

CABINET ADDENDUM THREE

2.00PM, THURSDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2026

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

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BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

CABINET

2.00pm 22 JANUARY 2026

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

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

PART ONE

94 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

94a Declarations of interests

94.1 There were none.

94b Exclusion of the press and public

94.2 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.

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

95 MINUTES

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

96 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

96.1 The Chair provided the following Communications:

"We're starting 2026 in Brighton and Hove with a real energy and a clear sense of purpose for our city. This afternoon's agenda tells a powerful story about the kind of council and the kind of city that we are determined to be, one where young people help shape decisions where we double down on recycling and climate action where we deliver our Council plan and protect vital services and where we seize on the

opportunities of devolution, where we invest in safe, sustainable projects and where we protect and enhance our precious natural environment.

We begin with a refreshed model for our Youth Council moving to a Cabinet style system, strengthening links with senior officers and cabinet members and creating regular opportunities for young people to present directly to our corporate leadership team and to full council.

This is about putting young people front and centre in how we discuss things and make decisions here at the Council, including for a youth takeover day that will take place this year and youth led consultations and listening events that make sure their priorities genuinely influences what this Council does.

We're also discussing today a new, ambitious programme to move to more recycling and less waste, building on our increased investment, expanded curbside recycling and the successful roll out of weekly food waste collections so that over the next decade we can work towards doubling our recycling rates. By using better data, smarter rounds, engagement with residents and staff, and exploring changes such as alternate weekly collections for residual waste, we want a more reliable, efficient service that clearly supports our net zero and our circular economy ambitions.

Alongside this, the updated circular economy route map and action plan 2025 to 2035 will embed circular principles across the city's economy, from construction and the visitor economy to food systems and digital innovation, supporting green jobs, resource efficiency and a fair and more resilient local economy. We want to keep our money within Brighton and Hove.

This route map positions Brighton and Hove as a leader in the circular economy, aligned with our council plan and our national move towards a green industrial revolution.

Our Mid-Year Council plan performance update shows that even with a forecast General Fund overspend and significant pressures in key services, we continue to make strong progress against our four priorities:

a city to be proud of, a fair and inclusive city, a healthy city and a responsive, learning Council.

From culture change in environmental services to improved housing safety, strengthen safeguarding practise and a more diverse and inclusive workforce, the Council is demonstrating that we can be both forward-thinking and financially responsible.

The accompanying risk management framework and strategic risks underline that we are serious about managing challenges from keeping our city clean and safe to ensuring property compliance, delivering devolution and reorganisation well and safeguarding our most vulnerable residents.

This is about being honest about risk while staying focused on improvement and innovation.

Today, we'll also be considering very excitingly the next steps in creating a Sussex and Brighton Mayoral Combined County Authority and preparations for hosting a mayoral election later down the road.

There has been a delay to the mayoral election, which was announced by government last month. Our message to our city today is very much that devolution is still on track. Devolution itself has not been delayed and we are working, if anything more earnestly and more ambitiously with our partners in East and West Sussex to create this new strategic authority by May this year and to get underway, working with government, receiving their investment fund and starting to make strategic decisions in the interest of all our residents in Brighton and wider Sussex.

Several items today focus on our housing and our neighbourhoods, urgent electrical mains replacement in council housing, procurement for the Brickfields development and

our ongoing programme to improve housing safety and compliance. The progress is the regulator of housings judgement is good from dramatically improving smoke alarm coverage and electrical testing to tackling repairs backlogs and fire safety actions and I think it reflects a Council that has moved from a crisis response to a phase of consolidation, improvement and accountability.

I also think I should be open about the fact that since we last met, cabinet decisions relating to housing have been taken as executive decisions do, in particular by myself.

Given the urgency concerned in both cases, a report on these decisions is coming to full Council for information at our full Council meeting next week, and this report can be accessed on the Council's website under the published agenda for full Council on the 29th of January. It gives the full detail of those decisions and it links to the decision report themselves with the background to the issues, the decisions taken and the region reasons for urgency, I will only exercise special urgency powers where the decision cannot wait until the next Cabinet meeting and where the Chair of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee has confirmed that they agree with this position, which happened in both of these cases over the last month. It's my preference for all executive decision reports to come here to Cabinet but this is not always possible in exceptional circumstances and I want to ensure that residents and anyone in attendance today or watching online are aware that these decisions are published and accessible and also reported to full Council for transparency.

Today we'll also consider future arrangements for all this services to ensure our back office functions are modern, efficient and fit for purpose, helping us get the best value for every pound that we spend. These are not always headline decisions, but they are fundamental to well-run services and keeping residents safe, supported and crucially informed. And finally, today our biodiversity habitat, bank pilot at Saint Michael's Field, both the open report and its exempt companion showcases a new way of investing in nature, improving habitats and unlocking biodiversity net gain in and around the city. This is about turning our climate and ecological ambitions into practical projects on the ground, creating richer green spaces for communities while supporting sustainable development.

So as we move through the agenda items today, the thread running through this meeting is clear. A council that listens and learns that plans for the long term and that works with our young people, residents and partners to build a cleaner, fairer, healthier Brighton and Hove where everybody has a chance to thrive.

97 CALL OVER

97.1 The following items on the agenda were reserved for discussion:

- Item 102: Youth Participation Update
- Item 103: More recycling, Less Waste- A new collection model
- Item 104: 2025/26 Mid-Year Council Plan Progress Update
- Item 105: Sussex and Brighton Devolution and Mayoral Election
- Item 107: Circular Economy Routemap and Action Plan 2025-2035
- Item 108: Orbis Services Future Model
- Item 109: Urgent Work for Incoming & Lateral Electrical Mains Replacement in Council Housing
- Item 110: Housing Management Procurement for Brickfields Development
- Item 111: Biodiversity Habitat Bank Pilot at St Michaels Field

97.2 The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that the items listed above had been reserved for discussion and that the following reports on the agenda with the recommendations therein had been approved and adopted:

- Item 106: Council Tax Base and Business Rates Retention Forecasts 2026/27

98 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

98.1 There were none.

99 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS

99.1 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- More recycling, less waste – a new collection model

Have refuse vehicle numbers increased since 2023?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

Refuse Trucks, 2023 = 57 to now = 63

The increase in trucks has been part of the fleet replacement programme and the introduction of food waste collections. The replacement programme has seen 9 refuse vehicles replaced since 2023 with 9 additional due to arrive in November, and this is being managed as part of a new fleet strategy that is addressing the historic under investment in fleet. In addition, we have 5 new vehicles for our food waste service

2. Councillor McNair- More recycling, less waste – a new collection model

Have Environmental Services staff numbers gone up since 2023?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

Yes, there has been an increase in the number of permanent and temporary staff across the whole service as part of the improvement programme, and introduction of new services such as food waste collections. We have also increased the number of mechanics to increase resilience of the fleet service and projects staff to deliver the service improvements. As we continue to transform and improve the service we will ensure that the right level of resources are in place for a resilient service.

3. Councillor McNair- More recycling, less waste – a new collection model

How many vehicle breakdowns have there been since November 2025?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

The number of breakdowns since November is as follows:

Nov – 6
Dec – 5
Jan – 5

In addition to breakdowns, vehicles also develop defects which, may lead to future breakdowns or impact safety. These defects can also mean a vehicle is off the road while it is addressed. We have instigated measures last year to identify and address more defects at the end of shifts so that triage and maintenance can take place well in advance of the following morning.

4. Councillor Meadows- More recycling, less waste – a new collection model

Does the 99% collection rate (3.3) refer to the same day or within 48 hours?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

The collection performance is a weekly figure and is based on the number of bins collected on the scheduled collection day. Since the introduction of the digital in cab technology system, the service has access to reliable data which is used to understand performance each week. We are working towards a service standard that will ensure any missed work is collected in 48 hours, but the data below is based on collections on the scheduled collection day.

Week commencing	Week number	Achievement
03-Nov 25	45	98.824%
10-Nov-25	46	99.364%
17-Nov-25	47	98.898%
24-Nov-25	48	98.509%
01-Dec-25	49	96.983%
08-Dec-25	50	93.932%
15-Dec-25	51	99.674%
22-Dec-25	52	98.161%

5. Councillor Meadows- More recycling, less waste – a new collection model

Residents in Patcham & Hollingbury have not experienced a collection rate of 99% this winter. What is the rubbish and recycling rates in Patcham & Hollingbury and Westdene & Hove Park?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

We do not hold recycling rates or refuse collection data, broken down by ward. The current round structure does not correlate with wards as some cross over into different areas, meaning the data would not represent figures for a ward. We know that some areas of the city have had greater issues than others, and this is a matter of great concern and one that we are absolutely focused on and will address as the service continues to become more resilient. For instance we are doing a deep dive into Saltdean as this is an area where we acknowledge improvements are needed. We have made

some changes to rounds in Hove Park area that have addressed some issues we previously had.

6. Councillor Meadows- More recycling, less waste – a new collection model

Is introducing a fortnightly refuse collection and fortnightly food collection a cost-cutting exercise?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

This report seeks approval to model a fortnightly kerbside refuse collection only. All other streams would remain as they are, including food waste, which is weekly for kerbside and as often as daily in central communal locations.

With so much more waste coming out of the refuse bins and into recycling streams, we need to consider whether collecting half empty bins every week is the most sensible and efficient use of council resources.

In short, it is not about cost but about delivering the best and most efficient service possible to our residents.

7. Councillor McNair- More recycling, less waste – a new collection model

By implementing a fortnightly refuse collection, is the council admitting that the problems in the Environmental Services department investigated in the KC's report in 2023 are still ongoing?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

No. More than 80% of councils already collect refuse fortnightly or, in some cases, every 3 or 4 weeks.

8. Councillor McNair- More recycling, less waste – a new collection model

Is the council admitting that it does not have the staffing levels or vehicle availability to manage a weekly service?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

No. However, clearly a move to fortnightly would enable us to jettison some of our older vehicles, thereby improving the reliability of the fleet.

9. Councillor Meadows- More recycling, less waste – a new collection model

When is this reduced fortnightly service likely to be introduced?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

We are undertaking a review of the service as described in the report. There is no set timescale currently, and we plan to bring a report back to cabinet with the outcome of the review in the summer. If a move to fortnightly collection is recommended following

our review and engagement with residents, we would anticipate the earliest possible implementation around November 2026.

10. Councillor Meadows- Council Tax Base and Business Rates Retention Forecasts 2026/27

By what percentage are business rates increasing?

Response: Cllr Taylor

Business Rates are not increasing by a single percentage, as there are several changes which interact with each other, affecting different businesses in the city in different ways.

The changes are listed in the report, but the main changes include:

- A new valuation list
- Changes to business rates multipliers
- A new temporary transitional relief scheme
- A new temporary transitional supplement of 1p for those businesses not in receipt of transitional relief.

11. Councillor McNair- Council Tax Base and Business Rates Retention Forecasts 2026/27

How many businesses will be impacted by increasing business rates?

Response: Cllr Taylor

All businesses in the city will be affected by the business rates revaluation from 1 April 2026.

Following on from the answer to question 10, because of the way the different changes interact with each other, it is not yet possible to provide a figure of how many businesses will be impacted by increasing business rates. The updates required to the system that calculates and produces the bills will not be installed until mid-February.

12. Councillor Meadows- Council Tax Base and Business Rates Retention Forecasts 2026/27

Is the council providing any support to businesses under threat of closure?

Response: Cllr Taylor

Business rates hardship relief is available in certain circumstances.

Businesses can use the Growth Hub and BIPC at Jubilee Library for free. Services include training and guidance to other support resources. The Growth Hub offers a Sales Skills bootcamp with Freedom Works, has a Scale-up Programme for growing businesses, and runs the Brighton & Hove Business Launchpad for start-ups. More support options are being considered as resources allow.

13. Councillor McNair- Circular Economy Routemap and Action Plan 2025-35

What percentage of council tax is used to help the council achieve Net Zero?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

Work on Net Zero is embedded throughout the council, with multiple teams doing associated work – Highways, Parks, Planning, Estates, Housing and of course the Net Zero Team itself.

These teams receive funding from multiple sources, including central government grants, HRA and general fund, of which council tax is a part.

Polls show that work on climate has strong support from the public. Much of our work delivers warmer homes and lower bills for some of our most deprived residents.

14. Councillor Meadows- Circular Economy Routemap and Action Plan 2025-35

What likelihood is there of the council and the city achieving net zero by 2030?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

Our Decarbonisation Pathways Study, published in late 2024, sets out the pace and scale required for the whole city to reach Net Zero and identifies the key projects required. We are working on an investment and delivery vehicle to accelerate progress as quickly as possible.

15. Councillor McNair- Circular Economy Routemap and Action Plan 2025-35

Is the drive to a circular demand the reason why contracts negotiated by the council are more expensive than they otherwise would be?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

If you can give me a better idea of what you are referring to, I can do my best to comment. The question suggests that you have a set of data that outline two contract costs – the amount spent by the council and a comparable but cheaper contract. If you're happy to send me that data, we can look into it.

In short though, good circular principles such as using recycled materials in new buildings, can lead to significant savings, which I assume you'll support.

16. Councillor Meadows- Biodiversity Habitat Bank Pilot at St Michael's Field

Could you please explain what a habitat bank is, what a unit is, and how it can be sold in plain English?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

Biodiversity Net Gain legislation requires developers to compensate for any potential loss of biodiversity as a result of their development. The legislation means that just mitigating what might be lost is not enough, and that a minimum 10% net increase is required.

Where that is not possible on-site, they must pay for this biodiversity net gain to be realised elsewhere, at a registered habitat bank. A habitat bank is therefore an area of land that is managed to provide an improvement in biodiversity, sustained over 30 years. This is sold as Biodiversity Net Gain units to developers.

A unit is a standardised measurement which places a value on habitat types based on how much biodiversity they support and the condition of the habitat, and is used to ensure that the purchaser is paying for the replacement and improvement of habitat types that are lost or damaged from a development. The units are registered on Natural England's national register and developers can purchase units directly from the landowner by searching the register or through a broker.

17. Councillor McNair- Biodiversity Habitat Bank Pilot at St Michael's Field

How is a habitat bank at St Michael's Field connected to Patcham Court Farm?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

The field referred to as St Michael's Field was part of Patcham Court Farm and previously used for agricultural purposes by the tenant of that farm. While the field is no longer leased to the farm tenant, it continues to have historical and geographical connections to Patcham Court Farm. The council staff responsible for delivering the habitat bank will continue to work in partnership with the farm tenant on joined up management of the field and surrounding landscape.

18. Councillor Meadows- Biodiversity Habitat Bank Pilot at St Michael's Field

Despite stating in paragraph 5.4 that ward councillors have been briefed on this, to the best of our knowledge, we haven't. When will we be?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

Ward Councillors have been contacted to set a date for this briefing, and a written briefing has been sent.

19. Councillor West- More Recycling, less waste - a new collection model

Moving to fortnightly rubbish collections was something the Green administration sought to do over ten years ago as part of a plan to introduce food waste collections. Labour in cahoots with the Conservative Group quashed that plan, leaving the city embarrassed to be one of the last councils in the country collecting refuse every week and without a food waste collection scheme until the previous Government made this mandatory. Would the Administration apologise for all those lost years when recycling would have been incentivised, food waste would have been composted and less 'waste' would have been incinerated?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

There is a fundamental difference between the Green Party's approach to recycling and ours – sequencing.

The Green proposal was to switch to fortnightly collections in the vague hope that it would improve recycling rates. Our approach has been as follows:

1. Finally address the fundamental and historic issues with the collections service
2. Expand the materials we collect for recycling
3. Introduce weekly food waste, along with the necessary funding from the council – and by the way, (aside from Lewes who have had it for some time) we were the first council in the region to start food waste rollout because we were progressing it before the government even announced mandated date.
4. Model fortnightly collections based on the significantly reduced waste in the bins, and using modern systems instead of pieces of paper.

The Green position on recycling is all over the place. First, it was “it’s not possible because of the contract”, then it was “you’re only doing it because you have to”, then it was “you shouldn’t be recycling plastics anyway” and now it’s “please apologise for the fact that the Green council wasn’t able to do it”. Now I know the Green Party doesn’t talk about the environment anymore, but my question to you is – given that you have twice called publicly for us not to expand our recycling provision, will you be lobbying Zack to include an end to plastics recycling the next Green manifesto?

20. Councillor Hill- Sussex and Brighton devolution and Mayoral election

Despite having a much smaller population than West and East Sussex respectively, our administration has agreed a memorandum of understanding to take on an equal third share of the value of the financial contributions and liabilities for the Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority of any future debt. While I understand the stated reason of this is due to each authority having equal voting rights, why should our city take on a disproportionate financial risk compared to our neighbouring councils in setting this up? In other words, are those 2 votes on the strategic authority really worth the extra cost for us?

Response: Cllr Hewitt

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) covering contributions and liabilities for the Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority will be time-limited and will end in May 2028 upon vesting of new unitary authorities following local government reorganisation. It is judged that risk of an overspend is very low given the resources that will be available to the new authority and the commitment from all constituent authorities to ensure a balanced budget. A range of mitigations to avoid an overspend have been agreed and are set out in the report to Cabinet.

The MOU aligns financial commitment to voting rights for this initial 2-year period. This was felt to be an appropriate approach to support partnership working at this critical phase and help secure agreement to deliver the benefits of devolution at the earliest opportunity. There is precedent in other Combined Authorities to agreeing a similar approach to that set out in the MOU despite disparities in population.

But let me make a further point, the collaboration we are seeking with East and West Sussex is historic – it is a genuine partnership based on coming together as equals, something this arrangement reinforces. Brighton & Hove will not be subservient, in fact we together with our partners in East and West Sussex are taking a leading role in

devolution. Unlike past Green led Council's we are financially prudent and this arrangement is one we have considered to be in the best interests of the City.

21. Councillor Hill- Sussex and Brighton devolution and Mayoral election

Our neighbouring constituent authorities will be potentially run by Councillors serving seven year terms from 2021 until 2028 when vesting day occurs a year after the new shadow authorities are elected in 2027. These long terms are highly undemocratic. The political makeup of them would likely be totally different were it not for the government allowing them to not hold elections year after year. Does the administration agree with me that their lack of mandate harms the legitimacy of their role in creating the strategic authority?

Response: Cllr Hewitt

The timing of elections in other local authority areas is a matter for those administrations and the Government. We are focussed on working to deliver devolution as soon as possible and unlocking new powers and funding that will bring significant benefit to the residents of Brighton and Hove as well as the wider region.

But I'm curious about the Green position on this. One minute you're leafleting houses across the City saying we're on the verge of having a new Green Mayor for Sussex, then you arrive here in the Chamber to question the legitimacy of the whole project and over in Hastings – not sure if you're aware but your Party is supporting the delay of elections – does the Green Party have a coherent position on anything?

22. Councillor Sykes- More Recycling, less waste - a new collection model

The paper describes 'significant progress made to improve the performance of the waste and recycling service'; yet the next item 104 then shows that residual waste is rising, missed collections are rising, street litter is rising and the percentage of waste sent for reuse and recycling is down and declining, to levels below those achieved 12 years ago. I'm getting emails every week from B&A residents complaining about overflowing communal bins. Will the administration maintain performance monitoring to allow us to continue to see what's really happening in our services?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

Yes, we will, and indeed we are working on a public facing dashboard that shows service performance every week.

There are a few factors that impact our recycling rate – contamination and non-compliance are certainly two of them, and we will be taking steps to address that. But the path to better recycling rates has to include the expansion of materials that are collected, and that is why we have made that our priority. The data in the report is the period to June 2025 – before we began collecting new materials.

The data on litter actually shows an improvement since the last update, and the same is true for missed collections.

23. Councillor Sykes- 2025/26 Mid-year Council Plan Progress update

Stage 1 complaints about performance in Environmental Services are upheld in 93.5% of cases; far higher than under other services. How has this been assessed by the administration and what steps are planned to address this?

Response: Cllr Allen

Environmental Services make around 190,000 collections every week. The number of formal complaints received relating to missed collections over the six-month period referred to in the report is 276, representing a small proportion of the total number of collections the service have to make.

The upheld rate for these complaints is 93.5% - we would always uphold a complaint where we have not delivered a service in the way that we should have.

The transformation in progress, including digital & data improvements, within Environmental Services will both strengthen our service performance and improve residents' experience.

One key difference now compared to is that when residents call the contact centre, the member of staff actually knows what is happening on the ground.

Outdated paper-based systems have been replaced with a modern digital platform, connecting crews, back office staff, and customer contact teams. This integration enables real-time resource deployment and performance monitoring, ensuring everyone is informed and able to respond quickly to operational needs.

Digitisation has enabled the launch of real-time information service for residents, providing transparent updates on collection performance. As soon as a bin is recorded as missed or not collected due to contamination by a crew.

Ultimately, the strategy for reducing the number of complaints is to reduce the number of missed collections – and our target is zero.

24. Councillor Sykes- 2025/26 Mid-year Council Plan Progress update

Under key corporate KPIs, business rates collection performance is significantly down and declining against targets, potentially implying an additional shortfall of up to £2.4m in revenue to the council. Has this been looked into and what are the reasons for this?

Response: Cllr Allen

The business rates base is volatile. In September 2025, an additional £0.808m was added to the base, on which we are now progressing collection.

The projection following Q3 (October to December 2025) is a year-end collection rate of 95.8%.

The team continues to review data to inform changes to the way they are working, such as targeting accounts with large debts where no payments have been received.

As part of the Business Rates Retention Scheme, the Council's share of the cost of non-collection is 49% of the total.

25. Councillor Sykes- Sussex and Brighton devolution and Mayoral election

How many FTE are now working on devolution and what was spent on devolution in the current financial year against budget?

Response: Cllr Hewitt

The current dedicated staff resource for the Devolution Programme is 1.5 FTEs. The allocated budget for 2025/2026 is £112, 500.00. It is estimated that up 31st December 2025, £48,682.63 would be spent against budget. And to put this into perspective, this will deliver a 30 year investment fund, totalling £1.14bn from 2028 and £30.4m released over the next two years and £4.5 million in capacity funding over 4 years to support the establishment the new authority.

26. Councillor Sykes- Council tax base and business rates retention forecasts 2026/27

9682 dwellings are estimated to be exempt from council tax. It is assumed the bulk of these are student households; can a breakdown be provided.

Response: Cllr Taylor

The breakdown is as follows:

B - Unoccupied by Charity, 59
 D - Unoccupied by Prisoner, 11
 E - Patient, 170
 F - Awaiting Probate / Probate Granted, 694
 G - Prohibited by Law, 8
 I - Receiving Care, 17
 J - Providing Care, 8
 L - Mortgagee in Possession, 11
 M - Halls of Residence, 1,387
 N - Occup wholly students, 5,695
 S - Occup under 18 years, 12
 T - Unoccupied Annexe, 18
 U - SMI, 1,568
 W - Granny Annexe, 15
 Other categories not defined above - 9
 TOTAL, 9,682

27. Councillor Sykes- Future model of ORBIS IT&D, procurement and internal audit services

It appears that political disagreement between Surrey, East Sussex and BHCC is the reason for termination of the bulk of integrated IT&D services, and the paper states "BHCC has no choice but to exit the partnership", at the cost to BHCC of an additional £0.457m in scarce revenue funding. It seems an extraordinary time for this to happen just prior to devo and LGR. This must be seen as a political failure by all three authorities. Can the Administration explain?

Response: Cllr Taylor

In 2025, all three authorities agreed to review each of the Orbis services and establish which meet the needs of the authorities going forward. The big thing is with IT&D and transformation, we're all going to have to get our heads round as councillors, including through budget setting.

The needs of the authority in terms of IT&D and transformation to be able to transform services and keep delivering for residents through, you know, various things, whether it's AI, automation, etcetera, the view was clear that we need our own independence and our own strategy in IT&D to be able to do that. It was clear that a partner authority didn't want to continue a partnership arrangement of IT&D. Partnership arrangements are always to be encouraged, but it was clear an increased level of strategic support required to progress our ambitious plans for transformation couldn't be met within the partnership. Ending the partnerships, not a political falling out or failing, but to ensure the right IT&D support is in place to deliver the transformation over the medium term.

28. Councillor Shanks- Youth Participation Update

How will the administration ensure a good geographical representation and include diversity in the youth council?

Response: Cllr Daniel

The Youth Council offers an election or nomination process to all local authority schools in the city alongside several colleges. The incoming cohort has representation from 9 out of 10 local authority secondary schools and four colleges in the city. The Youth Council allocates protected spaces for young people who may find it harder to engage or whose voices may be underrepresented. These spaces can be nominated to thereby avoiding the barrier that being elected may cause. This year the Youth Council are piloting ambassador roles, members whose focus will be to listen, connect and advocate for groups in the city whose voices are underrepresented. Where possible these will be young people who represent these groups, where this is not possible members will stand and aim to learn and understand the groups they represent to best advocate on their behalf. This will also be implemented through their listening processes where ambassadors will seek to listen specifically to the groups they represent to ensure a broad, representative and inclusive capturing of young people's voice in the city.

29. Councillor Shanks- Housing Management for Brickfields Development

This appears a missed opportunity for the council to manage this site and keep council tenants. Will cabinet consider managing Brickfields development itself rather than a 125 years lease?

Response: Cllr Alexander

This option was seriously considered but would result in a loss of housing benefit subsidy of around £60,000 per year as the Council cannot reclaim subsidy for enhanced housing benefit for accommodation that we ourselves provide, even if technically we are a registered provider. Paragraphs 3.7 and 4.3 of the report also provide details of why this option is not recommended - the council has limited experience and capacity to manage a specialised supported living service with the level of responsiveness that is required for residents with such specialist needs.

30. Councillor Shanks- Housing Management for Brickfields Development

Is there a break option for the lease and what would happen if a new provider relinquishes it?

Response: Cllr Alexander

It is not usual practice to have a break clause within a 125 year lease and we wouldn't be complying with the Homes England restrictions if we were to include this. If the provider wishes to relinquish the lease they must seek an alternative Registered Provider to assign it to and seek the Council's approval.

31. Councillor Fishleigh- More Recycling, Less Waste- A new collection model

With some residents in the area I represent not having had a recycling collection since the start of December (ie three collection misses), and the caretaker of the 200+ flats at the Grand Ocean in Saltdean having to call every week to ask when there will be a recycling collection, do you agree that the easiest way to increase our city's recycling levels is to actually empty the bins?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

Yes, clearly a reliable collection service is the fundamental, and that has been our top priority. An enormous amount of work has taken place, but we are still on that journey. However, another fundamental part of improving our recycling has been to add new materials to our collections and I'm pleased we have been able to deliver that. Residents in Saltdean have not had the service they should expect, and we remain focussed on making the necessary improvements to the service.

32. Councillor Fishleigh- More Recycling, Less Waste- A new collection model

Paragraph 6.1 of the report is unclear to me. I read it that the cost of doing the various assessments, surveys and employing an independent consultant will be £0.512m and that this money will be taken from the food waste budget. Is this correct and, if so, do you think that buying another lorry that won't break down, or employing more people (internally or agency) is more likely to increase recycling rates?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

Vehicles are purchased via the Capital Programme; we can't purchase vehicles from revenue funding.

We have been investing as quickly as possible in new vehicles but, given the age profile of the fleet following years of neglect, it will take some time to get the fleet as a whole to where it needs to be.

It should be pointed out though that the disruption in early January was primarily due to weather, and compounded by staffing shortfalls on our afternoon crews – our main source of catch-up capacity.

However, clearly any move to fortnightly kerbside refuse collections would enable us to jettison some of the older vehicles, thereby improving the reliability of the fleet.

The £0.512M in quoted in the financial implications of the report has been carried into the next financial year from the budget for rolling out food waste. This will be the project budget for both deciding on and rolling out a new collection model that optimises

the frequency and structure of the rounds. Included is programme management, data analytics, operations expertise, and secondments of drivers and a post to engage with residents, to ensure that we are designing the new service with the insight of our frontline staff and input from residents.

33. Councillor Fishleigh- More Recycling, Less Waste- A new collection model

Reviewing and improving existing based on feedback from our own drivers and loaders alongside councillors isn't a difficult or time-consuming piece of work. Why isn't this happening anyway as a standard operational procedure?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

This is happening as a matter of routine. Regular meetings take place with crews to share important information and provide an opportunity for crews to feedback. This was demonstrated when implementing the new collective in cab digital system where regular feedback has been taken to improve data and use of the system. The larger task of round redesign is now more feasibly since we have the digital system in place across the service.

34. Councillor Fishleigh- More Recycling, Less Waste- A new collection model

Last year when additional items were added to the recycling capacity, I was told that every household would receive a leaflet. However, as far as I know and certainly not in the area I represent, this didn't happen. Why don't you try a campaign to raise awareness before agreeing to spend money on researching a new collection model?

Response: Cllr Rowkins

All households will receive an updated recycling leaflet raising awareness on the new pots, tubs and trays, which were added in June 2025. Household with food waste in place, have already received these leaflets as they were inserted in the food waste caddies for phases 1, 2 & 3 (East, North & West). We are continuing to deliver the leaflets to those phase 4 Central area as part of the rollout so that all households will have received this information by the end of next month. We will be adding further materials (cartons and foil) to recycling collections in 2026, and once that is in place we will be doing a focussed communications campaign aimed at driving up participation and reducing contamination.

35. Councillor West- Sussex and Brighton devolution and Mayoral election

It is very regrettable that the Cabinet took the gung-ho decision to enter the city into the Government's fast track for a combined mayoral authority in Sussex. The overly hasty process has severely limited meaningful public engagement and a well-considered and inclusive approach to decision making. The best advice was that rather than rushing Devolution and the accompanying drive for Local Government Re-organisation, together these processes would need to take much longer to get right. The Government has finally caught up with this thinking and now the project is in a complete mess. It was very poor and inappropriate judgement of the Executive to put political pride before good

governance. Will the Leader of the Council show responsibility for this fiasco and resign?

Response: Cllr Sankey

What an interesting question Cllr West. What exactly is it you find regrettable about a 30 year investment fund totalling £1.14bn, with the first tranche of £15.2m to be released immediately following the creation of the Combined County Authority. This funding to be spent on locally agreed priorities that will come to Brighton and Sussex as a result of this Cabinet's forward-thinking and progressive decision-making. What is regrettable about the fact that 40% of that fund comes online from May of this year when we together with East and West Sussex establish the new strategic authority.

What's regrettable about the fact that our relationship with Government has been strengthened as a result of this forward-thinking and progressive decision so much so that Minister Fahnbulleh wrote to myself and the Leaders of East and West Sussex only this week to say: As Mayoral Strategic Authorities, your new institutions will be entitled via the Devolution Framework to establish Strategic Place Partnerships (SPP) with Homes England. As part of the SPP, Homes England will work with you to develop your plans for housing and regeneration in your area, support you identify a pipeline of schemes and then co-invest into these schemes.

I can commit that Homes England will begin this process in 2026 with the Strategic Authority in advance of a Mayor being in place. As part of this, Homes England will work with you to identify opportunities to invest the National Housing Development Fund and Social and Affordable Homes Programme in your areas. This includes providing the technical advice and support required to develop those propositions.

What's regrettable about new powers and money to tackle our housing crisis. What's regrettable about having the funding and influence to unlock integrated strategic transport for the people of Brighton and Sussex.

I don't think any of this is regrettable, I actually think it is long overdue. Your Party did untold damage to this City with your go slow, do nothing, can't make a decision if my life depended on it attitude. Our Labour Administration by contrast mirrors the boldness, the ambition, the history, the vision that Brighton and Hove conjours in peoples minds.

36. Councillor McLeay- Urgent Work for Incoming & Lateral Electrical Mains replacement in Council Housing

Given the significant risk of electrical mains failure and the impact on heating, lighting, lifts, door entry and fire safety systems, can Cabinet confirm what contingency arrangements are in place for residents (particularly vulnerable or disabled residents) should a sudden loss of power occur before works begin?

Response: Cllr Williams

If residents experience a sudden loss of power, they should contact the repairs emergency line. We have arranged for both our Electrical Manager and Electrical Supervisor to be on call. They are highly experienced in managing faults affecting larger installations and are in direct contact with escalation teams within UK Power Networks (UKPN) who the council will need to work with to restore power.

Both organisations will work to restore power as quickly as possible. We have already collated up-to-date information on residents with identified vulnerabilities within the affected blocks, enabling us to respond quickly and appropriately should a power outage occur. Our teams will contact vulnerable residents to ensure we put in place the support they may need during any power outage.

If power cannot be restored within a safe timeframe, we will arrange an emergency temporary move to ensure residents' safety and wellbeing, with priority given to vulnerable or disabled occupants.

37. Councillor McLeay- Urgent Work for Incoming & Lateral Electrical Mains replacement in Council Housing

What level of oversight had previously been applied to electrical safety in these blocks, and what went wrong such that these risks were only detected through recent testing?

Response: Cllr Williams

Historically, oversight of electrical safety in these blocks focused on communal installations within the Council's recognised areas of responsibility. The incoming, rising, and lateral mains were long understood to be owned and managed by UK Power Networks (UKPN). As a result, the Council reasonably believed that UKPN remained responsible for maintaining and repairing these elements of the electrical infrastructure.

However, we noticed an emerging issue which led to The Council initiating a proactive and comprehensive testing programme, including detailed condition surveys at each site, in order to understand the state of the installations and plan for investment requirements aligned to discussion around taking over responsibility for supplies within the blocks as the Building Network Operator. These surveys required UKPN's involvement to isolate electrical supplies safely before testing and inspection could take place.

It was during this more intrusive testing phase, beyond what had historically been possible, that concerns were identified with the mains previously assumed to be under UKPN's management. These issues have been raised with UKPN, with whom we remain in dialogue around response to the issues arising.

We are seeking legal advice to clarify the ownership and responsibility for these mains to inform any handover to establish Brighton & Hove City Council as the Building Network Operator and to ensure responsibilities are properly defined and that similar oversights cannot occur in future.

We want to act now to ensure residents in these 6 blocks continue to have a reliable and safe electrical supply.

38. Councillor McLeay- Urgent Work for Incoming & Lateral Electrical Mains replacement in Council Housing

Has the council reviewed whether previous inspections or maintenance regimes were adequate, and if not, will responsibility be established for any failure in oversight, internally or with UKPN?

Response: Cllr Williams

As outlined above, as part of the work to legally establish ownership and clarify responsibility for the Building Network Operator role, we will be reviewing the history of inspections and maintenance relating to these installations. This review will examine whether previous regimes were adequate and will identify any gaps or failures in oversight.

39. Councillor McLeay- Urgent Work for Incoming & Lateral Electrical Mains replacement in Council Housing

How will the Council ensure that awarding contracts under urgency procedures still guarantees competitive pricing, quality workmanship, and full regulatory compliance?

Response: Cllr Williams

Multiple contractors have been invited to provide quotations for the required works to ensure competitive pricing, even under urgency procedures. All contractors considered are accredited by NICEIC, a recognised competent persons' scheme, that regulates who can undertake works of this nature. As part of the procurement process, we have also requested evidence of successful delivery on comparable projects to confirm capability and quality standards.

Once works are completed, they will be subject to thorough post-inspection and testing to verify that installations meet all required safety, quality, and regulatory standards. This approach ensures that urgency does not compromise value for money, workmanship, or compliance.

40. Councillor McLeay- Urgent Work for Incoming & Lateral Electrical Mains replacement in Council Housing

Given that these risks were found only because of proactive testing, what assurance can the Council provide that similar risks are not present in other buildings, particularly older high-rise blocks?

Response: Cllr Williams

Proactive electrical testing has now been completed across all of our high-rise blocks where installations did not already have a valid (within 5 years) inspection certificate. Defects and remedial works have been prioritised and will be scheduled according to urgency, with the 6 blocks that are the subject of this report being the very highest priority. This work ensures that any similar risks in comparable buildings have been identified and either addressed, or, where further action is required, we are working with procurement to secure the necessary resources to deliver planned safety works.

As part of our ongoing commitment to resident safety, we are now extending this programme to include mid- and low-rise blocks. Testing is being carried out in a systematic and prioritised way, and where any risks or defects are identified, we will undertake planned replacement or remedial works to ensure installations meet current safety standards.

This approach provides assurance that we are not only responding to issues as they arise but actively identifying and mitigating risks across our housing stock, including older buildings.

100 MATTERS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE

100.1 There were none.

101 REPRESENTATIONS FROM OPPOSITION MEMBERS

101.1 There were none.

102 YOUTH PARTICIPATION UPDATE

102.1 Cabinet considered a report that set out proposals from representatives of the Youth Council to move to a Cabinet system.

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

102.3 Resolved-

1) That Cabinet approves the Youth Council remodel proposals as below:

- The Youth Council to move to a Cabinet system of operation and to meet with relevant Cabinet members and senior officers as appropriate
- The Youth Council to present to Corporate Leadership Team biannually and to meet regularly with the Corporate Director for Families Children & Wellbeing.
- The Youth Council to present an update of its priorities and work to Full Council on an annual basis
- Officers to explore the Youth Council being located in council offices.

103 MORE RECYCLING, LESS WASTE - A NEW COLLECTION MODEL

103.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought approval for a series of actions to explore and develop a proposal for a future model of delivery for waste collection services.

103.2 Councillors Allen, Robins and Muten asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

103.3 Resolved-

- 1) Cabinet agrees the actions set out in the report to explore and develop a proposal for a future model of delivery for waste collection services, in particular through modelling and independently assessing round structures.
- 2) Cabinet approves the use of a waste composition survey to assess how the current service is being used.
- 3) Cabinet approves the engagement with residents and staff as set out in the report to ensure a collaborative and evidence led approach to the redesign of the waste collection services.

- 4) Cabinet notes that a further report will be brought to Cabinet to assess the outcome of the waste composition survey, round analysis and engagement with residents and staff, and for a further decision to be made on the future model of the service based on this data.

104 2025/26 MID-YEAR COUNCIL PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE

104.1 Cabinet considered a report that outlined the progress made against the delivery of each of the Council Plan outcomes and highlighted achievements and delivery areas of focus.

104.2 Councillors Taylor, Sankey, Williams, Miller, Robinson, Muten and Robins contributed to the debate of the report.

104.3 Resolved-

- 1) Cabinet notes the progress made in relation to delivering the Council Plan in 2025/26 as outlined in section 3 and with full details in appendix 1.
- 2) Cabinet approves the Risk Management Framework (appendix 2) and notes current strategic risks as detailed in appendix 1.

105 SUSSEX AND BRIGHTON DEVOLUTION AND MAYORAL ELECTION

105.1 Cabinet considered a report that provided an update on recent changes for the Devolution process and sought renewed approval in principle to consenting to devolution in the terms outlined.

105.2 Councillors Sankey, Taylor, Rowkins, Miller and Robinson contributed to the debate of the report.

105.3 Resolved-

- 1) That Cabinet notes the content of this report, including the assessment of the implications for Brighton & Hove City Council of creating a new Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority with a delay to the election of a mayor.
- 2) That Cabinet confirms its approval in principle to consenting to devolution and delegates authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to undertake all steps necessary to provide consent on behalf of the Council to the Statutory Instrument that the Government proposes to lay before Parliament to create a new Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority.
- 3) That Cabinet delegates authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to approve any technical amendments to the Statutory Instrument on behalf of the Council.
- 4) That Cabinet agrees the proposed local 2-year Memorandum of Understanding for financial contributions and liabilities in establishing the Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority as set out in appendix 3.

106 COUNCIL TAX BASE AND BUSINESS RATES RETENTION FORECASTS 2026/27**Resolved-**

- 1) That Cabinet agrees the calculation of the council's tax base for the year 2026/27.
- 2) That Cabinet notes the collection rate assumed is 98.75%.
- 3) That Cabinet notes that no change to the Council Tax Reduction scheme is proposed for 2026/27 except that, in accordance with the policy agreed by full Council on 3 February 2022, earnings bands will be uplifted to reflect government changes to the National Living Wage as set out in paragraph 3.7.
- 4) That Cabinet agrees that in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amounts calculated by Brighton & Hove City Council as its council tax base for the year 2026/27 shall be as follows:-
 - i) Brighton and Hove in whole – 96,316.1 (detail in appendix 1).
 - ii) Royal Crescent Enclosure Committee – 29.7 (detail in appendix 2).
 - iii) Hanover Crescent Enclosure Committee – 41.1 (detail in appendix 2).
 - iv) Marine Square Enclosure Committee – 73.7 (detail in appendix 2).
 - v) Parish of Rottingdean – 1,775.2 (detail in appendix 2).
- 5) That Cabinet agrees that for the purposes of Section 35(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the expenses of meeting the special levies issued to the council by the Enclosure Committees shall be its special expenses.
- 6) That Cabinet agrees that the Enclosure Committees and Rottingdean Parish are paid the required Council Tax Reduction Grant of c£5,000 in total, to ensure they are no better or no worse off because of the introduction of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the reasons set out in paragraph 3.15.
- 7) That Cabinet notes that the amount forecast to be received by the council in 2026/27 from its share of local Council Tax, including Adult Social Care precepts, is £210.010m based on latest available data.
- 8) That Cabinet delegates the agreement of the final business rates forecast and completion of the NNDR1 2026/27 form to the Section 151 Chief Financial Officer following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration and this will be reflected in the General Fund Budget report to Cabinet in February 2026.
- 9) That Cabinet notes that the amount forecast to be received by the council in 2026/27 from its share of local business rates and section 31 Local Government Act 2003 compensation grants is £58.442m, based on the provisional local government finance settlement.

107 CIRCULAR ECONOMY ROUTEMAP AND ACTION PLAN 2025-2035

- 107.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought approval for the 2nd iteration of the Circular Economy Routemap and Action Plan 2025–2035.

107.2 Councillors Muten, Robinson, Alexander, Robins, Miller, Sankey and Allen contributed to the debate of the report.

107.3 Resolved-

- 1) That Cabinet approves the Circular Economy Routemap and Action Plan 2025-2035 as the strategic framework for embedding circular economy principles across the city and to inform council activity.
- 2) That Cabinet agrees to Brighton & Hove signing the Circular Cities Declaration to reinforce the city's role as a national and regional leader in circular innovation.

108 ORBIS SERVICES - FUTURE MODEL

108.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought approval to revise the future shared delivery model for the Internal Audit service and disaggregate our IT&D and Procurement services from the Orbis Partnership.

108.2 Councillors Allen, Sankey and Robinson contributed to the debate of the report.

108.3 Resolved-

- 1) Cabinet agrees to end the shared IT&D service arrangements with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and Surrey County Council (SCC) under the Orbis Partnership.
- 2) Cabinet agrees to continue sharing core data centres with SCC subject to appropriate contractual agreements being in place.
- 3) Cabinet approves the additional recurring revenue budget of £457,000 to fund and establish a sovereign IT&D service for Brighton & Hove City Council.
- 4) Cabinet agrees to delegate authority to the Corporate Director, City Operations, in consultation with the relevant cabinet member, to take any action necessary or incidental to the implementation of the above including (but not limited to) agreeing the new structure for a Brighton & Hove City Council IT&D service, and entering into partnership or contractual agreements with ESCC and SCC regarding data centres.
- 5) Cabinet agrees to end the shared procurement service arrangements with ESCC and SCC under the Orbis Partnership.
- 6) Cabinet agrees to delegate authority to the Director of Property and Finance, in consultation with the relevant cabinet member, to take any action necessary or incidental to the implementation of the above including (but not limited to) agreeing the new structure for a BHCC procurement service.
- 7) Cabinet notes that the future model of the Internal Audit service will move away from the current Orbis Partnership service and authorises the Director of Property and Finance to work on the development of a shared Internal Audit service with ESCC.

- 8) Cabinet notes that the other services within the Orbis Partnership will remain, including the centres of excellence for treasury management and insurance and claims handling.

109 URGENT WORK FOR INCOMING & LATERAL ELECTRICAL MAINS REPLACEMENT IN COUNCIL HOUSING

109.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought authority to award specialist contracts to contractor/s to undertake urgent upgrade and replacement works at six high rise residential blocks given the essential need for works to be conducted.

109.2 Cabinet moved to confidential session at 16.50pm and returned to public session at 17.12pm.

109.3 Resolved-

- 1) That the Cabinet agrees to delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Homes and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Cabinet member for Housing, to award contracts to carry out electrical work as described below with an estimated total contract value of £1.5m:-
- 2) To award a contract to GB Electrical essential works to rising and lateral electrical mains, and evacuation & refuge systems at Wiltshire House with a total contract value as set out in Part 2 of this report;
- 3) To award a contract to GB Electrical essential works to rising and lateral electrical mains, and evacuation & refuge systems at Hereford Court with a total contract value as set out in Part 2 of this report;
- 4) To award a contract to the best value for money returning contractor, essential works to rising and lateral electrical mains, and evacuation & refuge systems at Warwick Mount;
- 5) To award a contract to the best value for money returning contractor, essential works to rising and lateral electrical mains, communal power & emergency lighting, at Viscaria (Bristol Estate);
- 6) To award a contract to the best value for money returning contractor, essential works to rising and lateral electrical mains, communal power & emergency lighting, at Cherry (Bristol Estate); and
- 7) To award a contract to the best value for money returning contractor, essential works to rising and lateral electrical mains, communal power & emergency lighting at Allamanda (Bristol Estate).

110 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT FOR BRICKFIELDS DEVELOPMENT

110.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought approval to grant a 125-year lease to a Registered Provider to provide the landlord and housing management function for the Brickfields building, which will be the site for the new Brickfields Supported Living Service.

110.2 Councillors Allen, Robinson, Robins and Taylor contributed to the debate of the report.

110.3 Resolved-

- 1) Cabinet agrees to the principle of granting a 125-year lease to a Registered Provider for the Brickfields building, along with transfer of liability for the Homes England grant.
- 2) Cabinet delegates authority to the Corporate Director – Homes and Adult Social Care in consultation with the Director of Property and Finance and Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities, Public Health & Adult Social Care to enter into a 125-year lease for the Brickfields building together with all necessary ancillary documentation with a Registered Provider subject to the following conditions:
 - The council's developments costs have been met; and
 - The council achieves the best consideration that can reasonably be obtained when generating the capital receipt for the property.

111 BIODIVERSITY HABITAT BANK PILOT AT ST MICHAELS FIELD

111.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought approval to register St Michael's Field as a Habitat Bank for the purpose of selling Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) units and Voluntary Biodiversity (VB) credits to developers and corporates.

111.2 Councillor Muten contributed to the debate of the report.

111.3 Resolved-

- 1) Cabinet agrees to register St Michael's Field as a Habitat Bank and enter the necessary legal agreement for the registration of the site.
- 2) Cabinet delegates authority to the Corporate Director for Finance & Property and the Corporate Director for City Operations for key decisions on registration and sale of biodiversity units and credits.

112 URGENT WORK FOR INCOMING & LATERAL ELECTRICAL MAINS REPLACEMENT IN COUNCIL HOUSING (EXEMPT CATEGORY 3)

As per the Part Two minutes.

113 HOUSING MANAGEMENT FOR BRICKFIELDS DEVELOPMENT (EXEMPT CATEGORY 3)

As per the Part One minutes.

114 BIODIVERSITY HABITAT BANK PILOT AT ST MICHAEL'S FIELD (EXEMPT CATEGORY 3)

As per the Part One minutes.

115 PART TWO MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

115.1 **Resolved-** That the Part Two minutes of the previous meeting be approved as the correct record.

116 PART TWO PROCEEDINGS

116.1 **Resolved-** That Cabinet agreed that the confidential items listed on the agenda remain exempt from disclosure to the press and public.

The meeting concluded at 5.30pm

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 125

Subject: General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27

Date of meeting: 12 February 2026

Report of: Director of Governance and Law

Contact Officer: Name: Natalie Sacks-Hammond/Luke Proudfoot

Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

1. Recommendations

- 1) That Cabinet receive the extracts of the draft minutes of the budget meetings of the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee for information.

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

5.00pm 19 JANUARY 2026

HOVE TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBER

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Evans (Chair) Cattell, Fowler, Goddard, Mackey, Meadows, Pickett, Sykes and Earthey

Other Members present: Mark Strong (CVS), Mary Davies (OPC)

PART ONE

47 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

47. Procedural Business

47a Declarations of substitutions

47.1 Apologies from Cllr Winder

47.2 Cllr Mark Earthey attended as substitute for Cllr Bridget Fishleigh.

47b Declarations of interest

47.3 There were none.

47c Exclusion of the press and public

47.4 The press and public were not excluded

48 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

48.1 The Chair gave the following communication:

Today we are holding a special Place Overview & Scrutiny meeting as part of the budget scrutiny process. The minutes of this meeting and any specific comments made by committee members will be shared with the Cabinet to inform their planning.

We will be looking at the details of the budget plans ahead of the Cabinet meeting on 12th February and budget Council on 26th February. We are joined by Cllr Jacob Taylor, Deputy Leader of the Council and cabinet member for Finance & City Regeneration, and John Hooton, Interim Director of Property and Finance, who will be talking to us about the budget and then taking questions from members. We are also joined by Cabinet members and officers who are on hand to help with any questions, and I'd like to welcome them to the meeting.

We will start the meeting with a brief overview of the budget plans from Cllr Taylor. I will then ask each Cabinet Member in turn, supported by Cllr Taylor and by the relevant officers, to take questions on plans within their portfolio.

Although we only have one item on the agenda, this is an important subject for scrutiny, so I imagine there will be a lot of questions to get through. Can I therefore please request that both those asking and answering questions are as brief and to the point as possible. There will be ample opportunity for members to state their position on plans and propose alternative savings to Budget Council; the purpose of this meeting is to get more information on the budget plans, so I do want encourage members to ask questions rather than make statements.

Please note that any questions relating to a specific ward will be referred to officers outside of the meeting to ensure the committee is focussed on implications for all wards. In the interests of time and to ensure that everyone gets to contribute, I'm going to ask members to refrain from asking multiple questions and to ask one question only to each Cabinet Member. If you have more questions for the Cabinet Member, and if we have time, I will come back to you once everyone has had the opportunity to ask something. I do want to give all members the opportunity to ask everything they want to, but I need to be mindful that we have many service areas to cover and only limited time. I will move on to the next topic if I feel we need to, even if there are questions still to be asked.

We are in the process of setting up another special budget scrutiny committee in February where we will have the opportunity to scrutinise the budget at a later stage in the process which will include the HRA and any changes that has been made to the budget before it goes to Council on the 26th February for approval.

49 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

49.1 There were no public questions.

50 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

50.1 There were no member questions.

51 GENERAL FUND DRAFT BUDGET AND RESOURCES UPDATE – 2026-27 TO 2029-30

51.1 The item was presented by Cllr Jacob Taylor, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration, and by John Hooton, Interim Director of Property and Finance. Cabinet Members and senior officers were also in attendance to present and answer questions on plans relating to their portfolios and services.

Overview

51.2 Cllr Taylor told the committee that a draft budget for 2026-27 had been approved by Cabinet on 11 December 2025. A revised budget would be presented to Cabinet on 12 February 2026, and subsequently to Council on 26 February 2026.

51.3 The draft budget identified a £24.9 million budget gap. This is due to service pressures of around £35 million rather than to any decrease in funding. In fact, real terms funding has increased significantly in each of the past 2 years. This is a very different situation to the early 2010s when there were substantial year-on-year reductions in cash terms to the funding the council received. Service pressures are largely concentrated in homelessness and temporary accommodation and in adult social care. This is a common picture in councils across the country, although Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) is not currently experiencing a high degree of service pressures in children' care, unlike many other councils. To give an example of the scale of the challenge, the homeless & temporary accommodation budget in 2025-26 was £8M. In 2026-27 demand pressures mean this has risen to £20M. The council cannot simply fund these additional pressures and urgent steps are being taken to mitigate them: for example, by building or purchasing social housing to reduce pressures on temporary accommodation.

51.4 The draft budget identifies around £12M in savings for 2026-27. These are mainly efficiencies rather than cuts to services. A budget gap of around £13M remains, and this will be addressed in the revised budget plans due to be presented to Cabinet on 12 February. Following the Cabinet meeting, there will be a further opportunity for scrutiny of these plans.

Sport & Recreation: Cllr Alan Robins (Cabinet member for Sports, Recreation & Libraries) and Alison McManamon (Corporate Director, City Operations)

51.5 Cllr Robins told the committee that his priorities included increasing income generation and improving public access to parks. There will be a review of parking charges at city parks, and also a review of the sports on offer across the city.

51.6 Cllr Sykes asked whether all the identified sports and leisure savings would be delivered in year 1 given the need to develop a commercial strategy. Ms McManamon replied that there are a number of areas for additional income being explored, including uses for Blackrock and pop-up beach concessions. Cllr Taylor added that the council needs to do much more to realise the commercial opportunities offered by its assets. There is considerable scope here.

51.7 Cllr Meadows asked whether income targets for car parking charges in parks were realistic given that many parks have not even introduced parking charges. Cllr Robins responded that parks will be assessed individually for the potential to introduce or increase parking charges. Ms McManamon added that there are a number of opportunities to increase income from parks, so there is scope to cover any shortfall in anticipated parking income. Cllr Taylor noted that some risk is inherent in all budget planning, hence the need to build reserves.

51.8 Mark Strong asked about the risk of increasing charges pricing some communities out of using sports and leisure services. Cllr Robins replied that this is not the intention and any impacts will be closely monitored. Mr Hooton added that the council provides a very comprehensive sports and leisure offer, for example, free swimming for young people, and that there are no plans to undermine this work. Ms McManamon noted that it is already the case that profitable elements of the leisure contract are used to subsidise access and this will continue. Ms McManamon offered to provide additional information in writing on the community benefits in the leisure contract, such as free swimming, schools using facilities and other benefits offered, and information on how we are protecting community activities in the new contract.

51.9 Cllr Goddard noted that the council has been historically poor at commercialising its assets. It is very important that we protect the vulnerable, but we must do much more to take advantage of commercial opportunities. For example, there is a growing demand for padel courts which would generate income, but which will not be addressed by existing modest expansion plans. Cllr Taylor responded that he partly agreed. However, it is important to note that the council does elements of commercial activity really well: for example, in terms of the annual events programme and in terms of the commercial property portfolio. Ms McManamon offered to provide additional written information on plans to increase revenue by offering additional leisure opportunities such as padel, and on the council's position on paid-for murals.

51.10 Cllr Pickett asked whether increasing outdoor event income would mean an increase in events in parks. Ms McManamon replied that a new Events Strategy will be presented to Cabinet in March. However, increasing revenue from events is not necessarily about running more major events – it is also about encouraging more community events, improving the offer for weddings and similar measures. Cllr Robins added that the council is very conscious that some residents feel strongly about access to their park being restricted by major events.

51.11 Mary Davies noted that the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) on parking charges in parks states that the impact of changes will be low. However, the Older People's Council (OPC) contests this – there will be a significant impact on older people and people with disabilities who need to use their cars to access open spaces and who may struggle to pay charges or will be unable to pay because they do not have smart phones. The OPC would like to see the EIA re-examined. Ms McManamon agreed that the EIA for car parking charges in parks will be reviewed.

51.12 Cllr Earthey asked about short-term borrowing costs for the King Alfred development. Cllr Taylor replied that there are inevitably short term costs for this type of project as the new King Alfred will not generate income while works are in progress.

51.13 Mr Strong asked whether plans to develop a VIP offer at the Brighton Centre could include offering opportunities for young people or excluded communities to benefit from new facilities. Ms McManamon agreed to take this idea away.

Central Services & Public Realm: Cllr Jacob Allen (Cabinet Member for Customer Services and Public Realm), Alison McManamon (Corporate Director, City Operations), Elizabeth Culbert (Director Governance & Law).

51.14 Cllr Allen outlined plans relating to his portfolio, including establishing a sovereign Brighton & Hove IT function, moving away from Orbis partnership arrangements.

51.15 Cllr Meadows asked about recovery of money owed by the owners of the Albion Hotel. Cllr Taylor responded that £1.2M has now been recovered and negotiations for the residue are ongoing.

51.16 Cllr Sykes asked about costs relating to work with Orbis. Cllr Allen explained that savings have been identified in terms of procurement spend, but there are cost pressures in relation to ICT, particularly in terms of cyber security. Ms McManamon agreed to provide additional information in writing on the council's actions on cyber security.

51.17 Cllr Goddard asked about the Innovation Fund. Ms McManamon replied that the council is looking to learn from pioneering councils across the country, particularly in terms of digital innovation. Mr Hooton added that the Innovation Fund will also focus on reducing costs in high-cost statutory services, for example by using reablement to reduce burdens on adult social care or by targeted work to help people avoid being made homeless.

51.18 Cllr Earthey asked about savings on subscriptions. Ms Culbert responded that the council will retain some key subscriptions (for example to the Local Government Association). Those being terminated are not considered key to council efficiency.

51.19 Cllr Mackey asked why the council had seen a rise in Freedom of Information and Subject Access requests. Cllr Taylor replied that this is likely to be because the council has made lots of significant policy changes recently. Ms McManamon added that it is clear from officer feedback that there is a need to streamline the process of responding to these requests. She also offered to provide more information in writing on this issue.

51.20 Cllr Pickett asked about risks to legal services income generation. Ms Culbert explained that there is a potential risk to income from East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service arising from changes to fire services that form an element of local government reorganisation. However, this is only part of legal services external income.

Finance & City Regeneration

51.21 Cllr Taylor told members that much of his portfolio related to capital rather than the General Fund budget, so was not germane to this discussion. However, members should note that the council's rationalisation of properties, including its main office buildings, was having a positive impact in terms of reduced buildings maintenance costs.

51.22 Cllr Meadows asked about risks of the council borrowing too much to fund developments including Withdean swimming pool and the King Alfred. Cllr Taylor replied that it is necessary to borrow to fund the overdue redevelopment of leisure facilities. BHCC is not a heavily indebted local authority and this borrowing is manageable.

51.23 Cllr Sykes asked for details of dialogue with Government over the council's settlement. Cllr Taylor responded that the council made a formal response to the Government's Fair Funding review. However, it should be noted that the fair funding formula adopted does not result in lower funding for the city, albeit funding will increase less than would have been the case using the previous formula. The council is actively talking to Government around homelessness. This is not about asking for more funding, rather the council is seeking greater flexibility to buy property to use as temporary or social housing. A number of private landlords are currently seeking to exit the rental market, and this represents a real opportunity for councils if they are able to purchase properties.

51.24 The Chair stated she was disappointed that the Government's new funding formula does not fully include housing costs when calculating deprivation. Cllr Taylor agreed, noting that the issue of local housing affordability has been raised with the relevant minister. The Government recognises that this is an issue. John Hooton added that the funding formula does now include some elements of housing costs, but does not fully reflect the cost of housing.

51.25 Cllr Earthey expressed concern about any moves to reduce the council's risk reserves. Cllr Taylor agreed that it is important to maintain and build reserves and more needs to be done in this space. Mr Hooton added that steps have been taken to build up the general reserve, which is now around £8M, up from £6M a couple of years ago. The measures in this year's budget plans are not to reduce reserves but to transfer some money from earmarked reserves to the general reserve which will enhance the council's ability to manage risk.

Net Zero and Environmental Services. Cllr Tim Rowkins (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Net Zero and Environmental Services), Max Woodford (Director, Place).

51.26 Cllr Rowkins told the committee that priorities include protecting frontline services, particular those supporting net zero and the look and the feel of the city. There are opportunities to generate savings by exploring options for commercialisation, for example by offering graffiti removal services to local businesses, adopting a more commercial approach to the collection of garden waste and recovering full costs of cleaning up after events from the organisers. It should also be noted that public toilets are a priority: there are no plans to close any toilets and there is an aspiration to extend opening hours at some toilets where this is possible.

51.27 Cllr Mackey asked about the impacts on older or disabled people of charging for some public toilets. Cllr Rowkins replied that the council does not want to impact these groups. However, it is important to note that the high volume of visitors to central parts of the city imposes considerable burdens on the council and targeting toilets in high footfall areas of the city for charging will help with recovering some of the costs associated with being a popular tourist destination.

51.28 Mark Strong asked about community & voluntary sector (CVS) groups that want to recycle but are unable either to use domestic services or to buy commercial recycling which is not available. He also asked whether it might be possible to exempt small CVS groups from waste charges which they may struggle to pay. Cllr Rowkins responded that the recycling issue was being examined. He was sympathetic to the financial burden placed on small CVS groups, but it needs to be recognised that the council's financial situation makes it tricky to apply exemptions. Ms McManamon added that exploiting opportunities to trade waste services might provide more headroom to offer exemptions. Ms McManamon offered to provide further information on the council's policy regarding charging 3rd sector organisations for waste services.

51.29 Cllr Earthey asked about metering of council assets and suggested that local environmental groups may be willing to assist this project. Cllr Rowkins replied that metering is ongoing and is delivering cost savings. The idea of involving local environmental groups is a good one. Mr Woodford added that the council has many hundreds of assets to convert to meters and this is a major change project.

51.30 Cllr Sykes asked about community composting, noting that it would be a shame to end this just because food collections are being rolled out. He also declared an interest as he is on the board of the Food Partnership. Cllr Rowkins responded that he recognises the value of community composting, but there has to be consideration of whether this is something the council can support financially. He would be happy to explore non-financial support measures.

51.31 Cllr Pickett asked about the council's fleet and whether there would be disadvantages in measures to rationalise the storage of parts. Ms McManamon replied that elements of the current supply chain are ineffective and the plans are to develop a new stock control system which will address this and make the fleet more reliable.

51.32 Cllr Meadows asked whether the plan to charge for replacements for broken bins would be worth the administration costs. Cllr Rowkins replied that most of the required admin is already in place. It needs to be recognised that residents are responsible for the upkeep of their bins. However, bins damaged by the council will be replaced for free, and there will be no charge for replacement bins when residents have requested to up or downsize.

51.33 Mary Davies stated that the Older People's Council is opposed to the proposal to charge for some toilets, challenging the low impact score in the Equality Impact Assessment, and would prefer that funds were raised via a tourist tax. Cllr Taylor responded that local areas do not currently have the ability to impose tourist tax. This is a power that may, in time, be granted to the Mayoral Authority. Ms McManamon added that the EIA on toilet charging plans would be reviewed.

51.34 Cllr Fowler asked about plans to charge for Christmas tree disposal and the impact on residents who already pay for garden refuse disposal. Cllr Rowkins replied that residents with brown bins will still be able to use these for disposal of Christmas trees at no extra charge; the plan is to introduce charged disposal as an offer for those without brown bins. Mark Strong noted that Rotary already offer collection and disposal for a small charge.

51.35 Mark Strong asked whether the council would continue to remove offensive graffiti. Cllr Rowkins confirmed this is the case. The plans to offer a charged service to business with graffiti do not mean that the council will start charging to clean offensive graffiti.

Culture. Cllr Birgit Miller (Cabinet Member for Culture, Heritage and Tourism)

51.36 Cllr Miller told the committee that her priorities include a focus on greater efficiencies and on commercialisation, for example in terms of introducing a VIP offer for Brighton Centre events and on making the city a more attractive venue for filming.

51.37 Mark Strong asked about the potential negative impact on local residents from increasing the number of city events. Cllr Miller replied that she recognised the issue. The new events strategy will include a reduction in the hours of some events and there will be limits placed on some event locations, for example, the north of Valley Gardens will only be offered for daytime events, minimising disruption to local people. It should also be recognised that the main focus for increasing revenue is on weddings and filming rather than on outdoor events. Ms McManamon added that feedback from Place Committee informed, and is embedded in, the events strategy. Cllr Taylor noted that many residents enjoy city events and are happy to accept a degree of inconvenience.

51.38 Cllr Earthey asked about opportunities to increase revenue on the Volks railway, potentially including extending it either to the east or the west. Cllr Miller replied that she would love to look at extending the Volks, but this is not a realistic opportunity in the short term. More pertinent measures include developing Blackrock so that the Volks terminates at a destination that people will want to travel to, and increasing use of the Volks by holding themed events.

Cllr Taylor added that developing Brighton's Eastern seafront is the biggest commercial opportunity in the city and something that the council is focused on.

Transport. Cllr Trevor Muten (Cabinet Member for Transport)

51.39 Cllr Muten told the committee that his priorities are to deliver a well-run service that meets the needs of residents whilst generating income. Measures planned include the charging of 'lane rental' to utilities companies and a rationalisation of resident parking.

51.40 Mark Strong noted his concern that additional roadside advertising would risk the safety of cyclists. Cllr Muten replied that public safety will be of paramount concern when considering any additional use of advertising.

51.41 Cllr Earthey asked about plans to address potholes. Cllr Muten replied that this would be detailed in a Cabinet paper expected in March. The council is anticipating a 4 year settlement from Government to help fund this work.

51.42 Committee members discussed whether they wished to make any specific recommendations in addition to sharing a draft minute of the meeting with Cabinet for information ahead of its consideration of budget plans. Members agreed to make 2 recommendations, around the equality impact assessment of plans to introduce parking charges in some parks, and around the council's reserves where committee members did not wish to see the Council adopting any policies that would increase risk.

51.43 RESOLVED – (i) that Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommends that the Equalities Assessments relating to parking at parks, and charging for toilets, are urgently revised to accurately reflect the Impact of proposals to groups with protected characteristics, particularly older people and the many which intersect e.g. those with disabilities and socio-economic deprivation.

(ii) that Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommends that Cabinet looks closely at the plans to move sums from earmarked to general reserves.

The meeting concluded at 7.31pm

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

2.00pm 19 JANUARY 2026

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL, NORTON ROAD, HOVE, BN3 3BQ - HTH/CC

MINUTES

Present: Councillor O'Quinn (Chair) Cattell, Mackey, McLeay, Parrott, Shanks, Sheard, Winder, Meadows and Thomson

Other Members present: Maria Cowler (Catholic Church diocesan representative), Sara Fulford (Older People's Council), Joanna Martindale (Community Works Rep), Adam Muirhead (Community Works Rep), Fiona England (PaCC).

PART ONE

29 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

29.1 Cllr Meadows for Cllr Lyons. Cllr Thomson for Cllr Gauge. Apologies from Dr Anusree Biswas Sasidharan.

29.2 There were no declarations of interest.

29.3 There were no Part Two items.

30 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

30.1 There was no public involvement.

31 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

31.1 There was no member involvement.

32 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATION

32.1 The Chair gave the following communication:

Today we are here at this special meeting to scrutinise the draft plans of the 2026/27 budget ahead of the budget going to Cabinet on 12th February and budget Council on 26th February.

The scrutiny team are in the process of arranging a joint special scrutiny committee meeting to allow us to scrutinise the final budget. This is planned for Monday 16th February and details will be sent out to members shortly. So we will have a second opportunity for budget scrutiny.

The minutes of this meeting and any specific comments or recommendations made by committee members will be shared with the Cabinet to inform their planning.

We are joined by Cllr Jacob Taylor, Deputy Leader of the Council and cabinet member for Finance & City Regeneration, and John Hooton, Interim Director of Property and Finance, who will be talking to us about the budget and then taking questions from members. We are also joined by Cabinet members and officers who are on hand to help with any questions specific to their service areas, and I'd like to welcome them to the meeting.

We will start the meeting with an overview of the budget plans from Cllr Taylor. I will then ask each Cabinet Member in turn, supported by Cllr Taylor and by the relevant officers, to briefly talk about their portfolios and then take questions.

Although we only have one item on the agenda, this is an important subject for scrutiny, so I imagine there will be a lot of questions to get through.

Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee is due to begin at 17:00 and therefore we will need to finish this meeting by 16:30 and so will need to stick to timings to ensure the next meeting can start at the advertised time. Can I therefore please request that both those asking and answering questions are as brief and to the point as possible.

In the interests of time and to ensure that everyone gets the chance to contribute, I'm going to ask members to refrain from asking multiple questions and to ask one question to each Cabinet Member. If you have more questions for the Cabinet Member, and if we have time, I will come back to you once everyone has had the opportunity. I need to be mindful that we have many service areas to cover and only limited time. I will move on to the next topic if I feel we need to, even if there are questions still to be asked.

Please can members keep to questions that will be relevant to the city, rather than asking questions that are ward specific. These questions will be referred for a written answer after the meeting.

I will look to hold a ten-minute break at an appropriate point roughly halfway through the meeting.

33 GENERAL FUND DRAFT BUDGET AND RESOURCES UPDATE – 2026-27 TO 2029-30

33.1 Cllr Jacob Taylor began by giving an overview of the draft budget. He said that there was a budget gap of £24.9m, in December funding had been increased by £16.9m but that service pressures were set to increase by £34m which was above inflation. He gave examples showing that since 2010 there had been years where the general fund had been cut in cash terms. He said that in the last two years it had gone up by £18.4m and when the report was published it was £16m. Cllr Taylor said that the draft budget contained savings of £12.4m mostly from changes or redesigns rather than service cuts. He said that there was still a gap of £12.4m, but that this had increased by £900,000. Cllr Taylor said that the details of the savings were included in appendix 1.

33.2 Cllr Shanks asked about the government's fair funding, and Brighton & Hove weren't getting more funding due to the homelessness problem. Cllr Taylor that the calculations for

funding was complicated and that the increase given to Brighton & Hove was not as much as they thought it might be. Cllr Taylor explain that under the fairer funding review more deprived areas received more money and that although Brighton & Hove has significant areas of deprivation overall it is about in the middle compared to other areas. Cllr Taylor said that he had been calling for more money from the government but that it is right that areas of greater deprivation received more money. He said that the way that the homelessness funding was calculated hadn't helped Brighton & Hove and he thought that the government could be more flexible with this.

Children, Families, & Youth Services

33.3 Cllr Emma Daniel, cabinet member for Children, Families & Youth Services, spoke to the committee about the focus that the administration is placing on services for young people, and that savings in this area were low. She said that the £1.2m savings were reflecting the shift from crisis management to prevention work. Cllr Daniel said that this shift had to be done carefully. She explained that the council had 0% use of agency social workers compared to a 16% average. She said that savings included a greater use of the public health budget and that there were small savings from unused budgets, greater government investment, and less demand for home to school transport.

33.4 Cllr Sheard asked about savings that were arising from reductions in demand for services and if she was sure that demand would not rise. Cllr Daniel said that she was confident that the savings were achievable as they know the number of pupils in schools and that the number of children in the city was falling.

33.5 Cllr Meadows asked about the schools budget and the support for schools in deficit. Cllr Taylor responded that what she was referring to was the deficits for the high needs block and SEND, which Brighton & Hove hasn't had a big problem with like other councils. He said that schools were able to have a deficit for up to three years and that the council oversee these budgets and help schools.

33.6 Cllr Shanks spoke about the use of public health funding, asked about the removal of a post within the adolescence service and about young futures funding. Cllr Daniel said that young people's mental health was a public health issue and that adolescence services were a priority. She said that regarding the young futures funding they had kept services going even when they were not statutory. Cllr Taylor said that public health funding was ringfenced and that in the past it had been seen as very separate.

33.7 Jo Martindale thanked the team for the investment in young people. She asked what would be lost in public health. Deb Austin said that the funding was taken from underspends in the 2025/26 budget and therefore nothing was going to be lost. Jo Martindale then asked if that meant that the funding was one off or reoccurring. Deb Austin confirmed that it was one off funding and that the areas would need to be looked at again in the following year. The Chair asked what areas of public health had underspent. Deb Austin said that she did not have the figures to hand.

33.8 Adam Muirhead spoke of the work of the local community and voluntary sector with young people and thanked Deb and the team for their support. Cllr Daniel said that over the last decade that Adam and Jo had kept the flame going on youth work.

33.9 Fiona England asked a question about the reduction of £40,000 from renegotiating the services for young people with SEND short break service. Cllr Daniel said that she was grateful to Fiona for raising the issue and that the reduction was not about reducing hours or services but contract management.

33.10 Cllr Mackey raised concerns about schools in deficit and what was being done to support them. Cllr Taylor said that it was not progressive to have half empty schools and that headteachers and school governors did not have many leavers to pull. He said that it was better to have fewer schools with higher pupil numbers. He said that the council was increasing support and challenge to schools as well as looking at other options such as school partnerships or federations. Cllr Daniel said that they were being creative in wider children services and gave an example of putting specialist speech and language therapists in Rudyard Kipling School.

33.11 Cllr Mcleay asked about school overspends and if the council were moving money from the general fund to schools. Cllr Taylor said that it was not shifting millions and that the override was only on SEND.

Adult Social Care

33.12 Cllr Mitchie Alexander, cabinet member for Communities, Public Health, & Adult Social Care, spoke to the committee saying that adult social care was the largest budget in the council, with significant and sustained demand. She spoke about the demand pressure continuing to rise, of the adult social care improvement plan, and of the planned savings.

33.13 Cllr Sheard asked about the £880,000 saving to reablement and if this was a saving to reablement or saving made from the use of reablement and about the margin of error in the savings given the high demand. Steve Hook said that it was an ambitious target and that the current reablement service gives a good idea of future demand. He said that a small reablement offer can provide good savings and that they were investing in the service, giving the example of a new programme manager.

33.14 Sara Fulford asked about cuts to independence at home service. She said that 60% of adult social care users were older people and that she was sceptical that the cuts could be made. Cllr Alexander said that they were not cuts to services but savings made from providing a better service. Cllr Taylor said that there had not been cuts to adult social care as the budget had risen very sharply each year. He said that they were trying not to cut services but providing services at a better cost. Steve Hook said that the EIA had not identified negative impacts on groups.

33.15 Cllr Parrott asked a question on the key areas of friction within the reablement service and the monitoring of these. Steve Hook said that it relied on working closely with colleagues from the NHS.

33.16 Cllr Meadows asked if any money was made from the Brickfields site, and about increasing capacity at Ireland Lodge when some of it was closing down. Steve Hook said that the Brickfields site would be 28 flats supporting working age adults to live more independent lives. Steve said that the council was an outlier in placing a lot of young adults on registered residential care and Brickfields would allow them to resettle working age adults in expensive residential care. The £300,000 savings for Brickfields was only for part of the year as it won't

open until midway through the year, but should see a reduction in the cost of supporting those people and give them a better chance in life. Steve said that Ireland Lodge had 34/35 beds in it but for quite some time some of those had been decommissioned for a few years and so had been running on 24 beds. Part of the facility has gone over to children's services to support them and a number of the remaining beds have been switched to support rehabilitation. Although there aren't more beds in terms of volume, the way they are used will help people return home more quickly.

33.17 Fiona England asked about the CQC report and overdue assessments. Steve Hook said that they were coming back to next week's People Overview & Scrutiny Committee to discuss the CQC report and the Adult Social Care Improvement Plan and that the data on assessment was from November 2024. He said that the Pod 2 team from children's services carried out the services that she was referring to.

33.18 Cllr Shanks spoke about adult social care national funding and asked why Brickfields was sold on a 125 year lease to an external provider rather than being run in house by the council. Steve Hook said that Brickfields was not kept in house as a lease provides greater income from housing benefit. He also said that they were about to provide a more efficient and specialist service with a rigorous contract.

Libraries

33.19 Cllr Alan Robins, cabinet member for Sport, Recreation, & Libraries, spoke about what had happened at People Overview & Scrutiny committee in November, what had been decided at Cabinet in December regarding libraries, and then said that there were no new savings within libraries.

33.20 Cllr Mcleay asked about the unanimous decision at the November People Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting to recommend that all of the planned library closures did not go ahead and why this was ignored. Cllr Robins said that it had not been ignored and was discussed at Cabinet in December.

Customer Service, Innovation

33.21 Cllr Jacob Allen, cabinet member for Custer Services & Public Realm, spoke about the work in his area to, community & engagement, and resilience work. Savings included working smarter to utilise office space and contract conciliation to deliver substantial savings for facilities and buildings. He said that they were using new innovative operating models, streamline structures and rationalised core services.

33.22 Cllr Parrott asked about being a disability confident employer and ensuring that digital transformation did not leave behind the digitally excluded. Cllr Allen said that in person support would remain available.

33.23 Cllr Mcleay asked about the savings made to the information rights team and the risks posed by this. Cllr Allen said that the information rights team were holding vacant posts and that this is where the savings came from. He also said that he wanted the council to be able to deal with more complaints at stage one rather than have them get to stage two or to the ombudsman. Alan Steeden, Director of People & Innovation, spoke about improved monitoring and the use of technology and AI, within the law.

33.24 Cllr Sheard said that for many young people the only way they would contact the council is through digital services, and if they couldn't, they would give up and therefore making sure that digital services were available across all council services was very important. Cllr Allen said that technology changes should not just be a novelty but make services better for residents or reduce burdens on staff.

33.25 Cllr Shanks asked about customer services in libraries and if there was room at Hove Town Hall for the additional staff moving into it from Barts House. Cllr Taylor said that it was not good to have underused buildings as it is spending taxpayers money on things that it doesn't need to be spent on. We have to bring staff along with us. By freeing up Barts House we have options to get income for the council.. Cllr Allen said that the council had not changed the employment contracts of any librarians as library officers have always been expected to help residents to access services. Alan Steeden said that a lot of learning had been taken from the customer service move into libraries.

33.26 Cllr Thomson spoke about the investment in resilience. Cllr Allen said that the council had a statutory duty to organise and coordinate the emergency services in an emergency and gave several examples of when they had recently done so. He said that they were investing a further £150,000 in this area.

33.27 The Chair said that his portfolio covered a lot more than the committee had realised and that she would like him to come back to the committee to talk more about it.

Housing

33.28 Cllr Gill Williams, cabinet member for Housing, spoke to the committee about the pressures within her portfolio, the work being done to alleviate this, and the savings being made.

33.29 Cllr Mcleay asked about the use of council housing as temporary accommodation. Cllr Williams said that it was only a temporary situation involving around 80 voids. She said that they are building more council properties and buying more and were approaching their 500th but back. Cllr Taylor said that they wanted to rotate more properties into council housing, that landlords were leaving the market and that the council wanted those properties. Harry Williams, Director of Housing People Services, said that they wanted to transform homelessness services and get to people earlier before they experience homelessness, therefore providing much cheaper intervention and much better outcomes for people. He said that they were looking at digital innovation like predictive analytics. He said that they wanted to provide better quality temporary accommodation as well as the wider housing stock.

33.30 Cllr Thomson said that she was pleased that the council was buying council property but wanted to know what could be done to challenge landlords of temporary accommodation who were charging a lot but failing on standards. Cllr Williams said that bringing temporary and emergency housing in house would save money and improve standards. Harry Williams said that the private sector was important but that a balance was needed.

33.31 Cllr Meadows asked about how the full cost recovery would be implemented. Harry Williams said that the amount that the council can get back from temporary housing was fixed by housing benefit and the local housing allowance but by owning or long-term leasing the

property they could increase the level of housing benefit that they could access from the property.

33.32 Cllr Sheard asked about the risk of not realising the proposed savings. Harry Williams said that it was a very difficult climate with legislation change and demand that would remain unpredictable.

33.33 Cllr Shanks asked whether tenants needed to be consulted about a change in the allocation policy. Cllr Williams said that the change was very short term and only for three months.

33.34 Cllr Cattell spoke about the planning application for the Slipper Bath being submitted and asked what the Greenwich Model is in terms of reducing the cost of existing temporary accommodation. Harry Williams said that this was where they could look to apply the standard local housing allowance on properties that the council either own or lease on a longer-term basis. He said that at the moment they had a much lower level of local housing allowance through housing benefit income per property, but that they found that they could apply that standard rate, which is more per night, for properties that they own on a longer-term basis. Cllr Taylor suggested a briefing note on this for all councillors as it was a complex issue.

33.35 The committee resolved to recommend:

1. That the public health budget be examined with all information about the grant and what it can be used for at an additional scrutiny meeting.
2. That a full account of consultations with unions and community groups be brought to this meeting or a future scrutiny.
3. That People O&S committee agrees to use its scheduled meetings to scrutinise, at the earliest opportunity, Adult Social Care improvement planning, with a specific focus on the successful implementation and delivery of supporting people to successfully live in their own homes and as part of the wider community.
4. People O&S committee recommends that the final budget papers include details of the council's engagement with the Treasury and with the Department for Housing, Communities & Local Government regarding the financial settlement for Brighton & Hove, with specific focus on funding for housing and homelessness.
5. That People Overview & Scrutiny committee note the General Fund Draft Budget and Resources Update – 2026-27 to 2029-30.

The meeting concluded at 4.45pm

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