

# **BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

## **PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY**

**4.00pm 15 SEPTEMBER 2025**

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

### **MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor O'Quinn (Chair) Gauge (Deputy Chair), Cattell, McLeay, Parrott, Shanks, Winder, Guilmant and Meadows

**Other Members present:** Lesley Hurst (Church of England diocesan representative), Sara Fulford (Older People's Council), Adam Muirhead (Community Works Rep), Dr Anusree Biswas Sasidharan (Community Works), Jasmine (Youth Council Rep), Jessica Sumner (Community Works Rep)

### **PART ONE**

#### **10 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS**

10 (A) Cllr Meadows substituting for Cllr Lyons. Cllr Guilmant for Cllr Sheard. Apologies from Jo Martindale.

#### **11 MINUTES**

11.1 RESOLVED The draft minutes of the 8<sup>th</sup> July 2025 People Overview & Scrutiny Committee were approved.

#### **12 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

12.1 Tenancy Policy – Lee Catt

Why is there not a vulnerability policy and/or strategy and a reasonable adjustment policy being used in line with the Spotlight report on attitude, respect, rights, and the vulnerability within social housing. If there is one, where is it, when was it published, why is it not easy to access, and why is it not being used in all cases?

Cllr O'Quinn gave the following answer: Thank you for your question. Having engaged with officers from housing I have received the following response:

We recognise the importance of ensuring that our housing services are inclusive, respectful, and responsive to the needs of residents, particularly those who are vulnerable. While there is currently no standalone Vulnerability Policy or Reasonable Adjustment Policy in place, I can confirm that work is actively underway to address this, as part of a wider programme of policy

development, which has so far included a new Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Hate Incident Policy.

The Vulnerability Policy will set out our approach to adapting service provision to meet the individual needs of residents. It will be informed by equalities data and lived experience, and will reflect our commitment to:

- Recognising the unique experiences of each individual, and tailoring support accordingly.
- Collaborating across departments and with external agencies, including social services, health, education, and the voluntary sector.
- Using evidence-based approaches to guide decisions and interventions.

We are aiming to begin consultation with council tenants, leaseholders, residents in temporary accommodation and those accessing our Homelessness and Housing Options service early in the new year, to ensure the policy is co-produced and reflects the voices of those it is designed to support.

Mr Catt asked the following supplementary question: Will this include staff members of Brighton & Hove City Council who will also be approached and trained in respect of ASB victims? Because a lot of the policies are effective but it's the officers and individuals that are not upholding the policies and correct procedures.

Cllr O'Quinn responded that she would provide him with a written answer. The following was provided as a written answer:

Thank you for your follow-up question regarding the training of Brighton & Hove City Council staff in relation to supporting victims of ASB.

Our approach to ASB includes training for staff across relevant teams to ensure they are equipped not only with the tools and powers available to address ASB, but also with the understanding and sensitivity required to support victims effectively. We recognise that policies alone are not enough, how staff apply them in practice is critical.

To that end, we have a comprehensive training programme in place which includes:

- Specialist legal and procedural training for ASB casework.
- Regular sessions reviewing Independent Housing Ombudsman findings to improve compliance and accountability.
- Trauma-informed practice training to help staff understand the impact of ASB on victims and respond with compassion.
- Reflective practice sessions facilitated by trained staff to support emotional resilience and learning from complex cases.

We also provide individual support and coaching where staff are identified as needing further development to meet expected standards. Accountability is maintained through case audits, supervision, and performance management processes.

Our commitment is to continuous improvement, and we are actively working to strengthen internal relationships and multi-agency collaboration to ensure that our response to ASB is both robust and empathetic.

12.2 Cllr Mcleay asked a question regarding public engagement in the Task & Finish Group on antisocial behaviour in social housing and if it could be confirmed that Mr Catt would be invited to participate as a witness. Cllr O'Quinn confirmed that the Task & Finish Group would be undertaking public engagement and that discussions had taken place with Mr Catt about him participating in that.

### **13 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT**

13.1 There was no member involvement.

### **14 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATION**

14.1 The Chair gave the following communication: Today we are beginning the process of scrutinising the council's budget, with an update from Cllr Jacob Taylor and officers on the council's financial situation. As set out in the report, it would be helpful if members could limit questions to remain within the remit of this committee. A similar report is going to the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee where issues within their remit will be covered.

We will then be looking at the renewal of the Section 75 Agreement on mental health services between the council and Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

Before we begin, I want to make members of the committee aware that the council is still in the pre-election period ahead of the Queen's Park Ward by-election on 18th September.

Therefore, I would urge members of the committee and cabinet members presenting to us to refrain from making any comments which could be seen to encourage or discourage support for any party or candidate standing in the election.

### **15 GENERAL FUND BUDGET PLANNING & RESOURCE UPDATE - 2026-27 TO 2029-30**

15.1 Cllr Jacob Taylor gave a broad overview of the council's financial position. He said that the general fund was forecast to increase by £16m but that the levels of pressure faced by the council was also set to increase providing a budget gap. Cllr Taylor said that the pressures were mainly coming from service areas covered by the People committee and made clear that this increased pressure was not the fault of the service users. He talked on recent TBM reports, the fairer funding review and the possibility of thinking outside of the box on temporary accommodation with ideas such as bringing more in house. John Hooton, Interim Director for Property & Finance, spoke on working with other local authorities on children's places, investing in IT and digital to save money, and saving money on property.

15.2 Following the presentation Cllrs asked questions on the following issues: levels of reserves, school transport, temporary accommodation, SEND, fairer funding, business rates, work with the voluntary sector, use of s106 money, student landlords, instances of overpaying for social care, wider social care costs, LGR, 2<sup>nd</sup> home premium rates, EIAs, the need to consult with the voluntary sector early in the budget process.

15.3 Proposed Cllr Shanks seconded Cllr O'Quinn. RESOLVED:

People Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommend that the Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration begin earlier discussion with the voluntary sector on budget recommendations, ideally by December.

15.4 RESOLVED:

People Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed to note the report.

## **16 MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES S75 AGREEMENT**

16.1 Cllr Jacob Allen, Steve Hook (Director of Adult Social Care), Richard D'Souza (General Manager), and John Child (Chief Operating Officer at Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust) presented to the committee. The main points were an explanation of what s75 agreements are, the agreement between Brighton & Hove City Council & Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, the aims & objectives, the challenges & benefits of such agreements, and the proposal to renew the current agreement for a further three years.

16.2 Following the presentation Cllrs asked question on the following issues: Dementia beds in the city, why the item was coming to scrutiny now, if the number of staff was assessed as well as demand, lessons learnt on the current agreement, the proportion of people captured by equalities data (specifically race), if there was a children's services version of s75, the need for a proactive service, alternative options to a s75 agreement, move to neighbourhood mental health teams, how different strategies in the two organisations (such as VAWG strategy) feeds into s75 agreement, the idea of such an agreement for CAMHS, if drug addiction was an increasing issue.

16.3 RESOLVED:

People Overview & Scrutiny Committee agree to note the contents of the report including the recommendation to renew the s75 agreement for a further three years.

The meeting concluded at 18:53

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

