



# **Greater Brighton Economic Board**

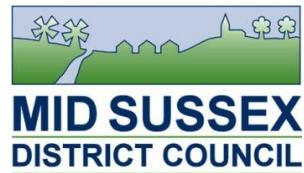
**28 January 2026  
10.00am**

**Shoreham Port, Nautilus House,  
90 – 100 Albion Street, Southwick,  
Brighton BN42 4ED**

**AGENDA**



ADUR & WORTHING  
COUNCILS



**University of Brighton**



Members:

**Councillors:** Sankey (Chair), Cox, Eggleston, Jones, Nicholson, Gardner and Lury

**Business Partners:**

Tim Slaney, Prof Rusi Jaspal, Prof. Debbie Keeling, Dean Orgill, Dan Power and Andrew Swayne

Contact:

**Francis Mitchell**  
Democratic Services Officer  
01273 294183  
[Francis.Mitchell@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:Francis.Mitchell@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

**AGENDA**

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<b>PART ONE</b>	<b>Page</b>
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**1 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS**

**(a) Declaration of Substitutes:** Where Members of the Board are unable to attend a meeting, a designated substitute for that Member may attend, speak and vote in their place for that meeting.

**(b) Declarations of Interest:**

- (a) Disclosable pecuniary interests not registered on the register of interests;
- (b) Any other interests required to be registered under the local code;
- (c) Any other general interest as a result of which a decision on the matter might reasonably be regarded as affecting you or a partner more than a majority of other people or businesses in the ward/s affected by the decision.

In each case, you need to declare

- (i) the item on the agenda the interest relates to;
- (ii) the nature of the interest; and
- (iii) whether it is a disclosable pecuniary interest or some other interest.

If unsure, Members should seek advice from the committee lawyer or administrator preferably before the meeting.

**(c) 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 public.*

*A list and description of the exempt categories is available from the Secretary to the Board.*

**2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**5 - 12**

To consider the minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 October 2025.

**3 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

# **GREATER BRIGHTON ECONOMIC BOARD**

<b>4</b>	<b>TRANSITIONING TOWARDS A SUSSEX AND BRIGHTON COMBINED COUNTY AUTHORITY</b>	<b>13 - 26</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>SUSSEX ENERGY UPDATE</b>	<b>27 - 40</b>

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For further details and general enquiries about this meeting contact Francis Mitchell (01273 294183, email [Francis.Mitchell@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:Francis.Mitchell@brighton-hove.gov.uk)) or email [democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

Date of Publication - Tuesday, 20 January 2026

**The Date of the next meeting is 25 March 2026**

**GREATER BRIGHTON ECONOMIC BOARD**  
**WORTHING TOWN HALL - 22.10.25**  
**MINUTES**

**Attendees:**

Cllr Bella Sankey (Chair), Cllr Martin Lury, Cllr Jeremy Gardner, Cllr Sophie Cox, Cllr Robert Eggleston, Jess Gibbons, Andrew Swayne, Karl Roberts, Paul Brewer, Kathryn Hall, Dan Power, Peter Sharp, Lewis Church, Stan Lucas, Steve Skelton, Dean Orgill Annie Roebuck, Tom Cottam, Natasha Bridge, Andy Hill, Francis Mitchell,

**1 – Procedural Business**

- A) There were no declarations of substitution.
- B) There were no declarations of interest
- C) There were no exclusions of press or public.

**2 – Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as correct record.

**3 – Chair's Communications**

- 3.1 The chair stated the following:

*Good morning, everyone,*

*I'd like to begin today's meeting by addressing two important developments that impact our region's economic landscape.*

*Devolution*

*In December, the government released the much-anticipated English Devolution White Paper, which outlines the framework for transferring greater powers and resources to regional authorities with a clear ambition for devolution to reach every part of the country to support local growth.*

*This initiative aims to empower local governments, enhance economic autonomy, and tailor policies more closely to our unique needs.*

*Following special cabinet meetings in East and West Sussex and Brighton & Hove on 9th January, all three councils agreed to submit an expression of interest to the Government to form a Mayoral Strategic Authority for Sussex and to join the*

*Devolution Priority Programme which would put us on an accelerated timeframe. A decision from Government is expected in the coming weeks.*

*This Board was born from a City Deal in 2014, which was a form of devolution. As this new chapter in the devolution journey evolves, the Board will keep close to the developments in Sussex and work to support collaboration to drive economic growth in the region.*

#### *DBT Tech Team Visit: Outcomes*

*In November we hosted a successful 2-day visit of colleagues from the Technology Investment Team at the Department of Business & Trade. The team work with overseas investors to attract investment into the UK. This visit was a great opportunity for us to showcase why this region is such a fantastic place for businesses, particularly technology businesses. The visit was received positively and the DBT team were impressed by the presence and participation of senior representatives of the universities, colleges, business support organisations, businesses and local authorities throughout the visit, demonstrating the importance Greater Brighton places on inward investment. Thank you all for your support with it.*

*They recognized our region's burgeoning strength in quantum computing, a field where we have demonstrated remarkable progress and potential. Our region can help the UK to capitalize on its research excellence in quantum computing to give rise to a world-class industry sector. To realise this ambition, government funding is needed. I raised this to Peter Kyle, Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, and as a result, a ministerial visit has been scheduled for him to see the quantum computing potential of the region first hand. The Board will provide a quote and photo to include on the day, send a letter of support following the visit to demonstrate the importance of the sector to the region and continue our dialogue with DSIT. Following our meeting today please stick around so we can take this photo.*

*Kathryn Hall presented an overview of Burgess Hill's Science and Technology Park, emphasizing the significant growth being delivered at Burgess Hill, as well as local facilities, services and its gigabit connectivity. The primary request was assistance from government to enable delivery by increasing capacity at the key A23/A2300 junction. In response, departments across government are working with the Council. It is hoped this approach will enable collaborative support from multiple government departments, to fully realise the region's growth potential.*

#### *Papers for today*

##### *NHS Sussex ICB*

*In July I received a letter from the NHS Sussex ICB formally requesting to join the Board. Last Board meeting we heard from Amy Galea, their Chief Integration & Primary Care Officer about the rationale for them joining the Board. In that meeting*

*we agreed that we were supportive of including them as a Board member. Since then, each Council has formally ratified this membership extension. This topic is coming back to the Board today to officially approve that the NHS Sussex ICB should join the Board.*

### **Sussex Energy**

*The Board launched the Sussex Energy Mission in July. The Sussex Energy update paper highlights the progress made since the last Board meeting in October. Building a Sussex-wide network of sustainability networks to co-create the Sussex Energy Programme is critical to its success and to build towards this there has been engagement with a wide group of sustainability experts across Sussex, including all Local Authorities. The key development has been the establishment of a Core Network of sustainability experts to steer the programme, which includes representation from each of the Sussex upper tier authorities and the South Downs National Park Authority. Building these relationships has been achieved through a diligent effort within a complex and sensitive environment. The Core Network are developing a proposal for a forum to enable engagement of a wider group of sustainability stakeholders, for knowledge sharing and to shape the Sussex Energy programme.*

## **4 – Unleashing Potential-Creative Industries**

- 4.1 Lewis Church introduced the report for this item and delivered a presentation providing an overview of the Creative Industries Strategic Industry Plan, stating that Sussex is a major hub of creativity and industry in the UK.
- 4.2 Lewis Church provided further overview of the growth of the sector as well as providing a breakdown of the sectors workforce within Sussex.
- 4.3 Lewis Church stated that the sector was growing faster than both the local economy and other hubs for the creative sector across the UK.
- 4.4 Lewis Church outlined the challenges faced by creative industries and provided three areas of focus to support the industry (Ensure understanding, ensure training, and offer support).
- 4.5 Lewis Church outlined how each area of focus would be delivered locally, and stated that Central Government would be providing further support.
- 4.6 Andrew Swayne stated that he was pleased with the report and its compatibility with the forthcoming Combined Sussex County Authority.

4.7 It was stated the number of students studying to enter creative sectors in Sussex and explained that more work could be done to advertise careers and development in the industry.

4.8 It was stated the importance of freelance work in creative industries.

4.9 Sophie Cox welcomed the report and suggested looking into how local education could feed into creative industries.

4.10 Sophie Cox also emphasised the importance of transport links in unlocking opportunities for locals wishing to enter creative industries.

4.11 Martin Lury commended the report and suggested that schools could refocus towards the arts to both assist local creative industries and improve the mental health of students.

4.12 The Chair questioned what else could be done to assist people entering the creative industries in the county.

4.13 Dan Power suggested that success stories be shared to advertise the achievements, impact and contribution of the sector.

4.14 The Chair invited further action on creative comms to advertise the sector.

4.15 The Chair commended the report and emphasised the importance and impact of the sector.

4.16 A vote was moved that unanimously agreed the recommendations of the report.

## **5 – Sussex Energy Update October 2025**

5.1 Natasha Bridge introduced the report for this item and delivered a presentation.

5.2 Natasha Bridge provided a detailed overview of the focuses of Sussex Energy, as well as the milestones achieved and further development goals of the organisation.

5.3 Natasha Bridge stated the success of the first Sussex Energy Forum meeting in July 2025, and shared details of collaborative organisations that had joined

the forum.

- 5.4 The Chair provided an overview of the history and foundation of Sussex Energy and emphasised the importance of local energy independence.
- 5.5 The Chair stated that the Government was keen to expand local energy infrastructure that could lead to 4000 new jobs in the sector nationally.
- 5.6 Andrew Swayne stated that he was pleased to see Sussex Energy taking shape and requested a future update on the number of jobs created locally by Sussex Energy.
- 5.7 Andrew Swayne stated the need for a good local energy settlement for the country from Central Government.
- 5.8 It was stated that the Sussex region was focused on the expansion of the clean energy sector.
- 5.9 The Chair stated that they were pleased to host the Secretary of State for Energy and Net Zero and obtained a commitment from him to support the local energy sector.
- 5.10 A vote was moved that unanimously agreed the recommendations of the report.

## **6 – Economic Opportunities Study**

- 6.1 Andy Hill delivered a verbal update on this item and invited Kieran and Luke to present the economic opportunities study.
- 6.2 Kieran stated that the study was approximately 50% complete and provided an overview of the study's objectives (to understand, identify, and recommend).
- 6.3 Kieran provided an overview of the work completed to date, as well as outlined the themes of devolution and how devolution could benefit project delivery within the county ahead of the foundation of the Combined Sussex Authority.
- 6.4 Kieran provided an additional overview of the county's international industry gateways and stated their importance in the development of the local economy, citing examples such as Gatwick Airport, Shoreham Port,

Newhaven Port, and Brighton City Airport).

6.5 Luke provided a brief overview of what devolution could mean for the area as well as a breakdown of local development opportunities in skills and employment.

6.6 The Chair commended the presentation.

6.7 Martin Lury questioned how A-roads in Sussex could be unlocked in the context of the counties growing population and suggested that a radical solution could be required.

6.8 Steve Skelton commended the presentation and stated the need to progress conversations and build on collaborative strengths across the region.

6.9 Steve Skelton provided an overview of the inclusive growth strategy and stated the huge potential of the Sussex Combined Authority.

6.10 Kieran stated that lessons had been learned from other Mayoral Combined Authorities and emphasised the need for ambition in delivering projects that could be adopted as policy by a future Sussex Mayor.

6.11 Kieran stated that the Greater Brighton Area had been waiting for a fully integrated mass transport plan for decades, further stating the need for a multi-faceted approach through rail and bus contracts to bring the county together.

6.12 Luke stated that local transport was a substantial barrier to local educational, career, and economic development.

6.13 Karl Roberts questioned what additional strategic problems could be resolved by a future Sussex Mayor to unlock further development, using water infrastructure as an example.

6.14 Jeremy Gardner suggested broadening the scope of the proposed transport policy to include more methods of transport.

6.15 Sophie Cox stated that the 'how' was missing from the report and questioned how, for example, transport could materially be improved in Sussex. Sophie Cox requested more information on this in future.

6.16 Kieran stated that Combined Authority Mayors have a unique ability to facilitate dialogue for development and emphasised the importance of

allowing skills to develop within the county.

6.17 Andrew Swayne highlighted the demographic differences across the geographies of Sussex and suggested the identification of risks to development and delivery of the project to ensure robust business cases, especially in the context of obtaining funding from Central Government.

6.18 Kieran agreed the importance of a risk register to identify potential issues and obstacles. Kieran thanked members for their questions and comments and highlighted the importance of engaging younger people in project delivery, as well as bolstering and developing the visitor economy in the wider Greater Brighton region.

6.19 The Chair thanked members for their contributions and commended representatives from Litchfields.

6.20 The Chair suggested the investigation of regional development opportunities in terms of health, mental health, and substance abuse.

The meeting concluded at 15:42.



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>The Greater Brighton Economic Board in the context of the Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>28 January 2026</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Chair, Greater Brighton Economic Board</b>
<b>Contact Officer: Name:</b>	<b>Andy Hill</b>
<b>Email:</b>	<b>Andy.hill@brighton-hove.gov.uk</b>
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 In early February 2025, Sussex and Brighton was confirmed as one of six regions to be accepted on to the Devolution Priority Programme and the establishment of the Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority (SBCCA) is gathering pace.
- 1.2 The Greater Brighton Economic Board “the Board” welcomes the Government recognition of the opportunities available from working at a larger, regional level for strategic initiatives. With the formation of the SBCCA in progress, it is clear that the role and purpose of the Board and other existing governance structures are likely to be replaced by a wider governance structure to drive the region’s economic growth. This will probably come into effect during the 2026/27 financial year, though exact timings are not yet known. As such, this report sets out some recommendations to continue the Board’s work through the period of transition to the SBCCA.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Board agrees in principle to commit funding for a further twelve months (April 2026-March 2027), so that the Board continues to operate as structures around the SBCCA are established.
- 2.2 That the Board agrees to develop an Integration Plan to ensure that Board priorities, particularly the Sussex Energy Mission, are embedded within the future SBCCA.
- 2.3 That by September 2026 the Board agree the timeline for the dissolution of the Board and transition into the SBCCA with the ambition for this to take place during 2026. It should be noted that three months is required to provide notice and close.
- 2.4 That in accord with 2.3, whilst the Board agrees to twelve months funding in principle, initially six months of funding (April-September 2026) is requested from each Member.

2.5 That a more fully worked up budget for the period April-September 2026, which includes any costs associated with Board dissolution, be presented at the next Board meeting for agreement (March).

### 3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 The Board was established as a requirement of the Greater Brighton City Deal with Government in 2014. The Board is comprised of two parts: the Greater Brighton Economic Joint Committee (GBEJC) and the Greater Brighton Business Partnership (GBBP). Board meetings have operated as concurrent meetings of both the GBEJC and GBBP to help coordinate economic development activities and investment at a regional level.

3.2 Currently, Board membership is set out as below:

Greater Brighton Economic Joint Committee (GBEJC)	Greater Brighton Business Partnership (GBBP)
Adur District Council	Adur & Worthing Business Partnership
Arun District Council	Brighton & Hove Economic Growth Board
Brighton & Hove City Council	Chichester College Group
Crawley Borough Council	South Downs National Park Authority
Lewes District Council	University of Brighton
Mid Sussex District Council	University of Sussex
Worthing Borough Council	NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board

3.3 The main remit of the Board is to help nurture sustainable economic prosperity, by co-ordinating economic development activities and investment at City Region level, and by joining together places and working collaboratively to build on the area's economic assets and unblock its barriers. In bringing together, in a partnership of the willing, seven local authorities, business partnerships, two universities, a college group, a National Park, and recently NHS Sussex, the Board has occupied a unique position within the local governance landscape.

3.4 The forthcoming English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill will create a statutory requirement for Mayoral Authorities to produce a Local Growth Plan which sets out a long-term vision for growth in their region over the next decade and a roadmap for how this can be achieved. Established governance structures such as the Board, and the Economic Growth Boards of East and West Sussex and Brighton & Hove have a detailed understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing residents and businesses.

3.5 The Board boasts a lot of experience and expertise in sustainable economic prosperity and this knowledge will be pertinent to the new SBCCA once established. The Board's experience, expertise and good practice will be shared to ensure that this knowledge is transferred to the SBCCA.

3.6 Mayoral Authorities will have a defined list of 'Areas of Competence', set out in law. These are designed to strengthen, not detract from, the functions and roles of other public bodies, such as NHS England, Environment Agency or Local Authorities. The Areas of Competence include:

- Transport & local infrastructure
- Skills & employment support
- Housing & strategic planning
- Economic development & regeneration
- Environment & climate change
- Health, wellbeing & public service reform
- Public safety.

3.7 Thus far the Board has been able to add great value and demonstrate competence in the areas of economic development & regeneration and environment & climate change, with successes demonstrated through the Investment Programme and Sussex Energy Mission, launched in 2024. Transport and local infrastructure are key enablers of economic growth; high quality transport infrastructure supports growth and opportunity. Skills and employment support are equally foundational to sustainable economic growth, ensuring that investment translates into jobs, productivity gains and inclusive prosperity. Infrastructure will also be fundamental to realising the Sussex Energy Mission.

3.8 Work has begun on the establishment of the SBCCA. Following the decision by the government to delay the election of a new mayor they also confirmed the intention to move forward with the creation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority in 2026. It is anticipated that the new SBCCA will be created in March 2026 but will take time to become fully established. As devolution for Sussex and Brighton gathers pace, the role for the Board becomes less defined. The areas of focus for the Board, including Sussex Energy will be increasingly led by the SBCCA as the primary governance structure for developing and growing the region's economy. Once established, the SBCCA will likely establish a Business Board to provide a strong and independent business voice and advice. Similarly to the Board, Business Boards are routinely made up of representatives from business, higher/further education and local government.

3.9 In the likelihood that the role and purpose of the Board will eventually be subsumed within the SBCCA advisory structures, it is recommended that the Board agrees to commit funding for twelve months in principle, by which time the governance structures around the SBCCA are likely to be more established. Recommendation 2.2 outlines the intent to prepare an Integration Plan, so that the Sussex Energy Programme and other Board priorities are embedded within the SBCCA at an early stage, and therefore this important work continues beyond the life of the Board. The recommendation at 2.3 is that the Board agrees a timeline for dissolution by September, if work around establishing the SBCCA and embedding the integration plan is sufficiently progressed.

3.10 The 2025/26 Operational Arrangements & budget, agreed by the Board in April 2025, was framed within the context of the region being on the Devolution Priority Programme. At that stage it was unclear how quickly the SBCCA and its structures would be established and the future of the Board beyond the end of March 2026 was not certain. There was a large underspend being carried forward into 2025/26, and to avoid a situation where at the end of 2025/26 there was another large surplus, contributions sought from Board Members were reduced from previous years. The aim was that by the close of 2025/26 there would be zero budget

remaining which would avoid the situation of having to redistribute remaining funds to members if the Board were to be dissolved at the end of March 2026.

The table below shows the contributions from Board Members for 2024/25 and the much-reduced contributions for 2025/26.

Organisation	2024/25 Contribution	2025/26 Contribution
South Downs National Park Authority	£7,970.00	£1,995.00
University of Sussex	£7,970.00	£1,995.00
University of Brighton	£7,970.00	£1,995.00
Chichester College Group	£7,970.00	£1,995.00
NHS Sussex ICB	N/A	£1,995.00
Adur District Council	£10,000.00	£2,500.00
Arun District Council	£24,700.00	£6,175.00
Brighton & Hove City Council	£52,200.00	£13,050.00
Crawley Borough Council	£20,750.00	£5,190.00
Lewes District Council	£15,200.00	£3,800.00
Mid Sussex District Council	£24,750.00	£6,190.00
Worthing Borough Council	£18,000.00	£4,500.00
<b>Total Contributions</b>	<b>£197,480.00</b>	<b>£51,380.00</b>
<b>Carry-forward from 2024/25</b>		<b>£300,000.00</b>
<b>Total Budget for 2025/26</b>		<b>£351,380.00</b>

3.11 The reduced contributions for 2025/26 were made possible due to the large carry-forward from 2024/25. These funds are now being used to cover 2025/26 costs, which will only leave a small surplus for 2025/26. If the Board is to continue its work into 2026/27, further contributions will need to be requested from Board members.

3.12 The recommendation at 2.1 is that the Board agrees in principle to commit twelve months of funding so that the Board can operate to March 2027. However, recommendation 2.3 is that the initial request is for six months of funding for the period April-September 2026. The sought contributions are illustrated in the table below, based on the baseline of the 2024/25 contributions highlighted in the table above.

Organisation	Annual Contribution (from 2024/25)	Six-month contribution (April-September 2026)
South Downs National Park Authority	£7,970.00	£3,985.00
University of Sussex	£7,970.00	£3,985.00
University of Brighton	£7,970.00	£3,985.00
Chichester College Group	£7,970.00	£3,985.00
Adur District Council	£10,000.00	£5,000.00
Arun District Council	£24,700.00	£12,350.00
Brighton & Hove City Council	£52,200.00	£26,100.00
Crawley Borough Council	£20,750.00	£10,375.00
Lewes District Council	£15,200.00	£7,600.00
Mid Sussex District Council	£24,750.00	£12,375.00
Worthing Borough Council	£18,000.00	£9,000.00
<b>Total Contributions</b>	<b>£197,480.00</b>	<b>£98,470.00</b>

3.13 The requested budget will cover the essential elements of running the Board, chiefly the cost of the Business Managers and the other operational costs as per the figures in the table below, which are based on 2025/26.

Running Costs	Annualised figure (from 2025/26)	Six-months (April-September 2026)
Salary costs (including on-costs) and expenses	£127,420.00	£63,710.00
Finance support	£8,188.00	£4,094.00
Legal support	£11,213.00	£5,606.00
Democratic Services support	£4,778.00	£2,389.00
Scrutiny (charged £500 (excluding venue) on a 'pay as you go' basis)	£2,000.00	£1,000.00
GBEB Communications	£24,950.00	£12,475.00

GBEB Annual report, printing and other materials	£3,500.00	£1,750.00
Venue hire, hospitality, and refreshments	£500.00	£250.00
Additional costs e.g. IT, travel	£1,000.00	£500.00
<b>Total running costs</b>	<b>£183,549.00</b>	<b>£91,774.50</b>

These are indicative figures based on the 2025/26 Operational Arrangements. These figures need to be reviewed by Finance colleagues and may be subject to small changes. The tables above illustrate that there will likely be a very small surplus of around £7k, which will be kept as contingency. With this recommended provision there is no budget for a Board work programme as such. This would require additional funding be sought from Board members, and given the 6-month timeframe, it seems sensible to focus on delivering on current priorities and work, such as the Sussex Energy Mission, and working closely with the SBCCA through the transition to embed the Integration Plan, rather than committing to new projects which are likely to have a lifespan longer than that of the Board.

- 3.14 Further consideration will need to be given to additional costs that could be incurred by the dissolution of the Board, including any employment liabilities and ongoing costs such as maintenance of the Sussex Energy website. The recommendation at 2.5 is that an accurate final budget for April-September 2026, which includes these additional costs, be presented back to the Board at the next meeting.
- 3.15 If dissolution costs are identified which could exceed the current budget, the Accountable Body (Brighton & Hove City Council) will seek to apportion these costs equitably across Board members, in line with the original Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at appendix 1.
- 3.16 If when the Board is dissolved there remains a surplus after all costs of dissolution have been accounted for, the Accountable Body will distribute these excess funds equitably across Board Members.

#### **4 ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 One alternative is that the Board be dissolved at the end of March 2026, in line with the end of the financial year and current funding. This was considered, but the view was that the structures around the SBCCA are not yet mature, and the Board still has a role to play as convenor and supporter of work to establish the SBCCA, including developing the Integration Plan recommended in 2.2.
- 4.2 The other option would be to ask Members to cover the budget for the full year from the outset. Given progress to establish the SBCCA has accelerated in recent months, a year seems a long time. Agreeing in principle to fund the Board for a year, but securing funding for the first six months, seems the most prudent approach at this time.

## **5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

5.1 There are no direct community engagement or consultation arising directly from this paper. However, the development of the proposed Integration Plan will set out how a) the work will continue at SBCCA; and b) make initial recommendations on ongoing community engagement and participation as part of regional devolution activity.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

6.1 As noted previously, the Sussex and Brighton region is on the Devolution Priority Programme, and progress to establish the SBCCA is gathering pace. The future purpose of existing governance structures is uncertain, so it is recommended that the Board agrees to fund operations for six months until September 2026, and then be dissolved, subject to the SBCCA governance structures being appropriately advanced, and Board priorities, including Sussex Energy, being embedded within the new organisation.

6.2 The Board has added significant regional economic value as a unique convenor of local authorities and business partners. Its experience gathered over more than 10 years mean that it is in a prime position to offer support to MHCLG and other Government departments as work to establish the SBCCA progresses, through the development of a robust integration plan to ensure Board priorities are embedded within the new SBCCA.

## **7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

7.1 The report recommends that the Board approve to commit to funding the activity for a further 12 months, but to secure member contributions to initially cover the period from 1 April 2026 to 30 September 2026. This is to ensure the Board's activity can be funded whilst work is undertaken to develop an Integration plan and a timeline and activity for dissolution.

7.2 Indicative running costs for the first six months of 2026/27 is £91,774.50 as per the table in 3.13. Updated costs will be presented to the Board at the next meeting, in March 2026, which will include any estimated costs of dissolution. Member contribution requests will be calculated based on these updated costs and presented within the same report.

7.3 Further contributions from Board members may be required to cover the continuation of activity beyond 30 September 2026, subject to the timeline of the integration of the Board's activity with the SBCCA.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Haley Woppard*

*Date: 19/01/2026*

Legal Implications:

7.4 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report. In agreeing a timeline for dissolution of the Board, consideration will be required to be given to the treatment of any contractual arrangements that have been entered into by the Accountable Body (Brighton and Hove City Council) on behalf of the Board. If required, and as part of agreeing the timeline for dissolution, an updated legal agreement/memorandum of understanding may be presented for agreement by the March Board.

*Lawyer Consulted: Siobhan Fry – BHCC Head of Legal (Commercial)*  
*Date: 19/01/26*

Equalities Implications:

7.5 None directly arising from this report.

Sustainability Implications

7.6 None directly arising from this report.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices:**

- Greater Brighton Economic Board Memorandum of Understanding

**Background Documents:**

- Greater Brighton City Deal 2014
- Greater Brighton Operational Arrangements 2025/26
- Greater Brighton Operational Arrangements 2024/25

**Greater Brighton Economic Board**

**Memorandum of Understanding**

**1. Background**

- 1.1 This Memorandum of Understanding ('Memorandum') is made pursuant to paragraph 13 of the Heads of Terms for the Greater Brighton Economic Board (the 'Board'), and sets out the arrangements in respect of:
  - (i) The Accountable Body's role in relation to the Board;
  - (ii) The Board's budget and financial accountability;
  - (iii) Financial contributions by specified Board members towards the running and administration of the Board;
  - (iv) The administrative support to be provided to the Board by the Lead Authority.

- 1.2 In this Memorandum, 'Lead Authority' and 'Accountable Body' both mean the local authority member of the Board appointed as lead authority in accordance with the Board's Heads of Terms.

**2. Accountable Body Role**

- 2.1 The following provisions set out the responsibilities of the Accountable Body.
- 2.2 The Accountable Body shall, in relation to any funds received by it on behalf of the Board, be responsible for the legal and financial management of those funds and for ensuring that they are spent in accordance with the objectives and criteria for those funds and the directions of the Board. Any Board decision which incurs expenditure or which could generate any ongoing liability which cannot be defrayed directly from any central government funds or other external funding sources held by the Accountable Body on behalf of the Board shall require the unanimous agreement of all members of the Board prior to its implementation by the Accountable Body.
- 2.3 The Accountable Body will undertake an administrative role which will include but is not limited to the following:
  - 2.3.1. development and maintenance of administrative systems to enable the Accountable Body and the Board to fulfil their responsibilities, including setting up such accounting and other financial and management arrangements as are required;

- 2.3.2. where applicable, submitting grant claims to the Board for approval.
- 2.4. The Board and the Greater Brighton Officer Programme Board will carry out their activities so far as practicable in a manner which enables the Accountable Body –
  - (i) to comply with the terms of any central government or other third party funds received in connection with the Board's functions; and
  - (ii) to ensure that the functions of the Board are carried out with regard to the principles of sound financial practice.
- 2.5. The Accountable Body shall not be obliged to act upon any decision or direction of the Board if such action is not in accordance with the proper exercise of the Accountable Body's powers or if such a decision or direction would cause the Accountable Body to be in breach of its obligations under any funding agreement. Furthermore, the Accountable Body shall not be obliged to act upon any decision or direction of the Board which is in conflict with its own constitution.
- 2.6. Subject to paragraph 1.9 of the Board's Heads of Terms, if the local authority appointed as Accountable Body is no longer to act as the Accountable Body for any reason, then upon ceasing to act the exiting Accountable Body will forthwith transfer any funds held in the Board's budget, or funds held on behalf of the Board, to the local authority that is to be the replacement Accountable Body.

### **3. Board Budget**

- 3.1. Any increase in the financial contributions made by specified members of the Board towards the running and administration of the Board shall be agreed unanimously by the Board no later than 2 (two) calendar months before the commencement of each financial year.
- 3.2. The Board's budget will not exceed the total amount of the following:
  - 3.2.1. the financial contributions made by members of the Board pursuant to paragraph 5;
  - 3.2.2. any other financial contributions from central government and other third parties; and
  - 3.2.3. any contributions from the private sector.
- 3.3. The financial contributions from Board members pursuant to paragraph 5 will be paid to the Accountable Body within 30 days of receipt of the Accountable Body's invoice.
- 3.4. The Accountable Body shall not take any action which will result in expenditure exceeding the Board's budget for the year without the prior

unanimous approval of the Board. Any expenditure in excess of the Board's budget shall be funded by additional contributions from those Board members specified in Schedule 2.

- 3.5. Subject to paragraph 3.6 below,
  - (i) all expenditure and liabilities in connection with the running and administration of the Board shall be met from the Board's budget;
  - (ii) nothing in this Memorandum shall oblige the Accountable Body to spend any money or otherwise incur any liabilities whatsoever that are not fully recoverable through the Board's budget; and
  - (iii) the Accountable Body shall be indemnified by the Board members to such extent and in such proportions as set out in Schedule 1 for all and any losses relating solely to the running and administration of the Board (such losses to include costs, liabilities, claims, demands, actions, damages and expenses (including reasonable legal expenses)) properly and reasonably incurred and arising from or incurred by the Accountable Body in performing its role pursuant to this Memorandum.
- 3.6. Notwithstanding paragraph 3.5, where any losses (as defined in the preceding paragraph) are incurred as a result of a negligent act or default of or breach of this Memorandum by a Board member or an act of a Board member which was not authorised by the Board, that Board member shall indemnify the other Board members in respect of any such losses arising.
- 3.7. For the avoidance of doubt, the indemnities referred to in paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6 above shall not apply in the case of any losses that occur in relation to projects which the Board is managing in exercise of its functions.
- 3.8. Where the Board has delegated the implementation of a project to the Lead Authority pursuant to paragraph 3.3(ii) of the Board's Heads of Terms, that authority shall, in its capacity as Accountable Body, be individually liable for any losses or overspend incurred in the delivery of that project.

#### **4. Financial Accountability**

- 4.1. The Accountable Body will operate the financial systems relating to the Board in respect of obligations undertaken in accordance with paragraph 1.
- 4.2. The Board will act upon the advice of the Accountable Body's chief financial officer in respect of improvements to controls, both financial and non-financial.

4.3. The Accountable Body will provide financial monitoring statements to the Board in relation to the Board's budget on a quarterly basis together with a financial year end report.

**5. Financial Contributions of Board Members to the running and administration of the Board**

5.1 Financial contributions payable by specified Board members to the running and administration of the Board shall be made annually from 1 April 2014. Those Board members listed in Schedule 2 shall, in respect of the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015, pay the respective contributions set out in that Schedule.

**6. Administrative Support to be provided to the Board by the Lead Authority**

6.1 The Lead Authority will provide the following administrative support to the Board:

- (i) The timetabling of Board meetings and the booking of venues;
- (ii) the co-ordination, publication and circulation of agendas (in hardcopy and electronic format as appropriate), including on the internet.
- (iii) the taking of minutes at Board meetings and their subsequent circulation.
- (iv) other functions to facilitate the smooth running of the Board, at the discretion of the Lead Authority.

**Agreed on behalf of...**

*[List of each Board member signatory]*

## Schedule 1

### Apportionment of Losses between Board Members

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Relevant Proportion of Losses</b>
Brighton & Hove City Council	1/12 <sup>th</sup> (one twelfth)
Adur District Council	1/12 <sup>th</sup> (one twelfth)
Worthing District Council	1/12 <sup>th</sup> (one twelfth)
Lewes District Council	1/12 <sup>th</sup> (one twelfth)
Mid Sussex District Council	1/12 <sup>th</sup> (one twelfth)
University of Sussex	1/12 <sup>th</sup> (one twelfth)
University of Brighton	1/12 <sup>th</sup> (one twelfth)
Further Education Representative	1/12 <sup>th</sup> (one twelfth)
Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership	1/12 <sup>th</sup> (one twelfth)
Brighton & Hove Economic Partnership	1/12 <sup>th</sup> (one twelfth)
Adur & Worthing Business Partnership	1/12 <sup>th</sup> (one twelfth)
Coastal West Sussex Partnership	1/12 <sup>th</sup> (one twelfth)

## Schedule 2

### **Financial Contributions Payable by Specified Board Members to the running and administration of the Board in respect of the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015**

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Contribution</b>
Adur	£4,964
Brighton & Hove	£26,063
Lewes	£7,801
Mid Sussex	£11,643
Worthing	£8,629
Coast to Capital LEP	£7,500
University of Sussex	£5,000
University of Brighton	£5,000
FE Colleges	£5,000
South Downs National Park	£5,000

**Subject:** **Sussex Energy Update**  
**Date of Meeting:** **28 January 2026**  
**Report of:** **Chair, Greater Brighton Economic Board**  
**Contact Officer:** **Name:** **Natasha Bridge**  
**Email:** [Natasha.Bridge@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:Natasha.Bridge@brighton-hove.gov.uk)  
**Ward(s) affected:** **All**

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 On 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024 the Greater Brighton Economic Board (“the Board”) supported the launch of the Sussex Energy mission.
- 1.2 An update was provided in the subsequent Board meetings highlighting the progress made since the launch event.
- 1.3 This report gives a further Sussex Energy update setting out the work undertaken since the last Board meeting in October 2025 and the next steps in developing the mission.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Board notes the progress on Sussex Energy.
- 2.2 That the Board supports the:
  - i. Next steps needed to take Sussex Energy forward as set out in section 3.13, 3.17, 3.20, 3.26, 3.29 and 3.33.
  - ii. Recommendations from the Sussex and Brighton Energy Briefing, giving practical early priorities and longer-term opportunities for the Sussex & Brighton Combined County Authority (SBCCA) summarised in sections 3.4-3.9.
  - iii. Engagement with the SBCCA to embed energy within its future priorities and governance arrangements, as set out in section 3.10-3.12, including nomination of a Board member to support this work by engaging SBCCA leadership.
  - iv. Requests for support set out in section 3.30 relating to commercial landlord

2.3 That the Board agrees to receive a further update on Sussex Energy at the next Board meeting, including an integration approach as described in 3.11 to support the alignment of Greater Brighton's priorities with the future delivery of the SBCCA

### 3 CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Sussex Energy aims to achieve net zero energy status across Sussex by 2040. This ambitious goal seeks to ensure that our community's energy use equals the amount of zero-carbon energy generated locally, thereby enhancing energy security, driving down energy bills and addressing urgent climate concerns, at the same time as generating inclusive economic prosperity.
- 3.2 This remains a strategic priority, and pace is needed in 2026 because climate change is cumulative, accelerating and characterised by tipping points. As governance arrangements evolve, it is important to stay closely aligned with Board plans and SBCCA priorities and prepare for transition so that momentum is maintained and this work does not fall between organisations.

## **UPDATE**

### **Summary**

- 3.3 Sussex Energy has made strong progress across all workstreams while also beginning structured work to position the programme for transition into the emerging SBCCA.
  - Upper-tier authorities have drafted a joint Sussex and Brighton Energy Briefing to inform the SBCCA, setting out early priorities, a pipeline of deliverable projects and longer-term opportunities, with wider engagement across districts, boroughs and the Sussex Energy Forum to follow.
  - In parallel, Sussex Energy is being positioned as a Sussex-wide, delivery-ready and investable programme that can be carried into the SBCCA, offering a low-cost, high-impact platform for early regional delivery and continuity through devolution.
  - Communications work has advanced through:
    - A new Sussex-specific content library, developed by University of Sussex students, which is being built into a communications calendar to help coordinate and amplify messaging through partner organisations on Sussex Energy themes.
    - Sussex Energy contributing to the Worthing Heat Network launch planned for February 2026.
  - Two major work packages — the Regional Funding & Investment Strategy and Solar Across Sussex — are moving into procurement, supporting the development of a scalable pipeline of investable projects.
  - New initiatives are building the foundations for delivery including.
    - Early work to engage commercial landlords and tenants to unlock solar deployment on industrial buildings; and
    - Development of an online, filterable regional energy-projects map, led by a University of Brighton master's student with Brighton & Hove City Council GIS and Net Zero support.

### **Workstream: Devolution – Sussex & Brighton Energy Briefing**

- 3.4 Net zero, energy and environment leads from the three upper-tier authorities have jointly developed a Sussex and Brighton Energy Briefing to inform the emerging SBCCA (see appendix 'Sussex & Brighton Energy Briefing DRAFT').

3.5 The briefing highlights that Sussex starts from a position of strength, with robust climate strategies across all upper-tier authorities and the Sussex Energy collaboration already bringing together local authorities, universities, NHS Sussex, business groups, a strong and experienced community energy sector and the Greater South East Net Zero Hub.

3.6 The briefing identifies a clear set of early priorities for the first 1–2 years of the SBCCA, focused on practical and achievable actions that will maintain momentum through transition and create long-term value. These include:

- Ensuring continuity of existing climate and energy activity during the transition to the SBCCA;
- Embedding climate and environment across all SBCCA decision-making;
- Commissioning a Sussex-wide Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) to provide a shared evidence base for infrastructure investment and spatial planning;
- Establishing a regional investment framework and early funding mechanisms;
- Accelerating delivery of priority programmes, particularly heat networks and solar deployment;
- Strengthening net-zero skills pathways; and
- Ensuring inclusive governance that embeds key partners from the outset.

3.7 The briefing will set out a pipeline of early deliverable projects already underway across Sussex, including heat networks, solar farms, battery storage, community-owned PV, renewable transport and public-estate decarbonisation. With targeted SBCCA support, many of these projects could reach delivery or major milestones before or within the first mayoral term, providing early, visible progress and demonstrating credibility to government, investors and communities.

3.8 Looking further ahead, the briefing outlines longer-term opportunities (3–10 years), drawing on learning from established combined authorities. These include whole-system energy planning, large-scale retrofit and heat programmes, expansion of solar and storage, market-shaping and innovation activity, regional skills academies, strengthened energy governance, and longer-term funding and investment mechanisms.

3.9 The briefing highlights that Sussex Energy is commissioning a regional funding and investment strategy, which will benchmark best practice, map funding and investor opportunities, and recommend models suited to Sussex—providing an important evidence base for future SBCCA decisions.

### **Workstream: Devolution – Transition to SBCCA**

3.10 Sussex Energy has been developed as a Sussex-wide collaboration, bringing together the three upper-tier authorities alongside districts and boroughs, universities, NHS Sussex, business networks, community energy organisations and the Greater South East Net Zero Hub. It has established its own programme identity and delivery infrastructure, including an active Partner Group, communications platforms and an emerging pipeline of activity. This provides a ready-made programme with defined workstreams, commissioned activity, and projects that could be accelerated through coordinated regional support and investment. As such, Sussex Energy offers the SBCCA a low-cost, high-impact platform to demonstrate early regional delivery, build confidence with government, investors and partners, and retain Sussex's emerging competitive advantage in low-carbon energy collaboration.

3.11 In parallel with finalising the Sussex and Brighton Energy Briefing - including identifying a set of "early win" projects deliverable within 2–3 years where regional coordination or investment could unlock faster progress - an integration approach will be developed that frames Sussex Energy as an "investable proposition" for the emerging SBCCA. This will include (i) setting out the governance and resourcing arrangements required to maintain delivery confidence; (ii) engaging with the SBCCA's leadership and officer team to build a shared understanding of the value of embedding the Sussex Energy Programme in the organisation; and (iii) subsequent engagement to agree options for adoption, resourcing and oversight.

3.12 To enable this approach, it is recommended that a Board member is nominated to engage the SBCCA leadership and prior to this, work with the Sussex Energy Programme on the messaging needed to facilitate this engagement.

3.13 Next Steps:

- ***Socialise Sussex & Brighton energy briefing with a) the Sussex Energy Partner Group and b) Districts & Boroughs and c) Sussex Energy Forum and incorporate input.***
- ***Compile a short list of "early win" projects deliverable within 2–3 years where coordinated regional action or investment could unlock faster progress or scale.***
- ***Develop an integration approach as set out in 3.11.***
- ***Develop a concise integration offer for the SBCCA, setting out Sussex Energy's current programme infrastructure, pipeline, and options for future governance and resourcing within SBCCA structures.***
- ***Establish a planned route of engagement with SBCCA leadership/officers (timed to SBCCA capacity), to agree how Sussex Energy can be carried forward as part of the region's emerging priorities and governance.***

#### **Workstream: Communications – Pick n Mix Communications Calendar**

3.14 Greater Brighton partnered with five University of Sussex students through the Winter 2025 Student Consultancy Programme to support Sussex Energy communications. The students curated a shared library of Sussex-specific content (posts, images, videos and infographics) aligned with key themes such as Keeping Sussex Warm, increasing local renewable generation and promoting community energy. This “pick and mix” bank of materials will enable partners to adapt high-quality, Sussex-specific content for use across social media, websites, newsletters and other channels.

3.15 This work will underpin the development of a Sussex Energy communications calendar, to socialise with organisations across the region, via the Sussex Energy comms working group. The aim of the Sussex Energy communications calendar is to create something simple to use to help organisations understand the themes, timing and the content available. The aim is to coordinate and amplify messaging on Sussex Energy themes, with partners aligning their communications around shared campaigns and key dates.

3.16 An article is being developed, containing student quotes, publicising this student work experience to a) promote Sussex Energy, b) publicise the communications calendar and c) attract future volunteers to support with content development.

3.17 Next Steps:

- ***Develop Sussex Energy communications calendar and review with Sussex Energy comms working group to refine.***
- ***Socialise communications calendar to encourage organisations to adopt using it to amplify Sussex Energy messaging.***
- ***Publish article about the student help to develop content.***
- ***Apply for future student support to produce more content for communications calendar.***

#### **Workstream: Communications – Worthing Heat Network Launch**

3.18 Sussex Energy has been invited to play a prominent role in the Worthing Heat Network launch, scheduled w/c 9<sup>th</sup> February 2026. The plans include a formal launch event, where a Sussex Energy representative will present alongside partners, and a community drop-in session with stalls.

3.19 At the community event, Sussex Energy will work with partners to showcase a wider range of low-carbon energy activity beyond the heat network, e.g. community-owned local solar opportunities and sustainability advice for small organisations.

3.20 Next Steps:

- ***Confirm community event partners.***
- ***Develop presentation for formal launch to showcase the regional energy work and collaboration and confirm presenter.***

#### **Workstreams: Regional Funding & Investment Strategy and Solar Across Sussex – Procurement**

3.21 The Regional Funding & Investment Strategy is a 9-month contract to develop a regional approach to finance energy decarbonisation work in Sussex. It includes work on fund design options, investor mapping, an Investment Prospectus, a business case for a long-term funding and investment function, and a strategic report on regional funding and investment for energy decarbonisation.

3.22 The Solar Across Sussex 4-month contract will map and prioritise solar opportunities (e.g. rooftop, car port, ground-mounted) to support accelerated deployment of investable solar projects across the region.

3.23 The two contracts have been developed and are in the process of being issued to suppliers to get quotations.

3.24 A subset of the Sussex Energy Partner Group will be responsible for evaluating supplier responses and overseeing the supplier's work.

3.25 Considering potential changes to the Board's governance arrangements, and should the Board be dissolved, there may be a requirement for an organisation to administer and manage the Sussex Energy contracts to completion. Delivery oversight will be provided by an agreed group from the Sussex Energy Partner Group, responsible for monitoring progress and confirming deliverable sign-off. The role would therefore be limited to contract administration, including verification of signed-off deliverables and processing payments to suppliers. Further consideration will be given to which organisation could appropriately house this role and whether any additional costs arise from this arrangement. Where relevant, these will be reflected within the Board dissolution costs to be included in the final budget for April–September 2026, due to be presented to the Board in the March 2026 meeting.

3.26 Next Steps:

- ***Work with Sussex Energy Partner Group to shortlist potential suppliers for work packages.***
- ***Award contracts.***

#### **Workstream: Solar Across Sussex – Commercial Landlord Engagement**

3.27 Sussex Energy has begun work to engage commercial landlords on industrial estates, where many tenants face high energy costs in older, hard-to-treat buildings. The aim is to turn industrial estates into a “distributed solar power station”, cutting bills and CO<sub>2</sub>e while protecting asset values.

3.28 The emerging proposition is based on community energy / third-party models that fund, own and operate rooftop solar, removing landlord capital barriers while offering tenants cheaper, long-term power purchase agreements. Initial discussions with local commercial property contacts suggest significant potential, particularly for older stock. Next steps include developing a programme of awareness-raising events with Sussex Chamber of Commerce and local authorities, enabling landlords and tenants to share experience and building a pipeline of solar-ready roofs suitable for aggregation e.g. Mid Sussex have suggested hosting an event linked to their business parks, and there is scope for similar events with other local authorities and business networks. This work will help build a pipeline of solar-ready industrial roofs suitable for aggregation through Solar Across Sussex and community energy partnerships.

3.29 **Next Steps:**

- *Develop a programme of awareness-raising events, working with partners such as Sussex Chamber of Commerce and district/borough councils to engage business parks.*

3.30 **Asks of Board:**

- *Support with facilitating introductions to property agents / owners in the area.*
- *Support for events. E.g. ability to convene business parks, support event promotion, identification of local, early adopter landlords willing to share their experience.*

### **Mapping Work – Building a Single View of Energy Decarbonisation Activity**

3.31 A key gap identified by partners is the absence of a single, up-to-date view of energy decarbonisation projects across Sussex. A static map presented previously to the Board is helpful as a snapshot but is not easily updated or interactive.

3.32 To address this, Sussex Energy is developing an online, filterable (e.g. by technology or status) map of energy projects, drawing on existing data sources and designed for low-maintenance, semi-automated updates. A Masters-level student from the University of Brighton has been recruited to do this work via a university-funded placement (30 days in spring 2026), with oversight from Brighton & Hove's Net Zero team and expert input from their GIS mapping and IT&D teams. Once operational, this map will support project replication, strengthen Sussex's reputation and provide a valuable strategic regional energy planning tool for the Board and, in time, the SBCCA.

3.33 **Next Steps:**

- *Continue delivery of the mapping project (following project kick-off in January 2026).*
- *Establish Sussex Energy programme oversight for the mapping work, including Partner Group input and regular progress check-ins.*

### **Lewes District Council – Whole Energy System Feasibility Study**

- 3.34 By March, Lewes District Council expect to conclude a significant two-year whole energy system feasibility study which looks in depth at how to decarbonise at town scale. It is an advanced version of a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) that has investigated varying net-zero carbon pathways for all technology and fuel options that could be applied to (i) domestic and commercial buildings (ii) road, rail and marine transport. Newhaven made an ideal test case thanks to its representative population size, mix of a residential and varied range of commercial activity, alongside high levels of deprivation and the learning can be transferred across Sussex. This study has included solar PV, hydrogen, biomethane, wind, heat networks, EVs, private wires, micro grids and BESS.
- 3.35 The project was led by Clear Futures, a joint venture between Lewes and Eastbourne Councils, Robertson Construction and AECOM. In addition to the engineering and commercial expertise brought by the external Clear Futures partners, the project has included collaborators from the Sustainable Market Initiative, convened by HRH the King Charles, UKPN, and leading UK companies that can deliver the range of solutions, so its conclusions are based on what can be delivered at scale and in a timely manner.

#### **4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 The Board is unlikely to have sufficient funding directly for projects, but even if it could, the impact would be far less than incubating collaborative working to attract funding into the region for energy solutions, culminating in the implementation of scaled solutions which could make a large impact to the UK net zero goals. The Government has highlighted decarbonisation of energy as a priority with aims to transition to a clean power system by 2030, create 400,000 additional jobs in the clean energy sector by 2030 and support over 1,000 local and community energy projects, boosting community ownership.

#### **5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 Community engagement is an important principle of Sussex Energy. The ongoing approach will vary depending on the proposed energy solution, from consulting the community, offering community ownership options to enabling communities to implement their own solutions. Community engagement options will be different for each working group / project but will be considered and prioritised.
- 5.2 The first Sussex Energy Forum meeting was held on Wednesday, 9 July 2025. The Forum brings together individuals working on low-carbon energy solutions in Sussex to strengthen connections, accelerate their efforts, and co-create Sussex Energy. This community is being cultivated through continuous online discussion on a private Sussex Energy Forum LinkedIn group.

#### **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The Board is asked to agree the recommendations 2.1-2.3, which will mean the work to operationalise Sussex Energy will continue, including an integration approach to support the alignment of Greater Brighton's priorities with the future delivery of the SBCCA.

## 7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

### Financial Implications:

7.1 In July 2024, the Board agreed to earmark a total of £100,000 from the Greater Brighton Economic Board Operational Budget to support the Sussex Energy mission — £50,000 from the 2024/25 Operational Budget (carried forward to 2025/26) and a further £50,000 from the 2025/26 Budget.

7.2 It is proposed that this funding is utilised as follows:

- £50,000 to commission priority work packages (the *Regional Funding & Investment Strategy* and *Solar Across Sussex – Solar Identification and Prioritisation*), providing specialist expertise to accelerate delivery of Sussex Energy priorities; and
- £50,000 for follow on Solar Across Sussex work to engage site owners and develop projects.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Modupe Oshin, BHCC Principal Accountant - Capital Date: 20/01/26*

### Legal Implications:

7.2 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. In progressing the procurement activity noted within this report, Brighton and Hove Council (BHCC) as accountable body is required to comply with the relevant Public Contract Regulations and legislation as well as well as its Contract Standing Orders.

*Lawyer Consulted: Siobhan Fry Date: 19/01/26*

### Equalities Implications:

7.3 Sussex Energy is aiming to ensure that the benefits of the transition to net zero energy are shared equitably across the region. This includes supporting community energy models that retain value locally; promoting investment in energy efficiency measures that help reduce fuel poverty; and ensuring that smaller organisations and community groups, which often lack capacity or technical expertise, can access support through dedicated workstreams.

The communications working group is being built with a wide variety of organisations to ensure engagement activity is designed to be inclusive, reaching residents, businesses, and voluntary sector organisations across Sussex. Citizens Advice and Fuel Poverty Coordinators are included in the Sussex Energy Forum so that the voices of those most affected by high energy costs or poor housing are heard when shaping solutions. The [Sussex Energy Useful Resources page](#) also signposts to Citizens Advice and support services focused on tackling fuel poverty and reducing energy costs.

By embedding these practices, Sussex Energy is helping to ensure that vulnerable households and smaller organisations are not left behind in the transition but

instead are supported and empowered to participate in and benefit from a fairer, more resilient low-carbon economy.

### Sustainability Implications

7.4 The driving force behind Sussex Energy is to reduce carbon emissions and accelerate the journey to net zero, which will help protect the environment, enhance natural capital, limit the effects of climate change, and build resilience in key infrastructure and the supply of energy. The programme promotes renewable energy generation, energy efficiency, and decarbonisation of heat, all of which directly contribute to the UK's legally binding carbon budgets. It also supports adaptation and resilience by enabling more localised generation and greater energy security. Co-benefits include improved air quality from reduced fossil fuel use, job creation in low-carbon industries, and the development of skills and supply chains that will have long-term positive impacts for the regional economy. Sustainability principles will also be embedded in procurement processes, for example by exploring ways to prioritise local suppliers and ensure social value.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

Sussex & Brighton Energy Briefing DRAFT

Sussex is entering a pivotal moment in its devolution journey. The emerging Sussex & Brighton Combined County Authority (SBCCA) will take on significant responsibilities for growth, transport, housing, planning, skills, health and regeneration. Clean, affordable and secure energy underpins each of these functions and delivers critical co-benefits across them.

This briefing sets out practical early actions and longer-term opportunities for the emerging SBCCA to embed energy and climate across its functions, maximise co-benefits, and position Sussex for inclusive growth, resilience and investment. *Note: Climate change adaptation and nature recovery are important considerations but are not covered in this briefing.*

**Energy and climate action are not stand-alone policy areas; they are central enablers of the SBCCA's entire agenda.** Investment in clean energy and decarbonisation reduces costs for households, businesses and public services; improves housing quality; shapes transport systems; supports productivity and competitiveness; improves air quality and health outcomes; strengthens energy security; and creates demand for skilled local jobs. Embedding energy considerations across all areas of competence early helps maximise co-benefits and avoid costly retrofitting of policy decisions later.

**Investing in net zero is also a major economic opportunity.** Nationally, the transition to a low-carbon economy is expected to support hundreds of thousands of jobs and deliver substantial economic growth over the coming decades<sup>1</sup>. The UK's net zero economy is already growing around three times faster than the economy as a whole<sup>2</sup>, highlighting clean energy and low-carbon sectors as one of the strongest drivers of future growth, jobs and investment. Locally, activity such as home retrofit, renewable energy deployment and electric vehicle infrastructure directly creates skilled employment, strengthens local supply chains, attracts private investment and reduces energy costs for households and businesses. Sussex is well placed to capture these benefits, with strong natural assets, including high solar potential, and a growing clean-energy economy.

A strong local example is the University of Brighton's Clean Growth UK programme, which has helped SMEs secure over £2 million in R&D funding, supported the creation of more than 300 green jobs and enabled the development of new low-carbon products<sup>3</sup>. This illustrates how coordinated action on energy and climate can deliver innovation, productivity and local prosperity alongside emissions reduction.

**Sussex starts from a position of strength.** All upper-tier authorities have robust climate strategies, measurable carbon-reduction commitments and ongoing investment programmes, supported by Sussex Energy — a region-wide partnership that already brings together energy system leads from all three upper-tier authorities, alongside universities, NHS Sussex, business groups, a strong and experienced community energy sector and the Greater South East Net Zero Hub. Sussex also benefits from favourable natural and economic conditions, including high solar potential, exposure to onshore and offshore wind, and an engaged, relatively affluent population capable of supporting local investment and participation in renewable energy. Together, this provides a ready-made forum for cross-authority coordination on energy policy, evidence and delivery that does not otherwise exist at a Sussex-wide level and offers a strong foundation for a more coordinated and investable regional energy proposition – enabling the SBCCA to maximise local value retention as it takes on takes on strategic responsibilities for growth, infrastructure, skills and regeneration.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/local-green-jobs-accelerating-sustainable-economic-recovery>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.renewableinstitute.org/uk-netzero-sector-growing-faster-than-economy](https://www.renewableinstitute.org/uk-net-zero-sector-growing-faster-than-economy)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.clean-growth.uk/south-east-hub/>

**Early priorities for the first 1-2 years** focus on practical, achievable actions that will set the SBCCA up for long-term success:

**Governance, Capacity & Transition Management:** The transition to the SBCCA, alongside potential local government reorganisation, risks loss of momentum unless ownership and coordination are clear. Proportionate governance and temporary coordination arrangements will maintain continuity, avoid duplication and embed climate and energy across all SBCCA functions from the outset, enabling early identification of co-benefits across energy, transport, skills and regeneration.

- Ensuring continuity and capacity during transition, with risk assessment and interim coordination arrangements.
- Embedding climate and environment across all SBCCA functions, strategies and decision-making.
- Ensuring inclusive governance so that non-voting but critical stakeholders including local authority energy leads, are embedded from the outset.

**Evidence, Strategy & Spatial Planning:** Strategic energy decisions require a shared evidence base. A Sussex-wide Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP), aligned with spatial planning, will inform infrastructure investment, engagement with government and regulators, and prioritisation of interventions that best support growth, resilience and net zero.

- Commissioning a Sussex-wide LAEP to support the Spatial Development Strategy and infrastructure investment.
- Demonstrating regional leadership on the energy transition with other emerging South East Mayoral Strategic Authorities, highlighting Sussex's skills, delivery capability and leadership to attract investment and open up wider opportunities with central government/national partners.

**Investment, Funding & Market Shaping:** The SBCCA's role is to shape markets and crowd in investment. Clear investment frameworks, early funding mechanisms and alignment with national policy (e.g. Warm Homes Plan, Local Power Plan, Great British Energy, NESO's RESP) will reduce delivery risk and position Sussex to respond quickly to funding opportunities.

- Leveraging government policy to maximise funding opportunities and ensure strategic readiness, including engagement with NESO.
- Creating a regional investment framework for energy and green infrastructure.
- Launching early funding mechanisms such as development grants, SME loan schemes and targeted capital support.

**Programme Delivery & Infrastructure Deployment:** Early delivery builds credibility. Accelerating priority programmes such as heat networks and solar deployment will deliver carbon savings, reduce costs, support local supply chains and create investable pipelines within a mayoral term.

- Designating priority heat network zones to accelerate heat decarbonisation.
- Accelerating solar deployment through Solar Across Sussex and exploration of future support for group purchasing schemes such as Solar Together Sussex.

**Skills, Partnerships & Place-Based Growth:** Delivery depends on skills and partnerships. Aligning net-zero skills with the LSIP and FE/HE providers, alongside national positioning, will support delivery at scale and attract investment and high-quality jobs.

- Strengthening net-zero skills pathways aligned with the LSIP and FE/HE providers.
- Positioning Sussex nationally by leveraging strong local capabilities in solar, hydrogen transport, heat networks and community energy.

Jan 2026 Note: This visual shows a sample of great projects going on in the area currently to give the idea of what is aimed for. These are not a comprehensive list, nor the final view.

**A number of early deliverable projects are already in the pipeline** —With targeted SBCCA support, many of these could reach delivery or major milestones before or within the first mayoral term. Early success on these projects will demonstrate credibility to central government, investors and residents.

### Pan Sussex Projects

Solar Together Sussex scheme - Since 2020, installed >2,500 systems across Sussex.

2026: Supplier contract out for procurement.

Combined 11MW generation capacity.

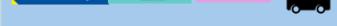


Developing Sussexwide LAEP. Investment being sought



Renewable hydrogen fuel station (biggest liquid fuelling station in the UK) and bus fleet.

Live. Plans to have Europe's largest hydrogen bus fleet.

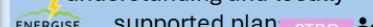


Decarbonisations Pathway Study ID'd 110 priority projects to get Brighton & Hove to net zero.

Investment being sought



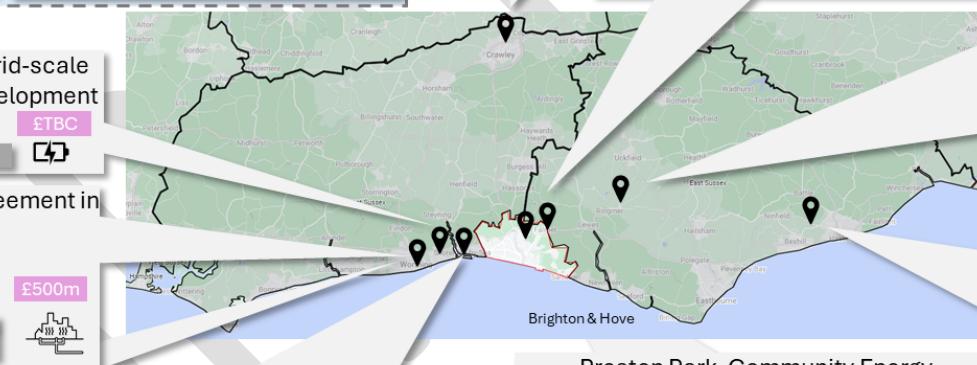
Future Energy Landscapes workshops engage communities to explore their energy needs and future options – building shared understanding and locally supported plan.



Halewick Lane, Sompting: Energy storage facility with grid-scale batteries at a former waste site, surplus will support development of more renewables.



Due to complete end of 2026. 16MW:32MWh



Worthing Heat Network - First evergreen concession agreement in the UK.



In development. Phase 1 launching Feb 2026, phase 2 planning approved.

3k tonnes of carbon removed per yr (same as taking >2k cars off the road)



Decarbonising Worthing crematorium: Trailblazing, project demonstrates innovation.

1st phase (hydrogen trial) complete. Next stage: Electrify gas burners. Funding sought.



£TBC



Shoreham Port Industrial Cluster selected as 1 of 12 national clusters to win Local Industrial Decarbonisation Plan funding. The plan set out the process, options and scenarios to achieve net zero and highlighted that an 85% emission reduction is deliverable.



1.5MW additional solar PV, 5MW onshore wind & 1.9MW battery storage will be installed by 2030.

£TBC



Preston Park Community Energy Programme – Brighton's first community energy neighbourhood. Solar power, battery storage, and community ownership demonstrate how residents can lower bills, cut carbon emissions, and build a more resilient local energy system – with little or no upfront cost. Ambition to replicate in other neighbourhoods.



80 households signed up, 9 installed delivering 40 kWp.



Manor Royal and North Crawley Heat Network using waste heat from data centres.



Construction start Summer 26, due Autumn 27

£410m

Supplying ~45GWh/yr of low carbon heating.



Ouse Valley Solar Farm. Community invested project with surplus income going into community benefit fund to use for decarbonisation or energy efficiency projects, community engagement and addressing fuel poverty.

In progress. Planning permission granted. ~4 month build time. Grid connection pending.

£TBC

17MW. Equivalent to power in excess of 4,000 homes



Crowhurst Solar Farm & biodiversity reserve. Community Energy project with surplus income going into village community benefit fund to be used for decarbonisation projects or to address fuel poverty.



In progress. Planning permission granted.

£TBC

5MW

9MW solar opportunity on a closed landfill.



X

£TBC

**Longer-term opportunities (3-10 years)** should reflect the approaches used by established combined authorities that have made progress by moving beyond individual projects to a sustained strategic role in planning, delivery, market shaping, skills, and investment. Based on a high-level extrapolation of the Brighton & Hove Decarbonisation Pathway Report, scaled by population, it is estimated that Sussex & Brighton may require c. £21.7 billion of investment to reach net zero (indicative only) and could support c. 24,000 jobs in the net zero economy, based on population-scaled national estimates<sup>4</sup>. A structured review of comparable combined authorities should therefore form part of SBCCA's medium-term workplan assessing which interventions are transferable to Sussex, and how SBCCA powers can be used most effectively. Areas to consider include:

**Strategic Energy System Planning.** E.g.

- Developing whole-system regional energy strategies and pathways, including LAEP coordination.
- Building relationships with DNOs, NESO and Ofgem to influence grid investment and connections.

**Major Programme Delivery.** E.g.

- Large-scale retrofit and heat decarbonisation programmes for homes and public buildings.
- Regional heat network development, including zoning and delivery agencies.
- Expansion of solar deployment, battery storage and smart systems.

**Market-Shaping and Innovation.** E.g.

- Demand aggregation and regional procurement frameworks (e.g. heat pumps, solar, retrofit).
- Use public land and assets to unlock renewable and storage projects and support innovation testbeds.

**Convening and Governance.** E.g.

- Establishing strong regional energy governance bringing together local authorities, universities, NHS, DNOs, business networks and community energy organisations as a single point of engagement for government, investors and regulators.
- Ensuring energy and net zero are fully integrated into all SBCCA statutory functions (growth, skills, transport, spatial planning).

**Skills and Workforce.** E.g.

- Establish regional net-zero skills academies and retrofit, heat pump, solar, green construction and hydrogen training programmes.
- Alignment with the Local Skills Improvement Plan and local FE/HE providers.

**Long-Term Funding and Investment Mechanisms.** E.g.

- Green investment, retrofit and heat funds; low-cost and revolving loan models; community and municipal energy investment; and strategic investment partnerships using blended finance. Sussex Energy is commissioning a regional funding and investment strategy to benchmark best practice, map funding and investor opportunities and inform future SBCCA decisions.

Together, these priorities enable SBCCA to shift from isolated projects to a **coherent, multi-year regional energy programme** that supports economic growth, strengthens energy resilience, reduces costs for residents and businesses, and secures long-term investment into Sussex.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://eciu.net/media/press-releases/2025/uk-netzero-economy-grows-10-in-a-year-finds-new-report](https://eciu.net/media/press-releases/2025/uk-net-zero-economy-grows-10-in-a-year-finds-new-report)