolio. Or, 64% if you exclude the ones that are normally closed at this time of year.

In response to your specific questions:

**Question A**

As a result of twelve years of Conservative austerity many local authorities have had to make difficult decisions to balance their budgets. The number of public lavatories that local authorities have funded and maintained fell from 3,154 in 2015/16 to 2,556 in 2020/21 – a drop of 19% across the past six years, which comes on top of reductions in previous years. We understand the impact closing toilets can have on our city and we have made significant efforts to keep them open. However as stated in the Member Briefing circulated on 6 October, the additional closures are due to substantial cost increases in energy, consumables and maintenance caused by inflation.

Staffing costs have also increased due to the service redesign as this led to increased pay and improved terms and conditions for all the staff who transferred into the council from a private business.

31% (11 sites) have been closed to manage the impact of this cost increase, which has created significant pressure within the public toilet budget.

The council's financial position is currently forecasting an overspend of more than £13million.

The decision to close the toilets has been made to help reduce this overspend.

**Question B**

Options are being explored as to whether third parties can take on the cleaning and maintenance of some sites, whilst the longer-term plan for public toilets is being developed and the council's financial position improves.

**Question C**

As has been previously reported, Daltons, Kings Esplanade, Saltdean Undercliff, Station Road (Portslade) and Park Road (Rottingdean) will be refurbished over the next 12 months.

Phase 2 of the refurbishment programme is under discussion. This includes which sites will be refurbished and whether the work should be brought

forward. If it is, it will mean that the chosen sites are likely to be closed during higher footfall months. Budget is not available to provide portaloos in their stead.

The Royal Pavilion Garden toilets are unlikely to be refurbished in Phase 2. There are very high levels of anti-social behaviour and drug use in the toilets which can make it unsafe at times for members of the public and our staff. These problems also make it much harder to maintain and keep the toilets clean. The site has been reviewed alongside a Public Conveniences Problem Reduction Guide produced by Hertfordshire Constabulary. This document highlights the best crime prevention practice in toilet design, such as ensuring the entrance is visible and in areas of high passing footfall. Using this guide, there are concerns about whether the location of the building is suitable for a public toilet. Discussions have also taken place with the council's Head of Architecture & Design and Community Safety Teams, as well as Sussex Police, to identify options to reduce to the risk to the site, staff and members of the public and the options are limited.

Therefore, before the money is spent on refurbishing the facility as-is, it is now preferable to close these toilets while works continues to resolve the risks of drug use and anti-social behaviour in the area and also reconsider the design and possibly the location of this toilet facility, to make it safe for the public and staff.

In the meantime, there are toilets that the public can use in the Jubilee Library along the road or a bit further away in Churchill Square.

## **18. Councillor Meadows**

Carden park in Hollingbury has an excellent new playground, while Mackie Park's new playground, close to three schools, has had less money spent on it and has been disappointing to many parents and children. When will the new consultation for Mackie park be held? How much will be spent on the upgrade? Can we be assured the equipment will be for older children? And when will Vale Avenue park be upgraded?

### **Reply from Councillor Davis / Heley, Joint Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

Thank you for your question.

Ward Councillors have been advised that a public consultation will be published regarding Vale Park and Mackie Park in October. It is in the final stages of being checked.

Once residents have expressed their views on the future of Vale Park and the potential improvements to Mackie Park playground, officers will advise Councillors and the public of the desired outcome.

The budget for Vale Park or the Mackie Park extension is £45,000. The budget available for each playground refurbishment is based on Section 106 contributions for the particular area.

If extension works are completed at Mackie, they will be for older children. Work is scheduled for financial year 2023/24, once an outcome has been chosen.

## 19. Councillor Lewry

### City Clean breakdowns

It has now been one year since the Brighton & Hove bin strikes that took place from 5-19 October 2021 and there are still major problems with the services that residents are receiving.

One issue we are seeing lately in Hangleton is the regular break-downs of city clean bin lorries midway through their routes. After these breakdowns, the areas of the round not completed are never returned to by other vehicles and residents are left with overflowing bins for the week.

Other excuses given to residents so far include that the council forgot to charge the city clean vehicle fully or that the weather was becoming too hot.

I am aware of several areas that have been affected by problems up to 9 times this year. Some examples of the problems with the service include:

- **Meads Avenue** - 3 missed bin collections, with overflowing rubbish and lots of flies during the summer.
- **Lark Hill, Park Rise and High Park Avenue** - 9 missed collections so far this year. With nothing being collected until the usual day the week after the problem or breakdown, residents are left in the lurch. They have had enough and want answers.
- **The Community bins at Harmsworth Crescent** - These were overflowing on the day of the Queen's funeral when the community centre was showing the funeral in its entirety for residents to sit with others so not to be alone and also for residents to enjoy some complimentary tea and homemade cakes. Contents of the overflowing bins were strewn all over the ground with rats, seagulls and foxes having a field day. Residents had to clear the site filling five black bags before the event started.

Can the Chair advise:

- a. How many city clean mid-round breakdowns have been recorded in the past twelve months since the bin strikes concluded?
- b. Is there is a problem with the road worthiness of the city clean fleet that services the Hangleton area?
- c. Can a policy be put in place whereby rounds impacted by breakdowns or other issues such as 'hot weather' or 'failure to charge

vehicles beforehand' are fully completed by other vehicles when this occurs?

**Reply from Councillor Davis / Heley, Joint Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

The Cityclean fleet is well maintained. Although there is not high mileage, the vehicles are subject to continuous stop/start, hills, and continuous moving parts particularly on our recycling vehicles and communal refuse vehicles. This impacts the amount of maintenance and repairs needed.

Details of vehicle breakdowns are available, though Cityclean would need to determine the vehicles in question to provide specific information.

The side-loaders used for communal refuse bins, for example, run at 92% capacity over the year.

It is correct that there have been issues with charging the electric vehicles. This is now resolved.

Following the industrial action, the Council invested in five new recycling vehicles to replace the oldest and least reliable. Another new electric communal vehicle is arriving in February 2023, with three more to follow. There is a Fleet Replacement Programme that replaces diesel with electric over the next ten years.

The working practices and local agreements at Cityclean mean that management are not able to redirect crews to collect refuse or recycling that is not on their round. Management is currently in dialogue with the trade union for crews to pick up their own missed work when there is a vehicle breakdown or another issue impacting service delivery, where there is capacity to do so.

**20. Councillor Bagaeen**

**Gateway signage projects**

Projects to install large gateway signage and artwork at several key entry points across the city to welcome tourists and provide a sense of place for locals as well were agreed to at the City Budget in 2021-2.

Funding for these projects was secured by the Conservative Group as part of a package of proposals aimed at boosting the City's tourism industry and restoring civic pride post-pandemic.

The proposals budgeted and agreed to included the following:

- a) New signage installations were agreed for the City's three main gateway train stations at Brighton, Hove and Portslade, the entry points for many visitors

- b) Additional signage and an iconic piece of welcoming artwork was proposed for the Patcham Roundabout for those arriving in the City by car.
- c) A second set of signage for the seafront, with iconic 'Brighton' and 'Hove' signs - similar to those in other cities around the world that lend themselves to social media and go onto promote the City as a destination - set to be commissioned

All these measures were designed to help attract overnight visitors, with more to do, rather than just day visitors to the city, with a flow on boost to the city's £886m tourism sector, which is such a big part of the City's overall economy. We also hope this gateway signage will help to lift city pride.

In the last update received (December 2021) the Council advised that planning and commissioning phases had begun and that a long list of artists was being developed in partnership with Brighton's Centre for Contemporary Art for which is part of the University of Brighton. A project manager was to be appointed to work on the site negotiation and development of artworks. The artists' brief had been expanded to explore ideas of welcome through different artforms such as sculpture, painting and installations.

Can the Chair please provide an update to all Councillors on the status of the above Gateway signage projects as it has been a significant amount of time since the last time Councillors were updated on this matter.

**Reply from Councillor Osborne / Powell, Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee**

Officers investigated the potential to install large gateway signage and artwork at several key entry points in the City's including three main gateway train stations at Brighton, Hove and Portslade.

At Brighton Station a location was established for the installation but despite lengthy negotiation, Network Rail did not give permission to proceed. At Hove Station, the Network Rail were not able to offer permission in the station itself for an installation and at Portslade Station the budget provided is too small to commission something significant. Options are being explored.

Investigatory work was undertaken regarding the potential to install an iconic piece of welcoming artwork at the Patcham Roundabout. However, the proposed installation raised concerns that it would create increased risk implications for road safety. An alternative proposal was explored to remove the flower bed that is positioned adjacent to the roundabout, but this was rejected by Ward Councillors in favour of retention of the flower beds. Patcham Roundabout has been identified by City Parks for a new planting scheme.

With regards to the commissioning of a second set of signage for the seafront, with iconic 'Brighton' and 'Hove' signs, funds were not identified for



this in the original budget amendment. Officers are currently looking at further options for welcoming artwork and signage and will report back in due course

**21. Councillor McNair**

**Patcham & Hollingbury dog poo bins**

Many of the dog poo bins around Patcham & Hollingbury ward, for example at Greenfield Crescent, have suddenly been removed by the Council without warning.

As a result of these removals the remaining dog poo bins in the ward are overflowing and other areas are a mess, with examples of dog poo bins being left on residents' walls. Places where bins are overflowing include: Rotherfield Crescent, Keymer Road, Chelwood Close (2); Horsdean Recreation Ground (2); Wilmington Way and Carden Park.

The dog poo bins still there also look in poor condition. Patcham and Hollingbury has many dog walkers so we desperately need new bins to make it easier for the waste to be disposed of. The vast majority of dog walkers take dog poo home but bins should be provided.

There are hardly any bins near prime dog walking sites such as the nature reserve at the top of Ladies Mile where they are really needed.

Can the Chair please advise:

- a) How many dog poo bins have been removed from the Patcham & Hollingbury ward this year?
- b) Why have they been removed without being replaced?
- c) Will the removed dog poo bins eventually be replaced?
- d) Is there a plan for bigger dog poo bins to be installed in Patcham & Hollingbury ward in the near future?

**Reply from Councillor Davis / Heley, Joint Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

Thank you for your question.

Since the Energy Recovery Facility opened in Newhaven, dog waste and litter can be mixed together in a general litter bin and as a result the provision of dog poo bins is being reviewed across Brighton & Hove.

Cityclean is removing dog poo bins that are located close to street litter or communal bins to make collections more efficient. Signage and stickers are placed on bins to inform the public that the bin can be used for both general waste and dog waste.

In answer to your specific questions:

#### Question A

As part of the review of dog bin provision, 10 dog poo bins have been removed from Patcham and Hollingbury.

#### Question B

Cityclean has removed dog bins where they are close to street litter or communal bins so that there is still provision for people to dispose of dog waste.

#### Question C

Currently, Cityclean is not looking to replace dog bins because many of them were close to general litter bins which can be used for dog waste. Where this isn't the case, Cityclean will assess the area and place litter bins where there is high footfall, and close to car parks/roads.

#### Question D

There are no current plans to install bigger dog waste bins anywhere in the city. Instead, Cityclean is reviewing the number of general litter bins throughout the city which can also help dog walkers to dispose of waste.

## **22. Councillor Barnett**

### **Benfield Valley**

Residents are unhappy with several issues at Benfield Valley which remain unresolved, including (a) dumped chalk and (b) the damaged flint wall next to Benfield Barn.

The Chalk was dumped in April 2021 but still hasn't been removed, despite an enforcement notice having been issued by the council at the time. The historic flint wall behind Benfield Barn has been in a state of disrepair for a similar amount of time after being partially destroyed.

Can the Chair please provide an update on the council's progress relating to:

- a) The implementation of enforcement notice issued by the Council to have the dumped chalk on Benfield Valley removed.
- b) Organising the repair of the historic flint wall at Benfield Barn.

**Reply from Councillor Davis / Heley, Joint Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

- a) After the Enforcement Notice was served, requiring the removal of the chalk deposits, a planning application was submitted to seeking to retain some of the chalk with some regrading and other associated works; with proposals to mitigate and protect the ecology and biodiversity of the site. After careful consideration the application was approved in August 2021. It was subject to several pre-commencement conditions. The information for these has now been received, is being considered.

Following this decision, the Enforcement Team will be seeking to ensure that the remedial works are carried out.

- b) The Estate's Team has been working to resolve the situation with the flint wall at Benfield Barn. The wall has become dilapidated due to a combination of overgrown tree roots surrounding the wall and it degrading over time.

There has now been work carried out by the council's Arboricultural Team to the trees on Sylvester Way to enable repairs to the flint wall by leaseholder. However, additional work still needs to be done. To help speed this up, it has been agreed that the leaseholder will arrange this to be carried out directly by a contractor. Then repair works will be carried out.

### **23. Councillor Simson**

In January, residents of McWilliam Road Woodingdean were left unhappy after pavements were left in a patchwork state following the contractual work to install fibre optic broadband.

Holes in the pavements were covered over with tarmac, leaving mismatched walkways.

Back in January when concerns were raised, the Council indicated that its policy on the restoration of pavements had been breached and that it would work with the company to redress the issues and ensure the finished surface was consistent in future.

This however hasn't solved the situation on McWilliam Road, which remains a patchwork of tarmac and paving slabs.

Can the Chair advise whether McWilliam Road will be resurfaced and restored to a consistent surface, as should have happened in line with the Council's policy on restoring pavements?

Supporting information:

<https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/19865456.construction-works-leave-woodingdean-residents-furious/>

**Reply from Councillor Davis / Heley, Joint Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

The footway of McWilliam Road will be reinstated to a consistent surface. Our Asset Maintenance team have had a site visit with CityFibre, and we are now waiting for agreement to be reached on their contribution to the cost of re-surfacing the footway. Unfortunately this process has taken longer than we expected, but we are in regular contact with them.

**24. Councillor Theobald**

**Parking revenue**

Since the last Council Elections how many roads have had bicycle lanes introduced in place of car parking and how much annual income has been lost by the loss of parking fees?

How many roads are proposed to have bicycle lanes and what will be the amount of annual income that will be lost by the Council from removing the car parking?

**Reply from Councillor Davis / Heley, Joint Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

Since the last Council elections, the main cycle routes implemented have been on the A259 - Palace Pier to Fourth Avenue and on Madeira Drive with an estimated annual loss of £640,000 parking income combined.

A further cycle lane on the A259 - West of Fourth Avenue will be cost neutral as it will be mitigated by Cycle Lane enforcement income and new shared bays near the Rockwater centre.

Due to twelve years of Conservative government austerity parking revenue plays an important part in balancing all council's budget. However more important is the health of our planet and our residents. Providing active travel infrastructure is enabling our residents to take sustainable journeys which reduce the carbon footprint of the city. Furthermore, our residents deserve to breath clean air not polluted harmful toxic emissions. Finally, we know that walking and cycling improvements can increase retail spend in high streets by up to 30%.

**25. Councillor Brown**

**Ongoing parking issues in Nevill Avenue & Nevill Road**

Residents are unhappy that at the most recent Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee meeting, the Chair voted against their request for an officer report to explore solutions to ongoing parking issues in Nevill Avenue and Nevill Road, without providing any explanation why.

The residents spent a great deal of time preparing their deputation in good faith, which was dutifully presented to the full council and then referred to the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee meeting in

accordance with the Council procedures. They do deserve a response as to why the Chair and the Administration voted against a report.

Can you please provide the reason why the Greens voted against such a report into addressing ongoing parking issues on Nevill Avenue and Nevill Road?

**Reply from Councillor Davis / Heley, Joint Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

Residents were advised that they needed to come forward in a larger area for this to be considered in the Parking Scheme Priority Timetable. This is to ensure the Council considers the wider implications of any proposal rather than adding additional single roads.

**26. Councillor Nemeth**

**Speed Trials**

Despite the great efforts of the organisers of the Brighton Speed Trials, there was huge disappointment again amongst motor-racing enthusiasts concerning the non-participation of motorcycles.

The decision to not allow motorcycles ultimately stems from a decision by the Auto-Cycle Union (ACU) to not grant a track licence following concerns about surface materials. Last year, there were concerns about the green cycle lane. This year, there were concerns over the type of white paint that has been used for line markings.

The ACU has clearly stated that there are suitable types of white paint which are available for the job in question.

Given that this Council resolved to ensure that this event continues – with no excuses or caveats – please detail precisely what conversations and meetings took place (with dates) with the appropriate licensing authorities prior to the paint being administered.

**Reply from Councillor Davis / Heley, Joint Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

Following approval at ETS committee to proceed with proposals to implement a dedicated cycle track along Madeira Drive plans were further developed. In February 2021 the plans were circulated to key stakeholders including Madeira Drive Event Organisers via our Events Team. During this period e-mail exchanges with many traders and event organisers took place and meetings were held on site. More specifically e-mail exchanges between the Speed Trial Event organiser and BHCC officers regarding the plans took place.

In February 2021 a site meeting took place with the organiser of the Speed Trials to identify measures to ensure the layout was suitable. In March 2021 the plans were updated to incorporate change requests to respond to the

needs of the event. These changes included removable signposts in the carriageway, removal of proposed buildouts at proposed crossing points to allow sufficient clearance for motor vehicles and the addition of extra safety bollards to protect the Concorde 2 building. In August 2021 Speed Trial organisers requested a further meeting with UK Motorsport and BHCC to detail highway changes and to prepare for the Licencing application. During this meeting the green surfacing specification was requested alongside skid resistance testing. This was circulated directly after the meeting to all attendees. During August BHCC officers were copied into an e-mail between Event Organisers and the Licencing Body detailing all required safety measures that had been put in place. On the lead up to the event all other works at the Dukes Mound end were stopped and temporary measures put in place to ensure the licenced event could take place.

In December 2021 BHCC Events, Highways, Event Managers and Licence bodies attended a meeting to discuss previous events. Some concern was raised over the white lining with Event organisers offering to circulate the specification used on the Isle of Man. BHCC agreed to determine the specification of the existing white lining.

In March 22 –July 22 the white lining specification was received by BHCC contractors and sent to a representative from the event organisation. The specification for the white lining laid at Madeira Drive by our experienced contractor are developed for use on all Local Highway roads and can be found Citywide.

## **27. Councillor Nemeth**

### **Welcome Back Fund**

A response to a written question at Full Council on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2022 confirmed broad funding arrangements for the five high streets to which the Welcome Back Fund applied.

The project included both planting and street-cleaning elements.

Please now provide a full breakdown of costings for each street along with an explanation as to why plants were picked that immediately died.

### **Reply from Councillor Davis / Heley, Joint Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

In response to your question, officers can send you a breakdown of costs for the high streets that received various initiatives through the Welcome Back Fund. These costs have been identified through claim forms submitted to the government and associated invoices, which formed part of the reporting process for the fund. Invoices for the majority of these initiatives included all high streets in receipt of funding, so the total cost has been divided between each area.

The plants were selected by the professional company who placed the pots in local high streets. Officers viewed these in situ and do not share the view that the plants died quickly after location.

## **28. Councillor Theobald**

### **A27 litter clean-up operation**

It was good to see a five-night council operation to clear A27 roadside litter take place from 26-31 September between Portslade junction and Falmer.

Can the Chair provide an update on the results of this including the following:

- a) How much litter was removed?
- b) Did the council identify where the litter mostly came from (for example construction materials or general rubbish) and will any further action taken based on these conclusions?
- c) What was the cost of this 5-day litter clearing effort to the budget?
- d) How many times per year are these operations carried out and at what annual budgeted cost?

### **Reply from Councillor Davis / Heley, Joint Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

Further to the Council operation to litter pick the A27 roadside between 27th and 30th September and 3rd to 4th October, I confirm that:

- A total of 18 tonnes of detritus was removed including
  - 2 tonnes of litter
  - 13 tonnes of silt
  - 3 tonnes of fly tip.
    - From this:
      - Approximately 40% was general rubbish
      - 40% was construction material
      - and 20% was vehicle parts.

Cityclean has previously worked with Sussex Police on joint operations to address common issues such as unsecured loads and will continue to look for opportunities for joint working with the police and National Highways.

The cost of the litter clearing for this part of the road was £35,000 and includes working with third parties on road closures to enable Council staff to access the areas to clear litter, flytip and silt.

Cityclean is aiming to undertake this work twice a year but this dependent on budget.

**29. Councillor Atkinson**

**Preparing for winter and the fuel/cost of living crisis – vulnerable elderly people**

Can you outline what plans the council are putting in place for elderly and other vulnerable residents, who may be in fuel poverty, to keep warm this winter?

Are we looking to offer public buildings as a warm haven for residents and, if so, how will this be publicised?

Also, are we also looking to use facilities such as sheltered accommodation lounges and other council buildings?

How can we facilitate travel to these facilities if and when they are available?

**Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council**

Information in relation to your question is set out in the report provided to Policy & Resources Committee on 6 October 2022 and which is also on the agenda for this Council meeting. It sets out in detail that we are looking at the feasibility of utilising council-owned buildings as warm spaces and we will also be working with the Community & Voluntary Sector to determine what they may be able to offer. This work is now in progress.

At the Policy & Resources Committee, in the same report, the committee also approved an allocation from the Household Support Fund to further improve information on our website and develop a communication and awareness campaign, including a leaflet to all households in the city, to provide further awareness of financial support and advice available from the council and its partners including support for energy bills and energy saving advice. This will also include information about warm spaces available to the public once these have been determined and agreed.