

CABINET ADDENDUM TWO

2.00PM, THURSDAY, 24 APRIL 2025

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

Agendas and minutes are published on the council's website www.brighton-hove.gov.uk. Agendas are available to view five working days prior to the meeting date.

Electronic agendas can also be accessed through our meetings app available through [ModernGov: iOS/Windows/Android](#)

This agenda and all accompanying reports are printed on recycled paper

ADDENDUM

ITEM

Page

185 MINUTES

3 - 30

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

CABINET

2.00pm 20 MARCH 2025

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL, NORTON ROAD, HOVE

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Sankey (Chair) Taylor (Deputy Chair), Allen, Daniel, Miller, Muten, Robins, Rowkins and Williams

Other Members present: Councillors Alexander, Hewitt, Robinson

PART ONE

163 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

163a Declarations of interests

163.1 Councillor Alexander declared an interest in Item 179: Brighton and Hove Fairness Fund and Household Support Fund 2025-26 as a member of an organisation that received funding from the Funds. Councillor Alexander would leave the Chamber during discussion of the item.

163.2 Councillor Daniel declared an interest in Item 179: Brighton and Hove Fairness Fund and Household Support Fund 2025-26 as a member of an organisation that received funding from the Funds. Councillor Daniel would leave the Chamber during discussion of the item.

163b Exclusion of the press and public

163.3 In accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the Act"), the Committee considered whether the public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any item of business on the grounds that it is likely in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during it, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act.

163.4 **Resolved-** That the public and press are excluded from the meeting from items listed on Part 2 of the agenda.

164 MINUTES

164.1 **Resolved-** That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as the correct record.

165 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS**165.1 The Chair provided the following Communications:**

"Before moving to today's business, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on some of the brilliant work that has gone over gone on over the past months since our last Cabinet meeting and to pay thanks and give gratitude to our officers and our hard working members.

To have achieved some really positive results for the city, we announced today that half a million journeys have now been made on Beyrl bikes. This week we have refurbished and reopened Goldstone Villas public toilet in Hove, making it more accessible and family friendly. We have contracted a design team for the planned swimming pool at Withdean. We've announced free swimming for all children in Brighton and Hove for the year ahead and we've opened new tennis courts at Hove Beach Park.

We've launched a new Sea Front Development Board chaired by local resident, Lord Steve Bassam, which will help us to accelerate the type of investment, ideas and planning needed to secure the future of our iconic sea front for residents and visitors alike. The Madeira Terraces restoration is well under way. We've announced funding to restore our sea front heritage lighting, and we've passed a balanced budget for our Council last month which ringfences additional funding for street cleansing to support our ongoing effort to bring our city back to its sparkling best.

We've launched an opt out scheme for residents who would rather weed their own pavement than have the Council do it, demonstrating that we are a listening Council, and we've worked to increase consensus on school admission changes which were passed at our special Council meeting last month with support from Green and independent councillors. National offer day earlier this month for secondary schools confirmed that our trailblazing policy to give priority to children on free school meals in our admission arrangements, is already having an impact with nearly 100 children using the policy to secure a preference school for September 2025, helping to rebalance the attendance of children on free school meals among our secondary schools in the city.

This is the first cabinet meeting since International Women's Day and so it seems only right to reflect on the fantastic events organised by Varndean School last Friday by their feminist society, for which I was an honoured panel guest. I was really inspired by the work being done by young women at Varndean that I met to support girls in primary school, raise awareness of women's issues within their school and advocate for uniform changes.

During International Women's Month, as I'm now calling it, we reflect on the national average gender pay gap, which still exists in this country of 13.1%, in favour of men. I'm pleased to say that our median gender pay gap at Brighton and Hove City Council is 3% in favour of women. Women also make up 62.7% of staff in our upper pay bands. But we know that women are not equal until all women are equal, and so we pledge to redouble our effort to close the Council's race and disability pay gap. We've seen significant progress in these pay gaps in the last 18 months, but there is still much more to do.

Moving on to today's agenda, I'm delighted to see our report on plans for local government reorganisation and devolution for Sussex and Brighton and Hove and to welcome on you, Cabinet advisor on the same Councillor, John Hewitt.

The report sets out our considered interim proposal to the government's local government reorganisation proposals and the next steps in establishing a Mayoral Combined Authority for Sussex and Brighton.

These are exciting times, not only for our city but the wider Sussex region. They will mean more local decision making, more money and power flowing down the A23 from Westminster to Brighton and Hove and a greater say for local people on decisions which directly affect our communities.

In line with our commitment to listening and transparency, we held an initial short engagement exercise with residents in the time available before this Friday's deadline and our interim response is shaped by that feedback.

We are therefore suggesting to government that our region could operate with up to five unitary authorities of relatively equal size, and all represented alongside a new mayor on our new strategic authority.

Assuming our approach is discussed and approved today, we will then test our thinking against data and evidence as we work with our neighbouring authorities and develop final plans ahead of September's government deadline.

I want to now turn to an item on today's agenda, which I know is causing much anxiety and upset for those affected. New England House is a beacon of creativity, a hub of talent to the and a community who call it home.

It's an example of the types of businesses that make Brighton and Hove the renowned Centre for Arts and Culture that it is.

Unfortunately, however, as the report coming before Cabinet today says, for the necessary improvements to be made to this much-loved building to make it safe and fit for the future traders and tenants in the building will need to leave. We will support traders where we can, helping them find alternative accommodation and ensuring that the amazing businesses that are currently resident in this building will continue to thrive. We will also be preparing and communicating in the coming weeks a compensation offer for all current tenants.

I also this afternoon want to put on record an apology on behalf of this Council to everyone impacted by this situation.

We are taking both the actions that we need to take now, but we are also going to do the learning from how this has been previously dealt with and we're going to take that extremely seriously. We are conducting an internal review which has highlighted areas of learning for this Council and several actions, including a priority programme of training on contract management and project management for officers and guidance on how issues are raised and escalated within the organisation.

A new approach to be developed in relation to the retention of project documentation and closer management of fire safety concerns, including consulting with East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service and our own fire consultant. These actions have been taken forward by officers and going forward, we want to work collaboratively with all tenants of the building and together ensure that we have the safe workspace we need to support our businesses.

That have worked for New England House. We know that different solutions will be needed for different businesses, and we are committed to working through with you to find solutions.

Turning to another item on today's agenda, I'm pleased to see the report on Red Routes taken together with recommendations to expand these to Western Road and Queens Road, roads that we need we know are in need of change. Red Routes in London Road and Lewes Road have helped improve safety and reduce congestion and contributed to a huge reduction of 85% in journeys to bus passengers in these

areas. They're also a great example of consultation and community engagement at every stage of this process, the Council has listened, spoken to residents, spoken with traders and adapted the scheme so that they can work as well as possible for everybody.

In addition, there is more good news on bus concessions which I know Councillor Muten will expand on, but I wanted to particularly highlight one aspect. There are around 42,000 people in Brighton and Hove who are eligible for an older person's or disabled persons bus pass. The number of journeys made with a concessionary bus pass increased by almost 10% in the last year, which is really fantastic news. The Council reimburses bus operators for their travel, and the Brighton and Hove scheme is more generous than the national scheme in the hours that concessionary buses, sorry, concessionary passes can be used. Older people can use their passes between 9:00 AM and 4:00 AM

Sunday to Friday and all day at the weekends, while disabled people can use their passes 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

I'd also like to say how proud I am to see the updates on the Brighton & Hove Fairness Fund come before this Cabinet today. The continuation of our Fairness Fund will allow us to further support those residents most affected by the cost of living crisis and the terrible legacy of the Conservative government's inadequate funding of local councils. It's proposed focus for 25/26 intends to move the city's welfare support response towards a stronger prevention model, finding longer term solutions for households and reducing the need for future crisis or hardship support. It's an approach I'm confident will make a real difference not only to the lives of those being supported, but also to our community as a whole.

And in more good news, I'm delighted to confirm that Britannia Hotel Group have paid £500,000, the first of their instalments to this Council to compensate us for the cost of work done over the past two years to ensure the safety of the Royal Albion Hotel following the devastating fire there.

Lastly, Ramadan Mubarak. To those observing I was really delighted to attend the Community iftar almost two weeks ago. It was hosted by the Multicultural Group and our Mayor, Councillor Mohammed Asaduzzaman, where we broke bread and reflected on the bonds that bind all of our communities here in Brighton and Hove".

166 CALL OVER

166.1. All items on the agenda were reserved for discussion.

167 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

(b) Public Questions

(1) Community Infrastructure Levy

167.1 Mark Strong read the following question:

Community Works welcomes the CIL proposals, especially the proposed Neighbourhood CIL process with a more equitable city-wide distribution of funds.

We note this places responsibility on Ward members to agree a schedule of local groups, to determine which projects receive Neighbourhood CIL, and possibly even submit bids.

Community Works would like more information on how this will be done fairly, consistently and inclusively, ensuring engagement with a wide range of neighbourhood groups. In particular we ask Cabinet to consider how our existing work with groups across the City could help support officers and councillors in delivering the Neighbourhood CIL process

167.2 Councillor Taylor provided the following reply:

Mark, thanks for your question. And as always, thank you for the work for community works and that you do specifically in your organisation does specifically and and thank you for sort of broadly welcoming the update on SEAL and the approach. My sense would be probably a little bit behind some other areas, a little bit further forward on how they administer seal. And so I think the paper we've got today is.

A good step in putting some good framework around that.

In terms of engagement, we're gonna do an engagement process that will use your voice as our typical online platform to seek views from the public and community groups. A separate communications plan is plan is being established to ensure that consultation is effectively promoted throughout the city and through the press, but we would absolutely welcome support of Community works. And so I have asked officers to contact you and the organisation to ensure that the voice of the third sector is part of the development of the overall plan.

(2) Red Routes

167.3 Laura Marshall read the following question:

It is noted in paragraph 3.7 that there is an intention to apply for DfT funding for the fourth tranche of moving traffic enforcement powers i.e. cameras (July 2025). Paragraph 4.2 references the use of such cameras to enforce school streets, which are currently operated by staff and the goodwill of volunteers. Why has it taken until tranche 4 for school streets to be considered? Will the application include cameras for school streets?

167.4 Councillor Muten provided the following reply:

Thank you, Laura for your question. Very nice to meet you. The council has not sought to apply for moving traffic enforcement powers previously. The deadline for tranche three applications for moving traffic enforcement powers was in 2023 and this opportunity was not then taken, nor previously. This was this was also before the school streets schemes had been widely established in our city and information about compliance with the schemes could be gathered to support such an application.

Last year the new Labour government issued new guidance for school streets schemes steering away from reliance on volunteers and advising that all new schemes should be enforced through ANPR cameras.

Several of our school streets schemes rely on volunteers and school staff and as an authority, in the absence of moving traffic enforcement powers, we rely on Sussex Police for such enforcement. Their resources are limited and often focus on other priorities. Therefore, as an administration, we conclude that we have a strong case to proceed for applying for these powers. The council will include cameras for school streets in its application for moving traffic enforcement powers as this is likely to provide strong and welcome support for such powers in our city.

(3) New England House

167.5 Zenzie Tinker read the following question:

Through no fault of our own, New England House tenants now face an intolerable situation, much like the fire risk we have unknowingly been exposed to for years. With little notice and no real support from the council, we are being forced to relocate our businesses—or face closure, putting many local jobs and creative enterprises at risk. Zenzie Tinker Conservation has thrived here for 22 years, renewing our leases last year without any warning of this crisis. Will the council provide a rent-free period from November 2024 and offer compensation to cover relocation and refitting costs to prevent closures?

167.6 Councillor Taylor provided the following reply:

Thank you Zenzi for asking your question and more importantly than thanking you for asking your question, thank you for what you've done over the previous 20 years in establishing and running an internationally renowned business that contributes significantly to the local economy. I think for people who haven't started businesses, it's difficult to understand the level of commitment that has to go into it and the personal risk that you take and the employing people, it makes a massive contribution and really to reiterate what Bella said at the beginning, I think it's really important that as elected officials and politicians in the city, we make genuine apologies when we think we need. The Council needs to apologise and I think the Council does need to apologise corporately as a council, probably over a period of 20 years, when things probably haven't been done correctly, and we'll talk about that a bit later in terms of lessons learned, but genuinely an apology to you and the rest of the tenants in the building, many of which are here today for the disruption that was caused in November, an absolute nightmare. I completely understand what a nightmare to get it such short notice having to not be able to attend your businesses and then only get in days later in the run up to Christmas, and now, as you said in your question, the prospects of having to leave the building. So, I genuinely want to apologise for that to you and another tenants. To answer your question directly, the Council will be making a compensation offer to all tenants, not just some tenants, but all tenants. I completely understand that tenants want to get that as soon as possible so they can understand the position going forward. I believe that will be coming in the coming weeks. I've obviously got to make the decision today, which is the formal first decision of cabinet, but I'm asking to make those communications and offers as quickly as possible, because we understand why that's important for tenants. But thank you again for your question.

(4) New England House

167.7 Alexander Claber read the following question:

Our businesses risk closure due to the lack of suitable premises or the cost of relocation if premises can be found in time. How will the council financially support us through compensation? The council's Firenta 2020 report highlighted that NEH was at substantial fire risk - if this had been communicated we would have made very different

plans, rather than continuing to invest in NEH and renewing our leases over the past five years.

167.8 Councillor Taylor provided the following reply:

Thank you, Alexander, for your question. It's been nice to meet many tenants in circumstances that we wouldn't really want to be meeting each other. But it has meant that I've got to have a better understanding of the brilliant vibrant businesses in the building. Thank you again for the work that you've done in setting up your business, and reiterate again the apology in the difficult circumstance you're in.

On the fire report, I think it's really important that the council properly learns lessons from this, not just pays lip service to it. One of the first things we did when we had the really unfortunate unfolding of events in November is that we requested a proper internal audit report on the sequence of events, and the documentation, and the reports leading up to that point. Not just at that point, the decision we made, but what's leading up to that point. That report will come in the coming months. A full internal audit report on that decision making, who knew what when, which will come to an Audit and Standards Committee and I think it would be really important that the council doesn't try and brush anything under the carpet but properly acknowledges if there were mistakes that were made.

I guess I would reiterate what I said to Zenzie about compensation, completely understood in the coming weeks, I expect, a formal offer of compensation will be made to all tenants.

(5) New England House

167.9 Lou Taylor read the following question:

I've been a tenant of NEH for over 3 years, and as I understand it, the Council has been aware of the dangerous fire situation for the whole of this time. Risking the future of my business as well as the lives of myself and all other tenants in the building.

I know there was money set aside to address these issues but this money has disappeared. As far as I can tell no money has been spent at all in years to support this incredibly valuable resource to the city. Where has this money gone?

167.10 Councillor Taylor provided the following reply:

Thanks, Lou, for your question. Again, really sorry you're in this difficult position. Obviously you moved in relatively recently compared to Zenzie, three years. I know many tenants who moved in were excited about moving in, in the sense that the building is a special and unique building that has housed a diverse range of businesses for years and so I'm really sorry we're in this position.

In terms of that money, the money certainly hasn't gone away. The council has a ring-fenced pot of £11 million, some of which came from a city deal a number of years ago. That is ring-fenced for refurbishment of New England House. So far, those funds have been used to develop proposals, but I would reiterate what I said earlier to Alexander that we're very, very serious about properly learning the lessons of whether decisions were made quick enough, in the right order and funds allocated properly. But the money hasn't gone anywhere. It is still there and that money will be used if the council proceeds with ending up refurbishing the building to a similar condition and use as it currently is.

(6) New England House– Heike Roesel

167.11 Heike Roesel read the following question:

What action did the council take when the fire safety report from 2020 described issues with New England Houses fire safety?

167.12 Councillor Taylor provided the following reply:

It's a very good and important question, apologies for not giving you a direct answer here. That question is what will need to come out in the lessons learned and the audit report which will come to an Audit and Standards Committee, I believe in the coming months. I think we should invite all tenants to come and observe that meeting if they're interested. I will certainly be attending that meeting and we'll need to draw out exactly that question, which I think is really important for the council and for the city to answer. Not just for you as tenants, who clearly want to know those answers, but for the city, we need to get those answers and make sure we're understanding it for other buildings across the city.

(c) Deputations**(1) New England House**

167.13 Cabinet received a deputation that raised a number of points in relation to the future of New England House.

167.14 Councillor Taylor provided the following response:

Thank you, Ria genuinely for your deputation. One of the reasons it's so important that as a Council we have public engagement deputations and questions is, as you implied in your question, you know we're sitting here and we're looking at a Council decision in front of us with numbers and consequences and we're going for the legal implications and we have to make the decisions that we think are right at any given time.

But we have to have members of the public, whether we're talking about schools, streets, whether we're talking about talking about sports equipment or in this case, commercial tenancy in a building, we have to have those members of the public come and bring it alive and make it real and make us understand genuinely what's happening in our communities and in our businesses. And I thought your deputation was extremely powerful and it brought to life a number of really important things it brought to life the range of different makers, artists and creators in the building that I think probably most members of the public aren't necessarily aware of across the city. And now, as I said earlier, sadly, have become aware through these really unfortunate circumstances, but that was really, really important for us to hear, and I think what you say about creativity and that hub is clearly probably fairly unusual in the South of England to have a building of this nature with so many creative and tech businesses in one place, and unfortunately one of the things that you highlight is that there is a lack of space in the city for that light industrial creative space which is different to office space. Office space, that's you know above ground floor retail space in the city centre is not the same thing that we're talking about here in terms of light industrial, creative space. And we've observed in previous studies the Council that we have a lack of that light industrial space in the city and that's

something that we need to and are feeding into all of our planning considerations for the city and something that we'll need to feed into the city plan that we've recently done our first consultation on, but will come out in the coming months and years. I think it's important that you flagged the concept of this word decant, which as you say whilst we're talking about a commercial building, this is a commercial building that's not full of objects, it's full of people and businesses and creativity. And so I think it's really important that you flag that and it's important that what we talk about the unfortunate decisions that we're facing tonight, which will be asking tenants to vacate their leases and which brings on to the next part about support the Council is committed to try to support in in sort of two main ways. The first is compensation that I've mentioned in previous answers and which will be forthcoming in the in the coming weeks. And I know it's important to get that as quickly as possible for tenants. And then the second piece is around support and alternative premises and whilst I'm committed to the Council helping with that and I will keep asking officers to help as much as they possibly can, I also don't want to be a politician that over promises in the room, right. And we know that there is a lack of space and we know that it is going to mean difficult decisions and circumstances for many of those tenants because in talking to some of you, as I have been in the previous weeks and months, we know that there aren't perfect spaces for every tenant in the centre of Brighton. So some may need to look at further afield within the city or really tragically outside of the city, but I'm committed to the Council helping as much as we can, using both contacts in the city and our own portfolio of property. There may be some creative solutions that are being looked at on other properties that are not currently commercially let properties, but are operational buildings that may provide some solutions. And then I think the final thing which is really important is the spirit and not even just the spirit, the practical reality of what the building offered in terms of that creative hub and not losing that going forward. What we are not voting on this evening is the final proposal to what will happen with the building. However, the options in the paper do indicate that a potential refurbishment and essentially establishing and maybe even improving the business, the building in its current state in its current offer, it does look like a fairly possible option which you know at the beginning of this process. I had been worried frankly that it just wouldn't stack up that that might be a viable option. I know Councillor Miller who represents the creative industries from a cabinet perspective, is really keen to maintain that creative hub as am I. And so let's work together. I realise many of these, the businesses and tenants will now be understandably focused on their next steps and their businesses, but let's continue to work together on what the longer term next steps might be so that we can continue to maintain the much needed creative and light industrial space in the city and if possible, maintain the sort of spirit and the creative hub nature of what the building is represented for, for, for, for many, many years. But thank you again for your deputation.

167.15 **Resolved-** That Cabinet note the deputation.

168 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS

168.1 A copy of the questions received was circulated ahead of the meeting. Responses provided both at the meeting and in writing are as follows:

(1) Councillor McNair- Future of New England House

It was unclear in the paperwork what is happening with New England House. Can you confirm if the new housing company will use this site for housing?

Response: Councillor Taylor

No decision is being made on the long-term future of New England House in this report. A fully developed appraisal of refurbishment and redevelopment options will come to Cabinet in the Summer and will consider different delivery strategies including mixed-use with housing and different types of commercial space. In developing our proposals we will work closely with the businesses and individuals that have made NEH the vibrant creative space it is today.

(2) Councillor McNair – Future of New England House

What alternative accommodation will you provide for the existing tenants who contribute so much to the creative economy?

Response: Councillor Taylor

We have reviewed the council's commercial property portfolio and have provided links to our agent's website where details of all vacant properties available for review. We are also considering properties within our operational portfolio to provide alternative accommodation for tenants.

Some tenants have already found alternative accommodation outside of the council's commercial property portfolio, and we will continue to support as far as we are able those tenants who are still looking for property.

(3) Councillor Meadows- Community Infrastructure Levy

Does Patcham & Hollingbury have £35583.21 to spend on traffic and parking improvements?

Response: Councillor Taylor

Thank you for your question. Patcham & Hollingbury ward has £35,583,21 Neighbourhood CIL available to invest in local projects and infrastructure. It will be for the local ward councillors to decide how to direct that funding into qualifying projects, taking into account the outcome of the views and suggestions made by local residents and community groups. The funding is not just ring fenced for spending on traffic and parking improvements.

(4) Councillor Meadows- Community Infrastructure Levy

When will councillors be contacted so that residents and councillors can input our suggestions for improved infrastructure?

Response: Councillor Taylor

Thank you for your question. The engagement process will start to be undertaken using the council's Your Voice online platform in May to seek ideas and suggestions direct

from both residents and community groups. A separate communications plan is being established to ensure that the consultation is effectively promoted through the press, social media and existing relationships with community groups.

A series of ward councillor briefings will also be held during late April and early May to set out the process, programme and how councillors will be supported in their decision making.

(5) Councillor McNair- Red Routes Update

Has a consultation been undertaken with shop owners since the implementation of the red lines in London Road and Lewes Road to find out if it has impacted small businesses at all? If so, can the contents of the review be made available to ward councillors?

Response: Councillor Muten

Thank you for your question, Councillor McNair. There has been engagement with shop owners both before and after implementation of the red route schemes through public consultation and in person meetings at the London Road Local Area Team (LAT) meetings which I attended myself, along with officers. I have also met with many of the traders and residents during the period of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO). We listened during the extensive consultation prior to installation of the Red Route and made changes as a result of the extremely useful comments and views provided. For instance, the number of loading bays included in the scheme has almost doubled with several more added plus a motorcycle bay for delivery drivers. The contribution and collaboration with traders in making sure the Red Routes work well for businesses as well as the significant environmental and traffic benefits has been extremely valuable. We will continue to engage and listen to communities and local businesses once these Red Routes are made permanent with a responsiveness for further improvements, and in developing our future schemes.

(6) Councillor Meadows- Concessionary Fares and Bus Service Improvement Plan Update

Has there been an updated consultation since the one in 2021 which was during covid?

Response: Councillor Muten

Thank you for your question, Councillor Meadows. Due to the timescales and commercial sensitivities during negotiations to get the best deal for the city, there has been a streamlined consultation involving Brighton & Hove Buswatch, the Enhanced Bus Partnership, and the Department of Transport. There has also been ongoing engagement with key stakeholders such as schools and colleges, Citizens UK, disability groups, the youth council, partners on the Transport and Travel Partnership, and other community groups and activists whilst negotiations with our bus operators proceeded.

(7) Councillor Meadows- Concessionary Fares and Bus Service Improvement Plan Update

Which concessionary bus fares are at risk from cuts if the council does not achieve an uplift in funding?

Response: Councillor Muten

Thank you for your question, Councillor Meadows. There are no fares at risk as the council has secured a financial deal to protect all the concessions that are currently in place. Council has a statutory duty to reimburse bus operators for concessionary bus fares. This has been accounted for in the 2025-26 budget setting process. As a Labour administration, we are committed to a balanced budget. Further, through robust negotiation, we not only have delivered this within budget, but we have saved the city some £1million over a two-year deal whilst providing concessionary travel for over 42,000 residents well above the statutory minimum required.

(8) Councillor Meadows- Brighton & Hove Fairness Fund and Household Support Fund 2025-26

Why is the council giving £67000 of the Fairness Fund to Operation Black Vote (para 3.24) for a civic leadership programme, instead of funding libraries which support all faiths and ethnicities yet are being cut?

Response: Councillor Taylor

The council is committed to increasing participation from its communities in local decision making and the civic leadership programme is designed to increase representation in public duty roles, supporting our aims to be a fair and inclusive city.

Recruitment to the programme will encourage people from under-represented groups and with intersecting identities to ensure as diverse representation as possible.

(9) Councillor Meadows- Brighton & Hove Fairness Fund and Household Support Fund 2025-26

Are there any plans to help other minority groups in the city such as travellers and working-class boys and girls to engage in civic leadership programmes?

Response: Councillor Taylor

The proposed allocation takes into account historical evidence that people from BRM communities are systemically and institutionally disadvantaged when it comes to employment and civic leadership. It will have a lasting impact as part of the council's anti-racism strategy.

It's acknowledged that there are barriers to employment and civic leadership faced by other groups and individuals with protected characteristics, particularly where there are intersections of vulnerability.

Whilst there is no specific leadership programme planned for other protected characteristics, the EIA explores how the Fairness Fund and HSF mitigates impacts overall in terms of economic vulnerability, by providing a combination of safety net and

support that aims to prevent households from experiencing crisis in the future. More broadly, the welfare infrastructure across the city and within the council provides an excellent range of support and advocacy. This includes income and benefit maximisation, support with removing barriers to employment for benefit-capped households, community-based projects driven by the people in those communities, and a diverse advice sector.

(10) Councillor McNair- Planned Maintenance Budget and Asset Management Fund Allocations and Educational Capital Resources and Capital Investment Programme 2025-26

What are the new developments which are proposed (para 3.14) that will need s106 money to mitigate their impact?

Response: Councillor Taylor

Thank you for your question. The £4.085M in accrued s106 receipts has been generated through the commencement of a number of major planning applications previously granted for developments across the city. Details of the specific developments granted planning permission and the sums received can be found on the council's Exacom system.

(11) Councillor Hill- Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

East Sussex County Council appears to want to keep its boundaries and become one unitary authority. Given this, surely the proposal for 5 unitary authorities throughout Sussex is not able to get collective agreement?

Response: Councillor Hewitt

As you'll have seen, the East Sussex County Council response was published on the 11th of March, and, like the proposed Brighton & Hove City Council response, it is clear that East Sussex Councils remain open to alternative options should the government indicate flexibility in the current criteria, or if residents demonstrate a clear desire for us to consider an alternative configuration.

The key point is that having undertaken our initial engagement, we now need to collate the data and evidence which provides us with sufficient information regarding the benefits and challenges, including the potential costs of any changes to us as a unitary authority. All Sussex Councils will be doing the work and are all committed to working collaboratively with each other throughout this process.

(12) Councillor Hill- Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

Jim McMahon has said that 350,000 people should be a minimum for local councils and would need to be justified with the average for all new councils being 500,000. Do you agree with this approach?

Response: Councillor Hewitt

I come back to my earlier point about needing the evidence in place to support change. I think our current size is broadly right but if there are opportunities through growth to address critical challenges, such as increasing economic prosperity then these are options we would want to explore for the benefit of all residents. We have set out our plan to test our proposals in the interim response and that will involve a lot of detailed work before submitting a final response in September.

(13) Councillor Hill- Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

Does Cabinet believe that residents in places like Peacehaven, Shoreham or Worthing will want to join a new unitary authority which includes the current Brighton & Hove City Council boundaries? I don't see much evidence of this, do you?

Response: Councillor Hewitt

Our early engagement exercise was primarily responded to by residents of Brighton & Hove and no specific proposals have been put forward to residents in Sussex to draw conclusions from. As part of our next stage of this process where we work collaboratively with all the other Sussex Councils, we'll seek to engage with, and listen to the views of, residents and test our proposals with them.

(14) Councillor Hill- Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

The consultation states that the majority of respondents believe that Brighton & Hove should stay the same. What proportion was this exactly and could we see published some exact numbers and responses to answers in the consultation?

Response: Councillor Hewitt

For this initial engagement exercise, we intentionally designed all our questions to be open-ended, avoiding any closed questions. This approach was chosen to encourage residents to elaborate on their responses, ensuring they felt free to provide detailed and expansive answers rather than being confined to a single, limited response. To ensure that the AI generated responses was factual, Officers did do a review, and we ascertained approximately 60% of individuals outlined a willingness that Brighton & Hove should stay the same.

(15) Councillor Hill- Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

I'm concerned by the low number of responses in the consultation as only 2 people from Coldean & Stanmer ward responded. Whilst it is a small ward in population, this is still much less proportionally than elsewhere and consistent with lower turnout in the ward at the last local election. How will you address this in future?

Response: Councillor Hewitt

I do want to be clear that this was an early engagement exercise conducted over a short period to enable early thoughts to be shared and to gain a sense of public opinion. As we have set out in our proposed interim plan, we will carry out comprehensive engagement prior to submitting the final proposal in September and we intend that

engagement to be transparent, accessible and proactive. We will include roadshows, themed focus groups and digital channels to ensure that we reach all of our communities.

(16) Councillor West- City Economic Growth Board

In what way will the new City Economic Growth Board truly embrace the successful partnership working that has evolved over 20 years. What of the benefits of that model of collaborative working won't be lost by this new narrower top-down approach?

Response: Councillor Taylor

The Brighton & Hove Economic Partnership has been a valued partner over the last 20 years. The Partnership has been steered by an Executive responsible for key decisions. The new Board will also have Councillor representation to ensure the voice of our business community reaches straight to the heart of the council – strengthening collaborative working and supporting our ambition to grow a stronger and more diverse city economy.

(17) Councillor West- Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

The risk of devolution and LGR not being fully government funded is flagged in the report's financial and risk implications. What are the costs likely to be beyond the significant cost of the initial work which the report suggests may already be up to £300,000. How can the cabinet be so enthusiastic about devolution and LGR when it doesn't know what the bill will be, nor yet understand the value of any possible efficiencies and how long they may take to deliver. Given the government has lost headroom yet seems determined to stick to its fiscal rules while seeking to grow protected budgets like defence, isn't there a real risk here the council may end up footing a significant and yet little understood bill for devolution and LGR. Is this wise and prudent, or is it creating a financial exposure the council is in no position to absorb?

Response: Councillor Hewitt

Thank you, Councillor West. The government have made clear that areas on the Devolution Priority Programme will receive Capacity funding which will assist areas like ours, with implementation. One of the key activities between submitting our Interim Plan on Local Government Reorganisation in March and the final proposal in September, will be to ascertain the financial cost of any change.

The reason we are so enthusiastic about devolution and Local Government Reorganisation is that based on experiences of devolved areas so far it is beyond question that it brings greater financial investment and growth to areas and we know from our own experience the benefits and efficiencies of unitary over two tier governance.

(18) Councillor West- Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

On page 67, the report says: "AI technology has been used to analyse the responses. While AI helps ensure a thorough examination of the data, there may still be some inaccuracies.". What firm conclusions can we draw from this analysis other than that it

cannot be relied upon. Does the Cabinet agree with me that in order to reassure the public, business, staff and other stakeholder consultees that their valuable viewpoint is properly appreciated and respected, then this important analysis needs to be fully reconducted by human beings?

Response: Councillor Hewitt

Officers have been involved in every step of the way in developing this initial engagement exercise and providing analysis. AI has been utilised as a support mechanism, but the responses have also been reviewed by human beings and checked through. A public consultation exercise will take place to inform the final proposal to be submitted in September.

(19) Councillor West- Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

I'm glad to see in the proposed interim plan for LGR that there is some appreciation given to the significance of the City's relationship with the South Downs National Park and the UNESCO designated Living Coast Biosphere, as well as the importance of the 147 parks and other green spaces in the city. It is surprising then that there is no mention of our 13,000 acre City Downland Estate and its significance for health and wellbeing, nature restoration, tourism and carbon reduction as set out in the City Downland Estate Plan. Will this oversight be corrected?

Response: Councillor Hewitt

The report sets out the council's Interim Plan on Local Government Reorganisation. The background information contained in the plan sets out our unique strengths and positioning as a city and provides an overview, but not an exhaustive list. We will be happy to ensure reference to the City Downland Estate is included in future.

(20) Councillor West- Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

While much of the city's publicly owned downland estate lies within the BHCC boundary, much also lies in surrounding jurisdictions. If LGR were to lead to an expansion of the unitary authority boundary, it would make good sense to incorporate much more of our downland estate within this new authority area. This move would certainly assist in a more coherent delivery of the aims of the CDEP as well as helping the authority to further delivery of the National Park's Partnership Plan too. Would the Cabinet agree to amend the report to include the opportunity LGR presents to realign the Brighton & Hove unitary boundary to incorporate much more, and possibly all, of the city downland estate?

Response: Councillor Hewitt

The report sets out the Council's interim plan on local government reorganisation. We will be taking a much more detailed look at options for reform between now and September when the final proposal will be submitted and this will include consideration of the city downland estate plan.

(21) Councillor West- Future of New England House

In the cabinet report establishing a new City Economic Growth Board, it suggests this initiative will support the Corporate Plan outcome 1: 'A city to be proud of,' and that the board will "ensure the council continues to work in partnership with the business community to support and grow our economy". How does the cabinet reconcile this uplifting statement with their plan to evict dozens of businesses from New England House by September. Many businesses have asked for a longer notice period and fear their having to leave will cause their demise along with the loss of very many jobs. With suitable light industrial and workshop space in short supply in the city to receive these businesses, and the scale of costs some will face with vacating and fit-outs, what meaningful financial support will the council be offering those in desperate need to ensure they survive this trauma?

Response: Councillor Taylor

The report sets out the reasons a recommendation is being made to empty the building by end of September. Work is needed to fix the defects in the building and doing this work with tenants in place is unachievable. It is unsafe to keep tenants in the building for a longer period.

The current control measures we have in place gives tenants a period to vacate the building. We cannot increase this period without fixing the building's core defects, which cannot be done while the building is occupied.

The council will take a pragmatic and flexible approach to supporting tenants to move during this period.

The issue of compensation and support for tenants is being considered and we are seeking legal advice on this issue. We know this is important for all tenants and aim to release further information in the next few weeks.

(22) Councillor West- Concessionary Fares and Bus Service Improvement Plan Update

The report states that the approved budget for Concessionary Fares payments to operators in 2024-25 of £9.862m is showing a pressure of £365,000 reported in the TBM. The report also states there has been a 10% uplift in concessionary passenger numbers this year, adding to budgetary pressure. While the increase in bus use is welcome to see, given the administration have chosen to freeze many parking charges which help to pay for concessionary fares, and have added the considerable extra burden to the BSIP of funding their adventure with park and ride, how confident are the cabinet that they will not bust their budget again in the coming year?

Response: Councillor Muten

Thank you, Councillor West, for your question. As a Labour administration, we are committed to a balanced budget. Through robust negotiation, we not only have delivered Concessionary Fares within budget, but we have saved the city some £1million over a two-year deal whilst providing concessionary travel for over 42,000 residents well above the statutory minimum required through a deal tailored for our city's requirements. For Concessionary Fares reimbursement, the two-year fixed deal we have negotiated with Brighton & Hove Buses is helpful in providing reassurance that it can be managed within budget for 2025-26.

BSIP spending and priorities are monitored and scrutinised by officers as well as the Department of Transport to ensure there are no pressures on core council budgets. Unlike some previous administrations, Labour is careful with the city's finances and have delivered some £1million savings though this negotiated bespoke two-year fair deal for our residents.

(23) Councillor West- Concessionary Fares and Bus Service Improvement Plan Update

I'm very pleased to see that the administration has decided to continue funding the vital Breeze Bus services in the 2025-26 Bus Service Improvement Plan from the Government Bus Grant. Countryside access is a chief driver for people choosing to retain car ownership. As campaigners have made clear, Breeze is an essential support for the large number of households in Brighton & Hove who either can't afford to run a car, can't drive or simply prefer to travel sustainably to minimise their carbon footprint. However, the administration's commitment is limited to one more year. Are we going to lurch from one year to the next with this, or will we see a multi-year settlement that allows the service to be properly marketed for passenger growth? Will the cabinet member commit to supporting this service for a longer term?

Response: Councillor Muten

Unlike your party who let the Breeze up the Downs partnership dwindle and cease without taking any effective action to save or reestablish this, we're acting to work in partnership to improve public access to the Downs. On the demise of this partnership, your party oversaw the removal of some 500 city centre parking bays, hiked up parking fees by 50% in three years, hitting those on lower income, including key workers, the hardest and leading to more congestion, poorer air quality and significant shortfall in projected income upon which supported services, including Breeze up to the Downs, relied.

Unlike your party, Labour are financially responsible, balancing the books and prioritising those most in need. Labour have instigated a holistic city-wide parking review, the first this millennium, and frozen parking fees, the first time for over a decade. After the Green Party's chaotic approach to budgets and city services, we were forced to take the number 77 and the 79 bus services out of the General Fund in February 2023 for the reasons I've given. However, we have a plan and with support from the Department for Transport we found grant funding to support the Breeze up to the Downs buses.

We are the party committed to sustainable public access to the Downs, we get things done, not with words but by our actions. And I take this opportunity to thank the many residents who campaigned in support of our actions to keep the Breeze up to the Downs bus service going. This is why we have approached the Department for Transport who have again approved BSIP support for Breeze up to the Downs buses.

You may be very pleased to know that we have strong indications that bus support is a Labour government priority and that there will be a three-year BSIP spending plan for 2026-27 to 28-29. We expect this to be confirmed this summer 2025. Thank you.

(24) Councillor West- Concessionary Fares and Bus Service Improvement Plan Update

Will the cabinet member set out his plans for increasing usage rates of the Breeze buses. As he knows, I have asked if Breeze could perhaps be attracting more urban

passengers who may not currently recognise the service is available to them as well as those travelling to and from the countryside. Will he also look at extending the 79 route to Ditchling village, which would be a significant additional destination point that would attract extra passenger journeys to the route?

Response: Councillor Muten

Thank you, Councillor West. This question is surprising as it comes from the party that saw the demise of the Breeze up to the Downs Partnership when they were in administration without taking effective steps to re-establish it. This was the partnership that promoted this service.

Nonetheless, there is an allocation of BSIP funding to promote the marketing of the supported services which include the Breeze network.

Furthermore, we are meeting with potential partners to re-establish the partnership with intent to both improve viability and better promote.

Before Covid19, the service 271 was diverted through Ditchling village but this was withdrawn due to lack of passengers. Should the 79 be extended to Ditchling then more slack would need to be built into the timetable which may result in a reduction in the frequency of the service. There is also an issue that the double decker bus is not considered suitable for the steep hill on the northside of Ditching Beacon. This would need replacing with a minibus or single decker reducing the capacity of the route and preventing the popular open top buses from running.

We are committed to improving the viability and sustainability of the Breeze up the Downs Bus services, to promote and develop in partnership better public access for residents and visitors to the South Downs.

(25) Councillor West- Concessionary Fares and Bus Service Improvement Plan Update

It is important for planning bus growth that the council have the certainty of a multi-year bus grant. Why then has the Labour government perpetuated their conservative predecessors' short-termism in continuing the one year funding approach? Is the cabinet calling on their Government to create a more certain future for bus grant funding?

Response: Councillor Muten

Thank you for your question, Councillor West. We might agree on the shortfalls of the Conservative government and their short-termism and decline in public services. This is one of many reasons why the country elected the party of change. Labour are committed to moving away from the past. This is why Labour are committed to longer term funding settlements; including bus services supported through a multi-year grants. The Department of Transport have given the Council strong indications that Bus support is a government priority and that there will be a three-year BSIP spending plan for 2026/27 to 2028/29. You might be pleased to hear they are expected to confirm this in Summer 2025. This Labour administration welcomes this.

(26) Councillor Sykes- City Economic Growth Board

The B&H Economic Plan, which is a key reference document in this paper, itself significantly references the city's asset base as a basis for underpinning growth ambitions. As we stated at the time the new Economic Plan was launched, despite this

asset focus there is little if any reference to the climate resilience of assets in the Economic Plan. How will the CEGB help rectify this gap and ensure our city and its growth ambition is prepared for future climate hazards?

Response: Councillor Taylor

I think the first thing to say that's really important is one of the core strategic imperatives, there were eight in the economic plan, is the following: which is to decarbonise and create a more regenerative economy. So it is central to what we know we need to do to get sustainable growth in the city, and obviously the country more broadly. It's also worth noting the significant efforts of this administration to undertake developing a real plan for decarbonisation, and I won't stray into party political points because I don't want to incur the wrath of Councillor West, but it is worth noting that the new decarbonisation report that Councillor Rowkins has brought forward, and the plans that unfold from that, are quite a significant departure from the approach that has been taken in previous years.

So, I'm agreeing with you in the substance of your question in that yes, the resiliency of assets or our asset base, which is significant in the city. As you know have large portfolio commercial buildings, housing, property but also the downland estate and other farm assets in the city. The resilience is obviously very important, but that is already included in a sense in that the overall plan is very focused on decarbonisation and a more regenerative economy.

(27) Councillor Sykes- Red Routes Update

The paper and the positive results of the new red routes are welcomed and I'm sure Brunswick and Adelaide will welcome the proposal to consider a red route for Western Road Hove. However, one side effect of parking congestion has been that it limits to an extent speeding vehicles, which have been a real problem on Western Road Hove. Please can the Cabinet Member advise on how the problem of speeding vehicles will be included in appraisal of the new red routes?

Response: Councillor Muten

We welcome your party's support for the proposed red route on Western Road. Cyclists, pedestrians and disability groups all report improvements to safety with fewer obstructions and clearer sight lines where we have introduced red routes in our city. Bus passenger injuries are fewer and air qualities improve with less congestion. There are overwhelming safety improvements. Council officers will liaise with Sussex Police to assess the impacts of speeding vehicles. You'll note a caution about their deduction is noted. Adherence to speed limits will be factored in as a consideration within the design. The proposals for the majority of loading and parking bays will be on the south side of the road, with bus stops on the north side themselves which will form chicanes in the road. These have proven to assist in road safety by slowing the traffic. It's also important to note that the key strategic corridor for buses, which will be stopping at bus stops to load and unload passengers, which would limit increased speeds.

Red routes provide significant safety benefits through encouraging responsible parking and not creating hazardous obstacles for passing traffic. I'm not suggesting necessarily those are responsible for the incident you refer to in the Norfolk Square but it's possible that there might be some incidents whilst vehicles are manoeuvring around illegally

parked vehicles and also cyclists report such hazards as well having to go into the stream of passing traffic to avoid an illegally parked car or van. But yes, in short we will look at this in the design and to make sure there's a here adherence of speed limits. Thank you.

(28) Councillor McLeay- Future of New England House

There is evidence that the council have been aware of the fire risks at New England House (NEH) for some years. Can the cabinet make a formal commitment to adequately compensate businesses who have, in good faith, invested tens of thousands of pounds in refurbishment (some as recently as September 2024)?

Response: Councillor Taylor

The issue of compensation and support for tenants is being considered and we are seeking legal advice on this issue. We know this is important for all tenants and there will be further discussion with tenants in the coming weeks.

(29) Councillor McLeay- Future of New England House

Can the cabinet commit to compensating businesses that will need to relocate expensive and complex machinery?

Response: Councillor Taylor

The council is considering compensation options to contribute towards tenants' moving costs. There will be further discussion with tenants in the coming weeks.

(30) Councillor McLeay- Future of New England House

With the notice period officially starting March 20th, and given the severe lack of space in the city for these independent businesses to use, how much flexibility can be given for businesses unable to secure a relocation site ahead of September 30th? What reassurances can be shared with the anxious business owners of NEH today?

Response: Councillor Taylor

This report is intended to give tenants certainty that the building must be vacated by 30th September.

The report does not 'officially' give notice to tenants. Formal written notice will be given to tenants individually in accordance with the terms of their tenancy documents.

For almost every tenant, this means they must vacate the building by 30 September.

The council is considering whether a handful of tenants can stay longer. Those tenants will be contacted imminently, if they have not already.

We aim to be flexible with notice periods for tenants, permitting them to vacate earlier than their notice period.

(31) Councillor McLeay- Future of New England House

The report for Cabinet references an internal audit being done to review the decision making up to the temporary closure of New England House in November 2024. Given the scale and impact of the issues at NEH, will Cabinet consider an external investigation, rather than solely an internal audit?

Response: Councillor Taylor

It's a fair question. The council has a good internal audit team who I know well and are independent, rigorous and well qualified. It's really important that the council can learn its own lessons and we have to embed a culture where we can question and challenge ourselves, and our own internal audit team can do that level of scrutiny and reporting. The report will be published and we can have a look at that and its conclusions.

I just would say a further external report would obviously add cost, and that would be money that would be taken away from potential further refurbishment or support from tenants, so I think the right approach is a good internal audit that we then bring to Audit and Standards Committee that Councillor West will chair and Members will obviously interrogate it.

(32) Councillor McLeay- Future of New England House

There are multiple council owned properties within BHCC's commercial portfolio, including the former Lloyds bank building at Preston Circus. What steps are being taken to review all of BHCC's commercial assets to review the possibility of them being used as meanwhile space for NEH tenants until refurbishment has been completed? I would specifically like to know the position regarding the empty Lloyds bank building as I believe the council has previously resisted use as meanwhile space to charities in the city, but my understanding is the property continues to sit empty.

Response: Councillor Taylor

So I mean broadly the thrust of your question is what the Council are doing. We're looking at our entire commercial and operational portfolio to try and find solutions. There's obviously specific needs and tenants, it's not always that they will line up with the space that the Council have, but that is exactly what we're attempting to do. But I'm also trying to assist more generally. But as I said in my answer to the earlier question, that there's no point us pretending that we will have perfect solutions for every tenant but the council understands acutely the contribution that the businesses in that building made to the local economy, and the diversity and creativity of the local economy, so it's really important we try and find those spaces if we can within our own portfolio. Specifically on that building, the Lloyds Bank building, it's actually going to be let this week and that will be, I don't know whether that'll be announced or not in terms of who's taking it, but it has been let and so is no longer available.

(33) Councillor McLeay- Large Panel System Blocks Programme Update

There is an overall budget envelope of £18.8m across the next 5 years, but in papers for the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2025/26 to 2028/29 it was highlighted that over the short term there is a need to ensure the blocks remain safe with measures being introduced which require a significant revenue investment for the HRA. Considering the

level of investment required and that this is a national issue, with leaseholders across the country continuing to be on the hook for huge sums to make homes safe, what work is being done to claim compensation from the failings of an unregulated construction industry? Could Cabinet press the Government for more support on fire remediation issues?

Response: Councillor Taylor

We have reviewed the council's commercial property portfolio and have provided links to our agent's website where details of all vacant properties available for review. We are also considering properties within our operational portfolio to provide alternative accommodation for tenants.

A new letting is due to complete on the Lloyds bank building this week and is no longer available.

169 MATTERS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE

There were none.

170 REPRESENTATIONS FROM OPPOSITION MEMBERS

- 170.1 Cabinet received a representation from Councillor Hill on Item 172, Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation
- 170.2 Cabinet received a representation from Councillor McLeay on Item 173, Future of New England House.

171 CITY ECONOMIC GROWTH BOARD

- 171.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought approval for the establishment of a new Economic Growth Board.
- 171.2 Councillors Daniel and Rowkins contributed to the debate of the report.
- 171.3 **Resolved-**
 - 1) That Cabinet agrees to note the establishment of the Economic Growth Board and formally designate the Economic Growth Board as an outside body in line with Government guidance.
 - 2) That Cabinet agrees to nominate the Cabinet Member for City Finance and Regeneration as the council's representative on the Board.

172 DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

- 172.1. Cabinet considered a report that set out the proposed responses from Brighton & Hove City Council to the Government consultation on devolution, which would close on 13 April. 2025. The report also sets out the proposed initial submission to Government on local government reorganisation, which was required to be submitted by 21st March 2025.

172.2. Councillors Williams, Taylor, Allen, Robins, Miller, Muten, Rowkins, Hewitt and Sankey contributed to the debate of the report.

172.3. **Resolved-**

That Cabinet:

- 1) Agrees to submit the response to the Government's devolution consultation for Sussex & Brighton as attached at Appendix 1.
- 2) Agrees to submit the response to the statutory invitation letter on local government reorganisation outlining Brighton & Hove's interim plan as attached at Appendix 2.
- 3) Delegates authority to the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader, to make formatting, typographical or factual changes to ensure accuracy to the documents referred to at 2.1 and 2.2 prior to final submission.
- 4) Notes a further report will come to Cabinet prior to submission of the Council's final proposal on local government reorganisation in September 2025.

173 FUTURE OF NEW ENGLAND HOUSE

173.1 Cabinet considered a report that recommended that vacant possession of New England House be secured to be able to undertake a full refurbishment or redevelopment of the site due to urgent fire risk.

173.2 Councillor Allen, Miller, Robins and Rowkins contributed to the debate of the report.

173.3 **Resolved-**

- 1) Cabinet agrees that the Council seek to secure vacant possession of New England House with a target date of 30 September 2025 in view of the need for the building to comply with all current fire safety standards.
- 2) Cabinet notes that a further report will be brought forward in Summer 2025 asking for approval of a recommendation for the future of New England House.

174 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY – ALLOCATION AND FUTURE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

174.1 Cabinet considered a report that seeks approval to allocate Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts and also proposed new governance arrangements for spending of neighbourhood CIL as well as planning future CIL expenditure to align with the cabinet decision making process.

174.2 Councillors Cattell, Robins, Alexander, Miller, Muten and Robinson contributed to the debate of the report.

174.3 **Resolved-**

- 1) Cabinet agrees to use £2.42m of CIL Citywide receipts to support existing priority seafront capital regeneration project expenditure in 24/25.
- 2) Cabinet agrees to use up to £184k of CIL Citywide receipts to support eligible projects in the Thriving Communities Fund programme
- 3) Cabinet agrees to use £235.9k of CIL Citywide receipts to top up available Neighbourhood CIL funds in 17 wards (as outlined in Appendix B of this report).
- 4) Cabinet requests an annual report that will outline how residual s106/CIL and neighbourhood CIL money has been spent over the previous 12 months and to provide a programme of options for spending forecast CIL money to ensure projects are supporting Council infrastructure priorities.

175 RED ROUTES UPDATE

- 175.1 Cabinet considered a report that reviewed the two experimental Red Route corridors in sections of London Road, Lewes Road and Preston Road and outlined the benefits and issues arising from implementation and sought a mandate to proceed with design, engagement and implementation of a red route for Queens Road, Western Road from Holland Road to Montpelier Road.
- 175.2 Councillors Muten, Sanket, Williams, Miller Robinson, Robins and Rowkins asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.
- 175.3 **Resolved-**
- 1) Cabinet agrees to proceed with the red route in Queens Road, as set out in Appendix 3
 - 2) Cabinet agrees to proceed with the design and implementation of a new red route along the Western Road corridor (from Holland Road to Montpelier Road). As set out in Appendix 3

176 CONCESSIONARY FARES AND BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

- 176.1 Cabinet considered a report that updated on negotiations with bus operators in the city for a fixed deal to cover the cost of concessionary fare journeys made by eligible older persons and disabled concessionary pass holders for the period commencing 1 April 2024 and sought approval for the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) programme for 2025-26 to release grant funding from the Department for Transport (DfT).
- 176.2 Councillors Sankey, Robinson and Robins asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.
- 176.3 **Resolved-**
- 1) Cabinet notes the conclusion of negotiations on concessionary fares payments with bus operators and agrees to the payment of the fixed deals as set out in Part 2 of this report.

- 2) Cabinet agrees to the use of negotiated fixed deals as the preferred option for the next 3 years with all bus operators for the reimbursement of concessionary fares and grants delegated authority to the Corporate Director for City Services to conduct and conclude such negotiations so that expenditure is less than would otherwise be calculated using the new DfT calculator.
- 3) Cabinet approves the BSIP Delivery Plan required for release of the 2025-26 Bus Grant totalling £9.729 million.

177 LARGE PANEL SYSTEM BLOCKS PROGRAMME UPDATE

177.1 Cabinet considered a report that updated on the steps the council has taken to ensure that the 8 large panel system (LPS) blocks within its portfolio remain safe for habitation, while long term options for the buildings are explored.

177.2 Resolved-

- 1) That Cabinet agrees to implement the policy as set out in this report for the continued buy-back of leaseholder properties formerly bought under right to buy in Dudney Lodge, Nettleton Court, Falcon Court, Heron Court, Kestrel Court, Kingfisher Court, Swallow Court and St James House.
- 2) That Cabinet notes the five-year projected budget of £18.770m agreed at Budget Council 27 February 2025 to support the buy-back of leaseholder properties in Dudney Lodge, Nettleton Court, Falcon Court, Heron Court, Kestrel Court, Kingfisher Court, Swallow Court and St James House.

178 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE DEBT POLICY

178.1 Cabinet considered a report that requested approval of a revised Corporate Debt Policy.

178.2 Councillors Sankey and Alexander contributed to the debate of the report.

178.3 Resolved-

- 1) That Cabinet approves the revised Corporate Debt Policy as Appendix 4 and agrees that it is put into practice with effect from 1 April 2025 to replace the policy last updated in 2021.

179 BRIGHTON AND HOVE FAIRNESS FUND AND HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 2025-26

179.1 Cabinet considered a report that requested approval of the allocation of funds from the Brighton & Hove Fairness Fund (BHFF), incorporating allocation of the Household Support Fund (HSF) for 2025/26.

179.2 Resolved-

- 1) That Cabinet approves the approach set out in Section 3 including the proposed allocations of funding from the Brighton & Hove Fairness Fund and the Household Support Fund 2025/26.
- 2) That Cabinet delegates authority to the S151 Chief Financial Officer, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration, to make minor alterations to the allocation of the Household Support Fund in order to maximise its use in accordance with the relevant time constraints.
- 3) That Cabinet receives a report at the end of the 2025-26 year, outlining how the Fairness Fund and Household Support Fund has been utilised and what outcomes have been achieved as a result.

Note: Councillors Daniel and Alexander left the Chamber during discussion of the report due to declaring an interest in the item.

180 PLANNED MAINTENANCE BUDGET AND ASSET MANAGEMENT FUND ALLOCATIONS AND EDUCATION CAPITAL RESOURCES AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2025-2026

- 180.1 Cabinet considered a report that provided information of the level of available capital resources allocated to support education buildings and recommended a capital programme for 2025/26 in respect of School Condition Allocations, Basic Needs and High Needs Provision Capital Allocation funding. The report also sought approval for the annual revenue budget allocation and programme of maintenance, improvements and Health & Safety works for the council's operational property portfolio. In this respect, the report details the allocations for two budget areas: The Planned Maintenance Budget and the Asset Management Fund.
- 180.2 Councillor Robinson contributed to the debate of the report.
- 180.3 **Resolved-**
- 1) Cabinet notes the level of available capital resources totalling £4.200m for investment relating to education buildings.
 - 2) Cabinet agrees the allocation of funding as shown in Appendix 1 for inclusion within the council's Capital Investment Programme 2025/26.
 - 3) Cabinet grants delegated authority to the Director of Property & Finance to procure the capital maintenance and basic need works required, as set out in Appendix 1, and enter into contracts in accordance with Contract Standing Orders.
 - 4) Cabinet approves the annual programme of planned maintenance works within the Planned Maintenance Budget as detailed in Appendix 2, at a total estimated cost of £4,441,940.
 - 5) Cabinet approves the allocations from the Asset Management Fund for 2025-26, totalling £1,000,000, as detailed in Appendix 3.

- 6) Cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Property & Finance to take all steps necessary to procure the Planned Maintenance Budget works and Asset Management Fund improvement works and award contracts within these budgets and in accordance with Contract Standing Orders.

181 FUTURE OF NEW ENGLAND HOUSE (EXEMPT CATEGORY 3)

As per the part one minutes.

182 CONCESSIONARY FARES AND BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE (EXEMPT CATEGORY 3)

As per the part one minutes.

183 PART TWO PROCEEDINGS

- 183.1 **Resolved-** That the confidential items listed on the agenda remain exempt from disclosure to the press and public.

The meeting concluded at 5.40pm