

CABINET ADDENDUM ONE

2.00PM, THURSDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2025

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

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Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 79(b)

Subject: Public Questions

Date of meeting: 11 December 2025

A period of not more than thirty minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting for questions submitted by a member of the public.

The following written questions have been received from members of the public:

(1) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Jess Jetmore

We know the savings from closing our library has been estimated at £20,000. Given the school it is attached to doesn't need the additional space, there is no realistic future for this building. If Westdene closes, what is the plan if the building sits empty and incurs security, maintenance, and deterioration costs that wipe out the claimed saving?

(2) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Isobel Foxon

Part of your consultation mentions that the southern part of our ward go to Hove library instead of Westdene. This is of course true, the southern part of our ward being Hove Park. Because our Ward is so big, you've disproportionately allocated low footfall and low responses in the consultation to a large ward. Westdene is a small community with a one-room library, and the response it has generated is huge relative to the area it serves and the library's size.

Moreover, Westdene pupils access the library daily through the internal school door, including during unstaffed hours. We don't believe this footfall was counted. Why has flawed and incomplete data continued to be used as the basis for recommending closure?

(3) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Ruth Williams

Clause 3.50 records that the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee formally recommended that Cabinet 'do not proceed with the libraries closure plan at this time'; why is Cabinet choosing to advance the closure of Westdene Library despite this scrutiny warning?

(4) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Esther Sweeney

Given that the Equality Impact Assessment identifies elderly residents, disabled residents, and SEN children as disproportionately affected by the closure of Westdene Library, how can councillors lawfully proceed with a permanent closure without first demonstrating that all reasonable alternatives have been fully explored and transparently costed in a way that satisfies the Public Sector Equality Duty?

(5) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Roni Graham

The report relies heavily on not only the use of alternative libraries, which are genuinely challenging for primary age, elderly and disabled in our community to access (and a double bus option with a major A road between is not an acceptable alternative for these vulnerable groups) but also strong reliance is placed on the Home Delivery Service. The service is only staffed and operated by volunteers and, as such, is irregular (only running when suitably mobile volunteers are available) and unreliable. As the library service has also placed a ban on recruiting new volunteers, how will councillors ensure that this service is up to the job that you claim it needs to be in order to provide a genuinely workable acceptable alternative for those that need it most if Westdene Library closes?

(6) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Alicia Buckingham

Councillors are being asked to vote on permanently closing Westdene Library when some of the most important information still hasn't been published. We still haven't seen the financial figures for what Jubilee Library will actually cost once the PFI ends, we haven't seen our feedback properly incorporated into your consultation papers, and we haven't seen the assessment of the city-wide alternative that could save money without closures. Without those pieces of evidence, what is this decision actually being based on?

(7) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Louisa Taylor

The footfall data on which the review of Westdene Library's use was based appears to have been from a period prior to the announcement of proposed closure and consultation. The footfall and use since that announcement has increased significantly. Residents often move in/out of Westdene and many were not aware of the library's existence (if you enter the school only from the bottom field or do not pass through the one-way system on Bankside you would not see that it exists because it is very small). The proposal to close the library has highlighted its existence to local residents and the need/use mix has since increased. Why has there been no attempt to look at the current data, in the light of the recommendation by the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee not to go ahead with the proposals to close the library?

(8) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Marisa Brown

Like Rottingdean, Westdene residents cannot resource a library in the timescale proposed and have a much higher number of elderly residents and disabled residents than other parts of the city. Additionally, Westdene has no public transport route to the proposed alternative library and long walk over two miles with hills and crossing the busy A23. Given the similarities, why is Rottingdean library recommended to be retained but Westdene to close?

(9) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Tara Coffey

I understand the closure of Westdene will save you 20k, what is the breakdown of this figure as the books and building are already paid for, as is the salaried member of staff?

(10) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Kate Reid

You've described these closures as the 'first phase', with additional community-library closures already being planned or modelled for the next phase. Why has the public not been told that this is the beginning of a wider programme?

(11) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Julie Lawrence

We welcome the fact that the proposal to close Rottingdean library has now been removed from the proposals for Cabinet. This responds to the serious concerns raised by residents about losing Rottingdean library that acts a crucial community hub and welcomes nearly 30,000 visits annually, fosters literacy among local school children—especially those without access to books at home, as well as providing older residents with vital educational information, support, and opportunities for social interaction. Will the Cabinet now remove any uncertainty by providing an assurance that if your officers find that “alternative community-based provision” is not possible, Rottingdean Library will remain as part of the library network and that all possible alternatives will be fully explored and presented to Cabinet before any libraries are considered for closure in the future?

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 80(a)

Subject: Member Questions

Date of meeting: 11 December 2025

A maximum period of fifteen minutes in total shall be made available at each meeting of the Executive for questions from Members of the Council. The questions included on the list of questions referred to above shall be taken as read at the Cabinet meeting. The question will be answered either orally or at the discretion of the Chair by a written answer circulated after the meeting. Officers may assist the Leader or a Cabinet Member with technical answers to questions. No supplementary questions shall be permitted.

The following written questions have been received from Members:

(1) Councillor Fishleigh- Sustainability plan for Libraries

We never received a breakdown of how BHCC came up with the figure of £25k to run Rottingdean library. Now that figure has increased to £40k. Please would you provide a breakdown of this.

(2) Councillor Fishleigh- Sustainability plan for Libraries

Several statements justify library closures as our city has more libraries per person population. This justification is inappropriate. UK Gov reports by The Centre for Cities shows our population has 56% high level qualification (NVQ4 or above). This puts our city 5th in the UK, just below Oxford, Edinburgh, Cambridge and London. Brighton and Hove is above 57 other UK cities/urban areas. Students require books and digital access to learning materials and spaces. The outcome of closures and restrictions on student access to learning materials is to reduce learning outcomes, employability opportunities, taxable earnings and public services relying on taxable incomes. Why is this demographic context omitted?

(3) Councillor Fishleigh- Our City Transport Plan

On page 426 of the cabinet report it gives £18.626m as the total funding allocation for transport 2026/7. Please would you tell me the breakdown between ring-fenced grants and BHCC funds?

(4) Councillor Fishleigh- Our City Transport Plan

Given the maintenance backlog of £57 million on our roads and £37.3 million on our footways, do you agree that all non-essential, nice to have schemes paid for from BHCC funds should be deprioritised in favour of mending existing pavements and roads?

(5) Councillor Fishleigh- Our City Transport Plan

The report states that Pavement parking is a major issue in the city and BHCC has campaigned central government for the power to be able to enforce pavement parking. Should we ask our three MPs to raise this again with the Government?

(6) Councillor Fishleigh- Our City Transport Plan

Figure 7 on page 426 of the cabinet report doesn't show that Rottingdean High Street has congestion and capacity issues. Previous studies have identified the High Street is a problem area so why is it being excluded in this report for measures to address the issues there?

(7) Councillor Fishleigh- Our City Transport Plan

Figure 7 also shows average delays on the A259 between Saltdean and Roedean of 30-50 seconds which is not people's lived experience. The plan is to create additional bus and cycle lanes but these will not help. Congestion of west-bound traffic is caused by the existing bus lane just east of the Rottingdean High Street/A259 junction and congestion of east-bound traffic is caused by issues in Telscombe and Peacehaven as well as bus stops. Will you commit to a more detailed analysis of the issues and working with ESCC to resolve them?

(8) Councillor Meadows- Sustainability plan for Libraries

When Hollingbury library was closed, residents were promised a new library, which was located in Old Boat Corner Community Centre. However, this library has over the last couple of years been reduced to only opening one day a week. There has been a lack of advertising on the part of the council. No wonder footfall is low. Has Hollingbury library been set up to fail? Is the use and needs analysis flawed because of this?

(9) Councillor McNair- Sustainability plan for Libraries

At budget council in February 2025, the Conservative Group proposed maintaining library funding and keeping all three libraries open by reducing the Advisor-Led Antiracism Strategy funding of £80,000. Does the Administration regret not using our suggestion to protect community assets?

(10) Councillor McNair- Sustainability plan for Libraries

Why did the Labour Administration propose closing Rottingdean library in their carefully planned budget in February only to reverse their decision and support Rottingdean library ten months later?

(11) Councillor Meadows- Sustainability plan for Libraries

With Rottingdean library being saved, what will be cut in its place?

(12) Councillor Meadows- Sustainability plan for Libraries

As only £35,000 is being saved by closing Westdene and Hollingbury libraries, surely money can be found to protect these community assets?

(13) Councillor Meadows- Sustainability plan for Libraries

The council has been working to propose means of maintaining some level of library service in Westdene and Hollingbury libraries for months. What concrete plans are there for these libraries to continue under different auspices?

(14) Councillor Meadows- Sustainability plan for Libraries

What further cuts to library services are coming?

(15) Councillor Meadows- Sustainability plan for Libraries

Why has there been a reduction in funding for homelessness?

(16) Councillor Meadows- Royal Pavilion & Museums Trust Service Fee 2026-31

The Royal Pavilion Trust has been able to secure £6m in funding from outside of the council. Despite this, why is the council still going to give the Trust £2.1m despite the it being unable to meet its £4m repayment plan agreed with the council?

(17) Councillor Hill- General Fund Draft Budget & Resource Update - 2026-27 to 2029-30

On page 232 there is a proposal that the £65,000 Cemeteries Maintenance Reserve is to be pooled with other risks under a general risk reserve. It would seem the future financial position of the council will lead to extreme pressures on the general reserves. What reassurances can the administration give that taking away a dedicated maintenance reserve for cemeteries will not harm cemetery maintenance?

(18) Councillor Hill- General Fund Draft Budget & Resource Update - 2026-27 to 2029-30

Page 131 regarding Registration Services says there will be a 'Comprehensive transformation of registration services by streamlining processes, optimising resources and embedding efficiency into service delivery risk and impact: Implications of managing change and challenging old ways of working – potential staffing challenges during the transition period'.

This is very opaque language that does not explain what the proposed changes to registration are, leaving me unsure how the 60k savings will be realised. Is this just a long way of saying the Administration is cutting jobs in the registration services team?

(19) Councillor Shanks- Sustainability plan for Libraries

Why has the Cabinet decided to ignore the recommendation from the People Scrutiny committee to shelve the library cuts, and the subsequent one which was to moth ball even if closed which was passed unanimously even to the extent of not mentioning them in the report?

(20) Councillor Pickett- Sustainability plan for Libraries

Residents are in agreement that this plan is too rushed and hasn't given interested residents, such as those in Westdene, the opportunity, and in the main, time, to fully engage to work out ways to keep a community library running, possibly by volunteers. Why can't this plan be mothballed, as suggested by the People Scrutiny and Overview Committee, so that residents have time to properly work out ways to make this can happen?

(21) Councillor Pickett- Sustainability plan for Libraries

As the library service is currently rewriting its current strategy regarding services, finances and forward plans, why can't the proposed closures wait until this strategy is complete so that we have a more thorough idea of how to move forward with possible closures and ways of making savings?

(22) Councillor Pickett- Sustainability plan for Libraries

Once the library at Westdene closes the children of Westdene Primary School will no longer have access to a school library. What provision will they have to access books, other than text books, in school?

(23) Councillor Pickett- Sustainability plan for Libraries

What will happen to the empty buildings once the libraries cease to function? I note that Westdene library is part of the school. How will this work?

(24) Councillor Sykes- General Fund Draft Budget & Resource Update - 2026-27 to 2029-30

To the background of the impact of the cost of temporary accommodation on council budgets, what actions are the administration pursuing to influence the cost of housing to residents and how is the effectiveness of these actions being monitored?

(25) Councillor McLeay- Regulator of Social Housing - response to regulatory judgement including Procurement of Stock Conditions Contractor

Are all FRA reports available for inspection by residents and if not, when can they be made available?

(26) Councillor McLeay- Regulator of Social Housing - response to regulatory judgement including Procurement of Stock Conditions Contractor

In a recent report, it stated that the fire safety actions remain high, although it has reduced from 6420 to 4855. Of the 4855 outstanding actions, how many of them are serious breaches, and if there are any serious breaches, how many of them have not been completed within the target remediation date mentioned on the FRA? We have been awaiting an update since Place Scrutiny.

