

Cabinet

Date: **20 March 2025**

Time: **2.00pm**

Venue: **Council Chamber, Hove Town Hall**

Members: **Councillors:** Sankey (Chair), Taylor (Deputy Chair), Allen, Daniel, Miller, Muten, Robins, Rowkins and Williams

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Chief Executive
Hove Town Hall
Norton Road
Hove BN3 3BQ

Date of Publication - Wednesday, 12 March 2025

AGENDA

Part One

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163 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

- (a) **Declarations of Interest:** Statements by all Members present of any personal interests in matters on the agenda, outlining the nature of any interest and whether the Members regard the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.
- (b) **Exclusion of Press and Public:** To consider whether, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, the press and public should be excluded from the meeting when any of the following items are under consideration.

Note: Any item appearing in Part Two of the agenda states in its heading the category under which the information disclosed in the report is exempt from disclosure and therefore not available to the press and public.

A list and description of the exempt categories is available for public inspection at Brighton and Hove Town Halls and online in the Constitution at Part 3E

164 MINUTES

7 - 24

To consider the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2025

165 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

166 CALL OVER

167 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

25 - 26

To consider the following matters raised by members of the public:

- (a) **Petitions:**
To receive any petitions presented by members of the public.
- (b) **Written Questions:**
To receive any questions submitted by the due date of 12 noon on the 14 March 2025
- (c) **Deputations:**
To receive any deputations submitted by the due date of 10am on the 10 March 2025.

168 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS

To consider the following matters raised by Members:

(a) Written Questions:

To consider any written questions

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Contact Officer: Alex Voce
Ward Affected: All Wards

173 FUTURE OF NEW ENGLAND HOUSE

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Contact Officer: Nicholas Fishlock *Tel: 01273 293905*
Ward Affected: West Hill & North Laine

174 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY – ALLOCATION AND FUTURE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

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Contact Officer: Max Woodford *Tel: 01273 291666*
Ward Affected: All Wards

175 RED ROUTES UPDATE

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Contact Officer: Charles Field *Tel: 01273 293329*
Ward Affected: All Wards

176 CONCESSIONARY FARES AND BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

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Contact Officer: Paul Nicholls *Tel: 01273 293287*
Ward Affected: All Wards

177 LARGE PANEL SYSTEM BLOCKS PROGRAMME UPDATE

169 - 176

Contact Officer: Diane Hughes *Tel: 01273 293159*
Ward Affected: Hollingdean & Fiveways;
Kemptown; Whitehawk & Marina

178 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE DEBT POLICY 177 - 242

Contact Officer: Graham Bourne
Ward Affected: All Wards

Tel: 01273 291800

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Contact Officer: Paul Ross-Dale
Ward Affected: All Wards

Tel: 01273 291969

180 PLANNED MAINTENANCE BUDGET AND ASSET MANAGEMENT FUND ALLOCATIONS AND EDUCATION CAPITAL RESOURCES AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2025-2026 269 - 292

Contact Officer: Niles Pankhania
Ward Affected: All Wards

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Contact Officer: Nicholas Fishlock
Ward Affected: West Hill & North Laine

Tel: 01273 293905

182 CONCESSIONARY FARES AND BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE (EXEMPT CATEGORY 3) 297 - 304

Contact Officer: Paul Nicholls
Ward Affected: All Wards

Tel: 01273 293287

183 PART TWO PROCEEDINGS

To consider whether the items listed in Part Two of the agenda and decisions thereon should remain exempt from disclosure to the press and public.

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Further information

For further details and general enquiries about this meeting contact John Peel, (01273 291058, email john.peel@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or email democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk

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BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

CABINET

2.00pm 13 FEBRUARY 2025

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

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

PART ONE

147 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

147a Declarations of interests

- 147.1 Councillor Muten declared an interest in Item 157: General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management 2025-26 as an allotment holder. Councillor Muten added that his spouse was a Trustee of Hangleton & Knoll Project that received community grants. Councillor Muten stated that he had been provided legal dispensation to participate and vote on the item.
- 147.2 Councillor Robins declared an interest in Item 157: General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management 2025-26 as an allotment holder and Trustee of the Royal Pavilion & Museums Trust. Councillor Robins stated that he had been provided legal dispensation to participate and vote on the item.
- 147.3 Councillor Allen declared an interest in Item 157: General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management 2025-26 as a Trustee and Board Member of Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes. Councillor Allen stated that he had been provided legal dispensation to participate and vote on the item.
- 147.4 Councillor Daniel declared an interest in Item 157: General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management 2025-26. Councillor Daniel stated that the interest was of a sensitive nature and stated that they had been provided legal dispensation to participate and vote on the item.

147b Exclusion of the press and public

- 147.5 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.

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

148 MINUTES

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

149 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 149.1 The Chair provided the following communications:

"With Brighton and Hope confirmed as being on the government's accelerated scheme for devolution, this is an incredibly exciting time for the city and for our residents and wider region. As well as unlocking new powers, new money and investment for our region and our city, devolution will give the people of Brighton and Sussex a stronger voice in how national decisions that affect them are made and enable more decisions to be made locally. We are one of only six areas accepted onto this programme, which is a massive vote of confidence in what we are doing here in Brighton and Hove and our growth potential.

Both for our people and for our country, more local powers and more local decision making is only a good thing and after a very difficult period for local government over the last 14 years, year on year of Conservative austerity, it's now possible to start seeing light at the end of the tunnel.

Today the Cabinet will discuss the budget that we will put forward to Budget Council later this month. Difficult decisions have been needed to propose a legally balanced budget, despite the uplift in spending power from our new Labour government.

Increased demand on our statutory services, increased costs and a decade of underfunding from the previous Conservative governments means that savings are unfortunately unavoidable.

But our Labour administration has also produced a draft budget with significant spending commitments and an unprecedented investment across a range of services in areas we know are a priority for residents, including our most vulnerable. More than £24,000,000 has been identified to support temporary and emergency accommodation for people made homeless.

We're looking at setting up a housing company with the goal of buying and potentially leasing more temporary properties in the city to help tackle the housing crisis and high rent, and we have ambitious plans to deliver more than 2000 more affordable homes in our city in the coming years. Building on the work we've already done in this area with 726 new council homes delivered by this Council in the last five years.

We are freezing parking charges in the city and making more money available to repair potholes and maintain our streets.

And at long last, and despite previous claims by the Green Party that this was not possible, we are launching a food waste collection service and increasing our recycling. We're investing further in adult and children's social care, special, educational needs and home to school transport. And we've also committed to keeping all public toilets open. These investments reflect our Council plan, which focuses on creating a fair, inclusive and healthy city that people can be proud of and thrive in.

With well run services delivered by a responsive Council, and they also reflect the priorities of our local residents under our new governance system, our budget proposals went to Place and People Scrutiny Committees last Friday and as will become clear today, we have listened and taken on board concerns in protect, in particular around public health budgeting. Importantly, while our budget is ambitious, it's also financially responsible.

This administration will never put the financial stability of this Council and the services that we provide at risk.

With this in mind, I'm also pleased to see the progress made, which we will be discussing today on our Targeted Budget Management, which was predicting an overspend for the current financial year.

It's vital that, as a Council, we take every step available to balance our books and with increased demand and costs over the last 12 months in statutory areas where this Council has a legal obligation to deliver services, we have predicted a significant overspend. Spending controls, recruitment freezes and the introduction of innovative and different ways of working throughout the authority, however, have had a genuine impact. Our forecasts overspend as of month 9 is now down to £3.3 million. This represents 1.3% of the net budget and approximately 7% of the gross budget gross budget.

We are determined to continue bringing this figure down and to break even this year and my thanks go to all of the staff here at the Council who are working so hard to do this. I know that these are very difficult circumstances that colleagues are working under, which is why our work on a medium term financial strategy and our Labour government's commitment to multi year funding settlements is so important. We need to end the hand to mouth approach to local government services.

Of course, much of our city's wider economic outlook is driven by the millions of visitors who come to Brighton home each year.

Which is why I'm particularly pleased to see our Sussex Visitor Economy Strategy for Growth, 2024 to 2034 included in today's agenda. The visitor economy plays a pivotal role in the vibrancy and economic vitality of our city and Sussex. It grows our local economies, generates and sustains jobs and provides meaningful regenerative experiences.

It puts Brighton and Hove and Sussex firmly on the map and has people coming back to this area time and again spending their money with our local businesses each time they do.

The report that we will discuss today outlines how working together with colleagues across Sussex, we can further build on this success. It underscores our region's commitment to the devolution agenda and highlights not only the strength of our existing public private sector collaboration, but the importance and the potential of a unified one regional voice approach. The Visitor Economy will be pivotal to the success of the incoming Sussex Mayoral Strategic Authority.

Driving forward, our economic ambitions and growing our already fantastic reputation.

Today, we'll also discuss the Council's response to the Procurement Act 2023 coming into force. This will shape how public bodies, including this council, buy goods and services. It's the biggest change to procurement legislation in recent years and it's intended to improve and streamline the way procurement is done and benefit prospective suppliers of all sizes, but particularly small businesses, startups and social enterprises. It's a welcome change and one that this Council will embrace. By adapting a 12 month detailed forward plan, identifying contracts worth more than £1,000,000, which are set for renewal, replacement or new requirement, our approach will also make sure that councillors have more oversight of how taxpayers money is being spent. It will also

enable more proactive and strategic decision making and provide greater transparency and insight as projects progress. A big change, perhaps, but one in line with this Council's commitment to openness, transparency and delivering value for money while creating a better Brighton and Hove for all.

150 CALL OVER

150.1 All items on the agenda were reserved for discussion.

151 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

(c) Deputations

1) General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

151.1 Cabinet considered a deputation relating to provision of childcare in the city for SEND children.

151.2 Councillor Daniel provided the following response:

Thanks for bringing this deputation to Cabinet. I know I've met with some of you and corresponded with some of you around these issues.

First, I want to talk about Drove Road. I know that families confidence in the Drove Road provision and our financial commitment to that provision has been rocked in the last month.

There was a week in January where staff wrongly were told that a council wide overtime ban applied to services at Drove Road. This was never intended to be the case, and it took little over a week to sort out and clarify that they were.

And unfortunately, on top of that happening, there's been a lot of sickness in our Drove Road staff team and managers have found it really hard to get cover. I would like to assure you they do have the finances from us as councillors to pay for it and all the authorities in place in terms of permission. To do so, this has caused some further cancellations with the sickness and all I can do is apologise for that.

There are no cuts to any budget or provision at Drove Road in the budget, nor any other budget relating to disabled children, which I know you acknowledge. We did listen to you last year and we got an independent which we listened to, and it agreed with your parental point of view.

And as a result, we are opening Rainbow Lodge this year, which is really good news because that will bring home five children from out of county to be cared for near their family.

There is a proposal to use a separate flat on the site at Drove Road currently being used full time by a young adult who is due to move on and that is to offer short term placements to neighbouring authorities to prevent the need for out of Sussex placements. This plan wouldn't impact on the main house or rest nights offered and it also doesn't impact on the plans around holiday provision.

This January, we approved new policies and papers around direct payments, and we have put an additional £500,000 into that budget because we think the new policies will make it more accessible and more likely that people can use those budgets.

Around short breaks, so there's three types of short breaks, holiday provision, wrap around school provision and respite care.

We know that you're concerned about the number of holiday sessions available to children with the most severe disabilities.

Officers are working with families on what they should look like and as an Administration, we support that as a priority. Having said that, we will review our budget proposals in light of what you have said and in the submission.

And I will be a meeting with Send Us a Break in early March to agree a work programme for the year with clear milestones focusing on all the three strands of short breaks, including respite after school clubs and holiday clubs.

And just once again, I would like to thank you for coming and for making this important deputation.

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

152 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS

152.1 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 Shanks- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

Response from Cllr Miller

Currently English local authorities do not have the power to introduce a tourist tax.

Primary legislation in the UK Parliament would be required to introduce this power.

We are continuing to investigate options currently available to us and look forward to the imminent launch of the Short Term Lets Registration scheme.

We will also lobby government to consider how the taxes already paid by tourists in the UK can be better spent to support and promote the visitor economy, and to consider the introduction of a visitor levy scheme in England, similar to the Visitor Accommodation Scheme currently being considered in Wales.

2. Councillor Shanks – Targeted Budget Management (TBM) 202/245: Month 9 (December)

Response from Cllr Daniel

This is a potential option that is being considered whereby the council could procure minibuses and take over some routes. However, this needs careful consideration of the costs including lease or financing costs of the vehicles, employment of drivers, and vehicle maintenance, insurance and fuel expenses versus the current contract prices.

3. Councillor Shanks- Targeted Budget Management (TBM) 202/245: Month 9 (December)

Response from Cllr Williams

Under the council's approved Capital Strategy, all council properties are effectively 'offered' to housing for consideration first. The council has a strong track record of

taking these opportunities for example developing homes in the former Oxford Street Housing Office.

Palace Place is a current example where we are delivering 11 high quality sustainable homes whilst preserving a historical structure and reducing urban blight. Decisions as to whether or not to take a site will depend on suitability for housing, i.e. high complexity or contaminated sites would be far too expensive to develop and could not be financed. Similarly, very high value properties or sites are unlikely to meet the statutory 'best consideration' test and would therefore be outside of the affordability of the HRA, which must be self-financing.

4. Councillor Meadows- Visitor Economy Strategy for Growth 2024-2034

Response from Cllr Miller

VisitBrighton is the official tourism organisation for Brighton & Hove and is part of the council's new Cabinet Office team; it has always been and remains part of Brighton & Hove City Council. It plays a unique role, working with a wide range of private sector businesses in the city and across Sussex through the VisitBrighton partnership. The budget savings relate to some of the marketing activity of VisitBrighton being brought back in house, into the VisitBrighton marketing team, instead of being contracted out. This will not have any direct impact on taxpayers.

5. Councillor McNair- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

Response from Cllr Pumm

The Community Infrastructure Levy has a number of elements. Some of the levy is collected and applied to strategic citywide projects while other elements are provided for neighbourhood improvements, whilst some can be applied to meet administrative costs. The strategic element of CIL can be used for the wider development of the community or place and the intention here is to use a small element to protect key community and voluntary services that form part of this city's infrastructure. This will not impact the use of CIL for neighbourhood programmes.

6. Councillor McNair- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

Response from Cllr Williams

Households will be sensitively supported, to move to more affordable housing outside of the city boundaries when they choose to do so, this will optimise opportunities to access a greater range of housing. This policy will be attractive for some people, for example where they have friends or family, opportunities for employment or support in other locations.

7. Councillor Meadows- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

Response from Cllr Muten

Thanks for your question, Cllr Meadows. In short, no.

8. Councillor McNair- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**Response from Cllr Robins**

The proposed sale of timber from both Ash Dieback and Elm Disease tree removals will be restricted to only those purchasing that can ensure the timber will not either be used for log wood (ash) or be stored/processed within an area which could result in any viable beetle habitat material finding its way back into the city (elm). Ash trees sold for use as biomass direct to power stations is only used for that purpose however this is dependent on the facilities being open to sales at any given time.

Elm timber sale could only be to those which can ensure that the material is both stored and processed outside the city's Elm Disease control zone for suitable construction purposes and is far enough from the city to mitigate the potential for any off cuts re-entering as log wood. Should this not be possible to ensure for any piece of elm timber upon felling, then timber will be disposed of in the usual manner. We will not risk further Elm Disease spread within the city through timber sales nor can we store elm for later sale.

9. Councillor West- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**Response from Cllr Allen**

The uplift announced by the government earlier this week in the Public Health grant for 2025/2026 has enabled the administration to review of the proposed saving across the Public Health budget. Following constructive feedback from the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee last week, I am very pleased to say that we have removed this saving proposal, and I will be tabling an amendment to that effect later in this meeting.

10. Councillor Hill- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**Response from Cllr Taylor**

Thank you, Councillor Hill, for your question. It's an interesting question. I would say that I agree with you in my concern. As you have observed both in the rise of the far right or the right wing.

In this country and other countries, and to an extent.

People losing faith in the overall political process, I would also probably agree with you if we were to have a chat about it on the sources of breakdown in the belief of democracy over not just the last 14 years, but the last 50 years for all sorts of reasons, the lowering of memberships and trade unions and community organisations in our country, but also, as you point out, public services being defunded particularly over the last 14 years, so I think I broadly agree with the thrust of what your question is.

I think where we slightly disagree and where we've drawn this out already, at full Council in debates is that and where I'd disagree with the Green Party both locally and nationally is I think the Green Party are responding to the budget that they thought the Labour Party would set, not the budget we actually set in the autumn statement. And again, I'm not trying to make this a political knock about between the two parties. I'm just trying to really exercise the reality of what has happened. The Green Party in the general election stood on a platform that was thought to be fiscally, massively more radical than anything that made the major parties were proposing. And in that manifesto, they aspired after four years to be getting to a place of 50 billion increased revenue from where we were starting to after four years in the first budget. The first autumn statement months after getting in, this Labour government has raised 40 billion in a single budget.

The most in real terms since certainly 1970, but I believe before that point. And so actually what this Labour government doing is dramatically turning the corner on 14 years of austerity. Now, does that mean that everything overnight is suddenly funded to the perfect level and to a level where they don't have to make savings or difficult? No, because you can't overturn 14 years of destruction of public services and not believing in public services in a single budget, but I think we've come closer to turning it around in a single budget and really changing direction that even I had hoped for. And I was suspicious that maybe the Labour government wouldn't go that far, and I think probably 40 billion in the single budget is probably the bounds at which a centre left government can raise that amount of revenue within our system of government and economy. So, I do slightly disagree with the overall Green Party analysis on the budget.

I agree with you that we need well-funded public services for a society that works and for a society that cares about people. That's what we're starting to do nationally. And I think things will improve in the years to come.

11. Councillor Hill- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

Response from Cllr Allen

The public health budget picked up the funding for this service some time ago when the NHS was unable to continue the funding of it. Unfortunately, this is not a service that is eligible under the public health ring fenced grant criteria and we are unable to continue funding it.

In terms of the therapeutic needs of survivors of sexual violence, support will continue to be available through services commissioned as part of the council's Violence Against Women & Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence strategy. This will mitigate the impact of the cessation of this funding, and we work to ensure effective signposting is in place.

12. Councillor Hill- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

Response from Cllr Allen

The uplift in the Public Health grant for 25/26 has enabled a review of the proposed saving across the Public Health budget lines. The proposed £18k savings will be

withdrawn via an amendment I am moving later on in the meeting. I am clear that I want to ensure the Public Health team is well equipped to continue with its evidence-based decision making.

13. Councillor Hill- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

Response from Cllr Daniel

The proposal relating to Drove Road relates to a flat on site which has been leased to the NHS. The young person occupying it has been living there full time whilst an appropriate house is being adapted for his needs as a young adult. The budget proposal relates to this accommodation and using it for short term emergency care provision for disabled children. We would offer that to neighbouring authorities as we work together ever more closely through our regional care cooperative to prevent children being moved out of county and far from family and friends or education. We will also use the flat in the same way and indeed potentially in the situation that you outline although for very short periods such as a week or two, existing users of respite care at Drove Road may be accommodated in the main building. That wouldn't change. Nor would this proposal in any way reduce the provision of respite care at Drove Road.

The main barriers to ensuring agreed respite can take place at Drove Road is having sufficient staff. Recruitment of staff is under way along with a staffing structure review to ensure Drove Road can operate fully and efficiently as a respite provision. No proposals being considered and certainly the proposals in the budget affect in any way the service offer to local families and nor would we bring forward plans which would reduce the service.

14. Councillor Hill- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

Response from Cllr Taylor

Any consumers who require this service can receive advice at Citizens advice bureau, there is a large consumer section on their website which includes scams and issues with purchases.

National agencies such as the National Fraud intelligence bureau, the police and victim support can also deal with and offer support with any activities in relation to fraud.

If the proposal proceeds to implementation we will sign post these services on our website.

15. Councillor Hill- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

Response: Cllr Allen

The savings proposals to the public health budget have had to be proposed due to the uniquely challenging financial situation the council has.

We have protected funding to our mandated Public Health services and have had to make some difficult decisions regarding other services that are important population-based services but not mandated public health services.

The uplift in the Public Health grant for 25/26 has enabled a review of the proposed saving across the Public Health budget lines, with a number of these being withdrawn. We have reflected upon the feedback from People Overview & Scrutiny Committee held last week and I'm very pleased to say that we will be maintaining the Aging Well contract.

16. Councillor McLeay- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

Response from Cllr Williams

Households will only be sensitively supported, to move to more affordable housing outside of the city boundaries when they choose to do so.

Should a reasonable offer be refused, we would follow the same housing options focused approach as we currently do with homeless households who refuse reasonable offers of accommodation in the city.

17. Councillor McLeay- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

Response from Cllr Williams

This model shares the same principles as those adopted under our former Empty Properties Grant scheme. This operated to incentivise landlords to lease homes to the council for temporary accommodation, in return for our investment via grants to allow for improvements to the energy efficiency of these dwellings. Advice will be sought from our Legal team before any arrangement is entered.

18. Councillor McLeay- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

Response from Cllr Taylor

Most of the increased investment relates to the landlord function in response to regulatory requirements and continued support for Housing ICT to deliver the required change in systems. The increases also relate to Fire Safety, LPS investment in addition to the savings being included. What I have got and I won't attempt to read it out, is a table that basically charts the difference between the previous figure and the final figure, which I will send to you, which breaks down the increases.

19. Councillor McLeay- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

Response from Cllr Taylor

Most of the increased investment relates to the landlord function in response to regulatory requirements and continued support for Housing ICT to deliver the required

change in systems. This will support a Housing Service that is compliant and promotes inclusivity and independence through improvements in accessibility.

Improving housing quality and ensuring compliance with social housing regulations are key to delivering the Council Plan's "Homes for Everyone" priority. Our focus is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of residents, visitors, and those who work on our council homes.

The council housing stock is growing with more homes that are subject to regulatory and legislative requirements around building, fire and health & safety that have increased significantly following the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

20. Councillor McLeay- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

Response from Cllr Williams

I can reassure you that there is not an issue with the housing supply programmes or a failure to spend. This is demonstrated with the month 9 the forecast that shows spend for new housing supply is over £36m which is in line with the budget for the year. Some of the issues identified in the question relate to the way the budgets are profiled over a four-year period based on estimated cash-flows, in particular for projects that have received cabinet approval throughout 2024/25. Any underspends will generally be used to reduce the amount of borrowing required.

21. Councillor McLeay- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

Response from Cllr Williams

For 2025-26, the government introduced a new ringfence within the Homelessness Prevention Grant, to maintain prevention activities during this period. This will mean that 49% of local authorities' funding allocation must be spent on prevention, relief and staffing activity. The 49% within this ringfence may not be spent on temporary accommodation. This proportion is based on spend declarations submitted in 2023-24, which showed that an average of 49% of total Homelessness Prevention Grant funding was spent across these three activities. There is no flex in our current allocation for 2025-26 to fund the voluntary sector to provide services in this area and the statutory prevention duty rests with the authority.

22. Councillor West- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

Response from Cllr Muten

Thank you for your question, Councillor West.

Our administration takes the City's residents' health very seriously and recognise the importance of good air quality for all. Notably, our focus is to reduce the impact on those with respiratory conditions exacerbated by poor air quality. This is why we are committed to a strategic, planned, targeted and data-led approach to air quality and net zero improvements. Rather than being driven by an ideology that prefers to focus on a

privileged few to make change at the detriment of the many who can less afford in a cost of living crisis; we seek to implement changes that enable the whole city to respond to the climate emergency and improve air quality for all.

We are driving change through our commitment our ambitious £28M Bus Service Improvement Plan for our city, now with an additional £9.6M uplift announced by the Labour Government in the Autumn. Data shows increased bus passenger numbers and more buses on time across the city.

We are taking targeted measures to address bus fares including the £1 Short Hop offer which data already shows has enabled many more to take the bus within their local communities.

With some 500 city centre car parking spaces lost and 50% increase in parking fees, with more increases baked into the 2023 budget resulting in an annual income shortfall of at least £1m, the Green Party in administration had no strategy. Without alternative provision such as park and ride, a better bus service and improved active travel all in place, their response was to penalise residents – especially those on lower incomes - businesses and visitors. Cars that could once have parked close to Preston Park or on the seafront were forced to queue to get into city centre car parks off the seafront and in the North Laine, increasing congestion and worsening city centre air quality.

Sadly, an ideology that disproportionately hit those on lower incomes the hardest, discouraged visitors, hit businesses hard, penalised residents and increased traffic congestion leading to an uptick worsening air quality after years of improvement all proved an ill-conceived approach.

Instead, Labour commissioned a citywide parking review and are implementing a holistic strategy that works for the city, is fairer, helps our vibrant visitor economy to flourish, with targeted measures that will see much needed improvements in air quality.

153 MATTERS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE

There were none.

154 REPRESENTATIONS FROM OPPOSITION MEMBERS

131.1 Cabinet received a representation from Councillor McLeay on Item 157, General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26.

131.2 Cabinet received a representation from Councillor Hill on Item 157, General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26.

155 VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY FOR GROWTH 2024 - 2034

155.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought approval for the Sussex Visitor Economy Strategy for Growth 2024 – 2034.

155.2 Councillors Taylor, Rowkins, Pumm, Muten and Robins contributed to the debate of the report.

155.3 **Resolved-**

- 1) That Cabinet approves the Sussex Visitor Economy Strategy for Growth 2024 – 2034 at (Appendix 1).

156 ANNUAL PROCUREMENT FORWARD PLAN

- 156.1 Cabinet considered a report that requested approval of the Procurement Forward Plan that set out all known procurement projects above £1 million spend in 2025/26 in line with the Procurement Act 2023 (the Act).
- 156.2 Councillors Taylor, Williams, Rowkins, Robins, Allen and Miller contributed to the debate of the report.

156.3 Resolved-

- 1) That Cabinet agrees the Procurement Forward Plan for 2025/26 as set out in Appendix 1.
- 2) That Cabinet notes the Procurement Flow chart set out at Appendix 2.

157 GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET, CAPITAL & TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2025-26

- 157.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought approval to recommend the proposed General Fund Revenue and Capital Budget 2025/26 together with a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) covering the 4-year period 2025/26 to 2028/29 to Full Council for approval.
- 157.2 Councillor Allen moved the following motion to amend the recommendations as shown in bold italics below:

2.9 Following the announcement of the Public Health Grant on 7 February 2025 and the higher than anticipated grant announcement, Full Council approve use of these additional resources to:

- ***Reduce the proposed reduction of contribution to the Healthy Child programme from £100,000 to £50,000 shown on Page 340;***
- ***Remove the £4,000 proposed saving on YMCA Mental Health Champions (part of proposed savings of £44,000 on Page 340);***
- ***Remove the proposed saving of £35,000 for cessation of the Audio Active CYP service (part of proposed savings of £44,000 on Page 340);***
- ***Remove the proposed £20,000 saving on Mental Health Support Services on Page 341;***
- ***Remove the proposed saving of £45,000 on the Ageing Well service delivered by Impact initiatives on Page 342;***
- ***Reinstate the proposed reduction in contribution of £18,000 to the Academic Library Service (part of proposed savings of £73,000 on Page 342);***
- ***Remove the proposed reduction of £10,000 to the TDC Act on Cancer Project screening promotion service (part of proposed savings of £73,000 on Page 342);***

- ***Remove the proposal to reduce the contribution to Oral Health promotion by £9,000 (10%) as shown on Page 342, and;***
- ***Reduce the proposed staffing saving of £565,000 by £39,000 to £526,000 as shown on Pages 342/343.***

157.3 Councillor Taylor formally seconded the motion.

157.4 Cabinet considered and approved the following officer amendment as shown in bold italics below:

- 2.1 That Council approves the Administration's proposed General Fund revenue and capital budget and Council Tax increase on the Brighton and Hove element of the council tax for 2025/26, comprising:
- iv) The 2025/26 budget allocations to services as set out in Appendix 1 incorporating budget savings proposals detailed at Appendix 2; ***subject to the amendment below:***

Care pathway for sexual dysfunction (female)	<p>Proposed withdrawal of the council's contribution to this service.</p> <p>Delivery Risk: The service is an NHS responsibility and will therefore continue to be provided. The risk is low and is not expected to impact significantly.</p> <p><i>Proposed withdrawal of funding for this service as this is not a Public Health responsibility. The most significant impact will be experienced by women who are unable to identify or afford a paid-for therapy service.</i></p>
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157.5 Councillors Miller, Daniel, Williams, Robins, Pumm, Muten, Rowkins, Allen and Sankey contributed to the debate of the report.

157.6 The Chair then put the motion to the vote that was carried.

157.7 The Chair then put the recommendations as amended to the vote that were approved.

157.8 **Resolved to recommend-**

That Cabinet recommends to Council the following:

- 1) That Council approves the Administration's proposed General Fund revenue and capital budget and Council Tax increase on the Brighton and Hove element of the council tax for 2025/26, comprising:
- A general Council Tax increase of 2.99%;
 - An Adult Social Care Precept increase of 2.00%;
 - The council's net General Fund budget requirement for 2025/26 of £264.819m;

- iv) The 2025/26 budget allocations to services as set out in Appendix 1 incorporating budget savings proposals detailed at Appendix 2, subject to the amendment below:

Care pathway for sexual dysfunction (female)	Proposed withdrawal of funding for this service as this is not a Public Health responsibility. The most significant impact will be experienced by women who are unable to identify or afford a paid-for therapy service.
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- v) The changes to Fees & Charges set out in Appendix 3;
- vi) The one-off resource allocations as set out in the table at paragraph 6.5.
- vii) A recommended working balance of £9.000m (approximately 3.4% of the net budget) to be maintained or replenished over the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 2) That Council notes plans to address future projected budget shortfalls set out in the 4-Year Medium Term Financial Strategy at Appendix 4.
- 3) That Council approves the Capital Strategy for 2025/26 at Appendix 5 comprising:
- Funding for investment in transformation and change, supported by the flexible use of capital receipts as set out in paragraph 10.12;
 - The capital resources and proposed borrowing included at Annex A of the Capital Strategy;
 - The Capital Investment Programme for 2025/26 of £246.946m included at Appendix 5 incorporating allocations to strategic funds.
- 4) That Council approves the Treasury Management Strategy Statement as set out in Appendix 6 comprising:
- The Annual Investment Strategy;
 - The Prudential and Treasury Indicators;
 - The Minimum Revenue Provision policy;
 - The authorised borrowing limit for the year commencing 1 April 2025.
- 5) That Council notes and considers the Equalities Impact Assessments to cover all relevant budget proposals as set out in Appendix 7.
- 6) That Council further notes that approval of the budget is an indicative resourcing decision to be taken in the context of the explanation given in the Legal Implications in Section 19.
- 7) That Council notes that supplementary information needed to set the overall council tax, including a detailed Budget Book, will be provided for the Budget Council meeting as listed in paragraph 12.1.
- 8) That Cabinet agrees that the council's S151 Chief Financial Officer be authorised to make any necessary technical, presentational or consequential amendments to this report before submission to Budget Council.

- 9) Following the announcement of the Public Health Grant on 7 February 2025 and the higher than anticipated grant announcement, Full Council approve use of these additional resources to:
- Reduce the proposed reduction of contribution to the Healthy Child programme from £100,000 to £50,000 shown on Page 340;
 - Remove the £4,000 proposed saving on YMCA Mental Health Champions (part of proposed savings of £44,000 on Page 340);
 - Remove the proposed saving of £35,000 for cessation of the Audio Active CYP service (part of proposed savings of £44,000 on Page 340);
 - Remove the proposed £20,000 saving on Mental Health Support Services on Page 341;
 - Remove the proposed saving of £45,000 on the Ageing Well service delivered by Impact initiatives on Page 342;
 - Remove the proposed reduction in contribution of £18,000 to the Academic Library Service (part of proposed savings of £73,000 on Page 342);
 - Remove the proposed reduction of £10,000 to the TDC Act on Cancer Project screening promotion service (part of proposed savings of £73,000 on Page 342);
 - Remove the proposal to reduce the contribution to Oral Health promotion by £9,000 (10%) as shown on Page 342, and;
 - Reduce the proposed staffing saving of £565,000 by £39,000 to £526,000 as shown on Pages 342/343.

**158 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET & CAPITAL INVESTMENT
PROGRAMME 2025-26 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

149.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought approval to recommend the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revenue and capital budget for 2025/26 as required by the Local Government & Housing Act 1989.

149.2 Councillors Robinson and Rowkins contributed to the debate of the report.

149.3 Resolved-

That Cabinet:

- 1) Approves a rent increase of 2.7% in line with government legislation as detailed in paragraph 3.12 of the report.
- 2) Approves the service charges and fees as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.
- 3) Notes the 5-year capital programme as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.
- 4) Notes the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and 30-year financial projections shown in Appendix 4 to the report.

Resolved to recommend-

- 5) Notes and recommends to Full Council for approval the HRA Revenue Budget for 2025/26 as outlined in table 1 of the main report and Appendix 1.

- 6) Notes and recommends to Full Council for approval the new Capital Programme Budget of £77.765m for 2025/26 be agreed as part of the revised capital budget of £111.098m (which includes reprofiles of £33.333m from 2024/25).
- 7) Notes and recommends to Full Council approval of the earmarking of £1m reserves against disrepair claims for 2025/26.
- 8) Notes and recommends to Full Council for approval the 5-year capital programme as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

159 TARGETED BUDGET MANAGEMENT (TBM) 202/245: MONTH 9 (DECEMBER)

- 149.1 Cabinet considered a report that set out an indication of forecast risks as at Month 9 on the council's revenue and capital budgets for the financial year 2024/25.
- 149.2 Councillors Sankey and Miller contributed to the debate of the report.
- 149.3 **Resolved-**
 - 1) Cabinet notes the forecast risk position for the General Fund, which indicates a potential forecast overspend risk of £3.310m.
 - 2) Cabinet notes the forecast outturn includes a forecast overspend risk of £1.522m on the NHS managed Section 75 services.
 - 3) Cabinet notes the forecast breakeven position for the separate Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
 - 4) Cabinet notes the forecast overspend risk for the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant, which is an overspend of £1.276m.
 - 5) Cabinet notes the forecast position on the Capital Programme which is an underspend variance of £2.188m.
 - 6) Cabinet approves the capital budget variations and re-profiling requests set out in Appendix 6.
 - 7) Cabinet approves new capital schemes requested in Appendix 7.
 - 8) Cabinet notes the Treasury Management update as set out in Appendix 8.

160 ANNUAL PROCUREMENT FORWARD PLAN (EXEMPT CATEGORY 3)

As per the Part 1 minutes.

161 PART TWO MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

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

162 PART TWO PROCEEDINGS

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

The meeting concluded at 4.25pm

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 167(c)

Subject: Deputations

Date of meeting: 20 March 2025

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Council for the hearing of deputations from members of the public.

Notification of the following Deputations has been received. The spokesperson is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

1) **Deputation: New England House**

1. **The impact of the Council's sudden closure of the building** on 8 November 2024 - including the impact of the meeting between Tenants and Council officers on 8 October 2024 when the word "decant" was first used and we were told that our annual Open Studios would not be possible in December.
2. **The uncertainty and insecurity that this initiated** for all tenants, and which continued and continues to this day regarding the continuation of our tenancies. As a member of the Tenants Reference Group, I attended all meetings with Council Officers but the lack of information regarding the future of the building and our future as tenants continued and continues.
3. **The effect of the uncertainty regarding our tenure on our work and our working practice, and on the atmosphere in the building,**

Much of our work is self-generated and may take years to prepare e.g. creating new work and preparing for exhibitions. Many of us have found it impossible to work on projects and unable to take up offers and opportunities to exhibit work, collaborate on exhibitions, undertake commissions when we haven't known whether we would have studios in which to work. It has stifled our creativity and curbed our ambition.

4. **Who we are and what we do:** painters, photographers, print makers, illustrators, graphic artists, ceramicists, multidisciplinary artists, textile artists and designers, embroiderers, portrait artists, art tutors / lecturers, costume makers, sculptors, book artists, writers, video makers, performers, inventors and more.
5. **Our Impact on the Brighton community as a whole and the future of the city and what Brighton will lose through dismantling the creative community of NEH.**

What we provide to make Brighton the attractive, inclusive, generous, individualistic, tolerant, creative, exciting city that we all want it to be, and which attracts people who want to make it their home and visitors from all over the world.

(The council is looking to expand the visitor economy through a 10-year growth strategy)

Small businesses: individual and expanding businesses working in the Arts sector in NEH. **Examples "Draw" / Drawing Circus:** Affordable Drop in Life drawing employing fine artists as tutors, and models who support their other work as performers, musicians, singers, artist, poets. Many of us are one person businesses, artists working alone in our studios but benefiting from contact and

collaboration with the others who work in the building, interacting on organising the Open Studios for over 20 years, running courses, preparing projects for the Brighton festival, for performances, drawing, painting & printmaking sessions, seminars, within the building and throughout the city through creative collaboration that goes on behind our doors; taking interns from Brighton University and then employing them.

5. **We seek from the Council that you will be generous and understanding of the impact that any closure and disruption will have on individuals, on all the people who work with us, for us, our clients and families and on Brighton as a whole, and (if the building is to be vacated) to provide us with the certainty of a generous period of notice and assistance in minimising the cost and disruption this will cause to our work and our lives**
6. **We seek from the Council that you will find and provide for us Artists and Makers suitable alternative accommodation with a building that will allow our creative community to continue, prosper and benefit Brighton and the wider community.**

Supported by:

Rea Stavropoulos (Lead Spokesperson)

Heike Roesel

Sam Williams

Lancelot Richardson

Peter James Field

Adam Stower

Brett James

Ken Eardley

Jenny King

David Myers

Marisa Zanotti

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 171

Subject: City Economic Growth Board

Date of meeting: 20 March 2025

Report of: Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration

Contact Officer: Alex Voce
Alex.voce@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: All

Key Decision: No

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report is to seek approval from Cabinet for the establishment of a new Economic Growth Board for the city, which strongly aligns with the city's Economic Plan and core outcomes 1 (a city to be proud of), 2 (a fair and inclusive city) and 3 (a healthy city where people thrive) of the Council Plan 2023-27.
- 1.2 The establishment of a new Economic Growth Board aligns with Sussex and Brighton being included on the Devolution Priority Programme and the future development of a Mayoral Strategic Authority, ensuring that a clear and united business voice is able to represent the economic growth needs and aspirations of the city.
- 1.3 Economic growth is the number one mission of the Government, driving up productivity, prosperity and living standards. The Government's mission notes that "*growth can only be achieved in partnership with businesses*". This aligns strongly with the vision for the new Economic Growth Board as set out in this report.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees to note the establishment of the Economic Growth Board and formally designate the Economic Growth Board as an outside body in line with Government guidance.
- 2.2 That Cabinet agrees to nominate the Cabinet Member for City Finance and Regeneration as the council's representative on the Board.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 An Economic Plan for Brighton & Hove has been developed for the city, providing a common goal and purpose that partners and stakeholders can work towards. The Economic Plan recognises the challenges the city faces, as well as the shared ambition of our partners. It has been developed around the idea of a new economy for Brighton & Hove, a ten-year journey to becoming a city which is more competitive, productive, fairer, and greener.
- 3.2 The Economic Plan is underpinned by new partnerships and approaches, which explicitly challenge and evolve from how we have worked in the past. It recognises that Brighton & Hove is a genuinely unique city in the national context and that this can work to our advantage when working with partners across the region. It is within this context that the establishment of a new Economic Growth Board has been proposed.
- 3.3 Establishing a new Economic Growth Board strongly aligns with the Council's Corporate Plan, primarily focused on Outcome 1 (a city to be proud of), as well as creating an inclusive and fairer city (Outcome 2) and a better future for young people (Outcome 3). The table below sets out key alignment.

Outcome 1: A city to be proud of	
Investing in our city	Alignment with Economic Growth Board
Grow a diverse and sustainable city economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board will be a key delivery vehicle for the city's Economic Plan. It will further strengthen the business voice and its broad sector representation reflects the diversity of the city's economy – which will be vital as devolution discussions progress. The Board will ensure that the council continues to work in partnership with the business community to support and grow our economy and promote the city for external investment.
Promote and protect what makes Brighton & Hove unique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board will recognise the importance of the visitor and creative economies to the city, helping to identify opportunities for growth. The Board will also act as the city's initial 'Business Ambassadors', with a remit to promote the city to external investors to support delivery of economic growth in Brighton & Hove.
Outcome 2: A fair and inclusive city	
An inclusive and fairer city	Alignment with Economic Growth Board
A city where people feel safe and welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board will play an important consultative role, reflecting the aspirations and needs of city businesses in delivering safe public spaces as well as tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.
Outcome 3: A healthy city where people thrive	
A better future for children and young people	Alignment with Economic Growth Board
Work with partners to deliver ambitious employment, training and apprenticeship opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building a stronger and more inclusive labour market is a key aspect of the Economic Plan. It is reflected in the new Board through the inclusion of a representative from the City Employment & Skills Plan steering group. This will support collaboration with key education and business partners to deliver the council's aspirations.

- 3.4 Prior to April 2024, Local Enterprise Partnership (LEPs) acted as a means of bringing together businesses and local leaders to drive economic growth. Following the abolition of LEPs, all core functions have been transferred to Upper Tier Local Authorities (UTLA's). This includes the importance of ensuring a strong business voice to inform strategic policymaking, as first set out in the Levelling Up White Paper in 2022.
- 3.5 Government guidance sets out the expectation that local areas will establish a strong and independent business voice, with representation that is broad and diverse and can advise on and support delivery of an area's economic plan.
- 3.6 The establishment of a new Economic Growth Board is in line with published guidance and work undertaken by a Shadow Board that met in January 2025 to agree transition and governance arrangements.
- 3.7 The Economic Growth Board is an evolution from the existing Brighton & Hove Economic Partnership (BHEP)¹. This is for two reasons; firstly, to reflect the work that the partnership has delivered over the past twenty years; and secondly, to avoid duplication of business voices.
- 3.8 The Economic Growth Board is intended to become the primary voice of business to inform the strategic economic growth narrative for Brighton & Hove and beyond. It seeks to build on the work of the BHEP, bringing business voices together on a voluntary basis to support the economic development of the city and sub-region. It is expected that the Board will feed into future discussions on a Sussex-wide geography, alongside the West Sussex Economy Board and Team East Sussex.

Economic Growth Board

- 3.9 The Vision for the Economic Growth Board focuses on helping to embed a strong and diverse business voice and play a key role in the delivery and implementation of the Economic Plan, including:
- Working strategically at a local and sub-regional level on the prioritisation and execution of projects critical to the development of a fairer, greener, and more competitive economy.
 - Supporting the development and delivery of an inward investment offer designed to attract new investment into the city, as well as retaining expanding companies.
 - Acting as initial 'Business Ambassadors' for the city – promoting opportunities and disseminating relevant information through members' existing networks
 - Collaborating on the development of a strategic economic growth narrative to secure devolved powers and longer-term funding for economic infrastructure and growth.

¹ The BHEP was originally created in the early 2000s by the now defunct South-East England Development Agency, with a remit to embed business thinking in issues such as housing, skills, jobs, transport and connectivity. The BHEP has always acted as a critical friend to the city council.

- 3.10 The Economic Growth Board will meet on a quarterly basis to deliver the Vision as set out above. Terms of Reference were agreed in principle at the Shadow Board meeting in January 2025 and are attached as an Appendix to this report.

Economic Growth Board Membership

- 3.11 Government guidance (December 2023) highlights that “*a board should have a diversity of voices, involve business representative organisations (e.g., local Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses) and there should also be a clear conflict of interest policy (where private interests, both pecuniary and non-pecuniary are declared).*”
- 3.12 Proposed Board membership reflects the Government guidance on business representation, with the following offered a seat on the Board:
- Cabinet Member for Finance and City Regeneration, BHCC
 - Brighton Chamber of Commerce
 - Sussex Chamber of Commerce (the designated Employer Representative Body for the regional Local Skills Improvement Plan)
 - Federation of Small Businesses
 - Representative from the City Employment & Skills Plan steering group.
- 3.13 In addition – and to reflect the work of the BHEP over two decades – it is proposed to retain two members of the BHEP Executive steering committee on the Board. For the first year of the Board, the existing BHEP Chair is to be retained as Chair of the Growth Board for continuity purposes. A representative from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will also be invited in an advisory capacity.
- 3.14 A total of 15 Board Members plus the Chair are proposed. This means that there are 8 vacancies for Board Members. A public call for business leaders to apply to join the Board will shortly be launched, with a focus on sectors that play a key role within the city’s economy as reflected in the Economic Plan.
- 3.15 A diversity of voices is sought to join the Board to reflect the diversity and inclusivity of Brighton & Hove, as well as the city’s business community. Officers have engaged through a wide range of business and community networks to maximise interest and applications from the full breadth of the city’s business base.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 The alternative option would be to not form a Growth Board.
- 4.2 This option was rejected as it does not align with Government guidance following the integration of LEP functions within UTLAs. This guidance sets out the importance of ensuring appropriate business representation in strategic policymaking.

- 4.3 Further, demonstrating a strong business voice is also an eligibility requirement for some government programmes (including Growth Hubs), with the Brighton & Hove Growth Hub now established alongside the Business & Intellectual Property Centre to support the city's business community.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 It is important that business representation on the Economic Growth Board reflects the city's geography, diversity and its diverse economy. A proactive approach is being taken to Board recruitment with support from internal council teams as well as external partners. The opportunity is being widely signposted through city business networks and key partnerships to maximise awareness and exposure. This has been combined with targeted promotion on social media.
- 5.2 Discussions commenced in 2024 with the Executive of the BHEP to agree the evolution to a new Growth Board. These discussions continued for several months to identify and resolve key issues. Subsequently, a discussion took place at a full meeting of the BHEP in December 2024 to formally agree the evolution of this partnership into the new Economic Growth Board.
- 5.3 A Shadow Growth Board meeting was then held in January 2025 to agree core governance issues with the business community. This will shortly be followed by a public recruitment exercise to identify city business leaders that wish to become Board Members of the new Economic Growth Board.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 Local Economic Development Fund has been awarded in 2024/25 to aid transition of LEP functions to UTLAs and it is proposed to utilise this funding to support the set-up and operation of the Economic Growth Board in its first year of operation.

Name of finance officer consulted: John Lack Date consulted: 18/02/25

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The Council has the power to put in place the arrangements contemplated by this report pursuant to the general power of competence contained in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 which allows the Council to do anything that an individual may do subject to any statutory constraints on the Council's powers.
- 7.2 In addition, Section 111 Local Government Act 1972 provides the Council with the power to do anything whether or not involving the expenditure, borrowing or lending of money or the acquisition of property rights which is incidental, conducive or calculated to facilitate the exercise of any of its functions. The recommendations in this report are in keeping with these powers.

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 A key principle of the Economic Plan is to promote inclusive growth in the city. An Equalities Impact and Outcome Assessment (EIA) was prepared for the Economic Plan identifying where work can be effectively focused to maximise benefits for diverse and vulnerable groups.
- 8.2 The EIA recognised that there is no published data on the experience of expatriates, migrants, asylum seekers or refugees in Brighton & Hove as business owners or intersectionality with religion and age, gender, ethnicity, disability or deprivation. The creation of an Economic Growth Board may help to better embed a more diverse range of business voices.
- 8.3 A proactive approach is being taken to Board recruitment with support from internal council teams as well as external partners. The opportunity will be widely signposted through city business networks and key partnerships to maximise awareness and exposure.

9. Sustainability implications

- 9.1 The creation of an Economic Growth Board aligns with one of the core objectives of the Economic Plan to prioritise decarbonisation and create a more circular economy as a robust response to climate change. The Board will support delivery of the Economic Plan and ensure that the city's business community continues to engage with our Circular Economy Action Plan, as well as the wider transition to net zero, working with larger businesses, investment partners and anchor institutions to continue to mainstream this work within our economy.

10. Other Implications

Crime & disorder implications:

- 10.1 Studies have repeatedly linked unemployment to rising crime and the deterioration of health. Improving the economic prospects of the city's residents through driving economic growth led by a new Economic Growth Board may contribute to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 Cabinet is asked to note the establishment of the new Economic Growth Board as required by Government guidance, and to approve the Cabinet Member for Finance and City Regeneration as the council's representative on the board.
- 11.2 The Economic Growth Board will support delivery of the Economic Plan, helping progress the city towards a fairer, greener and more productive economy, ensuring a business voice is embedded and working together with

external partners to grow the city's economy and build wealth for our communities.

- 11.3 The establishment of a new Economic Growth Board also aligns with Sussex and Brighton being included on the Devolution Priority Programme and the future development of a Mayoral Strategic Authority, ensuring that a clear and united business voice is able to represent the economic growth needs and aspirations of the city.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

1. Agreed Terms of Reference – City Economic Growth Board

2. Background documents

1. [Guidance for Local Authorities delivering business representation functions](#)
2. [An Economic Plan for Brighton & Hove 2024-27](#)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. CONTEXT

The Brighton & Hove Economic Growth Board is a significant alliance which brings together key stakeholders who have a vital role in safeguarding and supporting improvements to the city's economy. It is a partnership that seeks to ensure that the voice of business is fully embedded within strategic economic planning as part of a wider approach to delivering growth and opportunity for Brighton & Hove, its businesses and its residents.

The Growth Board will play a central role in the city's economic growth agenda. It will convene quarterly to help embed a strong and diverse business voice and play a key role in the delivery and implementation of the new Economic Plan over the period 2024-27, as well as support in developing subsequent economic strategies that support delivery of agreed economic aspirations over the initial 10-year period.

The Growth Board will also offer advice and guidance to strategic partnerships at a local and sub-regional level (including the Greater Brighton City Region) on the prioritisation and execution of projects critical to the development of a fairer, greener, and more competitive economy and delivery of the objectives of the Economic Plan and wider devolution aspirations as regards economic growth.

The Growth Board does not exist in isolation. It has evolved from the successful work of the Brighton & Hove Economic Partnership, but there is a need to further strengthen alliances to deliver the desired impact. The Brighton & Hove Economic Growth Board will provide:

- Clear relationships with other relevant partnerships which deliver regeneration activities
- Clear representation and involvement with voluntary, community, public, academic and business sectors in achieving economic growth.

These Terms of Reference set out roles and responsibilities of Board Members.

It is recommended that these Terms of Reference are reviewed on a bi-annual basis to ensure that they remain fit-for-purpose in a changing economic climate.

2. VISION AND OBJECTIVES

VISION

The Growth Board will also offer advice and guidance to strategic partnerships at a local and sub-regional level (including the Greater Brighton City Region) on the prioritisation and execution of projects critical to the development of a fairer, greener, and more competitive economy and delivery of the objectives of the Economic Plan.

To align with government guidance, the following responsibilities will be central to the Terms of Reference:

- To support the Council in the development of the Economic Plan, taking an outward-facing view

- To monitor the development and delivery of core actions within the Economic Plan
- To take responsibility for ensuring that a business voice is embedded within strategic economic planning and local growth plans
- To identify and recognise key partnerships of economic importance to the city (e.g. GBEB, etc), working with all strategic partners to ensure effective promotion of shared issues and opportunities alongside the coordination of decisions and appropriate economic infrastructure delivery
- Support the delivery of an inward investment offer designed to attract new investment into Brighton & Hove and the wider city region and retain expanding companies, as well as understanding barriers to exporting that may impact upon the city's business base
- To act as Business Ambassadors for the city – promoting opportunities and disseminating relevant information through members' existing networks
- Where relevant, respond to local, regional and national consultation opportunities and planning applications for major city developments that will have a significant positive or negative effect on the city's economy
- To collaborate with local and regional skills initiatives, including with the Employer Representative Body for the Local Skills Improvement Plan.
- To collaborate on the development of a strategic economic growth narrative that aligns with the 'Sussex Footprint' to secure devolved powers and longer-term funding for economic infrastructure and growth. This will include joint working with the respective Growth Boards for East and West Sussex.

3. MEMBERSHIP

The Economic Growth Board will be steered by its core membership of no more than 15 Board Members appointed through a selection process. Where possible, the Growth Board will contain representatives of the following:

- Large (250+) and medium (50-249) employers
- Brighton Chamber of Commerce representing small (10-49) and micro (0-9) employers
- Federation of Small Businesses (as for the Brighton Chamber of Commerce)
- Sussex Chamber of Commerce, who lead on the Local Skills Improvement Plan for Sussex, as well as international trade export and import documentation
- City Employment & Skills Plan steering group
- BHCC Councillor (Cllr Jacob Taylor - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and City Regeneration)
- Central government representative (MHCLG).

The Growth Board will give urgent consideration to ensure that the voices are suitably representative of the city's communities, including LGBTQ+, black and ethnic minority and neuro-divergent representative voices to include black and racial majority businesses, neuro-divergence and others.

All three city MPs will be invited to attend meetings as observers. The Chair of the Growth Board will sit on the Greater Brighton Economic Board as a Business Partner to replace the Brighton & Hove Economic Partnership.

4. PROCEDURAL

MEMBERSHIP

- See 3 above
- A Panel will form to review applications for Board Membership. Initially, this Panel will comprise Board Chair (Dean Orgill), BHCC Lead Cllr (Cllr Jacob Taylor) and Sussex Chamber of Commerce (Ana Christie), supported by BHCC Economic Development Manager and the Board's Executive Director.
- The Chair of the Board will be elected by Board Members for an initial 1-year period, with a maximum term of 2 years. Self-nomination is allowed.
- Board Members are elected for a term of 2 years. This term can be extended for 2-year periods (up to a maximum term of 8 years) subject to agreement from the Board Chair and BHCC Lead Cllr.

MEETINGS

- The Economic Growth Board will meet quarterly.
- The Growth Board commits to hosting two City Events each year on topics of relevance to the city's wider business base.
- All Growth Board Members will have equal weighting at meetings.

5. RESOURCING

The Economic Growth Board will be resourced by a small team led by Council officers and an Executive Director whose role will be to ensure that the listed objectives are being achieved. The team will develop a targeted approach, which will look for new ways of working and funding opportunities to ensure that strategic objectives are met.

ROLE

- Provide support to the members of the Economic Growth Board to ensure that they have an overview of the local economy.
- Report on whether strategic objectives, priorities, and targets are being met
- Identify strategic and policy issues for discussion at Growth Board meetings / City Events.
- To respond to local, regional and national initiatives and consultation opportunities that will impact upon the city's economy.

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 172

Subject: Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

Date of meeting: Thursday 20 March 2025

Report of: Leader of the Council

Lead Officer: Director Governance & Law

Contact Officer: Head of Cabinet Office

Email: alex.voce@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Key Decision: Yes

Reason(s) Key: Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards).

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed responses from Brighton & Hove City Council to the Government consultation on devolution, which is due to close on 13 April. 2025. The report also sets out the proposed initial submission to Government on local government reorganisation, which is required to be submitted by 21st March 2025.
- 1.2 The Government has set out its strategy for driving economic growth, improving living standards and enhancing public services in its Devolution White Paper and 'Plan for Change'. Both devolution and local government reorganisation provide opportunities to support the Councils' ambition for 'A Better Brighton & Hove for All' through the re-distribution of power from central to local government and the provision of an integrated financial settlement to fund local priorities.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Agrees to submit the response to the Government's devolution consultation for Sussex & Brighton as attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Agrees to submit the response to the statutory invitation letter on local government reorganisation outlining Brighton & Hove's interim plan as attached at Appendix 2.

- 2.3 Delegates authority to the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader, to make formatting, typographical or factual changes to ensure accuracy to the documents referred to at 2.1 and 2.2 prior to final submission.
- 2.4 Notes a further report will come to Cabinet prior to submission of the Council's final proposal on local government reorganisation in September 2025.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 In July 2024, Deputy Prime Minister, Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP, wrote to the Leaders of all Upper Tier Authorities across England and invited any interested areas to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) in devolution by 30 September 2024 (Appendix 4).
- 3.2 Following initial discussions with neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders, Brighton & Hove City Council submitted an EOI for devolution on an initial preferred geography of pan-Sussex, to include Brighton & Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex (Appendix 5).
- 3.3 On 16 December, the Government published its Devolution White Paper requiring all local authority areas in geographies made up of two-tier authorities and neighbouring unitaries to collaborate to create Mayoral Combined County Authorities at a preferred population level of at least 1.5 million people.
- 3.4 For the most ambitious places, keen to move forward with devolution, the Government invited areas to express interest in joining the Devolution Priority Programme. The Priority Programme offers the support of Government to establish Mayoral Combined County Authorities by May 2026 and new Unitary Authorities by April 2028, with elections to Shadow Unitary Authorities to take place in May 2027.
- 3.5 Brighton & Hove City Council, in collaboration with East Sussex and West Sussex County Council, submitted an application to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme on 10 January 2025.
- 3.6 On the 5 February the Government announced the 6 areas accepted onto the Devolution Priority Programme. Sussex & Brighton were confirmed as one of the successful applicants.

Proposed Devolution Consultation Response

- 3.7 The Council's proposed response to the Government's devolution consultation is set out at Appendix 1. The response sets out our high level views on how devolution will benefit Brighton & Hove and deliver on the priorities of economic growth, environmental benefits and improving social outcomes. It also includes our response on the proposed governance structures and representation on the MCCA.

- 3.8 Our response makes clear that the Council believes it is critical that local government reorganisation and devolution go hand in hand, so that Brighton & Hove's unique identity is protected and that governance structures support the needs of our diverse communities and reflect local identities.

Local Government Reorganisation Response

- 3.8 Unitary councils have been highlighted in the Devolution White Paper as leading to better outcomes for residents, saving significant finances and improving accountability by delivering a comprehensive range of services. As an existing Unitary Authority, Brighton & Hove is already a single tier authority providing all local government functions to its residents. Whilst the Government has indicated that new Unitary Authorities must be of a size to achieve efficiencies and improve capacity, the indication from Government is that there is flexibility around this, in particular for existing Unitary Authorities with established identities and geographies.
- 3.9 The Council's proposed interim plan is set out at Appendix 2. The interim plan sets out Brighton & Hove's support for local government reform to create unitary authorities where currently two-tier authorities exist. It highlights our unique position as the only existing unitary authority in Sussex. The interim plan includes our intention to engage further with our neighbouring Councils across Sussex, our residents, communities and key stakeholders on options. Our plan includes how we will build and review the data and evidence on the impact of local government reorganisation on the priorities for our City and the wider Sussex area, including financial sustainability, service delivery and equality.
- 3.10 The interim plan includes a summary of the initial engagement exercise. At this early stage of the process, no lines are drawn on a map and the interim response sets out clearly that Brighton & Hove City Council remains open to options in relation to population size for the new Unitaries. An indication is given that the current view is that creating five unitary authorities across Sussex, with Brighton and Hove on its existing footprint, or growing to form one of these authorities, would ensure the different voices of Sussex are heard, while ensuring the Unitary authorities are financially viable and retain local identity.
- 3.11 The interim plan proposes the next steps for collaboration, data collection and analysis and future engagement to support the preparation of final proposals by September 2025.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 The White Paper is clear that the Government intends that all of England be devolved by default and is committed to ending the deals-based approach. The Government will also legislate for a ministerial directive to enable it to directly create Strategic Authorities in any places where local leaders in that region have not been able to agree how to access devolved powers. Having submitted a successful expression of interest to join the Devolution Priority Programme, the Council is committed to work collaboratively with

neighbouring authorities to progress devolution and the creation of a Mayoral Combined County Authority.

- 4.2 As an existing unitary authority, Brighton & Hove City Council is not required to restructure. However, local government re-organisation presents an opportunity to consider options for reform to ensure that Brighton & Hove residents and businesses are best served. Not responding to the invitation from government would preclude the Council from fully exploring these options and from having a say in what governance structures would be best for Sussex in the context of devolution.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 On 17 February 2025, the Government launched its public consultation on devolution in areas on the priority programme, including Sussex & Brighton. Brighton & Hove City Council is a respondent to that consultation. The deadline for all responses is 13 April 2025.
- 5.2 At the request of Government and to ensure our residents and stakeholders have the opportunity to respond to the consultation, the Council has proactively promoted and shared the consultation link on the Council website, on social media channels, in all Councillor briefings, by email to key partners and stakeholders, on the Wave internal staff site and through newsletters to our communities.
- 5.3 The Council made a commitment to our residents to remain open and transparent about devolution and local government reorganisation. An initial engagement exercise on local government reorganisation, utilising our engagement platform Your Voice, has been undertaken. This engagement has been promoted through internal and external communications channels, and we have encouraged participation from residents, council staff, trade unions, public sector partners, businesses and wider stakeholders across Brighton & Hove.
- 5.4 A total of 597 respondents took part in the survey, offering a range of views on local government reorganisation. A full summary report of our Your Voice LGR engagement can be found at Appendix 3.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 The high-level programme plan set out in appendix 2 covers the activity between now and September 2025. This plan will require additional short-term internal staffing resources and external consultancy support and the financial planning assumption is this will require between £0.200m and £0.300m.
- 6.2 The Government has said that areas on the Devolution Priority Programme will receive capacity funding to deliver; the level of funding has yet to be announced and therefore there is a risk that additional costs incurred by this council will not be fully covered. The council will reflect any financial

implications of this initial stage within the Targeted Budget Management process during 2025/26.

Name of finance officer consulted: Craig Garoghan Date consulted: 05/03/25

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The Devolution White Paper sets out the proposals for a Devolution Bill which will confer all the powers and functions in the Devolution Framework to the Mayoral Combined County Authority once it is established.
- 7.2 The Mayoral Combined County Authority would receive devolved funding from central government, including relating to the following policies:
- Housing and regeneration
 - Local growth
 - Adult skills (except apprenticeships)
 - Local transport
- 7.3 In addition, the devolution consultation document indicates that the Mayoral Combined County Authority would receive a 30-year 'Investment Fund' from central government and that the amount of this fund would be confirmed at the government's Spending Review in June 2025.
- 7.4 The necessary powers are already in force to enable local government re-organisation to proceed under existing legislation (the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007).

Name of lawyer consulted: Elizabeth Culbert Date consulted: 04/03/25

8. Risk implications

- 8.1 A key risk related to the report is ensuring sufficient support for the devolution and local government reorganisation programmes to enable this work to be undertaken within the required timescales whilst maintaining service delivery.
- 8.2 Government has indicated that support will be available to support Councils through these processes and that the details will be shared with Councils shortly.
- 8.3 A BHCC Programme Board has been established with representatives from relevant service areas and this Board will oversee delivery of the projects and will commission additional support where this is required.

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be developed against the different elements of devolution and local government re-organisation proposals and will inform the final local government re-organisation proposal in September.

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 One of the areas of competence to be exercised by the Mayoral Combined County Authority under the new devolution framework will be Environment and Climate Change. Powers will include local nature recovery strategies, property retrofit and heat network zoning.
- 10.2 Any sustainability implications arising from the development of local government reorganisation will be considered and will inform the final proposal to be submitted in September.

11. Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 11.1 The Mayoral Combined County Authority will have a duty to improve health and to reduce health inequalities. The White Paper expects that Mayors, or their appointees, will sit on the board of, or Chair, their area's Integrated Care Partnership. Mayors and Strategic Authorities will support partners in driving public service reform and the new devolution framework will set clearer expectations for Mayors' roles in local health systems and in improving population health.
- 11.2 Any health and wellbeing implications arising from the development of local government reorganisation will be considered and will inform the final proposal to be submitted in September.

Other Implications

12. Crime & disorder implications

- 12.1 The Devolution White Paper sets out the Government's intention that where the geographies of the Mayoral Combined County Authority align with Police and Crime Commissioner and Fire and Rescue Authorities, Mayors will, by default, be responsible for those services.

13. Conclusion

- 13.1 Devolution and local government reorganisation presents an opportunity to drive significant economic and social benefits. The Sussex region stands to gain enhanced powers, financial resources, greater strategic control and improved infrastructure, as well as the ability to deliver more responsive public services helping Brighton and Hove to address some of our critical challenges. We believe it is critical that local government reorganisation and devolution go hand in hand, so that our unique identity is protected and that governance structures support the needs of our diverse communities and reflect local identities. This is vital to ensuring that the government's aim of bringing power closer to people.

Supporting Documentation

Appendices

1. BHCC response to Devolution consultation led by Government for submission by 13th April 2025.
2. BHCC response to the statutory invitation letter on local government re-organisation outlining Brighton & Hove's interim plan for submission on 21st March 2025.
3. Summary report of our Your Voice LGR engagement
4. Letter inviting expressions of interest on devolution September 2024
5. Sussex & Brighton expression of interest

Response to Sussex and Brighton devolution consultation by Brighton & Hove City Council

Consultation questions

Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority over the proposed geography will deliver benefits to the area?

- **Strongly agree**
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

Brighton & Hove city Council (BHCC) strongly agrees that the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) over the proposed geography will deliver benefits to the area. We feel the Sussex geography makes sense in terms of size, identity, as well as being the right footprint to ensure delivery of the benefits of devolution including economic growth, improved governance and enhanced public services.

Sussex has so much potential. We are proudly home to a beautiful coastline and national park recognised by a UNESCO Biosphere, three leading universities, a Premier League football team and international gateways including the UK's second largest airport in Gatwick, and the ports of Shoreham and Newhaven. The total population of Sussex is 1,705,800 and as a region we welcome over 60 million visitors each year. We have so much to offer but have not yet reached our potential.

Despite our relative prosperity, there are significant regional disparities, with pockets of deprivation and unmet potential. Devolution has the potential to turn these challenges into opportunities, and support collaboration to drive economic, social and environmental benefits. We are therefore excited by the government's commitment to go further with devolution and recognise the real opportunity this presents for us to deliver change for our residents.

Economic Development and Growth: Brighton & Hove as a city has seen significant jobs and productivity growth- among the strongest in the UK since 2010, with one of the most entrepreneurial economies and with the strongest business density per head of population of any city outside London, according to the centre for cities- cities outlook 2024. Brighton & Hove now has 16,150 registered businesses¹, plus a large number of freelancers and sole traders. The number of businesses in the city continues to rise, having increased by more than 12% since 2023. However, our economy does not exist in a vacuum. The UK economy is in a period of stagnation. Real wages have not grown in the last 15 years; income inequality is growing across the country; taxes have increased; and foreign direct investment has declined by 11% since Brexit. Our city is impacted by these larger structural

¹ ONS data 2024

challenges. For residents, the city is becoming increasingly unaffordable, with those on average incomes no longer comfortably able to afford to own or rent a home within Brighton & Hove. The rising cost of essentials means that in real terms pay is decreasing, and certain places and communities are disproportionately impacted by these wider economic challenges.

Improved Governance: Brighton & Hove has a history of working successfully with partners across Sussex through the Greater Brighton Economic Board (which covers seven local authority areas) and the Greater Brighton and Coastal West Sussex Strategic Planning Board, alongside other key partnerships such as The Living Coast UNESCO urban biosphere and Sussex Bay (regional vision for the 100 miles of coastline of seascape and rivers across Sussex). We feel that a clear collaboration mechanism which ensures that councils across Sussex and Brighton & Hove working together in a structured way, which can take decisions over a wider area footprint, is a huge benefit for the place and people across Sussex, with the added hopeful benefit of increasing trust from residents across Sussex.

Enhanced Public Services: Through the governance and focus on key strategic areas such as: Transport and local infrastructure, Skills and Employment, Housing and Planning, Economic development and regeneration, Environment and climate change, Health and Wellbeing and more. A clear mechanism of improved governance and collaboration with other Sussex local authorities led by the clear direction of a democratically elected mayor, will afford us the ability to work more effectively across Sussex and Brighton & Hove to continue to drive improvements on key public services.

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed governance arrangements for the Mayoral Combined County Authority?

- Strongly agree
- **Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) agrees with the proposed governance arrangements for the Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA). Coming together as a MCCA would provide greater visibility and transparency for this work across Sussex and Brighton & Hove and give us the necessary capacity to use key growth levers such as transport, skills, economic development, and regeneration. It would enable focus on the things that will make the biggest difference to the lives of our residents and the businesses within Sussex and Brighton & Hove.

Mayor: BHCC agree that the MCCA should have a mayor directly elected by residents to be a regional leader who will chair the MCCA and will have the powers, functions and budget outlined in the devolution white paper. We welcome the establishment of the Council of Nations and Regions and want to ensure that the region of Sussex and Brighton & Hove is represented in Whitehall. We also want to ensure that residents across the strategic authority understand who they can hold directly accountable when it comes to developing the Sussex and Brighton & Hove regional area.

Constituency Councils: BHCC agree that Sussex and Brighton MCCA would have the following:

- A directly elected Mayor

- Constituent Members (Members appointed by the constituent councils, with each constituent council appointing a lead member- which is expected to be the leader or their nominee) and one further member from its elected members. The number of constituent members will depend on the final proposal for local government reorganisation in Sussex
- Non-constituent and associate members to support the delivery of their work programme (who will be representatives of an organisation – for example a local NHS trust, Fire Authority, the police crime commission or local business representative or (for associate members) named individuals with expertise in specific areas. In terms of the number of non-constituent authorities, we consider that flexibility should be afforded to the MCCA to increase this number if the MCCA considers appropriate.

MCCA decision making and voting: BHCC agree that the voting members of the MCCA should be the constituent authorities (2 representatives each) and the mayor. We note that the final number of voting members will be determined following Local Government Re-Organisation, which will determine the number of Unitary Authorities that are established, so the numbers of voting members cited in the consultation may change. In relation to quoracy, again the final numbers will need to be dependent on the final number of constituent members.

We understand that the decision making at the MCCA would be by a majority voting system. However, this is an area that we would like more clarification on in terms of voting and ensuring that all areas will be effectively represented by decision making. As such, we would like to continue to develop with Government proposals around governance. For example, regarding the proposed arrangements for quoracy at MCCA meetings.

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the economy of the area?

- **Strongly agree**
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

Brighton & Hove City Council strongly agrees that a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) will support the economy of the strategic area of Sussex and Brighton & Hove.

Current economic position: By traditional economic measures, Brighton & Hove is in a strong economic position. External research has shown that we have some of the best conditions for investment of anywhere outside of London. Brighton & Hove is ranked as the 5th best city in which to live and work, and the 5th best city in which to start a business. The city has seen significant jobs and productivity growth- among the strongest in the UK since 2010, with one of the most entrepreneurial economies and with the strongest business density per head of population of any city outside London, according to the centre for cities- cities outlook 2024. Brighton & Hove now has 16,150 registered businesses, plus a large number of freelancers and sole traders. The number of businesses in the city continues to rise, having increased by more than 12% since 2023.

The strength of the city as a place to do business is exhibited in recent Centre for Cities research (Outlook 2025) which has the highest share of new economy knowledge-based firms when compared

to working age population.² This reflects the presence of two universities and leading FE providers, plus the University of Chichester and the Sussex and Surrey Institute of Technology located within Brighton & Hove's core travel to work area. Brighton & Hove is delivering economic growth, with a focus on sectors already identified by the government as crucial to future success. This is reflected in our recently adopted Economic Plan, which demonstrates our economic diversity and highlights the potential for growth of the digital knowledge economy, maximising the potential of our wider creative and cultural industries and our highly specialised and growing advanced manufacturing sector.

Our recent Employment Land Study shows that between 2023 and 2041 jobs in office and industrial sectors of the city's economy are forecast to grow by 8%. Combined with the city's existing strengths in financial services and the visitor economy, this demonstrates Brighton & Hove's potential for future growth.

Key Challenges: However, this growth may be impacted by key challenges being faced by Brighton & Hove. We have significant geographical constraints due to the South Downs National Park and the sea. This has meant that our businesses are finding it increasingly challenging to find space for expansion and competing pressures on space mean that some employment space is being lost to residential development. Between 2018 and 2023, the city lost an estimated 16% of its industrial floorspace and 7% of its office floorspace.³ Our recent Employment Land Study has shown that Brighton & Hove needs a further 56,386 square metres of new industrial space over the period to 2041, with a potential supply pipeline of just 6% of this. The study also shows a need for over 87,000 square metres of new office space. In addition, our aging building stock may mean that, without adequate support, landlords may struggle to upgrade commercial space to meet required minimum energy efficiency standards.

Despite this, housing prices continue to be high, meaning that residents struggle to rent or buy a home. The median house price in the year ending September 2023 is £430,000, and the median gross annual workplace-based earnings in 2023 for Brighton & Hove is 34,876. The competing pressures on developable land means that the ratio of median house price to median gross place workplace-based earnings put Brighton at 12.33 in 2023. This is higher than average in the Southeast at 10.39, and higher than the average in England at 8.26.⁴

The benefits of our economic growth are not felt evenly across the city, with pockets of significant deprivation in parts of East Brighton, Hangleton and North Portslade. Around 10% of all Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Brighton & Hove are in the most deprived decile. Parts of Whitehawk are in the topmost deprived LSOAs anywhere in the country.⁵

Strategic Benefits of MCCA

Brighton & Hove is a key economic hub in Sussex. Our prosperity is already felt by surrounding areas, but we need to work collaboratively to address our shared issues. Where the city struggles to find space for our growing business base, Sussex can help to grow the economy at a regional level, creating new opportunities for our residents and helping to address the deprivation seen in some parts of Brighton & Hove. It can be positive displacement in action – helping to alleviate the pressure on the over-heating city economy and generating new investment and growth for the region's wider benefit.

² [Cities-Outlook-2025.pdf](#)

³ Economic Plan Evidence Base

⁴ ONS data: [House price to workplace-based earnings ratio - Office for National Statistics](#)

⁵ IMD 2019 stats: File 1 gives the stats: [English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK](#)

This economic growth will not just happen. Taking a strategic view to infrastructure issues, including both east-west and north-south transport, and tied to environmental sustainability, will make a significant positive impact. Likewise, working together to promote Sussex & Brighton for investment – rather than competing against each other – can only benefit the economy. This builds on the work we’ve started with neighbours in the Greater Brighton Economic Board, delivering £200m of investment and growth in the sub-region.

This is why we believe that a strategic view of Sussex and Brighton & Hove can address these interlocking issues and find creative solutions.

A MCCA could provide:

- Localised Decision-Making: More tailored policies and initiatives that address specific regional needs.
- Improved Infrastructure: Enhanced transport links and infrastructure projects that connect different parts of Sussex more effectively.
- Balanced Development: Leveraging the strengths of both urban and rural areas to ensure balanced economic growth compatible with the net zero transition.
- Increased Investment: Attracting investment in key sectors, boosting employment opportunities, and supporting local businesses.

In conclusion, the strategic oversight provided by a Mayoral Combined County Authority could help overcome the challenges faced by Brighton & Hove and support the broader economic development of Sussex. This collaborative approach would enable us to harness the full potential of the region, ensuring sustainable growth and prosperity for all.

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve social outcomes in the area?

- **Strongly agree**
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don’t know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

Key Social outcomes in Brighton & Hove have been developed through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). The JSNA is concerned with wider social factors that have an impact on people’s health and wellbeing. Whilst there are some benefits in living in Brighton & Hove such as a lower mortality rate for air pollution 4.5% compared to 5.7% in Southeast, low number of young people not in education, employment or training of 3.8% compared to the Southeast of 6.9%. We also have lower hospital admissions for alcohol specific conditions of 531 per 100,000 compared to 587 per 100,000 in Southeast for 2021/2022. We also have a strong community with higher rates of belonging, pulling together, formal volunteering and feeling that people from different background get compared to England. (City tracker survey results 2018).

However, we do have some unique challenges In Brighton & Hove. Whilst we are the 131st most deprived local authority in England (of 317) according to the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD),

we do have, 17% of the population of the city living in one of the 20% most deprived areas in England. Additionally, in terms of population, we have a significantly smaller number of children under aged 18 (17%) compared to the Southeast (21%), we also have a high percentage of children in care with 74 per 10,000 children and young people in care compared to Southeast of 57 per 10,000. Overall, this paints a complicated picture of social outcomes.

We believe the MCCA will play an important role in health and wellbeing alongside wider public service reform. The new bespoke duty of in relation to health improvement and health inequalities would ensure that health outcomes and reduction in health inequalities would be given a clear plan across the Sussex and Brighton & Hove region. This is essential in creating a healthier society, more resilient to the effects of climate change, and supporting in a closer collaboration and partnership across health partners in the region.

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve local government services in the area?

- **Strongly agree**
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) strongly agrees that the MCCA will improve local government services. We understand that the MCCA will not replace Brighton & Hove City Council and that key council services will continue to be provided for our residents.

As a unitary council, Brighton & Hove provides over 700 services to residents in our area. This ranges from adult social care, to waste management to housing and planning and a lot more. Currently, we receive funding from a range of sources, some of this is controllable, where we have a say, and some of this is non-controllable. Pressures on council budgets has been mounting, with spiking inflation, high energy costs, increases to national living wage. This, combined with the increased demand on services has led to a 27% real term cut in core spending power since 2010.

The funding given to the MCCA will aid us in ensuring that devolved funding from central government, will be analysed reviewed and voted on tackling key issues locally. We agree with the MCCA having control over how funding is spent, including how it is spent to meet local needs in the area.

Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve the local natural environment and overall national environment?

- **Strongly agree**
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

Brighton & Hove, situated between the South Downs and the sea, has over 40 percent of its area within the South Downs National Park. This unique positioning provides a substantial opportunity to enhance and protect the natural environment, as recognised by its status as a UNESCO urban biosphere (which also incorporates parts of the neighbouring Sussex area). The Biosphere has enabled the development of strong partnership working across many facets of environmental enhancement in the Brighton and Hove and wider Sussex area.

The city has recently established a strategic partnership, Sussex Energy, with the goal of achieving net zero energy status in the Greater Brighton and wider Sussex area by 2040. The energy demand in Sussex is 14 times greater than the current supply from zero carbon sources and therefore it is necessary to reduce energy demand and increase the local supply of zero carbon energy. This would directly contribute to the government's priorities of transitioning to a zero-carbon electricity system by 2030. This initiative supports national efforts such as the creation of GB Energy and the UK-wide scaling up of solar panels for homes and businesses.

The proposed geography for the MCCA matches the geography adopted for the Sussex Local Nature Recovery strategy, thus the MCCA would be ideally placed to strategically oversee implementation of the strategy. In wider natural environment improvement, including adaptation to climate change, the ability of the MCCA to work strategically at catchment-level would lead to better outcomes than approaching this on a more local scale. The proposed public safety role of local resilience is also welcomed, enabling a joined-up, nature-based, approach to improving resilience to climate change.

The MCCA will play an essential role in this development. Its strategic role in convening partnerships, coordinating action, securing funding, and ensuring effective delivery is paramount in combating climate change. The devolution of retrofit funding and the hosting of heat network zonae coordination would enable the MCCA to take a strategic, joined-up approach to these activities across Sussex. The MCCA's involvement will be crucial in driving forward the initiatives necessary to improve the local and national environment.

In addition to specific powers and functions related directly to climate and the environment that are proposed for the MCCA, the powers and functions of the MCCA (transport and local infrastructure, skills an employment, housing and strategic planning, economic development and regeneration, health wellbeing and public service and public safety) are all strongly intertwined with improving the local and national environment. The proposed scope of powers and functions covered by the MCCA, and the inclusion of climate and the environment amongst them, should enable the MCCA to take a holistic view and bring about improvements that balance environmental, economic and social needs, rather than working in a siloed manner.

Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the interests and needs of local communities and reflect local identities?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Brighton & Hove City Council agrees that a MCCA will support the interests and needs of local communities and reflect local identities. In Brighton & Hove, we have some unique challenges that we believe the MCCA will be able to support, specifically in reducing inequalities.

However, we believe it is critical that local government reorganisation and devolution go hand in hand, so that our unique identity is protected and that governance structures support the needs of our diverse communities and reflect local identities. This is vital to ensuring that the government's aim of bringing power closer to people is realised and does not get lost in the establishment of new structures.

Our city is unique and diverse. We are unofficially referred to as the LGBTQIA+ capital of Britain and we are proud to host the UK's biggest Pride Festival. More than 20% of the city's population were born outside the UK, and we have a higher migrant population than elsewhere in the southeast – and much of England. As a City of Sanctuary, we are committed to being a welcoming place of safety, acceptance and freedom of expression for all – and to offer sanctuary for people fleeing violence and persecution.

The 2021 census shows that;

- 1 in 10 residents identify with an LGB+ sexual orientation 10.6% compared to Southeast 3.1%
- One in a hundred adult residents identify as Trans, double than what is found in the Southeast
- A quarter of residents are BME 26% compared to the Southeast 21%
- One in five residents were born outside of the UK 20% higher than seen in the Southeast of 16%
- Over a half of residents have no religion or belief 55%, significantly higher than in the Southeast of 40%

We celebrate our diversity and this is one of our great strengths. While there is much to celebrate, Brighton & Hove also faces a number of significant challenges in addressing the needs of our local communities. We are a city of deep inequalities, with areas of significant deprivation.

The national housing crisis is severely impacting the city, with 7,500 households currently on the Housing Register, including 1,800 people currently living in temporary or emergency accommodation. One of our biggest challenges is how we can provide more housing to meet the city's ever-increasing needs. Due to the constraints of being situated between the South Downs and the Sea, we do not have the space to meet the full demand within our own confines.

On a city-wide basis, average household earnings are almost the same as the national level (£30,000 per year). However, in some communities, those earnings are well below the national average. 9% of our population earns below the national living wage.

In Brighton & Hove, there are neighbourhoods that rank among the worst nationally for access to healthy and affordable food and GP services. Overall wages have not kept pace with inflation in recent years, which means residents are actually worse off in real terms than they were in 2011. Women's wages remain below men's, and the gap has widened in the last two years.

As a council we are taking a number of steps to tackle entrenched inequalities, provide more affordable housing and immediate financial support to our residents most at need, we believe that the MCCA offers a strategic framework to address these challenges. By providing localised decision-making, tailored policies, and coordinated efforts across the region, the MCCA can enhance economic growth, improve infrastructure, and attract investment.

Ensuring that local representation from across unitary authorities who have a seat at the table and can champion their areas is essential to ensuring that communities feel they have a say and is essential for the growth and development of the region.

Brighton & Hove City Council's Interim Plan for Local Government Reorganisation

21 March 2025

Summary

On 5 February 2025 the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution wrote to all East Sussex authorities and Brighton and Hove City Council inviting us to work with other Leaders across Sussex to develop proposals for Local Government Reorganisation of two-tier areas.

Brighton and Hove City Council supports local government reform to create unitary authorities where currently two-tier authorities exist.

This paper sets out our response to the Minister's invitation. We include our plans to engage further with our neighbouring Councils across Sussex, our residents, communities and key stakeholders on options. Our plan includes how we will build and review the data and evidence on the impact of Local Government Reform on the priorities for our City and the wider Sussex area, including financial sustainability, service delivery and equality.

Brighton & Hove City Council is the only Unitary Authority in Sussex and delivers more than 700 services to people living and working in the city. We are ambitious for the future of our city and are committed to making it "A Better Brighton & Hove for all". Our Council Plan is key to delivering our priorities by 2027 and beyond. Our top priorities are tackling inequalities, the housing and homelessness crisis, and improving the look and feel of the city. We are proud to have continued to balance our budgets through austerity and this period of declining local government finance.

We believe that our current council size is broadly set up appropriately for Brighton & Hove and we do not feel the need to pursue local government organisation arbitrarily. Notwithstanding this, we recognise that there would be benefit in reorganisation if it supports greater efficiency, effectiveness and resilience for the City and we are open to change where the evidence and data supports this. We are keen to explore options that will help us address the critical challenges facing our city, such as homelessness, housing affordability and inequality.

Brighton and Hove sits within Sussex where the differences between rural, urban and coastal areas form the strengths of the future Sussex and Brighton Mayoral Combined County Authority. We believe, and over the coming months will test our assumptions against the data and evidence and the views of our residents, stakeholders and partners, that any Sussex and Brighton MCCA must represent these different but complementary areas. We are of the view that potentially creating five unitaries

authorities across Sussex, with Brighton and Hove on our existing footprint or growing to form one of these new authorities, would ensure the different voices of Sussex are heard at the MCCA table, while ensuring the Unitary authorities are financially viable, efficient and hold local identity. We have seen through our own services and from other smaller unitaries the benefits of big county services being delivered on smaller footprints leading to positive outcomes for residents through the interconnection of universal services with specialist areas.

In this paper we share the findings of our initial engagement with the residents and communities of Brighton and Hove City where we set out four options for Brighton and Hove: remain as we are; grow towards the east; grow towards the west or grow towards the north. We set out our plan to test these options and assumptions further over the next six months in advance of final proposals being submitted on 26 September.

Brighton and Hove City – our unique character

Brighton & Hove is a cosmopolitan, dynamic city by the sea, located on the edge of the South Downs National Park. This inspiring place to live, work and visit is home to over 280,000 people and attracts 10 million visitors each year. The city's success is a result of continually adapting innovating and growing while maintaining its independent spirit and distinct identity.

Economic Strength

As a city, Brighton & Hove is in a strong economic position, punching well above our weight for our size and performing well by traditional economic measures. External research has shown that we have some of the best conditions for investment of anywhere outside of London.¹ We are proudly ranked as the 5th best city in which to live and work, and the 5th best city in which to start a business.²

Cultural and Creative Hub

Brighton & Hove is an internationally recognised cultural offer and are a hotspot for creative talent and technological innovation. City landmarks include the iconic Royal Pavilion, the Palace Pier, and The Lanes shopping area. With an abundance of bars, restaurants, independent shops and attractions.

Festivals and Events

Our city's cultural offering is huge - the Brighton Festival of performing arts has been held in the city for 50 years and boasts the biggest fringe festival in England. Annual major sporting events include the Brighton Marathon, the biggest outside London. We are home to a Premier League football team, Brighton & Hove Albion, who play at the

¹ [BRIGHTON & HOVE ECONOMIC EVIDENCE](#) pg 7

² [BRIGHTON & HOVE ECONOMIC EVIDENCE](#) pg.7

state-of-the-art Brighton Community Stadium, which also hosts the club's Women's Super League team and international games.

Educational Excellence

Our city's two top-flight universities attract students from around the world. The University of Sussex is ranked 25th in the index for the best universities in the UK and Brighton University is leading the way in the fields of advanced engineering and design. Brighton, Hove & Sussex Sixth Form College (BHASVIC) which is also located in the city – is in the top 10 Further Education colleges nationally and rated the No1 non-selective college in the country, drawing students from across Sussex.

Natural Beauty and Green Spaces

Key to the success of Brighton & Hove – both historically and in the present day – is its outstanding environment. We are ideally situated between the coast and the South Downs. Both are areas of outstanding natural beauty, and we are proud to be recognised as a UNESCO World Biosphere Region, known as The Living Coast. Our famous seafront promenades and undercliff walks provides 13km of off-road walking for residents and visitors. In the city centre, there is a green space or park in easy reach wherever you go in the city. We have approximately 147 parks including heritage parks, playing fields and green spaces. Of our major parks, 7 have been awarded Green Flags by the Keep Britain Tidy Campaign.

Diversity and Inclusion

Brighton & Hove is a diverse and unique city. We are unofficially referred to as the LGBTQIA+ capital of Britain and we are proud to host the UK's biggest Pride Festival. More than 20% of the city's population were born outside the UK, and we have a higher migrant population than elsewhere in the southeast – and much of England. As a City of Sanctuary, we are committed to being a welcoming place of safety, acceptance and freedom of expression for all – and to offer sanctuary for people fleeing violence and persecution.

Challenges

While there is much to celebrate, Brighton & Hove faces significant challenges. The national housing crisis is severely impacting the city, with 7,500 households currently on the Housing Register, including 1,800 people currently living in temporary or emergency accommodation.

We are a city of deep inequalities, with areas of significant deprivation. Out of 317 authorities, Brighton & Hove is ranked 131 most deprived authority in England (2019 IMD). 15 neighbourhoods (9%) are in the 10% most deprived lower super output areas in England.

Healthy life expectancy shows that Brighton & Hove women can expect to live 25% of their life in poor health (23% in England), while males in Brighton & Hove can expect 22% of their life to be lived in poor health (20% in England). In addition, there are

significant health inequalities across our population. For example, there is a gap in life expectancy of 10 years in men and six years in women between the most and least disadvantaged areas in the city. Local data highlights relatively good health and wellbeing in younger children. However, we have high rates of smoking, substance misuse and mental health needs in young people.

Looking Forward: Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

To address these challenges and build on our success, devolution and LGR present promising routes for further development. By gaining greater control over local resources and decision-making for the region, Brighton & Hove can tailor solutions to its unique needs and aspirations. This approach we believe will empower the city to enhance public services, drive economic growth, and reduce inequalities, ensuring a brighter future for all residents.

An evidence-based approach to LGR to support devolution

Our approach to options development is evidence based. We have mapped out the type of data and evidence we will need to test our proposals and assumptions including the detailed work we will undertake between now and submitting a final proposal in September.

Please see a monthly high-level programme plan outline below:

Table 1: High Level Programme Plan

Date and Task	Summary
March/April 25 - Data Collection and Analysis	Collect financial, service performance, socio-demographic, and geographical data. Share reports with the Devolution and LGR programme board.
April 25 - Evaluation Criteria	Define evaluation criteria, assess reports, and develop reorganisation scenarios.
May 25 - Develop and Test Scenarios	Create and test multiple reorganisation scenarios using financial models and simulations. Refine scenarios based on feedback.
June 25 - Evaluate against Criteria	Develop scoring system, perform cost-benefit analysis, assess risks, and conduct sensitivity analysis.
July 25 - Review Proposal	Validate data, conduct peer reviews, and finalise submission documents.
August 25 - Refine Proposal	Review and refine proposals, ensure alignment with government criteria, submit for internal approval, and plan for transition.
September 25 - Submit Proposal	Prepare comprehensive documentation, submit final proposals to government, and prepare for implementation.

Local Government Reorganisation Options to be considered

In relation to size and geography, for Sussex and Brighton & Hove, we feel it is important to consider:

Rural, coastal and urban needs

Rural areas face challenges such as low internet and mobile coverage, limited transport and access to services, youth migration, and an ageing population. Urban areas, on the other hand, deal with limited access to green spaces, affordable housing issues, congestion, air pollution, and other environmental and infrastructure problems. Coastal areas have tourism, low wage economies, hidden inequality and deprivation. To address these diverse needs, we need to ensure that unitary authorities reflect the unique characteristics of rural, coastal and urban areas, promoting balanced growth and improving the quality of life for all residents. We believe, and over the coming months will test our assumptions against the data and evidence and the views of our residents, stakeholders and partners, that any Sussex and Brighton MCCA must represent these different but complementary areas.

Equality of representation

The government has stated that it is supportive of places having Mayors because they have a mandate to take big decisions affecting more people, as well as the convening power to tackle shared problems, and are accountable to the local electorate for the decisions they take. It is important to ensure that new unitaries make the most of the strategic capacity and capability that the new Mayoral institution can bring, to deliver for local communities. To achieve this, we believe that it is vital that there is equal representation of areas across Sussex, both rural and urban.

Number of unitaries for Sussex

We are currently of the view that potentially creating five unitary authorities across Sussex, with Brighton and Hove on our existing footprint or growing to form one of these authorities, would ensure the different voices of Sussex are heard at the MCCA table, while ensuring the Unitary authorities are financially viable, efficient and hold local identity inclusive of rural, coastal and urban identity.

We have seen through our own services and from other smaller unitaries the benefits of big county services being delivered on smaller footprints leading to positive outcomes for residents through the interconnection of universal services with specialist areas. A five-unitary model in Sussex could broadly lead to the creation of five council areas with populations in the region of c300,000 to c400,000 (with Brighton and Hove being 280,000 if we were to remain as we are).

We remain open to options other than the five unitaries while we consider the evidence and test our assumptions. Our aim by the September deadline is to advance a single consensus proposal or a small number of alternative options for Sussex for Government to consider.

At this early stage of the process, we appreciate that other councils will submit different configurations, but we are committed to working with all neighbouring authorities to achieve consensus. There is recent precedent for this. In September 2024, the three Upper Tier authorities (UTAs) in Sussex (Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council) submitted expressions of interest to government on devolution, but with different views on the preferred geography. When the Government published the English Devolution White Paper and invited areas to express interest in being on the priority programme, the Leaders and CEOs of the three UTAs worked together to reach consensus on submitting a proposal for devolution for the whole of Sussex. This led to all three councils taking reports to Cabinet on 9 January setting out Mayoral devolution for Sussex as the preferred option. To support the application, officers in the policy, legal, and communications teams at all three councils worked closely together to ensure aligned stakeholder and communications plans were developed and implemented.

Since the announcement that Sussex and Brighton have been successful in our application to the priority programme, we have continued to work together and are committed to doing so going forward to ensure we achieve dual delivery of successful local government reorganisation and the implementation of devolution at the same time.

Working together to develop proposals

Our approach to both devolution and LGR is to be as open and transparent as possible. We have continued to regularly communicate with key City stakeholders and meet with our Sussex partners including all Sussex Councils. We have regularly briefed Councillors, staff and Unions. We will continue to do this over the next six months as we engage more deeply on the options we are proposing for Brighton and Hove City and Sussex on LGR.

Between 24 February and 10 March, we conducted local engagement using our engagement platform “Your Voice” engaging residents, council staff and wider stakeholders across Brighton & Hove. A total of 597 respondents took part in the survey, offering a range of views on local government reorganisation. A summary of the engagement is indicated in the table below.

Table 2: Summary of engagement feedback

Questions	Summary Responses
What are your thoughts on local government reorganisation and how it relates to Brighton & Hove?	Respondents had mixed opinions on local government reorganisation for Brighton & Hove. Many opposed changes due to fears of losing local identity, reduced accountability, and negative impacts on services, while others supported reorganisation for potential efficiency and financial savings. There was interest in expanding boundaries to nearby areas but not merging with East or West Sussex, as this could dilute Brighton's progressive values. Overall, the predominant sentiment was caution and a desire to maintain Brighton & Hove's distinctiveness and autonomy.

What are your thoughts on potential changes to local government in Sussex?	Responses to potential local government changes in Sussex are mixed. Many fear that merging Brighton & Hove with other areas could dilute its unique character, reduce tailored services, and lead to less local accountability. Some see benefits in efficiency and cost savings through reduced duplication and economies of scale. There is a call for more detailed information on the proposals, with concerns about job losses and increased workloads for council employees. Overall, while some support reorganisation for efficiency, there is significant apprehension about losing local identity and representation, and a demand for more transparency.
What impacts, if any, do you think local government reorganisation in Sussex could have?	Respondents had mixed feelings about local government reorganisation in Sussex. Many feared job losses, reduced local accountability, and Brighton & Hove losing its unique identity to larger areas. Concerns about increased bureaucracy and costs were also common. On the positive side, some anticipated improved efficiency, better service delivery, and cost savings, with hopes for more integrated services and strategic planning. However, uncertainty due to a lack of detailed information was prevalent. Overall, there was tension between the potential for streamlined services and the risk of losing local identity and accountability.
Should Brighton & Hove stay the same or be changed?	Most respondents believe Brighton & Hove should remain unchanged, emphasizing its unique identity and specific needs. Many are concerned about losing local identity and potential negative impacts on service delivery if merged with other areas. Some are open to minor expansions to nearby areas like Saltdean or Peacehaven. A smaller group supports combining with other councils for shared expertise and economies of scale, but many want more information on the benefits and drawbacks before deciding. Concerns about financial implications and maintaining quality services were also highlighted.
Should Brighton & Hove combine with areas east of the city?	Many respondents oppose combining Brighton & Hove with areas east of the city due to different needs, identities, and concerns about transport infrastructure and service quality. Saltdean's unification under one authority is widely supported, and some see benefits in including Peacehaven and Newhaven for economic reasons. There is strong sentiment for careful consideration with local input and a clear understanding of benefits and drawbacks. Some are open to the idea if it improves services or saves costs. Overall, responses reflect opposition, conditional support, and calls for more information before deciding.
Should Brighton & Hove combine with areas west of the city?	Respondents are divided on combining Brighton & Hove with areas west of the city, with many opposing the idea due to concerns about losing local identity and distinct character. Some suggest including Shoreham-by-Sea due to its proximity and connections, but there is less support for including Worthing. While some are open to the idea for improved services or economic benefits, others feel more information is needed. Overall, there is a clear split in opinion, with many preferring to maintain current boundaries.
Should Brighton & Hove combine with areas north of the city?	A significant majority of respondents oppose combining Brighton & Hove with areas north of the city due to differing identities, demographics, and needs. Many view the South Downs as a natural boundary, with northern areas seen as too rural or distinct. Concerns include administrative challenges and dilution of local identity. A minority see potential economic and infrastructure benefits, particularly with Crawley and the Gatwick corridor, but even they prefer careful consideration of specific areas and potential impacts on services and community identity.

Communications and Engagement Plan March – September 2025

As we develop the final proposal, we will aim to create a mutual understanding and shared vision for Brighton and Hove that aligns with the needs and aspirations of our communities.

The engagement plan below outlines how we'll work with communities and stakeholders to prepare a formal proposal to government as part of Sussex-wide plans for local government reorganisation.

Participants	How we will engage	Methods of communication
Councillors in Brighton & Hove	Regular updates, briefings and focus groups to ensure alignment with council priorities, using their local knowledge to involve less heard from residents and businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing sessions • One-on-one meetings • Council committees • Email updates
Council Staff	Internal engagement with staff and Trade Union colleagues to ensure awareness and implementation of initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff newsletters • Internal workshops • Intranet updates • CLT supporting in-person meetings • Printed materials • Frontline service newsletter • Online meetings with Senior Leadership and Administration
Sussex Council Leaders, CEOs, and MPs	Collaborative working to build strong partnerships and develop shared goals for Sussex-wide policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership forums • Joint strategy meetings • Formal email correspondence
Wider Stakeholders and Partners	High-level engagement to align regional priorities and influence decision-making through partnership forums and round table discussions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder forums • Networking events • Partnership meetings • Online consultations • Formal email correspondence
Communities (Residents, Businesses, and Interest Groups)	Transparent, accessible and proactive engagement to encourage participation and collaboration including roadshows, themed focus groups and digital channels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public meetings and consultations • Social media and online platforms • Surveys and feedback forms • Council website updates • Media press releases • Community events

Conclusion

Brighton and Hove City is unique, with distinct strengths and challenges. As we consider local government reorganisation (LGR) within Sussex, it is crucial to address the diverse needs of rural, coastal, and urban areas, ensuring equality of representation and an appropriate number of unitary authorities. Our approach will be evidence-based, developing and testing scenarios for LGR, including the potential creation of five unitary authorities.

Our initial findings from local consultations have been shared, and these will be reviewed alongside our data and evidence. We have outlined how we will continue to develop our proposals, maintaining a comprehensive communications and engagement plan that involves various stakeholders, both internal and external.

In the coming months, we will further refine and test our proposals, with the aim of creating an inclusive, efficient, and representative governance structure that meets the needs of all residents in Brighton and Hove and the region of Sussex. We are committed to ensuring that our approach is thorough and inclusive.

Engagement exercise on local government reorganisation

Project title: Share your thoughts on local government reorganisation

Dates covered: 24 February 2025 to 10 March 2025

Report summary:

Brighton & Hove City Council launched this engagement exercise to gather early views from residents, staff, business owners and stakeholders on potential local government reorganisation in Sussex.

This report provides a summary of participation and key themes from the initial feedback collected from a small section of our city's whole population. A total of 597 respondents took part in the survey, offering a range of views on local government reorganisation. This small segment represents an early sample of views, rather than a definitive position at this stage.

AI technology has been used to analyse the responses. While AI helps ensure a thorough examination of the data, there may still be some inaccuracies.

Respondents expressed a mix of opinions on local government reorganisation, with a significant number preferring Brighton & Hove to remain as it is, citing concerns about losing its unique identity and local governance. Many fear that merging with other areas could dilute Brighton & Hove's distinct character and lead to less effective local services.

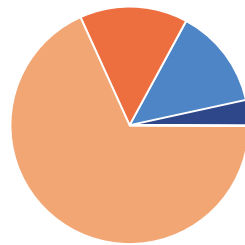
Some respondents are open to expansion, particularly towards areas like East Saltdean and Shoreham, to address boundary anomalies and improve service delivery. However, there is resistance to merging with more rural or politically different areas, such as those north of the city.

Concerns about the potential loss of local accountability and increased bureaucracy were common. Some respondents worry about the financial implications and fear that reorganisation might not lead to the promised efficiencies or improvements in services.

A minority see potential benefits in reorganisation, such as improved financial sustainability and more strategic regional planning. They suggest that combining with neighbouring areas could lead to better resource allocation and service delivery.

Overall, the responses highlight a strong desire for maintaining Brighton & Hove's autonomy and identity, with cautious consideration for any changes that might bring tangible benefits without compromising local governance and community needs.

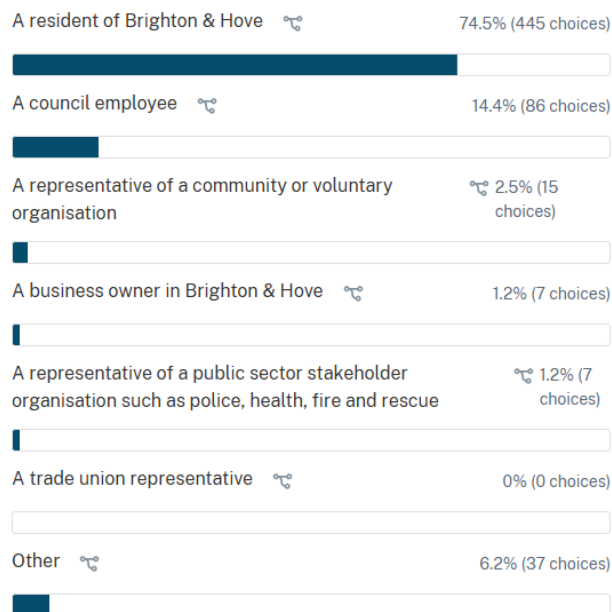
Traffic sources



- Search engines (3%)
- Social networks (14%)
- Websites (15%)
- Direct entry (68%)
- Campaigns (0%)

How are you primarily responding?

597/597 - Multiple choice - choose one - required



Residents of Brighton & Hove

Of the 445 participants responding primarily as residents of Brighton & Hove:

- 8.3% live in Hollingdean & Fiveways
- 7.9% live in Rottingdean & West Saltdean • 6.3% live in Kemptown
- 6.3% live in Hanover & Elm Grove
- 6.1% live in Preston Park
- 5.2% live in Patcham & Hollingbury

- 5.2% live in Central Hove
- 4.7% live in Westdene & Hove Park
- 4.5% live in Wish
- 3.8% live in Regency
- 3.6% live in Goldsmid
- 3.6% live in Hangleton & Knoll
- 3.6% live in Westhill & North Laine
- 3.6% live in North Portslade
- 3.1% live in Woodingdean
- 3.1% live in Queen's Park
- 3.1% live in Moulsecoomb & Bevendean
- 3.1% live in Brunswick & Adelaide
- 2.9% live in Westbourne & Poets' Corner
- 2.2% live in Round Hill
- 2% live in South Portslade
- 2% live in Whitehawk & Marina
- 0.32% live in Coldean & Stanmer
- and 5.4% of those responding primarily as a resident chose not to share which ward they live in.

Community and Voluntary Representatives:

15 participants responded primarily as community or voluntary representatives.

Business owners

Of the 7 participants responding primarily as business owners:

- 71.4% responded as transport business operators
- 14.3% responded as cultural and creative industry business operators
- 14.3% responded as utilities business operators
- There were no responses from business owners operating in retail, hospitality, tourism, financial, property, digital or agricultural.

Representatives from public sector stakeholder organisations

- 7 participants responded primarily as representatives from public sector organisations. These included education, housing and local government.

Trade unions

- There were no responses from participants primarily responding as trade union

representatives.

Other

37 respondents identified as 'other' when asked how they were primarily responding. Some:

- identified themselves as former residents
- mentioned they were living in other areas around Sussex including Worthing, Newhaven and Peacehaven

Local Government Reorganisation: Summary of responses to questions.

7: What are your thoughts on local government reorganisation and how it relates to Brighton & Hove?

- Respondents expressed mixed opinions on local government reorganisation concerning Brighton & Hove. A significant number opposed changes, fearing loss of local identity, reduced accountability, and potential negative impacts on services. Many emphasised the distinct needs and character of Brighton & Hove compared to surrounding areas. Concerns about merging with East or West Sussex included fears of Brighton's progressive values being diluted by more conservative neighbouring areas.
- Some respondents supported reorganisation if it led to improved efficiency, better service delivery, and financial savings. There was interest in expanding Brighton & Hove's boundaries to include nearby areas like East Saltdean and Shoreham, but not further inland. There is support for combining with areas that share similar urban characteristics, particularly along the coast, but less enthusiasm for merging with rural areas to the north.
- Overall, while some saw potential benefits in reorganisation, the predominant sentiment was caution and a desire to maintain Brighton & Hove's distinct identity and ensuring that local needs are not overshadowed by broader regional interests.

460 / 597 inputs

8: What are your thoughts on potential changes to local government in Sussex?

- Responses to the potential changes in local government in Sussex are mixed, with a significant number of respondents expressing concerns about the impact on local identity and services. Many fear that merging Brighton & Hove with other areas could dilute its unique character and lead to less tailored services. There is also apprehension about losing local accountability and representation, with worries that larger governing bodies might not adequately address local needs

- On the other hand, some respondents see potential benefits in terms of efficiency and cost savings through the reduction of duplicated services and economies of scale. The idea of unitary authorities is viewed positively by some, as it could streamline governance and improve service delivery.
- There is a notable call for more detailed information and clarity on the proposals, as many feel unable to form a definitive opinion without understanding the specifics of the changes. Concerns about potential job losses and increased workloads for council employees are also prevalent
- Overall, while there is some support for the idea of reorganisation to improve efficiency, there is significant apprehension about the loss of local identity and representation, as well as a demand for more transparency and information about the proposed changes.

410/597 inputs

9. What impacts, if any, do you think local government reorganisation in Sussex could have?

- Respondents expressed a mix of concerns and hopes regarding local government reorganisation in Sussex. A significant number feared negative impacts, such as job losses, reduced local accountability, and diminished local knowledge.
- Many worried about Brighton & Hove losing its unique identity and autonomy, potentially being overshadowed by larger, more conservative areas. Concerns about increased bureaucracy and costs were also prevalent
- On the positive side, some respondents anticipated improved efficiency, better service delivery, and potential cost savings. There was hope for more integrated services and strategic planning across the region
- However, many respondents were uncertain about the outcomes due to a lack of detailed information.
- Overall, the responses highlighted a tension between the potential for streamlined services and efficiencies versus the risk of losing local identity and accountability.

388/597 inputs

Should Brighton & Hove stay the same or be changed?

- The majority of respondents believe that Brighton & Hove should stay the same, emphasising the city's unique identity and specific needs that differ from surrounding areas. Many express concerns about losing local identity and the potential negative impact on service delivery if merged with other areas

- Some respondents are open to minor expansions to include nearby areas like Saltdean or Peacehaven, where it makes geographical sense.
- A smaller group supports combining with other councils for potential benefits like shared expertise and economies of scale.
- However, many express a need for more information on the benefits and drawbacks of such changes before making a decision.
- Concerns about the financial implications and the ability to maintain quality services were also highlighted.

547/597 inputs

11. Should Brighton & Hove combine with areas east of the city?

- A significant number of respondents are opposed to combining with areas east of the city, citing reasons such as different needs and identities, lack of transport infrastructure and concerns about service quality
- Many respondents specifically mention that Saltdean should be unified under one authority due to its current division. Some see potential benefits in including Peacehaven and Newhaven, especially for economic reasons or due to existing connections.
- However, there is a strong sentiment that any changes should be carefully considered with input from local residents and a clear understanding of the benefits and drawbacks
- Some respondents are open to the idea if it results in improved services or cost savings
- Overall, the responses reflect a mix of opposition, conditional support, and calls for more information before making a decision.

528/597 inputs

12. Should Brighton & Hove combine with areas west of the city?

- Respondents are divided on whether to combine with areas west of the city, with a significant number opposing the idea. Many express concerns about losing local identity and the distinct character of Brighton and Hove.
- Some respondents suggest that Shoreham-by-Sea could be included due to its proximity and existing connections, but there is less support for including Worthing, which is seen as more distinct.
- Some respondents are open to the idea if it results in improved services or economic benefits, while others feel more information is needed to make an informed decision

- Overall, there is a clear split in opinion, with many preferring to maintain the current boundaries.

508/597 inputs

13. Should Brighton & Hove combine with areas north of the city?

- A significant majority of respondents oppose combining with areas north of the city, citing reasons such as differing identities, demographics, and needs.
- Many feel that the South Downs acts as a natural boundary and that the areas north are too rural or distinct from Brighton & Hove . Concerns were also raised about potential administrative challenges and the dilution of local identity.
- A minority see potential benefits in terms of economic ties and infrastructure, particularly with areas like Crawley and the Gatwick corridor.
- However, even among those open to the idea, there is a preference for careful consideration of the specific areas involved and the potential impacts on services and community identity.

470/597 inputs.



Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP

*Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for
Housing, Communities and Local Government*
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

16 July 2024

Dear Leader,

The next steps to devolution

I am delighted to be writing to you with the weight of a new Labour government behind me, laser focused on pushing power out of Whitehall and lighting the touch paper of growth across our regions.

In my first correspondence to you, I would like to invite you to partner with this Government to deliver the most ambitious programme of devolution this country has ever seen. I know you agree that for too long, Westminster has hoarded power and held back towns, cities, and villages across the country from achieving their true potential.

Last week, the Prime Minister and I had the pleasure of meeting England's metro Mayors, a signal of intent about our desire to bring local leaders into the heart of our government. We discussed how to deliver sustained economic growth through better housing, more tailored skills, and decent, well-paid jobs, through both national and local levers.

This government has been elected on a manifesto to widen and deepen devolution across the country. I have seen first-hand the benefits of devolution, from better integrated transport and publicly controlled buses to new skills programmes and good, affordable housing projects.

But our ambitions go further. We will devolve new powers over transport, skills, housing, planning and employment support. As we have set out to Mayors, we want more regions to benefit from integrated settlements, with access to this important financial flexibility for mayoralities with capacity, strong accountability structures and exemplary track records of financial management.

We will move away from a deal-based approach, setting out clear conditions and a clear offer in return for places seeking devolution agreement, and will enshrine a presumption towards devolution, so places can take on new powers automatically if they meet certain conditions.

Devolution underpins our national mission to deliver economic growth for everyone, everywhere, raising living standards across the UK. This Government will work in partnership with local leaders to implement Local Growth Plans, and I am excited to establish a Council of Nations and Regions to bring together the Prime Minister, the leaders of the devolved administrations and metro Mayors. I want to see more places represented at that Council, with more Mayors at the table.

Together, we can drive growth in every corner of the country. That is why we are inviting more places to use these enhanced powers and play a leading role in our national renewal. Now is the time to come forward and work with this new Government to deliver growth in your area.

Many of you will have struggled to get devolution settlements over the line, or were in the process of negotiating a settlement before the general election. You may have been held up by lengthy negotiations over powers, geographies, or governance. This Government will begin to work with you to resolve those issues.

My Cabinet Colleagues and I also understand that all too many councils are facing financial strain and have been left balancing new obligations with higher costs and interest rates after a decade of financial mismanagement from the centre. Rest assured, we will ensure that you have the resources to deliver new devolved powers and functions.

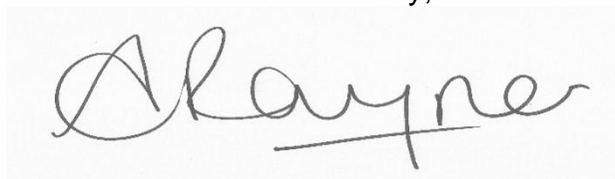
We know we will only be able to improve public services through economic growth, and it is critical you play a leading role in delivering it. But we also recognise this must be accompanied by reforms to local government and long-term funding settlements, providing you with the certainty to plan and provide the best possible value for money for residents.

In due course, the Government will publish a new devolution framework, setting out the new powers and flexibilities available to you. While we will not force places to take on a metro Mayor, we will not shy away from making the case for their huge advantages, with some powers continuing to be reserved for institutions with directly elected leaders, such as Mayoral Combined Authorities.

We continue to believe that new devolution settlements should be tailored to sensible economic geographies so that local leaders can act at the scale needed to effectively deploy their powers. In the majority of cases that will require local authorities to come together in new combined or combined county authorities. I encourage you to begin discussions with your neighbouring authorities on this basis.

The Minister for Local Government and my officials stand ready to meet to discuss proposals and to support you, so you are ready to board the train of devolution as we surge along this journey to give every community a voice in the future of Britain. I would welcome proposals by the end of September to participate in a first set of devolution settlements.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'A Rayner', with a stylized flourish at the end.

RT HON ANGELA RAYNER MP

Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

Devolution Deal EOI

<p>Preferred Geography (Upper-tier local authorities in the area)</p>	<p>We have and continue to engage widely with Local Authorities across Sussex and want to work with them going forward on a shared vision for devolution.</p> <p>Our preferred geography is Brighton and Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex. We believe this footprint would meet the ambitions of devolution: a sizeable and sensible economic geography with a cohesive identity.</p> <p>Devolution discussions must also include key partners in Sussex Police, East and West Sussex Fire Authorities, our three Universities (Brighton, Sussex and Chichester), Sussex ICS and the diverse range of strategic businesses forming the functional economic areas of Sussex. We know that convening these stakeholders and partners will be key to a successful devolution solution for Sussex.</p>
<p>Initial Preference on Mayoral/Non-mayoral devolution</p>	<p>We recognise that the current levels of devolution and governance models are subject to change pending the publication of the government's new framework.</p> <p>We are open to discussions on evolving these models to better fit local needs and priorities, ensuring that any new arrangements are effective, inclusive, and tailored to the unique context of Brighton & Hove and the wider Sussex region, while ensuring strong devolution of power and authority to drive economic growth across Sussex.</p> <p>We look forward to working collaboratively with government partners to explore these options further and develop a devolution deal that maximises local autonomy, accountability, and impact.</p>
<p>Contact Details (Political and officer level)</p>	<p>Bella Sankey Leader Brighton and Hove City Council Tel: 07720165691 Email: bella.sankey@brighton-hove.gov.uk</p> <p>Alex Voce Strategic Advisor to the Leader & Cabinet Brighton & Hove City Council Tel: 07591 988 226 Email: alex.voce@brighton-hove.gov.uk</p>

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 173

Subject: Future of New England House

Date of meeting: Thursday, 20 March 2025

Report of: Cabinet Member for Finance and City Regeneration

Contact Officer: **Name:** Max Woodford
 Tel: 01273 291666
 Email: max.woodford@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: West Hill & North Laine;

Key Decision: Yes

Reason(s) Key: Expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the expenditure of the City Council's budget, namely above £1,000,000.

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 New England House is a council owned industrial building which is tenanted by multiple commercial tenants primarily in the creative, cultural and digital industries which are important sectors for the city's economy. Over several years, underinvestment in the building has resulted in a number of problems with the building fabric – in particular these have created fire risks which the council as landlord must now take urgent measures to rectify. This report describes options for the future of New England House following the identification of those serious fire safety issues and seeks approval to further develop those options to refurbish or replace the building.
- 1.2 Due to fire risks present in the building, this report recommends that vacant possession of New England House is secured to be able to undertake a full refurbishment or redevelopment of the site. Tenants should be notified of Cabinet's decision six months in advance of the target date and Tenants will individually be given written notice in accordance with the terms of their leases. The report describes how tenants will be supported to find alternative accommodation.
- 1.3 This proposal accords with the Council Plan 2023 – 2027, specifically:

Outcome 1: A city to be proud of

1. Develop Brighton & Hove as a place where people want to live, work and learn.
2. Grow a diverse and sustainable city economy.

2. Recommendations

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

3. Context and background information

Fire safety issues

- 3.1 New England House is an eight storey, council owned industrial building used by multiple commercial tenants primarily within the creative, cultural and digital industries. The building has been due a major refurbishment for several years and plans were being prepared to take this forward.
- 3.2 Extensive surveys have established that the building currently has fire safety failings which include inadequate fire protection of the floor slabs; extensively compromised compartmentation throughout the building including the façade which is beyond its useful lifespan; no fire protection of external staircases; insufficient fire detection and firefighting provisions (given the current state of building); no provision for the evacuation of disabled people; and an incoming electrical supply beyond its useful lifespan which is a potential fire risk. Major works are required for the building to be brought to compliance with safety standards.
- 3.3 It was necessary to undertake an emergency closure of the building in November 2024 to put fire safety control measures in place as the risk of keeping the building open was considered too high without them.
- 3.4 This report is recommending that, in view of the scale of the works needed, it is necessary to secure vacant position of the building in order to either prepare for a full refurbishment which would comprehensively mitigate fire risks, or for a redevelopment of a building which is fit for purpose, in accordance with current safety standards.
- 3.5 An internal audit is reviewing the decision making up to the temporary closure of New England House in November 2024. This will help ensure lessons are learned, and will be reported to Audit, Standards & General Purposes Committee.
- 3.6 The council has commissioned a report summarising the fire safety issues, authored by an independent consultant fire engineer. This is appended at Appendix 1 [New England House Short Term Mitigation Report, Firenta, 11/11/2024]. This report sets out the basis upon which it is considered that in its current state, the building is an intolerable fire risk. The report recommended immediate short-term control measures to mitigate this risk.

- 3.7 In accordance with those recommendations control measures have been implemented to maintain business continuity over a short period. These include fire wardens on-site 24/7 who proactively identify fire risks and incidents, are trained to tackle a fire if safe to do so and will lead an evacuation of the building. LPS gas has been removed from the building or is stored compliantly, and the storage and charging of bicycle and scooter batteries has been prohibited. These measures are intended to mitigate fire risks and enable the building to remain open for a short period whilst it is vacated.
- 3.8 The New England House Short Term Mitigation Report [Appendix 1] describes the risks in the building and limitations of keeping the building open beyond a short period, without fully resolving the key failings in the building.
- 3.9 Implementing short-term control measures must be followed by major works to resolve the building's failings either via a refurbishment of the building or via demolition and redevelopment. In both cases the existing tenants would need to move out of the building.
- 3.10 The Council has considered whether it would be possible to conduct the works required with tenants remaining in the building given the desire of many tenants to remain in the building, and the wish of the Council to continue to support the industries represented. As detailed below the evaluation of the scale of the works required has concluded that it is not a realistic option to achieve this with tenants remaining in the building, if the building were to be refurbished. Thus, irrespective of whether the Council refurbishes or seeks to redevelop the site, regrettably, the need for existing tenants to move out of the building is unavoidable.

Reasons for recommendation to empty the building

- 3.11 Undertaking a refurbishment of the building with existing tenants in place is considered unachievable. The works are estimated to take several years longer if the building remains occupied. The fire risks in the building remain until such works are completed to rectify the defects and emptying the building to undertake the works is therefore the safest option.
- 3.12 If tenants were to remain in the building while fire safety works were carried out, each tenant, including all their property and fittings, would need to relocate within the building while works are carried out to their unit. The façade of the building and all fire doors must be replaced, and repairs must be made to the ceilings and most internal walls. To do this, several tenants, potentially an entire floor, would need to relocate at the same time to carry out the works.
- 3.13 Recent experience undertaking limited fire mitigation works in occupied units presented issues with programming, obtaining the tenants' consent to undertake works, and negotiations with tenants to relocate them both temporarily and permanently. The works were delayed, proved majorly disruptive for tenants, and took a lot of tenants', the council's and

contractor's time to agree and undertake. A much larger refurbishment project is expected to be unfeasible in relation to the complexity and resources required from the council, tenants, and contractor, to be able to deliver successfully. The project would be difficult to control, and the likelihood of significant programme and cost overruns would be very high.

- 3.14 The disruption of noise, vibration, access limitations and relocations are expected to lead to significant vacancies in the building, greatly limiting the benefits of keeping the building open and occupied, while also making it difficult to realise all the benefits of a refurbishment. These benefits include undertaking a deeper retrofit to extend the lifespan of the fire stopping measures and overall building, and resizing units to make them more lettable.
- 3.15 For these reasons it is considered that there is no realistic option to conduct the scale of the works required with tenants continuing to occupy the building.

Supporting tenants to relocate

- 3.16 A decision to empty the building will require tenants to relocate from the building and some tenants are already doing so. Tenants will be contacted individually regarding notice to leave their premises, in accordance with the terms of their tenancy.
- 3.17 A survey undertaken by tenants found the majority would prefer over six months to vacate (even where there is no entitlement to this under their tenancies), and they have asked the council to consider keeping the building open for at least twelve months to help them move. But it is not considered that it is a tolerable level of risk for the building to remain open for a further twelve months while the key failings remain unresolved, even with the current mitigation measures in place.
- 3.18 It is recognized that whilst six months may be suitable for some tenants to find alternative accommodation, it will be a challenging timescale for others. There is a lack of affordable light industrial workspace in the city, especially in the central area, and the tenants will be competing the limited space available. Not all tenants of New England House are expected to be able to find alternative accommodation in the centre of Brighton.
- 3.19 For some tenants, being located in the London Road, city centre area and close to Brighton Station is considered by them to be helpful to their businesses, and for many tenants the co-location of creative, cultural and digital businesses in New England House is important to the success of their business.
- 3.20 Space at New England House is let at comparatively lower rents than many other buildings in the city and it is recognised that there is a risk that many tenants will need to pay more for workspace elsewhere.

- 3.21 To assist with this a review of all council owned property, including surplus operational property, has been undertaken to identify properties with potential to provide alternative accommodation for tenants relocating from New England House. This includes properties that are not currently office, workshop, or light industrial use (for example schools) and several properties have been identified. If these premises can be made available, tenants will be notified of their availability as soon as possible.
- 3.22 To mitigate the impact upon tenants, the council will offer the following waivers to all tenants, to help them to move:
- Permit tenants to vacate earlier than their notice period.
 - Require tenants to return units in a vacant, tidy safe and compliant order while waiving full dilapidations liability.
 - Tenants will be given first refusal, on commercial terms, to return to a refurbished building or redevelopment.

New England House's impact on the city's economy

- 3.23 New England House is an important hub for the city's creative, cultural and digital sectors and enables innovation and economic growth through its unique tenant mix. Light industrial commercial space in the city is extremely limited and New England House contributes a significant amount of space to the total stock.
- 3.24 The council wishes to ensure there is an economically sustainable provision of commercial workspace, including light industrial space at the New England House site supporting a diverse range of businesses which continues to foster the city's creative, cultural and digital business sectors and offers space for makers to start up and grow.
- 3.25 Provision of affordable commercial space in the city centre is important to meeting the council and city's needs and objectives as identified in the recent Brighton & Hove Employment Land Study 2024, Brighton & Hove Economic Plan 2024 to 2027 and Brighton Space to Grow report 2023.
- 3.26 The Brighton Space to Grow report 2023 highlights the importance of the creative and cultural sectors in the city. It describes the most pressing challenge faced by Brighton & Hove's creatives, businesses and organisations as the limited availability of space, high prices and the lack of flexibility in lease arrangements.
- 3.27 The Space to Grow report uses New England House as a case study: "New England House is a great example of a place which is more than a sum of its parts — the high concentration of creatives supports innovation and has given rise to numerous collaborations. As a result, New England House has become an inconspicuous heart of creative production in Brighton & Hove. New delivery should learn from the success of New England House and seek similar qualities - affordable rates and clustering of creative businesses".

- 3.28 The Brighton & Hove Employment Land Study 2024 identifies jobs in office and industrial sectors in Brighton & Hove are forecast to grow by 8% between 2023 and 2041. Approximately 87,000m² of new office space and 56,386m² of new industrial space will be required in the city over the period to 2041. To be able to meet the identified levels of need, it recommends protecting existing industrial space from redevelopment to other uses.
- 3.29 The Brighton & Hove Economic Plan 2024 to 2027 sets out a 10-year strategic vision guided by eight core imperatives. These include:

Capitalise on our digital competitive advantage: the city has a comparative advantage in digital sectors which are vital to economic growth. Barriers to the opportunity persist. There is still a lack of scale up within our micro-businesses, perpetuated by a shortage of space (especially within the city centre).

A world-leading creative destination worthy of the UK's best small city: aspiring to have a creative economy that is sustainable, healthy, secure and thriving, rooted in our city. What makes us unique is our local people, talent, independence, entrepreneurialism and creative freelance economy, and driving additional economic and social value from this will be crucial to the city's distinctiveness and economic competitiveness.

Options for the future of New England House

- 3.30 An initial options appraisal for the long-term future of New England House has been carried out. Six options have been considered to refurbish New England House or demolish and build a new commercial use building. A description of the options is included in Appendix 2.
- 3.31 A financial appraisal overview of the options is given in the below table:

Option name	Investment* [£'000]	Modelled Lifespan [years]	NPV at end of lifespan* [subsidy/ (surplus)] [£'000]	Year achieves surplus
Refurbishment (empty building)	31,672	20	(10,372)	12
Refurbishment (while occupied)	34,839	20	(10,687)	14
Refurbishment (3 storey extension)	52,403	30	(32,841)	15
Small New Build	60,287	50	(30,253)	38
Med New Build	82,818	50	(35,281)	41
Large New Build	105,421	50	(32,073)	45

* Figures are based on stress test +10% cost and +10% rent

- 3.32 An average rental income of £15 per sq. ft (in 2024/25) is assumed as this is the current average rent at New England House. A 10% increase is still considered affordable and is used in the assumption for the above table. All options have been assessed on the existing use only, and new build options especially would benefit from consideration of a mixed-use scheme. All options considered achieve a surplus within their lifespan.
- 3.33 The option to refurbish while occupied would be expected to create a service pressure of up to £0.85m for 2025/26 and 2026/27 through loss of income, but this option is not considered realistic in the circumstances described above. All other options require emptying New England House, which would create a service pressure, through loss of income, of up to £1.2m for 2025/26 and 2026/27. The service pressures for 2026/27 will be built into the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy to remove the income target whilst construction for refurbishment or redevelopment is underway and will also ensure future rents of the preferred option covers any required borrowing costs.
- 3.34 A fully developed options appraisal will consider different delivery strategies for both refurbishment and redevelopment including the council acting as developer and landlord or working in partnership with outside organisations to deliver the works and/or manage the building. It will also include mixed use new build options including housing, different types of commercial space and rent levels.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 **Do nothing** – the situation in relation to fire safety in the building was evaluated as intolerable and control measures are already in place to mitigate risks in the event of fire. These control measures make the building safe to occupy at current levels for a short period of time but must be followed by closure or major works to address the fundamental deficits in the safety standards of the building. To rectify the deficiencies in the building it is considered necessary for tenants to relocate out of the building.
- 4.2 **Disposal of the building** – The investment and development market is currently very subdued with both investors and developers having difficulty securing funding. Under improved market conditions in the future, values may be higher. The estimated use value does not cover the investment costs to refurbish the building. The council has therefore been advised that the current market value of an occupied New England House, or with vacant possession is £0, and that both a fully refurbished building and a medium sized new build would, at current estimates, have a negative value as the investment would be more than the value of the asset after works have been completed.
- 4.3 **Deliver light industrial use space in other locations in Brighton & Hove** – Identify other sites across the city where commercial light industrial space could be built to replace New England House, freeing up the site for a mixed-use development with a high proportion of residential or fully

residential use. This option requires further detailed analysis and consideration. This is expected to be a complicated and high-risk strategy, and the timescales do not fit with present need to undertake works to mitigate fire risk, or close New England House. The city does not have a lot of options for location of light industrial space. Further consideration of this option will be reported to Cabinet as part of the next stage of the options appraisal.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 A Tenant Representative Group has been set up through which officers can share progress on fire safety measures and consult on project options. The minutes of each meeting are shared with all tenants. A single point of contact has been set up for tenants to contact the council in relation to New England House.
- 5.2 Individual meetings have been arranged with tenants to discuss the impact of fire safety mitigations, provide feedback on tenant's fire risk assessments and answer any questions they have. In October 24, following letters to all tenants outlining the fire safety issues and proposed mitigation works, all tenants were invited to a meeting at New England House to discuss the fire risks and proposals. Following the temporary closure of New England House in November 24 a meeting was held for all tenants to describe why the need for closure and answer tenant's questions.
- 5.3 The council's Health & Safety team offered 50 tenants Occupancy Fire Risk Assessment training, which was held at Brighton Town Hall.
- 5.4 A full communication and consultation plan will be prepared to support further development of the options for the long-term future of the site. The intent of this consultation plan will be to ensure the project proceeds in collaboration with existing tenants and wider business representatives to deliver commercial workspace which meets the city's current and future needs, and to implement a sustainable management strategy.
- 5.5 Local residents and businesses will also be invited to engage with a consultation process on the design proposals for a redevelopment of New England House if this option proceeds.
- 5.6 The project team will establish ongoing communication channels with local residents and businesses to ensure they understand what works are taking place, the likely impacts and disruptions. The project team will aim to minimise disruptions and give as much notice as possible wherever possible. It will work with local tenants and businesses to achieve this.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 Giving notice to tenants in New England House will result in service pressures to the council from both lost rental incomes and from business rates liability as units become void. The annual rental income target for New England House is c£1.2m and the estimated annual impact of Business

rates for the property is c£0.700m. NNDR reliefs are available to mitigate some of this business rates impact, but the level of relief available is dependent on future options of New England House. These pressures have not been included within the 2025/26 budget and will result in reported adverse variances of c£1.200m within the Council's Monthly Budget Monitoring process for the 2025/26 financial year. Where all options are 3 years or greater in timescale to deliver either a full refurbishment or redevelopment of the site, recurrent service pressure funding will need be included within the Medium Term Financial Strategy to account for lost rental income over the period of the refurbishment/redevelopment. Rental income from the refurbished or redeveloped site would support the costs of borrowing in future years.

- 6.2 Any costs related to emptying the building and preparing detailed options appraisals will be funded from the existing capital budget for New England House Refurbishment. All initial options appraisals are resulting in surplus net present values at the end of their lifespans. The detailed options appraisals work will finalise the preferred method for cabinet to consider.

Name of finance officer consulted: John Lack Date consulted: 20/02/25

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The Council has the general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything an individual may do subject to any statutory limitations. Further the Council has powers under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 which, permits the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions. The recommendations in this report are in keeping with this power.
- 7.2 As the owner of the building the Council is legally responsible for ensuring that it complies with current safety standards. The interim measures taken to protect the safety of existing tenants whilst reducing risks to tenants in the event of a fire, and reducing the risk of fire occurring, which have allowed for ongoing occupation of the building are insufficient to achieve compliance. It is essential that the building is brought to compliance with all safety standards. As indicated in the report if refurbished this involves major works which cannot realistically be achieved with tenants present in the building.
- 7.3 Tenants will be entitled to notice in accordance with the terms of their tenancy.

Name of lawyer consulted: Siobhan Fry and Natasha Watson
Date consulted: 28/02/25

8. Risk implications

- 8.1 The body of the report covers steps being taken to mitigate the significant fire safety risks associated with New England House. The report also covers potential risks in relation to impacts on businesses located within the

building and the wider economy of the city through needing to empty the building.

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 Fire risks in relation to the evacuation of disabled people have been identified and addressed to ensure any disabled people known to be working in or visiting the building can be evacuated safely.
- 9.2 Refurbishment options have included the introduction of refuge points to improve safe evacuation of disabled people.

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 An initial assessment of the sustainability implications of refurbishing and redeveloping New England House have has been carried out. A future report presenting a detailed options appraisal will include quantitative whole life carbon emissions estimates.

11. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 11.1 The current fire risk situation in New England House and lack of certainty on the future of the building has created much stress and anxiety for tenants.
- 11.2 The change and disruption of emptying New England House may further negatively impact the health and wellbeing of people who work in the building and use services the tenants provide.
- 11.3 Helping tenants find alternative space may help reduce the stress of relocating.
- 11.4 The safety of tenants is at the core of the recommendations in view of the fundamental issues identified with the current safety of the building.

12. Conclusion

- 12.1 It is recommended that steps are put in place to start to emptying the building to achieve vacant possession with a target date of 30 September 2025 due to the existing fire related risks in the building and the need to undertake a full refurbishment or redevelopment of the site. Work will continue on the options for the future of the building with an aim to bring this back to Cabinet in Summer 2025 for decision.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

- 1. New England House Short Term Mitigation Report [Firenta, 11/11/2024]
- 2. New England House Options Report

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**NEW ENGLAND HOUSE
SHORT TERM MITIGATION REPORT**

New England House

New England Street
Brighton
BN1 4GH

Document Number: BHCNEH-FIR-XX-00-RP-X-0002
Document Revision: [P03]

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BRIEF INTRODUCTION ABOUT WHY THIS DOCUMENT IS REQUIRED

Firenta Ltd has been commissioned to create a summary document for New England House (NEH). This report is designed to ensure that all stakeholders are equipped with the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions. It provides a clear explanation of the fire safety issues, detailing their implications and how they pose a risk to life safety. Understanding that those reading this document may not have prior fire safety experience, it has been written in clear, straightforward language to ensure that all stakeholders can comprehend the risks to life safety so they can make well informed decisions.

Brighton & Hove City Council are dedicated to supporting the tenants of New England House and are actively exploring all possible options to keep the building operational. However, life safety is, and always will be, their primary concern. While the impact on SMEs and their livelihoods is acknowledged, the safety and well-being of people will always come first.

As readers of this document will vary in both fire safety knowledge and history of the building, it is important to clarify that this is neither a fire risk assessment nor a fire engineering report. Over recent years, New England House has been subject to multiple assessments, inspections, and remedial works. However, it is apparent that several significant findings and recommendations are still to be implemented. This document aims to provide a conclusive overview, drawing upon the insights and shortcomings of previous reports to explain how these accumulated failures have now resulted in what can only be concluded as an **intolerable risk** to New England House.

Fire safety is of paramount importance, as fires can lead to severe consequences, including loss of life, injuries, and extensive property damage. While Brighton & Hove City Council has received various reports over the years, it is acknowledged that interpreting these documents can be challenging, particularly when distinguishing between non-compliance and actual risk levels. Therefore, to fully appreciate the assessment of risk, the following paragraphs should be reviewed, as they offer critical context to supporting judgments and reasoning outlined later in this document.

COMPLIANCE VS RISK

The distinction between “compliance and risk” has been a recurring question throughout this process. In fire safety inspections, significant findings are often presented in terms of compliance—i.e., whether something meets a given standard or not. However, this binary “pass or fail” approach offers little insight into the actual level of risk involved. The fire safety aspects of Building Regulations are designed to establish reasonable standards for life safety, which is usually achieved through the application of prescriptive, code-compliant measures. In both new construction and upgrading existing buildings, the various aspects of fire precautions are interrelated and weaknesses in some areas can be compensated for by strengths in others. This is not to suggest that any remedial works should not meet the relevant standards but simply that minor non-compliances or shortcomings can often be compensated for by using other control measures. **[NOTE: It should be explicitly stated that any deviation should be subject to review by a competent fire engineer and that use of such assessments should be the exception and not the rule].** The level of risk resulting from non-compliances is dependent on several factors which include (but not limited to):

- The number and extent of shortcomings.
- The extent of deviation from a tested detail.
- The risk profile and complexity of the building
- The holistic package of other control measures which may be used to compensate for shortcomings.

Ultimately, the existence of an unsafe situation should not be allowed to persist if it is practicable to provide remedy. Unfortunately, many of the findings within New England House are too significant to be adequately compensated for through existing control measures. While additional controls, such as sprinklers and enhanced fire detection systems, can sometimes help mitigate compartmentation issues, the existing provision of automatic fire detection (AFD) is insufficient to offer this level of support. Further details on this will be discussed later in this document.

QUALITATIVE VS QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

Fire risk assessments are primarily a qualitative assessment which relies upon the assessor’s expertise, experience, and judgment. In contrast, fire engineering typically involves numerical analysis to determine the outcomes in comparative, absolute, or probabilistic terms. Fire safety engineering can offer an alternative approach to prescriptive fire safety measures and, in some cases, may be the only feasible way to achieve an acceptable standard of fire safety in complex or existing buildings. However, fire is an extremely complex phenomenon, and gaps exist in the available knowledge and technology. While advanced analysis is necessary for assessing the fire performance of the composite floor plates, fire engineering methods have

not been applied elsewhere in the building. Due to the severity of the combined deficiencies, it was deemed inappropriate to pursue compliance through fire engineering given that exact conditions would be impossible to model. Any fire engineering solution would require a substantial inherent safety margin to account for these uncertainties, which cannot be confidently assured in the current context.

A SUMMARY LIST OF THE MAIN FAILINGS WITHIN THE BUILDING.

REDUCED FIRE-PERFORMANCE OF THE FLOOR SLABS: The building's most significant defect is the inadequate fire protection of its floor slabs. According to the 2017 Cluttons report titled *"Review of Condition of New England House Business Centre"*, (1) asbestos was extensively used for fireproofing throughout New England House. Initially, suspended ceilings made of asbestos insulation board provided fire protection to the underside of the floors however, these ceilings were inadvertently removed during an asbestos survey which resulted in a reduced fire performance of the floors. In March 2024, HOP Consulting Limited produced the document *"Appraisal of concrete structure for fire"* (2) which was an elemental review of the structure using historic drawings. Using tabulated methods, they concluded that the in-situ floor deck is only provided with 13mm cover from the underside which, under CP114 & CP115, only provides 30 minutes fire protection. For reference, the requirement is 90-minutes. It should be noted that tabulated approaches are usually "conservative", meaning they should under-estimate performance to allow a degree of safety margin.

Given that New England House is a complex historic structure, an advanced assessment undertaken by specialists should be able to evaluate the hybrid decks in greater detail, offering insights into the actual performance of the composition beyond the estimated 30-minute fire protection. As this is the most significant risk within New England House, an advanced assessment is critical before further comment. In the absence of any further assessment or definitive conclusion, the worst-case scenario of 30-minute fire performance would result in an "intolerable" risk [see the example timeline in the next section]. This assessment needs to be commissioned immediately.

- **COMPARTMENTATION IS EXTENSIVELY COMPROMISED:** Through a combination of site visits, review of previous inspections and a full recent survey by fire stopping specialists, the compartmentation in New England House is extensively compromised. In summary, this includes the following:
 - **Concern there are no cavity barriers at floor level** – The fire stopping between floors to the service risers was formed of fibre glass insulation packed between the slab and glazing. While this is not a significant issue as the riser does not require fire stopping at floor level, it does raise concerns regarding the remainder of the perimeter of the building and how fire stopping was achieved at the floor level. This was echoed within the Cluttons LLP Report. [Page 14, Paragraph 3 & 4].
 - **Fire breaks removed and replaced with non-fire rated materials** - It was referenced in the last condition report from Cluttons LLP report that some of the green panels to the curtain walling were replaced. It was thought at the time that these were painted glass but in reality, they were asbestos cement sheeting boards designed to act as a fire break between floors. It is suggested that these panels were replaced with powder coated steel and other laminate panels, and there was at least one known instance when it was replaced with timber. This, in conjunction with the fire stopping observed behind the service risers, leads this consultant to assume there may be no adequate vertical fire stopping at the floor level. [Page 13, Paragraph 2, Cluttons LLP Report].
 - **Compartmentation between the tenant units and common areas is sub-standard, and there are instances where fire resisting walls are not carried full height** - In the worst cases, many of the units have overhead panels built above door sets - these are either covered with a single layer of plasterboard and in some cases even plywood. This would not be expected to provide the required fire separation. [See Golden Thread Fire Delay Report 'C23-221– 14/07/23', page 34]. (3)
 - The compartmentation report documents over 1000 instances of where the compartmentation is inadequate. While this can be reviewed by the reader, the summary states *"the survey establishes that the current state of fire doors and fire compartmentation in the building is inadequate"*. This refers to inadequate:
 - Fire Stopping and Linear Gap Seals:
 - Fire Rated Ceilings and Soffits:
 - Fire Resistant Glazing Systems
 - Electrical cables, Data Cables, & pipework penetrating fire resisting construction.
- **THERE IS NO PROTECTION TO THE EXTERNAL STAIRS:** There is currently no fire protection to the staircases. New England House is somewhat unique in that the upper floors are only served by external staircases. While this is not necessarily a problem, this would be

prohibited under current guidance and would need at least 1 internal staircase which is protected to a level which is equal to that of the main elements of structure (which in this case is 90-minutes). [NOTE: While 30-minute fire resistance would suffice for external stairs under current guidance, this is not acceptable for New England House]. The wall immediately adjacent to the stair is constructed largely of single pane glass which would not provide any fire resistance. Furthermore, the spandrel panels at floor level may be aluminium or even (in at least 1 case) timber. This presents a significant risk for 2 reasons:

1. If the façade were to fail while the staircase is occupied by evacuating individuals, a plume of smoke and hot gases would likely engulf the stair, resulting in serious risk of injuries from burns and smoke inhalation.
2. In the event this stair is inaccessible to fire and rescue service, the fire service would need to use the east stair which has no dry riser. This would mean fire service would need 4 – 6 lengths of 45mm hose which is very difficult to manoeuvre and would seriously impact tactical operations. *[NOTE: Conventionally the fire service would connect to the dry riser on a lower level and then proceed up using the protection of the stair. However, this is not possible on the west stair as it is external and there is no internal route].*

- **AFD IS LIMITED IN SOME AREAS:** Automatic fire detection (AFD) is a critical control measure for providing early warning and maximizing the available safe escape time (ASET). The only drawings indicating AFD device locations are from 2012, and while there's no certainty that these details are still accurate, the AFD coverage seems adequate in most areas. However, internal layout modifications that have created additional enclosed spaces, along with obstructions from partitions and other barriers, and compartmentation issues that may slow the movement of smoke into adjacent areas, could delay the activation of fire alarms (A clear example of this issue is in the southeast corner of Level 7). This delayed activation would result in a delayed evacuation. Given these concerns, the current extent of fire detection cannot be deemed a sufficient compensatory measure unless it is expanded to cover all necessary areas.
- **NO PROVISION FOR THE EVACUATION OF DISABLED PERSONNEL** – It is believed there are no evac chairs onsite within the building. While some may consider this a minor issue due to the current absence of disabled personnel in the building, the building's accessibility—facilitated by lifts—means disabled visitors could be present. Even if visitors are accompanied during a fire, the common areas are not equipped with appropriate evacuation aids (such as evac chairs) & we have a strong assumption this is also true for the tenants. In the worst-case scenario, the building lacks disabled refuges or safe waiting areas where individuals could signal for assistance- especially given the severe compartmentation previously discussed.
- **ELECTRICITY SUPPLY [MAIN INTAKE AND UNIT DISTRIBUTION BOARDS] BEYOND ITS USEFUL LIFE:** Following a recent letter from Paine Manwaring, it was determined that the electrical installation has exceeded its useful life, raising concerns about the safety of the main intake. Observations in tenant areas showed that many distribution boards within individual units were left exposed, with combustible materials stored underneath. In some instances, combustible items like papers and instruction manuals were even stored behind the meters.
- **FIREFIGHTING PROVISIONS ARE UNSUITABLE IN CONTEXT TO THE CURRENT FAILINGS:** While a single dry riser would have been sufficient if the staircase were adequately protected and the compartmentation met high standards, the current setup could easily be compromised. This could force fire service personnel to use the rear staircase, relying on the deployment of 45mm hose from ground level up to and including Level 8. This would be very difficult to manage.
- **FAÇADE IS BEYOND ITS USEFUL LIFE:** Although the lack of potential fire stopping at floor level was discussed earlier in the report, the only long-term solution of addressing this along with the fire protection to the stair is to replace the façade. As this is beyond its useful life, it should equally be factored in.

A SUMMARY LIST OF THE FAILINGS WITHIN TENANT AREAS:

While it's understandable that smaller businesses may lack awareness regarding fire safety provisions, compliance with fire safety regulations is not just a statutory duty; it is essential for ensuring the safety of all occupants. During several visits to the building, it became evident that tenants were not suitably managing fire safety, and some of the findings were concerning. The following list, while not exhaustive, highlights some of the most significant issues observed:

- **PRESENCE OF DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES** – Some tenants require the use of propane in their business operations. With a flashpoint of -104°C, Propane is classified as a 'dangerous substance' which requires strict controls to protect employees, and anyone potentially affected by its use. Extremely flammable and heavier than air, propane can create an explosive atmosphere in enclosed spaces. Its vapours can travel significant distances to a source of ignition, where they may ignite, flash back, or explode. Additionally, propane cylinders exposed to heat can rupture and explode, posing a serious risk to both evacuating occupants and responding fire service personnel. The storage of LPG cylinders is strictly prohibited within multi-storey buildings which are not purposely designed for this use. (4) (5) (6) Small cartridges may be used; however, must meet the following (as an absolute minimum):

- The maximum stored quantity should meet prescriptive requirements listed in guidance for the storage of cartridges.
- Be stored in fire-rated cabinets with at least 30-minute fire resistance.
- The cabinet must be ventilated at both high and low levels to a safe area outside the building.
- If the internal volume of the cabinet exceeds 0.5m³, it should also be fitted with explosion relief.
- Hazardous area classification may be required which would require ATEX rated electrical equipment within these zones.

Dangerous substances in the workplace are subject to stringent regulations under both the **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005** and the **Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (DSEAR) 2002**. Any assessment where dangerous substances are used must demonstrate that the matters set out in 'Part 1 of Schedule 1 - Matters to be considered in risk assessment in respect of dangerous substances' and 'Part 4 of Schedule 1 - Measures to be taken in respect of dangerous substances' of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 have, where necessary, been suitably applied. These conditions had not been met.

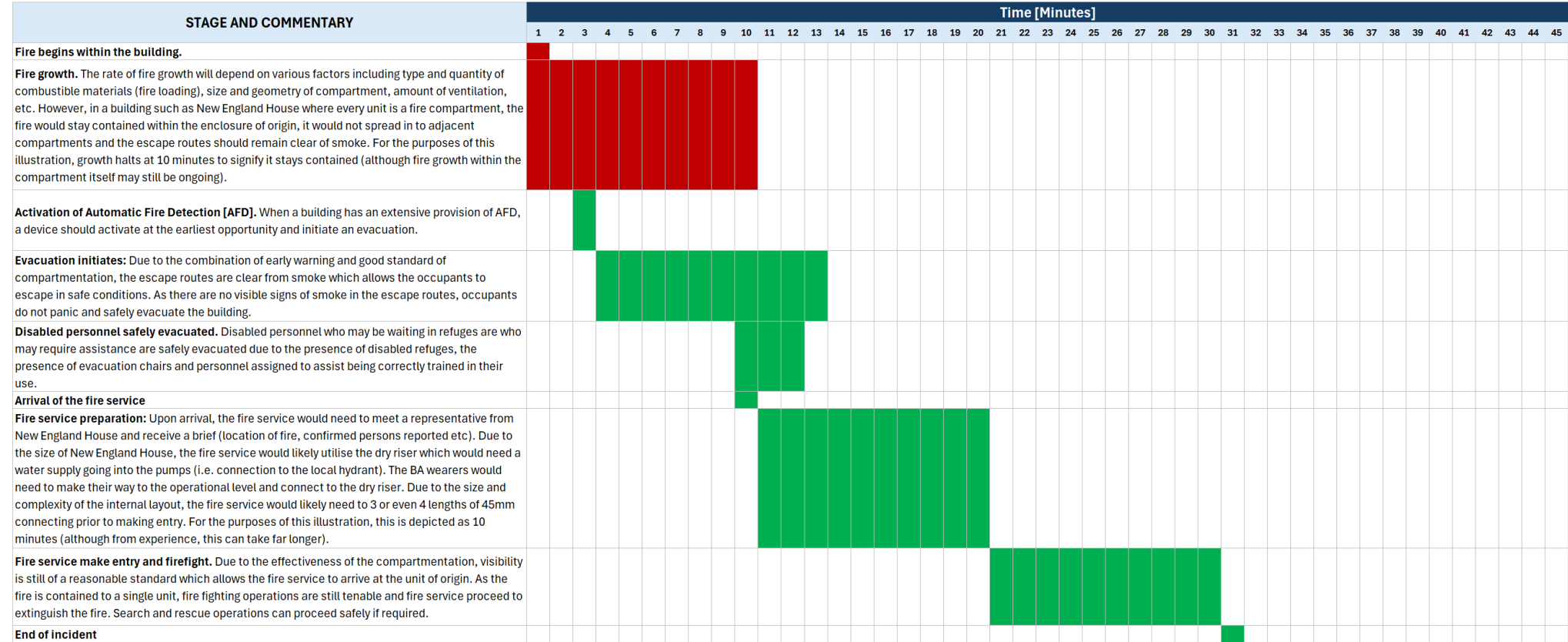
- **EXCESSIVE FIRE LOADING** – Following site visits conducted in July 24, some of the fire loading present within the units was 'excessive'. The fire loading generally comprised of combustible materials. Fire loading represents the total potential fuel available in a space that can sustain and intensify a fire. High fire loading increases the amount of heat, smoke, and toxic gases produced during a fire, making it more challenging to control and posing significant risks to occupants, firefighters, and the structure itself. High fire loading can lead to a faster development, increasing the chances of flashover which can reach temperatures over 1,000°C. This intense heat can weaken structural elements and lead to partial or complete collapse, further endangering lives.
- **LACK OF, OR INSUFFICIENT, FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS BEING PRODUCED BY THE TENANTS** – Overall, most tenants could not produce a fire risk assessment when requested. The responsible person (*i.e., the employer, if the workplace is to any extent under his control, or the person who has control of the premises as occupier or otherwise*) must undertake a fire risk assessment to identify the general fire precautions required to, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure the safety of any of his employees, and anyone who may be effected by their work activities. The Fire Risk Assessment must record the prescribed information which includes, as a minimum, findings of the assessment, the measures which have been, or will be, taken by the responsible person pursuant to the Order; and any group of persons identified by the assessment as being especially at risk. At the point of writing this report, Ligas consultancy had reviewed 30 fire risk assessment from a total of 99 tenants. Of the 30 received review, 24 were deemed neither suitable nor sufficient.
- **LACK OF FIRE EXTINGUISHING APPLIANCES IS COMMON** – Many tenants did not have any fire extinguishers where they would be expected (due to the activities carried out and the hazard which are present). This may be a result of no fire risk assessment identifying when they would be needed.

WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN? A COMPARISON OF A TYPICAL FIRE SCENARIO BETWEEN A COMPLIANT BUILDING AND NEW ENGLAND HOUSE

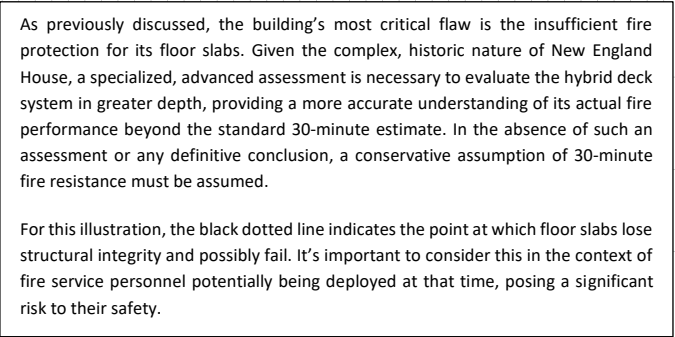
This consultant recognizes that for those without fire safety experience, understanding the real-world impact of these failures can be challenging. Therefore, this section includes a visual representation to illustrate the difference between how a well-designed building should facilitate a safe evacuation and how the deficiencies at New England House could compromise life safety during an evacuation. For clarity, "life safety" is often mistakenly thought to involve only the safe evacuation of occupants; however, it also includes measures to ensure the safety of responding fire service personnel. Firefighters take calculated risks in their work, but the extent of the risk they are prepared to accept depends on the potential outcomes.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS A REPRESENTATION INTENDED SOLELY TO ILLUSTRATE KEY SEQUENCES OF EVENTS AND THE EXPECTED PERFORMANCE OF EACH CONTROL MEASURE. SUPPORTING COMMENTARY IS PROVIDED TO EXPLAIN HOW EACH CONTROL MEASURE AIDS EVACUATION AND HOW ANY FAILURES MAY IMPEDE IT. THE TIMES SHOWN ARE APPROXIMATE AND MEANT FOR ILLUSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY; THEY SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED AS CALCULATED RESULTS FROM METHODS SUCH AS BS 7974. THE FIRE SERVICE RESPONSE TIMES ARE BASED UPON EAST SUSSEX FIRE AND RESCUE’S 2023 PERFORMANCE DATA, WHERE THE FIRE APPLIANCE ARRIVES WITHIN 10 MINUTES 77% OF THE TIME. HOWEVER, IN 23% OF CASES, THE RESPONSE TAKES LONGER. FOR THIS ILLUSTRATION, A 10-MINUTE RESPONSE TIME FROM THE MOMENT OF THE CALL HAS BEEN ASSUMED. PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT THIS ILLUSTRATION AIMS TO DEMONSTRATE THE ORDER OF EVENTS RATHER THAN EXACT DURATIONS. MANY OF THE TIMES AND DURATIONS SHOWN COULD, IN REALITY, BE SIGNIFICANTLY LONGER.

EXAMPLE OF HOW A BUILDING WHICH MEETS CURRENT STANDARDS SHOULD RESPOND IN A FIRE SITUATION:



EXAMPLE OF HOW NEW ENGLAND HOUSE MAY ACTUALLY RESPOND GIVEN THE SHORT-COMINGS:



SHORT TERM CONTROL RISK MITIGATION TO SUPPORT THE TENANTS BUSINESS CONTINUITY:

Establishing the short-term control measures is not an easy or prescriptive solution. Therefore, the following should be acknowledged by the design team at Brighton & Hove City Council.

Firstly, it must be explicitly recognized that if the floor plates are confirmed to provide only 30 minutes of fire resistance before instability could occur, there are very limited control measures available to adequately mitigate this risk in the short term. Apart from having firefighting personnel onsite during occupied hours or implementing an active suppression system, no level of AFD (Automatic Fire Detection) or temporary compartmentation would eliminate this risk in a building of this size and complexity. As this instability of the floor would coincide with fire service intervention, it would be impractical to keep the building operational in its current condition.

Therefore, while short-term control measures are explored to maintain business continuity, addressing this instability risk—if confirmed—presents significant challenges that cannot be fully resolved with temporary solutions alone. Potential alterations to the building's operation, such as partial occupation and tenant restructuring, could be viable options. However, it would be more effective if all possible business continuity options were first identified and then reviewed by a fire engineer to determine the specific control measures needed to achieve them.

Finally, the intended plan, sequence and timeline for their implementation are key factors when determining appropriate control measures.

SHORT TERM MEASURES:

- **Increase the level of Automatic Fire Detection to cover all areas [AFD].** The priority is to expand the AFD system to ensure comprehensive coverage across all areas. Enhancing the extent of Automatic Fire Detection will reduce detection times, trigger early evacuation, and significantly increase the Available Safe Escape Time (ASET). Additionally, because the alarm system is linked to an autodial function that alerts the local fire service, this expansion will reduce the time to intervention. Automatic fire detection can also help offset deficiencies in compartmentation (however, it should be noted that extensive AFD coverage alone is not sufficient to fully address these issues). This should be enacted immediately. Provided the existing system matches the original 2012 drawings, it may be possible to simply add additional devices. In the event the current system is at capacity & cannot accommodate additional devices, a replacement system will be necessary.
- **Initiate the Installation of sprinklers immediately.** Sprinkler systems offer substantial benefits for fire safety and property protection. Critically, in the context of New England House, sprinklers can significantly reduce the impact on the structure, provide early fire suppression and increase the time provided to escape. By controlling fires at an early stage, sprinklers help limit the spread and intensity of fire, which has two key advantages: (A) it reduces the risks faced by firefighters, and (B) it prevents the fire from compromising the structure's fire resistance. To achieve this in the context of New England House, the sprinklers system would need to be a life safety system where the reliability is increased above the 99%. While large amounts of water could pose a risk to the High alumina cement (HAC) concrete structure, the controlled application of water from sprinklers is likely to mitigate this issue (*i.e., the water applied from sprinklers is likely far less than would be applied by fire service*). Overall, implementing a sprinkler system in New England House could provide critical fire protection, balancing both life safety and structural considerations.
- **Consider reducing occupancy hours and deploying onsite fire service personnel.** As the installation of a sprinkler system will likely take up to 12 months to complete, the danger from floor slabs which may only have 30-minute fire protection remains. To mitigate fire risk, consider reducing building occupancy hours and arranging for onsite fire service personnel (*to undertake a building wide fire marshal role*). Having dedicated personnel onsite to undertake initial firefighting activities would allow for rapid intervention in the early stages of a fire. This proactive measure could mitigate the risk while sprinklers are installed.
- **Install access control so building occupancy can be monitored.** This should be done immediately. Installing access control which continuously tracks occupancy numbers in the building would provide the fire service with invaluable information upon attending an incident. If the building is confirmed as empty during an incident, the fire service may take a defensive approach and fight the fire externally (where possible). Alternatively, if personnel are missing, this could narrow down the search parameters.
- **Increase protection to the staircase.** Suitable protection is required to the stair and no control measure would remove the need for this. The means of escape (especially the vertical section) must be provided with suitable protection to facilitate a life safety evacuation. This should be done immediately.

- **Initiate further analysis of the fire resistance to the floor plate** – The expected performance of the floor plates is a significant part in deciding on the risk to the building. A specialized, advanced assessment should be commissioned immediately to fully understand expected performance in a fire. In the absence of such an assessment, a conservative assumption of 30-minute fire resistance must be assumed.
- **Increase the management of high-risk tenants** - Regardless of any short-term control measures in place, the excessive fire loading and potential presence of dangerous substances presents a substantial and immediate risk to the building. High fire loading amplifies the amount of heat, smoke, and toxic gases produced in the event of a fire, making it more challenging to control and posing severe risks to occupants, firefighters, and the structural integrity of the building itself. Excessive fire loading accelerates fire development, increasing the likelihood of flashover—a phenomenon where temperatures can exceed 1,000°C. This extreme heat can compromise structural elements, leading to partial or total collapse, thereby endangering lives. Due to these hazards, a review of tenants should be conducted to assess compliance and risk levels. Additionally, the presence of any dangerous substances, such as liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), should be grounds for immediate action. Given that tenants were previously informed about safe LPG handling practices, any evidence of continued misuse should lead to immediate action to ensure overall safety.
- **Continue to collect and Review Fire Risk Assessments from All Tenants** – All tenants must comply with their legislative duties by undertaking a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment (FRA) for their occupied space. Regular collection and review of these assessments are essential to ensure compliance and maintain safety standards. Failure to supply an adequate FRA within a specified timeframe, after multiple requests, should be grounds for immediate action due to health and safety concerns. Continued diligence in gathering these assessments will enable proactive identification of risks, helping to safeguard the building and its occupants effectively.
- **Fully consider plans to consolidate risk by depopulating and changing activities within the building.**
- **Reinstate fire resistance to the floor slabs.** Initiate the process of enhancing the fire resistance of floor slabs in New England House. While the specific approach will depend on the building's long-term plan, improvements can be implemented in phases if necessary. Developing a comprehensive plan is essential, outlining the methods and timeline for increasing fire resistance in each area. This phased approach allows for gradual reinforcement while aligning with broader renovation or safety goals for the building.

CONCLUSION:

Advanced assessment is necessary to evaluate the floor slab hybrid deck system in greater depth, providing a more accurate understanding of its actual fire performance beyond the standard 30-minute estimate. In the absence of such an assessment or arriving at a definite conclusion, 30-minute fire resistance must be assumed. This would conclude the building as an **INTOLERABLE RISK**.

Beyond concerns over slab performance, multiple inspections by various consultants have revealed numerous deficiencies across various control measures - from all parties - resulting in intolerable safety risks. The only reasonable conclusion is that there is a significant risk of serious injury or fatality, primarily for fire service personnel who may feel obligated to enter the building to conduct life-saving operations. This risk also extends to occupants attempting to evacuate, especially individuals who may require additional time, such as those with disabilities.

The measures in this document should begin immediately. While short-term control measures are explored to maintain business continuity, addressing the floors instability risk—if confirmed—presents significant challenges that cannot be fully resolved with temporary solutions alone. Potential alterations to the building's operation, such as partial occupation and tenant restructuring, could be viable options. However, it would be more effective if all possible business continuity options were first identified and then reviewed by a fire engineer to determine the specific control measures needed to achieve them.

Significant works are required to address critical issues within the building, including (but not limited to) the external façade, internal compartmentation, floor slab performance, active fire protection systems, and electrical infrastructure. Decisions must be made in relation to the current risk and appropriate control measures need to be implemented promptly.

If the intention is to keep the building operational, it is strongly recommended that a sprinkler system be commissioned immediately. While risks would still need to be managed in the short term, a sprinkler system would provide the most substantial impact across a range of existing deficiencies, enhancing overall safety significantly. A sprinkler system also addresses any residual, unquantified risks that are likely to persist in a building of this age and construction.

Failing to address the critical deficiencies within the building would lead to significant and potentially devastating consequences. The immediate cost of inaction includes heightened risk of serious injury or fatality to occupants and emergency responders due to inadequate fire safety measures. The floors structural integrity and resilience could remain compromised, increasing the likelihood of rapid fire spread and failure during an emergency.

Ultimately, the cost of taking no action far outweighs the investment required for immediate safety improvements and long-term planning, both in terms of financial outlay and the responsibility to protect lives.

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Option 1 – Full Refurbishment of New England House (empty building)

Description

Undertake works to mitigate current fire risks identified at New England House, refurbish the building, and replace any materials and systems which are at, or near, the end of their lifespan.

The works are expected to achieve a continued tenanted lifespan of at least 20 years with 'normal' repair and replacement obligations. Necessary repair and replacement activities have been identified and will be undertaken to avoid future high-cost obligations. While the building may continue to be occupiable after 20 years, plans should be prepared to replace the building in the long run. Maintenance and repair obligations are expected to increase over the 20-year period. When preparing for a refurbishment project, officers would look to increase confidence in the expected lifespan of the building and see what measures could be undertaken to increase the minimum expected lifespan.

The works include:

- All fire stopping, and fire & lightning protection works
- New façade including lightwell, and replacement entrance doors
- Repairs to roof and alterations to incorporate new façade (which is currently in a poor state of repair and leaking)
- Repairs to areas of the external façade, staircases, and drainage
- Replace: signage, handrails, balustrading, cages, CCTV, Access Control, external lighting
- Replace and upgrade electrical connection and installations incl. lighting to common areas
- Statutory compliance works to landlord water installations
- Making good unit spaces and carpark

The building would be fully vacated for the duration of the above works to allow for efficient programming, negating risk to tenants, and limit financial obligations of a partially tenanted building, including service charges and business rates.

Timescales

A high-level programme needs to be produced with input from a contractor. Works are expected to take between 30 and 36 months. For the purposes of this report, the timescale used is 36 months.

Variations

A variation if this option would be to explore the benefits of a deeper level of refit, for example returning to shell and core. This would potentially identify further existing and unknown defects and may allow for an increased lifespan of the building, e.g., for at least 30 years.

Analysis

A 20-year lifespan could be made to coincide with a masterplan for regeneration of the wider area including land owned by the council and its current development partners. A redevelopment of the site as part of a wider masterplan is expected to lead to better outcomes and can come within or after the regeneration of the area. The option achieves a surplus at year 12 [+10% cost and +10% rent scenario] which coincides with timescales to deliver a masterplan regeneration of the area. Not maximizing the lifespan of the existing structure would be an unsustainable use of materials and this aspect needs further consideration.

This option represents a low risk in that it would deliver an asset meeting an identified and quantified need (the existing needs) with an opportunity to resize units to improve let ability.

From a planning perspective this option is a low risk, avoiding potential delays to delivery of the project and re-providing the lost commercial space.

Financial

This option requires decanting New England House, which would create a service pressure of up to £1.2m for 2025/26 and 2026/27, through loss of income.

Assumptions

The assumptions for this appraisal are as follows:

- Excludes management costs
- The existing building is empty from 2025 and during works.
- The existing refurbished building lifespan is 20 years.
- Available capital funding for the project is £9.26m.
- All floorspace will be available for a similar light industrial use.
- 15% professional fees and contingency.
- Assumed average void rate of 5% over the lifetime of the building.
- NPV figures include £1.2m service pressure through loss of income and loss of business rates in the first year.
- Costs based upon estimates by Potter Raper Partnership dated: 23/10/2024.

Costs

Investment	Estimated cost £'000	Estimated cost +10% £'000	Estimated cost +20% £'000
Works costs	25,037	27,541	30,044
On-costs incl. contingency	3,756	4,131	4,507
Total	28,793	31,672	34,551

20-year NPV Subsidy / (Surplus) and gap funding per unit

Rent type	NPV year 20 £'000	NPV year 20 10% cost increase £'000	NPV year 20 20% cost increase £'000
Existing rent	(10,714)	(6,091)	(1,469)
Existing rent + 10%	(14,994)	(10,372)	(5,750)
Existing rent + 20%	(19,275)	(14,653)	(10,031)

At +10% cost and +10% rent, the project achieves a surplus at year 12.

Risks

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = catastrophic	Mitigating controls and actions
Refurbishment of existing buildings can be complex and unforeseen issues can occur.	Increase in construction costs, timescales, and complexity of works	4	3	Undertake thorough assessment of the current condition of the building. Undertake works without tenants in place to be able to access view all areas.
The refurbishment does not uncover an unknown building defect.	The existing unknown defect impacts on safety of the building. Future high cost and disruptive works to remediate.	3	3	The refurbishment does not uncover an unknown building defect. Undertake works without tenants in place to be able to access view all areas. Consider deeper refurbishment which aims to uncover and resolve any issues.
The building is old and before 20 years further defects, which	Future high cost and disruptive works to remediate.	2	3	Prepare and undertake ongoing proactive maintenance programme with surveys of the building.

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = catastrophic	Mitigating controls and actions
currently don't exist, may arise.				
Ongoing investment and maintenance programme is not maintained.	Defects will be allowed to worsen, increasing H&S risks, and increasing future costs to remediate.	4	2	Costs to maintain the building are likely to be the same or higher over the future 20-year lifespan, including increased condition surveys
Presence HAC [High Alumina Cement] concrete requires ongoing condition surveys and consideration of uses allowed in the building.	HAC is susceptible to reduced concrete strength and risk of failure when in contact with chemicals (incl. water).	3	4	Ongoing condition surveys to confirm the structure is performing suitably. Works should not cover up areas of the structure, which must be accessible for survey and testing.
Risk that the building does not meet future regulation requirements	If regulations come into effect, e.g. minimum energy use requirements, which the building cannot meet, further investment may be required.	3	3	Carefully consider use of the refurbished building and impact potential regulation changes may have.
To achieve a viable scheme, rents rise and become unaffordable for the targeted business sectors.	The refurbished building does not offer the same economic benefits of co-locating creative businesses and fostering business growth.	3	3	Interrogate the proposed works and limit them to those which are required to achieve the outcome.
Works taking place with tenants in situ.	Increased H&S risks of occupying the building while works are taking place. The complexity of work programme and timescales increase. Additional 'meanwhile' systems required such as a sprinkler system. The below opportunity to reconfigure the layout would be limited or made impossible.	4	3	Undertake works in an empty or nearly empty building.

Opportunities

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = fantastic	Realisation controls and actions
Reconfigure the layout to achieve higher occupancy rates while meeting the aims of the Vision for NEH	Increased let ability Meet the needs of potential new and different management and letting strategies for the building	5	3	Decant the building fully or almost fully before undertaking works Review the requirements that meet the Vision for NEH

Sustainability– Carbon Neutral City

While no assessment of carbon emissions has taken place, the refurbished building would perform better than the existing building for energy use, as improved thermal performance of the façade would reduce energy use for heating and increase comfort for tenants working there.

However, the refurbished building would not be expected to perform as well for energy use as a new building. Despite the avoided carbon emissions by not rebuilding, the overall whole life carbon emissions of this option may be higher than for a demolition and rebuild. Further assessment of this would be required.

While whole life carbon emissions could be higher over the building's lifespan, this is only part of the story; another important consideration is that the retention and reuse of the building would avoid new materials use achieving 'circular' benefits of limiting impact on the environment and the earth's resources.

This option lacks significant opportunities to increase biodiversity on this site, but further consideration to use of the roof space could be given if chosen.

Overall, and given the information currently available, the refurbishment options are considered the most environmentally sustainable option.

Option 2 – Full Refurbishment of New England House (with tenants in occupation)

Description

Undertake works to mitigate current fire risks identified at New England House, refurbish the building, and replace any materials and systems which are at, or near, the end of their lifespan.

The works are expected to achieve a continued tenanted lifespan of at least 20 years with 'normal' repair and replacement obligations.

The works have been identified to avoid future high-cost obligations, but to keep tenants in place, it would be difficult to deliver as deep a refit as with an empty building. As such, there is a higher risk that unknown defects are not uncovered and rectified during the works. While the building may continue to be occupiable after 20 years, plans should be prepared to replace the building in the long run. Maintenance and repair obligations are expected to increase over the 20-year period.

The works include:

- All fire stopping, and fire & lightning protection works
- New façade including lightwell, and replacement entrance doors
- Repairs to roof and alterations to incorporate new façade (which is currently in a poor state of repair and leaking)
- Repairs to areas of the external façade, staircases, and drainage
- Replace: signage, handrails, balustrading, cages, CCTV, Access Control, external lighting
- Replace and upgrade electrical connection and installations incl. lighting to common areas
- Statutory compliance works to landlord water installations
- Making good unit spaces and carpark

Wherever possible tenants will be supported to remain in the building during the works, but work will be carried out to all floors, ceilings, and all walls. It is expected all tenants will need to move equipment, and work from elsewhere (for up to weeks at a time) while works are carried out in their units.

A partial decant of the build may create enough space for each floor to be renovated, after which tenants can move into refurbished units, but some works are required to take place with tenants in situ.

Timescales

A high-level programme needs to be produced with input from a contractor. Works are expected to take between 5 and 5.5 years. For the purposes of this report, the timescale used is 5.5 years.

Analysis

Undertaking a refurbishment of the building without decanting the existing tenants is, while technically achievable, considered unrealistic in practice. The works are estimated to take several years longer if the building remains occupied. The fire risks in the building remain until such works are completed to rectify the defects and emptying the building to undertake the works is therefore the safest option.

If tenants were to remain in the building while fire safety works were carried out, each tenant, including all their property and fittings, would need to relocate within the building while works are carried out to their unit. The façade of the building and all fire doors must be replaced, and repairs must be made to the ceilings and most internal walls. To do this, several tenants, if not an entire floor, would need to relocate at the same time to carry out the works.

The disruption of noise, vibration, access limitations and relocations are expected to lead to significant vacancies in the building, greatly limiting the benefits of keeping the building open and occupied, while also making it difficult to realise all the benefits of a refurbishment.

Financial

This option is expected to be unattractive to many tenants and the building is expected to be c.30% occupied throughout the period when works are taking place. This would create a service pressure of up to £0.85m for 2025/26 and 2026/27, through loss of income.

Assumptions

The assumptions for this appraisal are as follows:

- Excludes management costs
- The existing building is 70% empty from 2025 and during works.
- The existing refurbished building lifespan is 20 years.
- Available capital funding for the project is £9.26m.
- All floorspace will be available for a similar light industrial use.
- 15% professional fees and contingency.
- Assumed average void rate of 5% over the lifetime of the building.
- NPV figures include £0.85m service pressure through loss of income and loss of business rates in the first year.

- Costs based upon estimates by Potter Raper Partnership dated: 23/10/2024.

Costs

Investment	Estimated cost £'000	Estimated cost +10% £'000	Estimated cost +20% £'000
Works costs	27,541	30,295	33,049
On-costs incl. contingency	4,131	4,544	4,957
Total	31,672	34,839	38,006

20-year NPV Subsidy / (Surplus) and gap funding per unit

Rent type	NPV year 20 £'000	NPV year 20 10% cost increase £'000	NPV year 20 20% cost increase £'000
Existing rent	(10,657)	(5,787)	(917)
Existing rent + 10%	(15,557)	(10,687)	(5,818)
Existing rent + 20%	(20,457)	(15,588)	(10,718)

At +10% cost and +10% rent, the project achieves a surplus at year 14.

Risks

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = catastrophic	Mitigating controls and actions
Tenants remain in a building with where most existing fire risks are not mitigated. The mitigations are only achieved over time.	The risk of fire remains high while works are not completed.	4	5	Undertake works without tenants in place.
Refurbishment of existing buildings can be complex and unforeseen issues can occur.	Increase in construction costs, timescales, and complexity of works	4	3	Undertake thorough assessment of the current condition of the building. Undertake works without tenants in place to be able to access view all areas, carry out a deeper retrofit
The refurbishment does not uncover	The existing unknown defect impacts on safety of the building	3	3	Undertake thorough assessment of the current condition of the building.

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = catastrophic	Mitigating controls and actions
an unknown building defect.	Defects worsens over time Future high cost and disruptive works to remediate.			Undertake works without tenants in place to be able to access view all areas. Consider deeper refurbishment which aims to uncover and resolve any issues.
The building is old and before 20 years further defects, which currently don't exist, may arise.	Future high cost and disruptive works to remediate.	2	3	Prepare and undertake ongoing proactive maintenance programme with surveys of the building.
Ongoing investment and maintenance programme is not maintained.	Defects will be allowed to worsen, increasing H&S risks, and increasing future costs to remediate.	4	2	Costs to maintain the building are likely to be the same or higher over the future 20-year lifespan, including increased condition surveys
Presence HAC [High Alumina Cement] concrete requires ongoing condition surveys and consideration of uses allowed in the building.	HAC is susceptible to reduced concrete strength and risk of failure when in contact with chemicals (incl. water).	3	4	Ongoing condition surveys to confirm the structure is performing suitably. Works should not cover up areas of the structure, which must be accessible for survey and testing.
To achieve a viable scheme, rents rise and become unaffordable for the targeted business sectors.	The refurbished building does not offer the same economic benefits of co-locating creative businesses and fostering business growth.	3	3	Interrogate the proposed works and limit them to those which are required to achieve the outcome.
Works taking place with tenants in situ.	Increased H&S risks of occupying the building while works are taking place. The complexity of work programme and timescales increase. Additional 'meanwhile' systems required such as a sprinkler system. The below opportunity to reconfigure the layout would be limited or made impossible.	4	3	Undertake works in an empty or nearly empty building.

Opportunities

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = fantastic	Realisation controls and actions
Reconfigure the layout to achieve higher occupancy rates while meeting the aims of the Vision for NEH	Increased let ability Meet the needs of potential new and different management and letting strategies for the building	5	3	Decant the building fully or almost fully before undertaking works Review the requirements that meet the Vision for NEH

Sustainability– Carbon Neutral City

While no assessment of carbon emissions has taken place, the refurbished building would perform better than the existing building for energy use, as improved thermal performance of the façade would reduce energy use for heating and increase comfort for tenants working there.

However, the refurbished building would not be expected to perform as well for energy use as a new building. Despite the avoided carbon emissions by not rebuilding, the overall whole life carbon emissions of this option may be higher than for a demolition and rebuild. Further assessment of this would be required.

While whole life carbon emissions could be higher over the building's lifespan, this is only part of the story; another important consideration is that the retention and reuse of the building would avoid new materials use achieving 'circular' benefits of limiting impact on the environment and the earth's resources.

This option lacks significant opportunities to increase biodiversity on this site, but further consideration to use of the roof space could be given if chosen.

Overall, and given the information currently available, the refurbishment options are considered the most environmentally sustainable option.

Option 3 – Full Refurbishment with Three Storey Extension

Description

This option is similar to Option 1 – Full Refurbishment but includes the addition of three additional storeys to be constructed using a lightweight structural system. This option is a retrofit approach which achieves additional lettable space with significant sustainability benefits and avoided carbon emissions verses a demolition and new build.

Offering the additional storeys will increase the floorspace offering a total GIA of 20,135 m² and NIA area of 16,464 m².

Given the additional investment in extending the building, a deeper level of refurbishment is recommended to reduce the risk of future replacement and maintenance and increase the lifespan of the building to c.30 years. **The viability of achieving a 30-year lifespan building needs to be fully considered as it is not yet understood whether this is achievable.** Further surveys of the structure would be required to confirm this.

Timescales

A high-level programme needs to be produced with input from a contractor. Works are expected to take between 36 to 48 months. For the purposes of this report, the timescale used is 48 months.

Analysis

This option is a complicated and costly proposal which would require considerable alterations to the existing building. Working as a hybrid between the refurbishment or new build options will result in additional unknowns and risks for the council. The proposal will also need to go through the same statutory processes as the new build, such as a major planning application, without the full benefits being realised.

It is expected the estimated life span of the building cannot be substantially increased as it will be dependent upon the existing structure remaining viable. The pure refurbishment option allows for wider strategic placemaking over the long-term without investment in new structures.

Financial

This option requires decanting New England House, which would create a service pressure of up to £1.2m for 2025/26 and 2026/27, through loss of income.

Assumptions

The assumptions for this appraisal are as follows:

- Excludes management costs
- The existing building is empty from 2025 and during works.
- The existing refurbished building lifespan is 30 years.

- Available capital funding for the project is £9.26m.
- All floorspace will be available for a similar light industrial use.
- 15% professional fees and contingency.
- Assumed average void rate of 5% over the lifetime of the building.
- NPV figures include £1.2m service pressure through loss of income and loss of business rates in the first year.
- Refurbishment option based upon estimates by Potter Raper Partnership dated: 23/10/2024.

Costs

Investment	Estimated cost £'000	Estimated cost +10% £'000	Estimated cost +20% £'000
Works costs	41,425	45,568	49,710
On-costs incl. contingency	6,214	6,83	7,457
Total	47,639	52,403	57,167

30-year NPV Subsidy / (Surplus) and gap funding per unit

Rent type	NPV year 30 £'000	NPV year 30 10% cost increase £'000	NPV year 30 20% cost increase £'000
Existing rent	(31,363)	(22,194)	(13,024)
Existing rent + 10%	(42,010)	(32,841)	(23,671)
Existing rent + 20%	(52,658)	(43,488)	(34,318)

At +10% cost and +10% rent, the project achieves a surplus at year 15.

Risks

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = catastrophic	Mitigating controls and actions
Refurbishment of existing buildings can be complex and unforeseen issues can occur.	Increase in construction costs, timescales, and complexity of works.	4	3	Undertake thorough assessment of the current condition of the building. Undertake works without

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = catastrophic	Mitigating controls and actions
	The complexity of work programme and timescales increase.			tenants in place to be able to access view all areas.
The refurbishment does not uncover an unknown building defect.	The existing unknown defect impacts on safety of the building. Defects worsens over time. Future high cost and disruptive works to remediate. A deeper level of retrofit works would be more disruptive to tenants in place, and this may not be feasible without decanting tenants while works are carried out to each floor.	4	3	Undertake thorough assessment of the current condition of the building. Undertake works without tenants in place to be able to access view all areas.
The building is old and before 30 years further defects, which currently don't exist, may arise.	Future high cost and disruptive works to remediate.	3	3	Prepare and undertake ongoing proactive maintenance programme with surveys of the building.
Ongoing investment and maintenance programme is not maintained.	Defects will be allowed to worsen, increasing H&S risks, and increasing future costs to remediate.	4	2	Costs to maintain the building are likely to be the same or higher over the future 30-year lifespan, including increased condition surveys
Presence HAC [High Alumina Cement] concrete requires ongoing condition surveys and consideration of uses allowed in the building.	HAC is susceptible to reduced concrete strength and risk of failure when in contact with chemicals (incl. water).	3	4	Ongoing condition surveys to confirm the structure is performing suitably. Works should not cover up areas of the structure, which must be accessible for survey and testing.
To achieve a viable scheme, rents rise and become unaffordable for the targeted business sectors.	The refurbished building does not offer the same economic benefits of co-locating creative businesses and fostering business growth.	3	3	Interrogate the proposed works and limit them to those which are required to achieve the outcome.
Risk of fire & increased H&S risks for works	Risk to tenants, fire services and construction workers	4	5	Undertake works in an empty or nearly empty building.

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = catastrophic	Mitigating controls and actions
taking place with tenants in situ.	remain while work is being carried out, the risk being reduced incrementally through the works.			Additional 'meanwhile' systems required such as a sprinkler system.

Opportunities

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = fantastic	Realisation controls and actions
Increase existing lettable floorspace by 5181 m ²	This option delivers a higher amount of much needed floorspace to continue to develop new businesses.	5	3	Architectural feasibility study is underway.
Reconfigure the layout to achieve higher occupancy rates while meeting the aims of the Vision for NEH.	Increased let ability Meet the needs of potential new and different management and letting strategies for the building	3	3	This opportunity is more limited with tenants in place but can be done if each floor is entirely decanted while works take place and tenants move back into entirely new units.

Sustainability– Carbon Neutral City

For the 30-year period, the refurbished building would perform better than the existing building for energy use, as improved thermal performance of the façade and extension would lead to a reduction in energy use for heating.

However, the refurbished part of the building would not be expected to perform as well for energy use as a new building. Despite the avoided carbon emissions by not rebuilding, the overall whole life carbon emissions of this option may be higher than for a demolition and rebuild. Further assessment of this would be required.

While whole life carbon emissions could be higher over the building's lifespan, this is only part of the story; another important consideration is that the retention and reuse of the building would avoid new materials use achieving 'circular' benefits of limiting impact on the environment and the earth's resources.

This option has opportunities to increase biodiversity on this site through the use of a brown/green roof, or roof garden.

Overall, and given the information currently available, the refurbishment options are considered the most environmentally sustainable option.

Option 4 – Demolition and New Build Small Sized Building (15,886 m²)

Description

This option is a new build approach on a scale which is comparable to the existing New England House, creating approximately 15,886 (GIA) m² and 13,268 (NIA) m².

This option tests the viability of redelivering a commercial use building by full demolition of New England House and construction of a new building.

Timescales

A project team needs to be appointed to provide an accurate programme. Works are expected to take between 3 and 4 years. For the purposes of this report, the timescale used is 48 months.

Variations

- Consider different occupancy mixes between light industrial and office space use as well as roof terrace gardens, bars, restaurants, co-workspaces and public cafes.
- Consider different occupancy mixes including other commercial uses and mixed use including residential.

Analysis

This option is based upon the existing building footprint and is likely to be considered under use of the site by the Planning Authority. Substantial financial investment will be required over a long-term period to construct the building with a surplus only being achieved at year 38 based on a 10% increase in both works and rental assumptions.

Other new build options support better opportunities to deliver a mixed-use development and realise the full potential of the site.

Financial

This option requires decanting New England House, which would create a service pressure of up to £1.2m for 2025/26 and 2026/27, through loss of income.

Assumptions

The assumptions for this appraisal are as follows:

- Excludes management costs
- The existing building is empty from 2025 and during works.
- The existing refurbished building lifespan is 50 years.
- Available capital funding for the project is £9.26m.
- All floorspace will be available for a similar light industrial use.

- 15% professional fees and contingency.
- Assumed average void rate of 5% over the lifetime of the building.
- Includes reserved income of £340,000pa (plus inflation) for refit of common areas and major reconfiguration over lifespan of new building.
- NPV figures include £1.2m service pressure through loss of income and loss of business rates in the first year.
- Works costs are based upon £3,000 per m².

Costs

Investment	Estimated cost £'000	Estimated cost +10% £'000	Estimated cost +20% £'000
Works costs	47,658	52,424	57,190
On-costs incl. contingency	7,149	7,864	8,578
Total	54,807	60,287	65,768

50-year NPV Subsidy / (Surplus) and gap funding per unit

Rent type	NPV at year 50 £'000	NPV at year 50 10% cost increase £'000	NPV at year 50 20% cost increase £'000
Existing rent	(27,010)	(12,278)	2,455
Existing rent + 10%	(44,985)	(30,253)	(15,520)
Existing rent + 20%	(62,960)	(48,227)	(33,495)

At +10% cost and +10% rent, the project achieves a surplus at year 38.

Risks

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = catastrophic	Mitigating controls and actions
New build construction costs are high and have gone through a period of inflation	High construction costs require high rental incomes to make a financially viable project. This impacts the type and size of organization	3	3	Continue to monitor costs against the market. Factor in realistic initial budget. Consider early contractor engagement

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = catastrophic	Mitigating controls and actions
	which can afford the space.			
New build redevelopments can take a long-time impacting programme	Existing building requires ongoing considerable investment to remain tenanted while new build plans are drawn up. Otherwise, the building may be empty long-term attracting anti-social behaviour.	4	3	Produce an early realistic programme considering optimism bias. Look into security options if building were to be decanted and analyse costs.
This smaller option "like-for-like" replacement only increases overall footprint by modest amount	The smaller scale of development may negatively impact viability and underuse the development potential of the existing site.	4	2	Work with planning case officers early to discuss density and agree development principles.
Likely to lose significant proportion of NEH tenants due to time needed for redevelopment	May not assist existing tenants in the longer term. Likely to need new tenants and make up of building will need to change	3	4	Understand wider city needs for commercial space and engage with tenants early to understand their priorities.

Opportunities

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = fantastic	Realisation controls and actions
New build offers opportunity to meet modern standards of construction	New build standards higher than for existing buildings offering safe contemporary commercial space with lower maintenance obligations in the medium term.	5	3	
Opportunity to reimagine the space at New England House through engagement with existing tenants and wider	Clear opportunity to design building in keeping with tenants needs	4	3	Continue to engage with the tenant reference group and prepare a consultation plan if this option is chosen.

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = fantastic	Realisation controls and actions
business community.				
Opportunity to deliver a masterplan for the wider Elder Place corridor area	Consideration of masterplan opportunities will take additional time, and delivering a regeneration masterplan with land assembly and phased development would be a far longer-term project.	2	5	There can be no delay to undertaking fire mitigation works at New England House, which does not suit the timescales of a wider masterplan. Consider a wider development masterplan when preparing plans for a new building.

Sustainability– Carbon Neutral City

A new build commercial building offers the opportunity to deliver high energy efficiency especially in relation to heating. A mix of unit types can allow for heated and unheated units.

In design the whole lifespan of the building can be considered from a sustainability perspective. The ability to adapt the layout and activities in the building with minimal carbon emissions can be included. The end of life of the building can be considered to allow for disassembly rather than demolition. This would mean more materials could hold their original value and be reused, avoiding additional materials use and carbon emissions, and retaining some financial value.

There is potential opportunity for materials in the existing building to be reused in the new development, or on other sites. Secondary (reused) materials can be used in the new build development, but retaining and refurbishing the existing structure is expected to be the best opportunity to minimise the use of primary raw materials.

Reducing primary materials use, using sustainable materials, and other measures are likely to impact delivery costs and/or timescales. The impact is expected to have the greatest impact on design and procurement timescales.

A new building could achieve biodiversity net gains through green roofs and walls, but these must be considered carefully as the building is in an exposed location and planting is expected have a higher risk of failure.

Underuse of this site for employment (and/or residential) space is unsustainable. More commercial and residential space is required in the city and what is not delivered here may need to be provided at an alternative location where there is a greater impact on biodiversity, space, and materials use.

Option 5 – Demolition and New Build Medium Sized Building (21,823 m²)

Description

This option is based upon a medium new build of 21,832m² (GIA) and 18,498m² (NIA). The scale is comparable to option 3 refurbishment with three storey extension but would require full demolition of the building.

Timescales

A project team needs to be appointed to provide an accurate programme. Works are expected to take between 3 and 4 years. For the purposes of this report, the timescale used is 48 months.

Variations

- Consider different occupancy mixes between light industrial and office space use as well as roof terrace gardens, bars, restaurants, co-workspaces and public cafes.
- Consider different occupancy mixes including other commercial uses and mixed use including residential.

Analysis

This option is based upon substantial financial investment which will be required over a long-term period to construct the building with a surplus only being achieved at year 41 based on a 10% increase in both works and rental assumptions.

A block of this size will need to be fully justified through masterplanning and placemaking of the wider locale increasing timescales for delivery. This option could be considered alongside the refurbishment of the existing building for a longer-term plan for the area.

Financial

This option requires decanting New England House, which would create a service pressure of up to £1.2m for 2025/26 and 2026/27, through loss of income.

Assumptions

The assumptions for this appraisal are as follows:

- Excludes management costs
- The existing building is empty from 2025 and during works.
- The existing refurbished building lifespan is 50 years.
- Available capital funding for the project is £9.26m.
- All floorspace will be available for a similar light industrial use.
- 15% professional fees and contingency.

- Assumed average void rate of 5% over the lifetime of the building.
- Includes reserved income of £465,800pa (plus inflation) for refit of common areas and major reconfiguration over lifespan of new building.
- NPV figures include £1.2m service pressure through loss of income and loss of business rates in the first year.
- Works costs are based upon £3,000 per m².

Costs

Investment	Estimated cost £'000	Estimated cost +10% £'000	Estimated cost +20% £'000
Works costs	65,469	72,016	78,563
On-costs incl. contingency	9,820	10,802	11,784
Total	75,289	82,818	90,347

50-year NPV Subsidy / (Surplus) and gap funding per unit

Rent type	NPV at year 50 £'000	NPV at year 50 10% cost increase £'000	NPV at year 50 20% cost increase £'000
Existing rent	(30,491)	(10,253)	9,985
Existing rent + 10%	(55,520)	(35,281)	(15,043)
Existing rent + 20%	(80,548)	(60,310)	(40,072)

At +10% cost and +10% rent, the project achieves a surplus at year 41.

Risks

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = catastrophic	Mitigating controls and actions
New build construction costs are high and have gone through a period of inflation	High construction costs require high rental incomes to make a financially viable project. This impacts the type and size of organization which can afford the space.	3	3	Continue to monitor costs against the market. Factor in realistic initial budget. Consider early contractor engagement

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = catastrophic	Mitigating controls and actions
New build redevelopments can take a long-time impacting programme	Existing building requires ongoing considerable investment to remain tenanted while new build plans are drawn up. Otherwise, the building may be empty long-term attracting anti-social behaviour.	4	3	Produce an early realistic programme considering optimism bias. Look into security options if building were to be decanted and analyse costs.
Increased footprint by 7,215sqm compared to the existing building. Is there a need for the space?	Need to consider commercial need for amount of light industrial and other commercial uses in the building.	2	4	Work internally and externally to establish need within city. Carefully consider the mix of commercial and/or residential uses within building.
Likely to lose significant proportion of NEH tenants due to time needed for redevelopment	Many existing tenants looking for long term certainty in their premises are unlikely to return to the new building. Likely to need new tenants and make up of building will need to change.	3	4	Understand wider city needs for commercial space and engage with tenants early to understand their priorities.

Opportunities

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = fantastic	Realisation controls and actions
Larger space offers more opportunity to consider mixed uses to help with viability and wider place shaping.	Opportunity to redeliver existing space alongside other uses to create a thriving community	4	3	Undertake further options appraisal including use mix if this option is chosen.
New build offers opportunity to meet modern standards of construction	New build standards higher than for existing buildings offering safe contemporary commercial space with lower maintenance obligations in the medium term.	5	3	
Opportunity to reimagine the space at New England House	Clear opportunity to design building in keeping with tenants needs	4	3	Continue to engage with the tenant reference group and prepare a consultation

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = fantastic	Realisation controls and actions
Larger space offers more opportunity to consider mixed uses to help with viability and wider place shaping.	Opportunity to redeliver existing space alongside other uses to create a thriving community	4	3	Undertake further options appraisal including use mix if this option is chosen.
through engagement with existing tenants and wider business community.				plan if this option is chosen.
Opportunity to deliver a masterplan for the wider Elder Place corridor area	Consideration of masterplan opportunities will take additional time, and delivering a regeneration masterplan with land assembly and phased development would be a far longer-term project.	2	5	There can be no delay to undertaking fire mitigation works at New England House, which does not suit the timescales of a wider masterplan. Consider a wider development masterplan when preparing plans for a new building.

Sustainability– Carbon Neutral City

A new build commercial building offers the opportunity to deliver high energy efficiency especially in relation to heating. A mix of unit types can allow for heated and unheated units.

In design the whole lifespan of the building can be considered from a sustainability perspective. The ability to adapt the layout and activities in the building with minimal carbon emissions can be included. The end of life of the building can be considered to allow for disassembly rather than demolition. This would mean more materials could hold their original value and be reused, avoiding additional materials use and carbon emissions, and retaining some financial value.

There is potential opportunity for materials in the existing building to be reused in the new development, or on other sites. Secondary (reused) materials can be used in the new build development, but retaining and refurbishing the existing structure is expected to be the best opportunity to minimise the use of primary raw materials.

Reducing primary materials use, using sustainable materials, and other measures are likely to impact delivery costs and/or timescales. The impact is expected to have the greatest impact on design and procurement timescales.

A new building could achieve biodiversity net gains through green roofs and walls, but these must be considered carefully as the building is in an exposed location and planting is expected have a higher risk of failure.

Option 6 – Demolition and New Build Large Building (27,779 m²)

Description

This option is based on a significantly larger development being proposed and maximising the height of a new building using the neighbouring York & Elder as a guide. The areas would be 27,779m² (GIA) and 23,728m² (NIA), and the height would be 12 storeys.

The massing would break the building into two blocks to reduce the visual impact. This option would benefit from a wider master planning exercise and potential to incorporate other land holdings within the vicinity.

Timescales

Due to the size and scale of the proposals this would be a long-term aspirational proposal and would take approximately 5 to 6 years to develop from feasibility to completion. For the purposes of this report 60 months have been used. If wider scale masterplanning is incorporated these timescales may increase but could provide a cohesive redevelopment option for the wider locale.

Variations

- Wider commercial uses can be considered, and a mixed used scheme should be strongly considered due to the size of building as well as roof terrace gardens, bars, restaurants, co-workspaces and public cafes.
- Consider different occupancy mixes including other commercial uses and mixed use including residential.

Analysis

The size of this block is comparable to neighbouring developments but will require substantial borrowing to build. A block of this size will need to be fully justified through masterplanning and placemaking of the wider locale increasing timescales for delivery. This option could be considered alongside the refurbishment of the existing building for a longer-term plan for the area.

Financial

This option requires decanting New England House, which would create a service pressure of up to £1.2m for 2025/26 and 2026/27, through loss of income.

Assumptions

The assumptions for this appraisal are as follows:

- Excludes management costs
- The existing building is empty from 2025 and during works.
- The existing refurbished building lifespan is 50 years.

- Available capital funding for the project is £9.26m.
- All floorspace will be available for a similar light industrial use.
- 15% professional fees and contingency.
- Assumed average void rate of 5% over the lifetime of the building.
- Includes reserved income of £515,865pa (plus inflation) for refit of common areas and major reconfiguration over lifespan of new building.
- NPV figures include £1.2m service pressure through loss of income and loss of business rates in the first year.
- Works costs are based upon £3,000 per m².

Costs

Investment	Estimated cost £'000	Estimated cost +10% £'000	Estimated cost +20% £'000
Works costs	83,337	91,671	100,004
On-costs incl. contingency	12,501	13,751	15,001
Total	95,838	105,421	115,005

50-year NPV Subsidy / (Surplus) and gap funding per unit

Rent type	NPV at year 50 £'000	NPV at year 50 10% cost increase £'000	NPV at year 50 20% cost increase £'000
Existing rent	(21,047)	(1,122)	18,802
Existing rent + 10%	(51,997)	(32,073)	(12,149)
Existing rent + 20%	(82,948)	(63,024)	(43,099)

At +10% cost and +10% rent, the project achieves a surplus at year 45.

Risks

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = catastrophic	Mitigating controls and actions
New build construction costs are high	Construction costs may be high	3	5	Continue to monitor costs against the market. Factor in realistic initial budget.

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = catastrophic	Mitigating controls and actions
and have gone through a period of inflation	impacting upon rental incomes for tenants.			Consider early contractor engagement
New build redevelopments can take a long-time impacting programme	Existing building requires considerable investment to keep open otherwise the building may be empty long-term attracting anti-social behaviour.	4	3	Produce an early realistic programme considering optimism bias. Look into security options if building were to be decanted and analysing costs.
This option increases the footprint by 12,445 m ² compared to the existing building	Need to consider the commercial need for this amount of light industrial in building	3	4	Produce an early realistic programme considering optimism bias. Look into security options if building were to be decanted and analysing costs
Much larger building compared to existing New England House and may present planning risk	Proposals have a much larger footprint and would become more dominant compared to wider street scene.	3	4	Early discussion with planning authority on building mass and wider masterplanning options.
Likely to lose significant proportion of NEH tenants due to time needed for redevelopment	Many existing tenants looking for long term certainty in their premises are unlikely to return to the new building. Likely to need new tenants and make up of building will need to change.	3	4	Understand wider city needs for commercial space and engage with tenants early to understand their priorities

Opportunities

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = fantastic	Realisation controls and actions
Larger space offers more opportunity to consider mixed uses to help with viability and wider place shaping.	Opportunity to redeliver existing space alongside other uses to create a thriving community	4	3	Undertake further options appraisal including use mix if this option is chosen.
New build offers opportunity to meet modern	New build standards higher than for existing buildings offering safe	5	3	

Description	Potential consequences	Likelihood 1 = almost impossible 5 = almost certain	Impact 1 = insignificant 5 = fantastic	Realisation controls and actions
standards of construction	contemporary commercial space with lower maintenance obligations in the medium term.			
Opportunity to reimagine the space at New England House through engagement with existing tenants and wider business community.	Clear opportunity to design building in keeping with tenants needs	4	3	Continue to engage with the tenant reference group and prepare a consultation plan if this option is chosen.
Opportunity to deliver a masterplan for the wider Elder Place corridor area	Consideration of masterplan opportunities will take additional time, and delivering a regeneration masterplan with land assembly and phased development would be a far longer-term project.	4	5	There can be no delay to undertaking fire mitigation works at New England House, which does not suit the timescales of a wider masterplan. Consider a wider development masterplan when preparing plans for a new building.

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There is potential opportunity for materials in the existing building to be reused in the new development, or on other sites. Secondary (reused) materials can be used in the new build development, but retaining and refurbishing the existing structure is expected to be the best opportunity to minimise the use of primary raw materials.

Reducing primary materials use, using sustainable materials, and other measures are likely to impact delivery costs and/or timescales. The impact is expected to have the greatest impact on design and procurement timescales.

A new building could achieve biodiversity net gains through green roofs and walls, but these must be considered carefully as the building is in an exposed location and planting is expected have a higher risk of failure.

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 174

Subject: Community Infrastructure Levy – Allocation and future governance arrangements

Date of meeting: Thursday, 20 March 2025

Report of: Cabinet Member for Finance and City Regeneration

Contact Officer: Name: Corporate Director- Operations

Tel: 01273 292222

Email: Simon.Barrett@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Key Decision: Yes

Reason(s) Key: Expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the expenditure of the City Council's budget, namely above £1,000,000 and is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards).

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 CIL is a charge which can be levied by local authorities on new development, through the planning system, in their area. It is an important tool for local authorities to use to help them deliver the infrastructure needed to support development in their area. The priorities for spending the strategic city wide CIL pot will help to bring forward infrastructure projects that will help to achieve the Council Plan objective of creating a city to be proud of.
- 1.2 This report recommend/seek approval to allocate Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and also proposes new governance arrangements for spending of neighbourhood CIL as well as planning future CIL expenditure to align with the cabinet decision making process. Investing CIL in local schemes for every ward across the city will help achieve the Council plan objective of creating a fair and inclusive city.
- 1.3 The report recommends £2.42M of the accumulated Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Citywide pot to support capital expenditure on seafront regeneration projects in 24/25 such as Madeira Terrace, Back Rock and Hove Beach Park. It also recommends supporting the Thriving Communities Fund in 25/26, plus a proposal to utilise some funding to top up neighbourhood CIL funding available in some wards. It also proposes new cabinet aligned governance arrangements for planning future CIL investment and will ensure that spending supports infrastructure improvements directly aligned to the council plan objectives.

2. Recommendations

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

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) started on 5th October 2020. It is a tariff-based charge that can be levied by local authorities on new development in the area following the grant of planning permission. It is an important tool for local authorities to use to help deliver infrastructure needed to support development in the area and can be used to bring forward projects that are aligned to the priorities of the Council Plan.
- 3.2 The liability to pay CIL arises as planning permission is granted; at that stage the council issues a “liability notice”. Payment is due when development commences, at which point a “demand notice” is issued.
- 3.3 Since commencement, the council has received receipts totaling £3.03m for the Citywide pot and £0.5m for the Neighbourhood pot.
- 3.4 The council has also received £187k which has been used to cover the administration costs of operating the scheme to date.

Capital Programme – 24/25

- 3.5 The council currently holds £3.03m of Citywide CIL which can be spent on infrastructure across the city. It is currently estimated that the 24/25 capital programme will require borrowing of circa £37.440m as part of its programme of delivering new strategically important infrastructure for the area. In particular, the council has had to borrow to deliver significant seafront projects such as Madeira Terrace, Black Rock enabling works and Hove Beach Park. Utilising £2.4m of the Citywide CIL receipts will reduce the ongoing revenue borrowing costs to support investment in the programme by £0.180m per year over 15 years. If used to reduce the cost of borrowing, this will help to reduce the ongoing revenue funding pressures that the council will continue to face in future years, and the CIL will have been used for its intended purpose, as a driver of regeneration. Remaining

and future CIL funds could be invested into seafront maintenance projects to also reduce future borrowing requirements generated by that work.

Thriving Communities Fund – 25/26

- 3.6 The Thriving Communities programme is a key part of how the council supports local communities and groups with a range of work aimed at reaching the most disadvantaged groups across the city. It has been identified that some of these projects could be eligible for funding under the CIL Regulations 2010. It is therefore proposed to work with the service to identify suitable projects and deploy up to £184k of Citywide CIL to support bids in 25/26.

Neighbourhood CIL – Ward Top Up

- 3.7 Since implementation, circa £0.5M of Neighbourhood CIL has been collected. Appendix A of this report sets out the draft governance for spending Neighbourhood CIL.
- 3.8 Ward members will be involved in determining which projects in their ward receive Neighbourhood CIL. The Director of Place will review the final spending requests in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and City Regeneration to ensure the projects are in accordance with the CIL regulations and do not create an ongoing financial burden to the Council. Training will be provided to ward councilors.
- 3.9 Neighbourhood CIL is allocated to the ward where the development has taken place, with no flexibility in the regulations to redistribute ward funds, there are significant differences in the level of receipts available in each ward; with several not having any funds available at all.
- 3.10 In order to ensure that all neighbourhoods see some local benefit from the developments that have taken place cumulatively across the city, it is proposed to use £235k from Citywide CIL to ensure that every ward has at least the average amount of neighbourhood funding available (£22k). The use of Citywide CIL to ensure all wards receive some funding is an opportunity to enable local engagement to help deliver localised projects across the city in a fair and proportionate way.
- 3.11 This will result in 17 wards receiving additional funding and full details of the sums held and the top up proposed are shown in Appendix B of this report. The process to consult with communities on their proposals to spend the monies will commence in late Spring 2025, with local ward councillors deciding which projects will be supported during the Autumn.

Annual Update report & updates

- 3.12 In order to plan the future use of Citywide CIL, maintain an overview of Neighbourhood CIL and monitor the allocation of residual S106 receipts, it is proposed to establish an officer CIL & S106 Oversight Board which will meet at least quarterly. The officer board will provide monthly updates to the

Cabinet Lead Policy Advisor on S106 and CIL, and then onto the Cabinet Member for Finance and City Regeneration.

- 3.13 A key task for the board will be to develop a range of options for the council to utilise Citywide CIL in the longer term (5-10 years.) Investment in infrastructure (including the environment) will make a significant contribution to meeting the council plan objectives to make the city a place which people are proud of and want to live, work and learn in.
- 3.14 Whilst the actual projects to be considered will emerge through this work, it is envisaged that schemes likely to be considered could include tree planting and other environmental improvements, investment in strategic road improvements, seafront heritage assets and place making projects.
- 3.15 A monitoring update report will be presented to Cabinet yearly from the Cabinet Lead Policy Advisor on S106 and CIL which will outline the spending for residual s106/CIL and Neighbourhood CIL money as well as outlining potential future spending projects for CIL.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 The council could decide to leave the £2.43M of Citywide CIL receipts unallocated. This would result in additional revenue borrowing costs to support the agreed schemes in 24/25 for the current capital programme. Increased borrowing costs would place further pressure on the revenue budget for future years.
- 4.2 The council could decide not to top up funding for Neighbourhood CIL in 17 wards. This would leave 2 wards with no funding and a further 8 wards with less than £10k of funding per ward. Spending £235.9k to ensure that each ward has at least £22k available to be spent on local projects ensures that all of the neighbourhoods in the city will see some local benefit from planning permissions granted and developments taking place in the city.
- 4.3 The council could decide not to provide £184k funding for the Thriving Communities Fund in 25/26. This investment will support the community and voluntary sector to work with the council to deliver the four over-arching priorities of the council plan, to meet communities' needs, to provide value for money and to grow and thrive as a valued partner in jointly addressing the challenges of funding pressures and increasing demand. It has been designed with consideration to the future release of a micro-grants programme for community groups working with marginalised and vulnerable residents in the city experiencing the most disadvantage.
- 4.4 The council could decide to retain all of the Citywide and Neighbourhood CIL for a further period of time until more receipts have been received, considering there is currently a potential £6.87M that could be received if projects from approved planning applications are commenced. This has been discounted as one of the benefits of CIL compared to S106 is that there are more freedoms to target the expenditure on infrastructure and associated needs across the city and within wards. S106 was much more

prescriptive and often tied to specific assets where they may have been little or no demand for investment. This resulted in large sums of S106 monies being held whilst services developed projects and programmes to utilise the funding received.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 All of the implementation phase of CIL was undertaken in accordance with the adopted BHCC Statement of Community Involvement 2015. Consultation on the charging schedule and its main modifications was undertaken prior to adoption in accordance with the CIL regulations.
- 5.2 Regular feedback will also be sought from neighbourhood groups and Councillors on the processes for the Neighbourhood CIL portion and will update the governance with subsequent rounds of spends.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 The use of £2m CIL Citywide receipts to support existing priority capital expenditure in 2024/25 will reduce ongoing revenue borrowing costs. Using £2m CIL rather than borrowing for infrastructure with a life of 15 years would save the council c£0.180m per year on repayments and interest depending on average borrowing rates over the 15 years.
- 6.2 Use of Citywide receipts to support the Thriving Communities Fund programme is allowable under CIL where officers will identify suitable projects. Where 2025/26 draft budget savings include this reduction of £0.184m, CIL funding will be required to ensure the costs of the service are met, otherwise a reported pressure of £0.184m will need to be reported in the councils monthly budget monitoring process in 2025/26. Allocation from Citywide CIL to Neighbourhood CIL has no financial implications and allows all neighbourhoods to benefit from CIL received from developments across the city.
- 6.3 The administrative costs of managing and monitoring both Section 106 planning obligations and CIL are funded from the levy CIL or contained within existing service revenue budgets. Developer contributions are a source of funding for the provision of infrastructure within the city.

Name of finance officer consulted: John Lack Date consulted: 21/02/2025

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The CIL Regulations provide that a charging authority may use the CIL receipts for the support of neighbourhoods by funding—
 - (a) the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure; or
 - (b) anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area subject to the relevant limits in Regulation 59A

8. Risk implications

- 8.1 There are no specific risks associated with the decisions being recommended in this report as all of the funding has been received and is held by the council.
- 8.2 There is a risk that services may have insufficient resources to deliver some of the Neighbourhood projects being supported. This will be assessed by them through the bidding process and some of the funding may be used to provide additional project management and delivery resources as necessary within services.

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 An Equalities Impact and Outcome Assessment (EIA) was prepared alongside the CIL Draft Charging Schedule and is available on the councils' website. The EIA was updated at the submission stage of the process. Income raised from CIL will go towards funding infrastructure necessary to support new development and communities

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 CIL receipts will help to fund infrastructure necessary to support new development and sustainable communities and should therefore have a positive impact in terms of sustainability outcomes. A Strategic Environmental Impact (SEA) for CIL concluded that a SEA was not required.
- 10.2 The bids that will be approved through this funding will need to have demonstrated their compliance with all relevant council policies relating to sustainability

11. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 11.1 None.

Other Implications

12. Procurement implications

- 12.1 All of the projects supported through this process will be the subject of existing procurement routes used by the various council services to deliver projects and work programmes.

13 Conclusion

- 13.1 The proposals contained in this report will ensure that the council mitigates in part the cost of capital borrowing in 24/25, reduces some of the revenue savings required in 25/26 and establishes new arrangements to plan, manage and monitor developer contributions received.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

1. Appendix A – Neighbourhood CIL Governance
2. Appendix B – Neighbourhood CIL – Ward Allocations

2. Background documents

1. <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/brighton-hove-city-council-community-infrastructure-levy-charging-schedule2>

Appendix A – Neighbourhood CIL Governance Process

- 1.1 The following principles will be applied to the neighbourhood portion:
 - The ward structure will be used as the spatial framework for decision making, due to the varied, patchwork mix of neighbourhood groups across different parts of the city
 - This basis will be sustainable as neighbourhood forums crystallise in the short to medium term, as they do not necessarily follow established boundaries, which could leave some parts of the city without a voice
 - A comprehensive schedule of groups to be engaged with per ward will be developed and agreed with ward councillors, based on existing relationships and intelligence. Their role will be to feed their views on spending priorities that the neighbourhood CIL should be directed to in their ward to local councillors
 - An initial call for proposals for neighbourhood CIL will be issued for all wards through Your Voice to encourage the maximum amount of participation from residents
 - The annual frequency of bidding cycles can be increased, subject to the levels of CIL secured
 - The same approach will be applied uniformly across the city to ensure that a consistent approach to decision making and timescales is maintained
- 1.2 Ward councillors have a vital role to play given their democratic accountability and knowledge of local needs and circumstances. They will also be able to help both the council and neighbourhoods ensure that the engagement process is comprehensive, effective and timely. Their role will be to:
 - Ensure that lists of groups being consulted with are comprehensive, include their informal networks and are maintained up to date
 - Promote the availability of neighbourhood CIL within their ward, the bidding cycle and advise on what types of bid can/cannot be supported
 - If necessary, submit bids for funding if they have identified a particular issue and no community group has submitted a bid. Support from two councillors in the relevant ward(s) would be required in these circumstances.
 - Review the long list of submitted bids for their ward and provide feedback on support for bids, priorities and any other useful background/information. It is recommended/encouraged that this would be on the basis that Councillors from each ward affected agree for a proposal to proceed. The Director of Place would review the recommendations and ensure the projects are in accordance with the CIL regulations and do not create an ongoing financial burden to the Council notwithstanding that the Cabinet Member for Finance and City Regeneration is the decision making cabinet member. This would help to ensure that the proposals coming forward have wide local support.
- 1.3 It will be important to be clear to our neighbourhoods and local communities about how the process for allocation of neighbourhood funding will work - its timing and the process for engagement and agreement of projects. Further

information will be published on Your Voice to help with this, but the following information will need to be communicated:

- As required by law, every CIL spending decision will be made by the council on its merits and in accordance with the legal requirements governing council decisions. There should not be an expectation that bids submitted by neighbourhoods will be automatically agreed;
- In the short to medium term, the amounts of Neighbourhood CIL are likely to be small as it will take some time for receipts to accrue. Even then, individual neighbourhood portions may not be large. This may well mean adjacent wards working with each other and with the council to mobilise sufficient resources to fund projects, and;
- In all cases the council will (in line with national guidance) expect there to be a link between its priorities and policies and those of the successful bids submitted through the neighbourhood bidding process as this will enable a properly structured approach taking account of both City-wide and local objectives.

1.4 Officers will prepare guidance setting these principles out and explaining the process that should be followed by residents and community groups to make bids. Appropriate briefings, seminars and publicity will also be produced to explain the process in advance of the first round of bids.

1.5 The guidance will also set the criteria against which neighbourhood proposals for Neighbourhood CIL spending will be assessed (so providing a 'checklist' that residents and community groups can use to identify things that it would be sensible to propose). In addition to the statutory test the checklist will include the following questions:

- Is the proposal supported by at least two of the councillors from each of the ward(s) concerned?
- Does it support delivery of a specific Council Plan commitment or objective?
- Is it identified in the City Plan or other strategic document or action plan?
- Can it be shown to support the growth plans for the city as a whole and for the neighbourhood in particular? Has there been engagement with adjoining wards or neighbourhoods?
- Can it be shown to have the support of local residents and businesses generally?
- Are there sufficient CIL funds available for the project? Would it involve a continuing revenue cost to the City Council?
- Is it shown to be value for money? Would CIL funding help lever in resources from other sources?
- Has it been shown that there are no other sources of funding for the proposal?

- Has a feasibility study been undertaken and is there evidence that the proposal could be started within twelve months of the decision to grant funding and be completed within a reasonable period?

- 1.6 A minimum financial threshold for the value of a proposal may also be set subject to the volume of bids coming forward and the level of funding available. This would ensure that the Neighbourhood CIL is allocated to projects of a kind and scale that will have appreciable benefits in terms of supporting growth and meeting the demands of development.
- 1.7 Where any single planning permission is likely to result in a Neighbourhood CIL receipt to the value of £150,000 or more, the CIL & S106 Oversight Board will provide a separate report to the Cabinet Lead Policy Advisor on S106 and CIL and the Cabinet Member for Finance and City Regeneration recommending how the sum should be allocated. The report will reflect the views of the local and neighbouring ward councillors and consider the wider impact that the specific development is likely to have beyond the ward in which the development is based (e.g. more use of existing green and play space, greater demand for allotments, the need to extend an existing Controlled Parking Zone, the provision of more youth workers etc.)

Appendix B – Neighbourhood CIL Income and Proposed Allocations including Citywide CIL contributions

Zone	NCIL Collected	Cost of Citywide CIL to lift	
		wards to average NCIL	NCIL after lifting
Central Hove	£ 13,189.52	£ 8,810.48	£ 22,000.00
Goldsmid	£ 21,321.19	£ 678.81	£ 22,000.00
Brunswick And Adelaide	£ 22,466.24	£ -	£ 22,466.24
Hangleton And Knoll	£ 819.24	£ 21,180.76	£ 22,000.00
Hanover And Elm Grove	£ 4,811.97	£ 17,188.03	£ 22,000.00
Hollingdean And Fiveways	£ 518.88	£ 21,481.12	£ 22,000.00
Westdene And Hove Park	£ 90,898.36	£ -	£ 90,898.36
Moulsecoomb And Bevendean	£ 18,990.80	£ 3,009.20	£ 22,000.00
North Portslade	£ 2,001.57	£ 19,998.43	£ 22,000.00
Patcham And Hollingbury	£ 35,583.66	£ -	£ 35,583.66
Preston Park	£ 19,355.21	£ 2,644.79	£ 22,000.00
Queen's Park	£ 2,370.56	£ 19,629.44	£ 22,000.00
Regency	£ 13,403.81	£ 8,596.19	£ 22,000.00
Rottingdean And West Saltdean	£ 87,110.83	£ -	£ 87,110.83
South Portslade	£ -	£ 22,000.00	£ 22,000.00
West Hill And North Laine	£ 49,925.04	£ -	£ 49,925.04
Westbourne And Poets Corner	£ 14,816.38	£ 7,183.62	£ 22,000.00
Wish	£ 76,125.30	£ -	£ 76,125.30
Woodingdean	£ 8,177.22	£ 13,822.78	£ 22,000.00
Kempton	£ 1,849.84	£ 20,150.16	£ 22,000.00
Roundhill	£ -	£ 22,000.00	£ 22,000.00
Whitehawk And Marina	£ 13,990.21	£ 8,009.79	£ 22,000.00
Coldean And Stanmer	£ 2,506.68	£ 19,493.32	£ 22,000.00
Average NCIL in wards (rounded up)		£ 22,000.00	
Amount of Strategic CIL to lift each ward to average NCIL		£ 235,876.92	

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 175

Subject: Red Routes

Date of meeting: Thursday, 20 March 2025

Report of: Cabinet Member for Transport, Parking and Public Realm

Contact Officer: Name: Charles Field

Email: charles.field@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Key Decision: Yes

Reason(s) Key: Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards).

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

1.1 This report (a) reviews the two experimental Red Route corridors in sections of London Road, Lewes Road and Preston Road, outlines the benefits and issues arising from implementation and (b) seeks a mandate to proceed with design, engagement and implementation of a red route for Western Road from Holland Road to Montpelier Road.

1.2 The policies which this report seeks to promote are:

- A city to be proud of – an accessible, clean, and sustainable city.
- A city where people feel safe.
- A responsive council with well run services

2. Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet agrees to proceed with the red route in Queens Road, as set out in Appendix 3

2.2 Cabinet agrees to proceed with the design and implementation of a new red route along the Western Road corridor (from Holland Road to Montpelier Road). As set out in Appendix 3

3. Context and background information

3.1 The introduction of red routes was primarily to improve bus services along key routes into and out of the city and funded by the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

- 3.2 Since 2021 we have become a more active city, this initiative is an integral part of the strategy to keeping cycle lanes free of parked vehicles and encourage active travel.
- 3.3 London Road / Preston Road and Lewes Road were identified as two of the most congested arterial routes in and out of the city with significant scope for improvement.
- 3.4 In December 2023 a report reviewed the informal consultation results of the two routes. Having taken account of all duly made representations and comments, it was agreed that the red route corridors progress to the Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETRO) implementation stage.
- 3.5 The red routes are being enforced via CCTV operators in the Council's Transport Control Centre (TCC) who issue PCNs for vehicles that stop on double red lines or misuse loading bays.
- 3.6 A longer-term strategy for Red Routes will be developed and will come back to Cabinet later in the year.
- 3.7 Were delighted to have the opportunity to bid for tranche 4 moving traffic enforcement powers. We will be applying to the DfT before the deadline of 7th July 2025 and a further update will be provided. We will continue to engage with on the strategy through discussions with businesses.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 The alternative option, to do nothing further, was considered. However, there are significant potential benefits to relieving congestion in the areas of Queens Rd / Western Rd which have improved bus journey times.
- 4.2 The Council is also seeking moving traffic enforcement powers. This would enable the enforcement of school streets, box junctions and other banned turning movements. The application process to the DfT for these powers includes a 6-week public consultation on the proposed sites for enforcement. We are currently reviewing complaints about poor compliance with existing restrictions to inform the site selection.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 Since the introduction of the red routes in April 2024 a period of consultation has taken place. A summary of the public consultation is in Appendix 1.
- 5.2 Regular attendance by officers at the London Road LAT meetings for the first 6 months of the Experimental Order took place, which informed and influenced changes on site within this period.
- 5.3 Also, as a direct result of engaging with traders an additional five loading bays were installed and extension of the existing bay. Also, an additional motorcycle bay was provided after concerns were raised by residents over pavement parking of food delivery bikes.

5.4 There has been positive feedback from stakeholder groups:

Brighton & Hove Buses *“The initial feedback we’ve received has been overwhelmingly positive. The improvements are noticeable, and there’s a growing interest in extending this initiative to other areas.”*

NSL Enforcement *“CEOs previously spent a lot of time and resource moving vehicles along for them to only return when the officer left. For certain areas, on foot enforcement isn’t effective. Having the red routes in place allows NSL to direct the resource elsewhere in the city when it makes a difference. It was said by all how red routes have resolved the previous issues. I also think it’s good to note little is now being said negatively to CEOs in relation to the red routes.”*

Cycling UK *“The red routes have reduced obstructive parking which is dangerous for us as cyclists due to having to pull out further into the road to avoid the obstructing vehicle. Also, there is the added risk of collisions due to car/van doors opening in our path and maneuvering / unloading vehicles into the road space. Overall, our general view is that the red routes have been a good improvement in cycling safety as it has removed a lot of casual obstruction, and we would like to see more red routes being established.”*

Bricycles *“It’s amazing how much better the roads are since the camera enforcement started. A recent video we posted, showed a ride up and back both directions of Lewes Road with zero cars blocking the cycle path - this NEVER used to happen before!”*

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 The cost of delivering Red Routes is funded from the Bus Service Improvement Plan grant, and from part of the £3.220m Bus Service Improvement Scheme capital budget as set out in the Capital Programme for 2025/26. Costs of delivering the scheme will form part of the Councils standard financial monitoring process with variations to capital schemes being reported to Cabinet via the TBM reports.
- 6.2 As with any introduction of new enforcement schemes across the city there is likely to be a short-term spike in the Penalty Charge Notice income, however this would be a short term impact only and cannot be quantified. Any additional income received will be reported to Cabinet through the revenue TBM reports.

Name of finance officer consulted: Craig Garoghan Date consulted :
14/02/2025

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 provides the framework for local traffic authorities to make traffic regulation orders, which can include the designation of specific traffic routes for various purposes, such as avoiding danger, preventing damage, or facilitating traffic flow.

- 7.2 The Council, as traffic authority, is empowered to make Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs) under the provisions of s9 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. An ETRO cannot remain in force for longer than 18 months. Public notice must be given that the ETRO has been made, that the traffic authority will be considering in due course whether the provisions of the ETRO will continue in force indefinitely, and that any objections to the making of such a permanent order must be made within six months of the making of the ETRO or any order amending the same (Sched. 5 Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996). The traffic authority must give consideration to any duly made objection.

Name of lawyer consulted: David Fairfield Date consulted : 17/02/2025

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) were carried out for the red routes and overseen by an equalities and inclusion officer.
- 8.2 The existing red routes have an exemption for Blue Badge holders to be dropped off and picked up on the double red lines.

9. Sustainability implications

- 9.1 The red route program aims to improve bus service journey times.
- 9.2 We expect long-term improvements in air quality and collision data due to the red routes, short term Air Quality data indicates we are on track to meet the legal standard.

Time span	Location	Air Quality
Pre-Red Route May-Nov 2023 Red Route May-Nov 2024	Lewes Rd N of Elm Gr A270	Improvement in Air Quality -1.7 NO2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$
Pre-Red May-Nov 2023 Post May-Nov 2024	Lewes Rd S of VG A270	Improvement in Air Quality -4.1 NO2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$
Pre-Red Apr-Nov 2023 Post Apr-Nov 2024	London Rd N of Cheapside A23	Improvement in Air Quality -2.6 NO2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$
Pre-Red May-Nov 2023 Post May-Nov 2024	N of Preston Circus A23	Improvement in Air Quality -0.9 NO2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$

10. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 10.1 Improvements to pedestrian and cyclists' safety whose journeys were previously impeded by parked vehicles on the carriageway and footway.
- 10.2 Improvements to air quality in red route corridors where vehicle movement is more free flowing.
- 10.3 Reduction in bus passenger injuries on the red route corridor, see appendix 2.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 To summarise the recently introduced red routes have;
 - improved air quality
 - reduced bus passenger injuries
 - kept cycleways clear of parked vehicles
 - resulted in more effective deployment of enforcement resources
- 11.2 A mandate is required to bring these benefits to other parts of the city.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

- 1. Summary of comments from stakeholders regarding implemented red routes during the formal ETRO consultation period.
- 2. Report on the Impact of Red Routes on Bus Passenger Injury Incidents from B&H buses.

2. Background documents

- 1. [Brighton & Hove City Council - Agenda for Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee on Tuesday, 22nd June, 2021, 4.00pm](#) Item 15
- 2. [Brighton & Hove City Council - Agenda for Transport & Sustainability Committee on Tuesday, 5th December, 2023, 4.00pm](#) Item 46

London Road, Preston Road and Lewes Road Red Route Public Consultation Report

December 2024

Background

Two Red Routes were implemented using an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order. The first six months of an ETRO forms the formal public consultation on the scheme.

Headline Findings

- Comments were generally supportive of the scheme, in particular relating to cycle lanes clear of parked vehicles and safety for both cyclists and pedestrians.
- Unsupportive comments mainly related to a lack of loading bays / places to pick up / drop off to both residential and business addresses. To address this, an additional five loading bays were installed and an existing bay extended.

Methodology

The consultation was advertised as part of the ETRO and promoted via the council's social media, website and featured several times in the local media. The public consultation for both red routes was closed on 6 January 2025.

Results

Comments were submitted via email and these comments were grouped together and themed as follows:

Formal ETRO Responses	
A23 London Road / Preston Road Supportive	19
A23 London Road / Preston Road Object	1
A23 London Road / Preston Road other	1
Lewes Road Supportive	29
Lewes Road Object	0
Lewes Road Other	0

Other comments received by Parking Projects during consultation period

In addition to the formal ETRO comment process, we received 111 emails related directly to both red routes. In summary these can be themed as:

Supportive	55
Opposed	7
Other	49

Comment theme	
Supportive	
Safer for cyclists	49
Safer for pedestrians	2
Less anti-social parking	1
Improve traffic flow / bus journey times	1
Easier for disabled people to negotiate	1
General approval (no specific reason given)	1
Other	
Lack of loading bays / difficult for deliveries	17
General enquiries on the rules for red routes	15
Lack of disabled parking	10
More general parking spaces needed on routes	3
Opposed	
Concerns over impact on individual businesses / loading access	6
Scheme not needed	1

Report on the Impact of Red Routes on Passenger Injury Incidents

Summary

This report evaluates the impact of implementing red routes on the number of passenger injury incidents reported by Brighton and Hove Buses. An analysis of the incident data indicates a significant reduction in passenger injury accidents, suggesting that red routes have contributed to improved safety and reduced accidents in these areas.

Data Overview

Two datasets from Lewes Road and London Road areas were analysed. The key focus was on incidents categorised as "Passenger Injury" from 2023 to 2024.

Key Findings:

2023: Between April and October – Total 14 (London Road - 9 / Lewes Road - 5) Passenger injury incidents.

2024: Between April and October – Total 2 (London Road - 2 / Lewes Road – 0) Passenger injury incidents.

The percentage reduction in passenger injury incidents from 2023 to 2024 is approximately **85.7%**

Analysis

Monthly data revealed a clear downward trend in passenger injury incidents following the implementation of red routes. This suggests a strong correlation between the introduction of red routes and improved passenger safety.

Impact of Red Routes

Red routes are designed to manage traffic flow and ensure that roads remain clear for essential services, including buses. The reduction in passenger injury incidents indicates that:

- Improved Traffic Flow: Red routes reduce congestion, leading to fewer collisions and accidents.
- Enhanced Safety Measures: Clear lanes for buses minimise the risk of accidents involving passengers boarding and alighting from buses.
- Increased Compliance: Drivers are more likely to adhere to traffic regulations, reducing the likelihood of collisions.

Recommendations

Given the positive impact observed, the following recommendations are made:

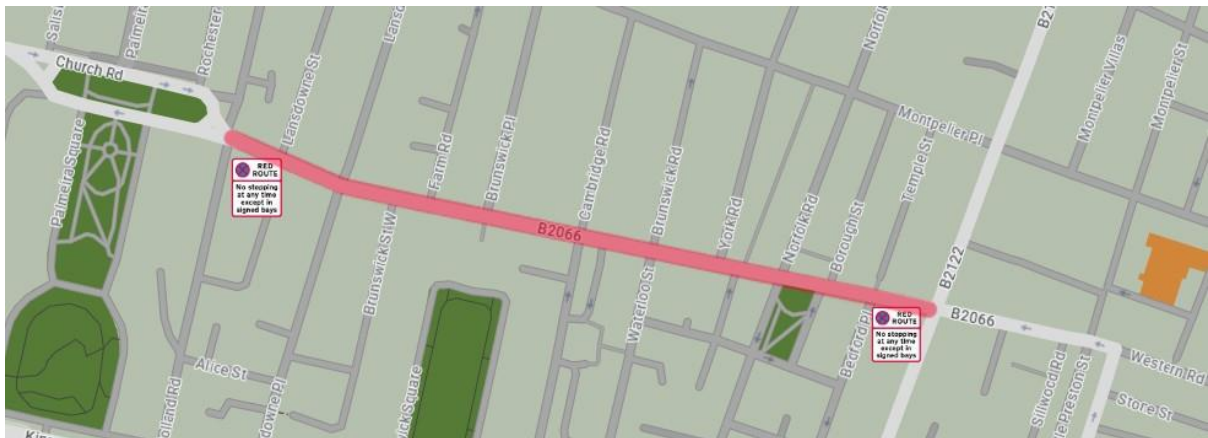
- Expansion of Red Routes: Extend red routes to other high-traffic areas to further improve safety and reduce incidents.

- Continuous Monitoring: Regularly analyse incident data to measure the effectiveness of red routes and make necessary adjustments.
- Public Awareness Campaigns: Educate the public on the benefits and rules of red routes to ensure compliance and maximise safety benefits.

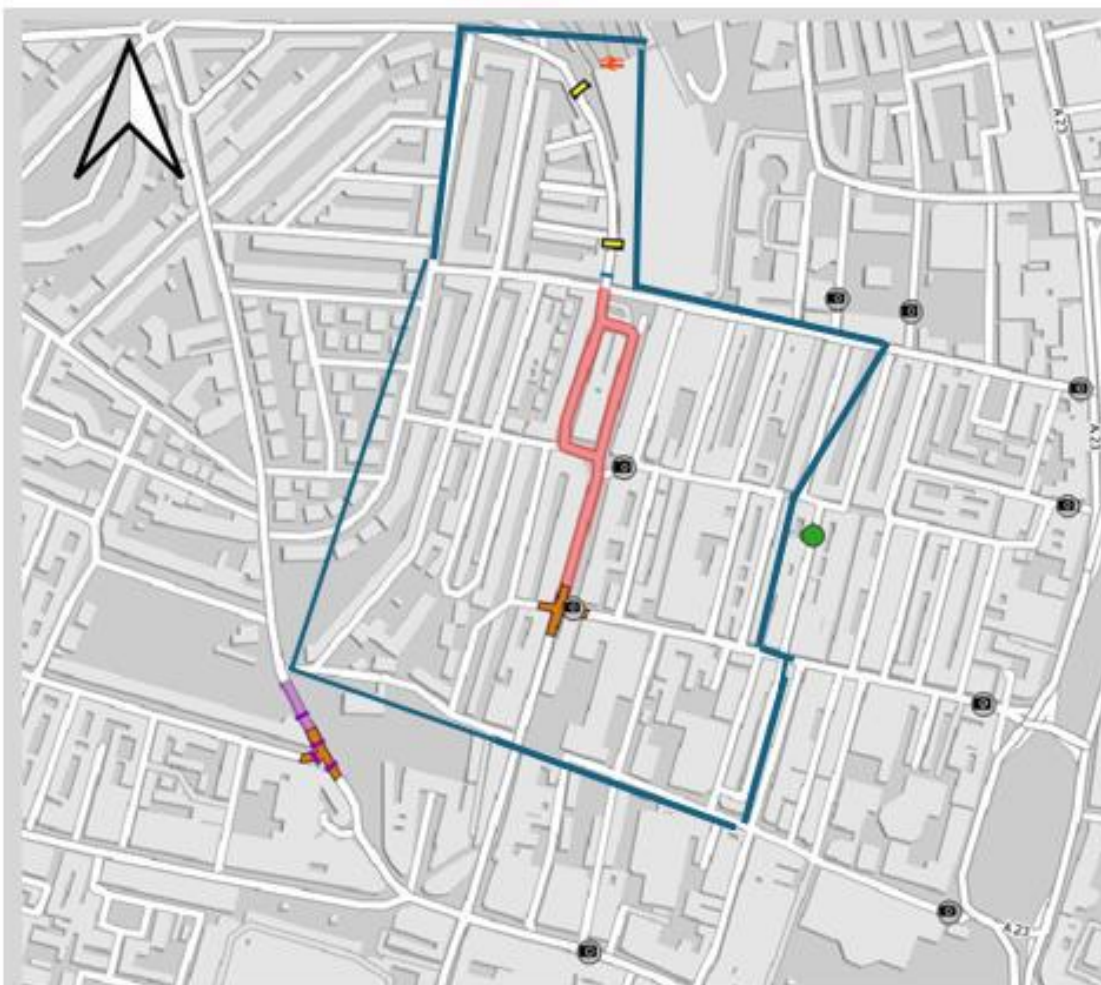
Conclusion

The implementation of red routes in Lewes Road and London Road areas has led to a notable reduction in passenger injury incidents. This report supports the continued and expanded use of red routes to enhance road safety and reduce traffic-related injuries.

Appendix 3.



Western Road Red Route proposed corridor



Queens Road Red Route feasibility study area

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 176

Subject: Concessionary Fares and Bus Service Improvement Plan Update Report

Date of meeting: 20 March 2025

Report of: Cabinet Member for Transport, Parking and Public Realm

Contact Officer: Name: Paul Nicholls
Tel: 01273 293287
Email: paul.nicholls@brighton-hove.gov.uk;
owen.mcelroy@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Key Decision: Yes

Reason(s) Key: Expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the expenditure of the City Council's budget, namely above £1,000,000 and is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards).

For General Release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report (a) updates Cabinet on negotiations with bus operators in the city for a fixed deal to cover the cost of concessionary fare journeys made by eligible older persons and disabled concessionary pass holders for the period commencing 1 April 2024 and (b) seeks approval for the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) programme for 2025-26 to release grant funding from the Department for Transport (DfT)
- 1.2 The policies which this report seek to promote are:
 - promote and improve health and wellbeing, to reduce health inequalities, and to support people to live independent and fulfilling lives.
 - a city to be proud of making it easier to move around the city.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet notes the conclusion of negotiations on concessionary fares payments with bus operators and agrees to the payment of the fixed deals as set out in Part 2 of this report.
- 2.2 Cabinet agrees to the use of negotiated fixed deals as the preferred option for the next 3 years with all bus operators for the reimbursement of concessionary fares and grants delegated authority to the Corporate Director for City Services to conduct and conclude such negotiations so that expenditure is less than would otherwise be calculated using the new DfT calculator.

- 2.3 Cabinet approves the BSIP Delivery Plan required for release of the 2025-26 Bus Grant totalling £9.729 million.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 The Council reimburses bus operators for Concessionary Travel undertaken by older people and eligible disabled pass holders. There are over 42,000 pass holders in Brighton & Hove of which 7,000 are issued to qualifying disabled residents.
- 3.2 In 2023 negotiations were held with Brighton & Hove Bus and Coach Company (B&H Buses) who agreed to a fixed deal for the financial year ending 31 March 2024.
- 3.3 In November 2023 the DfT produced new guidance on the new DfT Calculator to calculate concessionary fares reimbursement to bus operators. Use of the new DfT calculator is not mandatory as the Council is still able to enter into fixed deal arrangements provided that both parties can agree on an annual sum to be paid for concessionary fares on the principle of 'no better or worse off'.
- 3.4 The Council has made representations to the DfT to the effect that the new DfT calculator does not appear to work fairly for certain high frequency inner city bus networks. Brighton & Hove has the highest per capita bus use outside London with an integrated high-frequency network of services resulting in many hop on-hop off concessionary journeys at low expense to the operator. The new DfT calculator does not appear to adequately take these factors into account.
- 3.5 Concessionary passenger numbers have increased by up to 10% this year adding to this budgetary pressure.
- 3.6 The Council's concessionary fares scheme operates for additional hours compared to the statutory scheme, as follows:

Location	Weekdays	Weekends and bank holidays
Statutory minimum scheme hours	9.30am to 11pm	All day
Brighton & Hove – Disabled	All day	All day
Brighton & Hove – Older Persons	9am to 3:59am	All day

2025-26 Bus Grant (BSIP Delivery Plan)

- 3.7 The National Bus Strategy (NBS) for England was published in March 2021, requiring all local transport authorities (including Brighton & Hove City Council) to develop a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). This set out a vision, objectives and delivery plan to meet the targets of the LTA, local bus service operators and other key stakeholders, in accordance with the aims of the NBS.

- 3.8 The key targets defined in the Brighton & Hove City Council BSIP are:
- **Journey times:** by 2030, for the average time for a bus to have completed its route to have reduced by 10% from 2018 to 2019
 - **Reliability:** by 2030, 'on time' performance for services operating within the city to have increased to 90%
 - **Passenger growth:** By 2030, the target is for bus passengers to have increased 15% on the 2018 to 2019 baseline
 - **Customer Satisfaction:** by 2025, the National Highways and Transport (NHT) satisfaction survey to record an "overall satisfaction with local bus services" score of 80%, and a "satisfaction with bus fares" score of 60%
- 3.9 This BSIP was approved by the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee in September 2021.
- 3.10 Brighton & Hove City Council was awarded £27.9m of funding for the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 financial years to deliver this BSIP programme. To date, a wide range of projects and initiatives have been implemented using this funding including, but not limited to:
- The launch of a new 1X express service between Mile Oak and Brighton Marina, offering residents faster connections
 - Enhancement of socially necessary bus services such as the 16, 47, 52, 37/37B, Breeze network (77/78/79), 17, 273 and 21 routes
 - Development of several bus priority schemes which improve journey times for passengers
 - Discounted fare offers such as free accompanied youth travel, 50p unaccompanied youth travel, discounted citySAVER tickets, and £1 Short Hops
 - Improving equality of access for all through accessibility improvements at bus stops, inclusivity research projects, and improved bus stop signage
- 3.11 In December 2024, it was confirmed that BHCC was awarded a £9.279 million Bus Grant to continue delivery against its BSIP targets with a focus on improving bus services and keeping fares down. This grant replaces the BSIP funding programme. This has required that the council submit a Delivery Plan with a new programme of works. The receipt of a costed BSIP Delivery Plan, alongside an update to the BSIP, is a requirement for the release of the grant funding for the 2025-26 financial year. An updated BSIP is planned before the end of the financial year to comply with this.
- 3.12 An initial draft programme has been developed between Transport team leads within the City Infrastructure Department. The views of current bus operators in Brighton & Hove, as well as Brighton & Hove Bus Watch, have been considered. A range of projects which aim to achieve the BSIP targets listed above, and help the council deliver against key targets, have been selected.
- 3.13 Change control processes will permit Brighton & Hove City Council to adjust allocations of funding towards specific schemes with project

adjustment requests, provided that new schemes meet BSIP objectives. This provides flexibility to the 2025-26 programme should any new schemes be identified which would demonstrate greater value for money or a higher priority than those currently identified.

- 3.14 The Delivery Plan (without financial information) is available to view in Appendix B, with full financial detail provided in the Part 2 report. A summary of priorities is provided below:

1. Delivering affordability through Fares to sensitive populations	Continuing daily and weekly fare cap offers, youth fare offers and Short Hops (£1), with potential future fare offers if budgets allow
2. Driving patronage growth in suburbs and to neighbouring areas	Supporting a new Express Service along the A23 corridor and continued enhancements to the 1X route , as well as joint route enhancements project with West Sussex and Park & Ride feasibility work
3. Improving journey times	Bus priority and red routes at key locations, and surface reinforcement works to future-proof bus stops and key bus corridors Reliability schemes on routes which suffer from congestion (23/25, 27 and 46)
4. Maintaining revenue support for socially necessary services	Including the 37/37B, 16, 47, 52 and 21 routes, as well as the Breeze up to the Downs Network (77/78/79)
5. Improving Passenger Experience	Bus Stop accessibility and real-time information, enhanced customer service hours , passenger research, franchising study& supporting operators to modernise ticketing technology e.g.TOTO and the national DFT sponsored CORAL project

- 3.15 The programme continues to deliver successful revenue schemes such as fares offers, support for socially necessary services and express routes, as well as identifying new capital schemes such as bus priority and carriageway strengthening. This directly supports the Council's priority "A city to be proud of making it easier to move around the city", as well as positive impacts upon equalities, health and wellbeing and sustainability goals.
- 3.16 The programme supports the administrations priorities regarding Park & Ride both through revenue allocation towards feasibility work in identifying suitable sites, as well as by supporting express services in the city which would be able to support faster journey times into the city centre when a site is operational.

- 3.17 It should be noted that BSIP funding is unable to directly fund school bus routes, as they must offer a realistic route towards commercial viability for revenue support. However the programme does otherwise help with links and capacities on the school bus network, by supporting socially necessary services which fill gaps in the commercial network as well as providing revenue support on commercial routes for the much-needed capacity growth during morning and afternoon peak hours.
- 3.18 Further BSIP funded enhancements to increase the frequency of B&H Buses commercial and socially and economically necessary bus services to a value of about £2m are under consideration, subject to resources and priorities and the agreement of the DfT
- 3.19 B&H Buses are currently in receipt of subsidies annually from the Bus Service Improvement Plan comprising of discounted bus fare support, socially and economically necessary enhancements to bus routes and frequencies, marketing and publicity, extended customer service opening hours and an additional dedicated civil enforcement officer enforcing bus stop obstruction. This is in addition to capital schemes improving bus priority on the highway network which benefits their operations. Total values are provided within the Part 2 report.
- 3.20 During the development stage of the BSIP Delivery Plan for 2025-26, operators were requested to submit recommendations for schemes which they believed would help to achieve BSIP targets. These are usually revenue-based schemes, which provide financial support to a project which would be unprofitable commercially but offer benefits to bus use.
- 3.21 All schemes proposed by operators are considered to align with BSIP targets, delivering improved journey times and reliability for passengers, which is expected drive patronage growth and passenger satisfaction with the network.
- 3.22 The future of devolution should have a positive impact on bus services in the city.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 The option of paying operators using the DfT calculator rates was considered but discounted for to the reasons explained in this report.
- 4.2 The submission of a BSIP Delivery Plan for 2025-26 and a refreshed BSIP (published no earlier than April 2024) is a condition for the release of the £9.279 million Bus Grant for 2025-26 with no alternative options.
- 4.3 The development of the draft BSIP programme also included a consideration of a range of schemes. Of particular consideration were fare offers which might improve the affordability of bus travel within the city. This included an evaluation of the cost of maintaining a £2 bus fare cap. However initial forecasts suggested that this option would be highly

unaffordable to the council, and targeted fare offers would provide a more affordable option in delivering value for money.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 A wide range of key stakeholders were consulted upon for the original BSIP document in 2021. This included bus operators, local politicians, representatives of disabled people, representatives of bus/transport user groups and other organisational representatives such as education and business.
- 5.2 As the 2025-26 BSIP Programme is considered as a continuation of ongoing work to deliver against priorities outlined in the 2021 BSIP, a full consultation is not a statutory requirement. This is in line with guidance issued by the Department for Transport
- 5.3 The timescales required to develop a new programme for the 2025-26 BSIP funding tranche have necessitated a streamlined consultation process. An initial draft programme has been developed between Transport team leads within the City Infrastructure Department.
- 5.4 The views of current bus operators in Brighton & Hove, as well as Brighton & Hove Bus Watch, were heard at the Enhanced Partnership meeting on 07/02/2025, with a formal request for comments on a draft 2025-26 BSIP programme shared on 31/01/2025
- 5.5 No consultation was undertaken for the Concessionary Fares negotiations.

6. Financial implications

The Council approved a budget for Concessionary Fares payments to operators in 2024/25 of £9.862m, this is showing a pressure in 24/25 of £0.365m and reported as part of the Targeted Budget Monitoring (TBM) process. Following the negotiations took that place a fixed deal was agreed in January for 24/25.

Service pressure have been requested as part of the budget setting process for 25/26 financial year reflecting current deals and potential uplifts in the new year to ensure the service operates within budget. Expenditure as part of BSIP Delivery Plan will be funded by the 2025/26 Bus Grant. Any significant variations will be reported as part of the council's TBM process.

Name of finance officer consulted: John Lack Date consulted 18/2/25

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The Council operates its concessionary fares scheme in accordance with the Transport Acts 1985 and 2000, the Travel Concession (Eligibility) Act 2002, the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007 and the Mandatory Travel Concession (England) Regulations 2011. The provision of a

concessionary travel scheme in accordance with the national minimum is a statutory duty. There is discretion for councils to provide a scheme that extends the entitlement of services over and above the national minimum. The statutory framework for travel concessions does not stipulate a minimum or maximum duration for an individual scheme. It is for the travel concession authority (i.e. the Council) to propose a start and end date, and to seek agreement with the bus operator over the length of this term.

- 7.2 The BSIP programme will constitute part of the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme that is in place and has to be implemented in accordance with the requirements of the Transport Act 2000 and the Bus Services Act 2017

Name of lawyer consulted: David Fairfield Date consulted: 19/2/2025

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 Concessionary travel passes help passholders access services throughout the city and live independent lives, particularly those without a private vehicle.
- 8.2 Bus services are disproportionately used by those on lower incomes, younger and older people and people with disabilities. The BSIP will enhance bus services in the city, including fare offers delivering affordability and vital supported bus services amongst other schemes.
- 8.3 An Equality Impact and Outcome Assessment (EIA) was undertaken for the original BSIP in 2021. As the 2025-26 BSIP Delivery Plan is considered as a continuation of ongoing work to deliver against priorities outlined in the 2021 BSIP, an updated EIA is not considered to be required.

9. Sustainability implications

- 9.1 The provision of concessionary travel passes encourages older person and disabled pass holders to use the bus rather than their own vehicles, reducing congestion and per capita emissions of pollutants and carbon. Similarly, improvements to bus services in the city will encourage greater modal shift away from the private car for all resident groups, encouraging sustainable travel and reducing transport related emissions.

10. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 10.1 The provision of concessionary travel passes support older person and disabled pass holders to be more active and supports their wellbeing through increased social interaction particularly if they don't have private means of transport
- 10.2 Enhancements to bus service provision through the BSIP will also facilitate easier and more reliable access for all residents to healthcare providers and leisure opportunities. Bus travel encourages healthier lifestyles by

encouraging regular physical activity in walking to and from bus stops, as well as reducing private car-related emissions.

11.0 Conclusion

- 11.1 The fixed deal offers that have been accepted by bus operators for concessionary fares payment in the city are considered to be reasonable and sustainable in terms of council finances and meet the principles of 'no better no worse off' for the operator.
- 11.2 The Bus Service Improvement Plan programme for FY25-26 builds upon the success of the original grant-funded programme delivered across 2022 to 2025. A range of schemes have been identified alongside operators as part of the Enhanced Partnership which deliver against council priorities and BSIP targets to encourage a more inclusive and attractive public transport system for residents and visitors, and with these priorities and targets.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

- 1. 2025-26 BSIP Delivery Plan

Brighton & Hove City Council Bus Service Improvement Delivery Plan 2025-26

Part 1 Report

Category of scheme/measure	Name of scheme/measure	Additional description of scheme/measure (including intended beneficial outcomes)	Target delivery date	Funding Type			Other funding sources
				Capital	Revenue	Source	
Bus service support/ network development	Service improvements from the north	Continuation of joint project with West Sussex County Council improving frequency and operational hours improvements on the 273 and 17 routes, better connecting nearby settlements into the city centre by bus	01/04/2025		X	Previous years' DfT BSIP funding	Joint funding with West Sussex County Council
Bus service support/ network development	Socially Necessary Services	Continued support for socially necessary services which fill gaps in the commercial network and ensure all residents have a high quality provision of public transport (16,47,52,37/37B)	01/04/2025		X	Previous years' DfT BSIP funding	
Bus service support/ network development	Breeze Bus Services	Continued support for the socially necessary 77,78,79 bus services to the South Downs, including year round weekday services to key educational destination at Stanmer Park. Drives equality of access to key leisure destination for residents and visitors	01/04/2025		X	Previous years' DfT BSIP funding	
Bus service support/ network development	Route 21 enhancement	Continued support for a socially necessary service, which links an underserved corridor into the city centre	01/04/2025		X	Previous years' DfT BSIP funding	
Bus service support/network development	Express Services	Revenue support continuing on the success of the 1X with higher frequency operation, as well as support for a new service along the A23 corridor. Supporting faster journey times and punctuality, as well as delivering more capacity on the overall network, which will drive patronage growth particularly in suburban areas	01/07/2026		X	2025-26 Bus Grant & Previous years' DfT BSIP funding	
Bus stops/ stations/ interchanges	Bus Stop Strengthening	This will re-open high-frequency bus stops which have been closed due to warping of the surface, returning the convenience of services to passengers who can board/disembark closer to where they desire	01/02/2026	X	X	2025-26 Bus Grant	
Improved information, marketing	RTPI - Interchanges and Modernisation	Improvements to passenger information at key bus stop locations including Churchill Square and Valley Gardens	01/01/2026	X		2025-26 Bus Grant	
Bus priority infrastructure	Bus Detection at signals - Phase 2	Continuation of project identifying and installing bus detection technology at key junctions to improve journey times on busy corridors	31/03/2026	X		2025-26 Bus Grant	
Other infrastructure	Reinforcing surfaces on key bus corridors	Reinforcement of the carriageway on key high-frequency bus corridors will improve passenger safety and comfort, and guarantee against future lane closures. On A23 Preston Park, Western Road, Valley Gardens	31/03/2026	X	X	2025-26 Bus Grant	
Bus stops/ stations/ interchanges	Accessible Bus Stops - Phase 2	Upgrading bus stops across the city to provide dropped kerbs, ramps, layout improvements and crossing facilities, making bus travel easier for more residents	31/03/2026	X	X	Previous years' DfT BSIP funding	
Bus priority infrastructure	A259 Marine Drive/High Street Junction (White Horse): Rottingdean	A feasibility study to look at how this junction could be improved to reduce bus journey times and improve reliability including accessibility improvements resulting in benefits to all road users	31/09/2026	X	X	2025-26 Bus Grant	
Bus priority infrastructure	B2066 Western Road (near Waitrose) Red Route	Feasibility study for red route on the B2066 and bus boarding improvements at the junction with a contribution to implementation if agreed to proceed. The scheme could reduce bus journey times and improve reliability including accessibility improvements resulting in benefits to all road users	31/09/2026	X	X	2025-26 Bus Grant	
Bus priority infrastructure	A2010 Queens Road: North Road to North Street	Feasibility study for the red route on A2010 with a contribution to implementation if agreed to proceed. The scheme could reduce bus journey times and improve reliability including accessibility improvements resulting in benefits to all road users	31/09/2026	X	X	2025-26 Bus Grant	
Bus priority infrastructure	A2010 West Street: Closure to the south of 'The Clock Tower' junction	A feasibility study to look at how this junction could be improved to reduce bus journey times and improve reliability including accessibility improvements resulting in benefits to all road users	31/09/2026	X	X	2025-26 Bus Grant	
Bus service support/ network development	Support on routes where poor on-time performance is evident	Improvement of punctuality on Route 23, 24, 26, 46, and improvement of frequency on Route 28, which will provide a more reliable service for passengers	01/06/2025		X	Previous years' DfT BSIP funding	

Brighton & Hove City Council Bus Service Improvement Delivery Plan 2025-26

Part 1 Report

Category of scheme/measure	Name of scheme/measure	Additional description of scheme/measure (including intended beneficial outcomes)	Target delivery date	Funding Type			Other funding sources
				Capital	Revenue	Source	
Simpler/more affordable fares	Targeted Fare Reductions - Maintain City Saver at £6 for FY25-26	Continuation of £6 day citySAVER and £25 week citySAVER offers to drive affordability for regular travellers and patronage growth	01/04/2025		X	2025-26 Bus Grant	
Simpler/more affordable fares	Simpler Fares - (citySAVER, TOTO Breeze Zone Expansion)	Continuation of £6 cap on daily Tap-On, Tap-Off travel in the city and South Downs / £25 cap on weekly Tap-On, Tap-Off in the city and South Downs to drive affordability for regular travellers and patronage growth	01/04/2025		X	2025-26 Bus Grant	
Simpler/more affordable fares	Extend Youth Fare Offers FY25-26	Continuation of free accompanied U19 travel / 50p unaccompanied U19 off-peak travel for U19s, supporting families with cost of living and driving patronage growth	01/04/2025		X	2025-26 Bus Grant	
Simpler/more affordable fares	Short Hops fare offer for December 2025 - January 2026	Continuation of discount to selected one-stage trip fares down to £1, supporting residents with the cost of living	01/04/2025		X	2025-26 Bus Grant	
Simpler/more affordable fares	Fares offers (TBC)	Budget remainder to spent on either a reduction in the £2.80 fare stage, student fare offers or other fare offers, dependent on emerging reimbursement forecasts for other fare offers	01/09/2025		X	2025-26 Bus Grant	
Development of future proposals	City-wide red Route strategy	Feasibility study by consultants, identifying policy and strategy as well as further priority areas for red routes	31/12/2025		X	Previous years' DfT BSIP funding	
Development of future proposals	Pedestrian footfall study	Assists in targeted marketing schemes and informs the outcomes of the Wayfinding Maps Scheme	31/09/2025		X	2025-26 Bus Grant	Joint Funding with Visit Brighton
Other	Dedicated traffic contraventions officer	Enforcement officer tasked with monitoring problem parking/waiting areas to improve the movement of buses, until July 2025 as Red Routes have replaced the need for this	01/04/2025		X	Previous years' DfT BSIP funding	
Improved information, marketing	Marketing campaigns	Supporting new BSIP schemes, existing BSIP schemes, and upskilling operators of contracted services to increase patronage	31/03/2026		X	Previous years' DfT BSIP funding	
Improved information, marketing	Marketing - Betterpoints (continuation)	Marketing campaign encouraging modal shift towards sustainable transport	01/04/2025		X	Previous years' DfT BSIP funding	
Safety and security	EDI Project	Continuation of Better Buses for All equalities research project	01/04/2025		X	Previous years' DfT BSIP funding	
LTA delivery/ admin costs	Data collection and collation consultants	Reimbursement and forecasting for fare offers, allows these projects to run	31/03/2026		X	2025-26 Bus Grant	
Improved information, marketing	Customer services extended opening hours (NTCSS)	Keeping operator customer service open earlier in the morning, later in the evening and on weekends, improving passenger experience	01/04/2025		X	Previous years' DfT BSIP funding	
Development of future proposals	Franchising feasibility study	Study to be undertaken by consultants, exploring the feasibility and viability of bus reform in the city following the Bus Services Bill	31/11/2025		X	Previous years' DfT BSIP funding	
Development of future proposals	Park and Ride feasibility study	Work undertaken with support from consultants to determine optimal locations for Park & Ride in the city	31/07/2025		X	Previous years' DfT BSIP funding	
LTA delivery/ admin costs	Programme Management	Additional resource requirement to manage the BSIP programme effectively	31/03/2026		X	Previous years' DfT BSIP funding	

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 177

Subject: Large Panel System Blocks Programme Update

Date of meeting: 20 March 2025

Report of: Cabinet Member for Housing & New Homes

Contact Officer: Interim Director of Housing Regeneration

Tel: 01273 291132

Email: darren.levy@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: Hollingdean & Five Ways, Kemptown, Whitehawk & Marina

Key Decision: Yes

Reason(s) Key: Expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the expenditure of the City Council's budget, namely above £1,000,000. Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards).

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the steps the council has taken to ensure that the 8 large panel system (LPS) blocks within its portfolio remain safe for habitation, while long term options for the buildings are explored.
- 1.2 This paper provides a mechanism for handling properties formerly bought under the right to buy where leaseholders would prefer to sell back to the council now and outlines our current approach for secure tenants wishing to move. The proposed approach contributes to the delivery of the strategic outcomes in the Council Plan 2023 to 2027 by ensuring that we are a fair and inclusive city.

2. Recommendations

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

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 As part of our responsibilities under the Building Safety Act 2022 and Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 we commissioned detailed structural surveys on buildings within our housing stock. Structural engineering experts Ridge

were employed to carry out investigations into each of the blocks. It was reported that the eight blocks do not meet the current safety standards, in relation to their ability to resist a disproportionate collapse in the case of an explosion or large fire. Interim measures were put in place to ensure that the buildings remain safe to occupy whilst longer term decisions are taken on the future of the blocks.

3.2 The eight council blocks are:

- Dudney Lodge and Nettleton Court in Hollingdean
- Falcon Court, Heron Court, Kestrel Court, Kingfisher Court and Swallow Court in North Whitehawk
- St James House in Kemptown.

3.3 Whilst there is no immediate danger to the buildings and measures such as a ban on gas cannisters and barbecues have long been in place, acting on the advice of independent consultants we have taken a number of steps to introduce additional safety measures, to ensure all 8 LPS blocks remain safe for residents to continue living in. These include:

- A temporary ban on e-bikes and e-scooters in all areas of the building
- Alternative e-bike and e-scooter storage with an electrical supply has been installed away from all 8 blocks.
- Monitored CCTV 16 hours a day with onsite security providing eight-hour security for the 8 LPS blocks to mitigate the risk of banned items being taken into the building.
- Chapel Street car park, under St James House remains closed.
- A temporary halt to all vehicles parking underneath the building remains in place for the foreseeable future at the North Whitehawk blocks.
- A temporary suspension of the use of the garages behind Nettleton Court and Dudney Lodge remains in place for the foreseeable future.
- Temporary heating plant has been put in place for St James House to allow for the relocation of the communal heating supply from under the block in the car park.
- Removal of refuse / bin storage areas from under the blocks and regular clearance of bulk waste.
- Resources are now in place to provide 7 day a week, 9am to 5pm floor walks to support fire health & safety and to maintain clear common ways, including entrance and exit ways across all 8 blocks. Housing Estates Service staff are undertaking these floor walks during the week. SES Security at weekends.

3.4 The housing team have completed enhanced tenancy visits to every household, (apart from two where access is being followed up), living in the 8 LPS blocks. On completing visits, the team follow up on any urgent issues and referrals that have come up during the visit. They remain in regular liaison with the fire service, sharing information on vulnerable tenants who may require assistance, including around issues of fire safety, hoarding and evacuation. These visits have been well received by residents.

3.5 An 'Individual Cabinet Member Non-Key Decision' was taken in December 2024, to allow for homes that have become empty to be used as temporary accommodation to house people to whom the council owes a housing duty. This will be reviewed again to the point that the future programme for the blocks is agreed on. These properties are being sensitively let to households

- who are currently being accommodated in higher cost temporary accommodation.
- 3.6 24/7 security was initially implemented in order to manage the risk of banned items being brought into the building. To manage the risk and lower the cost, CCTV systems have been upgraded so they can be monitored from a central point in real time. This means security staff at the entrances to all the LPS blocks are no longer required 24 hours a day.
- 3.7 We are also continuing to engage and communicate with residents through 'drop in' events and regular newsletters, including information on evacuation procedures, storage for e-bikes and e-scooters, and planned repairs and fire safety works. We continue to discuss our ongoing management and actions with both the Building Safety Regulator and the Regulator of Social Housing.
- 3.8 We continue to work on our plans to establish what happens to the eight buildings in the longer term and are aiming for a Cabinet paper to be brought forward in June 2025 with recommendations regarding future options for the LPS blocks. These options will be underpinned by the main principles of creating a net increase in social housing, ensuring place making plans that create diverse communities through mixed tenures and that the plans for the future are financially sustainable. We will take a resident-led approach to the options for refurbishment or regeneration of each of the blocks, to ensure we maximize the potential of any proposal and will carry out full consultations with residents.
- 3.9 Since residents were advised about the issues with the blocks in July 2024 we have continued to 'buy back' properties with vacant possession from leaseholders within the blocks under our existing Home Purchase Policy. Leaseholder concerns have been raised due to the impact of the current situation on the valuation of their properties together with their inability to sell on the open market as buyers are unable to secure mortgages. These impacts also mean resident leaseholders are unable to move home, which they may wish to do, for a variety of reasons e.g. for work or to fulfil caring responsibilities. Although a decision hasn't been made on the long-term future programme for each block, the likelihood is that residents will need to move out either for a period of time for the works to be carried out, or on a permanent basis. This makes it highly probable that we will need to buy back leasehold interests in the blocks in order to have vacant units. As a result, consideration has been given to a longer-term approach to handling properties which leaseholders of properties formerly bought under right to buy would prefer to sell back to the council now. This policy will be reviewed once the options for the blocks are more developed.
- 3.10 It is proposed that for those leaseholders who wish to sell their properties now that a buy-back offer separate from the Home Purchase Policy should be put in place. This will help improve the situation for those residents and provide empty homes that the council could use as good quality temporary accommodation.

Home Purchase Policy – Large Panel System blocks buy-back offer

- 3.11 The offer would be entered into voluntarily by both the council and the long leaseholders and should be viewed as an offer being made under exceptional circumstances. The advantage of offering to buy back former right to buy leaseholder's properties is that it demonstrates the council's

commitment to treating leaseholders fairly and equally and is providing leaseholders with genuine choice in extraordinary circumstances.

- 3.12 The eight blocks currently have 44 leaseholders of properties formerly bought under right to buy made up of resident and non-resident homeowners.

Size of property	Residential Leaseholders	Non-Residential Leaseholders	Total
1 bed	4	3	7
2 beds	19	18	37
Total	23	21	44

- 3.13 We currently have an existing Home Purchase Policy in place to buy back former council owned homes purchased under right to buy. This sets out a range of situations when we will buy back homes and our approach but the presenting circumstances at these eight blocks require a separate and bespoke approach. The proposed approach is set out below and the Corporate Director of Homes & Adult Social Care in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Housing & New Homes will finalise the details of how the scheme will operate.
- 3.14 The council will offer to purchase a property based on an independent open market valuation. The valuation will be based on the condition of the property and block prior to the identification of structural defects. Leaseholders will also be invited if they choose to appoint their own surveyor to act on their behalf and to agree the value of the property through negotiation when an offer is made.
- 3.15 In addition, the council will offer a financial package which will differ depending on whether a leaseholder is resident (where the resident has been living at the property as their main home for the prior 12 months) or non-resident (not living at the property for the prior 12 months). This will be in line with the Compensation Code (which applies to the buyback of properties impacted by regeneration schemes). We will offer a 10% uplift on the agreed open market valuation for resident leaseholders and a 7.5% uplift for non-resident leaseholders as the home loss payment.
- 3.16 For resident leaseholders, we will provide additional financial assistance by compensating reasonable disturbance costs relating to their move including:
- The fees of their own independent surveyor (if appointed)
 - The leaseholder's reasonable legal fees and stamp duty for an onward purchase to the value of the leaseholder's existing property
 - Mortgage redemption fees where necessary and appropriate
 - Removal costs
- 3.17 For non-resident leaseholders, we will provide financial assistance by paying reasonable disturbance costs including
- The fees of their own independent surveyor (if appointed)
 - The leaseholder's reasonable legal fees and stamp duty for an onward purchase to the value of the leaseholders existing property

- 3.18 In addition if the leaseholder has purchased through the right to buy scheme and is required to pay back the discount in part or in full, they will not be required to repay the discount.

Interim Tenant Transfer Approach

- 3.19 We are carrying out an assessment of housing need for each household with a secure tenancy in the 8 LPS blocks. We already know which households have a live housing register application. Carrying out home visits as outlined at 3.4, has also enabled us to identify households with a housing need who are not on the housing register. We are reaching out to residents to offer support where help may be needed to complete a housing register application
- 3.20 While work is underway to assess the future options for each of the blocks, we will continue to work with tenants who have an immediate housing need, to assist them in finding more suitable accommodation. Where people are unlikely to be successful in securing a transfer through bidding via the choice-based lettings process, a direct offer of a transfer may be made. Support and assistance are being tailored to the needs of individual households.
- 3.21 Once the long-term plans and programme of work for each of the blocks are established and approved, we will consider any wider future lettings strategies as appropriate.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 To continue to utilise the existing Home Purchase Policy to purchase homes bought under right to buy at a market value without the additional financial package. However, given the difficulty that leaseholders now have selling on the open market it is reasonable to offer the additional financial package alongside the market value at this early stage to ensure leaseholders are not disadvantaged by approaching the council early. This policy will also incentivise leaseholders to sell their properties to the Council, which will facilitate any regeneration or refurbishment programme.
- 4.2 Once a decision has been made on the future of the blocks and the programme of work required, we will review our strategy with regard to support we provide to tenants living there. Any plan will be carried out sensitively and in full consultation with tenants.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 The offer to have a clear mechanism to buy back properties has been a direct response to concerns raised from leaseholders collectively and individually. Public meetings have been held for residents in the affected blocks and leaseholders have urged the council to create a clear policy.
- 5.2 Once a policy is agreed further information will be provided to all leaseholders within the eight blocks.
- 5.3 We will explain to the residents

- What the proposal is and why it is being recommended
- What this will mean for them
- How we will keep communicating throughout the process
- Next steps

5.4 We understand that future decisions concern people's homes and communities and that uncertainty about the future of blocks may be disruptive and stressful. We are committed to keeping the people living in the blocks, updated as plans develop and to listening to their feedback and views

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 An overall budget envelope of £18.8m across the next 5 years is available for the acquisitions of leasehold homes and initial feasibility works for the LPS blocks, as reported to Full Budget Council on 27 February 2025. Of this an amount assumed for buying properties back within that budget is £13.6m, which includes the cost of home loss and disturbance payments. In addition to that a further £3.2m for on-costs and allowing for a contingency on costs to cover any unknowns over that period of time.
- 6.2 There will likely be some variation in this amount depending on any future legal challenge or if market value increases. This amount has been set aside in the LPS budget line over the next 5 years and will be funded in whatever year the acquisition occurs. It is expected to be funded by borrowing/other sources. Any significant variations will be reported to Cabinet as part of the capital budget monitoring process.

Name of finance officer consulted: Craig Garoghan Date consulted 14/02/25

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 Section 120(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 ("1972 Act") 120(1) authorises the Council to acquire any land by agreement for the purposes of a) statutory functions or b) for the benefit, improvement or development of its area. Under Section 120(2) of the 1972 Act the Council may acquire by agreement any land for any purpose for which they are authorised by the 1972 Act or any other act to acquire land, notwithstanding that the land is not immediately required for the purpose; and, until it is required for that purpose, it may be used for the purpose of any of the Council's functions. This report confirms the intended purchases for the discharge of its homelessness duties under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and that the purchases will facilitate the future regeneration or refurbishment of the LPS blocks. Given the intended housing purposes, the Council may also rely on Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 when purchasing these properties. The Council may also rely on its general power of competence under the Localism Act 2011 Section 1 of the Act which lays down the basic principle that the Council has power to do anything that an individual generally may do, subject to the restrictions and limitations which are specified in the Act.
- 7.2 Whilst there is no legal duty on the Council to put in place such a policy at this stage, should vacant possession of the blocks be required for regeneration or refurbishment in the future, the CPO rules are likely to

become relevant when seeking to acquire the properties which are the subject of this report.

- 7.3 The Council will have obligations towards those who may be displaced by redevelopment schemes should this be confirmed as such. These obligations are contained in legislation, including the Land Compensation Act 1973. The Land Compensation Act 1973 requires persons who are to be displaced from land to be provided with compensation. Disturbance payments are also available to those who do not qualify for the statutory compensation and are to cover reasonable costs of moving home.
- 7.4 The policy outlined in this report should align with the CPO regime to facilitate any future Council plans for redevelopment or refurbishment. Based on the information given, there is not currently a conflict – however, as the policy is developed there will need to be further analysis.

Name of lawyer consulted: Siobhan Fry Date consulted 06/02/25.

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 In making the offer to buy back leaseholder's properties and/or in assisting people with a housing need to transfer to a more suitable home, the council must have due regard for the possible effects of such a policy on any person sharing a protected characteristic in order to discharge its public sector equality duty.
- 8.2 This policy is offered equally across all long leaseholders in the eight blocks with homes formerly purchased under the Right to Buy. By offering a financial package this will help ensure leaseholders are not financially disadvantaged by selling the property and provides an opportunity to purchase an alternative property.
- 8.3 Support and assistance for tenants who are transferring to more suitable accommodation will be tailored to their individual needs.

9. Sustainability implications

- 9.1 There are none.

10. Health and wellbeing implications

- 10.1 Having a clear buy back policy will support leaseholders to have choice at this early stage. For those concerned about the future of their homes this policy could have a positive impact on their health and wellbeing.

Other Implications

11. Procurement implications

- 11.1 There are none.

12. Crime & disorder implications:

- 12.1 There are none.

13. Conclusion

- 13.1 Putting in place options for tenants and leaseholders whilst decisions are made on the future of the blocks provides them with real choice in the face of extraordinary circumstances. The proposed approach contributes to the delivery of the strategic outcomes in the Council Plan 2023 to 2027 by ensuring that we are a fair and inclusive city.

Supporting Documentation

- 1 [Home Purchase Policy](#)

Appendices

None

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 178

Subject: Corporate Debt Management Policy

Date of meeting: 20 March 2025

Report of: Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Service Transformation

Contact Officer: Name: Graham Bourne
Tel: 01273 291800
Email: graham.bourne@brighthon-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

1 Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 The council's Corporate Debt Management Policy sets out the council's ethical approach to effectively collecting income and the recovery of outstanding amounts due to the organisation.
- 1.2 The council's Corporate Debt Management Policy is reviewed annually to ensure it reflects public sector best practice. This year it is recommended that the policy is significantly restructured and updated to reflect latest research evidence and ethical collection practice to provide assurance that, while the council is vigorous in performing its duty to collect public debt, it is equally diligent in doing so fairly and proportionately in keeping with its stated ethical principles.

2 Recommendations

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

3 Context and background information

- 3.1 The council has a legal duty and responsibility to ensure that it collects income and recovers debt efficiently and effectively to fulfil financial responsibilities to citizens and maximise its capacity to provide local services.
- 3.2 The Corporate Debt Management Policy aims to promote and support best practice debt management processes across all of the council's main income collection hubs to ensure the council minimises debt and maximises rates of collection. The policy aims to ensure that all collection processes are compliant with legislation and, additionally, for all stages of collection the council adopts an approach that is fair and ethical, with a consistent approach to assisting customers who are experiencing financial difficulty.

- 3.3 In creating and maintaining the policy, officers regularly monitor the policies produced and updated by other authorities and monitor pilot approaches. and research, including case studies provided by the Local Government Association. The re-writing of the council's policy draws on progressions and refinement of other authorities' approaches to ensure Brighton and Hove remains at the forefront of best practice.
- 3.4 The technology that enables the council to effectively contact its customers and monitor and manage its debt portfolio is also continuously changing. As it does so, the way households respond, and their expectations of the service provided changes too. The policy has been updated to support the council's adoption of new technologies while ensuring the needs of every customer is still considered.
- 3.5 The policy supports the progression of using data analysis to understand individual household circumstances, assess their ability to affordably meet their financial obligations, identify potential entitlements to benefits and prioritise where support and advice can be most effectively applied. Intervening early in the debt recovery process is not only beneficial to those individual households requiring support but also through establishing sustainable repayment arrangements ultimately results in better collection performance.
- 3.6 The policy clearly defines in what circumstances debt will be escalated and the controls in place to ensure all enforcement action, whether action by the council or agencies on its behalf, operate in full compliance with the law and relevant regulations and fully comply with the ethical requirements of the policy.
- 3.7 The policy demonstrates the council's commitment to supporting Council Plan priorities, particularly to contribute to a fair and inclusive city and applying a one council, consistent approach across the council to debt collection and recovery.
- 3.8 In summary, the main changes in this update and revision are:
- Ensuring that in-house and external debt collection practices, including enforcement agents, include processes to identify hardship or vulnerabilities at the earliest possible stage;
 - Note that the council will continue the practice of not using enforcement agents or taking control of goods for people on Council Tax Reduction (i.e. on welfare benefits) and those identified through new processes to be in hardship;
 - To reconfigure signposting and in-house support to ensure hardship and vulnerability can be appropriately supported including advice regarding benefit entitlements, financial management, debt management options such as Breathing Space, and welfare/health support;
 - Increasingly, using new technologies to gather and analyse data to filter, segment and prioritise escalated debt so appropriate action or support can be put in place;
 - Assessing the viability of new payment methods and aiming for greater consistency of methods offered across all council debt hubs;

- A greater emphasis on one council working requiring sharing of debt information across debt hubs to provide more holistic support and consideration of multiple debt, subject to data protection limitations.

4 Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 Some authorities maintain the approach that debt and welfare should be considered as separate entities with debt pursued, and payment arrangements dictated without regard to household circumstances. The justification for this is anticipated better in year collection performance, often the main reported measure for debt collection.
- 4.2 However public sector best practice studies support the view that an integrated approach of considering welfare from the very outset of the debt collection process, using data analysis and debt segmentation to match appropriate recovery actions to household circumstances, providing support for households to maximise their income and manage their finances effectively, and giving flexibility to agree affordable and sustainable repayment agreements results in improved ultimate collection performance.
- 4.3 There is a legacy perception that enforcement agents commissioned by the council operate like doorstep bailiff companies. This is not the case, and the agencies commissioned by the council have been through a rigorous procurement process, providing evidence that they have in place necessary training, accreditation, policies and practice that meet the standards set by the council in its debt collection policy and contract specification. They are required to be compliant with the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act and various government National Standards. The enforcement agencies operate on a scale that has enabled them to develop data analytic models and tailored, ethical debt escalation processes that the council could not, without incurring significant additional investment and annual costs, replicate in effectiveness, either in terms of either collection performance or effective welfare identification.

5 Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 The Council's Poverty Reduction Steering Group is working on a corporate welfare strategy. The Corporate Debt board has ensured that the Corporate Debt Management Policy incorporates the Steering Group's identification of best practice in debt collection, that supports the council's strategic objectives and priorities.

6 Financial implications

- 6.1 Each year, the council now collects well over £500 million in taxation, rents and other income from fees & charges. All funding sources, but particularly major tax revenues, support the provision of vital council services for residents of the city as well as providing funding for Police and Fire services. Poor collection policies and performance can therefore have serious impacts on the ability of these public sector organisations to provide and maintain appropriate service levels and standards to meet their statutory duties.
- 6.2 Ensuring that revisions and updates to the Corporate Debt Management Policy are evidence-based is therefore critical to avoid potentially negative impacts on collection performance.

- 6.3 Providing easy and effective ways to pay, including the ability to pay by instalment, along with clear and accessible billing information, and modern

digital services ensures that council processes do not themselves cause collection delays or the build-up of arrears. Using data to identify low income or struggling households and providing early intervention and prevention will further help to avoid arrears build-up and evidence shows should deliver better long term collection performance. The revised policy embeds this approach.

Finance officer consulted: Haley Woollard Date consulted: 14 January 2025

7 Legal implications

- 7.1 There are no legal comments. The policy is structured to comply with legislative requirements. The decision to use a less draconian process is within the decision-making prerogative of the authority.

Legal Officer consulted: Simon Court Date: 14 January 2025.

8 Equalities implications

- 8.1 The equality implications and mitigations are outlined in the Equalities Impact Assessment attached as Appendix 3. This is not a static position and as information and evidence emerge the Corporate Debt Board will ensure the council's debt collection services adapt and improve their accessibility and responsiveness.

9 Sustainability implications

- 9.1 A commitment within the policy to explore further usage of digital and technical solutions contributes to minimising paper correspondence and processes.
- 9.2 Sustainable, affordable, payment arrangements reduce paper intervention and manual processing.
- 9.3 The council's contracts with Enforcement Agents include a requirement for the vehicle's fleet to be transitioned to electric and/or low emission vehicles.

10 Social Value and procurement implications

- 10.1 The contracts with Enforcement Agents have secured funds being contributed to the Council's Fairness fund.

11 Public health implications:

- 11.1 There is an evidenced link between mental health and financial stability. The best practice embedded in the updated Policy and the welfare support structure designed to support it are sensitive to the health issues related to debt. Staff are trained to be aware of potential health issues and possible paths of referral for specialist advice and support.

12 Conclusion

- 12.1 The council aims to improve its collection performance while continuously improving ethical standards and providing comprehensive welfare support, in collaboration with community and voluntary sector partners, to households struggling to manage their debts. The best way of achieving this is by employing evidence-based best practice. This best practice has been incorporated in the latest iteration of the policy for approval by the Cabinet.
- 12.2 The council's Corporate Debt Management Policy provides assurance that the council's debt recovery services are continuously improving, with strategies that align to the Council Plan.

Supporting Documentation

Appendices

1. Relevant Legislation to Debts Included in the Corporate Debt Policy
2. Best Practice – Writing off debts
3. Equality Impact and Outcome Assessment
4. Corporate Debt Management Policy

Corporate Debt Management Policy

Relevant Legislation to Debts Included in the Corporate Debt Policy

The list below shows the legislation that determines income collection, debt recovery and enforcement activities for debts that are included in the Corporate Debt Policy. The legislation listed is not necessarily exhaustive and the council will use any appropriate legal means to collect income or debt:

Council tax hub

Function

Council tax income collection and associated court costs.

Type of debt

Personal

Main legislation:

- The Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations (1992).

Business rates hub

Function

National Non-Domestic Rates collection and associated court costs.

Type of debt

Business

Main legislation

- The Local Government Finance Act (1988).

Benefits overpayments hub

Function

Housing Benefit Overpayments.

Type of debt

Personal.

Main legislation:

- Housing Benefit Regulations (2006)
- Social Security Administration Act (1992)
- Social Security (Overpayment and Recovery) Regulations (2013)
- Welfare Reform Act (2012)

Corporate collection team hub

Function: All service income and debt not collected by other hubs, including:

- commercial property rents
- life Events charges
- library service charges
- planning and Building Control fees
- licence fees
- highways fees and fines (excludes Parking)
- garage and other service charges
- trading Standards and Environmental Health charges
- educational facilities and lettings charges
- Business Improvement District Levy (collected on behalf of the BID company)

Type of debt:

Personal and business.

Main legislation

Generally, recovery is determined by the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (1976).

Some debt is also covered by specific legislation including:

- Commercial Rent and Arrears Recovery Act (2007)
- Licencing Gambling Act (2005)
- Fixed Penalty Notices - Section 444 of the Education Act (1996)
- Section 106 of the Education Inspections Act (2006) - school fines

Housing Temporary Accommodation hub

Function

Rental income collection and recharge debts.

Type of debt

Personal.

Main legislation

- Rent Collection - Landlord and Tenant Act (1985)/Protection of Eviction Act (1977)
- Removal & storage - Sections 211/212, Part VII of Housing Act (1996)

Housing Income Management

Function

Rental income, service charge collection and recharge debt.

Type of debt

Personal.

Main legislation

- Housing Act (1985)
- Arrears & Escalation - Housing Act (1985 & 1986) complemented by Ministry of Justice Pre-Action Protocol for Social Landlords

Parking

Function

Parking fine collection and associated court costs.

Type of debt

Personal and business.

Main legislation

Traffic Management Act (2004)

Adult Social Care Charges hub

Function

Collection of care charges.

Type of debt

Personal and business.

Main legislation

Care Act (2014)

Leaseholder Team hub

Function

Collection of leasehold fees.

Type of debt

Personal.

Main legislation

The Service Charges (Summary of Rights and Obligations, and Transitional Provision) (England) Regulations 2007.

Corporate Debt Policy

Best Practice – Writing off debts

The council recognises that where a debt remains unpaid after exhausting all appropriate recovery methods and is deemed to be irrecoverable, or where there are extenuating circumstances, the debt should be written off.

Establish Clear Debt Recovery Policies

Robust debt recovery policies minimize the need for write-offs. These policies should include effective measures to prevent and manage debt, such as regular monitoring, correct invoicing or billing, and attempting communication with debtors at regular intervals of the recovery process using various channels.

Identify Criteria for Debt Write-Offs

Clearly define the circumstances under which a debt may be considered for write-off. This should include specific criteria based on factors such as the age of the debt (time limited), the debtor's personal and financial situation. These include for example; vulnerability (financial or otherwise), bankruptcy, deceased, absconded or incorrect billing.

Regular Review of Outstanding Debts

Debt hubs should conduct regular reviews of outstanding debts to identify cases that meet the defined criteria for write-off consideration.

Assess the financial situation of the debtor

This can involve gathering information on their income, assets, liabilities, and any other relevant factors. The assessment should consider the debtor's ability to pay the debt. The availability of external and internal data should be sort.

Exhaust All Debt Recovery Options

Before proceeding with a write-off, exhaust all available avenues for debt recovery.

Approval Process

Establish a clear, documented approval process for writing off debts.

Document All Decisions

Maintain detailed documentation of the decision-making process for each debt write-off. This should include the rationale for the write-off, supporting evidence, and if relevant, any correspondence.

Continuous Improvement

Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the debt recovery and write-off processes. Identify areas for improvement, such as enhancing debt prevention strategies,

consider the use of the latest in technological advances in customer contact. Adopting a culture of continuous improvement helps minimize the need for future write-offs.

Legal

Ensure that all debt write-offs comply with relevant legal and regulatory requirements.

It is important to note that debt write-offs should be approached judiciously, considering the impact on public funds and the council's overall financial stability. The goal should always be to recover debts wherever possible, while recognizing that there are circumstances where writing off debts is a necessary step in managing the council's financial affairs.

Equality Impact and Outcome Assessment (EIA)

EIAs make services better for everyone and support value for money by getting services right first time.

EIAs enable us to consider all the information about a service, policy or strategy from an equalities perspective and then action plan to get the best outcomes for staff and service-users¹. They analyse how all our work as a council might impact differently on different groups². They help us make good decisions and evidence how we have reached these decisions³.

See end notes for full guidance

For further support or advice please contact:

- **BHCC: Communities, Equality and Third Sector Team on ext 2301**
- **CCG: Engagement and Equalities team (Jane Lodge/Meg Lewis)**

Title of EIA	Corporate Debt Policy	ID No.FR13	
Team/Department	Corporate Debt Team. Welfare Revenues & Benefits Support		
Focus of EIA	<p>The Corporate Debt Policy defines the council approach to collecting debt. The policy applies to the activities of all the services that have income or debt collecting function. The council has the dual responsibility to collect income to pay for services and to have appropriate regard for every household/business in terms of affordability, sustainability, vulnerability, and hardship.</p> <p>This assessment is not a duplication of the EIAs that separately exist in some of the service areas or in relation to some of the mitigations that the council delivers (such as discretionary payments). It concentrates on the specific debt collection activities and considerations stated in the revised 2025 Policy, particularly in relation to protected characteristics groups defined in the Equalities Act 2010 and other relevant groups.</p>		

The Corporate Debt Board meets regularly to bring together representatives from all the relevant service areas to ensure the principles of the policy are effectively maintained. There are escalation routes in the council to access support for households struggling with their debt repayment responsibilities. The main provision of this support sits within the 'Welfare Framework', a network of internal and voluntary sector services that combine to provide a comprehensive range of support.

The overall effectiveness of the combined efforts of the council and voluntary sector is managed through attendance of the Advice Services Network and Advice Partnership meetings.

This assessment breaks down debt into two types: Household Debt and Business Debt. This assessment primarily concentrates on the former. Whilst there is less consideration of Business Debt because expenditure is normally considered as something that should be anticipated in a business model, it is recognised that there is a link particularly in relation to small businesses and individual financial hardship.

Because households/businesses move out of the area, debts are incurred by households/businesses that are outside the area. Also, some businesses have central offices outside the area. The council conducts a considerable amount of debt collection activity across the country and sometimes beyond. Where this is the case, the debt impacts are less measurable and the mitigations available are limited. However, the principles within the policy, particularly in relation to affordability, still apply.

1. Update on previous EIA and outcomes of previous actions⁹

What actions did you plan last time? (List them from the previous EIA)	What improved as a result? What outcomes have these actions achieved?	What <u>further</u> actions do you need to take? (add these to the Action plan below)
<p>The best practice principles outlined in the Corporate Debt Policy are designed to ensure there is a structure for considering the appropriate actions to take to recover a debt without placing households in hardship. The welfare framework provides specific consideration for the support that can be put into place to help household address their budgeting pressures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved analysis and segmentation of customer data to inform ethical collection strategies. • Use of digital technology to enable early intervention and avoid escalation and further costs. • Proactive outbound contact with customers to discuss sustainable repayment plans. • Development and introduction of corporate debt database working towards a single view of citizens debt so that sustainable repayments can be agreed, and the system is aligned with digital MyAccount programme. Currently in test. • Closer working between council's debt hubs to facilitate a single view of a resident's debt where they have multiple council debts. • Corporate debt and welfare approaches aligned and more coordinated so that where there is financial or other vulnerability citizens are referred to support options. • Increased collaboration with community voluntary sector debt advice organisations • Cross government collaboration with HMRC and DWP to enable ethical and proportionate debt collection. To be Business As Usual in 2024/25 • Training approach to debt collection based on principals of fairness for front line teams aligned for debt hubs • Introduction of Standard Financial statement which will be developed and used across all council debt hubs <p><u>Result</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Household Support Fund (which is vital to welfare support function) is currently extended to 31 March 2026. If this is withdrawn or, more likely, the funding model is changed considerably, then this EIA will need revisiting. • Front line staff have and will continue to be provided with Mental health awareness and suicide awareness training. Ensure this training is continued • To be aware of advice documents in debt management published ad hoc by central government, advice sector and other professional bodies • Promote adoption of Standard Financial Statement (SFS) across all debt hubs in council to support ethical and sustainable repayment arrangements for citizens in debt. Add to EIA if successful • Monitor pilot of Economic Abuse Evidence Form project from Money Advice Plus and Surviving Economic Abuse.. Training for this is on 09/08/24 after that a panel made up of reps from all debt hubs will meet every time we get a new submission. Add to EIA if successful • Monitor Special Value from the contracts of the External Enforcement Agents into the Fairness Fund.

<u>Further Actions taken from last EIA 2021</u>		
Complete the roll out of Breathing space regulations -inclusive of Mental health elements	Completed	
Ensure adoption of Standard Financial Statement (SFS) across all debt hubs in council to support ethical and sustainable repayment arrangements for citizens in debt	Added to Further Actions	
The Welfare Rights team will continue to link to the advice services in the city and specifically have provided training to Speak out the advocacy service for people with Learning Difficulties	Funding to March 26. Added to Further Actions	
The Welfare rights team will continue to offer advocacy for people with mental health needs in terms of housing rights, adult social care and with the DWP.	Funding to March 26. Added to Further Actions	
Front line staff have and will continue to be provided with Mental health awareness and suicide awareness training	Added to Further Actions	
Housing Income Advisors to continue to provide support and advice to vulnerable housing tenants who need additional help to engage.	HIMT continue to work on a case by case basis to support vulnerable tenants in debt	
Apply for Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA) with the DWP where vulnerable housing tenants are on Universal Credit.	The impact of UC is being mitigated by setting up APA for citizens experiencing financial hardship. 46% of tenants on UC have an APA in place and they make up 68% of the total arrears.	
We will maintain a face to face service, including home visits, to support people with DHP applications where appropriate	DHP applications are dealt with over the phone currently.	
Provide interpretation service for people in debt	Council continues to offer interpretation service to	

<p>where necessary</p> <p>Work with traveller liaison team to understand if their clients are affected.</p>	<p>support people where English is not their first language, so they understand the options they have if they are in debt to the council and how to get support.</p> <p>Corporate debt team are working with Travellers liaison team to consider the combined debts to the council in respect of the permanent Traveller site residents and options for collection.</p>	
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2. Review of information, equality analysis and potential actions

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts identified from data and feedback (actual and potential)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brighton & Hove has an unusual population compared to the South East and England. Brighton & Hove has a much higher proportion of people aged 19–38 years (33%, 90,100 people) compared to only 24% in the South East and 26% in England. • The difference is most pronounced between the ages 19 to 28 years old. Nearly a fifth of Brighton & Hove's total population (18%, 49,600 people) is aged 19 to 28 compared to only 11% in the South East and 12% in England. There are also fewer people across all ages from the age of 60 years. In Brighton & Hove less than a fifth of the total population (19%, 53,000 people) is aged 60 years or older compared to 25% in the South East and 24% in England. • Brighton & Hove has a relatively large proportion of older people living alone and a higher percentage of older people who are income deprived. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff report that welfare reforms have impacted in terms of debt most significantly on the younger working age population. • For the older pensioner population, the fear is accessibility, exclusion and fixed incomes. • For those with children the problem is finding sustainable work and complimentary childcare as a solution to welfare reform impact/ debt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people over pensionable age are less capable of adjusting their expenditure on food or heating without compromising their health. • Older people over pensionable age are more likely to have a disability or a long term health problem • Young people are less likely to be able to find work and are less aware of or seek the help of support services or discretions. • Young people are more likely to be over-indebted than older age groups and less likely to seek advice • Single people under 35 affected by the welfare reforms have seen large reductions in their entitlement to housing benefit. • Single people under the age of 25 will be living on the lowest out-of-work income and so will be impacted more adversely than older people as shortfalls in Council Tax and Rent will be proportionately more of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best practice principles outlined in the Corporate Debt Policy are designed to ensure there is a structure for considering the appropriate actions to take to recover a debt without placing households in hardship. The welfare framework provides specific consideration for the support that can be put into place to help household address their budgeting pressures. • The following mitigations are applied in addition: • Continue to develop and encourage digital inclusion among all age groups • Housing Income Advisors to continue to provide support and advice to vulnerable housing tenants who need additional help to engage. • Support younger housing tenants through the Better Start Guide. • Apply for Alternative Payment Arrangements
Age..cont'd				

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Over a third of elderly persons live alone, aged 66+. 13,875 people• One in five over the age of 60, 9,900 people live in income deprivation, higher than the national average• Above Info from Brighton & Hove JSNA summary March 2024 Population		their total income.	with the DWP where vulnerable housing tenants are on Universal Credit.
Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts identified from data and feedback (actual and potential)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• advance equality of opportunity,• eliminate discrimination, and• foster good relations

Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The percentage of people living with long-term health conditions increases exponentially with age In 20-24 year olds 74% have no long-term conditions and up to the age of 50 years the majority of people in Brighton & Hove still have no long-term conditions. At 50-54 years, 22% have multiple long-term conditions, rising to 48% of those aged 65-69 years and 81% of those aged 85-89 years • There are 10,735 known households (in receipt of HB or CTR) with at least one member of the household receiving Disability Living Allowance, PIP or Attendance Allowance. • A further 1,656 Households are known to be in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance ESA. 6,963 households in total with one member in receipt of ESA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled people are more likely to have council tax arrears • The majority of people who claim disability benefits are on legacy benefits rather than Universal Credit. • Information suggests people with a learning disability find the most helpful way to communicate is face to face. This isn't always easily accessible, particularly in relation to UC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled people are likely to experience financial difficulties potentially leading to them falling into debt • Higher cost of living for disabled people and parents of disabled children means that the increased shortfalls created by the Welfare Reforms has seen these families disproportionately impacted. • Some disabled people and parents of disabled children will receive extra premiums in housing benefit which might increase the level of their award. • Physical access issues to some advice services and financial products that would enable them to address debts. • Accessibility issues to online services, such as UC, may create income difficulties. It also inhibits access to lower cost products available via the internet. • Households with disabled children under the age of 5 will have caring commitments preventing them from work. • People with a Learning Disability may face more barriers in seeking advice, in budgeting, understanding Welfare Reforms and managing debt, People with learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best practice principles outlined in the Corporate Debt Policy are designed to ensure there is a structure for considering the appropriate actions to take to recover a debt without placing households in hardship. The welfare framework provides specific consideration for the support that can be put into place to help households address their budgeting pressures. • The following mitigations are applied in addition: • We will attempt to maintain a face to face service, including home visits, to support people with DHP applications where appropriate. • Where possible working with agencies, social services and NHS to monitor and feedback the impact to disabled people • When council is procuring advice contracts make sure that accessibility issues and outreach issues are included in contract specification. • Reorganisation of NHS services should make it easier for people with common Mental Health issues such as anxiety and depression to receive help.
Disabilities..cont'd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The percentage of GP registered patients with a long-standing health condition is 52% in Brighton & Hove • Over 17,000 working age adults have a physical disability. • There are 50,900 adults aged 20 years or over in Brighton & Hove recorded as having multiple long- 			

<p>Disabilities..cont'd</p>	<p>term health conditions (two or more) June 2023, just under a quarter of the population (22%) . Just over 19,000 people have both mental and physical health long-term conditions (8%) June 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brighton & Hove has above average levels of mental health issues and higher rates of suicide deaths. 12.9% adults (35,700 people) are on GP Practice Depression register and 4,300 people with severe mental illness (1.3%) 2020/21 • Nearly one in five residents (18.7%, 51,797 people) are disabled • Source Census 2021 and B&H MLTC JSNA 2018 Exec Summary FINAL 		<p>disability often have a representative to help them manage their financial affairs eg; an appointee for benefits</p> <p>Mental Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being in debt may exacerbate anxiety and stress for some people • Potential increase in demand for (already stretched) Mental Health Services. • National studies suggest that people with mental health issues may face disadvantage in terms of diagnosis by non-specialist staff and in relation to non-compliance with reassessment. In the short term, this can lead to additional financial pressure. • People with mental health issues may face more barriers in seeking advice, in budgeting and managing debt. • Maintaining a claim of both ESA and UC require continued engagement and prompt communication management. Some people with anxiety and mental health issues struggle to read or respond to communication, leaving them more open to sanction or ending of their entitlement. • The move from legacy benefits to UC may cause 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will look to identifying those in receipt of DLA who are also eligible for Adult Social Care services and link with care management • Apply for Alternative Payment Arrangements with the DWP where vulnerable housing tenants are on Universal Credit. • The Welfare Rights and Welfare Reform teams support households with issues of disability and long-term ill health to access appropriate disability benefits, supporting with both the application process and through the appeals process. They will also support households with Non-Dependents in receipt of disability benefits claim Carers Allowance, to exempt them from the Benefit Cap. • The Welfare Rights team will continue to link to the advice services in the City and specifically have provided training to Speak out the advocacy service for people with Learning Difficulties. • The Welfare rights team will continue to offer advocacy for people with mental health needs in terms of housing rights, adult social care and with the DWP. • Breathing space legislation
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			several issues and possible reduction to income.	<p>to support people who have mental health conditions will be supported and adhered to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Front line staff have and will continue to be provided with Mental Health awareness and suicide awareness training•
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Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts identified from data and feedback (actual and potential)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one in a hundred residents aged 16+ (1.0%, 2,341 people) identify as Trans (England 0.5%) from 2021 Census 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is limited feedback around transgender issues and debt because of the relatively low numbers. However, evidence from a Trans survey report in the United States in 2015 and the UK Government National LGBT survey in 2019 both showed that transgender people are more likely to be unemployed, in poverty and homeless. • Issues of debt, benefits and access to appropriate housing, employment, advice and financial products are proportionately higher amongst this diversity group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trans people face significant barriers to employment and housing and may face discrimination in the workplace. They are more likely to be on lower incomes and be reliant on benefits. • This may mean they are less able to meet shortfalls between benefit and rent or other debt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best practice principles outlined in the Corporate Debt Policy are designed to ensure there is a structure for considering the appropriate actions to take to recover a debt without placing households in hardship. The welfare framework provides specific consideration for the support that can be put into place to help households address their budgeting pressures. • The following mitigations are applied in addition: • Share DHP/DCTR info with organisations that specifically support people for the transgender community through the Advice Services Network • Where a person's assigned gender differs from their birth gender the Revenue and Benefits service are legally able to reflect this in decisions about housing benefit.

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts identified from data and feedback (actual and potential)	What can you do? All potential actions to: • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were 2,099 live births in 2021 Source ONS • All 3rd and subsequent children born to households after 6th April 2017 are not eligible for further Child Tax Credit or UC child element payments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The period around the birth of a child is one of financial pressure as well as emotional pressure and may be accompanied by difficult decisions in relation to accommodation, work and budgets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women who are pregnant and those with very young children will be less able to seek or increase their working hours, reducing their ability to self-mitigate in light of the reduced income caused by Welfare Reform. • With very young children couples adjust their working hours to account for their childcare arrangements. • A baby does not count in terms of family size until it is born. A family with a pregnant person in it who moves to accommodation of a size which takes into account the expected baby will not receive a level of housing benefit which pays for that property until the baby is born leaving a period of occupation where there • will be a shortfall. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best practice principles outlined in the Corporate Debt Policy are designed to ensure there is a structure for considering the appropriate actions to take to recover a debt without placing households in hardship. The welfare framework provides specific consideration for the support that can be put into place to help household address their budgeting pressures. • The addition of a child may mean accommodation changes for the household that may conflict with timing of benefit awards. In these circumstances DHP/DCTR is considered to address shortfalls.

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts identified from data and feedback (actual and potential)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
Race/ethnicity Including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % in brackets are for England. • From 2021 census; 26% of people are Black or racially minoritised* (27%): • 4.8% Asian or Asian British (10%) • 2.0% Black or Black British (4%) • 4.8% Mixed or multiple ethnic group (3%) • 1.1% Arab (0.6%) • 11.5% White Irish or White other (8%) • Between 2016 and 2019, while white British households had an average income of £518 per week; Black African, British and Caribbean had an average of £408; Bangladeshi households had an average of £365 and Pakistani households had an average of £334. • Over a two-year period between 2016 and 2018, ONS reported that while White British people had an average household wealth (including property, savings and pension) of £590,400 and Indians had £493,800, Black Caribbean people had £379,200; Pakistani 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers who do not consider English as their first language have expressed that they find it easier to overcome language barriers when discussing issues face to face. • Some groups (particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi) are less likely to have bank accounts. This will create a barrier to financial inclusion • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While every attempt is made to produce plain English documents the language around debt can be specialised and difficult to understand particularly if English is not a first language. * • For 9.1% of people, English is not their main language (9%) • 1.0% do not speak English well (1.6%) Source 2021 census • Gypsies and Travellers may be unable to access financial products and advice services as well as being affected by fuel poverty in light of reduced incomes. • Some different cultures will have different approaches to debt. Different types of debt and size of debt affect behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best practice principles outlined in the Corporate Debt Policy are designed to ensure there is a structure for considering the appropriate actions to take to recover a debt without placing households in hardship. The welfare framework provides specific consideration for the support that can be put into place to help household address their budgeting pressures • • The following mitigations are applied in addition: • • To provide interpretation services for persons wishing to make an application for DHP who cannot do so using English language forms • Provide interpretation service for people in debt where necessary • Work with traveller liaison team to understand if their clients are affected.

Race/ethnicity..cont'd	<p>people had £302,100; Black African people had £147,300 and Bangladeshi people had £141,100.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Source Institute Race Relations• Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities have significantly lower levels of savings or assets than White British communities. For every £1 of White British wealth, Pakistani households have around 50p, Black Caribbean around 20p, and Black African and Bangladeshi around 10p• Source Fair4All Finance• In particular, between 2019/20 and 2021/22, around half of people in Pakistani (51%) and Bangladeshi (53%) households lived in poverty, with even higher poverty levels for children in those households (61% and 62%). In comparison, 25% of children in households headed by someone of white ethnicity were in poverty• Source Joseph Rowntree Foundation https://www.jrf.org.uk/uk-poverty-2024-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk			
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Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts identified from data and feedback (actual and potential)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
Religion or belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 55.2% of people have no religion or belief (37%): • 30.9% Christian (46%) • 3.1% Muslim (6.7%) • 0.9% Jewish (0.5%) • 0.9% Buddhist (0.5%) • 0.8% Hindu (1.8%) • 0.1% Sikh (0.9%) • 1.0% Other religion (0.6%) • England figures in brackets. Source census 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have had no specific feedback in relation to religion and belief and recovery of debt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some religious groups experience different levels of disadvantage. • Different religious group/cultures have different approaches to debt. • Potential for misinformation to be spread within a religious community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best practice principles outlined in the Corporate Debt Policy are designed to ensure there is a structure for considering the appropriate actions to take to recover a debt without placing households in hardship. The welfare framework provides specific consideration for the support that can be put into place to help household and businesses address their budgeting pressures.

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff 	What do people tell you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback 	What does this mean? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts identified from data and feedback (actual and potential) 	What can you do? <p>All potential actions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> advance equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination, and foster good relations
Sex/Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CTR caseload: among CTR claimants and their partners, 58% are female and 42% are male, compared with a city profile of residents aged over 16 where 49% are male and 51% are female. 60% of people of working age living alone are male and 40% female. 63% of people of pensionable age living alone are female and 37% male. In January 2021 60% of housing tenants identified as female and 40% as male. These figures include the additional 0.3% of tenants who identified as transgender, depending on their gender identity. Tenants who identified as female were responsible for 64% of the total amount of rent arrears outstanding. The gender pay gap has been declining slowly over time. Over the last decade it has fallen by approximately a quarter among both full-time employees and all employees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information gathered by the welfare reform team indicate that there several welfare reform changes that have potentially had a significant impact on single parent households Feedback from council tax teams suggest single women with young children are more likely to be in debt for council tax 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women are far more likely to be a lone parent (94%) and therefore managing on less income. In such cases they are less likely to be available for work, due to childcare commitments and therefore are limited in their debt remedy options. High cost of childcare in the city poses a disproportionate barrier to a lone parent seeking work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The best practice principles outlined in the Corporate Debt Policy are designed to ensure there is a structure for considering the appropriate actions to take to recover a debt without placing households in hardship. The welfare framework provides specific consideration for the support that can be put into place to help household address their budgeting pressures. The following mitigation is applied in addition: To work with gender specific advice agencies (including through the CVS) and groups through the advice services network to ensure DHP is appropriately promoted to this group and there is access to debt advice

<p>Sex/Gender..<i>cont'd</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2023, the gap among full-time employees increased to 7.7%, up from 7.6% in 2022. This is still below the gap of 9.0% before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in 2019. Among all employees, the gender pay gap decreased to 14.3% in 2023, from 14.4% in 2022, and is still below the levels seen in 2019 (17.4%). Source ONS 			
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Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts identified from data and feedback (actual and potential)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and foster good relations
Sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brighton & Hove has the highest proportion of residents identifying as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB+) in England. More than one in ten residents aged 16 or over (10.6%, 25,375 people) identify with an LGB+ sexual orientation. This is three times the percentage found in both the South East (3.1%) and England (3.1%) and the highest seen in any upper tier local authority in England • Census infographic 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Count Me In Too Housing Report states that 22% of LGBT respondents had experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. • Count Me In Too ended 2008 but this stat may still be relevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGBTQ people experience worse outcomes than the general population in most, if not all, areas of health and care. The reasons for this are multiple: lack of provision of appropriate services, difficulty and resistance to accessing, and discrimination within, services, and lack of knowledge and understanding of the specific health needs of and risks for LGBTQ people. There are significant evidence gaps due to a lack in data collection and research, but where evidence exists it paints a stark picture of LGBTQ people's unmet needs. • Above from National LGB&T Partnership 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best practice principles outlined in the Corporate Debt Policy are designed to ensure there is a structure for considering the appropriate actions to take to recover a debt without placing households in hardship. The welfare framework provides specific consideration for the support that can be put into place to help address their budgeting pressures. <p>The following mitigation is applied in addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share DHP/DCTR info with organisations that specifically support people for the LGBT community through the advice services network

Sexual orientation cont'd			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGBTQ people still too often face hostility and are inappropriately treated because of their gender identity, trans status and/or sexual orientation. Additional barriers in secondary care include single sex accommodation, where trans and gender non-conforming LGB patients may be made to feel uncomfortable and discriminated against by staff and other service users. • Findings from Pride in Practice and Out Loud - Written submission from the National LGB&T Partnership (HSC0033) to Parliament 	
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Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts identified from data and feedback (actual and potential)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and foster good relations
Marriage and civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no known factors in debt and income collection that particularly relate to the marital status of a household • 33% of people aged 16+ are married or in a civil partnership (45%) • 52.2% Never married/civil partnership (38%) • 2.0% Separated (2%) • 8.8% divorced/civil partnership dissolved (9%) • 4.2% widowed / surviving civil partnership partner (6%) • UK average in brackets. Census 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There can be issues relating to joint and several liability if a relationship ends • In council tax for example partners are sometimes not recorded for liability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are specific legislative requirements, depending on the type of debt, relating to liability or treatment of income and assets. E.g. care costs are individual, benefit assessments are household. However, these do not discriminate between the marital status of the partnership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best practice principles outlined in the Corporate Debt Policy are designed to ensure there is a structure for considering the appropriate actions to take to recover a debt without placing households in hardship. The welfare framework provides specific consideration for the support that can be put into place to help household address their budgeting pressures.

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know¹⁰? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you¹¹? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean¹²? Impacts identified from data and feedback (actual and potential)	What can you do¹³? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
Other relevant groups Households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brighton & Hove has 121,401 households with at least one resident. The average household size in Brighton & Hove is still smaller than seen in both the South East (2.39) and England (2.37) and is the smallest among all upper tier local authorities in the South East. • More than a third of households (35%, 42,101 homes) in Brighton & Hove are single person households, higher than seen in the South East (28%) and England (30%). A third of single person households (13,875 homes) and one in ten of all households (11%) are households with a single person aged 66 or older living there, this is also higher than seen in the South East (13%) and England (13%).). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households with children with low income often face complex financial situations balancing benefit entitlement, work and childcare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single parent households are at a higher risk of poverty. Women make up the majority of those households and often live in social housing. Moreover, lone parents are likely to lower their working hours with children being at home during lockdowns. A reduction in the household's only income means that more are pushed into financial hardship. • Single parent families are approximately twice as likely as couples to be living on a low income and claiming a benefit. Lone parents in the UK have an employment rate of 59% (compared with 71% for women in two-parent households and 90% for men in two-parent households). • Single parent families with young children are less likely to be able to look for work without support, and therefore mitigate the main impacts of the welfare reforms or have capacity to respond to debt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best practice principles outlined in the Corporate Debt Policy are designed to ensure there is a structure for considering the appropriate actions to take to recover a debt without placing households in hardship. The welfare framework provides specific consideration for the support that can be put into place to help household address their budgeting pressures.

<p>Other relevant groups Households..cont'd</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearly a quarter of households (24%, 28,687 homes) contains a dependent child aged under 16, lower than seen in the South East (29%) and England (28%). However, we have a similar proportion on lone parent households (6%, 7,229 homes) as the South East (6%) and England (7%). Compared to the 2011 Census, the number of lone parent families has fallen by 16% (1,408 homes). Census 2021. UK figure in brackets) Over one-quarter (27%) of households reported that they did not have enough savings to cover a 25% fall in household employment income The households that were most likely to report this, and therefore the least financially resilient, were lone parents with dependent children (55%), renters (48%), households with a Black, African, Caribbean, or Black British head (53%), households where the head had a routine or semi-routine occupation (46%), and households where the head had a limiting disability or longstanding illness (34%) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welfare reform has meant shortfalls in income and families have used other benefits to meet their rent and as a result have less money for food, fuel and other essentials and an increase in use of foodbanks The B&H Child Poverty Needs Assessment 2010 identified that families with a child or parent with a disability, families with larger numbers of siblings and BME families have a higher risk of living in poverty Mental Health teams report that parents of children struggling with financial difficulties will inevitably see an impact on their mental health and their parenting. 	
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<p>Other relevant groups Households..<i>cont'd</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around 4 in 10 (40%) adults reported that affording their rent or mortgage payments were very or somewhat difficult; groups more likely to report this included Asian or Asian British adults (56%), Black, African, Caribbean or Black British adults (51%), and lone adults living in a household with at least one dependent child (61%) • Around 3 in 10 of adults (29%) reported an inability to afford an unexpected expense of £850; this proportion was 40% among disabled adults and 53% among renters, and increased to 66% among disabled adults who were renting • Around 1 in 20 (5%) adults reported running out of food and not being able to afford more; this proportion was 8% among parents living with a dependent child and 13% among renters, and increased to 21% among renters who were parents living with a dependent child • • ONS Dec 2023 General Survey UK; 			
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Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know ¹⁰ ? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you ¹¹ ? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean ¹² ? Impacts identified from data and feedback (actual and potential)	What can you do ¹³ ? All potential actions to: • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 in 6 (16%) unpaid carers are in debt as a result of their caring role and their financial situation, increasing to 2 in 5 (40%) for unpaid carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance. • The proportion of carers unable to afford their utility bills has more than doubled since last year – from 6% in 2021 to 14% in 2022. • Those in receipt of Carer's Allowance are also more likely to be cutting back on food and heating (35%) compared to all carers (25%). Nearly 8% of unpaid carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance are using food banks to cope with the cost of living crisis, compared to 5% of all unpaid carers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring for someone can often be both emotionally and physically tiring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carers are struggling financially, and significant numbers live in fuel and food poverty as a result of being in debt. • Young carers are likely to have reduced educational attainment and employment opportunities • Carers are less likely to seek access to advice services and financial products. • Carers of their partners, where there may be a medical or respite need for an additional bedroom, are affected by the LHA rules which may place them into debt. • Carers affected by the Benefit Cap may be less able to find work that fits in with their caring role. If they cannot work, they cannot self-mitigate this impact. • The cumulative impacts of Welfare Reform have had a disproportionately larger impact on disabled people (and carers) than others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best practice principles outlined in the Corporate Debt Policy are designed to ensure there is a structure for considering the appropriate actions to take to recover a debt without placing households in hardship. The welfare framework provides specific consideration for the support that can be put into place to help household address their budgeting pressures. • The Care Act 2014 recognises the equal importance of supporting carers and the people they care for. • The Care Act gives carers the right to receive support from their local authority if they have eligible needs. You can get this support through a carer's assessment. • If you care for someone, you have a legal right to have your caring needs assessed.

<p>Carers...cont'd</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carers who care for longer and provide more hours of care per week are more likely to be struggling financially. The proportion of people caring for over 5 years are almost twice as likely to be struggling to afford the cost of food (20%) and be in debt (19%) compared to people caring for less than 5 years (11% and 9% respectively) • From Carers UK Oct 2022 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high proportion of carers will also be experiencing some mental health difficulties. This will have an impact upon social care services if care relationships break down under additional stressors such as debt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A carer's assessment should look at all your needs. This includes the things you would like to be able to do in your daily life. Your needs should be written down in a support plan. • You can get a personal budget and direct payments from the local authority to pay for services.
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Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts identified from data and feedback (actual and potential)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
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<p>Domestic violence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have no consistent data on this diversity group within the city's CTR or HB caseload. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the point of accessing a domestic violence service, up to a 1/3 of women who are victim/survivors have no bank account • Victim/survivors who flee domestic violence may not have access to ID (because they are unable to take it when they leave, or because the abuser has seized documents), making applications for benefits humiliating and difficult. • Due to the circumstances most people in this group will need support to make applications for benefits/crisis support. or address debt. • Many victim/survivors will experience financial control and abuse, this can include control over their access to or use of benefits which increase their risk of economic exclusion and limit their ability to prevent debt situations arising or effectively address them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best practice principles outlined in the Corporate Debt Policy are designed to ensure there is a structure for considering the appropriate actions to take to recover a debt without placing households in hardship. The welfare framework provides specific consideration for the support that can be put into place to help household address their budgeting pressures. • Specialist teams within Revenue and Benefits Services such as the Discretionary Help and Advice Team and the Special Accommodation Team will work closely with refuges in the city and the Council's own Crisis Intervention Team within Housing Options to ensure that those fleeing domestic violence and other forms of violence against women and girls (including sexual violence) are given access to all discretionary support available in the most consistent way and with a holistic approach. • We will continue to use all administrative discretion available to us to protect the security of people affected by DV when making an application for Housing Benefit or DHP or addressing debt issues.
<p>Domestic</p>				

violence...cont'd

Domestic

- Universal Credit is paid in full to one member of the household. This could limit a survivor's access to independent financial means that may enable them leaving the relationship. Requesting split payments may further endanger the survivor as this is not possible to do without alerting the partner to the change.
- A significant number of those experiencing domestic violence are likely to leave their settled accommodation to escape it. This may create debt situations.
- Alternatively, the abuser may leave or may be required to leave, which may reduce the resources available to the household and a possible unaffordable debt legacy.
- If victim/survivors leave settled accommodation they may be 'hidden' because they spend time living with friends or relatives or are sleeping rough.
- Debts may escalate because they are a low priority in the context of the trauma being suffered.
- Debts may escalate because the behaviour of the customer is effectively treated as avoidance in the absence of any information.

<p>violence...cont'd</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debt problems may be difficult to address without compromising confidentiality • Victim/survivors may not access services because they are not aware of what is available, their entitlements or are not able to do so. They may also have additional vulnerabilities (including mental health, substance use or immigration issues) • Victim/survivors may present at services, including those provided by the Council, in crisis or in distress. They may also make disclosures to Council Officers which need to be identified and responded to appropriately. 	
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Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts identified from data and feedback (actual and potential)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
Cumulative impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From JSNA estimated number of residents in Brighton & Hove is 278,000 • Census 2021- 121,401 homes • Communal establishments One in 33 Brighton & Hove residents (3.1%, 8,505 people) live in a communal establishment • More than a third of households (35%, 42,101 homes) in the city are single person households • Housing tenure: nearly a third of households (33%, 39,684 households) in the city rent privately • Accommodation type: A fifth of households (20%, 23,803 households) live in a flat or bedsit in a converted or shared house • The city's international migrant population has increased by 27% or 11,500 people since the 2011 Census • Ethnicity: the number of Black and Racially Minoritised residents has increased by 35% or 18,921 people since the 2011 Census 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The welfare reforms and austerity of past 14 years have had a detrimental effect on the least wealthy households.. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is likely to be a higher demand for debt advice and welfare support. We are making more long-term payment arrangements to settle arrears. • This may mean it may takes a longer period to address an individual debt and this may reflect in short term performance indicators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Corporate Debt Policy specifically promotes an ethical best practice approach that incorporates fairness in actions of debt collection. This fairness approach includes the consideration of all protected characteristics.
Cumulative				

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Private rents rose to an average of £1,723 in March 2024, an annual increase of 9.0% from £1,581 in March 2023. This was higher than the rise in the South East (8.2%) over the year.• 12.3% of the population was income-deprived in 2019.			
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3. List detailed data and/or community feedback that informed your EIA

2024/25 sources used for research	Date	Gaps in data	Actions to fill these gaps: who else do you need to engage with? (add these to the Action Plan below, with a timeframe)
Adults with long term conditions in Brighton and Hove full report 2018.pdf	2018	None	n/a
Brighton & Hove JSNA 2017 executive summary VFINAL 15 08 17.pdf	2017	None	n/a
JSNA Executive Summary May 2023.pdf	2023	None	n/a
Adults with multiple complex needs in Brighton & Hove 2020.pdf	2020	None	n/a
Brighton & Hove JSNA summary December 2021- Population	2021	None	n/a
https://fair4allfinance.org.uk/financial-inclusion-of-black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-communities-in-the-uk/	2021	None	n/a

https://irr.org.uk/research/statistics/poverty/	2023	None	n/a
https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/genderpaygapintheuk/2023	2023	None	n/a
Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain: July to October 2023 ONS	2023	None	n/a
Written submission from the National LGB&T Partnership (HSC0033) to Parliament	2018	None	n/a
https://www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/our-campaigns/cost-of-living-crisis/	2022	None	n/a
Brighton & Hove JSNA summary March 2024	2024	None	n/a
Financial Inclusion Strategy EIA: http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/bhcc/equalities/Financial_Inclusion_Strategy_EIA_Final.doc	2013	None	n/a
Cost of Living in Brighton. Apr 2024. Prices in Brighton (numbeo.com)	2024	None	n/a
Your Data - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics (nomisweb.co.uk)	2024	None	n/a

B&H MLTC JSNA 2018 Exec Summary FINAL	2018	None	n/a
Joseph Rowntree Foundation https://www.jrf.org.uk/uk-poverty-2024-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk	2024	None	n/a

4. Prioritised Action Plan³²

Impact identified and group(s) affected	Action planned	Expected outcome	Measure of success	Timeframe
NB: These actions must now be transferred to service or business plans and monitored to ensure they achieve the outcomes identified.				
All groups	Ensured the Corporate Debt Policy is fully applied across the council	Improved ethical collection performance and improved consideration of individual circumstances in designing recovery making suitable recovery arrangements	No incident found complaint relating to inequality in the collection of debt on behalf of the council	Continuous
All groups	Ensure the Corporate Debt Board implements a strategy through the welfare framework that provides a holistic support network to citizens in financial hardship		Remedy, support or advice for every customer approaching the council with welfare reform related debt issues	Continuous
All groups	Ensure that further actions are listed above are reviewed fully	Progress against further actions listed above is reviewed in next EIA	Number of actions delivered	Continuous

EIA sign-off: (for the EIA to be final an email must sent from the relevant people agreeing it or this section must be signed)

Staff member completing Equality Impact Assessment: Graham Bourne

Date:

Directorate Management Team rep or Head of Service/Commissioning: Nigel Manvell

Date:

CCG or BHCC Equality lead: Sarah Tighe-Ford

Date:

Guidance end-notes

The following principles, drawn from case law, explain what we must do to fulfil our duties under the Equality Act:

- **Knowledge:** everyone working for the council must be aware of our equality duties and apply them appropriately in their work.
- **Timeliness:** the duty applies at the time of considering policy options and/or before a final decision is taken – not afterwards.
- **Real Consideration:** the duty must be an integral and rigorous part of your decision-making and influence the process.
- **Sufficient Information:** you must assess what information you have and what is needed to give proper consideration.

No delegation: the council is responsible for ensuring that any contracted services which provide services on our behalf can comply with the duty, are required in contracts to comply with it, and do comply in practice. It is a duty that cannot be delegated.

- **Review:** the equality duty is a continuing duty. It applies when a policy is developed/agreed, and when it is implemented/reviewed.
- **Proper Record Keeping:** to show that we have fulfilled our duties we must keep records of the process and the impacts identified.

NB: Filling out this EIA in itself does not meet the requirements of the equality duty. All the requirements above must be fulfilled or the EIA (and any decision based on it) may be open to challenge. Properly used, an EIA can be a tool to help us comply with our equality duty and as a record that to demonstrate that we have done so.

Our duties in the Equality Act 2010

As a public sector organisation, we have a legal duty (under the Equality Act 2010) to show that we have identified and considered the impact and potential impact of our activities on all people with 'protected characteristics' (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership).

This applies to policies, services (including commissioned services), and our employees. The level of detail of this consideration will depend on what you are assessing, who it might affect, those groups' vulnerability, and how serious any potential impacts might be. We use this EIA template to complete this process and evidence our consideration.

The following are the duties in the Act. You must give 'due regard' (pay conscious attention) to the need to:

- **avoid, reduce or minimise negative impact** (if you identify unlawful discrimination, including victimisation and harassment, you must stop the action and take advice immediately).
- **promote equality of opportunity.** This means the need to:
 - Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by equality groups
 - Take steps to meet the needs of equality groups
 - Encourage equality groups to participate in public life or any other activity where participation is disproportionately low
 - Consider if there is a need to treat disabled people differently, including more favourable treatment where necessary
- **foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.** This means:
 - Tackle prejudice
 - Promote understanding

EIAs are always proportionate to:

- The size of the service or scope of the policy/strategy
- The resources involved
- The numbers of people affected
- The size of the likely impact
- The vulnerability of the people affected

The greater the potential adverse impact of the proposed policy on a protected group (e.g. disabled people), the more vulnerable the group in the context being considered, the more thorough and demanding the process required by the Act will be.

When to complete an EIA:

- When planning or developing a new service, policy or strategy
- When reviewing an existing service, policy or strategy
- When ending or substantially changing a service, policy or strategy
- When there is an important change in the service, policy or strategy, or in the city (eg: a change in population), or at a national level (eg: a change of legislation)

Assessment of equality impact can be evidenced as part of the process of reviewing or needs assessment or strategy development or consultation or planning. It does not have to be on this template, but must be documented. Wherever possible, build the EIA into your usual planning/review processes.

Do you need to complete an EIA? Consider:

- Is the policy, decision or service likely to be relevant to any people because of their protected characteristics?

- How many people is it likely to affect?
- How significant are its impacts?
- Does it relate to an area where there are known inequalities?
- How vulnerable are the people (potentially) affected?

If there are potential impacts on people but you decide not to complete an EIA it is usually sensible to document why.

Title of EIA: This should clearly explain what service / policy / strategy / change you are assessing

ID no: The unique reference for this EIA. If in doubt contact your CCG or BHCC equality lead (see page 1)

Team/Department: Main team responsible for the policy, practice, service or function being assessed

Focus of EIA: A member of the public should have a good understanding of the policy or service and any proposals after reading this section. Please use plain English and write any acronyms in full first time - eg: 'Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)'

This section should explain what you are assessing:

- What are the main aims or purpose of the policy, practice, service or function?
- Who implements, carries out or delivers the policy, practice, service or function? Please state where this is more than one person/team/body and where other organisations deliver under procurement or partnership arrangements.
- How does it fit with other services?
- Who is affected by the policy, practice, service or function, or by how it is delivered? Who are the external and internal service- users, groups, or communities?
- What outcomes do you want to achieve, why and for whom? Eg: what do you want to provide, what changes or improvements, and what should the benefits be?
- What do existing or previous inspections of the policy, practice, service or function tell you?
- What is the reason for the proposal or change (financial, service, legal etc)? The Act requires us to make these clear.

Previous actions: If there is no previous EIA or this assessment is of a new service, then simply write 'not applicable'.

Data: Make sure you have enough data to inform your EIA.

- What data relevant to the impact on protected groups of the policy/decision/service is available?¹⁰
- What further evidence is needed and how can you get it? (Eg: further research or engagement with the affected groups).

- What do you already know about needs, access and outcomes? Focus on each of the protected characteristics in turn. Eg: who uses the service? Who doesn't and why? Are there differences in outcomes? Why?
- Have there been any important demographic changes or trends locally? What might they mean for the service or function?
- Does data/monitoring show that any policies or practices create particular problems or difficulties for any groups?
- Do any equality objectives already exist? What is current performance like against them?
- Is the service having a positive or negative effect on particular people in the community, or particular groups or communities?
- Use local sources of data (eg: JSNA: <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/content/needs-assessments> and Community Insight: <http://brighton-hove.communityinsight.org/#>) and national ones where they are relevant.

Engagement: You must engage appropriately with those likely to be affected to fulfil the equality duty.

- What do people tell you about the services?
- Are there patterns or differences in what people from different groups tell you?
- What information or data will you need from communities?
- How should people be consulted? Consider:
 - (a) consult when proposals are still at a formative stage;
 - (b) explain what is proposed and why, to allow intelligent consideration and response;
 - (c) allow enough time for consultation;
 - (d) make sure what people tell you is properly considered in the final decision.
- Try to consult in ways that ensure all perspectives can be considered.
- Identify any gaps in who has been consulted and identify ways to address this.

Your EIA must get to grips fully and properly with actual and potential impacts.

- The equality duty does not stop decisions or changes, but means we must conscientiously and deliberately confront the anticipated impacts on people.
- Be realistic: don't exaggerate speculative risks and negative impacts.
- Be detailed and specific so decision-makers have a concrete sense of potential effects. Instead of "the policy is likely to disadvantage older women", say how many or what percentage are likely to be affected, how, and to what extent.
- Questions to ask when assessing impacts depend on the context. Examples:
 - Are one or more protected groups affected differently and/or disadvantaged? How, and to what extent?
 - Is there evidence of higher/lower uptake among different groups? Which, and to what extent?
 - If there are likely to be different impacts on different groups, is that consistent with the overall

objective?

- If there is negative differential impact, how can you minimise that while taking into account your overall aims
- Do the effects amount to unlawful discrimination? If so the plan must be modified.
- Does the proposal advance equality of opportunity and/or foster good relations? If not, could it?

Consider all three aims of the Act: removing barriers, and also identifying positive actions we can take.

- Where you have identified impacts you must state what actions will be taken to remove, reduce or avoid any negative impacts and maximise any positive impacts or advance equality of opportunity.
- Be specific and detailed and explain how far these actions are expected to improve the negative impacts.
- If mitigating measures are contemplated, explain clearly what the measures are, and the extent to which they can be expected to reduce / remove the adverse effects identified.
- An EIA which has attempted to airbrush the facts is an EIA that is vulnerable to challenge.

Age: People of all ages

Disability: A person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The definition includes: sensory impairments, impairments with fluctuating or recurring effects, progressive, organ specific, developmental, learning difficulties, mental health conditions and mental illnesses, produced by injury to the body or brain. Persons with cancer, multiple sclerosis or HIV infection are all now deemed to be disabled persons from the point of diagnosis.

Gender Reassignment: In the Act a transgender person is someone who proposes to, starts or has completed a process to change his or her gender. A person does not need to be under medical supervision to be protected

Pregnancy and Maternity: Protection is during pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave to which the woman is entitled.

Race/Ethnicity: This includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality, and includes refugees and migrants, and Gypsies and Travellers. Refugees and migrants means people whose intention is to stay in the UK for at least twelve months (excluding visitors, short term students or tourists). This definition includes asylum seekers; voluntary and involuntary migrants; people who are undocumented; and the children of migrants, even if they were born in the UK.

Religion and Belief: Religion includes any religion with a clear structure and belief system. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief. The Act also covers lack of religion or belief.

Sex/Gender: Both men and women are covered under the Act.

Sexual Orientation: The Act protects bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian people

Marriage and Civil Partnership: Only in relation to due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

Community Cohesion: What must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together.

Other relevant groups: eg: Carers, people experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence, substance misusers, homeless people, looked after children, ex-armed forces personnel, people on the Autistic spectrum etc

Cumulative Impact: This is an impact that appears when you consider services or activities together. A change or activity in one area may create an impact somewhere else

Assessment of overall impacts and any further recommendations

Make a frank and realistic assessment of the overall extent to which the negative impacts can be reduced or avoided by the mitigating measures. Explain what positive impacts will result from the actions and how you can make the most of these.

Countervailing considerations: These may include the reasons behind the formulation of the policy, the benefits it is expected to deliver, budget reductions, the need to avert a graver crisis by introducing a policy now and not later, and so on. The weight of these factors in favour of implementing the policy must then be measured against the weight of any evidence as to the potential negative equality impacts of the policy.

Are there any further recommendations? Is further engagement needed? Is more research or monitoring needed? Does there need to be a change in the proposal itself?

Action Planning: The Equality Duty is an ongoing duty: policies must be kept under review, continuing to give 'due regard' to the duty. If an assessment of a broad proposal leads to more specific proposals, then further equality assessment and consultation are needed.

Corporate Debt Management Policy

Our corporate debt management policy sets out the council's ethical approach to effectively collecting income and the recovery of outstanding amounts due to the organisation.

1. Purpose

1.1

The council has a legal duty and responsibility to the people of Brighton and Hove to ensure that it collects income and recovers debt efficiently and effectively to fulfil financial responsibilities to citizens and maximise its capacity to provide local services.

1.2

This Corporate Debt Policy aims to promote and support best practice debt management processes across all the council's main income collection hubs to ensure the council minimises debt and maximises rates of collection. The council will ensure that all collection processes are compliant with legislation (see appendix a) and, additionally, for all stages of collection the council will ensure that the approach will be fair and ethical, with a consistent approach to assisting customers who are experiencing financial difficulty.

2. Policy Objectives

2.1

Ethical debt collection best practices advocates the principle of early intervention where customers are fully informed and supported in the early stages of debt collection to make sustainable, affordable payments. Where possible, the council aims to proactively prevent debt arising or escalating and will seek to keep citizens informed, and regularly reminded, so that they are fully aware of their obligations to the council and are able to make good decisions that avoid additional costs and pressures.

2.2

However, ultimately the council will, where appropriate, escalate recovery actions to recover hard to collect debt. When it does so, it will maintain its fairness principles while applying the correct legal options and ensure any agency acting on its behalf applies the same principles and consideration.

2.3

The Council will maximise the level of income collected, through accurate and timely billing with effective recovery processes offering multiple, accessible ways to pay. It will further commit to continuously explore new payment methods introduced to the industry, analysing their relevance and ability to meet customer demand, instigating implementation where appropriate. Similarly, the Council will monitor new ways of regularly engaging customers and instigate implementation when it can offer enhanced services via digital contact or access to digital services.

2.4

The Council will work to deliver a single view of debt solution that enables the council and customer to understand the cumulative debt any household or business with the council. This will enable:

- Analysis of cross-organisation debt
- Specific collection campaigns based on statuses of debt (e.g. location, debt types, debt size)
- Consistent customer experience, ensuring conversations with customers are co-ordinated and informed
- Minimising the escalation of commercial debts, where appropriate, not entering further commercial arrangements with existing debtors where there is a likelihood of further debts arising.
- Standardising financial assessments and co-ordinated payment arrangements
- Consistent, fair and ethical approaches to recovery escalations.
- Reconciliation of credits and debits and outstanding debt balances relating to the same customer, identifying potential conflicted transactions e.g. refunding a customer from one council service while there is outstanding debt with another
- Potential single payment arrangements for multiple debts with different council services

2.5

The council will meet legislative requirements in respect of income collection and has an obligation to collect on behalf of other organisations. The Police and Fire Authorities have dependency upon Council Tax collection, and Central Government and the Fire Authority retain a proportion of Business Rates income.

3 Debts applicable to this Policy & Debt Hierarchy

This policy is aimed primarily at individual/household debtors (Personal Debt) but wherever possible and where legislation allows, the principles and objectives of this policy will also be applied to businesses/organisations from all sectors (Business Debt).

3.1

Debts applicable are all debts and income due to the Council, including but not limited to:

- Business Rates
- Council Tax
- Housing Benefit Overpayments
- Sundry Debts
- Adult Social Care
- Housing Rents (*including garages and former tenant arrears*)
- Temporary Accommodation
- Leaseholders
- Parking Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs))

See Appendix A for more detail, including relevant legislation

3.2

The Council will work towards a coordinated approach when dealing with multiple debts and will consider the person's circumstances, legislation, the level and priority of debt and the potential for financial hardship.

Where the council or its collection agent is pursuing multiple debts, unless the customer advises to the contrary, priority is given to debts where non-payment could lead to loss of the customer's home or have direct implications upon an individual's health and wellbeing.

Future State: the Corporate Debt board to define the priority debts based on the above approach and a debt hierarchy to be followed when recovering multiple debts.

4. Governance

The delivery of this policy is overseen and maintained by the Corporate Debt Board, which has senior management representatives from all income and debt collection services across the council and from IT & Digital, Legal & Democratic Services, and Financial as key support services. The board has assigned responsibility for all decision making regarding the management of corporate debt across the organisation, with escalations referred to the Director Property & Finance (Section 151).

Application of the Corporate Debt Policy will be in line with the delegated functions set out in the council's Scheme of Delegation to Officers.

4.1

The Corporate Debt Board

The Corporate Debt Board delivers in line with five key principles that are intrinsic to the delivery of an ethical policy, namely to:

- ensure a one council approach to income collection and debt collection
- establish a proportionate, fair and effective end-to-end approach to debt management.
- use analytics to understand the debt portfolio and drive best practice for debt management;
- instil an ethos of fairness, built upon principles that recognise the impact debt collection has upon the vulnerable; and
- have a proportionate enforcement response to those who do not pay on time.

These principles are designed to ensure that while there is a financial imperative in debt collection, there is also a public sector responsibility to consider the whole picture and the potential impact of recovery and collection actions upon our citizens.

The Corporate Debt Board also has the primary requirement to:

- Set priorities for Corporate Debt Operational Group to consider legislation changes, appraise development options, recommend operational improvements, and ensure effective communication to the service hubs.
- prioritise the work of the Corporate Debt Team within the Welfare Revenues & Business Support Service, which directly provides the corporate support for the delivery of the policy
- agree the financial recharging principles to support the investment in continuous improvements to work prioritisation

- agree, instigate and support the system and digital developments that deliver the stated ambitions of the Corporate Debt Policy
- Support service operational and structural changes designed to deliver the stated ambitions of the Corporate Debt Policy
- Ensuring all staff working within debt collection for the Council have access to up-to-date training materials to ensure best working practices.
- Define, monitor and review debt classed a priority and the debt hierarchy in instances of multiple debt

4.2

The Corporate Debt Operational Group

The Corporate Debt Operational Group is a sub-group of the Corporate Debt board, where debt hub managers meet to collaborate, share knowledge, discuss processes, and best practice. This group make recommendations to the Corporate Debt Board regarding strategic decisions or policy changes.

4.3

The Corporate Debt Team

This function operates to corporately provide the analysis and support to the debt hubs to enable them to deliver optimum performance and best practice. It oversees the management of hard to collect debt, and co-ordinates the management of the debt portfolio and relationships with outside agencies and legal advisory services.

4.4

The Corporate Debt Board will review the Corporate Debt Policy annually to ensure it remains aligned to strategic priorities and if changes are required, will report to cabinet seeking approval for a revised policy.

4.5

This policy underpins our processes and procedures and officers are expected to apply these principles as business as usual. Breaches and non-compliance of the policy will be reported accordingly, firstly by notifying the board, secondly referring to the Chief Finance Officer/S151 where deemed significant and/or recurring.

5 Delivery

The delivery of this policy ensures:

- the Corporate Debt Team and the collection hubs' procedures and associated debtor engagement activities provide debtors with the maximum opportunity to repay debts affordably while avoiding punitive additional charges, such as court costs or enforcement charges
- services are responsible for their own financial management and have procedures to minimise debt caused by administrative delays or error

- collection hubs operate workflows and procedures that maximise collection with proportionate and appropriate consideration and adjustment to account for individual circumstances of hardship

Future State: research and analyse the potential usage of new products and techniques enabling early engagement and potential debt prevention

- collection hubs offer multiple payment methods, in line with industry standards and customer expectations

Future State: Assess the viability of new payment methods, analysis of relevance and requirement, deliver implementation projects. Aim to define a list of corporate payment methods, consistently offered across the debt hubs.

- collection hubs work collaboratively as one council in managing multiple debt; they have a holistic view of debt, that considers the correct prioritisation of multiple debt, so that the council does not pursue collection to the detriment of its holistic aims in providing services to that household*

Future State: Optimise the value of the single view of debt software to engage with consolidated ethical campaigns and referrals.

- the Corporate Debt Team pursues evasion and avoidance of debt with appropriate but proportionate vigour and assists government initiatives to prevent fraud and error, for example, the National Fraud Initiative (NFI);
- debt recovery performance is under constant review to identify opportunities to achieve efficiencies and refine the sensitivity of systems to household vulnerability through improvements, such as sharing best practice, policy changes, process improvement, digital development, training and consolidating debt recovery functions
- the priorities of the Corporate Debt Team align to the corporate plan and strategic priorities
- adherence to the Data Protection Act requirements for data sharing and information security across all income collection and debt recovery functions, however data will be shared across the debt streams where appropriate to enable consolidated communications
- the Corporate Debt Team and collection hubs properly employ government initiatives, such as Breathing Space, to give debtors appropriate access and opportunity to rationalise their debt, maximise their income and incorporate affordable repayments in their household budgets as part of their pathway to a stable financial position.
- the council's approach to debt recovery co-ordinates with the strategic aims defined by the council's Poverty Reduction Steering Group to support the city's welfare response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis.
- all aspects of collection activity are compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and the council's fair and inclusive policy.
- The Corporate Debt Board is supportive of the Parking initiative to address repeat and persistent violations by the same party.

**Parking debt/fixed penalty notices/debt incurred by way of fine is normally collected outside of this consideration where it relates to a legal penalty.*

6. Best practice debt collection

6.1

This policy aims to adopt fair, ethical, debt collection and recovery practices, including the aspirations to:

- ensure each stage of debt collection or intervention is delivered at the earliest point to prevent the accumulation of arrears and added costs
- ensure customers receive reminders and messages to keep them informed of their current debt status, and that these interventions are as effective as digital development allows
- ensure that all debt is valid, accurate and only generated where due
- ensure that bills are accurate, timely and clear, indicating available payment methods and customer support
- provide appropriate and easy payment methods with good customer access and services to help prevent the incidence of arrears
- provide access to contextual information so customers are clear on their responsibilities to make payment, the required timeframes to make payment, the consequences of not making a payment within the timeframe and what action to take, or advice to seek, if they have a difficulty in making a payment or dispute the amount being requested
- make it easy for households or businesses who do fall into arrears to contact the council and agree to payment arrangements appropriate to their circumstances
- build in mechanisms within debt collection workflows to ensure that hardship or vulnerability is identified at the earliest possible stage and consequently, the customer has access to appropriate support and advice regarding benefit entitlement, budget management, Breathing Space provisions and welfare/health support
- filter, segment and prioritise escalated debt so appropriate action or support is put in place;
- have a corporate debt e-learning that will be mandatory for all recovery/income collection staff, advising on the various income streams and their recovery processes, enabled informed customer interaction with a wider understanding of corporate debt
- oversee the whole debt portfolio to ensure that residual debt is actively managed, actions are proportionate and cost effective, and where appropriate, uncollectable debt is written off in a timely manner;
- ensure any agencies acting on the council's behalf commit and adhere to the council's debt collection principles
- where specific and specialised legal action is required (bankruptcy, charging orders), there is a structured approach to risk-manage individual cases within a recognised

framework of legal support and for this legal support to be developed in-house to minimise cost

- where appropriate, commit the council to national standards of best practice
- ensure that corporate write off policies and procedures are followed (*see appendix b*)

6.2

The council commits to working with central government initiatives. By aligning with a universal approach to public sector debt, the council will be providing a consistent approach to residents and businesses and operating in a manner that is commensurate with an expansive model of debt collection, if that opportunity arises in the future.

6.3

The council will seek to comply with all nationally approved debt recovery pre-action protocols and where complementary to this policy, also seek to comply with best practice protocols. This will include the following (the list is not exhaustive):

- Collection of Council Tax Arrears Good Practice Protocol (Published by Citizens Advice, June 2017)
- Stop the Knock (Published by the Money Advice Trust, September 2019)
- National Standards for Enforcement Agents (Published by the Ministry of Justice, April 2014)
- Code of Conduct and Good Practice Guide (Civil Enforcement Association (CIVEA), 2019)
- Guidance for Firms on Fair Treatment of Vulnerable Customers (Financial Conduct Authority, July 2020)
- Taking Control of Goods Regulations (2014)
- the Debt Respite Scheme (Breathing Space) Guidance for Creditors
- the Pre Action Protocol for Possession Claims for Social Landlords
- Universal Credit and rented housing: guide for landlords
- Alternative Payment Arrangement guide
- Universal Credit: Third party payments creditor and supplier handbook
- Rent Standard and guidance

7 Enforcement measures

Effective use of enforcement agents can also be an important way of recovering debt where the Council is satisfied that there are no other appropriate mechanisms for recovering that debt, and enforcement agents can also play an important role in identifying potential vulnerabilities. We will use enforcement agents to collect debts only where there has been no engagement from the customer or where alternative recovery options have not been successful or are not appropriate. The Council will monitor their practice closely to ensure compliance with our standards and agents should be able to quickly identify vulnerability,

referring these cases back to the Council and provide the Council with information that can be used to tailor subsequent action.

The following enforcement measures are applicable to:

Council Tax
Business Rates
Sundry Debts
Parking PCNs

7.1

The council will not refer council tax debt to enforcement agencies where the debtor is currently in receipt of council tax deduction unless there are exceptional, individual, circumstances identified by the Corporate Debt board.

7.2

When no other possible collection routes are available, the council will ensure that any enforcement agent activity meets the highest recognised industry standards of best practice. All service level agreements / contracts for enforcement agent services will reflect those standards. All enforcement agent services will be required to adhere to the standards of this policy. To ensure that the required standards are maintained, all agents/agencies will be required to:

- adhere to the CIVEA Code of Practice and Ministry of Justice National Standards
- have the appropriate certification under the Taking Control of Goods Regulations (2014)
- use body worn cameras in accordance with CIVEA code of practice
- be trained to recognise vulnerability, ensuring that appropriate support is provided to vulnerable residents where identified and that the council is made aware of the circumstances
- adhere to the Enforcement Conduct Board (ECB)

7.3

The Council will only begin committal proceedings against any resident for Council Tax debt in the most exceptional of circumstances when all other enforcement options have been exhausted. Any actions of this nature would have to be authorised by the Director of Property & Finance (section 151).

The following enforcement measures are applicable to:

Rent Accounting
Temporary Accommodation charges
Leaseholder Income

7.4

Best practice in collection emphasises the value of pre-enforcement actions and the diminishing use of invasive or punitive collection methods. This best practice is based upon better overall outcomes in terms of debt ultimately collected, and the impact of such measures in terms of stress and the longer-term welfare objectives of supporting households to have a platform of financial stability.

7.5

Therefore, the council's debt collection emphasis is moving to ensuring it exercises a full range of pre-enforcement engagement with tenants to establish affordable, sustainable repayment arrangements and avoids further escalation.

8. Fraud and evasion

8.1

The unlawful evasion of charges, taxation or fines reduces the financial resources available to the council and has a direct impact upon all residents, businesses and other organisations that rely upon council services.

8.2

Unlawful evasion or fraud to avoid payment will not be tolerated and where this is identified, the council will, in addition to taking action to enforce payment, seek to impose further penalties or sanctions. This may include prosecution for such offences.

8.3

Where this activity impacts upon other public bodies, such as HM Revenues & Customs and other authorities, the council will work with those organisations to seek legal remedy.

8.4

Where debts arise through evasion or fraud, the council will seek to recover payment in full as quickly as the law regarding the nature of the debt allows.

8.5

Where appropriate, the council will refer matters to the Police for criminal investigation. The council is also committed to fully supporting any investigation initiated by the Police, either in response to a referral or independently.

8.6

The council is fully committed to support the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) which uses data matching to identify potential fraud and error with referral to the Police or other crime investigation branches as appropriate.

9. Complaints and disputes

9.1

Any disputes raised regarding the application of this policy should be raised with the Corporate Debt Manager, in the first instance; should the incident be service specific then this will be referred to the relevant council service. If the dispute cannot be resolved, then it shall be dealt with in accordance with the council's Complaints Procedure.

9.2

Any dispute regarding an individual debt will be dealt with in compliance to the legal requirement of the collection of that individual debt. Any such dispute will only stop the continuation of the recovery process or legal mechanism if it is appropriate in the context of the specific legislation.

10. Use of data

10.1

The council will collect and store personal data for the purposes of the effective billing, collection and recovery of sums due. Data retained for this purpose will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and stored securely at all times. Data will be shared with agents or contractors appointed by the council for the purposes of the billing, collection and recovery of sums due. Data may also be shared within the council or with external organisations where the law allows and in particular, where it is in the interests of the debtor or where it will prevent fraud or the unlawful evasion of payment of sums due.

Further details can be found on the [council's website](#).

11. Equality Impact Assessment

11.1

The council has conducted an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) in relation to the Corporate Debt Policy. (See Appendix c)

11.2

The EIA will be refreshed as part of the annual review of the Corporate Debt Policy.

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 179

Subject: Brighton & Hove Fairness Fund and Household Support Fund 2025-26

Date of meeting: Thursday, 20 March 2025

Report of: Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration

Contact Officer: Name: Paul Ross-Dale, Welfare, Revenues & Business Support Manager

Email: Paul.Ross-Dale@Brighton-Hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Key Decision: Yes

Reason(s) Key: Expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the expenditure of the City Council's budget, namely above £1,000,000 and is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards).

For general release

1 Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 To approve the allocation of funds from the Brighton & Hove Fairness Fund (BHFF), incorporating allocation of the Household Support Fund (HSF) which the government has confirmed will be extended to cover the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.
- 1.2 The allocation of these funds links to the council's Cost of Living Action Plan, approved by full Council on 28 March 2024, which in turn is part of the Brighton & Hove City Council Plan 2023-27 to support 'a fair and inclusive city'.
- 1.3 The proposed allocation of the funds aims to provide a balanced spread of investment in prevention and advisory services, community & voluntary support services, as well as emergency hardship relief. The funds work in collaboration with other council services and complement other local welfare assistance including Council Tax Reduction and Discretionary Housing Payments. The focus is on helping to reduce financial, food and fuel poverty.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves the approach set out in Section 3 including the proposed allocations of funding from the Brighton & Hove Fairness Fund and the Household Support Fund 2025/26.

- 2.2 That Cabinet delegates authority to the S151 Chief Financial Officer, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration, to make minor alterations to the allocation of the Household Support Fund in order to maximise its use in accordance with the relevant time constraints.
- 2.3 That Cabinet receives a report at the end of the 2025-26 year, outlining how the Fairness Fund and Household Support Fund has been utilised and what outcomes have been achieved as a result.

3 Context and background information

- 3.1 Since October 2022, the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) has provided the Household Support Fund (HSF) to Local Authorities, initially with the intention of supporting vulnerable households struggling through the pandemic and then subsequently the Cost of Living crisis. HSF has generally been provided to local authorities in 6-month tranches, with varying terms and conditions, but the forthcoming tranche covers a 12-month period aligned to financial year 2025/26.
- 3.2 The allocation for Brighton and Hove is £3.772m, to cover the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. This is a reduction relative to the amount received by the council in 2024/25, which was £4.280m. The fund is ringfenced to this period and cannot be carried forward.
- 3.3 The council created a Cost of Living Action Plan in 2024, and in line with the core strategy of combating poverty, introduced the new Brighton & Hove Fairness Fund (BHFF) as a mitigation against the possibility of the Household Support Fund ending. The Fairness Fund draws together a mix of council resources, reallocated funding, donations and paid partnerships with energy companies, as well as the Household Support Fund, to provide as much support as possible to low-income households impacted by the higher cost of living, particularly housing costs.
- 3.4 Total funding of £4.323m is expected to be available including £3.772m for the HSF component and £0.551m available from Fairness Fund resources.
- 3.5 One of the actions arising from the Cost of Living Action Plan was the establishment of the member-led Poverty Reduction Steering Group (PRSG). This group has seen and discussed the core allocation principles outlined in this report and endorses the approach taken.
- 3.6 There is a balance to be struck between crisis and prevention work, but, having consulted widely, it is the council's strategy to move the city's Welfare Support response towards a stronger prevention model aimed at achieving more sustainable outcomes for households. This approach is also endorsed by the PRSG and is core to the Cost of Living Action Plan. By focusing on prevention, we can help households to find longer-term solutions and reduce or avoid the need for future crisis or hardship support. This aligns with the intended direction of travel within the advice sector and with other strategies, for example, the recently adopted Food Strategy within the city.

- 3.7 However, it is recognised that there is still a high demand for crisis support, in the form of food help, assistance with fuel bills, access to household items and other essentials. Feedback from the organisations supported by HSF within the community indicate that they are reliant on HSF to provide this practical help and meet demands. There also continues to be a high number of applications to the Local Discretionary Social Fund (LDSF) and a backlog of cases.
- 3.8 Providing help for short periods provides some support but is unlikely to help resolve longer term debt or financial issues. All parts of the sector know that investing more in casework and advice to help people manage debt, save energy and fuel, find lower cost contracts for goods and services, or apply for welfare benefits they may be entitled to is much more likely to help in the longer term.
- 3.9 The proposed allocations of the combined BHFF and HSF resources in 2025/26 are summarised in the following table. The rationale for the proposed allocations is discussed below.

Combined BHFF and HSF Allocations 2025/26

Area of support	Amount (£)
Free school meals in the school holidays *	1,023,500
Local Discretionary Social Fund (LDSF)	565,322
LDSF staffing (Assessment and Advice)	290,000
Homelessness Prevention and Housing Advice	500,000
Welfare Advisory Support	126,000
Specific Welfare Advisory and Employment support aligned with homelessness prevention	48,000
Older people (Brighton and Hove Fuel Payment)	47,000
Community Hub Resource (for older people campaign)	37,000
Youth Advice Centre	108,000
Lift Up scheme (for Just About Managing households)	80,000
MAP Energyworks	79,000
BHESCO (energy support and advice)	35,000
Food and essentials through community organisations	675,000
Impact Initiatives (April to September 2025)	32,500
Contingency for winter demand and changes	32,000
Civic Leadership Programme	67,000
Community Kitchen projects	30,000
Period Poverty	15,000
Discretionary Council Tax Reduction Scheme	150,000
Family Hubs	80,000
Children's Services Pods / S17 payments	70,000
Fairness Fund for People and Place	140,000
Fairness Fund/HSF management and support	53,000
LIFT data dashboard (Low Income Family Tracker)	40,000
TOTAL	4,323,322

* Note, Easter 2025 is already funded from HSF 2024/25.

- 3.10 To recognise the lower level of HSF funding next year and continue the move toward a more prevention-focused approach, the LDSF team has already had to adjust the award criteria. The team is focusing more on cases where financial vulnerability is highest, and many of the awards made are tied in with the applicant accepting a referral for more in-depth advice. LDSF support will continue at a lower level but this in itself requires more support as there will be more households ineligible for vouchers who will be in need of support and advice. Paradoxically, the lower fund level therefore requires more trained officers to provide support and assistance.
- 3.11 Vouchers for Free School Meal eligible children during school holiday periods have been seen as an important and effective guard against food poverty for low income households. However, this scheme requires a substantial proportion of the available total funding and with the lower level of funds available, a revision of the scheme is proposed for 2025/26 to ensure resources can continue to support wider initiatives and objectives. However, it has been possible to fund the Easter holidays from flexibility within the previous HSF which is of significant help in maintaining the scheme in 2025/26. Support for Free School Meal vouchers in the school holidays is proposed to be provided at the following rates:
- May 25, October 25 and February 26 Half terms - £10 per child
 - Summer Holiday period - £50 per child
 - Christmas Holiday period - £25 per child
- Note: As aforementioned, Easter 2025 has been paid for from the previous HSF allocation, at a rate of £30 per child for the full two weeks.*
- 3.12 In previous years, temporary HSF funding paid for £15 per child per week in the school holidays. The reduced funding and increased spending pressures mean that the equivalent weekly amount for 2025-26 would be the same for Easter, but between £8 and £12.50 per child per week for the other holidays. However, it should be noted that the government has now confirmed, separately to HSF, a continuation of funding for the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) scheme, which will now continue throughout the 2025/26 year. HAF provides a range of activities, including food, for children through the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays. Also, access to food support and crisis help continues to be available across the city, funded by the HSF.
- 3.13 £0.500m is proposed to be allocated to Homelessness Prevention and Housing Advice. This will enable a new approach to linking welfare advisory and employment support services more closely with Housing Advisors. The council has identified a spending pressure of £4.3m across homelessness in 2025/26 where demand is expected to increase for preventing homelessness. This HSF allocation will help to mitigate that pressure, as it will enable the recruitment of Housing Advisor roles that would otherwise have been unsupported.
- 3.14 The funding will also allow for the continuation of the Youth Advice Centre's Housing Support work, which the council was already committed to until the end of June. However, the alignment with HSF provides a new opportunity. Officers from Housing and Welfare, Revenues and Business Support

(WRBS) are working to create a model that will enhance the service provided and contribute to the prevention of homelessness.

- 3.15 A new Landlord enquiry line will also be developed, enabling landlords to contact the council directly if they are worried that a tenant is falling behind with their rent and may benefit from pro-active assistance and advice.
- 3.16 Elsewhere in the proposed allocation plan, allowance is made for additional Welfare Rights Advisory hours. This will enable joint working where benefits advice needs to be available alongside Housing Advisors for advice and support for clients. It is anticipated that this will be focused around cases that do not fall under the relief duty, but are nonetheless in need of support to maximise their income from Welfare Benefits and employment support.
- 3.17 £0.126m is allocated for the council to continue to provide Welfare Support and Advice at existing levels, which it would otherwise have had to withdraw. This will allow for trained staff in the Welfare, Revenues & Business Support (WRBS) team to continue to provide essential preventive support and advice.
- 3.18 Further to the commitment to June, £0.108m one-off additional support for the Youth Advice Centre is proposed. In feedback gathered from the Advice sector and other Voluntary Sector organisations, concerns were raised about the potential loss of funding for YAC over the next year. However, the HSF can cover the costs of retaining existing advisors at YAC.
- 3.19 With this funding, YAC will be able to continue posts that comprise a mixture of Housing Support and general support and advice roles. In advance of April, officers from Housing and WRBS will meet with YAC to agree the best way to deliver a service to young people that prevents the likelihood of them becoming homeless.
- 3.20 The following are also proposed to be supported in line with previous allocations of HSF that have worked well and ensure that people and households presenting through different routes can be supported:
- £0.150m for Discretionary Council Tax Reduction, topping up Council Tax Reduction for those most in need.
 - £0.070m for Family Hubs – vouchers and caseworking with families.
 - £0.060m for Children’s Services (Section 17 payments).
 - £0.114m on Energy support programmes, including advice provided by MAP+ and energy efficiency help and visits from BHESCO.
 - £0.080m “Lift up” scheme with Money Advice Plus, for households that do not qualify for benefits, and are ‘just about managing’.
 - £0.040m for the Low Income Family Tracker dashboard – this software solution enables the council to identify, track and carry out proactive campaigns for vulnerable cohorts in the city.
 - £0.050m support for older people (Brighton and Hove Fuel Payment)
 - £0.150m Fairness Fund for People and Place, a programme of financial support for grass roots community organisations
- 3.21 Food support in the city continues to be a priority, given evidence of continued high demands. £0.675m is set aside to distribute to over 50 community organisations and food projects, for food and other essentials.

- 3.22 Impact Initiatives provide on the day voucher support and signposting towards community help. The council has provided funding for the service since the pandemic, when the function was particularly relevant for residents who were clinically vulnerable and had to shield. The funding is no longer being provided by the General Fund, so an HSF allocation of £0.033m has been made to continue the service for six months until the end of September. During this time, officers will work with Impact Initiatives and the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership (BHFP) to establish what the future of such support should be.
- 3.23 A modest budget of £0.032m is proposed to be set aside for emerging needs changing demand. It is recognised that the council's approach to the Cost of Living could evolve during the year, particularly as winter 2025-26 is still some way in the future. Priorities will be reassessed in August via the Poverty Reduction Steering Group and decisions on allocations will be made in accordance with recommendation 2.2
- 3.24 In line with the council's commitment to building a fair and inclusive city, it is proposed that £0.067m of the Fairness Fund will support a Civic Leadership Programme in partnership with Operation Black Vote. The aims of the programme are to promote diversity across civic leadership roles across the city.

4 Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 By utilising the full amount of funding available from the Brighton & Hove Fairness Fund and the Household Support Fund the proposed allocations aim to provide a balanced spread of advice, prevention and hardship support. This is based on what has worked well before together with a recognition that prevention is preferable and effort should be increasingly focused on helping households into a more sustainable situation.
- 4.2 Note that the severe funding and demand pressures on the General Fund budget mean that minimum support from the HSF of £0.290m for Welfare Support and Advice officers, and £0.500m for homelessness prevention and housing advisers is required as assumed in the approved General Fund budget, otherwise these services/pressures will need to be reduced or withdrawn.
- 4.3 Changing the balance of allocations is possible and different methods of allocation for school holidays are possible but the proposed allocations attempt to sustain effective support, maintain a diverse range of access routes, provide more preventive advice and support, and enable a number of innovative initiatives.

5 Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 The Welfare Support and Financial Assistance Board met throughout the previous rounds of HSF, with attendees from multiple services and organisations providing welfare support in the city, including the advice sector and the BHFP. During these meetings, current demand was discussed, alongside forthcoming HSF proposals.

- 5.2 The Poverty Reduction Steering Group met on 12 February 2025 and discussed the core principles contained in this report. There was a full discussion of the potential impact of different choices and broad agreement with the proposed allocations of the Fairness Fund and HSF.
- 5.3 Specific funding meetings were held with a broad cross-section of the voluntary and advice sectors, including representation from the Advice Matters and Moneyworks partnerships, Community Works and BHFP, alongside some individual organisations and services within the council. The overall feedback was that whilst moving to a prevention model is the right approach, there is still high demand for crisis support, and the citywide infrastructure will operate more effectively if change is managed incrementally. The feeling was that 2025/26 could and should be viewed as a transitional year. This will also enable more time to understand the government's longer-term funding intentions around localised welfare support.
- 5.4 Key concerns included the funding situation for YAC and to ensure that there was adequate support for disabilities. There was support for changes to LDSF criteria and the corresponding reduction in LDSF spend. It was reported that there is adequate provision for energy support in other funding bids so this element can be reduced somewhat in the new HSF allocations without impacting available support.

6 Financial implications

- 6.1 The funding sources set out in this report are based on the best information currently available. The total of £0.551m from the Fairness Fund is available but the Household Support Fund 2025/26 is yet to be confirmed. Based on the announced national total and previous HSF distributions, the council is expected to receive £3.772m.
- 6.2 The report proposes delegating authority to the S151 Chief Financial Officer following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration to make minor alterations to the allocation of the HSF in order to maximise its use in accordance with the relevant time constraints and any change to the final allocation from government.

Finance officer consulted: Nigel Manvell Date consulted: 22/2/25

7 Legal implications

- 7.1 The key legal and governance implications are to ensure that the funds are distributed in accordance with the funding criteria to avoid any claw back or loss of funding. A clear record of the decision making and the detail of the allocations made is required. The recommended report back to Cabinet at the end of 25-26 year will assist with ensuring this is in place.
- 7.2 Lawyer consulted: Elizabeth Culbert 28.02.25

8 Equalities implications

- 8.1 The Equalities Impact Assessment from the previous Fairness Fund and HSF report has been reviewed. Whilst there are no substantive changes to

the main conditions impacting those with protected characteristics, some changes in the allocation plan could have an impact.

- 8.2 Overall, the Fairness Fund and HSF has a positive impact on protected characteristics. Significant elements of funding are directed towards grass-roots and community based organisations, strengthening local support networks for people with protected characteristics and has a positive impact on creation of access and equity. This is particularly the case for disabled, D/deaf/deafened, blind, migrant/refugee/ asylum seeker, QTIPOC, TNBI and Black and Racially Minoritised communities.
- 8.3 The restructuring of the Free School Meal vouchers in the school holidays means that those who are most financially disadvantaged will be impacted disproportionately. However, mitigation exists in the form of the Holiday Activities Fund, for which take up could be increased. Furthermore, HSF is distributed widely to community organisations across the city, where families in need can access help directly, in addition to the availability of the LDSF for the most financially vulnerable. Both the HSF and HAF are temporary funding and so the impact will have to be re-examined in light of the government's future funding plans, when known.

9 Sustainability implications

- 9.1 There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report however there is funding support for energy advice and fuel poverty that is aimed at helping households to achieve greater energy efficiency or reduce energy use.

10 Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 10.1 Allocations of the Fairness Fund and HSF are aimed at supporting the Cost of Living Plan and reducing the impacts of poverty for low income households alongside supporting advice services (food, fuel and financial) to help people reach a more sustainable position. This has significant health and wellbeing benefits as poverty and debt are known to be significant contributors to ill-health, particularly mental health issues which has well researched links to debt. The HSF will also be used to underpin continued investment in homelessness prevention which is also a significant contributor to poor health outcomes.

11 Conclusion

- 11.1 The recommendations in this report, if approved, will enable a continued response to the challenges low income households are facing within the resources available and in line with the Cost of Living Action Plan. It will complement other local welfare assistance such as the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Discretionary Housing Payments and will support other preventive services including Public Health services, homeless prevention services and community & voluntary sector support.

Supporting Documentation

Appendices

1. Equality Impact Assessment

General Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

Support:

An [EIA toolkit](#), [workshop content](#), and guidance for completing an [Equality Impact Assessment \(EIA\) form](#) are available on the [EIA page](#) of the [EDI Internal Hub](#). Please read these before completing this form.

For enquiries and further support if the toolkit and guidance do not answer your questions, contact your Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Business Partner as follows:

- Economy, Environment and Culture (EEC) – [Chris Brown](#),
- Families, Children, and Learning (FCL) – [Jamarl Billy](#),
- Governance, People, and Resources (GPR) – [Eric Page](#).
- Health and Adult Social Care (HASC) – [Zofia Danin](#),
- Housing, Neighbourhoods, and Communities (HNC) – [Jamarl Billy](#)

Processing Time:

- EIAs can take up to 10 business days to approve after a completed EIA of a good standard is submitted to the EDI Business Partner. This is not considering unknown and unplanned impacts of capacity, resource constraints, and work pressures on the EDI team at the time your EIA is submitted.
- If your request is urgent, we can explore support exceptionally on request.
- We encourage improved planning and thinking around EIAs to avoid urgent turnarounds as these make EIAs riskier, limiting, and blind spots may remain unaddressed for the 'activity' you are assessing.

Process:

- Once fully completed, submit your EIA to your EDI Business Partner, copying in your Head of Service, Business Improvement Manager (if one exists in your directorate), Equalities inbox, and any other relevant service colleagues to enable EIA communication, tracking and saving.
- When your EIA is reviewed, discussed, and then approved, the EDI Business Partner will assign a reference to it and send the approved EIA form back to you with the EDI Manager or Head of Communities, Equality, and Third Sector (CETS) Service's approval as appropriate.
- Only approved EIAs are to be attached to Committee reports. Unapproved EIAs are invalid.

1. Assessment details

Throughout this form, 'activity' is used to refer to many different types of proposals being assessed.

Read the [EIA toolkit](#) for more information.

Name of activity or proposal being assessed:	Fairness Fund and Household Support Fund
Directorate:	Governance, People and Resources (GPR)
Service:	Welfare, Revenues and Business Support (WRBS)

Team:	Welfare Support
Is this a new or existing activity?	Continuation of an existing activity, with some changes
Are there related EIAs that could help inform this EIA? Yes or No (If Yes, please use this to inform this assessment)	Yes, previous EIA's for Cabinet and Committee reports dealing with the Fairness Fund and Household Support Fund

2. Contributors to the assessment (Name and Job title)

Responsible Lead Officer:	Paul Ross-Dale and Tabitha Cork (Welfare Revenues & Business Support Managers)
Accountable Manager:	Graham Bourne, Head of Service
Additional stakeholders collaborating or contributing to this assessment:	EDI Business Partner

3. About the activity

Briefly describe the purpose of the activity being assessed:

Allocation of around £4.2m Fairness Fund and Household Support Fund for the purposes of welfare support in the city.

What are the desired outcomes of the activity?

An effective and equitable distribution of support, linking crisis response to long-term solutions where possible, across the areas of emergency food, fuel poverty, community organisations helping those in need, and households experiencing extreme financial vulnerability.

Which key groups of people do you think are likely to be affected by the activity?

A broad range of households and communities with different backgrounds, from across the city. Poverty and financial vulnerability tends to impact those with protected characteristics and minoritised identities or lived experiences more strongly.

4. Consultation and engagement

What consultations or engagement activities have already happened that you can use to inform this assessment?

- For example, relevant stakeholders, groups, people from within the council and externally consulted and engaged on this assessment. **If no consultation** has been done or it is not enough or in process – state this and describe your plans to address any gaps.

We have a regular dialogue with the voluntary sector and other council services, via the Welfare Support and Financial Assistance meetings, the Fuel Poverty and Affordable Warmth Steering Group, the Food Insecurity Group and other adhoc meetings through the year. Due to this network, we have extensive experience and knowledge of the impact of Household Support Fund and the levels of demand in the city as far as crisis response is concerned.

5. Current data and impact monitoring

Do you currently collect and analyse the following data to enable monitoring of the impact of this activity?
 Consider all possible intersections.

(State Yes, No, Not Applicable as appropriate):

Age	Partial
Disability and inclusive adjustments, coverage under equality act and not	Partial
Ethnicity, 'Race', ethnic heritage (including Gypsy, Roma, Travellers)	Partial
Religion, Belief, Spirituality, Faith, or Atheism	Partial
Gender Identity and Sex (including non-binary and Intersex people)	Partial
Gender Reassignment	Partial
Sexual Orientation	Partial
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No
Pregnant people, Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Menopause, (In)fertility (across the gender spectrum)	No
Armed Forces Personnel, their families, and Veterans	Partial
Expatriates, Migrants, Asylum Seekers, and Refugees	No
Carers	Partial
Looked after children, Care Leavers, Care and fostering experienced people	Partial
Domestic and/or Sexual Abuse and Violence Survivors, and people in vulnerable situations (All aspects and intersections)	No
Socio-economic Disadvantage	Partial
Homelessness and associated risk and vulnerability	Partial
Human Rights	No

Additional relevant groups that may be widely disadvantaged and have intersecting experiences that create exclusion and systemic barriers may include:

- Ex-offenders and people with unrelated convictions
- Lone parents
- People experiencing homelessness
- People facing literacy and numeracy barriers
- People on a low income and people living in the most deprived areas
- People who have experienced female genital mutilation (FGM)
- People who have experienced human trafficking or modern slavery

- People with experience of or living with addiction and/ or a substance use disorder (SUD)
- Sex workers

If you answered “NO” to any of the above, how will you gather this data to enable improved monitoring of impact for this activity?

The allocations of the fund bridge multiple organisations of varying size. Many of them are not resourced to collect and monitor data to the level that we would be able to conduct any detailed analysis. We do have some data about some of the protected characteristics for our awards from the Local Discretionary Social Fund (LDSF). We also have regular opportunities for soft input from all of our partner organisations, which helps to inform the future design of our welfare response.

What are the arrangements you and your service have for monitoring, and reviewing the impact of this activity?

The range of activities is so broad that there is no easy way to monitor the impacts of the activity. There is a broadly ameliorative effect across all of the protected characteristics because the activities are about providing financial and wellbeing support to those who ask for help.

6. Impacts

Advisory Note:

- **Impact:**
 - Assessing disproportionate impact means understanding potential negative impact (that may cause direct or indirect discrimination), and then assessing the relevance (that is: the potential effect of your activity on people with protected characteristics) and proportionality (that is: how strong the effect is).
 - These impacts should be identified in the EIA and then re-visited regularly as you review the EIA every 12 to 18 months as applicable to the duration of your activity.
- **SMART Actions mean:** Actions that are (SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, T = Time-bound)
- **Cumulative Assessment:** If there is impact on all groups equally, complete **only** the cumulative assessment section.
- **Data analysis and Insights:**
 - In each protected characteristic or group, in answer to the question ‘If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?’, describe what you have learnt from your data analysis about disproportionate impacts, stating relevant insights and data sources.
 - Find and use contextual and wide ranges of data analysis (including community feedback) to describe what the disproportionate positive and negative impacts are on different, and intersecting populations impacted by your activity, especially considering for [Health inequalities](#), review guidance and inter-related impacts, and the impact of various identities.
 - For example: If you are doing road works or closures in a particular street or ward – look at a variety of data and do so from various protected characteristic lenses. Understand and analyse what that means for your project and its impact on different types of people, residents, family types and so on. State your understanding of impact in both effect of impact and strength of that effect on those impacted.
- **Data Sources:**
 - **Consider a wide range (including but not limited to):**
 - [Population and population groups](#)

- [Census 2021 population groups Infogram: Brighton & Hove by Brighton and Hove City Council](#)
- [Census](#) and [local intelligence data](#)
- Service specific data
- Community consultations
- Insights from customer feedback including complaints and survey results
- Lived experiences and qualitative data
- [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\) data](#)
- [Health Inequalities data](#)
- Good practice research
- National data and reports relevant to the service
- Workforce, leaver, and recruitment data, surveys, insights
- Feedback from internal 'staff as residents' consultations
- Insights, gaps, and data analyses on intersectionality, accessibility, sustainability requirements, and impacts.
- Insights, gaps, and data analyses on 'who' the most intersectionally marginalised and excluded under-represented people and communities are in the context of this EIA.

Learn more about the [Equality Act 2010](#) and about our [Public Sector Equality Duty](#)

6.1 Age

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to any particular Age group? For example: those under 16, young adults, with other intersections.	YES
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If "YES", what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

<p><u>Older people:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of Living (CoL) crisis affecting all age groups, but increased fuel costs make older people more vulnerable to unaffordable fuel bills. Older people are on a fixed income and cannot increase this as needed, through work. They may require additional heating, due to health conditions. • Older people with health problems are more likely to be housebound. As such they may be limited in their ability to shop for their essential needs or socialise. • Older people more likely to have additional requirements for electronic health-related equipment, thus increasing costs • Older people more likely to have more expensive food costs due to specialist dietary needs. • Older people's health is more at risk if they cannot afford to heat their homes, eat adequately, or pay for essential medications / social care. • Census figures show rise in population figures for age group 50+ (55 to 59 almost doubled since 2011) <p><u>Young people</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brighton Youth Advice Centre (YAC) has confirmed a significant rise in young people under 25 presenting to them as struggling to manage their finances, despite not being eligible for means-tested benefits. • Young people unable to budget for costs of applying for better jobs or providing for themselves and/or children in the future, which can cause financial stress / anxiety.
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- Children at risk of insufficient or inadequate diets during school holidays, due to additional financial strains on the household, if school holiday vouchers are not provided.
- Young people less financially independent because of decrease in employment opportunities. More likely to be on a fixed income.
- The cost-of-living crisis has squeezed essential household income meaning those affected have had to adjust to lower income relative to inflation and other pressures
- Due to the rising costs of day-to-day essentials such as food and fuel, it is more difficult to manage on lower or fixed incomes.
- HSF will fund general and Housing advice for young people that would otherwise have been cut due to the council's budgetary restrictions in 2025-26. HSF will therefore prevent a disproportionate impact on young people.
- Young people engage more effectively with support provided by YAC than with formal statutory bodies

6.2 Disability:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Disability , considering our anticipatory duty ?	YES
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If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

In the context of distributing funds for help, the issues concerned might be around the fair distribution and adequate coverage of assistance.

The following factors may be an issue for some Disabled people:

- Limited opportunity to increase their income to afford additional costs arising from their health/disability needs.
- The need to keep homes warm or properly ventilated for health reasons.
- Additional requirements for electronic health-related equipment.
- More likely to have more expensive food costs due to specialist dietary needs.
- The possibility of being housebound and/or experiencing social isolation
- May not have access to the shops or be able to shop widely for competitive prices.
- More likely to be digitally excluded and may not be able to access cheaper deals online.
- Negative effect on pre-existing mental illness as a direct result of managing rising costs.
- Those on a fixed income less likely to have savings or financial contingency for increased cost in food and other expenses.
- Neurodiverse people may not be able to request help or recognise the need for help in the same way as Neurotypical people.
- Our datasets in Housing Benefits, Council Tax and LDSF are very limited, even where the option is provided for clients to give information relating to protected characteristics. It is therefore not possible to draw meaningful conclusions from that data alone.
- High intersection of disabled people within the city's socially deprived areas.

What [inclusive adjustments](#) are you making for diverse disabled people impacted? For example: D/deaf, deafened, hard of hearing, blind, neurodivergent people, those with non-visible disabilities, and with access requirements that may not identify as disabled or meet the legal definition of disability, and have various intersections (Black and disabled, LGBTQIA+ and disabled).

The Local Discretionary Social Fund (LDSF) team are accessible via phone or email contact and support can be given by staff on the team to make applications for crisis support. The HSF is distributed through a wide range of third sector partners, with consideration to organisations who already have an established support route for those with protected characteristics

6.3 Ethnicity, 'Race', ethnic heritage (including Gypsy, Roma, Travellers):

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to ethnicity?	YES
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If "YES", what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

- More likely to be on a low or fixed income or having limited or variable hours of work.
- Residents with No Recourse to Public Funds including EU nationals without access to benefits in precarious employment or working in the black economy are already vulnerable to destitution if they lose employment.
- Some communities will have specific dietary needs.
- Black and Racially Minoritised households almost twice as likely to be in food poverty in Brighton and Hove according to Money Advice Plus
- BMECP previously reported demand so high they have had to prioritise families with children which increases the risk around BME young people and pensioners (BMECP)
- High number of requests for help with rent, 70% of which from residents not on benefits (BMECP)
- Specific dietary needs may be impacted by food shortages or price rises on high demand products.
- Emergency food support available may not include items specific to dietary needs.
- Language and cultural barriers mean some groups may not be aware of support available through grants, additional benefit support or crisis intervention routes (e.g., food banks, Local Discretionary Social Fund (LDSF) etc.
- Our datasets in Housing Benefits, Council Tax and LDSF are very limited, even where the option is provided for clients to give information relating to protected characteristics. It is therefore not possible to draw meaningful conclusions from that data alone.

6.4 Religion, Belief, Spirituality, Faith, or Atheism:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Religion, Belief, Spirituality, Faith, or Atheism?	YES
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If "YES", what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

- Specific dietary needs can involve higher cost points as there is less availability.
- Emergency food support available may not include items specific to dietary needs. Council's new Food Strategy Action Plan notes the need for training to be provided to the city's emergency food providers around culturally specific dietary requirements.
- Language and cultural barriers mean some groups may not be aware of support available through grants, additional benefit support or crisis intervention routes (e.g., food banks, Local Discretionary Social Fund (LDSF) etc.

- Using community partners to help deliver HSF means that some groups can be supported by organisations from within their own communities, where language barriers may be overcome and information can be shared by word of mouth. If HSF was only delivered through the council, this would provide a greater disadvantage to non-English speaking households.
- HSF funding for organisations means that there is a greater opportunity for communities to come together and gain mutual support
- Provision to faith-based organisations may mean that some people feel excluded if they are not part of the same faith group. However, there is a very broad provision among our delivery partners, most of whom are not faith-based.
- Our datasets in Housing Benefits, Council Tax and LDSF are very limited, even where the option is provided for clients to give information relating to protected characteristics. It is therefore not possible to draw meaningful conclusions from that data alone.

6.5 Gender Identity and Sex:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Gender Identity and Sex (including non-binary and intersex people)?	YES
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If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

- Women are more likely to be working part time, or on a fixed income, than men and generally on lower comparative pay or experiencing pay gaps.
- Additional burdens due to the Cost of Living could have disproportionate impact on women due to the nature of their employment types and barriers to employment for those with sole childcare responsibilities.
- Single parents are more commonly women and are therefore also more likely to be subject to the Benefit Cap than men, which limits their welfare benefit income. With the sole burden of childcare requirements and lack of opportunities for work that couples may have, women are disproportionately affected under welfare benefit restrictions such as the Benefit Cap and the ‘Two Child Limit’ and therefore more likely to be living in financial hardship.
- Women with mental health problems are more likely to be financially burdened than men with mental health problems [Through-the-lens Gender-money-and-mental-health.pdf](#)
- Women, genderqueer and non-binary people can face additional financial costs, such as for period products

6.6 Gender Reassignment:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Gender Reassignment ?	YES
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If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

- More likely to be financially disadvantaged or living on a fixed income.
- LGBTQ+ people, particularly trans people, tend to be paid substantially less than those outside of the community.

- Trans people are more likely to be in precarious employment or housing.
- Those on a fixed income less likely to have savings or financial contingency for increased cost in fuel and food expenses.
- Trans community can have additional costs as part of transition process that they struggle to meet due to cost of food / fuel.
- Lack of family support network for residents who have come to Brighton to be part of a community.
- Trans people are more likely to be further excluded or impacted due to intersections with Racialised and ethnic backgrounds, migrant/ refugee/ asylum seeker experiences, and disability.
- Mental health is a significant issue for the trans community, which can have intersections with income security and debt.

Organisations supporting LGBTQ+ community are increasingly at risk due to reduced funding.

6.7 Sexual Orientation:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Sexual Orientation ?	YES
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If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

- Intersection of LGBTQ+ issues with young people who gravitate to the city or remain in the city after higher education for community reasons, which can then lead to financial vulnerability. For example, due to high housing costs locally.
- Possible lack of family support network.
- QTIPOC barriers unknown in detail, including intersections with disabilities, neurodivergence, autism.

6.8 Marriage and Civil Partnership:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Marriage and Civil Partnership?	YES
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If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

- The strain of economic pressures and debt caused by an increase in the cost of living can impact on the relationships of householders and their Mental Health.
- In incidents of fleeing Domestic Violence the family is often relocated away from their network of family and friends.
- Single parents can have less ability to increase their earned income and may be disproportionately impacted by welfare restrictions such as the Benefit Cap and the Two Child Limit.
- Single and same sex households with other intersections such as Black and Racially Minoritised, migrant, women-only, disabled households and QTIPOC and trans and non-binary households may likely be experiencing additional strains due to Cost of Living increases and pay gaps as well as social deprivation and other impacts.

6.9 Pregnant people, Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Menopause, (In)fertility (across the gender spectrum):

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Pregnant people, Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Menopause, (In)fertility (across the gender spectrum)?	YES
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If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already reduced income placed under greater pressure due to cost-of-living (CoL). • Reduced income risks deepening or newly establishing debt. • Unable to comfortably adapt to additional costs associated with CoL, i.e., pressure on household budget impacts ability to buy baby food and other essentials. • Less able to buy in more food to manage holiday periods if there is no provision for vouchers in the school holidays, as well as post-natal period when less able to get out. • Our awareness of intersectional impacts due to different identities and layers of barriers is limited.
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6.10 Armed Forces Personnel, their families, and Veterans:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Armed Forces Members and Veterans?	NO
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If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

No specific impacts identified

6.11 Expatriates, Migrants, Asylum Seekers, and Refugees:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Expatriates, Migrants, Asylum seekers, Refugees, those New to the UK, and UK visa or assigned legal status? (Especially considering for age, ethnicity, language, and various intersections)	YES
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If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) households may be at particular financial risk if not eligible for all support mechanisms that have been put in place. • Residents with insecure immigration status may fear contacting the authorities in case their details are shared with the Home Office. • Household Support Fund is one of the few resources available to help people with NRPF.
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- Intersections with disability, being Black and Racially Minoritised, belonging to minoritised faiths and religions, being trans, , non-binary and intersex (TNBI), having caring responsibilities and domestic violence exposure/ lived experience can be further impacts due to increasing cost of living pressures.

6.12 [Carers](#):

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Carers (Especially considering for age, ethnicity, language, and various intersections).	YES
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If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

- More likely to be on a limited and fixed income due to caring requirements.
- More likely to have higher fuel costs due to health or disability requirements of the people they care for.
- Those on a fixed income less likely to have savings or financial contingency for increased cost in food and other expenses.
- Depending on intersections with other communities of identity, access and awareness of funds and support may be lacking e.g. those from Transgender, Non-Binary and Intersex (TNBI) backgrounds, some disabled people from non-White non-English non-UK backgrounds, migrants.

6.13 Looked after children, Care Leavers, Care and fostering experienced people:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Looked after children, Care Leavers, Care and fostering experienced children and adults (Especially considering for age, ethnicity, language, and various intersections). Also consider our Corporate Parenting Responsibility in connection to your activity.	YES
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If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

Financial Independence at a Young Age: Care leavers are expected to be financially independent from the age of 18, unlike their peers who often remain financially supported by their families until their mid-20s. This abrupt transition can lead to financial instability and hardship.

Limited Access to Higher Education: Many care-experienced individuals face barriers to higher education, which can limit their career opportunities and earning potential. For example, those in residential care have a significantly lower chance of achieving higher educational qualifications compared to those in parental care

Employment Challenges: Care leavers often struggle to find stable employment due to a lack of qualifications, work experience, and support networks. This can result in lower income and job insecurity

Cost of Living Pressures: The cost of living crisis disproportionately affects care leavers, who may not have the financial safety net that others do. They are more vulnerable to financial shocks and may struggle to afford basic necessities

Health Inequalities: Poor health outcomes among care-experienced individuals can lead to increased medical expenses and reduced earning capacity. They are more likely to suffer from mental health issues and chronic illnesses, which can further exacerbate financial difficulties

6.14 Homelessness:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to people experiencing homelessness, and associated risk and vulnerability? (Especially considering for age, veteran, ethnicity, language, and various intersections)	YES
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If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

Many clients accessing crisis support will be at risk of homelessness.

- Homelessness places women at a significant financial disadvantage as well as impacting on their mental health and the wellbeing of the family.
- Limited or no access to support from family and friends
- Without a network of support, increased expenses may follow due to a loss of informal childcare. Or hours of work may need to be reduced.
- More expenses associated with being relocated further away from schools and GP surgeries.
- More likely to be susceptible to infection and other health concerns from lack of shelter and warmth.
- More likely to have poor nutrition which will impact on a person's health and wellbeing.
- Less able to access support services, including benefits and bank accounts.

6.15 Domestic and/or Sexual Abuse and Violence Survivors, people in vulnerable situations:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Domestic Abuse and Violence Survivors, and people in vulnerable situations (All aspects and intersections)?	YES
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If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

In incidents of fleeing Domestic Violence the family is often relocated away from their network of family and friends

Those fleeing or living with Domestic Abuse may be less able to maintain employment and therefore a regular income.

Those living with Domestic Abuse may be subject to financial control or abuse. This may be more challenging for those with TNBI, disabled, some faiths, Black and Racially Minoritised and Migrant/refugee/ asylum seeker lived experiences.

6.16 Socio-economic Disadvantage:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Socio-economic Disadvantage? (Especially considering for age, disability, D/deaf/ blind, ethnicity, expatriate background, and various intersections)	YES
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If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

<p>The nature of the Fairness Fund and Household Support Fund is to mitigate socio-economic disadvantage.</p> <p>Support for grass-roots and community based organisations strengthens local support networks for people with protected characteristics and has a positive impact on creation of access and equity. This is particularly the case for disabled, D/deaf/deafened, blind, migrant/ refugee/ asylum seeker, QTIPOC, TNBI and Black and Racially Minoritised communities. There is also consideration of an appropriate geographical reach to allow access for all disadvantaged communities.</p> <p>The threshold for Free School Meals eligibility is proportionately high, compared to some other forms of welfare support. A reduction in the amount of funding for Free School Meals in the holidays means that those who are in the greatest financial disadvantage will be disproportionately affected. However, the HSF support is distributed broadly via multiple council services and third sector organisations. There is no restriction on the number of times a household can access support through multiple avenues. Therefore the impact from this specific funding reduction is mitigated by their ability to access further support if necessary.</p> <p>Additionally the savings produced from the proportionately small reduction in holiday FSM funding per person means HSF is able to provide a wider remit of support to a broader cross section of our communities.</p>

6.17 Human Rights:

Will your activity have a disproportionate impact relating to Human Rights?	NO
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If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

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6.18 Cumulative, multiple [intersectional](#), and complex impacts (including on additional relevant groups):

What cumulative or complex impacts might the activity have on people who are members of multiple Minoritised groups?

- For example: people belonging to the Gypsy, Roma, and/or Traveller community who are also disabled, LGBTQIA+, older disabled trans and non-binary people, older Black and Racially Minoritised disabled people of faith, young autistic people.
- Also consider wider disadvantaged and intersecting experiences that create exclusion and systemic barriers:
 - People experiencing homelessness
 - People on a low income and people living in the most deprived areas
 - People facing literacy and numeracy barriers
 - Lone parents
 - People with experience of or living with addiction and/ or a substance use disorder (SUD)
 - Sex workers
 - Ex-offenders and people with unrelated convictions
 - People who have experienced female genital mutilation (FGM)
 - People who have experienced human trafficking or modern slavery

There is a strong degree of intersectionality across all protected characteristics when it comes to poverty, debt and the impact of the Cost-of-Living Crisis. Many of our vulnerable households will also face barriers of accessibility around technology, including digital literacy and availability of tablets, smart phones, and data to access online services. The multidoor approach through third sector organisations and the council's customer service centres and libraries means that the impact is mitigated. Literacy and numeracy issues impact on employability, and this has a direct impact on the ability for households to lift themselves out of poverty. An example of this is when benefit households are benefit-capped, but cannot easily access employment to become exempt from the cap.

7. Action planning

What SMART actions will be taken to address the disproportionate and cumulative impacts you have identified?

- Summarise relevant SMART actions from your data insights and disproportionate impacts below for this assessment, listing appropriate activities per action as bullets. (This will help your Business Manager or Fair and Inclusive Action Plan (FIAP) Service representative to add these to the Directorate FIAP, discuss success measures and timelines with you, and monitor this EIA's progress as part of quarterly and regular internal and external auditing and monitoring)

1. Ensure that referral pathways are clear for all clients, channelling them to appropriate help, and making inclusive and compassionate adjustments in keeping with the Accessible City and Anti-Racism strategies wherever possible.
2. Review training plan and availability of awareness resources for staff regarding protected characteristics and proactively develop understanding around intersectionality, diverse lived experiences and any other areas that may be a knowledge gap.
3. Broad distribution of financial support to organisations in the voluntary sector.
 - Support for food and essentials will go to 40+ organisations, including those focussed on protected characteristics and specialists such as Voices in Exile
4. Practice being a listening council through proactive practice and engagement.
 - Regular meetings involving the Voluntary and Community Sector (for example Welfare Support and Financial Assistance meeting/ Fuel and Affordable Warmth Steering Group) to hear the latest impacts of Cost of Living on specific client groups.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure representation of voice is intersectional and across age groups and lived experiences, especially for those from Black and Racially Minoritised, QTPOC, and TNBI communities. • A six-monthly review meeting with organisations who are distributing the Household Support Fund to gather feedback about impact of the fund, and emerging trends/issues • A progress and outcomes report will be submitted to a future Cabinet meeting regarding the latest round of HSF
5. Ensure that the council's Cost of Living hub on the website remains accessible for as many people as possible, especially from a disability, Easy Read and BSL provision, and migrant/ refugee/ asylum seeker perspective. Community Hub to provide ongoing support for those who find online access difficult.
6. Invest in support programmes where advice is aligned alongside practical support. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy advice • Financial advice • Debt advice

Which action plans will the identified actions be transferred to?

- For example: Team or Service Plan, Local Implementation Plan, a project plan related to this EIA, FIAP (Fair and Inclusive Action Plan) – mandatory noting of the EIA on the Directorate EIA Tracker to enable monitoring of all equalities related actions identified in this EIA. This is done as part of FIAP performance reporting and auditing. Speak to your Directorate's Business Improvement Manager (if one exists for your Directorate) or to the Head of Service/ lead who enters actions and performance updates on FIAP and seek support from your Directorate's EDI Business Partner.

Local team/ service implementation and practice plan.

8. Outcome of your assessment

What decision have you reached upon completing this Equality Impact Assessment? (Mark 'X' for any ONE option below)

Stop or pause the activity due to unmitigable disproportionate impacts because the evidence shows bias towards one or more groups.	
Adapt or change the activity to eliminate or mitigate disproportionate impacts and/or bias.	
Proceed with the activity as currently planned – no disproportionate impacts have been identified, or impacts will be mitigated by specified SMART actions.	X
Proceed with caution – disproportionate impacts have been identified but having considered all available options there are no other or proportionate ways to achieve the aim of the activity (for example, in extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore, you are going to proceed with caution with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.	

If your decision is to "Proceed with caution", please provide a reasoning for this:

Summarise your overall equality impact assessment recommendations to include in any committee papers to help guide and support councillor decision-making:

The distribution of the Fairness Fund and Household Support Fund is in itself a mitigation for the impacts of the Cost-of-Living crisis on individuals with protected characteristics. Broad access to the fund will help to ensure that help is distributed as fairly as possible, reaching households most in need. A number of actions have been identified to ensure equity and intersectional considerations and approach which will be reviewed as required.

9. Publication

All Equality Impact Assessments will be published. If you are recommending, and choosing not to publish your EIA, please provide a reason:

10. Directorate and Service Approval

Signatory:	Name and Job Title:	Date: DD-MMM-YY
Responsible Lead Officer:	Paul Ross-Dale and Tabitha Cork (Revenue & Benefits Managers in the Welfare Revenues & Business Support Service)	19/02/25
Accountable Manager:	Graham Bourne, Head of Service Hub and Nigel Manvell, Chief Finance Officer	XXX

Notes, relevant information, and requests (if any) from Responsible Lead Officer and Accountable Manager submitting this assessment:

EDI Review, Actions, and Approval:

Equality Impact Assessment sign-off

EIA Reference number assigned: GPR106-20-Mar-24-EIA-Fairness-Fund-and-HSF

For example, HNC##-25-Dec-23-EIA-Home-Energy-Saving-Landlord-Scheme

EDI Business Partner to cross-check against aims of the equality duty, public sector duty and our civic responsibilities the activity considers and refer to relevant internal checklists and guidance prior to recommending sign-off.

Once the EDI Business Partner has considered the equalities impact to provide first level approval for by those submitting the EIA, they will get the EIA signed off and sent to the requester copying the Head of

Service, Business Improvement Manager, [Equalities inbox](#), any other service colleagues as appropriate to enable EIA tracking, accountability, and saving for publishing.

Signatory:	Name:	Date: DD-MMM-YY
EDI Business Partner:	Eric Page	Thu 27 th Feb 2025
EDI Manager:	Sabah Holmes	-
Head of Communities, Equality, and Third Sector (CETS) Service: <i>(For Budget EIAs/ in absence of EDI Manager/ as final approver)</i>	Not applicable	

Notes and recommendations from EDI Business Partner reviewing this assessment:

Added in as comments for support

Notes and recommendations (if any) from EDI Manager reviewing this assessment:

Notes and recommendations (if any) from Head of CETS Service reviewing this assessment:

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 180

Subject: Planned Maintenance Budget and Asset Management Fund Allocations and Education Capital Resources and Capital Investment Programme 2025-2026

Date of meeting: 20 March 2025

Report of: Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration

Contact Officer: Name: Nilesh Pankhania

Tel: 07795 823280

Email: Nilesh.pankhania@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Key Decision: Yes

Reason(s) Key: Expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the expenditure of the City Council's budget, namely above £1,000,000 and is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards).

1 Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform the Cabinet of the level of available capital resources allocated to support education buildings and to recommend a capital programme for 2025/26 in respect of School Condition Allocations (SCA), Basic Needs and High Needs Provision Capital Allocation (HNPCA) funding.
- 1.2 The report also seeks approval for the annual revenue budget allocation and programme of maintenance, improvements and Health & Safety works for the council's operational property portfolio. In this respect, the report details the allocations for two budget areas: The Planned Maintenance Budget ("PMB") and the Asset Management Fund ("AMF").
- 1.3 The Planned Maintenance Budget (PMB) covers essential repair works to civic offices, historic, operational, commercial and environmental buildings and consists of a combined revenue and capital budget of £3,941,940 and a Social Care Planned Works Budget of £500,000, totalling £4,441,940 for 2025/26.
- 1.4 The annual Asset Management Fund (AMF) is a capital budget for property improvements and health & safety works totalling £1,000,000.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet notes the level of available capital resources totalling £4.200m for investment relating to education buildings.
- 2.2 Cabinet agrees the allocation of funding as shown in Appendix 1 for inclusion within the council's Capital Investment Programme 2025/26.
- 2.3 Cabinet grants delegated authority to the Director of Property & Finance to procure the capital maintenance and basic need works required, as set out in Appendix 1, and enter into contracts in accordance with Contract Standing Orders.
- 2.4 Cabinet approves the annual programme of planned maintenance works within the Planned Maintenance Budget as detailed in Appendix 2, at a total estimated cost of £4,441,940.
- 2.5 Cabinet approves the allocations from the Asset Management Fund for 2025-26, totalling £1,000,000, as detailed in Appendix 3.
- 2.6 Cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Property & Finance to take all steps necessary to procure the Planned Maintenance Budget works and Asset Management Fund improvement works and award contracts within these budgets and in accordance with Contract Standing Orders.

3 Context and background information

Education Capital Resources and Capital Investment Programme

- 3.1 The annual capital finance settlement for education buildings from central government includes Basic Need, School Condition Allocations (SCA), High Needs Provision Capital Allocations (HNPCA) and Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) for community schools.
- 3.2 Capital finance for Voluntary Aided Schools, academies and free schools does not form part of the funding allocated to local authorities as they have access to the separate Condition Improvement Fund administered by the Department for Education (DfE).
- 3.3 The table below shows the allocations of capital grant funding announced for 2025/26 only and does not include any 2024/25 capital grant forecast to be re-profiled into 2025/26.

Capital Grant Settlement 2025/26	£m
School Condition Allocation (SCA)	£3.700 *
Basic Need Funding	£0
High Needs Provision Capital Allocation	£0

Devolved Formula Capital Grant (Passported entirely to schools)	£0.500 *
Total	£4.200*

* To be confirmed. Estimate based on 2024/25 allocation.

- 3.4 In lieu of a final announcement the expectation is that there will be no appreciable difference to the allocation for the 2025/26 financial year and therefore it is assumed that the SCA will be £3.700m and the Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) allocation will remain at £0.500m. This is considered to be a prudent assumption and a reserve list of works has been compiled in case the actual settlement is higher than anticipated. This is common practice and enables works and contracts to be set in train without unnecessary delay while waiting for final confirmation of the settlement. As in previous years, a formal variation to the capital programme will be approved through Targeted Budget Management reports to Cabinet if the final settlement is above or, very unlikely, below the assumed funding level.
- 3.5 In March 2022 the Government updated their medium-term allocation figures for Basic Need capital funding for 2025/26 setting the level at £nil for this authority.
- 3.6 HNPCA funding for the 2025/26 financial year may be contingent on the outcomes of future Spending Reviews. HNPCA for next year cannot therefore be guaranteed; consequently this is included in the table as a zero allocation at this time.
- 3.7 DFC grants are passed directly to schools and therefore are not available for the Local Authority to spend.
- 3.8 In addition to the funding from central Government, there is a Services to Schools buy back option for the council's strategic property function to provide schools with a full condition survey, statutory compliance contracts and access to advice and support on all property matters. It is anticipated that this will generate £0.600m for the 2025/26 financial year. There is a forecast drop in income next year as a result of the anticipated academisation of the Orchard Schools Partnership and the closure of two one form entry primary schools.
- 3.9 This service buy-back resulted from a change in the rules around the ways in which schools were funded in 2017/18. As a result of this change a buy-back scheme was created for schools. Since the change, all community schools have purchased the service while Voluntary Aided schools buy a partial service (in recognition of their different status with the council when it comes to property) and the free schools and academies do not buy the service due to their direct relationship with the DfE. It is for this reason that the total buy-back amount has reduced over time.
- 3.10 The table below shows the level of new resources available for the Local Authority to commit in the 2025/26 financial year:

Capital Resources 2025/26	£m
Capital Finance settlement	£3.700
Services to Schools Income	£0.500
High Needs Provision Capital Allocation	£0.000
Total	£4.200

- 3.11 Additional grant funding may be made available throughout the forthcoming financial year and will be reported separately as appropriate.
- 3.12 Any capital reprofiles and/or slippage arising from the 2024/25 Capital Programme will be incorporated into the 2025/26 programme when the capital accounts are closed at 31 March 2025.
- 3.13 Any capital underspend arising from the 2025/26 Capital Programme will be incorporated into the 2026/27 programme when the capital accounts are closed at 31 March 2026.
- 3.14 In addition to the Capital Resources set out above, there is an existing pot of £4.085m of section 106 developer contributions for education. This is not intended for planned maintenance of schools but instead is to mitigate the impact on schools of new developments. There is an emerging programme of spend in place for this funding, and delivery of that expenditure will complement this education capital investment programme.

Planned Maintenance Budget (PMB) & Asset Management Fund (AMF)

- 3.16 The council's property is managed strategically and operated through a mixed economy Corporate Landlord Model that centralises the council's property functions to professional teams in the Finance & Property Directorate. The aim is to make best use of council assets to support corporate objectives and improve the utilisation, efficiency and effectiveness of our land and buildings. This is supported by the council's property asset data and systems that help to inform the process.
- 3.17 Rolling condition surveys are undertaken to ensure a robust assessment of the council's 5-year requirement for planned maintenance to help prioritise future programmes of work in conjunction with future service delivery plans.
- 3.18 The total available resources of £4.442m approved by Budget Council relate to those operational buildings where the council has a repairing liability but excludes council housing, highways, farm buildings and educational establishments (see earlier) that have their own budgetary provisions. It includes a planned budget of £0.111m for Environmental buildings in parks and recreation grounds, and adopted cemetery walls, etc.
- 3.19 The Corporate Building Maintenance Strategy sets out a robust framework to optimise the contribution that property can make to the council's priorities

and strategic and service objectives. The aim is to ensure that finite maintenance resources are prioritised and targeted at key operational assets. In line with the Budget Strategy to reduce the council's overall footprint, the Director of Property & Finance and Head of Strategic Property will drive a cross-council Operational Asset Review across all directorates to ensure that any investment in buildings fits with future service delivery plans and identifies any possible disposals. This applies to all corporate PMB and Social Care PMB buildings as well as others e.g. non-school properties in Families, Children & Well-being. As well as understanding condition survey requirements over a 5-year period and an assessment of alignment with Council Plan and Service priorities, reactive, term maintenance and energy efficiency implications are also considered. Where potential disposals, leasing or re-gearing are identified, income generation becomes a key consideration through either disposal for a capital receipt or generating revenue from rentals.

- 3.20 In common with the majority of local authorities, the council faces an unsustainable backlog in its required planned maintenance and severe budget challenges, resulting in the limited maintenance resources being inadequate to meet identified need. Budget limitations and restrictions applied over a number of years have therefore meant substantial restrictions on what can be achieved; that in turn increases prioritised volumes of required maintenance with growing associated risks.
- 3.21 Inadequate Planned Maintenance Budget resources are also compounded by reactive maintenance budgets also being under significant pressure for effectively maintaining the large and complex Corporate Landlord portfolio to a reasonable standard. For a number of years, necessary budget and spending restrictions have been put in place whereby only urgent, Health and Safety issues could be addressed. This has resulted in the cumulative effect of buildings not being maintained to a good standard, which can impact building user satisfaction and, potentially, revenue generating opportunities.
- 3.22 Ultimately, more money is then spent on dealing with emergency and planned maintenance projects. These become larger in scope and cost rather than addressing issues in a more timely and proactive manner when they are small and first realised. Funding reform of Local Government is therefore important to not only to meet growing demands across services, but is also important to help councils be financially sustainable and avoid unnecessary future costs and liabilities in areas such as property maintenance.
- 3.23 The annual planned maintenance budget allocation is prioritised in consultation with services to address the highest critical and most essential maintenance works and supports service re-design and delivery. It also aims to ensure that statutory compliance works, and high-risk Health and Safety issues are addressed. Essential maintenance includes works of a structural nature and those that keep buildings watertight. Officers aim to ensure best use of resources available, secure value for money and ensure that funding is prioritised. A substantial part of the planned maintenance budget covers

the costs of statutory compliance testing, routine servicing and maintenance contracts as detailed in Appendix 2.

- 3.24 In accordance with the Council's 50-year lease agreement with the trustees of the Brighton Dome Complex on the Royal Pavilion Estate that commenced in 1999, a figure estimated at £0.299m has been top-sliced from the PMB budget to a sinking fund to contribute towards maintenance works at the Dome. There is an obligation within the lease agreement that the council provides a contribution to this sinking fund each year (that increases by Retail Prices Index) to go towards helping to maintain the fabric of the building, items of plant, statutory compliance testing, routine servicing, etc.
- 3.25 The Royal Pavilion & Museums buildings were transferred to the Royal Pavilion & Museums Trust on a 25-year contract on 1st October 2020. The lease arrangements mean that the Trust is fully responsible for all forms of external and internal maintenance, health and safety and compliance for the leased buildings. To financially contribute towards the upkeep of these council-owned buildings, the council retains an annual sum within this budget for a planned programme to be prioritised and agreed between the Trust and the council. For 2025/26 the estimated sum allocated is £0.627m for PMB from capital reserves and delegated budgets to support the total maintenance commitment to the Trust.

Summary of the Proposed Annual 2025/26 Planned Maintenance Budget Programme of Works

- 3.26 The financial allocation to each main service area is listed within Appendix 2. For Corporate Landlord ("CL") premises the PMB is primarily used for works relevant to but not exclusive to, for example, safe Legionella Management and water monitoring, passenger and goods lifts, boiler refurbishments and replacements, electrical installations, fire and intruder alarms, automatic doors etc.
- 3.27 In the case of Freedom Leisure, the council would only be responsible for the replacement of main plant i.e. boiler or air handling plant and main structural repairs of the premises i.e. roofs and floors. The provision of cyclical maintenance and reactive repairs remains the responsibility of Freedom Leisure.
- 3.28 Flexibility is available during the year to reprioritise the programme to meet any changing service priorities, spending restrictions and respond safely to any emergency requirements within specific buildings.
- 3.29 There are sums to fund the ongoing structural propping and engineer checks to Madeira Terraces whilst the major project of refurbishment develops. Each service area also has a sum allocated for Health and Safety risk management works that is to address any unforeseen required remedial works throughout the course of the year.
- 3.30 Examples of areas of work to the adult and children's Social Care portfolio include a variety that address risk reduction to support some of the most vulnerable, such as roof repairs, structural works, window repairs and internal and external redecorations.

- 3.31 The Asset Management Fund 2025/26 is an annual capital fund of £1.000m to support priority property improvements, property related Health & Safety requirements and access improvements under the Equality Act 2010. It forms part of the corporate Capital Strategy 2025/26 along with the Strategic Investment Fund of £0.250m and the Information, Technology & Digital Fund of £0.500m.
- 3.32 The proposed overall Asset Management Fund allocation is as follows and details of the proposed allocations can be found in Appendix 4 which includes support for a computer aided facilities management system to support compliance of our operational buildings, a breakdown of the reprioritised Workspaces Innovation programme, important health & safety improvements to major operational buildings, and property related health & safety and Equality Act requirements:
- 3.33 **Table 1 Asset Management Fund - Programme Allocations for 2025/26**

Description	Funding £m
1. General Property Improvements	
1a Computer Aided Facilities Management (CAFM) System	0.150
1b Corporate core buildings – security, customer centres Energy Performance Certificates	0.100
1c Workspace Innovation Programme - Corporate programme project support, service delivery changes, Operational Accommodation strategy	0.130
Subtotal general property improvements	0.380
2. Equality Act Improvements	
2a Rolling programme of access improvements to corporate Buildings- incl. Hove & Brighton Town Hall evacuation lift and Accessible WC provision / changing places to various locations	0.355
3. Property Related Health & Safety Legislation	
3a Asbestos Management	0.040
3b Legionella Management	0.075
3c Fire Risk Assessment Works	0.150
Subtotal Equality Act & property related Health & Safety	0.620
TOTAL OVERALL	1.000

4 Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 For Education Capital resources the allocations are driven by need assessed by DfE. Resources are not sufficient to clear all backlogs or meet all demands and are therefore prioritised according need, including health & safety requirements, and in consultation with schools.
- 4.2 For the Planned Maintenance Budgets, failure to provide maintenance of the council's building stock, conform to Health and Safety and other statutory legislation to meet liabilities would increase existing risks, inhibit service

delivery, lead to a negative perception of the council, reduce the value of the assets and prevent fulfilling the council's priorities, aims and objectives as stated in the Asset Management Plan and Council Plan. Property teams work closely together to ensure that these programmes of work align with services and the limited funding is prioritised to meet service objectives and/or meet accessibility or health and safety requirements.

- 4.3 For the Asset Management Fund, failure to improve the council's core office accommodation, address property related access obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and property related Health & Safety legislation would increase council risks and liabilities, inhibit service delivery, may lead to a negative perception of the council, reduce the value of our assets and prevent fulfilling the council's priorities, aims and objectives as stated in the Asset Management Plan and the corporate priorities in the Council's Plan.

5 Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 Regarding Education Capital investments, as individual projects are developed, the necessary consultation is undertaken and reported to the Cabinet Member or Cabinet depending on value and in accordance with Contract Standing Orders. As part of the Community Engagement Framework, consultation with school Heads is undertaken to establish where urgent works may be required.
- 5.2 Regarding PMB, consultations have taken place with all services and with technical officers across property functions.
- 5.3 The Workspace Innovation Programme will involve extensive internal and external consultations on customer and service delivery requirements. This includes extensive engagement with community stakeholders and residents affected by the Moulsecoomb Hub works and supporting widespread consultation of staff through the Future Ways of Working programme and Operational Accommodation Strategy.
- 5.4 The procurement of planned maintenance frameworks and the cyclical, term and reactive contracts are either covered by the Procurement Forward Plan or, where a new requirement, will be reported to and considered by either the relevant Cabinet Member or Cabinet depending on value.

6 Financial implications

- 6.1 The report sets out the allocation of Education Capital resources included in the Capital Investment Programme 2025/26. The capital resources will meet ongoing capital maintenance requirements as well as addressing refurbishments, additional provision and other matters including SEND requirements.
- 6.2 The report details the resources available for investment into the Education Capital Investment Programme for 2025/26. The report includes assumed Government grant contributions for Education Capital Maintenance of £3.700m and Devolved Capital Formula of £0.500m which are subject to confirmation from the DfE in due course. Any change to this assumption from the final settlement will be reported in future TBM reports. The capital

resources include income estimated at £0.600m for 2025/26 that relates to Services to Schools buy-back associated with the strategic property function. This income will further assist with maintenance spend identified in this report.

- 6.3 The council's Planned Maintenance Budget for 2025/26 provides a total £4,441,940 for annual planned maintenance expenditure on the council's civic offices, historic, operational (excluding schools, housing and highways) social care buildings, environmental buildings and commercial buildings. Included within this annual budget and overall programme of works are items that will be capitalised and included in the 2025/26 Capital Investment programme. As noted, a permanent annual contribution toward the Dome Complex sinking fund estimated at £298,675 has been top sliced from the Corporate Planned Maintenance Budget. The Royal Pavilion & Museums buildings will receive a contribution of £627,000. The proposed budget allocation to the respective building portfolios reflects the risk prioritisation outlined in the report and is shown in Appendix 2 to this report.
- 6.4 The Planned Maintenance Budget will be met from a combination of recurrent revenue resources and capital borrowing. The borrowing costs have been factored into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 6.5 The council's capital programme also provides £500,000, for essential repair works to Social Care premises. This is funded from borrowing with the financing costs met corporately within the General Fund capital financing budget.
- 6.6 The programme of works set out in the appendices can be funded from within the agreed budget allocations for 2025/26. Emerging compliance risks will be addressed by reprioritising the allocation as required. Risk and priorities will be reassessed and considered in the development of the allocation for 2025/26.
- 6.7 The General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 to Budget Council approved the allocation of £1,000,000 capital resources to support the Asset Management Fund 2025/26. The Asset Management Fund allocation will be met from capital receipts. The Asset Management Fund allocations will be incorporated into the council's Capital Investment Programme 2025/26 to support the schemes identified within the table at paragraph 3.33 and Appendix 4.
- 6.8 Any running costs associated with the investments in this report will be met from existing budgets.

Finance officer consulted: John Lack Date consulted: 20/02/25

7 Legal implications

- 7.1 The works contemplated by this report must comply with relevant lease conditions, health and safety and other applicable legislation. All forms of procurement outlined in this report must comply with the Council's Contract Standing Orders and public procurement regulations.

- 7.2 The access improvement works proposed will assist the Council in meeting its obligations under The Equality Act 2010.

Lawyer consulted: Hannah Bassett

Date consulted: 27/02/2025

8 Risk implications

- 8.1 The key risks that need to be mitigated and regularly monitored are:

- a) Insufficient BHCC technical officer capacity to undertake and manage schemes. It is currently proposed to recruit suitably qualified staff to fill current vacancies.
- b) Potential increases in scope from original briefs that could require additional funding. Early contact with schools needs to be established to ensure original briefs are accurate and no variations in scope are experienced.
- c) Any delays to decision-making could result in general deterioration of assets that could prevent schools from running in a safe environment. This is supported by ensuring that condition surveys are done in a thorough and exhaustive manner to avoid the incidence of urgent works.

9 Equalities implications

- 9.1 Where applicable, items of maintenance work within the programme will consider the Equality Act 2010 to improve access and general facilities to address the diverse needs of staff and users of the educational, civic offices, operational and commercial buildings.
- 9.2 The provision of on-going access works under the rolling programme will assist in the council in meeting requirements under the Equalities Act 2010.

10 Sustainability implications

- 10.1 The detailed planning of projects at educational establishments will take account of the implications of Brighton and Hove's policies in relation to sustainability issues generally.
- 10.2 The council will consider how best to undertake the planned programme in a responsible, sustainable way. Projects within the planned programme are procured using new building maintenance frameworks put in place in 2023/24. The successful contractors are required to demonstrate that they will minimise waste, meet targets for reductions in waste to landfill and optimise the recovery, reuse and recycling of waste. In addition to this they are required to describe the steps they will take to minimise the use of resources (water, fuel, energy from fossil fuels) and improve sustainable sourcing. The framework contracts include Performance Indicators in respect of sustainability and Environmental Management and these will be monitored on a quarterly basis.
- 10.3 Energy efficiency audits have been carried out across selected buildings within the operational estate that are the largest contributors to the council's

carbon emissions. These audits identified opportunities for energy efficiency measures that will be prioritised into a programme of works and an investment strategy working towards a carbon zero position in 2030. Energy efficiency measures are incorporated into maintenance and improvement works whenever appropriate to help the council meet its CN2030 target.

- 10.4 The sustainability of projects is considered at the outset to ensure the best outcomes for the building and its users. The building works undertaken will improve the thermal performance of buildings overall. This can include items such as repointing, replacing curtain walling with aluminium systems which have better lifecycle costs, recyclability and energy efficiency. When replacing or refurbishing roofs the council looks to exceed Approved Document L requirements in terms of energy efficiency. The insulation installed when undertaking roofing works is rated A+ (the highest) in the BRE Green Specification Guide.

11 Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 11.1 The safety and maintenance of properties, including appropriate checks e.g. legionella, contributes to the health and well-being of building occupants and users.

Other Implications

12 Procurement implications

- 12.1 The Council's Contract Standing Orders set out the council's process for the procurement of building works. Larger value projects are delivered through the most appropriate procurement route as determined by the project team in collaboration with the appointed procurement lead. Planned maintenance projects are procured predominantly through frameworks set up in collaboration with East Sussex County Council colleagues. There are seven planned maintenance framework Lots for varying values of building works, mechanical, electrical, roofing and asbestos removal. Where appropriate for works below £15,000, the council's reactive repairs and minor works framework is utilised.
- 12.2 The 7 planned maintenance framework lots create added social value to the city with an increased benefit to the local economy and environment. There is an increased focus on sustainability by officers and contractors in line with the council's sustainable procurement policies.

13 Conclusion

- 13.1 Educational assets are required to be either replaced, upgraded or refurbished so that the schools can operate uninterrupted and without raising a risk to the welfare of staff and children. In order to maintain a safe environment, it is imperative to carry out these works as it could invalidate insurance terms and conditions.
- 13.2 The proposed financial allocations to a prioritised annual programme of planned maintenance works (PMB) are set out in Appendix 2. Note, this excludes areas such as council housing, highways and those structures

falling on highway land, car parks, public conveniences, city parks roadways and paths, city clean messrooms, and hostels, etc which have their own budgetary provisions.

- 13.3 This report also sets out the proposed Asset Management Fund financial allocation as detailed at paragraph 3.33 and Appendix 3 for property improvements, access requirements under the Equality Act 2010 and property related Health & Safety requirements for 2025/26.

Supporting Documentation

Appendices

1. Proposed Education Capital Planned Maintenance Schemes 2025/26
2. Proposed Corporate Planned Maintenance Budget Allocations 2025/26
3. Proposed Asset Management Fund Allocations 2025/26
4. Proposed Social Care Planned Works Budget Allocations 2025/26

School

Goldstone Primary
Middle Street

Bevendean Primary
Bevendean Primary
Hove Park Upper
Longhill High
Rudyard Kipling

Brackenbury Primary
Cherry Nursery
Elm Grove Primary
Longhill High
Mile Oak House
Mile Oak House
Mile Oak House
Mile Oak House
Mile Oak House
Peter Gladwin
Roundabout Nursery
Roundabout Nursery
Roundabout Nursery
Saltdean
Middle Street

Balfour Primary
Blatchington Mill
Downs View School
Elm Grove Primary
Patcham Junior

Coldean Primary
Fairlight Primary
Portslade Sport C

Mile Oak
Blatchington Mill

Connaught Annexe
Lynchet Close PRU
Patcham Junior

Carlton Hill
Coombe Road
Downs Junior
Downs View School

2025-26 EDUCATION CAPITAL MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME

Bid

Ceiling replacement, asbestos removal, and new lighting to rooms: 0/046 resource area, 0/017 & 0/017a corridor & resource area, 0/024 cloakroom/corridor, 0/034 corridor, 0/033 group area, 0/001 medical room.
Remove asbestos from kitchen walk-in larder

ASBESTOS TOTAL

Fluorescent lighting needs upgrading to LED lights
Obsolete Memshield 2 upgrade required
Reoplace lighting and ceilings (phase 6)
Electrical LED lighting
Phase 1 - Internal lighting upgrade to 2nr Halls including ceiling finish.

ELECTRICAL TOTAL

Replace conservatory roofs to lower building
Repairs to timber sand pit structure.
Repairs to walkway, damp proofing and steelwork repairs
Replace curtain walling to west elevation of block 4 & link corridors from block 4 to block 3
Replace window and lintel, internal finishes -link corridor to former school (if part of demise)
Existing UPVC windows – renew defective
Refix taps to wall
Replace timber windows to GF WC and hall
Refurbish Kitchen
Structural glazing and doors to kitchen
Replace 2nr dble door sets in toddler's room
Overhaul/replace rainwater goods, repair/replace rotten timber fascias and soffits, redecorate external timber windows and doors
Over 3's kitchen
Curtain Wall to North Hall
Damp proofing works to basement (electrical intake)

GENERAL TOTAL

Replace heating system (Old Junior site)
Library boilers, associated plant & controls, Block 2, Room 0/137
Cold water storage tank removal
Boilers
Replacement heating system and asbestos

MECHANICAL TOTAL

Take up uneven slabs and replace with tarmac
Playground resurfacing
BHCC consideration of drainage remedials South area

RESURFACING TOTAL

Recover flat roof above kitchen
Replacement pitched & flat roof covering (Block 1, front elevation east)

Replace flat roofing
Pitched roof replacement to front elevation
Replace flat roofing covering above music

	ROOFING TOTAL
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Toilet Refurbishment Boys & Girls 0/029 & 0/030
Refurbish Infants boys & girl's toilets
Boys and Girls toilet refurbishment (Block 2)
Toilet refurbishment G065

	TOILETS TOTAL
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	Fees
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	SUB - TOTAL
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	Fees
	OVERALL TOTAL

Priority	Budget Price	Category
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D2	£80,000.00	Asbestos
D2	£5,000.00	Asbestos

£85,000.00

D2	£178,000.00	Electrical
D2	£33,000.00	Electrical
D2	£65,000.00	Electrical
D2	£72,000.00	Electrical
D2	£40,000.00	Electrical

£388,000.00

D2	£60,000.00	General
D2	£7,000.00	General
D2	£50,000.00	General
D2	£290,000.00	General
D2	£8,000.00	General
D2	£1,500.00	General
D2	£200.00	General
C2	£5,000.00	General
C2	£10,000.00	General
D2	£20,000.00	General
D2	£20,000.00	General
D2	£30,000.00	General
D2	£20,000.00	General
D2	£40,000.00	General
D2	£20,000.00	General

£581,700.00

D2	£415,000.00	Mechanical
D2	£103,000.00	Mechanical
D2	£20,000.00	Mechanical
D2	£150,000.00	Mechanical
D2	£360,000.00	Mechanical

£1,048,000.00

D2	£30,000.00	Resurfacing
D2	£8,000.00	Resurfacing
D2	£25,000.00	Resurfacing

£63,000.00

D2	£72,000.00	Roofing
D2	£150,000.00	Roofing

D2	£85,000.00	Roofing
D2	£150,000.00	Roofing
D2	£65,000.00	Roofing

£522,000.00

D2	£80,000.00	Toilets
D2	£70,000.00	Toilets
D2	£120,000.00	Toilets
D2	£35,000.00	Toilets

£305,000.00

£2,992,700.00

£359,124.00	12% professional fee
£3,351,824.00	

Appendix 2

Proposed Corporate Planned Maintenance Budget Allocation 2025-26

Property Type	Examples of works / properties covered	Service area Clients	Budget Allocation
Corporate - Building	Asbestos testing & surveys	All	£10,000
Corporate – Term Maintenance Contracts	Boilers, legionella control, lifts, mechanical & electrical testing & maintenance, auto door systems, pumps, clocks, access systems, nurse call & alarms, etc	All –contracts cover all corporate and social care property types	£864,312
Historic – contribution to the Royal Pavilion & Museums Trust	Royal Pavilion & Museum buildings annual prioritised works	Royal Pavilion & Museums Trust	£627,000
Dome	General maintenance contribution	Dome	£298,697
Leisure	King Alfred & Prince Regent roofing & pool filter refurbishment	Sports & Leisure Services	£329,800
Libraries	Hove Library ongoing repairs	Libraries & Information Services	£55,000
Seafront	Seafront repairs & redecoration, Volks Railway, Madeira Terrace & Historic Lift	Seafront Services	£418,469
Civic, Amenity & Environment	Works to Town Halls, cemeteries, sewerage pumps & park building repairs	Property – Premises & Environment	£875,162 (including the £110,500 Environment budget)
Hollingdean Depot	Contribution towards Health & Safety Improvements	Cityclean	£5,000
Commercial	Miscellaneous Landlord obligations including refurbishments & structural repairs	Property - Estates	£365,000
Venues	Brighton Centre	Tourism & Venues	£93,500
Social Care	Internal Refurbishment	Various Locations	£500,000
TOTAL			£4,441,940

Proposed Corporate Asset Management Fund Allocation 2025-26

Description	Funding £m
1. General Property Improvements	
1a Computer Aided Facilities Management (CAFM) System	0.150
1b Corporate core buildings – security, customer centres Energy Performance Certificates	0.100
1c Workspace Innovation Programme - Corporate programme project support, service delivery changes, Operational Accommodation strategy	0.130
Subtotal general property improvements	0.380
2. Equality Act Improvements	
2a Rolling programme of access improvements to corporate Buildings- incl. Hove & Brighton Town Hall evacuation lift and Accessible WC provision / changing places to various locations	0.355
3. Property Related Health & Safety Legislation	
3a Asbestos Management	0.040
3b Legionella Management	0.075
3c Fire Risk Assessment Works	0.150
Subtotal Equality Act & property related Health & Safety	0.620
TOTAL OVERALL	1.000

SOCIAL CARE PLANNED MAINTENANCE BUDGET - CONDITION SURVEY DATA TO SUPPORT FUNDING BIDS 2025 / 2026

Your Name:

Steve Licence

Your Directorate:

Property & Design

Condition Rating

Each building element listed below must have an overall condition rating A to D:

A = Good condition
B = Satisfactory Condition
C = Poor Condition
D = Life Expired

Planned Programme; December 2024

Priority Rating

Each item of work identified below must be given a priority rating 1 to 3:
0 = Urgent (required now to prevent closure/ H&S breach)
1 = Essential (required within two years)
2 = Desirable (required within three to five years)

Property Name	Building Element	Brief Description of Works Identified	Condition Category	Priority Rating	Estimated Cost	Survey Source	
						CA	Survey Date
INTERNAL							
Beach House	Internal Refurbishment	Redecorate FF Bedrooms & Offices. Upgrade floor coverings	C	2	£35,000	SL	06/09/2024
83 Beaconsfield Villas	Internal Refurbishment	Internal redecoration	D	2	£15,000	SL	08/10/2024
Burwash Lodge	Internal Refurbishment	Flat 6 & 7 Bathroom alterations	D	2	£20,000	SL	06/12/2023
Craven Vale	Internal Refurbishment	Internal redecoration	C	2	£25,000	SL	11/11/2024
55 Drove Road	Internal Refurbishment	Internal refurbishment; LGF flat	D	2	£25,000	SL	05/11/2024
21 Ferndale Road	Internal Refurbishment	Contribution to forming Accessible GF bedroom with ensuite	D	2	£20,000	SL	22/10/2024
Hangleton Family Hub	Internal Refurbishment	Internal redecoration	C	2	£15,000	SL	23/07/2024
Ireland Lodge	Internal Refurbishment	Bedroom redecoration	C	2	£5,000	SL	17/11/2024
North Portslade Family Hub	Internal Refurbishment	Internal refurbishment	C	2	£5,000	SL	13/09/2024
The Greenhouse	Internal Refurbishment	Internal redecoration to corridors and toilet facilities	C	2	£5,000	SL	27/08/2024
Wayfield Avenue	Internal Refurbishment	Internal refurbishment	C	2	£25,000	SL	15/11/2023
Wellington House	Internal Refurbishment	Internal refurbishment and damp proofing works	D	2	£25,000	SL	05/11/2024
EXTERNAL							
83 Beaconsfield Villas	Windows & External Doors	Sash window refurbishment and external redecoration	D	2	£60,000	SL	08/10/2024
Craven Vale	External Decoration	Redecoration	C	2	£10,000	SL	11/11/2024
Hangleton Family Hub	External Decoration	Redecoration	C	2	£5,000	SL	23/07/2024
Hollingdean Family Hub	Soffits, Fascias & RW Goods	Form new surface water soakaways	D	2	£10,000	SL	29/11/2022
Ireland Lodge	Roofs & Chimneys	Upgrade Conservatory roof covering	D	2	£15,000	SL	17/11/2024
North Portslade Family Hub	Paths & Hardstandings	Reinstate defective retaining walls	D	2	£40,000	SL	13/09/2024
Sellaby House	External Walls & Cladding	External timber repairs and redecoration. Install linear drain to main entrance	D	2	£10,000	SL	28/11/2023
St John's Day Centre	Windows & External Doors	Window repairs	D	2	£5,000	SL	10/11/2023
Tarner Family Hub	Paths & Hardstandings	Resurface external courtyard. Drainage repairs. Japanese Knotweed treatment	D	2	£20,000	SL	22/10/2024
Tudor House	External Walls & Cladding	External repairs and redecoration	C	2	£15,000	SL	01/11/2023
Whitehawk Family Hub	Paths & Hardstandings	Resurface playground and clean shade sail	D	2	£20,000	SL	27/07/2023
MECHANICAL							
Drove Rd and Wayfield Avenue	Mechanical	Improve main catering Kitchen ventilation system	D	2	£5,000	PHT	15/11/2023
Ireland Lodge	Mechanical	Heating pipework repairs	D	2	£10,000	PHT	15/11/2023
ELECTRICAL							
Wellington House	Electrical	Upgrade reception office and external lighting	C	2	£5,000	PHT	12/07/2023
Various properties	Electrical	Upgrade obsolete light fittings & electrical distribution boards	D	3	£10,000	SL	14/09/2023
FIRE PRECAUTION WORKS							
Various properties	Other	Fire precaution works	D	2	£40,000	SL	Various
TOTAL					£500,000		

KEY; SL; STEVE LICENCE
PHT; PREMISES HELPDESK TEAM

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