

People Overview & Scrutiny

Date: **17 March 2026**

Time: **4.00pm**

Venue: **Hove Town Hall Council Chamber**

Members: **Councillors:** , Parrott, Gauge (Deputy Chair),
Cattell, Lyons, Mackey, McLeay, Shanks, Sheard and Winder

Contact: **Luke Proudfoot**
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Chief Executive
Hove Town Hall
Norton Road
Hove BN3 3BQ

Date of Publication - Monday, 9 March 2026

AGENDA

Part One

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46 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

47 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

(a) **Declaration of Substitutes:** Where Councillors are unable to attend a meeting, a substitute Member from the same Political Group may attend, speak vote in their place for that meeting.

(b) **Declarations of Interest:**

(a) Disclosable pecuniary 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.

48 MINUTES

7 - 26

47.1 To agree the draft minutes of the 19th January 2026 Special People Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting.

47.2 To agree the draft minutes of the 28th January 2026 People Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting.

47.3 To agree the draft minutes of the 19th February 2026 Special People Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting.

49 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

To consider the following items raised by members of the public: (a) Petitions: To receive any petitions presented by members of the public to the full Council or to the meeting itself; (b) Written Questions: To receive any questions submitted by the due date of 10am on the 11th March 2026; (c) Deputations: To receive any deputations submitted by the due date of 10am on the 5th March 2026.

50 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

To consider the following matters raised by Members: (a) Petitions: To receive any petitions submitted to the full Council or to the meeting itself. (b) Written Questions: To receive any written questions from members. (c) Letters: To consider any letters submitted by Members. (d) Notices of Motion: To consider any Notices of Motion.

51 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATION

**52 CONSULTATION ON USE OF EMPTY COUNCIL HOMES AS
TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION**

27 - 44

Contact Officer: Harry Williams

Ward Affected: All Wards

53 DISCUSSION OF NEXT TASK & FINISH GROUP

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Further information

For further details and general enquiries about this meeting contact Luke Proudfoot, (, email Luke.Proudfoot@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or email democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk

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BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

2.00pm 19 JANUARY 2026

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

MINUTES

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

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

PART ONE

29 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

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

29.2 There were no declarations of interest.

29.3 There were no Part Two items.

30 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

30.1 There was no public involvement.

31 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

31.1 There was no member involvement.

32 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATION

32.1 The Chair gave the following communication:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Children, Families, & Youth Services

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Adult Social Care

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Libraries

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

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

Customer Service, Innovation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Housing

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

33.35 The committee resolved to recommend:

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

The meeting concluded at 4.45pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

4.00pm 28 JANUARY 2026

HOVE TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBER

MINUTES

Present: Councillor O'Quinn (Chair) Gauge (Deputy Chair), Cattell, Lyons, Mackey, Parrott, Shanks, Sheard, Winder and Lademacher

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

PART ONE

34 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

34.1 Cllr Lademacher substituting for Cllr Mcleay.

35 MINUTES

35.1 RESOLVED: the draft minutes of the 08 October 2025 People Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting were approved.

35.2 RESOLVED: the draft minutes of the 10 November 2025 People Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting were approved.

36 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

36.1 Adrian Hart asked a public question. The Chair gave the following answer:

Thank you for your question. It is important to note that it is not within the purview of this committee to review decisions made by Chairs concerning the conduct of their respective committees. But it is Full Council who would deal with such a question as they are the ones who make these decisions, it is not the individual chairs of committees like the scrutiny committees. Where you have concerns about conduct by councillors which you consider amounts to a potential breach of the Code of Conduct for Members, the appropriate way to raise such a concern is through the standards process. But I think you are talking much more about the constitution and the discretion within that for various Chairs to make decisions. So, what I would advise you to do is take this question to a committee that can deal with it, because these committees can't but full council is the final say.

Adrian Hart asked for clarification that people like himself and those mentioned in his question should go to full council when the decisions were deemed final.

Cllr O'Quinn responded:

That was not what I was saying. What I am saying is that you need to ask a question about how much discretion there is for Chairs when a question comes up. That is the question you need to ask, and it is constitutional and it's a shame that we don't have the constitutional working group anymore because I think that is where that kind of matter could truly be discussed. I do appreciate your concerns, and I thank you for bringing that to us, unfortunately on this committee you do not get a supplementary question but if you want a very brief final comment I'm happy to hear it.

Adrian Hart said that some of that would be tested tomorrow in the chamber and that he was sceptical. He said that if a deputation or question was curtailed or corporate complaints is declined on the basis that the matter has been explained in email it was not clear what internal forum could examine if that was fair. He said that he heard Cllr O'Quinn's suggestion that full council will allow that.

Cllr O'Quinn said:

It is a constitutional matter and as I say there is a case for having our constitutional working group, that's my thought not what everybody else thinks.

37 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

37.1 There was no member involvement.

38 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATION

38.1 The Chair gave the following communication:

We have two very important items before us today. In response to the recent CQC inspection the Adult Social Care Improvement Plan has been put together and is here today for us to scrutinise.

Following this we have the issue of Large Panel Systems building and estates renewal come to this committee for the first time. Previously this has gone to Place committee as the focus has been on the buildings themselves. Today we will be looking at the Section 105, Rehousing Policy and Leaseholder Offer Consultation Programme. For this item an invitation has gone out to members of the Place committee allowing them to take part.

39 SCRUTINY OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

39.1 Cllr Mitchie Alexander and Steve Hook presented to the committee. The main points were: CQC inspection announced in November 2024, overall score of 48%, waiting times and assessment were significantly overdue, high use of out of are placement were found but 85% were within Sussex, strengths were assessment and care plans being strength based and person centred, assessing needs were rated as 1 (38%), a Section 50 notice was served meaning further scrutiny from DHSC, Phase 1 high priority actions (for scores of 1) were

underway and due to be completed in March-June 2026, improved governance involving cabinet member, informal cabinet and DASC, annual reviews have improved from 29.5% to 41% with a target of 44%, when inspection was carried out high level of residential and nursing admissions, some teams have made significant improvements on waiting times.

39.2 members asked a range of questions including:

- About the scoring system used by the CQC
- How BHCC compared to East & West Sussex
- Concerns about resources available
- Membership of the Task & Finish Group
- Retention of staff
- Reablement work with the NHS
- The balance of ambition and deliverability in the plan
- Whole systems issues
- Focusing on prevention work
- Concerns over the use of the term 'waiting well'
- Targets for the following financial year
- The 18-25 cohort and transition to adulthood
- How out of areas placements can be dealt with
- How equalities data is collected and reviewed by senior leadership
- Oversight of senior leadership team
- Staff morale

39.3 Steve Hook confirm that the Improvement Plan was due to go to Cabinet in February and was scheduled to be returning to Cabinet in July for a progress update. Members agreed that they would like that update to come to the July meeting of the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee to provide scrutiny members with the opportunity to monitor the Improvement Plan's progress.

39.4 RESOLVED that the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee note the report.

40 LARGE PANEL SYSTEMS BUILDING AND ESTATES RENEWAL - S105, REHOUSING POLICY AND LEASEHOLDER OFFER CONSULTATION PROGRAMME

40.1 Cllr Gill Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing, presented to the committee and gave a background of the issue. She was joined by Darren Levy, Interim Director of Housing Regeneration and Harry Williams, Director of Housing People Services, and Laura Webster, Regeneration Programme Manager (Housing Supply).

40.2 Member spoke on the following issues:

- Praise for the deposit scheme
- The possibility of someone exercising their right to buy after moving back into a new flat once the rebuild has taken place
- Communication with residents
- Concerns over risk to the wider housing market of giving residents housing deposits
- Supporting disabled residents and communication with adult social care teams
- The phrase 'wherever possible' in the commitment to a right to return
- Concerns over residents who are not engaging

- Mental health support for residents
- Uptake for the homeless repayment scheme
- The big use of resources, particularly around each household having a named officer
- If staff were trained to provide the wide range of options given to households
- If older residents were moving into senior housing and concerns that some senior housing is being used for other age groups due to demand
- The opportunity for people to address their housing needs, either by downsizing, moving into seniors housing, or supported accommodation.
- If removal costs were being met
- Where the funding for all of the work was coming from
- Potential disruption from demolition of the buildings

40.3 RESOLVED:

People Overview & Scrutiny provide responses to the s105 survey questions, as appropriate, so these can be included in the consultation report back to Cabinet on 19th March 2026.

People Overview and Scrutiny to provide feedback and comment on the Rehousing Policy and draft Local Lettings Plan, so these can be included in the consultation report back to Cabinet on 19th March 2026.

People Overview & Scrutiny to provide comment and feedback on potential options for enhancing the leasehold and tenant offer that they would like Cabinet to consider, so these can be included in the consultation report back to Cabinet on 19th March 2026.

The meeting concluded at 18:30

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

4.30pm 19 FEBRUARY 2026

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

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Cattell, Lyons, Mackey, Parrott, Sheard, Shanks, Winder, Asaduzzaman and Hill

Other Members present: Sara Fulford (Older People's Council), Joanna Martindale (Community Works Rep), Fiona England (PaCC), and Dr Anusree Biswas Sasidharan (Community Works).

PART ONE

41 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

41.1 Giles Rossington, Scrutiny Manager, welcomed everyone to the meeting and said:

“Neither the Chair nor the Deputy Chair of People Overview & Scrutiny Committee are in attendance today. Committee Procedure Rules state that “In the absence of the Chair or Deputy Chair at a meeting of a Committee or Sub-Committee, those voting Members present shall elect a person from amongst their number to preside over the meeting”. (Committee Procedure Rule 3.3)

I therefore need to ask if any member wishes to nominate themselves as Chair for this meeting only.”

Cllr Sheard nominated themselves to be Chair for the meeting.

Following a vote of voting members Cllr Sheard was elected as Chair for the meeting.

41.2 Cllr Assaduzzaman for Cllr Gauge, Cllr Hill for Cllr Mcleay. Apologies from Adam Muirhead (Community Works Rep), and Jasmine (Youth Council Rep)

42 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

42.1 There was no public involvement.

43 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

43.1 There was no member involvement.

44 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATION

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

We are joined by Cllr Jacob Taylor, Deputy Leader of the Council and cabinet member for Finance & City Regeneration, and John Hooton, Interim Director of Property and Finance, who will be talking to us about the budget and then taking questions from members. We are also joined by Cabinet members and officers who are on hand to help with any questions specific to their service areas. They will not be presenting to us as they did at the previous budget scrutiny meeting. However, following the recommendation of the previous budget meeting, I have asked that there be a short presentation specifically on the public health budget to help inform members' discussion. Public health will also be considered as an item for a future scheduled committee meeting, so we can examine how this spend is being realised throughout the council operation.

In relation to amendments from the committee, can I ask that if you have any amendments if you can propose them as we discuss that item in questioning. This is so we know to which item you are referring to when noting it down, and we can have the item fresh in our minds as we discuss it. We will then read out each of these at the end of the meeting and vote on them as normal.

Also, to make sure that we get through all the cabinet members in a reasonable time, I will be asking for questioning of each cabinet member to not last more than roughly half an hour. I have tried to put those cabinet members who we wouldn't need to spend as much time on up first so we can spend more time focusing on those with larger briefs, but please bear in mind to not take up too much time from other members of the committee.

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

45 SCRUTINY OF BUDGET 2627: GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET & HRA PROGRAMME.

45.1 Cllr Taylor introduced the budget and explained the process until now. He said that there were pressures on the budget from homelessness, temporary accommodation, adult social care, and children's services, being clear that it was not the fault of the users of these services. Cllr Taylor said that the final financial settlement from the government had come after the publication of the budget papers to Cabinet but that the gap was still around the same. Cllr Taylor explained about the additional support that had been asked for from government, which was largely for temporary and emergency accommodation. He explained the difference in the general fund for this was £8m but that demand was forecast to be £20m. Cllr Taylor said that they had to fix the underlying issue as it was not right for £20m of taxpayers' money to be going straight to private landlords. He said that the approach they were taking was to invest in temporary accommodation and reduce the number of people needing it. Cllr Taylor said that they had requested £15m from the government but put it in perspective by saying that Warrington had requested over £300m. He spoke about the in year overspend that was £4.8m in month nine and that there was a plan to get it down.

Public Health

45.2 Cllr Mitchie Alexander gave a presentation on public health setting out the functions of public health funding, both prescribed and non-prescribed. She went on to set out the 25/26 funding and said that the Department of Health & Social Care had to confirm that what public health funds were spent on was appropriate.

45.3 Cllr Shanks asked questions about domestic violence reviews and why they were in public health, and if an impact assessment had been done on schools counselling. Dr Nicola Lang, Director of Public Health, said that the review previously only took into account domestic homicides but now included suicides, and that it was usual for this to be funded through public health. Deb Austin, Corporate Director for Families, Children & Wellbeing, said that they were pulling together metrics on outcomes from the school counselling. She said that it stopped children having to go on waiting lists as the service was available in their school, and that it was used to intervene early and stop children requiring specialist intervention later. She said that the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapists were also reviewing the service. Cllr Alexander said that money not spent by the Families, Children & Wellbeing service helped the rest of the budget.

45.4 Cllr Hill asked about the 4.6 FTE posts that were being deleted and what they were. Deb Austin said that they were a very expensive consultant role, a vacant post due to retirement in the healthy lifestyle team and two vacant apprenticeship posts. Dr Nicola Lang said that these were posts that had become vacant and were no longer required due to rationalisation rather than kept vacant due to spending controls.

45.5 Cllr Assaduzzaman asked if the council was looking at different ways of using its ring-fenced Public Health budget and how have the changes been informed by a commitment to reduce health inequalities. Dr Nicola Lang said that work around drugs, alcohol, sex, and other children's work to do with health should be a strand of what they all do.

45.6 Cllr Lyons asked about the high suicide rates and how these would be affected by the changes. Dr Nicola Lang said that the Domestic Abuse Reviews would inform learning and that schools having counselling services will help catch children before they got into crisis.

45.7 Cllr Sam Parrott spoke about VAWG, death by suicide, and stresses on the system for this. She also spoke about the success of schools' mental health counselling services that she has been involved in and said that she would like to see more of it. Dr Nicola Lang said that VAWG was a particular interest of hers and that she was looking to work with CVS on this.

45.8 Cllr Mackey asked about the underspend on deleted posts and the influence of this. Deb Austin said that the of the deleted posts one was management and gave a big saving. The others were around sport and activity and not working with the most vulnerable in the city. Cllr Taylor said that vacancies have been held for some time but that this was not the way you want to run a council because it does impact teams and staff. He explained that there was a process for approving new posts that were vital. Cllr Alexander said that although the 4.6 FTE posts were being deleted the Public Health team were large.

45.9 Cllr Winder asked what the what the consultant was doing. Dr Nicola Lang said that they were carrying out analytics of drug use.

45.10 Cllr Hill asked how large the public health team was. Dr Nicola Lang said that she would need to come back to the committee with the full details.

Customer Services and Innovation

45.11 Cllr Jacob Allen spoke about the work within his portfolio including investing to save and ensuring that staff have the technology to help them. He spoke about AI pilots, some of which were specific to customer services, following councils like Derby and Peterborough.

45.12 Cllr Shanks asked about the committee's previous recommendations on consultations with the unions and CVS as well as the lobbying of government done by the council. Cllr Taylor said that consultation with the two unions had taken place before the draft budget in December and before this budget was published. He said he had had two meetings with them. He said that consultations around the staff posts affected by the budget were happening now and after the budget. Regarding the CVS he said that it was the same and that he had met a large group via community works and that they are now getting feedback. Cllr Taylor said that they were doing lots of lobbying of government on various issues including housing benefit and overall funding.

45.13 Cllr Parrott asked about adjustments to customer services to help people who will struggle to use technology and wanted resident facing services. She also asked about VAWG and economic abuse. Cllr Allen said that debt enforcement was not using AI, and that the corporate debt policy was updated in March 2025. He said that he would check if economic abuse was factored into this and if it was not then he would look and how it could be. Cllr Allen said that no avenue of contact was being closed and that they did provide reasonable adjustments.

45.14 Sara Fulford requested reassurance about customer facing services as one in three older people did not have access to IT. Cllr Allen said that there had been no loss of service and that there was nothing in the budget to change that. He said that last month the council answered 90,000 phone calls. Cllr Taylor said that they were aware of digital exclusion and want to maintain services. He said that he had recently found out that there was free IT skills training available at Jubilee Library.

45.15 Cllr Cattell asked about spending controls and the unintended consequences of these. She mentioned hearing of social workers being unable to pay for things while on day trips out with children. Cllr Taylor said that recruitment and spending controls were not the best way to work. Deb Austin said that funding had not been removed from the service mentioned but had been reduced.

45.16 Cllr Lyons said that the feedback on customer services that he had received from residents was not as good as Cllr Allen said. He said that the council website had not been updated since 2022. Cllr Allen said that the statistics for customer service were all in the refresh to the Council Plan that recently went to Cabinet.

45.17 Cllr Cattell spoke about homelessness and if it could be brought down in the next year so that the same issue was not being discussed in a year's time at the next budget. Cllr Taylor said that he hoped to bring down the cost from the £20m to £8m or ideally £0. He was confident that they could get the numbers down and said that they had to fix the issue.

Adult social care

45.18 Fiona England spoke about PACC's position statement on the budget and in particular Wellington House. She wanted to see equivalent and engaging day services provided. Fiona questioned the consultation on the closure of Wellington House. Cllr Alexander said that the consultation was not a tick box exercise and that the closure would only go ahead if they were happy with service provision going forward. Genette Laws, Corporate Director Homes and Adult social Care, said that the consultation would be meaningful and would involve public engagement. She said that those using Wellington House would get like for like services. Genette said that the saving was a net saving. She said that Wellington House provided services to those with the most need but that the council have people with a wide range of needs.

45.19 Cllr Hill spoke about a recommendation to pause the closure until a consultation was carried out. Cllr Taylor responded that this was what was happening and that Wellington House would not close until a consultation was carried out.

45.20 Sara Fulford spoke about the adult social care CQC report and said that there was a real concern about preventative services going. She asked that the EIA on adult social care savings be reviewed because it said that no impact on older people or the economically disadvantaged. Genette Laws said that the adult social care improvement plan focused on delays to assessment but that the report did say that once people received the service, they got a good service. She added that the consultation on Wellington House would also include the family of service users. Cllr Taylor said that there was not a proposal to stop services but to provide that in a different setting. Sara came back on these point and John Hooten said that looking at the savings and income that they were investing in adult social care with spending rising from about £152m to about £162m.

45.21 Cllr Sam Parrott said that she was concerned about the impact on other services, and the impact on staff. She also noted the importance of the consultation. Genette Laws said that they were looking after staff as they understood it was very difficult for them.

45.22 Cllr Shanks spoke about the decline of inhouse services, saying that the voluntary sector could not take them on. Cllr Taylor responded that the administration had not moved any services into the private sector, but that some services, such as the beach lifeguard service, were taken on by the voluntary sector. He said that most public services should be provided by the public but that they had to be realistic. He added that in some cases the voluntary sector could provide services better than the council and that some people feel more comfortable using services provided by the voluntary sector rather than the council. Genette Laws added that they were insourcing services in homes and adult social care.

45.23 Jo Martindale thanked Cllr Taylor for his comments on the voluntary sector. She said that the consultation on Wellington House was a chance for the council to build trust and was very important. She said that the next step would be co-production which was also really important. She urged the council to communicate well, be open, and transparent. Cllr Taylor said that it was helpful feedback and reiterated that it was a genuine consultation.

45.24 Cllr Ivan Lyons said that the closure of Wellington House would be devastating for a family he had spoken to about this and asked how they would get the services they needed. He also asked where the savings would come from if service users would get a like for like

service provided by someone else. Genette Laws asked him to share the details of anyone with concerns with her. She explained that there were another six providers in the community and that some families could take direct payments. She said that there were 21 people attending over the week with a day cost of £210, which was more expensive than other services charging £60.

45.25 Fiona England spoke about the 21 service users and highlighted that there were 17 young people leaving education who may require these services. She spoke about the need to reflect on the comms for the consultation and spoke on overdue assessments. Genette Laws said that she heard the concerns clearly from those attending now and those who would do in the future. She said that market engagement would be very important as they wanted to plan together.

45.26 Dr Anusree Biswas Sasidharan spoke of the value of prevention in adult social care and asked if they had additional resources what would they spend it on. Cllr Taylor said that between the costs and demands of the underlying issues from austerity and the housing market. He said that he would invest in housing as it affects so much of people's lives. Genette Laws said that she would do more prevention work.

45.27 Cllr Hill asked about the highly skilled staff at Wellington House and de-escalation skills as well as about any plans for the site should it close. Genette Laws said that the staff were highly skilled and the independent sector also highly skilled and trained. She said that should Wellington House close then they would look at the future use of the site. Cllr Taylor added that his first thoughts for the site would be temporary or emergency accommodation or services that the council provides.

45.28 The chair asked about any contingency plans should the outcome of the consultation be not to close Wellington House. Cllr Taylor said that there was no contingency plan and this is not something they would normally have for a budget saving. If Wellington House did not close, he said that the saving would become an in-year pressure which would have to be found.

Children's, Families and Youth Services

45.29 Cllr Shanks asked about the Roundabout Nursery and Youth Arts Fund. Cllr Emma Daniel said that the Youth Futures funding was compliant. She said that Roundabout Nursery is in the most deprived area and that they wanted to protect it for the long term. She said that they were looking to outsource it but that the contract would ensure the same offer provided, and that there would be a consultation. Cllr Daniel said that there had been no complaints about youth arts funding until the budget.

45.30 Cllr Cattell spoke about the number of new approvals for foster parents and gave a shout out to the council's dedicated social workers.

45.31 Jo Martindale was impressed with the staff retention and said that it was great that the council had been nominated as a youth partner.

45.32 Fiona England spoke about the short break offer for families represented by PACC and the need to look at the national picture. Cllr Daniel noted her comments and spoke of the difficulties faced when setting budgets due to a decade of austerity.

45.33 Cllr Assaduzzaman spoke about high-cost placements. Cllr Daniel said that family hubs would reduce escalation, that they were getting more foster carers but that the quality of placements for teens was concerning.

45.34 Cllr Mackey said that she was appreciative of the work on prevention and asked for assurances that SEND would not be disadvantaged by the budget. Cllr Daniel said that they were in as good a place as they could be.

45.35 Following the end of questions for cabinet members a recommendation was proposed by Cllr Hill to pause the closure of Wellington House until a consultation is carried out. This was voted down by the committee.

45.36 RESOLVED

That People Overview & Scrutiny Committee notes the Budget & Capital Investment HRA Programme 2026-27 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (and its appendices), and the General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital and Treasury Management Strategy (and its appendices)

The meeting concluded at 7.10pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

Brighton & Hove City Council

People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item 52

Subject: Consultation on use of empty council homes as Temporary Accommodation

Date of meeting: 17 March 2026

Report of: Cabinet Member for Housing

Contact Officer: Name: Genette Laws - Corporate Director for Homes & Care

Email: harry.williams@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Key Decision: No

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report introduces the council's approach to transform its Temporary Accommodation provision aligned to the priorities of the council's new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan covering 2026/27 to 2029/30.
- 1.2 It also seeks Overview & Scrutiny's feedback on the council's use of empty council homes as Temporary Accommodation during the interim period between 19 January and 1 May, as part of a wider public consultation.
- 1.3 This will allow feedback and comments from Overview & Scrutiny to be included in a report to Cabinet on 23rd April 2026.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Overview & Scrutiny provide a response to the consultation on the use of empty council homes as temporary accommodation between the period of 19 January and 1 May and possible extension for a further 12-months.
- 2.2 Overview & Scrutiny provide feedback and comment on the Policy on the use of empty council homes as Temporary Accommodation as set out in Appendix 1.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 Brighton & Hove is experiencing some of the most significant homelessness and temporary accommodation (TA) pressures in the South East. Demand for housing support has risen sharply in recent years, driven by a complex interplay of high local housing costs, a constrained supply of affordable homes, and growing numbers of households in crisis. More than 2,100 households now rely on emergency or temporary accommodation in the city, with children making up around 40% of all residents in TA. Evidence shows that outcomes for children in nightly-paid accommodation remain significantly worse than for those in settled housing.
- 3.2 At the same time, the cost to the council of meeting its statutory homelessness duties has escalated significantly. Rising nightly-paid rates, limited TA supply, and increased demand have contributed to a forecast of £6m overspend on Temporary Accommodation this year.
- 3.3 For 2026/27, the council has invested £12 million in homelessness-related pressures, driven by challenges outlined above. To reduce the financial impact of this pressure, the service has developed £5 million in savings proposals - resulting in a net investment of £7 million for the year. Looking ahead, a further £5.4 million of savings is required over the Medium-Term Financial Plan to ensure long-term stability and to reduce reliance on costly temporary accommodation provision.
- 3.4 To manage immediate pressures, the council has already taken steps to stabilise provision and reduce reliance on high-cost nightly-paid placements. This includes issuing a Direct Award to convert existing nightly-paid placements into a contracted arrangement saving more than £1m a year and approving a time-limited use of selected empty council homes for TA between 19 January and 1 May, prioritising families and households where there are clear educational or health needs. These decisions were made to protect vulnerable children and reduce harm while longer-term solutions are brought forward.
- 3.5 To that end, a report will be brought to Cabinet in April which includes a set of recommendations that are designed to reshape the city's Temporary Accommodation portfolio so that households live in better quality, more stable and more affordable homes, while the council significantly reduces its overreliance on costly nightly paid provision.
- 3.6 Measures such as the option to extend the interim period on the use of HRA voids as temporary accommodation – a further 100 homes in addition to the 80 envisaged under the current policy – and others including expanding the council's block booking and introducing new models of Supported Temporary Accommodation which provide tailored help for people with more complex needs and work on more sustainable financial models, due to it being exempt from standard housing benefit restrictions.
- 3.7 The recommendations prioritise keeping families in the city, reducing disruptive moves, and limiting the time households spend in unsuitable

accommodation, and taken together, these actions underpin a longer-term shift that aligns with the council’s Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy.

3.8 This shift is shown in the intended trajectory for Temporary Accommodation for 2025/26 to 2029/30 is to move away from high-cost nightly-paid provision towards contracted and council-owned supply. In the intended trajectory Nightly-paid (spot purchase) reduces from 465 units in 2025/26 to 90 units by 2029/30. Block-booked provision grows from 644 to around 920 units, before stabilising. Leased temporary accommodation (PSL) steadily reduces from 550 to around 500 units over the same period. Council-owned and other non-General Fund temporary accommodation increases from 959 to around 1,280 units, providing a more stable and lower-cost core offer. Exempt and supported accommodation expands from 22 units to 146 units from 2026/27 onwards.

3.9 The graph below visualises the council’s intended high-level trajectory over the council’s Medium Term Financial Plan:



3.10 The trajectory is not final and is a live model. It includes considered assumptions on levels of demand for homelessness and temporary accommodation services and the rate at which new supply is brought forward.

3.11 The cost of and demand levels for emergency and temporary accommodation are significant drivers of pressure within the Medium Term Financial Plan. Corporate Service Pressure funding will be allocated in relation to this with £11.106m being assigned in 2026/27. However to mitigate these pressures, savings totaling £5.143m have been agreed for financial year 2026/27 across key workstreams including increasing supply, full cost recovery, improving effectiveness in prevention and accelerating move on.

3.12 To support Cabinet in deciding on some of the recommendations within this report, we are currently running a six-week citywide consultation to help shape the future of the interim policy that uses a limited number of empty council homes as temporary accommodation, as outlined in paragraphs 5.1 to 5.7.

- 3.13 We are also gathering feedback on people's experiences of temporary accommodation provided during the interim period and people's views on the current exemptions and exceptions route, which allows the council to protect specific types of homes and respond to urgent individual circumstances.

4. Using empty council homes as Temporary Accommodation

- 4.1 As outlined in the report to the Leader of the Council on 14 January 2026 the interim scheme sets out how the council is making time-limited use of selected Housing Revenue Account (HRA) void properties to provide better quality, more stable temporary accommodation for homeless households.
- 4.2 This is part of the council's longer-term strategy to reduce reliance on costly nightly-paid provision, as set out in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.12. By using suitable empty council homes between January and May, the council aims to keep more families within the city, reduce the use of out-of-area placements, and offer households a greater sense of stability than is possible under nightly-paid arrangements.
- 4.3 The scheme is overseen by a Lettings Panel, which applies a clear prioritisation framework that focuses on families with children, households currently placed outside Brighton & Hove, and those where a move would bring clear health or educational benefits.
- 4.4 The policy on the use of HRA voids as TA also sets limits on the types of homes that can be used. Seniors housing and mobility-adapted properties are excluded to protect residents with specialist needs, and housing association properties are not part of the scheme as they are allocated through separate arrangements. The council retains discretion to make a small number of exceptions where there is a compelling case: for example, where allocating a property would enable another home to be freed up for use as temporary accommodation, or where there is a serious safeguarding or medical need that cannot be met in the household's current home.
- 4.5 The mentioned Lettings Panel considers each case individually to ensure decisions are fair, transparent and consistent. These exemptions ensure that while the scheme increases urgently needed temporary accommodation, it does so in a way that remains balanced, proportionate and sensitive to the needs of other residents waiting for council housing.

5. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 5.1 As outlined in the report to the Leader of the Council on 14 January 2026, an alternative approach would be for the council to make direct offers of permanent or settled accommodation to eligible homeless households as suitable homes become available, allowing some households to move straight into long-term housing without an interim stay in Temporary Accommodation (TA). This could reduce the number of people living in TA

and lessen the impacts associated with prolonged temporary placements, particularly for children and vulnerable adults, even further.

- 5.2 However, the council's Housing Allocations Policy is based on Choice Based Lettings, with direct offers permitted only in exceptional circumstances. Expanding direct offers beyond these defined exceptions could fall outside the policy in certain circumstances, risk undermining transparency and fairness in the allocations process.
- 5.3 Given the limited supply of permanent accommodation and the scale of current homelessness pressures, widespread use of direct offers of secure tenancies would not significantly reduce reliance on temporary accommodation or address projected financial pressures. Most households would still require interim placements while awaiting a suitable property.
- 5.4 For these reasons, this option was not recommended, recognising that a more impactful approach is required to deliver financial sustainability and address the urgent pressures facing the council's Temporary Accommodation system.

6. Community engagement and consultation

- 6.1 Given the urgent financial pressures and the need to introduce the interim policy, pre-implementation public consultation was not feasible. However, a full six-week public consultation is now underway during the interim period, running from mid-February to early April 2026, with the survey closing on 1 April 2026. The consultation is to ensure that Cabinet, in April, is able to consider the views of residents, tenants, and partners before deciding whether the interim arrangements should continue, be amended, or end.
- 6.2 Through the survey, households on the housing register, people currently living in temporary accommodation and council tenants are sharing how the scheme is affecting them, their families, and their communities.
- 6.3 Respondents are also offering views on the way the scheme operates in practice – including the prioritisation criteria, the exemptions for certain types of homes, and their experiences of being placed in a void property as temporary accommodation. Alongside this, the consultation is capturing any unintended impacts, such as concerns about fairness, community cohesion, or whether the approach strikes the right balance between urgent homelessness pressures and the needs of households waiting for long-term homes.
- 6.4 All of this feedback will support the refresh of the Equality Impact Assessment, ensuring that the council fully understands how the interim scheme is affecting children, families, disabled residents, and other groups who may experience disproportionate impacts, before any decision is made about extending the policy.
- 6.5 A range of engagement methods is being used to ensure that residents can take part in the consultation in ways that work for them. The main platform is

the online consultation hub, where people can read a short summary of the interim scheme and complete the survey. Alongside this, updates in Homing In, targeted email bulletins, and direct communications to tenants, households in temporary accommodation, and people on the housing register are helping the council reach those most directly affected.

- 6.6 For residents who prefer to speak to officers or ask questions before responding, drop-in sessions are being held in community venues and at Area Panels. Tenant representatives, ward councillors, seniors' groups, and voluntary and community sector partners are also being briefed so they can share the consultation within their networks. Work is under way to ensure that groups with protected characteristics are represented in the process, with dedicated equalities analysis planned as part of the final consultation report.
- 6.7 Early responses show that the consultation is reaching the households most impacted by the interim scheme. Of the first 205 respondents, 37.6% (77 people) are on the housing register, and 35.1% (72 people) are currently living in temporary or emergency accommodation. A further 12.2% (25 people) are council tenants or leaseholders, with one respondent placed pending an eligibility decision. The remaining 14.6% (30 people) have identified themselves as "other", which likely reflects increasing engagement from the wider community as general communications about the consultation have expanded. Detailed analysis will be completed at the end of the consultation period and included in the April Cabinet Paper.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The interim and proposed extended use of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) void properties as Temporary Accommodation (TA) reduces reliance on high cost nightly paid (spot purchase) accommodation, which remains the primary driver of the forecast £6m in year overspend within the TA budget.
- 7.2 Spot purchased accommodation represents the highest cost form of provision, with weighted average nightly rates materially higher than those associated with council owned stock, where costs are largely limited to management, maintenance and re letting works. Increasing the supply of council owned TA through the use of HRA voids between 19th January 2026 and 1st May 2026 is expected to deliver savings of £0.092m for 2025/26 and £0.665m 2026/27, £0.757m per annum in total, largely through the displacement of emergency and out of area placements. The proposed extension for a further 12-months up to a maximum of 100 properties is expected to save a further £0.946m per annum in total.
- 7.3 These savings represent cost avoidance within the General Fund rather than cost removal and are partially offset by impacts on the HRA, including deferred General Needs rental income while properties are used as TA, higher turnover related management and maintenance costs, and a temporary reduction in the availability of homes for households on the housing register. Increasing the number of Council-owned temporary accommodation units by 80 is expected to have an annual cost of £0.468m

on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) allowing for necessary repairs and maintenance, of which approximately £0.120m will be a pressure above the level anticipated through voids materialising as part of the Council's regular Housing Allocations Policy. If this is extended for a further 12-months up to a maximum of 100 properties, the additional annual cost is £0.585m of which approximately £0.150m will be a pressure.

- 7.4 While income associated with TA use mitigates some of this impact, it does not provide the same level of long term income certainty as secure tenancies and, if extended beyond a clear time limited and controlled period, may place pressure on HRA Business Plan assumptions. Ongoing monitoring of both TA savings and HRA impacts will therefore be required, alongside the progression of longer-term supply solutions such as block-booked, exempt and newly acquired council-owned temporary accommodation.

Name of finance officer consulted: Ferrise Hall Date consulted 09/03/26

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 Consultation is currently being undertaken as part of a review of the council's current policy of use of empty council homes as Temporary Accommodation during the interim period between 19 January and 1 May, and the potential to extend the policy beyond that time period. The policy aims to address an acute lack of affordable temporary accommodation within the city, at a time of a significant increase in homeless applications, while other planned measures come on stream.
- 8.2 The current policy sets out the considerations for the allocation of HRA council voids and specifies exemptions to the use of voids for temporary accommodation, including the retention of a discretion to allocate voids from the housing register in exceptional cases
- 8.3 In considering options for the use of the void homes, the Council is entitled to consider where assets can have the greatest impact, and there is no legal bar to the use of HRA council voids for Temporary Accommodation.
- 8.4 The Council has a statutory obligation to provide accommodation pursuant to obligations under Housing Act 1996 (and The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (which amended the Housing Act 1996)). In developing the policy, the Council is seeking to meet statutory duties in relation to homelessness in a manner which is more effective in meeting the needs of those in need of accommodation and mitigate the excessive spend on Temporary Accommodation.
- 8.5 The temporary partial restriction of allocation of council voids to use as temporary accommodation will impact on those people who are on the waiting list for council accommodation or eligible for transfers, and who are not otherwise eligible to bid for voids over the specified period within the exemptions or exceptions specified in the policy.

- 8.6 HRA voids offered as temporary accommodation will be the subject of non-secure tenancies. This offers a greater degree of security to eligible households than temporary accommodation by way of licenses.

Name of lawyer consulted: Natasha Watson Date consulted 9/03/2026:

9. Risk implications

- 9.1 As outlined in the report to the Leader of the Council on 14 January the most significant risk is that, without this approach, the council would remain reliant on increasingly costly nightly-paid placements, worsening the financial pressure already forecast at £4.8m overspend for the year.
- 9.2 Letting voids as temporary accommodation also temporarily reduces the number of general needs homes available for letting, which can lengthen waiting times for households on the housing register and affect the council's ability to address wider housing need. There is also a risk that increased turnover of temporary accommodation within certain blocks may affect community cohesion.

10. Equalities implications

- 10.1 As outlined in the report to the Leader of the Council on 14 January (Appendix 1), an initial Equalities Impact Assessment identified a range of differential effects linked to the interim scheme, many of them positive.
- 10.2 Families with children, disabled households, survivors of domestic abuse, and households placed out of area stand to benefit from greater stability, safer accommodation and improved access to local schools, networks and health services.
- 10.3 At the same time, the temporary pause on some general needs lettings may disproportionately affect some groups on the housing register, and the council recognises gaps in equality data that require active monitoring.
- 10.4 To ensure equity, the Lettings Panel records an intersectional rationale for each decision, and outcomes will be monitored. A full updated EIA will be completed using consultation feedback before any extension of the scheme is considered.

11. Sustainability implications

- 11.1 As outlined in the report to the Leader of the Council on 14 January using empty council homes within the city as temporary accommodation can help reduce travel emissions, as households are more likely to remain close to their schools, workplaces, and support networks. This supports stronger local communities and reduces disruption associated with out-of-area placements. Any additional resource use associated with bringing void properties up to the council's lettable standard will be balanced through adherence to energy-efficiency and sustainability requirements.

12. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 12.1 As outlined in the report to the Leader of the Council on 14 January providing temporary accommodation in council properties that meet the full lettable standard brings significant health and wellbeing benefits for homeless households. Unlike nightly paid placements, these homes offer greater safety, stability and security, and allow households to remain within established networks, schools and healthcare settings. Evidence shows that higher quality, stable accommodation improves both mental and physical health, particularly for children and vulnerable adults. This interim scheme aligns with the council's commitment to reducing health inequalities and improving outcomes for residents facing homelessness

Other Implications

13. Procurement implications

- 13.1 As outlined in the report to the Leader of the Council on 14 January, during the interim period, the council is refurbishing HRA void properties to ensure they meet the required standard for temporary accommodation, including installing flooring where needed. These works are being delivered through existing compliant frameworks due to the urgency of the scheme. A future request will seek approval to procure additional contractor capacity to support ongoing delivery and prevent disruption to wider housing repairs and maintenance programmes.

14. Crime & disorder implications:

- 14.1 As outlined in the report to the Leader of the Council on 14 January, the interim scheme is expected to have a positive impact on community safety. Providing better-quality, more stable temporary accommodation can reduce risk factors linked to crime, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse and re-offending. Keeping households within their established communities also supports social cohesion and reduces the disruption associated with frequent moves and nightly-paid placements. No negative crime or disorder impacts are anticipated, and the council will continue to monitor outcomes with community safety partners.

15. Conclusion

- 15.1 This report asks Overview & Scrutiny to consider the council's interim use of empty council homes as Temporary Accommodation between 19 January and 1 May, and to provide comments that will inform the final Cabinet report in April. The purpose of bringing this to the committee is to ensure that Members' views, alongside the findings of the public consultation, shape any decision on whether the scheme should continue for a further 12 months and, if so, how it should operate.
- 15.2 Overview & Scrutiny is therefore invited to comment on the proposed extension of the scheme – up to a maximum of 100 additional properties –

and on the policy framework that underpins it, including the prioritisation criteria and exemptions.

- 15,3 Feedback from the committee will form an important part of the evidence presented to Cabinet on 23 April, helping to ensure that the council's approach remains transparent, proportionate and aligned to its wider plans to transform Temporary Accommodation provision.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Policy on Use of Housing Revenue Account Void Properties as Temporary Accommodation

2. Background documents

1. [Use of Housing Revenue Account voids as Temporary Accommodation.pdf](#)

Appendix 1 - Draft Policy on Use of Housing Revenue Account Void Properties as Temporary Accommodation

December 2025

Introduction and Purpose

Brighton & Hove City Council currently faces acute pressures in meeting its statutory homelessness duties, with rising demand for Temporary Accommodation (TA) and limited local supply. This policy sets out a time-limited interim position to use council-owned void properties as TA, aiming to maximise in-city placements, reduce costly spot purchases and out-of-area placements, and improve outcomes for affected households, across education and health.

This will run from 19 January to 1 May 2026, after which its impact will be evaluated. This approach is a direct response to financial pressures, the rising need for stable temporary accommodation for homeless households, and the council's commitment outlined within the Council Plan, Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029 and new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 to 2030.

Scope

This interim policy applies to council-owned Housing Revenue Account (HRA) properties that become void within the window. It excludes seniors housing, extra care, and mobility/adapted properties due to their specialist nature and high demand. However, in exceptional circumstances, these property types may be brought within scope.

The focus is on general needs family-sized homes and other suitable units where compliance and lettable standards can be achieved. With the exception of the council's Large Panel System (LPS) blocks, properties already committed to regeneration or disposal, or requiring capital works that cannot be completed within the timeframe, are also excluded. This ensures the interim action targets stock that can be quickly and safely brought into use for TA, without impacting vulnerable groups or long-term strategic plans.

Policy Statement

During the interim position, all eligible HRA void properties (excluding seniors and mobility/adapted homes, other than in exceptional circumstances) will be for use as Temporary Accommodation for homeless households owed duties under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.

Priority will be given to families, households currently placed outside the city, and those in spot purchased placements. Exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis, as outlined below and approved by the Head of Tenancy Services.

TA placements in HRA stock are made under Part VII functions on a non- secure tenancy; they do not create secure tenancies and do not attract Right to Buy.

At the end of the period, the letting of HRA void properties will revert to standard allocation processes unless further approval is sought. This policy is designed to be transparent, fair, and responsive to the city's most urgent housing needs.

The period is not intended to be long term, as the council recognises the impact that this will have on households on the council's Housing Register and is an interim position whilst it carries out other action to address the pressures of Temporary Accommodation.

Legal and Policy Framework

The legal basis for using HRA voids as TA is included within the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Provision that they are not secure tenancies is found within the first schedule to the Housing Act 1985.

This temporary position is grounded in statutory homelessness duties under the Housing Act 1996 (Part VII) and the Homelessness Code of Guidance (Chapter 17), which require all TA placements to be suitable in terms of space, location, health needs, accessibility, and affordability.

As stated, using council stock for TA does not confer secure tenancy; placements are made under homelessness duties, not the Part VI allocation scheme.

The Equality Act 2010 requires that all decisions consider impacts on protected characteristics, with an initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) available prior to the decision to adopt this temporary policy.

Definitions

- **Void:** A council property with no active tenancy, after the tenancy has lawfully ended and the rent account is closed.
- **Temporary Accommodation (TA):** Accommodation secured to meet statutory homelessness duties until settled housing is offered.
- **Lettable Standard:** The minimum safety, compliance, cleanliness, and functionality standard a void must meet prior to occupation. These definitions ensure clarity for staff, residents, and stakeholders, and align with sector best practice.

Principles

The pilot is underpinned by key principles:

- **Suitability first:** Every placement is assessed for suitability, for the purpose of Temporary Accommodation, against household needs, ensuring families and vulnerable households are prioritised.
- **Safety and compliance:** All properties must (change to will) meet required lettable standard

- **Review rights:** Households can request review of the suitability of the accommodation provided.
- **Sustaining communities:** being aware of the sensitivity of lets and supporting community cohesion where possible.

Eligibility and Prioritisation

Eligibility follows statutory homelessness duties under Part VII. During the period, prioritisation will focus on households as set out below; it will be for council officers to assess and evidence which of the criteria are met to sufficient level:

- Households located outside Brighton & Hove and assigned 'Band A' under the Temporary Accommodation Allocation Policy to return to the city, namely households who include:
 - a child in secondary school within the city in their final year of key stage 4 (generally year 11)
 - a child who has a Statement of Special Educational Needs and or an Educational Health Care Plan and is at school in the city
 - a child who is the subject of Child Protection Order Plan from BHCC
 - someone who is officially caring for another person in the city as part of a care plan agreed with the relevant social care department
 - someone in permanent or settled employment who works anti-social hours within the city and would risk losing their employment (unless they can be transferred by their employer)
 - someone who is receiving medical treatment that can only be provided by a specific medical facility within the city and that treatment requires a high volume of attendance at that medical facility (a minimum of 2 to 3 times per week)
- Households with dependent children in spot purchase or blocked booked accommodation:
 - Assessed as unsuitable for longer-term stay and prioritised for transfer
 - Made homeless due to domestic violence or abuse
 - Including a neurodiverse child (diagnosed by a qualified practitioner) or a child with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or other significant educational pressure.
 - Living in spot-purchase and/or block booked TA for more than 6 months
- Other households in out-of-city, spot purchase or block booked Accommodation

Policy Exemptions

While the policy aims to maximise the use of HRA void properties as TA for homeless households, it recognises that certain circumstances require individual consideration. Exemptions are therefore built into the policy to ensure that the council can respond appropriately to complex issues.

Unless needed in exceptional circumstances the following property types are exempt from the interim policy:

- **Sheltered Housing:** Properties designated for seniors are excluded due to their specialist nature and high demand.
- **Mobility-Adapted Properties:** Homes adapted for accessibility are excluded to preserve availability for those with specific needs.
- **Housing Association / Registered Social Landlord Properties:** Properties managed by partners within the council's allocation scheme are not included. On average, approximately one-quarter of homes allocated to households on the housing register are Housing Association properties.

In addition, the council retains a discretion to allocate voids to households from the housing register, and existing secure council tenants where exceptional circumstances and needs can be demonstrated in the following categories:

- Where an allocation would enable another council property to become available to use as Temporary Accommodation. For example, a Priority Transfer or Large Panel System (LPS) block property.
- Where there is a serious safeguarding risk or urgent medical need and allocating an existing council tenant, a new property is deemed the only way to safeguard.
- Where there is a household with assessed care and support need in residential or alternative care whose needs could be met within general needs accommodation.
- Any other situation where a compelling case can be demonstrated by a household on the housing register will be considered individually by the Lettings Panel.

Exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis by a dedicated panel.

Panel for Lettings Decisions

A dedicated panel will oversee decisions to use HRA voids as TA. The panel will include:

- Head of Tenancy Services
- Temporary Accommodation Manager
- Housing Allocations Manager
- Rehousing Manager
- Housing Operations Manager
- Empty Homes Manager

This panel will meet regularly to apply the prioritisation and decide on exceptions, and oversee offers of accommodation, ensuring decisions are consistent, fair, and well-documented.

Process Overview

The below process will be followed during the pilot period:

- **Identification:** Empty Homes team flags eligible voids weekly during the pilot window.
- **Pre-void inspection:** Condition of void recorded.
- **Void works:** Minor or major works scheduled to achieve lettable standard for TA.
- **Panel decision:** Lettings panel applies prioritisation matrix and agrees placements
- **Offer and sign-up:** TA licence or non-secure tenancy terms issued; rights and responsibilities explained; move-in supported.

Standards for TA in Council Voids

All council-owned voids used as TA must meet the council's lettable standard for TA, ensuring properties are safe, secure, clean, and ready for occupation. The following requirements apply:

- **Safety & Compliance:**
 - Valid gas and electrical safety certificates (CP12 where applicable and EICR) must be in place.
 - Hardwired smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms installed and tested.
 - No Category 1 hazards present (HHSRS compliance).
 - EPC completed and available.
- **Security:**
 - Front door lock changed; two sets of keys provided.
 - All windows and external doors checked for security and function.
- **Flooring:**
 - Minimum floor covering provided in all TA voids, unless suitable flooring already exists.
 - Kitchens and bathrooms must have suitable/non porous vinyl flooring.
- **Cleanliness:**
 - All previous tenants' effects, rubbish, and graffiti removed.
 - Property thoroughly cleaned, including sanitary ware, kitchen, and all floor surfaces.
- **Functionality:**
 - Heating, hot water, electrics, and plumbing in full working order.
 - Kitchens and bathrooms must be ventilated and have essential fixtures in good condition.
- **Decoration:**
 - Internal decoration is the incoming tenant's responsibility, unless the property is either below an acceptable standard or excessive damage requires partial redecoration at the council's discretion.
- **Adaptations & Accessibility:**
 - Existing adaptations retained unless instructed otherwise; reasonable adjustments made for accessibility where required.
- **External Areas:**

- Gardens, sheds, and boundaries cleared of hazards and bulk waste; fencing and gates made safe.
- **Handover:**
 - Welcome pack left for the incoming tenant.

Interim period and extension

This action runs from 19 January to 1 May 2026. At the end of the period, a review of the impact will be carried out, including analysis of outcomes, challenges, and recommendations.

From 1 May, the letting of HRA void properties will revert to standard allocation processes unless an extension is granted by the council's Cabinet. The decision to extend will be informed by formal consultation and an updated Equality Impact Assessment, reflecting insights and data gathered during the interim period. A detailed record of all HRA properties used as TA throughout the interim scheme will be maintained.

Notifying Residents and Housing Register applicants

Advertising of council homes via Homemove (the council's Choice Based Lettings platform) will be paused from 19 January 2026. Residents and tenants will be notified of this change, as well as any subsequent decision to extend or amend the process.

During the interim period, residents and tenants will continue to be able to bid on:

- Housing Association properties
- Council-owned Seniors Housing
- Council-owned mobility-adapted properties

Financial Impacts

Indicative modelling assumes up to 80 additional council TA units across the pilot, with estimated savings as a result of fewer households in spot purchase and block booked temporary accommodation.

The savings will take into account the impact on the HRA including additional repairs and maintenance costs.

Monitoring and KPIs

The pilot will monitor and report:

- Number of HRA voids allocated to TA
- That figure as a percentage of overall allocations in the period
- Number of voids where exceptions were applied
- Number of households in spot purchase and block booked accommodation
- Suitability reviews (s202) and outcomes

- Enquiries, complaints and Ombudsman enquiries

