

Place Overview & Scrutiny

Date: **3 November 2026**

Time: **4.00pm**

Venue:

Members: **Councillors:** Evans (Chair), Cattell (Deputy Chair), Fishleigh, Goddard, Lademacher, Meadows, Sykes, Wilkinson and Winder

Contact: **Anthony Soyinka**
Head of Democratic Services

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Chief Executive
Hove Town Hall
Norton Road
Hove BN3 3BQ

Date of Publication - Monday, 26 October 2026

AGENDA

Part One

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29 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 and 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.

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

- (c) **Exclusion of Press and Public:** To consider whether, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, or the nature of the proceedings, the press and public should be excluded from the meeting when any of the following items are under consideration.

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

A list and description of the exempt categories is available for public inspection at Brighton and Hove Town Halls and on-line in the Constitution at part 7.1.

30 MINUTES

7 - 30

To approve the draft minutes of the 8th September 2026 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting

To approve the draft minutes of the call-in Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 6th October 2026

31 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATION

32 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 28th October 2026
- (c) **Deputations:** To receive any deputations submitted by the due date of 10am on 22nd October 2026

33 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:** A list of written questions submitted by Members has been included in the agenda papers.
- (c) **Letters:** To consider any letters submitted by Members.
- (d) **Notices of Motion:** To consider any Notices of Motion.

34 LARGE PANEL SYSTEM HOUSING MASTERPLAN AND LAND ASSEMBLY.

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Contact Officer: Natalie Sacks-Hammond
Ward Affected: All Wards

35 HOUSING SAFETY AND QUALITY COMPLIANCE BI-ANNUAL UPDATE

To Follow

Report to follow

Contact Officer: Natalie Sacks-Hammond
Ward Affected: All Wards

36 ALTERNATIVE CREATIVE WORKSPACE

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Contact Officer: Natalie Sacks-Hammond
Ward Affected: All Wards

37 REPORT OF THE VISITOR ECONOMY TASK & FINISH GROUP

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Contact Officer: Natalie Sacks-Hammond
Ward Affected: All Wards

**38 CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING TASK & FINISH GROUP SCOPING
REPORT**

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Contact Officer: Natalie Sacks-Hammond
Ward Affected: All Wards

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Further information

For further details and general enquiries about this meeting contact Anthony Soyinka, (email Natalie.Sacks-Hammond@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or email democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk

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In most meetings, there are no incidents and Council is not disturbed. We hope this continues so there is no need for the Mayor or any Chair of a meeting to take these actions.

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- Do not re-enter the building until told that it is safe to do so

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

4.00pm 8 SEPTEMBER 2026

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Evans (Chair) Cattell (Deputy Chair), Earthey, Goddard, Lademacher, Meadows, Sykes, Loughran, Winder and Parrott

Other Members present: Vic Borrill (CVS), Anusree Biswas (BRM), George Woodhams (YC), Bernadette Kent (OPC)

PART ONE

16 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1. Procedural Business

1a Declarations of substitutions:

Cllr Mark Earthey attended as substitute for Cllr Fishleigh

Cllr Liz Loughran attended as substitute for Cllr Gary Wilkinson

Cllr Sam Parrott attended as substitute for the vacant Labour seat

Anusree Biswas was invited to attend this meeting as Nora Mzaoui is unavailable

1b Declarations of interest:

Cllr Cattell declared that she is a member of the Planning Members Working Group.

1c Exclusion of the press and public

There were no Part Two items so the press and public were not excluded.

17 MINUTES

2.1 RESOLVED–

2.1.1 That the minutes of the Place Overview & Scrutiny Meeting on 22nd July were approved

2.1.2 That the minutes of the Call-in Meeting of Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 28th July were approved

18 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATION

3.1 The Chair gave the following communication:

We have some new representatives joining us today who I would like to welcome and introduce to the committee. We have Vic Borrill as our new rep for the community voluntary sector and Nora Mzaoui has taken up the new co-optee position of Black and Racially Minoritised representative. However, she is unable to attend today so Anusree is here as a substitute.

Today we have three items on the agenda. We will start with a discussion on City Plan focussed on balancing homes and employment land. Any comments from this discussion will be used to inform the development of the City Plan and help shape future engagement plans on this topic.

Following that, we have a presentation on recycling and behaviour change, looking at the steps taken so far to increase recycling rates and improve the service. We will discuss the impact of this work and the plans to maintain progress and tackle the remaining challenges.

Finally, we will look at the Memorials Policy, which was originally presented to this committee in March. Since then, changes have been made following feedback from Place O&S Committee, and we will be looking at those changes today.

Before we begin, I wanted to provide an update on the Government's plans for short-term lets, following the recommendations made by our first Task & Finish Group in 2024.

Lisa Nandy MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, has announced that the Government is accelerating the introduction of a mandatory registration scheme for short-term lets, which is currently expected to be rolled out in March 2027.

Under the scheme, owners of short-term lets will be required to register their accommodation, provide key information about the property, pay a registration fee and obtain a registration number. This number must then be displayed when advertising or letting the accommodation.

One of the recommendations from our Task & Finish Group was to lobby Government on this issue, which we did, so it is encouraging to hear that the scheme is progressing and is expected to become operational next year.

19 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

4.1 There were no public engagement items.

20 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

5.1 There were no member questions.

21 CITY PLAN: BALANCING HOMES AND EMPLOYMENT LAND

- 21.1 Cllr Jacob Taylor presented the slides and explained the tension between allocating land in the city for housing and employment spaces. Key points included that the target of 2,500 homes per year has never been achieved and that the city plays a regionally significant role in providing office space. There is a two-tier office market, with a large stock of older, lower-quality office accommodation alongside strong demand for newer, modern space. Much of the under-occupied office space does not meet current business requirements. Many businesses operating in light industrial premises are unable to expand as they would like. While the overall amount of available space has not declined significantly, demand remains high. Potential regional solutions may emerge through the Prosperity Strategy being developed by the Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority, which is intended to help shape future thinking on land use, including opportunities to meet some light industrial needs outside the city boundary, supported by improved transport links.
- 21.2 Max Woodford added that this isn't an issue that is unique to this City Plan and that space in the city is constrained. There are sites in the old coal yard by Hove station and the Sackville Trading Estate that can be developed. There are 564 new homes in the city with 300 council houses. The industrial units are on a long lease, where the council retains the freehold, and some of these units need modernising. Following the closure of New England House, there is a need to look at existing office space for creative industries.
- 21.3 Nicola Hurley said that the question being asked today is whether to keep these sites as protected employment land and to look at the policy approaches being presented. She mentioned that some heavy industrial use does not mix well with housing.
- 21.4 Cllr Meadows asked about developers building purpose-built student accommodation which isn't taken into account as part of the housing target and that the universities are struggling to attract more students. Nicola Hurley said that sites are allocated specifically for student accommodation and residential housing. Different models are coming forward including co-living schemes, billed to rent, and the more traditional bill to buy. Cllr Taylor said the building of student accommodation is not always popular but there is evidence it has led to less pressure on residential areas. The council are buying back HMOs and developers report that there is a significant decrease in demand for student accommodation. They are looking to allocate more sites for permanent residential housing and industrial land. Cllr Meadows added that the council should be lobbying to turn some of the student accommodation sites into residential as many are in prime spots and residents are concerned that a lot of them are half full, they have not reduced the number of HMOs and that they are not needed since the universities are losing students. Nicola Hurley said that the developer can approach them to change the use of the property and that they will be looking into this as part of the new City Plan. Cllr Evans added that once a premises has been built, it is difficult to change its use. Students have reported that they live in HMOs because the purpose-built student accommodation is too expensive. If the developers reduced the rent, there might be higher occupancy.
- 21.5 Cllr Meadows asked about the assessment of office space considering the change in habits with more people hot desking and working from home and whether this changes

the amount of space needed. Perhaps the older office stock could be used for something else including student accommodation. She added that green open spaces should never be built on.

- 21.6 Cllr Sykes said he was in favour of safeguarding industrial land. Whereas housing targets are set nationally, the assessment of need for industrial land is based on local analysis and demand. He asked if the flexibility in permitted development is skewing use plans with office space and light industrial space changing to housing which is treated as the priority. He asked how realistic the housing targets are and the need for a focus on social and affordable housing. There is also the issue of large numbers of short-term lets being used instead of residential homes. Cllr Taylor said the government is making progress on short-term lets and that there are 4000 properties being advertised and a high concentration of them in the city. These numbers need to come down and be turned into permanent residential use. Data suggests that the council has underbuilt and has a low number of dwellings for the population. However, this could be an ownership issue rather than a supply issue. There are high levels of second homes and short-term lets, which could be bought back for residential use. Affordability would remain high as there is a high demand to live in the city and a need for more social housing. Nicola Hurley said there has been a reduction of office space through permitted development which is why there is an Article 4 in place for central areas such as Western Road, to protect these spaces. Cllr Sykes added that industrial space should be safeguarded because it affects local supply chains and local jobs.
- 21.7 Cllr Loughran noted that land use is influenced by factors such as availability, accessibility and place-making considerations for housing, and therefore should not be considered in isolation. She asked whether these factors had been taken into account when assessing the identified sites. She agreed that they need to coordinate the provision of both types of land uses with the regional economy and this relates to affordability. If too much land is released for market housing it would drive up the cost. There is a need to build housing quickly so there is a need to consider modular housing. This would require the development of a new policy framework, alongside the planning of transport infrastructure to support both large sites on the edge of the city and developments within the city centre. There are physical challenges to consider such as tiny streets where HGV vehicles can get stuck doing deliveries. Cllr Loughran said maintaining the existing sites is important, but that safeguarded employment land could be released with the caveat that they will look at how mixed uses could work. Industrial space could be re-provided in other locations and tie in with the Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority. Older office space could be converted into homes. There are a lot of empty properties in the London Road area which could be used for residential as they are unlikely to be turned back into retail. London Road is a key area for the city centre and it needs regeneration. Cllr Taylor said they would look at a modular house building policy. He said that land prices are really high due to construction costs. Granting more social housing rather than market housing could stabilise the affordability issue. He agreed that transport is important and the old Victorian roads can be problematic. Mixed use developments have had limited success with the retail element. Max Woodford said that having flexibility for the ground floor of residential blocks has not worked and this needs to be looked at.
- 21.8 Cllr Cattell asked about the Article 4 direction which stops offices being turned into housing and whether this has affected the local market and increased vacant office

space. Should this be revised? She said that construction is expensive but there is also a lack of trade people as young people are not learning these skills and those in the industry are getting older. She asked whether there is a way to resist shared ownership schemes. Max Woodford said the Article 4 doesn't ban the change of use but controls it but there might be a need for more flexible policies. The Met College has opened a training centre teaching young people how to fit heat pumps. Affordable rented housing is prioritised over shared ownership.

- 21.9 Cllr Lademacher was in favour of modular housing and mentioned the "Hope Rise" Scheme in Bristol that was 100% social rental. In terms of affordability, she asked what proportion of homes are expected to be social rent and genuinely affordable and are they meeting that need. Cllr Lademacher asked about how the balance of housing and employment land would have an effect on communities with protected characteristics. Cllr Taylor agreed that modular housing will be part of the solution. Affordable housing is achieved through setting policies and taking contributions from other sites to have the funds for the council to do its own buying or building. The council has its own programme of social housing where they are trying to get as many new builds as possible, some through the buy back programme where they have already bought 500 properties and use it for a mix of rental and temporary accommodation. The city has constrained land boundaried by the South Downs National Park which makes it difficult to meet the housing needs. Nicola Hurley said that the whole City Plan will go through an equalities assessment and a viability assessment as they progress through the process.
- 21.10 Cllr Winder asked whether the council fully understood the factors contributing to the housing crisis and was taking account of the significant changes that have occurred in recent years, including increased home working, population movements out of the city, and the challenge of accommodating the housing and industrial space required. The council needs to look back in order to understand the future better and what the city really needs. Cllr Taylor said that statistics exist that evidence the changing profile of the use of land. Max Woodford said that part of the City Plan is to set a vision and then develop policies to deliver it.
- 21.11 George Woodhams asked about the need for young people to have the use of industrial land to develop skills such as carpentry. Cllr Taylor said that employment land and housing effects everyone but particularly the younger generation who are facing difficult prospects including employability and housing affordability. It's taking young people longer to leave the parental home and can only afford to pay their rent and aren't able to save for a housing deposit. Young people are at the front and centre of this plan.
- 21.12 Anusree Biswas asked how the council are assessing the social and financial impact of losing employment land against the benefits of increased housing and how they will involve the voluntary sector. Cllr Taylor said they assess it through underlying studies for the needs of employment and housing land and try to strike a balance between all of them. They need to consider the housing crisis as a priority but not all the land can be used for housing because the city needs everything else such as health facilities and education provision. They are keen to engage with the voluntary sector and there are key stages of engagement and consultation in the City Plan timeline where they will involve the sector.

- 21.13 Vic Borrill said it was good that creative spaces were being considered in the City Plan but that it could be expanded to include designated spaces for communities and social enterprises where people can go to gain skills and confidence to join the workforce. It's about engaging with the right people in the sector in the early design. Max Woodford said planners look at use rather than users but the community voluntary sector might want a slightly different kind of workspace and for her to get in touch about this.
- 21.14 Cllr Goddard said it doesn't need to be "either" or "or" for housing and employment land and to be more creative around the "and". They brought Moulsecoomb Place back to life with a creative set of studios and it's good to innovate and just get on with it. The council processes can be a blocker and need to be more of a catalyst for bringing empty areas back to use. BHT used shipping containers to offer short term rental accommodation to people and it's beneficial to encourage small communities to get together and build housing. Cllr Taylor agreed but said that often a site has gained consent for a particular use and it's not usually the community who request a change but developers who want to build something else that will make more money.
- 21.15 Bernadette Kent asked about how the over 60s are being considered as they are the fastest growing demographic. Cllr Taylor said the full City Plan will go through the EIA process which will include impacts on older people.
- 21.16 Cllr Evans asked about the new national policy framework and how it has sped the process up. Nicola Hurley said there is a new framework and new regulations on how the plan is created. It is a much shorter timeline compared to the previous process, although it will still take 30 months. The scope has been reduced so there are less things to consider. The next gateway is a self-assessment in October. Many of the policies are covered nationally so they are able to focus on things local to the city such as employment and the visitor economy.
- 21.17 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee members agreed that they had had a thorough discussion on the City Plan and contributed to the development process.

22 RECYCLING AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

- 22.1 Cllr Tim Rowkins presented the slides. Key points included: the highest recycling rate for the city was achieved in March 2026, an acknowledgement that residents need to have faith in what happens to the materials to be more willing to recycle properly, that cartons and foil will soon be accepted in mixed recycling collections, a waste composition analysis is undertaken every 2 years, contamination is a problem they are focussing on, leaflets with information on recycling will be circulated to all households, signage on communal bins are being replaced and they would like to introduce targeted messaging via email to specific households with contaminated recycling. The colour of the bins is contrary to surrounding areas which is confusing particularly to students who come from elsewhere and are used to them being the other way around. Most contamination comes from household rubbish in the recycling bin or the recycling being bagged up in a bin liner that cannot be recycled. There is a focus on communications and behaviour change.
- 22.2 Cllr Sykes asked why the energy recovery rate has declined. Residents from his ward have commented that it is easier to put items into the waste bins because they have a

larger opening and are bigger, that the charity bins collecting clothing are often overflowing, and that gatherings of communal bins don't look nice and more thought needs to be given to their location as they can be a detriment to retail and businesses. Cllr Rowkins said that the 3200 litre waste bins take up less space on the road in comparison to three 1100 litre bins and need a specialist vehicle to lift them, which are unfortunately prone to problems. They only have 5 of these vehicles which are unreliable, there are also issues with the bin lift mechanisms, all of which have an impact on the city. Any vehicle can lift the 1100 litre bins. They are colour coding the bins to make it more obvious which does what and changing the signage to be on top rather than at waist height where they are less visible. It was noted that the council does not collect textile bins directly, as these are managed through an external contract. Textile recycling is in decline, with companies experiencing difficulties in maintaining collection services. Bin placement is important as it does have an impact on the look and feel of the city. Satti Sidhu added that the energy recovery rates refer to waste being incinerated at Newhaven which is decreasing because food waste is going to a composting facility instead, so there is less being incinerated.

- 22.3 Cllr Meadows said that in Patcham the recycling was collected but not the glass which meant they had to wait a month until the next one; she was concerned about communication with residents and that residents were unable to report a problem on the website and are frustrated. Cllr Rowkins said the website is working fine for reporting and that once an issue has been logged on the website it cannot be logged again. However, he acknowledged that this could be better communicated to residents and made clearer on the website. Cllr Rowkins explained that recycling collections are done by twin pack vehicles that collect 2 different waste streams at the same time, allowing the materials to be kept separate. Unfortunately, these vehicles are old and have mechanical problems. This results in crews going out in a standard vehicle and only collecting mixed recycling because it can cause more of a nuisance than glass in terms of being blown around. Fortunately, there are 10 more vehicles arriving. Ali McManamon said that the key issue is vehicle reliability, and a properly resourced vehicle replacement strategy is coming into place now.
- 22.4 Anusree Biswas said that in society we use a huge amount of plastic and it would be good to reduce its use. Other countries have deposit return schemes where people can bring glass back to the shop and get money back for it. She also mentioned the Climate for Communities Partnership and that they should be involved in the conversation. Cllr Rowkins said there is a deposit return scheme coming in 2027 although it's not going to include glass. The Communities Partnership is a good idea as the council needs to work closer with groups in the city as they often are too reliant on their own comms.
- 22.5 Cllr Evans said some supermarkets have recycling bins for soft plastic such as crisp packets and cling wraps but that plastic packaging is gratuitous with organic vegetables often being the worst.
- 22.6 Vic Borrill said it would be valuable to communicate to residents via community groups especially if English isn't their first language because this kind of information could be hard to follow. There is also an opportunity to promote reuse options, free shops and composting. Cllr Rowkins said they do promote these services on the website and that the city has an above average number of reuse schemes but most people are not aware of them.

- 22.7 Cllr Winder asked if communal bins would be kept and said that some older people are unable to carry rubbish bags and find it difficult to manage the bins. Cllr Rowkins said there are no plans to get rid of communal bins as they are useful, particularly in very narrow streets to keep the pavement uncluttered especially for those using wheelchairs or buggies. There is a concern that communal bins encourage fly tipping which is a problem. In response to this, they have reduced the fee to remove bulky waste and are considering “skip days” in certain areas but it does need a more fully formed policy. Cllr Rowkins said they do offer an assisted collections service to those who need it where a crew member will go to the door and take the rubbish. Communal bins work well if not placed outside someone’s house and choosing location can be difficult. Some areas are requesting communal bins, and they will work with residents on implementing this.
- 22.8 Cllr Goddard said that a key challenge was to normalise the idea that everyone has a role to play in maintaining the city's appearance. He suggested that communal recycling could be promoted through messaging that emphasises individual responsibility for keeping the city looking its best. He recommended looking externally to think tanks and organisations based in the city to explore more modern and effective methods of communication. The bins themselves don’t look good and it would be nice to paint them or have a children’s art competition. The comms message should be around civic pride. Cllr Rowkins said that the age of the fleet is the main problem, that vehicles should only be used until they are 10 years old whereas there are 17 vehicles in the fleet that are over 10 years old and that these can’t be replaced overnight. They want to work with the community on the message of civic pride because the council has limited finances and can’t do everything alone. They used a consultancy firm to help with the food waste messaging to maximise uptake which was successful and there is value in external expertise. They have had conversations about underground bins which look better, and they have been talking to Liverpool council who are running a trial. They are expensive and the city’s Victorian sewers could be a problem. They plan to have mobile street crews on “skip days” and time it with typical move dates for students in HMOs.
- 22.9 Cllr Parrott said that more flexibility could be beneficial as some people might produce less waste than others and be happy with less bin collections and big families might appreciate having more. She said that other cities don’t use individual bins but have big pink sacks that seem to work well. It would be nice to wrap the communal bins with artist’s work and the Book Bench trail demonstrates the talent in the city. There are lots of converted houses in the city where each flat has its own bin which creates clutter and not all of the bins are full. Cllr Rowkins said the flexibility idea might over-complicate the round design. Residents can choose not to put their bins out if they don’t need to. Satti Sidhu added that there was a trial in the city for the pink sacks but crews were not able to collect them safely. Cllr Rowkins said they will look into it. Ali McManamon said that some places do wrap their bins in art and the council is currently developing a Graffiti Strategy where this could be included. Cllr Rowkins said it was an aspiration, but it was important to get the basics working first.
- 22.10 George Woodhams said it would be good to get the information campaign out to schools, colleges and universities and could deliver posters and attend assemblies. The colour of the individual bins in Brighton are the opposite of those in neighbouring areas which doesn’t help with contamination. Cllr Rowkins said they need to do more work with the universities and that they do attend Fresher’s Fair although this may not be the

best time to try and engage students. They want to engage with letting agents so that recycling information is in the property when students move in. Primary and Secondary schools play an important part as children can educate their parents on topics like this. He will discuss this with the Schools Team.

22.11 Cllr Loughran was surprised that the rounds review had not taken place for such a long time, she said that underground recycling bins in Europe are very successful and solve the problem of bins being in poor condition and looking bad. In the winter, there is often strong winds that blow recycling around if the bins are overflowing and questioned whether individual bins could be designed in a way to stop this. She asked if a glass has smashed, should residents put it in a bag for safety reasons. Cllr Rowkins said the round review is really needed and the new technology gives a more agile set of boundaries. Wind is an issue and some people still have the old black boxes which are being phased out. He is often approached by bin manufacturers selling new bin designs and some food waste bins have been redesigned to stop foxes getting into them. It is correct to wrap smashed glass in a protective bag for safety reasons and that he uses newspaper.

22.12 RESOLVED – that the report is noted.

23 MEMORIALS POLICY

23.1 Cllr Jacob Allen presented the slides. Key points included: the Memorials Policy first came to Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March 2026 where it was given robust scrutiny and the feedback informed the subsequent changes; they are trying to fix the issues of governance and consistency in relation to memorials balancing the emotion of remembrance and grief with the duties of management of the public realm. They are meeting legal and planning issues and giving it political accountability. Cllr Allen has met with opposition councillors on a one-to-one basis to get their feedback.

23.2 Cllr Meadows asked about the application process taking 8 weeks and what happens if the memorial is already up before putting in the application as it would then be there for a longer period. She asked about annual memorials such as in Wild Park for the girls who were killed there and whether that kind of memorial is classed as spontaneous or historically significant. Cllr Allen said that example is historically significant as it is a similar situation to laying wreaths every year at the war memorial; they know to expect it and so it doesn't need to be covered by the policy. Ian Baird said that the 8 weeks is the initial response time for applications for permanent memorials that will be in the city for a more significant amount of time.

23.3 Cllr Winder asked how this policy aligns with the process of people donating trees and benches, and also, the Blue Plaque process. Cllr Assaduzzaman tried to get a bench to remember those who died during Covid which was approved by City Parks but has not

progressed. Having a Covid memorial at the hospital is not appropriate. She asked whether cemeteries would be better used for plaques. Cllr Allen said the cemeteries provide a valuable quiet space and the policy was amended to signpost people to use these spaces more and they continue to promote the cemetery for this. Covid memorials would have to go through this process but tree donations go through the Tree Trust Fund. There is often a delay for this as trees can only be planted during the correct season. Benches would need to go through this process to be in agreed locations having considered accessibility and approved wording. The policy aims to make it easier for residents to understand. Ian Baird said the established processes for trees and benches will continue. The Bereavement Services Team has been restructured to include specific staff looking to expand the use of cemeteries. Cllr Allen said that the donation of trees needs to compliment the strategic aims and it is difficult to predict the demand. There are lots of space for new trees in East Brighton Park but people want to plant them in more crowded places like St Anns Wells Gardens. Ali McManamon added that there is a separate process for people who want to donate trees purely to increase tree coverage in the city.

- 23.4 Cllr Parrott asked whether tree donations were only for parks or whether they can go on the streets as a resident in her ward wanted a tree planted outside her late father's house. She said that memorials can be used for military and political figures and often pushed by those with loud voices, how will the team balance this to reflect and include more disadvantaged communities such as LGBTQ and women who may also want memorials. Cllr Allen said there are 2 statues of women in the city and they are both of Queen Victoria, most others are monarchs. It's down to political leaders to push for new and different statues and make them household names. Ali McManamon confirmed that street trees can be donated but it includes the cost of the tree pit and any works needed to fix the pavement after installation, so the cost is significantly higher than in a park.
- 23.5 Cllr Earthey said he was greatly in favour of a peace park or some centralised area to be a designated safe place for people to remember their dead however they died and to leave political beliefs aside. These areas should be policed to ensure that they remain a safe place as there are strong community tensions around some memorials.
- 23.6 Cllr Loughran said the policy was sensitively thought through, and she agreed with the 28 days. The policy guidance needs to make the difference between a temporary and permanent memorial clearer and which bit relates specifically to the applicant. Cllr Allen said that they wouldn't send out the hefty document to residents, it would be a more digestible version and targeted to their ask.

23.7 RESOLVED – that the report is noted

The meeting concluded at 7.52pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

6.00pm 6 OCTOBER 2026

HOVE TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBER

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Evans (Chair) Fishleigh, Goddard, Meadows, Sykes, Wilkinson, Parrott, Strong and Mackey

Other Members present: Natasha Barefield (CVS), Bernadette Kent (OPC)

PART ONE

24 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

24 Procedural Business

24a Declarations of substitutions:

Cllr Parrott for Cllr Cattell

Cllr Mackey for Cllr Winder

Cllr Strong for Cllr Lademacher

Apologies from George Woodhams and Nora Mzaoui

Natasha Barefield was invited as the CVS rep as Vic Borrill was unable to attend.

24b Declarations of interest:

24c Exclusion of the press and public:

There were no Part 2 papers so the press and public were not excluded.

25 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATION

25.1 The Chair gave the following communication:

Good evening and welcome to this Call-in meeting of the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee. I'd like to thank everyone for attending this meeting at such short notice. This was unfortunately the only possible slot for a meeting that fitted with constitutional requirements and the availability of key people and the chamber. I'd like to inform those present that this meeting is being webcast live and will be capable of repeated viewing.

I'd like to start off by briefly explaining the purpose of a call-in meeting. If anyone has any questions, I'm sure that Giles will be happy to respond.

Call-in is an essential and legally required part of the Leader and Cabinet model, providing a mechanism for non-executive members to challenge executive decisions before they are implemented.

It is not intended to be used simply because members disagree with a decision. To be accepted, a call-in request must set out valid grounds for challenge in accordance with the Council's procedure rules and be supported by at least six members from at least two political groups. In this case, the grounds are that there was an absence of sufficient evidence on which to base a decision.

In a moment, I am going to ask Cllr McNair to present this call-in on the Red Route. I'll then ask Cllr Taylor to respond before moving to questions and discussion. Officers are here to support and provide any clarifications as needed. Once members are happy to do so, we'll move to voting on the recommendations before us. The call-in committee essentially has 2 choices: it can agree that the Cabinet decision was sound, in which case it will not refer it back and the decision can be implemented. Or it can decide that there were significant problems with the way in which the Cabinet decision was made, in which case it will refer it back to Cabinet for reconsideration, noting the aspects of the decision that are of particular concern.

There is a third choice technically open to the committee, that of referral to Council. This can only be done if the committee believes that the original Cabinet decision was contrary to the Council's policy or budget framework. As there is nothing in the call-in letter suggesting that the decision was contrary to the budget or policy framework, I don't think this is an option for us today. I do want to be clear that the only way that the committee can refer to Council is on the grounds that the decision is contrary to the budget or policy framework; otherwise, if members wish to refer the decision back it must be to the original decision maker which was Cabinet.

It is very important for members to bear in mind that they are not being asked to debate the merits of the original executive decision. Rather, they are being asked to consider whether the Cabinet decision was properly made, given the concerns about process outlined in the call-in request. I do ask that we limit questions to the process of decision-making. I will stop questioners if they are veering too far from the brief of the committee.

Finally, when the committee comes to decide whether or not to refer the Red Route decision back to Cabinet, only voting members, that is Councillors, will vote. Non-voting members are otherwise welcome to play a full part in questioning and debating the issue.

26 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

26.1 There were two deputations submitted by members of the public.

26.2 Catherine Lane presented her deputation:

"Fines after fines after fines."

These are the words of Azem Gashi. He was talking about Archipelagos Gyros, his restaurant on Lewes Road, after the Red Route came. He says he lost between 20 to 30% of his turnover. A few people lost their jobs. Azem also owns two restaurants on Western Road. Today he does not know whether they can survive a Red Route there.

Paul Sankey was a butcher on Lewes Road for 14 years. He says that when the red lines came, his takings fell and suppliers refused to deliver. He says that is why he lost his business. He went bankrupt.

Amir Khan's family has run Taj on Western Road for three generations. Their shop on London Road is gone. Amir says the Red Route there contributed directly to its closure.

Those are three voices. We have heard many more, and we can put every one of them before you.

Now a Red Route is coming to Western Road, and to 185 businesses.

Once was a lesson. Twice would be a choice. Why has the decision making process completely failed to include a consideration of the inevitable economic impact? The loss of jobs? Why apply the most drastic parking enforcement option, when the Cabinet report never weighed anything less?

On 17th September, Cabinet resolved that the purpose of this scheme is "to reduce congestion in the area to allow for improved bus reliability." We share that aim. Nobody on Western Road defends illegal parking. We want the rules enforced. The report records 2,315 vehicles that drove away before a ticket could be issued. That grace period exists because loading is allowed on yellow lines. The report does not say how many of those drivers were simply making a delivery or collecting something heavy. A Red Route would ban that too.

Section 4 of the report sets out the alternatives Cabinet considered. There are only two: do nothing, or make the scheme permanent from the start. Stronger enforcement is not among them. Nor are clearer kerbside markings to prevent loading in any particular locations where congestion is an issue. The lightest tools were never weighed. The heaviest is being reached for first.

The traders would welcome working with the council on any other solution except double red lines and 24 hour camera enforcement. Unlike some other Red Routes, Western Road has no rear access. This scheme gives us ten loading bays, for nearly a kilometre of shopfront. The report says some businesses will be around 70 metres from the nearest bay. Health and safety guidance flags carrying goods more than 10 metres as a risk. The Brewery Logistics Group, whose members deliver to pubs and bars on this street, has said. Kegs weigh up to 200 kilograms. It says this scheme leaves its drivers with "an impossible choice": obey the Red Route and breach health and safety rules, or obey those rules and get a fine. In its words: "This is not a theoretical concern. It is an operational certainty."

Section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act requires the council to have regard to reasonable access to premises. Seventy metres, carrying a side of meat or a barrel of beer, is not reasonable access. Members, Red Routes have a cost, and we know who pays it.

The British Heart Foundation shop on Lewes Road tells us its profits fell from £75,000 a year to £35,000. People bringing furniture to donate to a heart charity were fined £70 for stopping

outside. That shop is now closing. We are told this is an 'experiment'. A shop that has closed as the result of an experiment stays closed. Ask Paul. Ask Amir.

We believe a Red Route will close many of the 185 businesses on Western Road. Please do not carry out a live experiment on the jobs of everyone who works on this street without first trying everything else. These are real people. Some will lose everything. Please send the decision back. That is not a vote against your colleagues in Cabinet. It gives them the chance to get this right.

This council's own plan says: "We continue to listen closely to our city's residents and businesses." Today, we are asking you to listen. Western Road is now closed for resurfacing. No Red Route can operate there until it reopens, so a pause costs the city nothing. Let us use that time well. The traders of Western Road will work with you and share our trading figures to show the impact of no kerbside stopping caused by the roadworks, so that the council can carry out the economic impact assessment the Chamber of Commerce and BIDs have asked for before deciding to implement this scheme.

26.3 Nigel Perkins presented his deputation:

Due to the Climate Emergency that we all face, it is even more important that we take all possible steps to encourage means of transport which have the lowest carbon emissions created per person per kilometre travelled.

Buses have a much lower impact on the environment in terms of carbon emissions per kilometre travelled per person. Red Routes always help to make bus services more efficient and hence more attractive to the travelling public.

As the Red Route is subject to an Experimental Traffic Order, the Council will be able to make changes before it is made permanent. Following a 6 week consultation period, closing on 4th January 2026, residents and businesses were able to make their views known. Feedback from the consultation confirmed that there was significant support for the plan. The Council also made changes to the number of loading bays and disabled parking spaces in response to the feedback.

As with the 2 other Red Routes, we are confident that the Council will continue to deal with the concerns of residents and businesses before they are made permanent.

It would be a terrible shame to lose this opportunity of a Red Route just when the road has finally been re-surfaced. We believe that the Council complied with established procedures before the cabinet made the decision to introduce a red route along part of Western Road.

26.4 The deputations were noted.

27 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

27.1 There were no member questions.

28 CALL-IN: UPDATE REPORT ON WESTERN ROAD RESURFACING WORKS AND RED ROUTE

- 28.1 Cllr McNair presented the call-in and said that they would like to refer the matter back to Cabinet due to the serious effects the red route would have on the local economy and called for better enforcement of the current parking restrictions. Cllr McNair raised 4 main points:
- That there was no Western Road specific evidence to support the scheme's stated aims of improved bus reliability and reduced congestion
 - Cabinet was only given a partial summary of the 1032 consultation responses with no breakdown of respondent type so they were unable to see how the businesses responded.
 - The loading provision is not tested against the council's own evidence of demand.
 - The economic effect of the scheme will only be assessed once the red route is in place and there is no baseline indicator or success criterion against which these effects will be measured.
- 28.2 Cllr McNair said that the British Heart Foundation and Taj had to close in London Road because of the red route there and that the Western Road red route is being introduced as an extra revenue stream for the council at the expense of people's livelihoods.
- 28.3 Cllr Taylor responded that this is an important decision, he did not agree with the framing of the call-in request and there is no valid reason to send it back to Cabinet. Cllr Taylor said that the aim of the red route was to reduce congestion on a busy bus route which was substantially related to widespread illegal parking that caused delays and affected bus reliability and bus times. In the year 25/26 there were 2315 recorded driveaways after enforcement which is more than 6 a day. The suggestion from the campaigners is to have more enforcement, however, there is nowhere else in the city that receives such high reports from residents of illegal parking than the Western Road area. The average bus journey time eastbound from Hove Town Hall to Churchill Square has increased by 16.7% and he stressed the importance of movement of traffic and its wider impact on the rest of the city. They need to manage this for residents and it is not about attacking small businesses or retail. Cllr Taylor said that Catherine Lane was a good campaigner and had done a good job of convincing people that the red route is the death of the high street. The red route is not about being anti-car and the future of the city is about having a mix of different transports. It is about being anti-illegal parking and not about generating income because the council won't receive any money if people park legally. Cllr Taylor acknowledged that the wording of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) is not helpful as it sounds like an experiment which is misleading. The point of the ETRO is to work with businesses to test, adjust and amend the plans as needed.
- 28.4 Cllr Taylor said that at the moment there are double yellow lines on Western Road which makes it illegal to park and those who park to go to the shop quickly are still parking illegally. Enforcement officers have to wait 5 minutes before giving a fine and often they are unable to as people drive off. It is common for drivers to drive away from the enforcement officer, go around the block and come back again. They want to stop the illegal parking to get the traffic flowing better and make sure it works for businesses in terms of loading.
- 28.5 Cllr Taylor addressed the 4 points from the call-in:

- The report does include data specific to Western Road such as on illegal parking and data from the bus company on the increase of congestion and lateness of buses on that stretch of road.
- The consultation is set out in appendix 1 where there is a summary of the qualitative findings of 792 responses. It would be unreasonable to expect councillors to read all 792 responses so a summary is provided instead. The quantitative responses are displayed with questions and answers in the paper. It also includes the number of responses from businesses who have also sent submissions directly to Cabinet members as well.
- The loading provision was informed by surveys of existing loading activity which the plan was based on and therefore, demonstrates a sufficient level of loading bays.
- The point about the Economic Impact Assessment demonstrates why the ETRO is important as they cannot assess the impact until the change has been made. The ETRO allows the council to respond flexibly and in a timely manner to the needs of businesses if something isn't working for them. The council looked at the impact of red routes in other places such as London Road and Lewes Road where footfall has slightly increased. Vacancy rates are lower in the city compared to the national average.

- 28.6 Cllr Taylor reiterated that they do want to work with the businesses and Catherine Lane and explained that they would be monitoring impact from day one of the red route by talking to businesses. If something is not working for them then they will change things very quickly and will be monitoring the effectiveness of the scheme hoping to see less illegal parking and improved bus flow. Cllr Taylor said that disability access is very important and reminded the committee that there is no such thing as unlimited disabled parking citywide. Appendix 1 shows the planned disabled parking bays which are all a short distance to the shops. Cllr Taylor said that it is not valid to send the decision back to cabinet as the points raised as missing information are not. It is a vital role of the council to allow for good bus flow and access to residents.
- 28.7 Cllr Sykes said it has been a passionate campaign and the plans merit scrutiny. He was concerned about transparency in relation to financial information and felt it was a critical part of decision making as the change to the revenue budget is important. He raised whether there are alternative options and said that double yellows can be designed to have immediate enforcement. He could foresee loading issues such as between Waterloo Street and Upper Market Street where the nearby traffic island would prevent large vehicles to park for loading. People have been given fines for loading in a designated loading bay.
- 28.8 Cllr Taylor clarified that the financial elements of the capital programmes are important but they have been accused of only putting the red route in to make income, which is not true. Paul Nicholls, Project and Policy Lead, explained about the process of issuing penalty notices for loading vans and explained that there are not enough officers to deploy in the area. The same issue happens throughout the day where an officer is sent to enforce illegal parking but the driver will drive off and return a few minutes later. There are 40 officers at any one time covering the whole city and the stretch of Western Road is the most heavily patrolled area. Paul Nicholls explained that when an ETRO is in place, they can change things within a matter of days. The cameras are not automatic and have 2 independent officers viewing the situation. If they are not satisfied that a parking rule has been violated, they will not issue a penalty notice.

- 28.9 Cllr Parrott asked if there was anything else that the council could do instead and whether all possibilities for enforcement had been explored. Paul Nicholls said the only other option would be to have 3 or 4 enforcement officers continually patrolling the area which would take away from other parts of the city and is not realistic. Cllr Taylor said the number of driveaways is the problem and they could deploy an army of enforcement officers but it would be unfair on the rest of the city. It would probably get a similar outcome because of the driveaways.
- 28.10 Natasha Barefield said the loss of places disabled people can park safely is a problem and that some people can't be dropped off because they need someone to remain with them. It can take some people a long time to get out of the car and there is anxiety around being fined. Some disabled people now avoid areas with a red route. The radius displayed in the paper for the disabled bays does not represent the walking route for disabled people who need to be close to their destination. Some bays are on side streets which have steep hills. She asked what specific measures will be used to assess the impact on disabled people. Paul Nicholls said they are increasing engagement with local groups on the location of the disabled bays. There are also 7000 disabled bus pass holders who need to be considered as well. If someone needs more time to get out of the car, the officer monitoring the red route cameras will acknowledge this and will not issue a fine.
- 28.11 Cllr Goddard said he had read in the papers that 100,000 extra movements had been recorded in London Road post red route which indicated an increase in footfall. Paul Nicholls said that mobile phone data monitoring showed an increase of 2% in footfall. He explained that they had introduced 5 additional loading bays in London Road after engaging with the McDonalds there whose delivery truck was much bigger and needed more space. Cllr Taylor said that they had acknowledged that deliveries for pubs is different due to the heavy weight of beer kegs so they have not changed the loading bay areas for the Temple Bar and the Wick Inn on Western Road. They had received a letter from the pub owners saying there were no loading bay provisions for them which was inaccurate.
- 28.12 Cllr Goddard said that the parking regulations had not changed, it was the method of enforcement that has. Paul Nicholls said most cities have red routes and that 30% of London's traffic goes through red routes ensuring that public transport works efficiently. There is evidence of improvements in bus reliability and a reduction in collisions due to improved lines of sight.
- 28.13 Cllr Goddard said that the campaign had claimed the closing down of shops on London Road on the red route but that he had heard that the British Heart Foundation was closing stores nationally and the Taj had unrelated challenges. Paul Nicholls said that there are 192 businesses in London Road and there are 7 vacant sites. Cllr Taylor said that the retail industry is struggling at the moment nationally due to cost pressures. Cllr Goddard asked if they will be looking at evidence on the impact of red routes across the city. Paul Nicholls said they will be collecting this data and doing surveys.
- 28.14 Bernadette Kent said that accessibility and transport came up a lot at the Older Peoples' Council meeting and asked how the red route will affect these issues, and how it will be monitored and measured for success. Cllr Taylor said older people also use the bus a

lot and they can monitor that with the bus company's tap card data. They will continue to engage with community groups to see if anything needs improving.

- 28.15 Cllr Strong said that some disabled bays seem to be some distance down the side streets and need to be assessed in some detail to ensure that the paving is safe and potentially moved closer to the main road. The impact of pavement parking is problematic but this should be enforceable soon by a new law being introduced. Paul Nicholls said there is a disabled bay outside the pharmacy and outside the GP surgery along with bays for doctors. It is possible to switch the disabled bays with the doctors' bays so that they are closer. These details will be looked at as part of the process. The bus company has said that reliability has increased by 2% from 75% to 77% along London Road and by 4% from 80% to 84% along Lewes Road and they will use the same measures for Western Road.
- 28.16 Cllr Strong said that London has flexible bays that can be used for different purposes at different times of the day including becoming parklets during the daytime when it's not needed for loading. Paul Nicholls said they are looking at bookable bays where a company can book a loading bay for an hour and it will be blocked for them and anyone else using it will be fined. However, changing the use at certain times of the day isn't always possible due to the high volume of buses passing through 24/7.
- 28.17 Cllr Strong said there are 185 businesses in Western Road but only 32 responded to the consultation and they need to reach out to those businesses that did not. Cllr Taylor said the ETRO gives them the opportunity to test and learn. Businesses are opposed to the red route and concerned about its impact so their barriers go up. The council will talk to them, keep them engaged and carry on listening. Paul Nicholls said their experience of London Road and Lewes Road was good where they approached businesses and had a conversation one-on-one and made changes as required. This will be the approach taken with Western Road.
- 28.18 Cllr Wilkinson said that he does not think that this matter should be referred back to Council as the call-in does not meet the requirements. He wanted to establish whether material evidence was missing when the decision was made by Cabinet. What evidence from Western Road regarding bus delays was available to Cabinet when making their decision? Was the capacity of the proposed 10 loading bays assessed against the demand including duration of delivery and the ability for simultaneous deliveries? How was the 70 metre maximum distance from a loading bay decided and were practicalities such as pavement conditions and having to cross roads considered? Were suppliers asked for their opinion? Did all of this information go to Cabinet? Paul Nicholls said the solutions to these points would be worked out under the process of the ETRO and adjustments will be made along the way, such as a City Car Club bay that is not used being replaced by a loading bay. Cllr Taylor said that there had been representation from the brewery group but he wasn't sure about other suppliers. The nature of the ETRO is to flush out immediate issues and he pointed out that at the moment there is no guarantee that deliveries can be made outside businesses due to all the illegally parked cars and traffic flow. Cllr Taylor said that it was clear that there is a problem with this stretch of road and that decisions need to be based on legal framework and good evidence which the report provides. The ETRO will allow for more details to be drawn out as part of the process.

- 28.19 Cllr Mackey asked about some conflicting details in the report regarding footfall and air quality. Paul Nicholls said it was difficult to definitively attribute improvements in air quality on Lewes Road and London Road on the red route but that the data suggests there is less congestion which would result in this. Cllr Taylor said that the report is being cautious and not over-promising to transform air quality which is why this is not an objective of the decision. Evidence across the country shows that reduced congestion results in better air quality.
- 28.20 Cllr Fishleigh said that other cities had undertaken economic impact assessments prior to putting in a red route, such as Luton and Birmingham. She said that the loading bay outside Taj on London Road was often blocked by other businesses and that they need to look at the frequency of deliveries. It is not good enough to say that they will sort it out as they go along as they need the basic information first. Paul Nicholls said they will look at what metric Luton used for this. They are looking at bookable bays which will be more efficient and wouldn't allow for other people to block the loading bay. They use the responses to the consultation as a starting point where they asked about the frequency of deliveries and size of the vehicle when designing the bays. Cllr Fishleigh said there are 185 businesses on Western Road and asked how they can coordinate that many deliveries, which will not always be on time. Paul Nicholls said this isn't the first time they have installed a red route and that they have a lot of contact with the businesses and will adjust things as a result of those discussions. They don't hear from those businesses on London Road anymore because things are working. They will give letters to all the businesses with a named contact to report if something isn't working. Cllr Taylor said that 30% of road traffic in London goes across red routes and the councils are able to respond to issues. They can't be fixed 10 seconds after being reported but it will happen.
- 28.21 Cllr Fishleigh said they had received a letter from the brewery saying that the red route fails Section 122 balancing test which is not mentioned in the report and is actually illegal. She asked if the letter had been presented to Cabinet. Paul Nicholls said he did not understand why the letter stated that there was no loading bay provision when there was. No change has been made to the current arrangements on Western Road for the pubs that they had made enquiries about. Cllr Taylor said there is no legal issue.
- 28.22 Cllr Fishleigh asked how many of the 2315 driveaways were blue badge holders or deliveries. Paul Nicholls said none of them were blue badge holders and very few for deliveries. He had spoken to enforcement officers who said they saw people come out of the shop and drive around the block. Enforcement officers will wait as long as it takes for loading vehicles and will not fine them. Cllr Fishleigh said her bus journey from Saltdean has become slower and congestion has got worse in the city. Cllr Taylor said that there are pinchpoints in the city due to old Victorian roads dealing with higher numbers of cars. Cllr Evans said that they are not discussing the merit of the scheme but on the soundness of the decision being made.
- 28.23 Cllr Meadows asked about phone data being used to calculate footfall and whether it was done in the summer or when there were 50,000 students living in the city and that it doesn't say whether they're out shopping. She asked about larger vehicles coming into the city to make deliveries that have multiple stops across Sussex and that it is difficult to have coordinated deliveries at certain times when they might get stuck in traffic. It is difficult to make a decision when you don't know the economic impact and they should

look at the existing red routes where they have got the data. She said that London generated £90 million from their red routes and that this is a cash making exercise. Food deliveries and taxis will find it difficult to operate and risk fines from the cameras and that people have been fined when loading in London Road. Cllr Meadows asked if the red route ends up being detrimental to the area, will it actually be removed? Cllr Taylor said that phone data doesn't show how much people are spending but it does show footfall; that bus reliability needs to be improved on Western Road; that London is a much bigger city and £50,000 revenue in Brighton is very small and the decision is not about revenue. Paul Nicholls said that there are very few deliveries at the rear on Western Road and the same applies to many parts of London Road and Lewes Road. He said that they had catered for food delivery and pick up and had worked closely with McDonalds on London Road to provide for their high numbers of delivery vehicles. Cllr Taylor said there is no assumption that the red route will become permanent and that is a decision to be made by a future Cabinet after assessing the balance of everything including disabled access, bus reliability, parking and loading.

28.24 Cllr Wilkinson asked about disabled access and that the radius circles on the map doesn't show accessible walking routes; what assessments were available at the time of the decision being made? Paul Nicholls said the initial assessment was based on key areas where disabled people need access and the Your Voice consultation invited people to comment on the design. The engagement is ongoing and they are looking at the area as a whole, checking data and making improvements. Cllr Wilkinson asked how quickly they will respond if something is reported as not working and what circumstances would trigger a change and who will make it. Paul Nicholls said they will write to all businesses and if they feel the bay needs to be moved then they can move it within a few days. The delegated authority lies with the director.

28.25 Cllr Mackey said she was reassured that the safeguards and baseline assessments were sound when Cabinet made the decision. Cllr Taylor said the nature of the ETRO allows the flexibility to be responsive with mechanisms in place to fix things quickly. They will engage with businesses as it is rolled out. Cllr Goddard agreed that the decision was sound.

28.26 Cllr Evans said she would like this to come back to scrutiny at a later date and moved to a vote:

Having regard to the grounds for call-in and the information supplied in response: Does the committee agree –

2.1 To determine that the challenge to the decision called-in should be taken no further and the decision may be implemented; or

2.2 To determine that that the decision called-in is contrary to the policy framework or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget framework and that it should therefore be referred to full Council. In such a case the Committee must set out the nature of its concern to full Council; or

2.3 To refer the decision called-in back to Cabinet for reconsideration. In such a case the Overview & Scrutiny Committee must set out the nature of its concerns for Cabinet.

The majority voted in favour of 2.1

28.27 RESOLVED – Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee determines that the challenge to the decision called-in should be taken no further and the decision may be implemented.

The meeting concluded at 8.49pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

Brighton & Hove City Council

Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item 34

Subject: Large Panel System Housing Masterplan and Land Assembly

Date of meeting: 3rd November 2026

Report of: Chair of the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer: Name: Natalie Sacks-Hammond

Email: Natalie.sacks-hammond@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards); with specific impact in Hollingdean & Fiveways, Kempdown, and Whitehawk & Marina

Key Decision: No

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 Following updated national guidance under the Building Safety Act 2022 and Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, the council undertook detailed structural surveys of its eight Large Panel System (LPS) residential blocks. As a result, the council has approved the re-development of the sites and the rehousing of affected residents.
- 1.2 This report provides an opportunity for Place O&S committee to be aware of the recommendations that Cabinet will be asked to provide a decision upon. It provides an update on programme progress of the eight large panel system (LPS) buildings following the decision made in March 2026 to proceed with redevelopment and the support package for residents affected by this decision.
- 1.3 At its meeting on 12th November 2026, Cabinet will be asked to approve opportunities for land assembly, the formal closure of a public play and display car park underneath an LPS block, and support vacant possession of the blocks and rehousing support for residents with a budget increase of £1.46m. The details of these proposals can be found at Appendix 1.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee notes the report and makes any comments on the proposals.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 At the council's Cabinet meeting on 19th March 2026, Cabinet agreed to take forward the option to proceed with redeveloping the eight LPS buildings at three sites, as well as the support package for residents affected by these decisions. The decisions were shaped by a consultation carried out with residents in the blocks and people on the housing register, which took place between October 2025 and January 2026.
- 3.2 In October 2026, the council served the Initial Demolition Notices to secure tenants living in the eight LPS blocks. These notices are a statutory step in the redevelopment process and do not indicate that demolition is imminent or that residents are required to move immediately. The notices can remain in force for up to seven years, during which time redevelopment proposals will be developed and a Final Demolition Notice will be issued setting out the timetable for demolition. The Initial Demolition Notice has suspended mutual exchanges and Right to Buy applications, but do not affect the current rehousing programme or the council's ongoing management of the buildings.
- 3.3 The report sets out a process for residents who may be interested to return to the redeveloped site once the redevelopment has taken place and new homes are built. It also includes details of plans for a bespoke 'leaseholder assistance' offer for current resident leaseholders that will be assessed on a case by case basis for financial hardship and/or vulnerability assistance.
- 3.4 The report also asks Cabinet to approve the permanent closure of the Chapel Street public car park under St James' House that has been closed since July 2024. This would reduce costs to the council through eliminating the need for business rates and maintenance costs.
- 3.5 The Section 105 consultation will be undertaken to seek the views of secure tenants on the proposed temporary use of housing land for site establishment and welfare facilities, as this is likely to affect tenants during the redevelopment process.
- 3.6 The report sets out placemaking proposals to enhance landscaping and increase biodiversity across the sites. It also outlines opportunities to support the future housing development at Hollingdean by incorporating adjacent council-owned land and buildings into the wider redevelopment area and considers Section 105 consultation for affected residents.
- 3.7 Creating a smooth process for the residents is highly important in this process and the report seeks an additional £1.46m to support land assembly, the 'leaseholder assistance' offer, Independent Tenant and Leaseholder Advisor support for residents and to increase staff resource to provide further support for affected residents.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 Not specifically for this scrutiny committee. The report presents proposals for the future redevelopment of the sites for which Cabinet will be asked to decide on.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 Residents have been engaged throughout this process with several consultations taking place at various stages. The Section 105 consultation will be undertaken to seek the views of secure tenants on the proposed temporary use of housing land and where the extended redevelopment area from land assembly impacts secure council tenants.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 The proposals that will be presented to Cabinet include a request for an additional HRA capital budget of £1.460m to support programme delivery, including land assembly, resident support arrangements, programme resources and associated legal and development costs.
- 6.2 The additional expenditure is currently considered affordable within the HRA Business Plan and would be incorporated within the HRA Capital Programme, funded through HRA borrowing where required. Any approved expenditure will be monitored through the Council's Targeted Budget Management process and reported through established governance arrangements.

Name of finance officer consulted: Ferrise Hall Date consulted: 22/10/26

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report. The cabinet report on which comments are sought contains legal implications in respect of the redevelopment proposals.

Name of lawyer consulted: Siobhan Fry Date consulted: 23/10/26

8. Risk implications

- 8.1 None specifically for this scrutiny report

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 None specifically for this scrutiny report

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 None specifically for this scrutiny report

11. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 11.1 None specifically for this scrutiny report

12. Conclusion

- 12.1 The Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the report and make any comment on the proposals.

Supporting Documentation

Appendices

1. Large Panel System Housing Masterplan and Land Assembly slides

Large Panel System Housing Masterplan and Land Assembly

These slides are to share the recommendations for the Cabinet paper as part of pre-decision scrutiny and follow Cabinet's decision on 19 March 2026 to approve the option to demolish the eight Large Panel System(LPS) blocks and the rehousing offer.

35 The eight LPS blocks are:

- St James's House (Kempton)
- Nettleton Court, Dudeney Lodge (Hollingdean site)
- Falcon Court, Heron Court, Kestrel Court, Kingfisher Court, and Swallow Court (north Whitehawk 'bird blocks' site)



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Be Confident: processes for residents that choose to return to the redeveloped for residents and enable vacant possession of the LPS blocks, and additional bespoke resident support

Items recommended in the Cabinet paper:

- Following March 2026 Cabinet approval, Cabinet is asked to note the Initial Demolition Notices have been served in October 2026 on all eight blocks secure council tenants as part of the legal process to notify of the council’s intent to demolish the blocks. This is not meaning an immediate requirement for vacant possession and residents will continue to be supported through the rehousing process.
- Seek approval for delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing to the Corporate Director of HASC to determine when the relevant vacant possession notification process is required to commence to enable vacant possession of both secure council tenants and TA residents.
- To note the suspension of letting secure council tenancies at the eight LPS blocks.
- Seek approval for delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing to the Corporate Director of HASC to create a policy for secure council tenants with an interest in returning to the redeveloped homes.
- To approve a budget of £0.1m to enable a ‘leaseholder assistance’ bespoke offer for resident leaseholders in exceptional cases of financial hardship and/or vulnerability requiring support.
- Seek approval for a budget for resident Independent Tenant and Leaseholder Advisors to support the residents through the re-housing process.



Brighton & Hove
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Be Connected: Permanent closure of the Chapel Street public car park beneath St James's House (this is not regarding the resident car park for the LPS block)

The public pay and display 'Chapel Street car park' has been closed since 14 July 2024 due to health & safety concerns linked to its position beneath St James's House.

Delegated decision: A delegated decision record dated 08.12.2025 granted permission for the feasibility design for the redevelopment of the site to be progressed based on the permanent closure of the car park. It states formal closure of the car park is to be determined by Cabinet.

Case for permanent closure & no reprovion in development proposals:

- Cost – reprovion will be prohibitive and will jeopardise the council's successful redevelopment of the site
- Regulatory approval – Meeting current Building Safety Regulations will be challenging
- No further Business Rates costs (£44k for 2025/26) to be charged if permanently closed
- Early Planning advice has advised there is no requirement to re-provide the public pay and display car park



Be connected

Item recommended in the Cabinet paper:

- To note the intention to permanently close the public car park beneath St. James' House, subject to the outcome of the relevant Traffic Regulation Order process.

Be Innovative and Creative: Opportunity Areas for Land

Land Assembly Opportunity areas to extend the redevelopment area are proposed, to give flexibility to enable the delivery of more homes, assist with site set-up & storage to reduce costs and programme length, and assist with delivery of onsite Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) planning requirements and improvements.

Item recommended in the Cabinet paper:

- In consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to delegate authority the Corporate Director Homes & Adult Social Care to consider Section 105 of Housing Act 1985 consultation responses from consultees of where an extension of the LPS development proposal area, including for demolition and construction site set up, opportunities for phased development and landscaping and to be decided upon.
- Cabinet is asked to note the Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985 consultation response from the secure tenant of the proposed additional land assembly at Hollingdean and is asked to approve them to be given the provisions of the Rehousing Policy – Regeneration Schemes and LPS Local Lettings Plan, and approve the service of an Initial Demolition Notice to any council owned property with secure council tenants.
- Subject to an extended redevelopment area for the Nettleton and Dudeney site (extending beyond just the LPS blocks and land), Cabinet is asked to delegate authority in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing to the Corporate Director HASC to approve the acquisition of property as part of land assembly requirements

Be Confident: Programme budget & finances

Approval is sought for an additional budget to deliver the Council's ambitions and realise the potential for these sites.

Since July 2025 Cabinet several external factors have impacted the programme budget (Building Regulation changes, Building Safety Levy Oct 26 etc). Increased staff resource is required to reduce programme delays, positively impact viability and proactively manage and mitigate programme, quality and financial risk. To enable a redevelopment programme, Cabinet is asked to approve the progression of an optimised approach to the design of the redevelopment proposals and masterplans.

³**Benefits of increased staff resource:** Drive programme delivery and ambitions, reducing overall costs and risks to the council. It is also aimed to provide excellent customer service and support to residents.

Item recommended in the Cabinet paper:

- Due to the construction industry challenges and financial constraints upon an estate renewal programme involving statutory homelessness and buyback requirements, it is recommended that an optimised approach is taken to the design of the redevelopment proposals and masterplans.
- Cabinet is asked to approve an additional capital budget of £1.46m to support staff resourcing, land assembly costs, home loss and disturbance costs for secure council tenants of properties in the extended redevelopment areas, 'leaseholder assistance' support, legal costs and the appointment of an Independent Tenant and Leaseholder Adviser for the residents of the three PS redevelopment areas.



Brighton & Hove
City Council

Brighton & Hove City Council

Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item 36

Subject: Alternative Creative Workspace

Date of meeting: 3rd November 2026

Report of: Chair of Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer: Name: Natalie Sacks-Hammond

Email: Natalie.sacks-hammond@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 The cultural and creative industries are a vital part of Brighton & Hove's economy, supporting jobs, education, the visitor economy and the city's identity. However, a lack of creative workspace continues to be a challenge in Brighton & Hove. Recognising the importance of the sector, the UK Government's Industrial Strategy identifies the creative industries as one of eight priority high-growth sectors, underlining the need to ensure suitable workspace is available to support its continued success and growth.
- 1.2 This report provides an update on work being undertaken to identify and provide space for the creative industries in Brighton & Hove including the Expression of Interest process for Phoenix House and Lyndean House. The presentation can be accessed at Appendix 1.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee notes the report and provides any comment on current plans.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 Cabinet agreed in July 2026 to "continue to support the provision of creative workspace by unlocking the potential of vacant council commercial assets, partnering with the creative community to curate engaging spaces that promote local talent, culture, and social connection". The agreed strategy focuses on remarketing vacant or underused assets within the council's current commercial portfolio to transform them into vibrant hubs of creativity to enable local arts and creative organisations to thrive.

- 3.2 Phoenix House on West Street and Lyndean House on Queens Road were identified as prospective sites to pilot the scheme as they are largely vacant and unsuitable for immediate disposal.
- 3.3 The repurposing of these buildings for creative use will be delivered through the assessment of bids and proposals from the wider creative sector submitted as part of the Expression of Interest process. The application window was open for 6 weeks, financial assessments were undertaken by the council's managing agent and then passed to officers for assessment. Recommendations to proceed with tenancies will be shared with relevant Cabinet members and officers and decisions taken in accordance with the schemes of delegation under the constitution
- 3.4 The Expression of Interest process closed on 2nd August 2026 and attracted significant interest and multiple applications were received from a range of creative businesses, creative workspace providers, and cultural charities. The Application Assessment Panel is scheduled for 26th October with officer recommendations to be sent to DLT/CLT and the Cabinet Member for consultation. Final approval to enter into the tenancies will be given by the relevant decision maker in accordance with the Council's constitution..

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 The applications are being considered as part of the Expression of Interest process and will be assessed on specific criteria. Officer recommendations will be passed to the relevant Cabinet Member and senior officers for approval in accordance with the scheme of delegation under the Council's constitution.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 The Expression of Interest window was open from 24th June to 2nd August and received significant interest from creative businesses, workspace providers and cultural charities.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report which is for noting. Should expressions of interest be agreed, it is anticipated agreed rental incomes will support the councils financial position in meeting the income targets of its commercial portfolio assets. Any reconfiguration costs will be met from the bids. Should expressions of interest from the creative industries not be considered the council will need to continue identifying tenants to meet its income targets

Name of finance officer consulted: John Lack Date consulted: 22/10/26

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report, The Council has the power to let property under section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972. Under Section 123(2), a council must not dispose of land for less than the "best consideration that can reasonably be obtained" unless it is a short tenancy (under 7 years) or secretary of state consent has been obtained. In seeking to let property, compliance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022 is also required.

Name of lawyer consulted: Siobhan Fry Date consulted: 23/10/2026

8. Risk implications

- 8.1 None for this scrutiny report

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 None for this scrutiny report

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 None for this scrutiny report

11. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 11.1 None for this scrutiny report

12. Conclusion

- 12.1 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee is being asked to note the report and provide any comment on current plans.

Supporting Documentation

Appendices

1. Presentation on Alternative Creative Workspace

Alternative Creative Workspace

November 2026

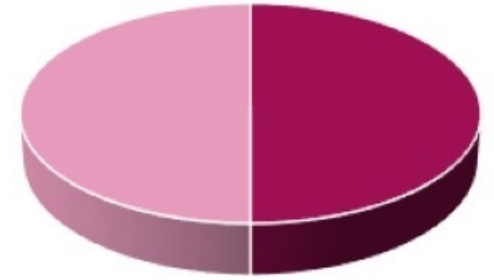
- Creative, cultural and digital industries comprise 10% of jobs and 21% of jobs in Brighton & Hove. This sector also contributes to the wider Visitor Economy, compliments education provision and is a major part of our civic identity.
- The Creative Industries are one of the 8 high-growth areas prioritised by the UK Government's Industrial Strategy (2025). Brighton & Hove is well placed to take advantage of this strategic focus, as a major centre of creative innovation.
- **Creative Workspace** is one of the biggest challenges facing the cultural and creative industries in Brighton & Hove. This has been highlighted in multiple policy documents and reports, including:
 - **B&H Economic Plan** (2024)
 - **GBEB Creative Industries Vision** (2025)
 - **Re:Frame Visual Arts Analysis** (2026)- commissioned in partnership with Arts Council England
 - **B&H Employment Land Study** (2024)
 - **Space to Grow Report** (2023) - commissioned in partnership with B&H Culture Alliance
 - **Creative Land Trust Feasibility** (2024) - commissioned in partnership with B&H Culture Alliance



"creative industries do not necessarily need to be focused around specific commercial hubs [...] location and accessibility are key to where companies may locate, and hence some flexibility in the way spaces are used may be useful to the sector in the future."

Brighton & Hove Space for Culture
We Made That Urban Research Unit,
2023

- Cabinet agreed in July 2026 to "**continue to support the provision of creative workspace by unlocking the potential of vacant council commercial assets, partnering with the creative community to curate engaging spaces that promote local talent, culture, and social connection**".
- The agreed strategy focuses on remarketing vacant or underused assets within BHCC's current commercial portfolio to transform them into vibrant hubs of creativity to enable local arts/creative organisations to thrive.
- This aligns to our Learning Framework, prioritising working innovatively across council services and in collaboration with the sector and leveraging existing resources and negative assets. At each stage of the process, data and learning will be gathered to support future initiatives and refine processes and mechanisms of support.
- This test and learn approach will also inform other council workstreams, most notably the City Plan, which will provide a strategic framework for the disposition of employment and residential land across the city.
- Repurposing of vacant assets could, for example, offer a model to address the volume of lower-grade office stock in Brighton & Hove (45% constructed or renovated before 1950), or to promote High Street recovery.



In the UK, 50% of adults would like to see more creative experiences on their high streets.

Creative High Streets
South East Local Enterprise
Partnership & Arts Council
England, 2021



- The first two properties identified as a pilot for this scheme are **Phoenix House** (West St) and **Lyndean House** (Queens Rd), both largely vacant BHCC properties unsuitable for immediate disposal. By promoting these as new creative workspaces, we will be reducing current void liabilities.
- The repurposing of these buildings for creative use will be delivered through assessment of bids and proposals from the wider creative sector submitted within the expression of interest (EOI) window. The properties were marketed via managing agents SHW and directly to the sector and will be assessed against both financial and non-financial weightings in a 50:50 ratio.
- Marketing and sector conversations have indicated BHCC's preference for established partners who have an appetite to take on whole floor(s) areas and who may also be able to act as a head tenant for smaller organisations, freelancers and individual artists.

Creative Tenants have been sought via EOI application window (6 weeks), with financial assessment then conducted by SHW (BHCC managing agents) and passed to officers for assessment. Recommendations to proceed with tenancies will then be shared with relevant cabinet members and DLT/CLT meetings.

Weighting for Assessment

Criteria	Evaluation Type	Weighting
Financial	Income - Rent per sq ft Rental Models – variety will be considered, depending on level of investment each organisation is looking to make or social/economic benefits being brought.	50%
Q.1 How do you intend to grow and develop the activities of your organisation, and, or collaborate with other local organisations to support the wider sector you are operating in. (quantified employment and financial if poss.)	Local Economic Benefits & Creative/Social Value	20%
Q.2 How do you intend to support the development of other small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) and creative enterprises locally?	Local Economic Benefits	15%
Q.3 How do you intend to promote physical and mental health of people working within your operation, and of the local community?	Health & Wellbeing	7.5%
Q.4 How do you intend to deliver training initiatives, eliminate any gender pay gap, and support disabled staff?	Health & Wellbeing	7.5%
TOTAL		100%

EOI Process:

The EOI window was opened on 24/06 and closed 02/08. It attracted significant interest and resulted in multiple full applications from a range of creative businesses, creative workspace providers and cultural charities. Officers from Estates, Culture & Creative Industries and Local Growth are now assessing these applications.

Next Steps:

- **Application assessment panel scheduled for 26/08, with officer recommendations to follow**
- **Approval through DLT/CLT & Cabinet (member decision)**
- **Tenancy negotiation and confirmation.**
- **Tenants move into properties.**



Additional complementary work on Creative Workspace:

Space to Grow Working Group (with B&H Culture Alliance) / Private sector workspace projects / SBSA engagement (Prosperity Strategy, Cultural Competency, Culture Sussex).

Brighton & Hove City Council

Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item 37

Subject: Report of the Visitor Economy Task & Finish Group

Date of meeting: 3rd November 2026

Report of: Chair of Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer: Name: Natalie Sacks-Hammond
Email: Natalie.sacks-hammond@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 presents the findings from the Visitor Economy Task & Finish Group (TFG) for consideration and review by Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The report focuses on the nighttime and winter economies, exploring factors that influence visitor behaviour and seeking to identify practical measures, informed by stakeholder evidence and best practice from other local authorities, to strengthen the visitor offer and support sustainable economic growth.

1.2 The report has produced 27 recommendations based on evidence gathered during the TFG process. The report is included as Appendix 1. The minutes from the evidence-gathering meetings can be found at Appendix 2.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee notes the Task & Finish Group report on the Visitor Economy attached as Appendix 1

2.2 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee refers the findings of the Task & Finish Group on the Visitor Economy to Cabinet for consideration.

3. Context and background information

3.1 Task & Finish Groups

3.1.1 Brighton & Hove City Council's Constitution permits Overview & Scrutiny Committees to establish informal task & finish groups (TFGs) to look in depth at specific issues.

- 3.1.2 In December 2025, Full Council approved a Notice of Motion that recognised Brighton & Hove's successful visitor economy but also the areas of growth, particularly in encouraging more visitors to stay overnight and visit during the winter. At the 22nd July 2026 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee, members agreed to establish a Task & Finish Group to explore initiatives that would enhance the visitor economy through increasing nighttime and year-round visitor numbers. The group's aim was to develop a report with recommendations to support and strengthen the visitor economy.
- 3.1.3 TFGs typically hold a series of meetings with witnesses, potentially including council officers, executive members, other councils, national organisations, businesses, and community members. Using the evidence gathered, the TFG agrees a report with recommendations which is then submitted for consideration, initially by the parent O&S committee. If the parent O&S committee so decides, the TFG report is then referred to the appropriate decision-making body, such as Cabinet or Council for consideration.

3.2 The Visitor Economy Task & Finish Group

- 3.2.1 The Visitor Economy TFG consisted of: Cllr Evans (Chair), Cllr Cattell, Cllr Miller (attended one meeting), Cllr Thompson (attended 2 meetings), Cllr Lyons, Cllr Lademacher, Cllrs Earthey and Fishleigh (alternating attendance).
- 3.2.2 The Task & Finish Group held 7 evidence-gathering meetings with a total of 23 guests who spoke to the group about their experiences and work in the visitor economy. All evidence gained during these meetings was used to form the recommendations.
- 3.2.3 The TFG ran from 3rd August until 30th September 2026 with the aim of presenting the recommendations at Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 3rd November. This tight timeline meant that not all avenues were able to be explored for such a broad subject and some key witnesses were unable to attend due to it being over the summer. This report needs to be considered within this context.
- 3.2.4 Brighton & Hove has a strong visitor economy, attracting over 11 million visitors annually and generating almost £886 million in spending. While the city benefits from a diverse year-round offer and experiences less seasonality than many seaside destinations, most visitors are day-trippers and overnight stays have declined. Recognising the greater economic value of overnight visitors, the Task & Finish Group examined opportunities to increase year-round visitation, support the nighttime economy, and encourage longer stays by building on the city's existing strengths and expanding its visitor offer.
- 3.2.5 **Night-time Economy:** Brighton & Hove's nighttime economy faces challenges including safety concerns, limited late-night transport, changing consumer habits, and a perception as a "party town", which can deter higher-spending overnight visitors. Rising costs and declining demand are also affecting traditional nightlife businesses. The TFG looked into new ways

to promote the city with a focus on nighttime, how to make nighttime activities more attractive to encourage people to stay overnight, the availability of late-night transport, the perception of the city at night, initiatives other councils have had success with, what challenges the industry are facing and what support might be needed.

3.2.6 Winter Economy: Brighton & Hove faces a number of challenges in attracting visitors in the off-season months, due to poor weather, a limited range of winter attractions, and funding pressures. Hospitality businesses are contending with rising operating costs, recruitment issues, and lower demand, which limits their ability to operate in the winter months. This highlights the need to strengthen the city's year-round offer and encourage more visits during the off-peak period. The TFG explored the Christmas offer for the city, how to extend popular summer events all year-round, new ways to promote the city in the winter, and new events and attractions to bring more people into the city off season.

3.2.7 The TFG engaged with a wide range of witnesses throughout the process, including council officers working in events, economic development, conferencing and marketing, including VisitBrighton; a range of business owners, members of groups such as the Tourism Alliance, the BID, the bus company; representatives from restaurants and hotels, event organisers, and other local authorities. The group also heard from the Cabinet Member, Cllr David McGregor, who talked about his vision for the city, and a representative from the Night-time Industries Association who gave an insight into the national picture.

3.3 Recommendations from the report

3.3.1 The TFG made 27 recommendations. These are:

1. Key finding: Lack of coordination

- Reassess the Visit Brighton model to reduce barriers to the effective promotion of hospitality venues, events and activities across the city.

Visit Brighton to be supported to:

- Host a central platform or guide that is easily accessible to the public so all information on activities in the city is in one place.
- Coordinate destination packages involving all hospitality businesses and attractions including transport providers.
- Encourage collaborations across travel providers, attractions and hospitality venues through the BID, LVEP, Tourism Alliance, and Seafront Development Board including cross-ticketing and cross-promotion.

2. Key finding: Marketing Brighton's unique identity

- To promote Brighton & Hove as a creative destination, focussing on what the city is known for including live music, LGBTQ+ scene, independent shops, seafront arches, art and culture.

- To explore partnering with Gatwick Airport to promote Brighton & Hove
- To explore understanding and the use of AI more efficiently and invest in visitor information, destination marketing and digital discovery, including AI-ready content.
- To promote Brighton & Hove as a food destination through restaurant offers and experiences, food trails, locally produced food festivals and other initiatives such as the introduction of a food hall.
- To look into bringing back the Ambassador programme

3. Key finding: Strategy and vision for events

- Develop a distinctive year-round visitor economy strategy including the nighttime economy.
- To create a flagship winter attraction
- Produce a more linked up year-round council-owned events programme with a focus on using local producers, artists and businesses including a collaborative art festival like White Night to potentially take place at the beginning of Spring.
- To look into expanding popular summer events such as a Winter Fringe or Winter Pride event
- To explore opportunities to tap into the emerging sauna economy, such as collaborating with the UK Sauna Association to have their Sauna festival become resident in Brighton.
- Plan collaborative events during quieter months, capitalising on the peak seasons for the arts and conference sectors to attract more visitors and encourage overnight stays.
- Support the visitor economy sector to prepare for Martyn's Law through training, information sharing and collaboration between businesses, event organisers, Sussex Police and the council.

4. Approach the SBSA

- BHCC agrees to use its influence in the SBSA to:
 - Consider increased funding for the visitor economy including attracting the international market as part of its Prosperity Strategy and the Local Growth Plan.
 - Support collaborative events and activities that expand across the wider Sussex region, such as creating multi-day itineraries that include local attractions such as wine tours.
 - Invest in attendance at international trade shows and strengthen collaboration between the conference team and local hotels to market the city and region to international business and leisure visitors.
 - To invest in better transport links at night across the whole Sussex region
 - To ensure that if the Visitor Levy is introduced, it will be re-invested into the visitor economy to support hospitality and events in consultation with the sector on where the funding is most needed.
 - To create stronger links with schools, colleges and universities to build the future workforce in hospitality in collaboration with the Local Skills Improvement Plan "Future Skills Sussex".

5. Key Finding: Lack of data

- To set up a central platform to collect data from multiple sources to fully understand the needs and demands of the visitor economy and identify the target audiences.
- Develop a visitor economy performance dashboard to monitor progress against agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), enabling quarterly reviews to assess performance, identify emerging issues and inform future initiatives.
- To collect relevant data that would justify the introduction of a 24 hour economy

6. Key finding: Transport

- To explore options of using underused car parks in the city to encourage overnight stays for visitors
- To review the night bus offer, particularly after midnight, specifically the frequency, cost, and routes, to ensure an efficient service for those returning home after work or a night out.
- To ask the Mayor to lobby for 24 hour train service between Brighton and London to improve access to Brighton for those living near the mainline.

7. Key finding: Supporting the hospitality sector

- Encourage central government to continue to reduce costs for nighttime venues including reclassifying nightclubs as live music venues
- To maintain the look and feel of the city centre, ensuring it is clean and well-lit so it feels safe and welcoming to residents and visitors especially at night.
- Explore options for creating a Procurement group for businesses in the visitor economy sector to buy energy as a collective to reduce costs
- To consider lighting at night and what could be introduced, specifically in darker areas, to make the area attractive and safer, such as installing light corridors between parts of the city.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 Having noted this report, the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee could choose not to refer the findings of the TFG report to Cabinet.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 The TFG spoke to a wide range of local business owners as part of the evidence-gathering process.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from noting this report, however, implementation of a number of the recommendations could give rise to significant future revenue and capital costs, including marketing, events, staffing, transport, public realm and infrastructure investment. Any proposals progressing from these recommendations will require fully costed business cases identifying funding sources, ongoing budget implications and expected economic benefits before approval

Name of finance officer consulted: Ishemupenyu Chagonda Date consulted (21/10/2026):

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The report of this informally constituted Task & Finish Group is for noting only by Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee, with the recommendation that it is Cabinet for its consideration. No direct legal implications have been identified at this stage.

Name of lawyer consulted: Victoria Simpson Date consulted 20.10.26

8. Risk implications

- 8.1 There is a risk that some recommendations would require a certain amount of time from a relevant council officer, and it is acknowledged that there is low staff capacity in some areas. This may affect the implementation of some recommendations.

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 The recommendations seek to support an inclusive and accessible visitor economy that benefits residents, businesses and visitors from diverse backgrounds. Improvements to transport, public spaces, visitor information and cultural programming have the potential to enhance accessibility and participation for a range of groups, including disabled people, older people and LGBTQ+ communities. Equality considerations will be incorporated into the implementation of individual actions to ensure any potential impacts on protected groups are identified and addressed.

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 The recommendations support the sustainable development of the visitor economy by encouraging greater use of public transport and promoting year-round tourism, helping to reduce pressure on infrastructure and make more efficient use of existing facilities.

11. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 11.1 The recommendations have the potential to support health and wellbeing by encouraging greater participation in cultural, leisure and outdoor activities, strengthening community vibrancy, and improving access to the city's attractions through enhanced transport connectivity.

12. Conclusion

- 12.1 The committee is asked to refer the findings of the Visitor Economy Task & Finish Group report to Cabinet for consideration. The TFG recommendations are based on a robust process of hearing and evaluating evidence from a number of witnesses.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

1. Report of the Visitor Economy Task & Finish Group
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Final report of the Visitor Economy Task & Finish Group

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Chair's Foreword

The starting point of this task-and-finish group was the awareness that our beloved city-by-the-sea already has a thriving visitor economy, that in this area – as in many others – we punch above our weight, while many other formerly successful coastal towns and cities struggle. Brighton & Hove is consistently high up in the UK tourism rankings, and the enormous numbers of visitors each year bring both economic and social benefits to all of us who live and work here.

However, it isn't lost on anyone that a vast number of our millions of visitors each year are summer day-trippers, here to spend a day on the beach, while possibly visiting the Pavilion, the pier, the i360 and a café or bar or two.

Whilst they are of course bringing a very welcome boost to the economy, particularly the businesses on or near the seafront, there are also issues with this sometimes overwhelming sunny-day influx, for example the struggle to deal with the sheer volume of litter left behind.

We aren't alone in this – many other visitor destinations have the same problem: how to provide a visitor offer that is tempting all year round, and that supports the nighttime

economy by encouraging a higher percentage of our visitors to stay over for a night, a weekend, or even a full week.

Not that the weather in the UK is fully reliable even in the summer months, but we set out to explore what we can offer once the heat can't be expected at all – are we a perfect sporting destination? How can we support and expand our Arts offer outside of May festival time? Are our conference facilities promoted to their fullest extent? Do people know how many fantastic independent restaurants, bars and shops we have across the city? Could we have a winter festival that incorporates entertainment, ice skating, a market, even a winter Pride? What is our offer in November, or could we greet the arrival of the earliest spring flowers and coming lighter evenings with a major event in chilly February? Can the new Sussex and Brighton Strategic Authority provide opportunities to promote tourism across the region so that the whole county benefits?

We talked to business and council experts both locally and in other towns and cities around the country, and have come up with a series of recommendations that we believe might help us to grow our year-round and overnight numbers, and it only remains for me to thank my fellow TFG members and our numerous guests and witnesses for their fantastic, sometimes eye-opening input, as well as our brilliant scrutiny officers, especially Natalie Sacks-Hammond, without whom we'd never have got to this report!

Executive Summary

The Visitor Economy Task & Finish Group was established to examine how Brighton & Hove can increase overnight visitor stays and strengthen its position as a year-round destination, with a particular focus on the nighttime and winter economies. The Group gathered evidence from a wide range of stakeholders, including businesses, event organisers, tourism representatives, local authorities, cultural organisations and council officers, to identify opportunities to enhance the city's visitor offer and support sustainable economic growth.

Brighton & Hove already benefits from a strong visitor economy, attracting more than 11 million visitors annually and generating significant economic impact. The city has many strengths, including its coastal location, cultural assets, independent businesses, events programme, LGBTQ+ heritage, creative industries and proximity to the South Downs. However, while visitor numbers remain high, the evidence highlighted a continuing reliance on day visitors and a decline in overnight stays. Given that overnight visitors contribute significantly more to the local economy, increasing the length of visitor stays was identified as the greatest opportunity for future growth.

A recurring theme throughout the review was the need for stronger coordination across the visitor economy. Evidence suggested that businesses, attractions and event organisers often operate independently, creating a fragmented visitor offer. The Group concluded that a more collaborative approach is needed, centred around stronger destination management and improved promotion of the city's assets. VisitBrighton was identified as having a potentially important role in coordinating activity, improving visitor information and encouraging collaboration across the sector.

The Group also found that Brighton & Hove could do more to promote its unique identity. Witnesses highlighted the city's strengths as a creative, cultural and inclusive destination, but felt these characteristics were not being consistently reflected in current marketing activity. Greater emphasis on arts, culture, food, live music, independent businesses, wellness, LGBTQ+ heritage and the city's wider natural environment could help attract higher-spending visitors and encourage repeat visits. Opportunities to develop relationships with Gatwick Airport and target key international markets were also identified.

The evidence demonstrated the importance of developing a stronger year-round events programme. While the city has a successful summer events offer, stakeholders highlighted a lack of major attractions during the quieter winter months. The Group heard support for the creation of a flagship winter attraction, the expansion of established events into off-season periods, and the development of new cultural and community-led events that showcase Brighton & Hove's distinctive character. Particular opportunities were identified in aligning activity with sectors that already perform strongly during spring and autumn, including conferences, arts and cultural festivals.

The newly established Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority presents a significant opportunity to raise the profile of the visitor economy regionally and secure additional investment. Witnesses emphasised the importance of ensuring that tourism and hospitality are reflected within emerging regional economic strategies and investment plans. The Group also identified opportunities for greater collaboration across Sussex, including joint marketing, transport improvements, skills development, international promotion and the creation of multi-day visitor itineraries.

The need for better data and intelligence emerged as another key finding. Stakeholders consistently highlighted the importance of understanding visitor behaviour, measuring performance and targeting investment effectively. The Group therefore recommends the development of stronger data collection mechanisms and a visitor economy performance dashboard to support evidence-based decision-making and monitor progress against agreed objectives.

Transport connectivity was identified as both a strength and a challenge. While Brighton & Hove benefits from strong bus services and good links to London, concerns were raised regarding late-night transport options, rail reliability and parking costs. Improved night-time connectivity was seen as particularly important for supporting both visitors and workers, while stronger regional transport integration could help support a more diverse and accessible visitor offer.

The Group also recognised the significant pressures facing hospitality, cultural and nighttime economy businesses. Rising operating costs, workforce challenges and changing consumer behaviours continue to affect the sector. As a result, future ambitions for expanding the nighttime and winter economies must be accompanied by appropriate support measures and realistic funding arrangements. In many cases, successful delivery will require partnership working and investment from regional bodies, external organisations and industry stakeholders as well as the Council.

The recommendations contained within this report seek to support the sustainable growth of Brighton & Hove's visitor economy, increase overnight stays, strengthen year-round visitation and improve the overall visitor experience. Collectively, they aim to ensure that the city remains a distinctive, vibrant and competitive destination, while delivering economic benefits for businesses, residents and visitors alike.

Recommendations

1. Key finding: Lack of coordination

- Reassess the Visit Brighton model to reduce barriers to the effective promotion of hospitality venues, events and activities across the city.

Visit Brighton to be supported to:

- Host a central platform or guide that is easily accessible to the public so all information on activities in the city is in one place.

- Coordinate destination packages involving all hospitality businesses and attractions including transport providers.
- Encourage collaborations across travel providers, attractions and hospitality venues through the BID, LVEP, Tourism Alliance, and Seafront Development Board including cross-ticketing and cross-promotion.

2. Key finding: Marketing Brighton's unique identity

- To promote Brighton & Hove as a creative destination, focussing on what the city is known for including live music, LGBTQ+ scene, independent shops, seafront arches, art and culture.
- To explore partnering with Gatwick Airport to promote Brighton & Hove
- To explore understanding and the use of AI more efficiently and invest in visitor information, destination marketing and digital discovery, including AI-ready content.
- To promote Brighton & Hove as a food destination through restaurant offers and experiences, food trails, locally produced food festivals and other initiatives such as the introduction of a food hall.
- To look into bringing back the Ambassador programme

3. Key finding: Strategy and vision for events

- Develop a distinctive year-round visitor economy strategy including the nighttime economy.
- To create a flagship winter attraction
- Produce a more linked up year-round council-owned events programme with a focus on using local producers, artists and businesses including a collaborative art festival like White Night to potentially take place at the beginning of Spring.
- To look into expanding popular summer events such as a Winter Fringe or Winter Pride event
- To explore opportunities to tap into the emerging sauna economy, such as collaborating with the UK Sauna Association to have their Sauna festival become resident in Brighton.
- Plan collaborative events during quieter months, capitalising on the peak seasons for the arts and conference sectors to attract more visitors and encourage overnight stays.
- Support the visitor economy sector to prepare for Martyn's Law through training, information sharing and collaboration between businesses, event organisers, Sussex Police and the council.

4. Approach the SBSA

- BHCC agrees to use its influence in the SBSA to:

- Consider increased funding for the visitor economy including attracting the international market as part of its Prosperity Strategy and the Local Growth Plan.
- Support collaborative events and activities that expand across the wider Sussex region, such as creating multi-day itineraries that include local attractions such as wine tours.
- Invest in attendance at international trade shows and strengthen collaboration between the conference team and local hotels to market the city and region to international business and leisure visitors.
- To invest in better transport links at night across the whole Sussex region
- To ensure that if the Visitor Levy is introduced, it will be re-invested into the visitor economy to support hospitality and events in consultation with the sector on where the funding is most needed.
- To create stronger links with schools, colleges and universities to build the future workforce in hospitality in collaboration with the Local Skills Improvement Plan “Future Skills Sussex”.

5. Key Finding: Lack of data

- To set up a central platform to collect data from multiple sources to fully understand the needs and demands of the visitor economy and identify the target audiences.
- Develop a visitor economy performance dashboard to monitor progress against agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), enabling quarterly reviews to assess performance, identify emerging issues and inform future initiatives.
- To collect relevant data that would justify the introduction of a 24 hour economy

6. Key finding: Transport

- To explore options of using underused car parks in the city to encourage overnight stays for visitors
- To review the night bus offer, particularly after midnight, specifically the frequency, cost, and routes, to ensure an efficient service for those returning home after work or a night out.
- To ask the Mayor to lobby for 24 hour train service between Brighton and London to improve access to Brighton for those living near the mainline.

7. Key finding: Supporting the hospitality sector

- Encourage central government to continue to reduce costs for nighttime venues including reclassifying nightclubs as live music venues
- To maintain the look and feel of the city centre, ensuring it is clean and well-lit so it feels safe and welcoming to residents and visitors especially at night.

- Explore options for creating a Procurement group for businesses in the visitor economy sector to buy energy as a collective to reduce costs
- To consider lighting at night and what could be introduced, specifically in darker areas, to make the area attractive and safer, such as installing light corridors between parts of the city.

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of the Visitor Economy Task & Finish Group was to review Brighton & Hove's current visitor offer, with a particular focus on the nighttime and winter economies. It examined the barriers that may deter visitors from coming to, or staying in, the city and identified opportunities for improvement. The group developed and explored initiatives aimed at converting high levels of day visitors into overnight stays, while also strengthening the city's appeal as a year-round destination. The group developed a report containing recommendations for consideration of the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee and, subject to the committee's endorsement, the report recommendations will be referred to Cabinet and/or partners for consideration.

Members of the group: Cllr Evans (Chair), Cllr Cattell, Cllr Miller (attended one meeting), Cllr Thompson (attended 2 meetings), Cllr Lyons, Cllr Lademacher, Cllrs Earthey and Fishleigh (alternating attendance). Ian Baird, Outdoors Event Development Manager, Natasha Bridge, Senior Local Growth and Visitor Economy Officer, and Neha Holmes, Local Growth and Visitor Economy Officer, were invited as the relevant officers to provide any additional information and to stay updated on the group's progress.

The Task & Finish Group Process: The Task & Finish Group held 7 evidence-gathering meetings with a total of 23 guests who spoke to the group about their experiences and work in the visitor economy. All evidence gained during these meetings has been used to form the recommendations.

The Task & Finish Group ran from 3rd August until 30th September 2026 with the aim of presenting the recommendations at Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 3rd November. This tight timeline meant that not all avenues were able to be explored for such a broad subject and some key witnesses were unable to attend due to it being over the summer. This report needs to be considered within this context.

Focus

In December 2025, Full Council approved a Notice of Motion¹ that recognised Brighton & Hove's successful visitor economy but also the areas of growth, particularly in encouraging more visitors to stay overnight and visit during the winter. This report focuses on the nighttime and winter economies, exploring factors that influence visitor behaviour and seeking to identify practical measures, informed by stakeholder evidence and best practice from other local authorities, to strengthen the visitor offer and support sustainable economic growth.

¹ [63 Winter Economy LG Amendment.pdf](#)

The Issue

Brighton & Hove attracts over 11 million visitors each year, generating almost £886 million in visitor spending². The city benefits from excellent transport links, its proximity to London and Gatwick Airport, and a diverse visitor offer including the beach, culture, shopping in the Lanes, major events, the South Downs, and attractions such as the Royal Pavilion and Palace Pier. The city continues to attract visitors throughout the year due to its strong shopping, dining and nightlife offer, with seasonal fluctuations being less pronounced than in many other seaside destinations. However, the majority of visitors are day-trippers, while overnight visitor numbers have declined. This presents a challenge because overnight visitors contribute significantly more to the local economy through spending on accommodation, food and drink, transport and activities. While Brighton & Hove does have much more of a year-round visitor economy than many cities, there is still a drop-off in visitor numbers in the colder months. There is therefore an opportunity to strengthen Brighton & Hove's year-round visitor economy by encouraging longer stays and developing attractions and experiences that draw visitors throughout the year.

The Brighton & Hove Visitor Economy Strategy 2018-2023 states that "Brighton & Hove should focus on attracting higher-spend, year-round overnight visitors, both business and leisure, who will visit on weekdays as well as at weekends."³ The Task & Finish Group explored how the city can build on its existing strengths, support a vibrant nighttime economy, and broaden its year-round visitor offer to increase overnight stays and visitor spending.

Nighttime economy

Brighton & Hove's nighttime economy faces a number of challenges that impact its ability to attract higher-spending overnight visitors. While the city is renowned for its vibrant culture, independent shops, diverse entertainment offer and LGBTQ+ scene, concerns around safety, including excessive alcohol consumption, anti-social behaviour, and limited late-night transport, can deter people from staying overnight, particularly during the winter months. The city's reputation as a "party town" may also discourage more high-spending visitors seeking a broader city-break experience. At the same time, alcohol-led businesses face rising operating costs, declining attendance at pubs and nightclubs, and changing drinking habits, particularly among younger people and students. There is also a limited range of activities available between the daytime and evening economies, creating a reliance on pubs during this period. Together, these challenges highlight the need to diversify the nighttime offer and develop a wider range of evening experiences that encourage visitors to stay longer. Visitors are more likely to stay overnight when there is engaging evening activity, something worthwhile to experience in the morning, and when they feel that their stay is both convenient and good value.

Winter economy

Brighton & Hove experiences challenges to attracting visitors all year-round, such as poor weather, including rain and strong winds, that can reduce the appeal of the city's coastal offer and limit the viability of outdoor events and attractions. While Brighton & Hove has a strong programme of major summer events that drive visitor numbers, several winter attractions, including Christmas markets and the Burning of the Clocks, have had limited success or not taken place due to funding challenges, which results in a more limited winter offer. The planned relocation of the Royal Pavilion ice rink, one of the city's most established winter attractions, may present a further challenge for 2026. At the same time, hospitality businesses face lower visitor demand alongside rising operating costs, including energy and

² [Microsoft Word - Brighton & Hove Visitor Economy Strategy.docx](#)

³ [Microsoft Word - Brighton & Hove Visitor Economy Strategy.docx](#)

food prices, which can affect staffing levels and capacity. Together, these challenges highlight the need to strengthen the city's winter offer, improve the visitor experience, and encourage more people to visit outside the traditional summer season.

To develop its recommendations, the group heard evidence from a wide range of stakeholders, including council officers responsible for events, economic development, destination marketing and tourism, alongside local businesses, event organisers and representatives from other local authorities and national organisations. The evidence gathered informed the key findings and recommendations set out in this report, which aim to strengthen Brighton & Hove's year-round visitor economy and increase overnight visitor stays.

Key findings:

Lack of coordination

Brighton & Hove is an attractive city for visitors with many unique tourist attractions, independent retail offer and vibrant and diverse hospitality sector. The city attracts high numbers of visitors, particularly over the summer, but suffers from a lack of coordination among visitor businesses with a fragmented and siloed approach to promotion across the city. Witnesses reported to the Task & Finish Group that businesses, venues and event organisers marketed independently, often competing rather than collaborating, which makes it difficult to bring the attractions of the city together as a coherent destination package. There is a lack of a single body that has oversight of everything that is going on in the city with the ability to showcase it effectively to potential visitors.

The group discussed the role of VisitBrighton, which is a known brand, and is best placed to take on this central role as it is already set up as a platform for marketing and partnership working. However, its current membership model can act as a barrier where promotion is restricted to paying partners and it cannot promote other attractions, making city-wide destination packages difficult. In the same way, the Business Improvement District (BID) will prioritise its members over others. This leaves a disjointed approach to promotion of the city which makes it complicated for visitors to find the information they need and for businesses to target them. The membership model for VisitBrighton is problematic as it depends on funding from its members but it was reported to the Task & Finish Group that many hotels are choosing not to be part of it as it is not meeting their needs and is too expensive. The model needs to be reassessed to identify alternative options that will raise funds for its work but also be more inclusive.

RECOMMENDATION:

VisitBrighton model to be reassessed to reduce barriers to the effective promotion of hospitality venues, events and activities across the city.

The group heard that there is no single source of information on what is going on in the city, so visitors simply do not know what is on offer. Participants commented on the need for a Brighton version of "Time Out" magazine bringing together information on activities across the city in one place. With over 1000 community and cultural events taking place, it is difficult for visitors to navigate. VisitBrighton is the perfect platform to do this via their website, social media and guides. Amena Matin⁴ from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) reported that they were developing a "Culture Clash diary" as the central place for

⁴ Amena Matin, Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council, TFG Meeting 24/09/26

events to be listed and easily accessed by residents and visitors. This is something VisitBrighton could explore. It would also allow VisitBrighton to create destination packages and make suggested itineraries involving all hospitality businesses, attractions and transport providers, bringing the city's wide range of visitor assets together in one offer.

VisitBrighton could also be utilised to encourage better collaboration between travel providers, attractions and hospitality venues using existing bodies such as the BID, LVEP, Tourism Alliance and the Seafront Development Board, including cross-ticketing and cross-promotion schemes. Suggestions included city-wide visitor tickets, bundled accommodation and attraction offers and sharing each other's posts on social media. Once a visitor has booked their accommodation, there could be a message displayed saying "Did you know that On the Beach festival is taking place during your visit?" Or, once a theatre ticket is booked they could be encouraged to stay at a particular hotel. These initiatives could help increase the number of overnight stays and visitor spend. Participants stressed that benefits to one part of the visitor economy ultimately benefit the wider destination. Amena Matin⁵ said their Destination Management Board take on promotion of the city which is successful as industry-led partnerships collectively fund and direct destination marketing activity. The evidence indicated that stronger collaboration and cross-promotion would help maximise the city's visitor offer, improve awareness of events and attractions, and support increased year-round and overnight visits.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

VisitBrighton to be supported to:

- **Host a central platform or guide that is easily accessible to the public so all information on activities in the city is in one place.**
- **Coordinate destination packages involving all hospitality businesses and attractions including transport providers.**
- **Encourage collaborations across travel providers, attractions and hospitality venues through the BID, LVEP, Tourism Alliance, and Seafront Development Board including cross-ticketing and cross-promotion.**

Marketing Brighton's unique identity

Brighton & Hove has a unique identity that witnesses felt was not being utilised to its full potential in order to bring visitors into the city. The silo approach from businesses and restricted promotion from central platforms like VisitBrighton doesn't allow visitors to get a full picture of what Brighton is about and can offer. Witnesses identified several strengths that could be promoted more effectively, including the city's LGBTQ+ venues, heritage assets, live music scene, wellness offer, proximity to the South Downs and wider Sussex countryside, independent businesses, food and drink scene, and thriving arts and cultural sector. Whereas some visitors might associate Brighton as a beach destination full of stag and hen dos, locals see it more as a creative destination, which needs to be recognised. The owners of the Adelaide Salon commented that there are a lot of famous artists who live locally who are not getting the exposure they need⁶. The city would benefit from a big art gallery and there are plans to develop this with Black Rock as a potential location.

Other councils reinforced the importance of promoting what makes a place unique. For example, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole market the distinct strengths of each town;

⁵ Amena Matin, Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council, TFG Meeting 24/09/26

⁶ Pascal Dowers and Paulina Anzorge, Adelaide Salon, TFG Meeting 02/09/26

"Bournemouth being the place to go for the beach, entertainment and nightlife, Poole is about the harbour, water sports and marine heritage and Christchurch is a typical market town with heritage, nature and the harbour and is the more relaxing destination"⁷, while Bath and North East Somerset successfully promote the Roman Baths as a defining attraction. Cllr David McGregor commented that Brighton isn't doing enough to make sure it has the most cohesive and accepting LGBTQ+ scene in the country and seem to have missed out on this to places like Manchester when this is a key part of the city's history⁸.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **To promote Brighton & Hove as a creative destination, focussing on what the city is known for including live music, LGBTQ+ scene, independent shops, seafront arches, art and culture.**

Several witnesses commented on the lack of promotion for the city at Gatwick airport and that visitors are pointed in the direction of London. It was suggested that tourists don't realise how close Brighton is to London and that they could use it as a base for their UK visit. Amena Matin said that Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council work closely with their nearest airport to market the region, which is effective⁹. They also create packages that they think are attractive to the European market such as walking and heritage trails. Key international markets were identified as the US, Scandinavia and China and it would be beneficial to work with Gatwick airport to target these audiences.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **To explore partnering with Gatwick Airport to promote Brighton & Hove**

Gavin Stewart from the BID told the group that artificial intelligence is changing the way people look for information online and is being used in new ways that visitor economy businesses need to be aware of and adapt to meet¹⁰. This includes ai-powered search tools based on data scraping and algorithms rather than key words, and using itinerary generators and automatic booking services. Businesses need to ensure that their marketing content can be accessed and interpreted by ai platforms to ensure they remain visible and don't get left behind. VisitBrighton's website is already optimised to improve ai discovery and gets a lot of hits as a result.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **To explore understanding and the use of AI more efficiently and invest in visitor information, destination marketing and digital discovery, including AI-ready content.**

Brighton & Hove is seen as a "foodie" place with a thriving food sector and a diverse range of restaurants that could be further developed through coordinated promotion of restaurants, independent food businesses and local produce. Witnesses talked about winter food trails and other culinary experiences to encourage off-peak visits. Ivanka Majic from "Restaurants Brighton" suggested capitalising on the city's status as the UNESCO Living Coast and introducing a weekend based around sustainable seafood with restaurants across the city

⁷ Amena Matin, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, TFG meeting 24/09/26

⁸ Robert Campbell, Bath & North Somerset Council, TFG Meeting 15/09/26

⁹ Amena Matin, Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council, 24/09/26

¹⁰ Gavin Stewart, BID, TFG Meeting 02/09/26

offering locally sourced “catch of the day”¹¹. This would raise the profile of the local food scene and help support local businesses through encouraging more overnight stays.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **To promote Brighton & Hove as a food destination through restaurant offers and experiences, food trails, locally produced food festivals and other initiatives such as the introduction of a food hall.**

Business tourism was identified as a growing market which draws visitors to the city to stay overnight all year round and typically during the week. It is a good audience to target to spend in the local visitor economy. The Conference Team used to run an Ambassador Programme that worked with influential local people, including representatives from universities, hospitals and other institutions to promote the city as a conference destination. Academics from universities were particularly valuable due to their international networks. Natalie Wyatt from the Liverpool City Region Destination Partnership commented that “Universities are a key partner as they have students from all around the world”¹² and are willing to bring visitors to the city unpaid because it can help develop their professional careers. In Brighton, the scheme was subjected to budget cuts and no longer exists but could be something to consider bringing back in the future.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **To look into bringing back the Ambassador programme**

Strategy and vision for events

Brighton & Hove hosts a large number of events with around 500,000 people participating or getting involved.¹³ The majority of events take place during the summer season, although many are designed to encourage overnight stays. For example, the early start time of the marathon and multi-day events such as Pride often lead visitors to stay in the city for one or more nights. However, there is a need to extend these successes into the winter months. Witnesses felt that there wasn't a strong strategic vision to encourage visitors all year-round. Cllr David McGregor echoed this and talked about aspirations for a 24-hour city and the need to develop a year-round visitor economy strategy which includes the nighttime economy¹⁴. The city is attracting more visitors than ever, but spending is down and this is why the sector is struggling. Carly Heath, who works in Bristol, talked about how they use events to extend the summer season such as Balloon Fest, St Paul's Carnival, and the Harbour Festival¹⁵. Donna Close talked about working with Glasgow where she brought separate seasonal activities such as lighting projects and museum programmes under one umbrella offer which demonstrated how stronger strategic coordination can enhance existing assets and create a clearer narrative for both residents and visitors¹⁶.

RECOMMENDATION:

¹¹ Ivanka Majic, “Restaurants Brighton”, TFG Meeting 02/09/26

¹² Natalie Wyatt, Liverpool City Region Destination Partnership, 25/09/26

¹³ Ian Baird, Outdoors Events Development Manager, TFG Meeting 18/08/26

¹⁴ Cllr David McGregor, TFG Meeting 18/08/26

¹⁵ Carly Heath, Nightlife Culture, TFG Meeting 25/09/26

¹⁶ Donna Close, Director of White Night, 24/09/26

- **Develop a distinctive year-round visitor economy strategy including the nighttime economy.**

A recurring theme was the lack of a main winter event for the city that would draw visitors in. Particularly with the absence of the ice rink this year, hoteliers and other business representatives felt there was no "hook" to increase overnight visitor numbers. Ian Baird, Outdoors Events Development Manager, explained that Christmas markets did not work in Brighton due to its year-round offering of independent shopping in the Lanes/North Laine and that it needed an experiential attraction rather than one based on retail. Ian shared a proposal for a "Winter Wonderland" experience featuring a funfair, food hall, curling experience, festive forest, alpine lodge and Christmas tree maze¹⁷. The proposal is large enough to become a destination piece, encouraging visits from outside the city and generating opportunities for overnight stays. A flagship attraction could provide a platform for evening entertainment, corporate events and hospitality offerings, increasing visitor spend and supporting the night-time economy. The group commented that it would benefit from asking the operator to make it more "Brighton" but were impressed with the proposal and were in support of it.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **To create a flagship winter attraction**

Ian Baird explained that currently, the Events Team put calls out for event organisers to put events on in Brighton & Hove but that this creates a disjointed, unrelated programme of events that doesn't always make sense¹⁸. They would benefit from developing a more coordinated and strategic programme of events throughout the year that showcased the culture and assets that make Brighton & Hove unique and tell the story of the city. Ideas included more community-focussed events, seasonal celebrations such as harvest time and ensuring that events take place over multiple days where possible. Ian spoke of reviving "Paddle Round the Pier"¹⁹ and extending it over a weekend with the heats are held on the Saturday and the final on the Sunday, which would encourage overnight stays. Amena Matin said that Poole held international watersports events and competitions which would run over multiple days and increased the number of overnight stays²⁰. One of Brighton's key strengths is its abundance of creative organisations, and events should move away from external organisers to using local producers, artists and businesses.

The success of White Night was repeatedly referred to as evidence of the city's ability to deliver innovative cultural events. Between 2008 and 2011, White Night grew into a major cultural event attracting audiences of around 45,000 people across more than 70 events. It was originally created as a cultural ritual held on the night the clocks went backwards during a time of high antisocial behaviour in the city. White Night encouraged people to explore the city at night, supported local artists and challenged visitors to "do something different in the middle of the night"²¹. Donna Close, who was the Director of White Night, suggested that a modern version could potentially be held in early spring to tap into the hope that winter is coming to an end. Residents have positive memories of White Night and it could have the support and buy-in to once again showcase Brighton's creativity while supporting the night-

¹⁷ Ian Baird, Outdoors Events Development Manager, TFG Meeting 18/08/26

¹⁸ Ian Baird, Outdoors Events Development Manager, TFG Meeting 18/08/26

¹⁹ Ian Baird, Outdoors Events Development Manager, TFG Meeting 18/08/26

²⁰ Amena Matin, Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council, TFG Meeting 24/09/26

²¹ Donna Close, Director of White Night, TFG Meeting 24/09/26

time economy during quieter months. This could potentially become a key off-peak event in the year-round events programme.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **Produce a more linked up year-round council-owned events programme with a focus on using local producers, artists and businesses including a collaborative art festival like White Night to potentially take place at the beginning of Spring.**

Brighton & Hove needs to build on what it's most well-known for and its popular summertime events successfully bring visitors into the city. It would be beneficial to see if any of these events could be expanded into the wintertime with a view to building the same kind of levels of visitors. The group discussed developing "Winter Pride" or a "Winter Fringe" that would build on the reputation and audience loyalty of the summer versions. These kinds of well-known, strong brands already have established audiences and marketing reach that could be utilised to develop new off-peak attractions.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **To look into expanding popular summer events such as a Winter Fringe or Winter Pride.**

Brighton is increasingly gaining a reputation as a place to go for health and wellness, due to its proximity to the South Downs for walking and nature experiences, sea-swimming and range of wellbeing organisations. Natalie Orringe, Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement, identified the emerging sauna economy as being an opportunity for the city and to consider collaborative events such as hosting a sauna festival on the seafront²². In 2026, the UK Sauna Association held a sauna festival and convention in Brighton, which could be built on to become resident to the city. Related events could be developed to be year-round and further diversify the tourist offer.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **To explore opportunities to tap into the emerging sauna economy, such as collaborating with the UK Sauna Association to have their Sauna festival become resident in Brighton**

The group learned that there are sectors that thrive during the off-peak months that attract visitors to the city. Lucy Davies, CEO of the Brighton Dome and Festival informed the group that the busy times in the artistic calendar are February, March, October and November²³, and this was echoed by the owners of the Adelaide Salon. Julia Weeks said she promotes "October Unpacked" in the Autumn, which is a celebration of Brighton's food, drink, arts and culture, bringing visitors into the area and extending the summer months²⁴. The Conference Team informed the group that their busiest time of year is during the spring and autumn and they are fairly quiet over the summer²⁵. There is an opportunity to align off-peak events at

²² Natalie Orringe, Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement, TFG Meeting 18/08/26

²³ Lucy Davies, CEO of the Brighton Dome and Festival, TFG Meeting 16/09/26

²⁴ Julia Weeks, Tourism Alliance, TFG Meeting 02/09/26

²⁵ Darren Johnson & Emma Thurlow, Conference Team, TFG Meeting 16/09/26

these times and target these particular audiences. Conference delegates come to the city for business and can be targeted to extend their stay or return at a later date.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **Plan collaborative events during quieter months, capitalising on the peak seasons for the arts and conference sectors to attract more visitors and encourage overnight stays.**

The group heard about the implications of Martyn's Law, which requires publicly accessible venues and events to assess and improve their preparedness for potential terrorist attacks, helping to protect staff, visitors and the public. It is expected to come into force in 2027. Lucy Davies from the Brighton Dome and Festival said that there will be tensions between meeting the obligations of Martyn's Law and keeping events inclusive and welcoming²⁶. Measures such as bag checks, vehicle bollards, enhanced CCTV, security personnel and evacuation plans could affect the chosen location of an event and increase the cost. Michael Kill from the NTIA said that nationally, they will need 100,000 more security operatives to fulfil Martyn's Law and with the sector also moving to PAYE, this will significantly increase costs²⁷. Work is already underway at the council to prepare for Martyn's Law, but it will need to be a collaborative approach with the relevant organisations in the sector to adapt to the new requirements and maintain a vibrant and accessible events programme.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **Support the visitor economy sector to prepare for Martyn's Law through training, information sharing and collaboration between businesses, event organisers, Sussex Police and the council.**

Approach the Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority (SBSA)

The Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority (SBSA) provides an opportunity to strengthen collaboration across Brighton & Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex on economic growth, transport, skills and investment. The Authority's emerging Prosperity Strategy and Local Growth Plan presents an opportunity to raise the profile of the visitor economy at a regional level, support investment in tourism infrastructure and marketing, and develop a more joined-up approach to attracting visitors to Sussex as a destination. Witnesses working in other regions in the UK commented that their Strategic Authorities have recognised the importance of the visitor economy and provided additional funding. There are two Councillors from Brighton & Hove City Council on the SBSA who represent the interests and needs of the city, which could be used to enhance the visitor economy.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **BHCC agrees to use its influence in the SBSA to:**
 - **Consider increased funding for the visitor economy including attracting the international market as part of its Prosperity Strategy and the Local Growth Plan.**

²⁶ Lucy Davies, CEO of the Brighton Dome and Festival, TFG Meeting 16/09/26

²⁷ Michael Kill, NTIA, TFG Meeting 16/09/26

The visitor economy falls within the scope of the SBSA's emerging Prosperity Strategy and Local Growth Plan, providing an opportunity to secure greater investment for the sector. Robert Campbell from Bath and Northeast Somerset Council (BNS) said they were part of the West of England Combined Authority which recognises the visitor economy in its 10-year growth strategy and links up better with the wider region²⁸. Gavin Stewart from the BID emphasised the importance of targeting key international markets, including China, Scandinavia and the United States, and highlighted Gatwick Airport as an important gateway for attracting overseas visitors to Brighton & Hove²⁹. Lucy Davies told the group she is a member of "Culture Sussex", which brings together cultural leaders across East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove³⁰. It's a very dynamic group producing lots of new ideas linking in with the new Prosperity Strategy being put together by the SBSA, which could play an important role in attracting more visitors to the region.

- **Support collaborative events and activities that expand across the wider Sussex region, such as creating multi-day itineraries that include local attractions such as wine tours.**

Ian Baird talked about promoting Brighton & Hove as a base from which visitors can explore the wider Sussex region. This could include developing multi-day itineraries that encourage visitors to take day trips to attractions such as vineyards, cultural destinations and countryside locations before returning to Brighton & Hove to dine and stay overnight³¹. A more regional approach would help extend visitor stays and spread the economic benefits of tourism across Sussex while strengthening Brighton & Hove's position as the gateway to the region.

- **Invest in attendance at international trade shows and strengthen collaboration between the conference team and local hotels to market the city and region to international business and leisure visitors.**

Witnesses from the conference sector told the group that conference delegates represent a valuable source of future leisure visitors. Providing delegates with a positive experience of the city can encourage them to return for longer stays in the future, often bringing family and friends. Some conferences offer a leisure day, and the organisers arrange activities such as a health walk or food tours. The Conference Team have already introduced a delegate discount card with local bars and restaurants and will tie in with anything already taking place in the city such as the Brighton Festival, On the Beach Festival, cultural activities and live music. Darren Johnson said they used to go to International Trade Shows, such as in Barcelona and Frankfurt, to showcase the city as a business destination but this has stopped due to budget cuts³². Amena Matin from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, said that they attend international Trade Shows with the hoteliers as a key way to attract visitors from abroad³³. International visitors have a much larger spend per head than domestic visitors and are a key driver for a greater economic impact. The SBSA could invest in the attendance of the international Trade Shows for the wider benefit of the Sussex region.

- **To invest in better transport links at night across the whole Sussex region**

A number of witnesses highlighted the importance of improved regional connectivity, particularly at night, to support the visitor economy and enable visitors and workers to travel

²⁸ Robert Campbell, Bath and Northeast Somerset Council, TFG Meeting 15/09/26

²⁹ Gavin Stewart, BID, TFG Meeting 02/09/26

³⁰ Lucy Davies, CEO of the Brighton Dome and Festival, TFG Meeting 16/09/26

³¹ Ian Baird, Outdoors Events Development Manager, TFG Meeting 18/08/26

³² Darren Johnson, Conference Team, TFG Meeting 16/09/26

³³ Amena Matin from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, 24/09/26

more easily across Sussex. Better integration between transport services, including the potential for a combined rail and bus ticket, could improve access to attractions across the region and support a broader visitor offer. Stronger regional transport links could also encourage overnight stays by making it easier for visitors to access destinations and events throughout Sussex. The SBSA would be well placed to coordinate and support such initiatives through a collaborative approach with East Sussex and West Sussex County Councils.

- o **To ensure that if the Visitor Levy is introduced, it will be re-invested into the visitor economy to support hospitality and events in consultation with the sector on where the funding is most needed.**

The SBSA will have the ability to consider introducing an overnight visitor levy following consultation with businesses, residents and other stakeholders. If the visitor levy were to be introduced, feedback from witnesses, including hoteliers, the BID and other councils, was to ringfence it so the money is reinvested into the visitor economy. Suggestions were to improve the look and feel of the city, to be put towards international marketing or cultural activities to improve the visitor experience. Amena Matin reported that when the visitor levy was introduced in Scotland, it had been used to boost funding for social housing and that Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council have committed to reinvest it into the visitor economy once introduced³⁴. Some hotels were resistant to the visitor levy, and this promise of ringfencing has helped to gain their buy-in.

- o **To create stronger links with schools, colleges and universities to build the future workforce in hospitality in collaboration with the Local Skills Improvement Plan "Future Skills Sussex"**

The group heard that the workforce in hospitality is a significant challenge for the sector. Recruiting and retaining skilled staff is an issue as hospitality jobs are often viewed as a temporary job rather than a long-term career and often students are hired as waiting staff who just want to earn a bit of money. Venues have to pay high wages regardless of the level of experience, which often means older applicants may be more successful, therefore reducing the number of jobs available to younger people. Ivanka Majic spoke of a cruise ship who only hires restaurant staff from Croatia because people study hospitality for 2 years there and it's seen as a career³⁵. It was reported that the Met College and the University of Sussex are creating courses for young people in hospitality and there is a need to invest in the talent pipeline. Evidence from other destinations suggested that stronger partnerships between the hospitality industry, schools and further education providers can help develop skills pathways, encourage young people to consider hospitality careers and strengthen the long-term resilience of the sector. This could be included as part of the SBSA's Local Skills Improvement Plan which is currently being developed.

Lack of data

Many of the witnesses emphasised the importance of data to truly understand the current state of the visitor economy and of changing visitor habits, which is essential in identifying the target audience and developing effective interventions. Destinations prosper when they have a really clear idea of who their audience is. There is a lot of data available, with many organisers and venues keeping track of their own visitor data including digital insights gained from web traffic and social media interactions. Ivanka Majic from "Restaurants Brighton" wanted to set up a "hospitality pulse survey" to see what footfall is like across the city and

³⁴ Amena Matin from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, 24/09/26

³⁵ Ivanka Majic, "Restaurants Brighton", TFG Meeting 02/09/26

see how everyone is doing³⁶. It could be an open-source project within the industry and the data would be shared to present a full picture.

Julia Weeks listed the changing visitor habits as one of the main challenges to the visitor economy sector³⁷. Michael Kill from the NTIA commented that young people generally spend less but the 35 – 40-year old market is increasing and could become the main audience target as they typically have more to spend³⁸. Younger people's habits have changed with fewer drinking alcohol and more interested in technology-driven experiences than face-to-face activities. The lack of late-night transport and policing is acting as a deterrent to activities taking place after midnight.

Evidence from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole demonstrated the benefits of bringing together intelligence from across the visitor economy through a Destination Management Board³⁹. Representatives from hotels, businesses, universities and other sectors regularly share information on visitor trends, spending patterns and barriers to overnight stays. This has enabled targeted interventions, such as developing offers with local food and drink businesses after hotels reported increasing numbers of visitors bringing food into their accommodation rather than spending in restaurants.

The approach in Brighton is somewhat siloed, and it would benefit from creating a central platform to collect data that all businesses could access and contribute to.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **To set up a central platform to collect data from multiple sources to fully understand the needs and demands of the visitor economy and identify the target audiences.**

Michael Kill from the NTIA stressed the importance of data and the ongoing monitoring against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). He spoke of the model in Sydney, Australia, where they do quarterly reviews of the data, judge how successful they are against the KPIs and adapt as needed⁴⁰. Natalie Wyatt from Liverpool, highlighted the importance of using data to identify where investment and promotional activity should be targeted, as well as to assess the effectiveness of marketing efforts and understand which specific campaigns have had the greatest impact on ticket sales⁴¹. They are also developing a data dashboard. It would be beneficial for Brighton & Hove to develop an accessible dashboard to monitor the sector to assess performance, identify emerging issues and inform future initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **Develop a visitor economy performance dashboard to monitor progress against agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), enabling quarterly reviews to assess performance, identify emerging issues and inform future initiatives.**

While the idea of a 24-hour city could bring potential benefits to increase visitor overnight stays, any development towards this would need to be evidenced. Transport services are a

³⁶ Ivanka Majic, "Restaurants Brighton", TFG Meeting 02/09/26

³⁷ Julia Weeks, Tourism Alliance, TFG Meeting 02/09/26

³⁸ Michael Kill, NTIA, TFG MEeting 16/09/26

³⁹ Amena Matin, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, 24/09/26

⁴⁰ Michael Kill, NTIA, TFG Meeting 16/09/26

⁴¹ Natalie Wyatt, Liverpool City Region Destination Partnership, 25/09/26

commercial entity and if late night services are not profitable the provider will discontinue the service. If there is no demand for restaurants to open much later, it will affect their profit margins, and they will choose not to do so. If there is nothing open late at night, visitors will not be encouraged to stay out. Therefore, the move towards a 24-hour city needs careful planning and there is a need to be innovative and diversify the offer to encourage visitors to stay out late. Collecting and analysing data on visitor demographics, behaviours and preferences would be essential in determining whether the conditions exist to support a successful 24-hour economy.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **To collect relevant data that would justify the introduction of a 24-hour economy**

Transport

Transport was consistently identified as both an enabler and a barrier to the visitor economy. Witnesses highlighted concerns around early last train services to London, rail disruption and replacement bus services, the cost of parking, and connectivity with the wider Sussex region. At the same time, the Group heard positive evidence about Brighton & Hove's strong bus network, successful night bus services and opportunities to better integrate transport with the wider visitor offer through partnerships, visitor passes and integrated ticketing. The city benefits from 9 night bus routes that run on an hourly basis all night and connect the surrounding areas such as Lewes, Peacehaven and Eastbourne. This supports the 24-hour economy by allowing visitors to experience nightlife and support residents travelling home and shift workers getting to work. However, they also identified areas where the service could be improved, such as expanding some routes, reviewing the cost and frequency. It was reported that some hospitality workers had to leave work early in order to catch the last available bus home, while others highlighted a gap between the end of regular bus services and the start of night bus operations.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **To review the night bus offer, particularly after midnight, specifically the frequency, cost, and routes, to ensure an efficient service for those returning home after work or a night out.**

Transport connectivity between Brighton and London was repeatedly identified as a key issue affecting the visitor economy. Witnesses highlighted concerns about the timing of the last train to London, which was considered too early to fully support the city's evening and night-time offer. Cllr David McGregor reported that recent changes to licensing arrangements may provide greater opportunities for businesses to operate later, strengthening the case for improved rail services in the future⁴². Gavin Stewart from the BID warned that when the trains aren't running due to delays or engineering works, everything goes very quiet⁴³. A lot of young people have moved to the outskirts of the city or its surrounding towns due to the cost of living and later trains servicing the London to Brighton mainline route could persuade more to stay out later in the city centre as well as enabling hospitality sector workers to travel to and from work.

⁴² Cllr David McGregor, TFG Meeting 18/08/26

⁴³ Gavin Stewart, BID, TFG Meeting 02/09/26

RECOMMENDATION:

- **To ask the Mayor to lobby for 24 hour train service between Brighton and London to improve access to Brighton for those living near the mainline.**

Several witnesses highlighted parking costs as a barrier to overnight stays, particularly during the quieter winter months when a larger proportion of visitors choose to travel by car. Concerns were raised that the cost of parking for longer periods can discourage visitors from staying overnight or lead them to choose alternative destinations. Witnesses suggested that exploring seasonal pricing, overnight parking offers or the use of underutilised car parks could help make overnight stays more attractive and support the local visitor economy during off-peak periods.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **To explore options of using underused car parks in the city to encourage overnight stays for visitors**

Supporting the hospitality sector

Throughout the Task & Finish Group meetings, a range of challenges facing the hospitality industry were identified including difficulties recruiting and retaining staff, skills shortages, rising wage costs, increasing business rates and higher utility bills. Witnesses also emphasised the importance of attracting visitors into the city in the first place. Hoteliers highlighted the need for a strong “hook” attraction that encourages people to visit and stay overnight. Evidence also showed that major events generate significant benefits for hospitality and retail businesses. For example, businesses in the North Laine area have increased sales following the Pride parade as the crowd disperses, demonstrating that visitors continue to spend money across the city after attending headline activities⁴⁴.

The nighttime economy continues to face financial pressures, and it is important that existing support measures remain in place. Business rates relief has played an important role in helping parts of the music industry survive challenging trading times. However, it was noted that nightclubs are not currently eligible for the same relief despite playing an important role within the wider nighttime economy. Michael Kill of the NTIA said that 36.1% of nightclubs in the UK had closed and there had been a 13% drop off for the late-night economy after midnight⁴⁵. Reclassifying nightclubs as live music venues could help reduce operating costs and improve the long-term viability of the sector.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **Encourage central government to continue to reduce costs for nighttime venues including reclassifying nightclubs as live music venues**

The Group heard that it was important for the visitor economy to create an attractive and welcoming environment in the city centre, particularly after dark. Feedback shows that visitors are put off by dark, dirty streets that feel unsafe. The hoteliers reported that some of their visitors took taxis everywhere because they didn't feel safe walking the streets⁴⁶. Lucy

⁴⁴ Ian Baird, Outdoor Events Development Manager, TFG Meeting 18/08/26

⁴⁵ Michael Kill, NTIA, TFG Meeting 16/09/26

⁴⁶ Herve Guyat & Rekha Sohun, Hoteliers, TFG Meeting 25/09/26

Davies described the experience of walking across Waterloo Bridge in London during winter and seeing the illuminated South Bank, noting how lighting helped create a warm, vibrant and safe atmosphere that encouraged people to spend time in the area⁴⁷.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **To maintain the look and feel of the city centre, ensuring it is clean and well lit so it feels safe and welcoming to residents and visitors especially at night.**

Michael Kill of the NTIA stressed that the safety element of lighting is important and talked about “light corridors” that were created in Luton to link hospitality hubs across the city to enable safe routes for people to go from one to the other and how it transformed the way people moved around at night⁴⁸. There are areas in Brighton that are very dark at night and do not feel safe, including the seafront. It was suggested that venues could be encouraged to introduce decorative uplighting and exploring creative lighting solutions in twittens and other pedestrian routes, such as ground projections and lighting installations on the seafront. These measures could improve wayfinding, enhance the visitor experience and strengthen feelings of safety while maintaining the city's distinctive character.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **To consider lighting at night and what could be introduced, specifically in darker areas, to make the area attractive and safer, such as installing light corridors between parts of the city.**

Michael Kill described how the cost base has changed in the sector, that staffing has always been the highest cost but that the second highest cost was now energy, making it now 40% more expensive to operate than it was in 2020⁴⁹. He talked about a new initiative where businesses are creating Procurement Groups to collectively reduce energy costs. This idea could be introduced in Brighton where the local authority and businesses could be encouraged to work collectively to purchase energy and other services, helping to lower their cost base and ease some of the immediate financial pressures they face.

The idea of forming a collective purchasing group as a single block with a supplier such as Octopus Energy, could be challenging. This is because for around four months of the year, the early evening period is the most volatile part of the energy market in terms of pricing. As a result, while suppliers may be willing to offer a group deal, it is unlikely to be as favourable as businesses might hope. Suppliers would also be likely to require members to commit to a tightly defined consumption profile, as significant changes in energy use during peak times can end up costing a lot. Any collective arrangement would need a mechanism to ensure that all participating businesses adhere to the agreed profile with the ability to penalise individual members whose energy usage deviates significantly from that agreement. Despite these challenges, witnesses expressed a willingness to support the exploration of such models and to share expertise on how collective purchasing arrangements could be developed.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **Explore options for creating a Procurement Group for businesses in the visitor economy sector to buy energy as a collective to reduce costs**

⁴⁷ Lucy Davies, CEO of Brighton Dome and Festival, TFG Meeting 16/09/26

⁴⁸ Michael Kill, NTIA, TFG Meeting 16/09/26

⁴⁹ Michael Kill, NTIA, TFG Meeting 16/09/26

Conclusion

Brighton & Hove's visitor economy is a major contributor to the city's prosperity, supporting employment, businesses and investment across a wide range of sectors. The city benefits from a distinctive and diverse offer, including its cultural assets, events programme, independent businesses, coastal location and vibrant communities, which provide a strong platform for future growth.

The Task & Finish Group focussed on ways to increase overnight stays and encourage visitors all year-round, particularly during the quieter winter periods. It would be beneficial to expand events and popular activities into the spring and autumn months and to take advantage of the sectors that thrive during those times such as art and cultural festivals and conferences. Taking a different approach to marketing such as branding the city as a creative destination, highlighting what makes it unique and strategically targeting specific audiences would attract higher numbers of visitors. Making use of geographical connections such as Gatwick Airport and the wider Sussex region could be built on and expanded. Evidence suggested that improved coordination, collaboration and strategic thinking was needed to work with local businesses and groups to create a more coherent, accessible and attractive visitor offer.

The establishment of the Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority presents an opportunity to strengthen the profile of the visitor economy at a regional level, improve strategic coordination and attract additional investment. Significant improvements in data collection and performance monitoring are vital to understanding the current state of the visitor economy and identifying who the target audience is. Transport connectivity, particularly at night, is an important factor when looking to develop a 24-hour economy, helping to attract visitors, support the nighttime economy and enable businesses to extend their operating hours sustainably.

It needs to be recognised that some businesses are facing significant financial pressures, particularly in hospitality and the nighttime economy and would need support if they were expected to increase their operation hours into the off-season months or into a 24-hour economy. Suggestions have been made throughout the Task & Finish Groups to help with this, but it remains an important factor to consider. The need for investment in certain areas has been highlighted in the recommendations but realistically, the Council is not able to fund everything and therefore, approaching external organisations to take on some initiatives where necessary should be considered.

The recommendations in this report are intended to support sustainable and inclusive growth, ensuring that the benefits of the visitor economy are shared by residents, businesses and visitors, while protecting and enhancing the unique qualities that make Brighton & Hove a successful visitor destination.

Appendix 1: Minutes from Task & Finish Groups

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Task & Finish Group Meeting 1 – 18/08/26

Members present: Cllrs Evans (Chair), Cattell, Earthy, Lademacher, Lyons

Apologies: Giles Rossington (Scrutiny Manager), Luke Proudfoot (Overview & Scrutiny Officer)

Witnesses/Officers supporting: Ian Baird (Outdoors Events Development Manager), Charlotte Barrow, (Senior Marketing Executive, VisitBrighton), Natalie Orringe, (Head of Communications and Engagement), Jack Cregan, (Commercial Executive), Natalie Sacks-Hammond (Overview & Scrutiny Officer).

Cllr Evans (AE) welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanking witnesses for finding the time to attend. She reminded everyone that the meeting was not in public, but that the Task & Finish Group (TFG) would be producing a report which would be published, with evidence from witnesses referenced or quoted. A note of the meeting will be circulated to all witnesses to check for accuracy.

IB talked through the slides acknowledging that the Events Programme is mainly summer-focused but this boosts the visitor economy by creating different reasons to visit the city. It also enhances the nighttime economy offer and supports local businesses. “On The Beach” festival producers have conducted an economic impact study this year looking at how many people attended their events and stayed overnight, which was encouraged through their multi-day format. An important part of the Events Programme is that it establishes Brighton’s national identity as a creative destination. People from outside the area associate Brighton with its beach and as a place for stag and hen dos but locals see it differently and are more clued into the city as a creative destination. This is the story of the city that needs to be told more widely. It’s all about creative talent, is a driver for the student population and creates a sense of joy, giving the sense of an active and lively city. There were 3 major events in 2025 which were the Women’s Rugby, the Marathon and Pride. There are 10 other festivals

hosted by the city including the Brighton Festival, the Fringe, Great Escape, Land Beyond, On the Beach and so on. There are around 150 community events that range in size from school fetes, to free fireworks provided by Coles in Preston Park. It's a busy events programme but mostly takes place in the summer. Around 500,000 people participate or get involved in the events. Looking at old data from 2018, the approximate economic value was £120 million. Using the national calculation for economic value for this year, it puts the onward value between £1.50 and £2.80 per £1 generated by the event, which is a more complex calculation. For example, "On The Beach" generates £3 million - £4 million income through sponsorship which gives an onward value to the city of 2.8 multiplied by that amount which ends up at around £8 million - £9 million. Pride has done an updated economic impact study this year and had 20 researchers on the streets over Pride weekend gathering data to enhance the other data available. There is also an economic impact study coming from the marathon this year and one from the Fringe next year.

AE commented that although these are summer events, there will be an impact on the nighttime economy. For events like Pride, people coming from outside the city are more likely to stay overnight.

IB said that a lot of people also stay overnight before the marathon due to the early start. Around 60,000 – 80,000 people travel in and out of the city by train for Pride which leaves a couple of 100,000 people here for the weekend.

IL asked about whether they have taken into account those people who don't come into town because they want to avoid events like the marathon due to disruption, traffic, etc.

IB said that is hard to gauge, and they don't have any data to quantify that. There are people who purposefully avoid Pride but also benefit because they rent out their house for the weekend.

ME suggested comparing a normal busy Saturday in August with Pride data and work out the difference to get this information.

IL said he has been told by residents that people go elsewhere when events are on.

AE said that the shops might take less when there is an event on but the bars would take more.

IB said the North Laine shops actually do very well and have increased sales. For example, when the Pride parade is over, people tend to pass through these areas to move elsewhere. When considering the winter economy, they would like to develop a centrepiece event for Christmas. After the Valley Gardens work was completed, there was a Christmas market that didn't land so well and was slightly underprepared. They came back the next year with a reduced footprint but decided it wasn't financially viable in the long term. In 2025, there was another offer that planned to operate over 3 weekends but was unfortunately hit by massive storms. They have learnt that Brighton is unique in terms of its winter offer compared to other cities who have a retail focused winter offer because that's something they don't inherently have in their city. Brighton has an incredibly successful independent shopping offer and has something that equates to a Christmas market 365 days a year in the North Laines. From talking to the traders in there, they don't see the benefit in trading at a different location like a Christmas market; they also don't want to compete with out-of-town traders. This is why Christmas markets don't work in Brighton. What Brighton needs is a winter

experiential offer as opposed to a retail piece, which is what they are working towards. There isn't anything planned for 2026 but there are early stage proposals for 2027.

IL asked if there were any New Year's events like Hogmanay in Edinburgh. People do travel there and spend a lot of money on tickets and accommodation.

IB said that Edinburgh benefits from having a controllable space which is something Brighton needs. Preston Park isn't really an option as the residents won't like it, particularly as there are a lot of summer events held there. Other cities have a natural town square. Valley Gardens is a possibility, but its elongated shape is tricky. IB presented a slide of a new potential Christmas attraction like a Winter Wonderland proposed by a well-respected operator called Sevanta who have been successful in Bournemouth and Cambridge. The attraction offers a funfair, food hall, curling experience, festive forest, alpine lodge and Christmas tree maze. The proposal is large enough to become a destination piece. This would run from St Peter's Church to North Road.

AE said that it would also be vulnerable to bad weather and asked whether high fencing would be put all around it.

IB said they are planning to have much harder structures rather than stretch tents which the market struggled with. They will also provide indoor space. The fencing is more tricky as they need the ability to lockdown the space and make it secure. It also needs to be managed in terms of capacity of attendees and alcohol sales. Fences can be made to look more appealing. There would be multiple entrances and no one-way system.

IL asked how many days and nights this would be taking place.

IB said around 6 weeks to 2 months minimum, from November to Christmas.

IL asked about impact on transport in the area.

IB said it would hopefully result in busier buses but no other impact other than around the build as it would be taking place on an area that is already pedestrianised.

JaC said that Valley Gardens has three areas for events which will be a key focus for winter. They have trialled things that have been unsuccessful but this attraction is an anchored winter event. The city is a creative tourist-led city without a winter market so this idea ticks all the boxes and from it, the nighttime and winter economies can develop. It doesn't look good that this year doesn't have anything to offer especially as the ice rink won't be there and there are no plans for New Year. We have the Laines and Christmas shopping.

IL asked if this attraction would encourage people to stay overnight.

IB said not necessarily but it creates a platform to put on entertainment that could encourage people to stay overnight such as corporate dining, hire spaces out for the night etc.

IL said it looks more like an event for local people to come out, have fun and go home.

IB said that we don't want events solely for people from out of town, which is a common criticism from residents, which isn't true. The data from Pride shows on the Saturday that 53% were from within Brighton with 22% coming from London.

ML said that the Christmas market was depressing because it was a mismatch of things like a bit of dancing, food, etc but didn't have an identity. This proposal is a whole experience that you can move around. ML said that AirBnbs are all offering free saunas and questioned why hotels aren't doing this. ML also said that licensing hours needs to be looked at as pub gardens all close early, and most venues close at 1am. The city has an economy based on going out but the licensing hours stifle that.

AE said that licensing had changed recently.

IB said that he had attended an urgent meeting regarding the recent announcement of LGBTQ+ venues closing where they looked at the licensing arrangements and thought they would benefit from exploring more about how they are being applied. However, the main problem is business rates and utility costs which are too high and not within the Council's control. Licensing laws allow venues to operate 24 hours a day, and the system should reflect this by supporting those venues that are suitable to remain open later. AE said that pub gardens close early because many have residents living nearby.

JaC talked about what was trying to be achieved, whether it was visitor numbers or overnight stays, and whether we are competing with the wider Sussex region or not. To make more of a compelling offer for the hotels, there needs to be an anchor point like this proposal and that it would be beneficial to challenge the operator to make it more "Brighton". A suggested idea was Winter Pride which would automatically make people stay overnight. This would involve performances and tickets with cross-promotion such as a hotel room offer. He also suggested targeted promotion once bookings have been confirmed that said, "did you know that Winter Pride is on".

ML commented that it would benefit from having more of a "Brighton" flavour and Winter Pride would do that.

NO suggested partnerships are set up through VisitBrighton as it is a platform already set up to do this.

IB said the ice rink is unlikely to return to the Pavilion. However, they are making plans to build a substation at the Old Steine with plans to have the ice rink there using the fountain as the centrepiece. This would give Brighton city centre a critical mass and become the hub to the Christmas experience in Sussex. The message would be to use Brighton as a base, to go on day trips in the wider Sussex area such as wine tours, then return to Brighton to eat and stay overnight. It would also be beneficial to have advertising at Gatwick airport to suggest visitors turn west rather than go straight to London.

JuC suggested promoting Brighton as a food destination and spoke of a recent interview with FatBoySlim about his favourite food spots in Brighton and Hove.

IB said at the moment they open their books and ask who wants to do something in Brighton and that they need to have more of a year-round Event Programme that links up and makes sense. They should use local promoters and local businesses at events. For example, bringing back Paddle Round the Pier and to connect with and promote local charities. They could run the heats on the Saturday with the final on the Sunday which would encourage people to stay overnight. Another idea would be to do something in the autumn like celebrating the harvest.

JuC said there is a good farmer's market in Shoreham but Brighton doesn't have one.

ML said it would be good to celebrate Sussex food.

IB said they are looking to develop New Road as a market space and possibly Valley Gardens. The one in Shoreham is costly and run by enthusiastic residents.

IL asked if Winter Pride was a done-deal

IB said he has been talking to Pride about having more presence in the city all year round, possibly doing something in St James' Street. It is currently an open conversation.

IL said he doesn't think Pride and the Christmas experience goes together. Pride attracts mostly young females as indicated by the data on the slides but the group is trying to get more people to stay overnight and spend a lot of money. Therefore, young females might not be the best target group and maybe more wealthier, slightly older people would be better.

IB said that data from Pride in the park shows that more younger people attend but older people are more likely to spend money in the city centre pubs during Pride.

AE said we are trying to get more people to visit in the winter so anything that attracts people is positive. The city has almost too many day visitors over the summer and we need more all year round.

ML said her friends always visit in the summer but not during the winter.

IB said Brighton does well compared to other coastal towns but that people do have a preconception about coastal destinations in the winter. The challenge is to make them forget they're on the coast. We need to sell pub culture, independent shopping and cosy spaces.

NO also suggested theatres and performances

AE suggested a Winter Fringe

JaC said we need to make a space for the winter experience and have a good brand for the city. We need to capitalise on things that Brighton is already known for. We also need support and to partner with places like Gatwick and cross-promote.

NO talked about place-based marketing and that the city has an iconic cityscape but we don't own it. The city needs to wrap all its assets together in the same way that New York and Copenhagen have done. We need to reach out to residents and bring them with us. We also need to bring Brighton into the wider Sussex area. She said it would be worth looking at the designer, Wayne Hemmings, who is recently famous for the girl guiding uniform but talks a lot about culture and civic authenticity and history as drivers for economic growth.

IL said we should get some of the biggest hotels in the room and ask them what would fill up more beds, what kind of people spend more money and stay longer. They might come up with things we haven't thought of.

CB said they have been working in partnership with the hoteliers for a long time and from talking to them in the past, they're not too concerned with the nitty gritty, they just want a hook, something to bring the customers in. They really care about having people coming through the door.

NO said that we need to define the proposition; make it clear what to expect from us, how they will benefit, provide marketing assets for them to use, create a vision and to bring them in. We should also include independent businesses and make sure everyone is working together for mutual benefit. Heritage and culture are really important.

CB said she has worked for VisitBrighton for 20 years and has seen the change from Brighton being known for “dirty weekends” to people getting to see the city as classier and more cultural and has evolved away from its original reputation. It is also an important gateway to the countryside.

NO said that the sauna economy is emerging with the city being seen as a place for wellness. She would like to do some research on changing spending patterns of visitors with people drinking less alcohol and not eating out at restaurants.

IB said there is one thing they are trying to get over the line for this Christmas which is a light trail at St Ann’s Well’s gardens. The light trail would be based around the story of St Ann and the well and tells the story of why the garden is there and its history. It’s near the shopping hubs so people can do their Christmas shopping and head over.

NO said that the St Ann’s Wells festival has been really successful.

ML said that wellness embeds itself into lots of things from music to art etc and that the Trans Pride Event did this very well.

IB talked about the new beach weddings offer near the Volks railway where they will have a marquee and chairs on the beach. They have linked up with the local businesses there; the sauna, Sea Lanes, Reading Room and Volks railway to offer customisable packages. They wanted to use everything embedded in the area in a different way.

JuC said that one of the arches in the Madeira Terrace project could be used for weddings.

IB said the wedding set would be portable so could be packed up and taken to other locations in the city like Stanmer Park.

JaC said that there are a lot of assets in the city, like the Theatre Royal, Royal Pavilion, Brighton Dome, the Laines etc but they are disconnected.

JuC said it would be nice to see the Registry Office promoting itself and what a “Brighton wedding” would look like.

JaC said the bandstand had a 73% conversion rate from those who enquire and suggested increasing the fee.

AE said that weddings were something you can increase because people will pay. It’s not like parking charges that you need to be careful with.

NO said that the inside of Brighton Town Hall is beautiful for weddings but the outside is a problem.

IL asked about the Amaze charity doing a Book Bench trail around the city.

CB said this was taking place over the autumn, and they will be using it as a hook. There will be a story trail on the website, they will talk about literary links to the city and that it’s beneficial to health and wellbeing as it encourages people to walk.

AE asked about the link between VisitBrighton and Visit Britain.

CB said there is no financial link between the two but that they work closely together and have set up local visitor economy partnerships. This is founded by Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council.

AE asked about cross-ticketing with transport providers.

CB said VisitBrighton has supported cross-ticketing through marketing. Govia used to have a "Days Out" campaign which they would run but approach VisitBrighton for help with promotion and advice on who to partner with. There isn't a budget for a city-wide visitor ticket although it would be a really good idea. At one point the Royal Pavilion, Sealife Centre and the i360 had a promotional ticket but there were operational complications.

IL asked if hotel beds were not being filled because Brighton doesn't have a Park & Ride.

CB said a Park & Ride would be good but parking is not a huge barrier for visitors and being seen purely as a coastal destination is more of a problem.

JuC said the city has a history with the cinema which isn't well known. One of the first cinemas was in Regency Square and the city was the centre of film making.

NO said the city has an extraordinary identity and queer history, people used to visit the bath houses, and it had one of the first Indian curry shops and the original Body Shop.

JaC asked what other cities are doing that Brighton isn't. For example, York has a really good winter package that makes use of its market, town square, light shows and heritage assets. Brighton could make use of its image of being independent and boutique and partner with hotels in Regency Square. It could be marketed as the best coastal getaway, Christmas by the sea.

NO talked about the winter events like Burning the Clocks, ghost walks, pagan fireworks and to do something that reflects its old fishing village traditions. Tourism is changing and people want something that feels unique and not corporate.

IL asked about the Hippodrome.

JuC said it is currently being kitted out and will open next year.

IL said that theatres have deals like book a show, stay at a particular hotel at a discount.

CB said that some hotels occasionally do this. These kinds of deals are not under the control of VisitBrighton but up to the hotels if they want to offer this.

JaC said they need to get adverts for Brighton at Gatwick airport as everything there advertises London at the moment.

IB talked about the Santa Bus being very successful as it doesn't need a huge amount of planning and it creates a feel-good factor and sense of Christmas. The Christmas lights could reflect Brighton a bit better. It all needs to be brought into a package.

CB said that VisitBrighton is the vehicle to do this.

AE mentioned the Christmas market hosted by the Sealife Centre with local traders in the central hall surrounded by the fishtanks.

NO said they also did cocktail evenings there.

JaC said that people used to travel from all over to do late night shopping in the Laines. The Unitarian Church hosts a good creative market.

IB said that Etsy often takes over the markets and it would be better to offer stalls to local artists.

JuC suggested using one of the big shops on Western Road that are currently empty, that we could host something there like a Christmas event or market.

JaC suggested Portslade Town Hall

IB suggested Middle Street School that is closing and they could create a Santa experience there with elves in a workshop.

AE asked who we are targeting.

CB said we are chasing the money so families are not the target audience but more those who can stay during the week typically aged before or after having children. They have a strong Facebook presence for slightly older people.

AE talked about foodies and the city now has a Michelin Star restaurant.

ML said Brighton restaurants are very good at social media.

JaC suggested a winter food trail to encourage more partnership working.

IL asked about attracting people off season and the marathon is good for this as it is held in April when the weather is a bit chilly. He suggested Halloween in October.

IB mentioned White Night and the Zombie Walk which have since ceased to take place. The Zombie Walk got out of control. There once was a lantern trail at the rockery near Preston Park. Octoberfest never worked in Brighton.

ML said that the Hanover Beerfest is really popular.

JaC said that the biggest wins will be in December and we should get that right and then look to expand into October.

IL talked about an indoor dry ski slope in Newhaven being very successful.

JaC said that this year Brighton hosted the Sauna Summit and it would be great to host a sauna festival by the beach and promote health and wellbeing.

IL suggested putting saunas by the nudist beach.

CB said the nudist beach was one of the most popular pages on the VisitBrighton website.

IB said it is important that the council owns the events rather than allowing operators to come in, brand themselves and make the money. There needs to be a strategy to make it "Brighton", promote Brighton businesses and charities. There could be a Food Festival with all local traders and food businesses and get BIM students to do the music entertainment.

IL said Brighton is known for having a lot of vegans and vegetarians and whether this could be a hook, such as "Veganuary" activities.

IB said Brighton is known for being quirky and always doing crazy things and we need to lean into that.

Task & Finish Group Meeting 2 – 02/09/26

Members present: Cllrs Evans (Chair), Lyons

Apologies: Cllrs Fishleigh and Cattell, Luke Proudfoot (Overview & Scrutiny Officer)

Witnesses/Officers supporting: Cllr David McGregor (Cabinet Member for the Economy, Culture, Heritage and Tourism), Gavin Stewart (CEO of BID and Chair of the Destination Experience Group), Ben Garcia (Business Development Manager, Brighton & Hove Buses) Ivanka Majic, (Restaurants Brighton), Pascal Dowers & Paulina Anzorge, (The Adelaide Salon), Julia Weeks, (Brighton & Hove Tourism Alliance), Ian Baird (Outdoor Events Development Manager), Natasha Bridge (Senior Local Growth and Visitor Economy Officer), Giles Rossington, (Overview & Scrutiny Manager), Natalie Sacks-Hammond, (Overview & Scrutiny Officer).

Cllr Evans (AE) welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanking witnesses for finding the time to attend. She reminded everyone that the meeting was not in public, but that the Task & Finish Group (TFG) would be producing a report which would be published, with evidence from witnesses referenced or quoted. A note of the meeting will be circulated to all witnesses to check for accuracy.

Cllr David McGregor (DM) gave his thoughts on the visitor economy in the city. One issue is the lack of late-night transport services, which effectively cuts off the nighttime economy and there is a lack of structure and strategy around the offer. It's only recently that the transport part of this has been up and running with more night buses. The city is attracting more tourism than ever before but spending is down, which is why the visitor economy is struggling. DM's overarching idea is to have a 24-hour economy in Brighton and make sure there is an option for everyone. People can go to the beach for almost no money and then there are others who go out for food and drinks who may end their night at 1am and be able to get the bus or train back home at a later time. The council has recently made changes to the licensing policy to allow restaurants to stay open later, which will justify the next step of getting the trains to run 24/7. He would like bigger events taking place in the city, although he acknowledged that there is a lack of hotel space during the peak season.

The other issue is that we are very summer-focused and need to do more to get people visiting in the winter, so Brighton is also seen as a winter destination. DM talked about the LGBTQ+ venues which are not really focussed on in economy strategies but they are a large part of what Brighton is known for. Pride is the biggest event of the year but DM questioned what we are doing to make sure we have the most cohesive and accepting LGBTQ+ scene in the country and seem to have missed out on this to places like Manchester. We need to honour what Brighton is known for.

DM wants to look at how VisitBrighton works within the next 12 months and ensure that it is up to date and working for people. The city needs to attract new people – young people, families, conferences, and to really utilise social media to do so. DM would like to see a Nighttime Economy Strategy that will be based off the work of this Task & Finish Group

making it a key focus. Access and travel are a huge part of it as well as making sure events and LGBTQ venues are key pillars of how we get people to come to the city. We need to make the summer season last longer and be more tourist focused.

Pascal Dowers (PD) said that there is a big cultural and artistic element that should be promoted and asked DM what his thoughts were on that.

DM said it is part of what Brighton is, but the city is an expensive place to live and creative types and young people cannot necessarily afford to be here so it's important to create spaces for them. This week they have opened up some buildings specifically for creative use and making this a key point in economic policy. They want to encourage people to come to Brighton specifically to start a creative business or art or a shop and don't want to lose this. Lots of creative businesses have left the city and we need to bring them back.

PD said Brighton is a big home for creatives but they don't have enough exposure of their work. There are facilities in the city and new space will hopefully encourage more people. PD gets a lot of people visiting from London but feels that the hotel pricing is not dynamic enough and should provide a different offer to those visiting from the home counties and London than those travelling further or internationally. The bigger hotel chains don't have a local marketing budget. More and more people don't stay in Brighton because it's cheaper to get a taxi home than stay in a hotel.

Paulina Anzorge (PA) added that the cost of parking for 24 hours is very high and it could be different prices for the summer and winter months.

PD said that if the hotels were more accessible for people living within an hour, they might not need to use a car and could be persuaded to stay overnight.

AE said there's no changing the fact that Brighton is a seafront city that's in a long, narrow strip and there's never going to be the space for lots of parking.

PD and PA host an art salon from home called the Adelaide Salon. They used to live in London which has a high level of visual arts unlike Brighton. There are a lot of people in Brighton working in the creative sphere but are not working here or displaying their work, instead they are travelling to London or internationally. Once Covid hit, the creative links were reduced, which meant people were expecting more from where they were. Along with the cuts in art funding, the sector was disappearing. They have an old Regency building that has space for hosting the salon, which evolved from a meeting of like-minded people trying to create something new. They used the Open Houses as the main vehicle for promotion, which is a festival that attracts thousands of people. It's purely philanthropic with an ambition to create a hybrid economy. They hosted an Art Gala with the Royal Pavilion that was about supporting the arts with heritage, activating spaces, and highlighting the quality of what is here. They had more visitors from London than Brighton. There are lots of people who could fill the hotels but due to the high costs, would choose to return home.

PA said they work with lecturers, philosophers and artists from the local universities bringing them into the conversation around arts. The concept of the salon is a movable concept and can host 100 people but the appetite has grown so they have partnered up with the Brighton Museum, Dome and Brighton University. There are internationally recognised artists living in Brighton who work abroad and there's no focus on Brighton. They exhibited at the Brighton Pavilion with support from big names like Thom Yorke from Radiohead and introduced the

idea of an Art Gala which was held at the end of May. They want to elevate the perception of Brighton as a creative city and help emerging talent and encourage a different form of philanthropy.

Julia Weeks (JW) asked why they held the gala in May. PA said it was timed with the Brighton Festival when there is a lot going on in the city.

AE said that they could capitalise on it in the winter season and there might be more opportunity to have a conversation with the hotels and restaurants and create a destination package.

PA said they are planning a visual arts show in the Autumn as that is when the art sector normally thrives.

PD said in Brighton there is a cultural void except for the music sector that people will travel down for. It all needs coordination and a silo approach doesn't work well.

JW said she is planning an arts festival in October and has lots of people involved, however, she is finding it difficult to get the word out.

PA said that people will buy art in London and come to Brighton for entertainment. They had engaged with Nick Cave about exhibiting his art but it didn't work out, they hope to do this next year but it needs to be curated.

JW talked about "October Unpacked" which was deliberately held in October to extend the summer season. There is the comedy festival in October and music events and they want it to become as busy as May. Getting other organisations to share it on their channels and networks is difficult.

PD said there is a silo mentality and that art revolves around the grants system which means everyone is a potential competitor and they don't want to share clients. However, if you promote something for someone else, they are more likely to promote your activity.

JW said that VisitBrighton do share with their partners but they are only allowed to promote partners who have paid.

Ivanka Majic (IM) gave praise to Adelaide Salon and said that Brighton's strength is its diversity and if we start embracing it, we can have the highbrow – the people who don't think they can buy art in Brighton, to see things differently. There is a silo mentality and Brighton is a bit cliquey. Ivanka works for Restaurants Brighton and they have a huge audience with only 5 staff members but they are happy to promote things without being paid.

PD said we need one central place to have everything listed, like a Brighton version of "Time Out". Everyone should subscribe to each other's newsletters and reach out on social media. He said some people are suspicious and ask what's in it for them. At some art events, a lot of the attendees are other artists and other people don't always feel welcome. People also recoil if people are constantly trying to sell them things. 4,500 people came to their Open House which shows there is appetite, they had a Marina Abramovich performance which had people queueing outside to experience.

JW talked about White Night and how she would like to bring it back. IB explained that it had originated from the "Nuit Blanc" movement in France around the activation of city spaces at night bringing different artists together. The first one was a co-production with the place in

France, however, it ran out of funding. JW said that Copenhagen has a “culture night” that is self-funded through ticketing, and they put on interactive activities, performances and visual arts.

PA said it took 2 years for Network Rail to support Open Houses and they now have some visibility at train stations. JW said that Network Rail and GTR are members of the Tourism Alliance, which she represents. PA suggested using billboards and digital screens to help with promotion in the winter months.

IB asked what prevented the Adelaide Salon event at the Pavilion from being bigger and whether being in a heritage location was a barrier for some people.

PD said it was a self-imposed capacity as it was the first year and they could expand. The event ran from 7.30pm until midnight and had a production of 90 people, it was a long show and there was a lot going on. It was a subsidised event with free champagne and free food from The Ivy. It cost attendees £100 which would seem acceptable in London but in Brighton seems very expensive. It was meant to be an event in Brighton for Brighton people.

JW said that she had done some surveying and asked people why they would come to Brighton out of season and not one person had an answer. One problem is that they don't link up with the hotels and restaurants to create packages, and are not marketing to a specific audience. Everyone is targeting their own email lists. There is also a change of behaviour which has meant 40% of all nightclubs nationally have closed, students don't go out anymore and drinking culture has changed, people want to go somewhere decent to eat much later but there isn't much choice and delivery companies are feeding people at home. We need to look at who the audience is now and their demographics. The LGBTQ+ scene has stayed fairly “old school” putting on drag performances but Pride has changed due to the type of acts that are playing in the park which are more mainstream and attracts a different kind of audience. JW listed the main issues being the silo approach, different behaviour habits, and the lack of one body to coordinate everything. A lot of people visit for conferences and they want to know what they're doing outside of the conference. A lot of independent restaurants don't open on Mondays and Tuesdays so miss out on these customers. The BID will put their members first, which is understandable. It is unclear how people find out about things going on in the city.

Cllr Ivan Lyons (IL) said that he has a lot of feedback from the residents in his ward, and he often asks them “why don't you go into Brighton?” and the comments are that it is dirty, there's graffiti everywhere, it's unwelcoming, they feel threatened by tramps asking for money outside shops and parking is an issue. In the winter, more than 50% of people come to Brighton by car as it's wet, cold, and dark. A lot of them live more than 5 miles outside the city centre choose to travel by car and are more likely to go elsewhere like Worthing, Crawley etc which they feel is more welcoming with cheaper parking charges. Local businesses in Brighton are reporting that footfall has dropped.

PD said that Brighton lacks public spaces to relax and kill time, there isn't much to do if you're between meetings other than sit in a coffee shop. In the summer you can go to the beach or sit in front of the Pavilion but there are not many resting spaces. You can't kill time wandering around an art gallery, shopping is really the only activity on offer.

IL said that his cousin visited from Brisbane for one night and chose to spend her day in Kingston because she wanted to go to John Lewis. The car park charge was half of what it is in Brighton, and it's much cleaner.

IM said she normally ends up walking down the pier and her daughter really likes going around the Pavilion. They have a deal where residents can visit multiple times on one ticket. They also like to go around the Brighton Museum. It would be good if there was more of a "wow factor" to pull in more people to the city centre.

IL mentioned the Martlett's art trails and how they made people go to parts of Brighton they wouldn't normally go to. Most visitors will typically go to the beach, SeaLife Centre, have a coffee and then go home again.

IM said there is a lack of data. She works for Restaurants Brighton, which is a business that markets restaurants, they are positive spirited and are always looking to share positive things that are going on. They have a weekly newsletter and work with restaurants and suppliers, some pay, some don't. There can't be a restaurant scene based around 1 restaurant, there needs to be different kinds of restaurants for different people. Restaurants are closing faster than ever over the last 4 years but new ones are opening just as fast. IM doesn't think there are too many restaurants, but possibly too many coffee shops and bakeries. The state of the restaurant industry isn't great; a big challenge is staffing as they have to pay high wages for inexperienced people. They have been liaising with the Met College who are introducing a course for young people to work in the restaurant business. They also run the BRAVO awards and got 73,000 people voting for their best restaurant.

IB said staff are the underestimated piece of the puzzle as it's seen as a job and not a career. IM said that is a UK thing. She has spoken to a director of HR on cruise ships who hires restaurant staff from Croatia because people study hospitality for 2 years and it's seen as a career. In the UK, it's often students being hired as waiting staff who just want to earn a bit of money. The experience during Covid showed people that working in hospitality is stressful and a lot of people left the industry, the cost of living is a big factor as is Brexit, which was the catalyst for the decline when the numbers of front of house staff fell. VAT is also an issue. If someone wanted to be a career chef, there isn't anywhere to go to get experience. Some restaurants have asked for license extensions until 1am, this isn't just about extending their business, it's a way of diversifying their customers to get more through the door in order to survive. Some restaurants choose not to open on a Monday or Tuesday, Terre a Terre deliberately opens then to plug the gap. Others do a set lunch menu.

JW said there are a lot more industry deals being introduced like First Table which offers 50% off your meal.

IM said they are working on a sustainability project with the University of Brighton and published a co-authored paper on sustainable seafood. Brighton is on a UNESCO Living Coast which ties in really nicely with sustainable seafood; you could have a weekend of sustainable seafood around the city with restaurants offering the "catch of the day". It would be a reason for people to visit and travel sustainably. IM talked about data and that she would like to do a "hospitality pulse" monthly survey to see what footfall is like across the city and see how everyone is doing. It could be an open source project within the industry and the data would be shared. There is a lot of data on website and social media traffic where

their most popular pages are Sunday Roasts, Brunch and Offers. The challenge for the city is how to fill the quiet times like November.

IL said that breakfasts are popular and AE added that Moksha often has queues on the weekend.

IM talked about cooking experiences being popular and that there is a lot more that can be done with food. Hamburg hosted a project called “Bauhaus by the sea” where coastal cities participated in talks about how to live in a changing climate and offered tasting experiences such as different kinds of miso.

Gavin Stewart (GS) said that there is a cultural black hole in Brighton when it comes to contemporary art, there is no central place to act as the fulcrum for this kind of activity. Black Rock is being looked at for this, but it is also important to have short and medium term plans. GS said that footfall in the city isn’t declining, it’s the fact that people are not spending money that is the issue. There is a churn of businesses, entrepreneurs want to try out new things and Brighton is a good place to try random ideas. There are 500 businesses who are part of the BID. The vacancy rate in the city is 5% compared to 14% nationally. IL said that there are a lot of vacant offices.

GS is involved with the BID, Destination Experience Group, the LVEP and the Brighton & Hove Growth Board, which is a collaboration between the council and East and West Sussex County Councils. The DEG is for tourism focused businesses. The visitor economy is built on experience, culture and events. There is a lot going on in the city and the outdoor events are a big driver. BID had received matchfunding from the Arts Council which funded a walk-in cinema and they projected films onto the side of buildings which acted as a walking trail around the city. Collaboration is key to organising an event like White Night. Brighton hosts 3 major events every year, a range of festivals, with many of them run by the council. They need to diversify the nighttime offer. Commercial partners need to be willing to take a risk and lead the charge. Businesses have been saying that there is a strong demand but soft spending habits and so far the year has been met with cautious optimism mixed with real pressure. The Sealife Centre has had its highest performing year hosting strong evening events, the Pier reported a really good Christmas period, conferencing has been successful and the bus service is seeing growth. Hospitality and leisure are struggling, spending is down, there is a lack of confidence and recruitment has slowed. People are coming to the city, but it’s a good place to go and spend no money, particularly in the summer. The North Laine is buzzing during the day but is completely empty at night. The city had tried to have late night shopping but the businesses said it wasn’t worth it.

Transport is a frequently raised issue such as delays, rail replacement buses, and traffic. If the trains aren’t running, then it goes very quiet. Brighton & Hove buses are doing well, the City Sightseeing is very popular and expands the connections with the rest of the region. It needs to feel effortless to move around the city. Business events and conferences in the city are growing in strength and cultural venues are seeing increased demand in the evenings.

PD questioned whether the hotels should be contributing more to the city as they benefit from the promotion, particularly for conferences. IB said they had been looking at a visitors levy but the hotels didn’t want it. JW said that the hotels aren’t happy because they have to pay VisitBrighton to be promoted and then have to pay the conferencing team, effectively paying twice. More hotels are deciding not to be part of VisitBrighton as they can still attract

conference attendees without paying thousands. Hotels are a member of the Tourism Alliance but the General Managers now report to big umbrella companies so it is difficult to agree things with those who ultimately make the decisions. If there was a tourist tax, it could be reinvested into creating something to attract people to the city.

GS said shortages of talent, skills and workforce are one of the biggest threats to the hospitality industry. It would be worth them linking up with schools and colleges to encourage young people into the sector as a career. The University of Sussex is creating opportunities for student engagement and Erasmus is back; there is a need to invest in the talent pipeline. GS talked about AI and a new trend that is emerging where visitors use AI driven discovery to find new activities. AI can be used to create ready built itineraries for a week and people use AI platforms to search for things rather than SEO. Businesses need to be ready for this. VisitBrighton gets a lot of website hits and its content is optimised for AI discovery. It is a strategic shift and LVEP need to take this on and expand into the wider Sussex area.

JW said that people can look something up on AI and then directly book via a link, for a taxi or a table at a restaurant. IM said restaurants would struggle with this.

GS said we need to tap into international markets such as China, the US and Scandinavia. It would be good to promote via Gatwick but we need to catch tourists at the point of sale so that they receive some information or a link at the point of booking that promote an activity. Brighton has great restaurants and it would be good to promote gastro-tourism for the foodies. There are Sussex Wines that are well-known, some that have won regional and international awards. There is an opportunity at Black Rock to redevelop and create a future cultural anchor. There is a lot that can be used to promote the city; such as heritage assets, anniversaries such as the Albion's 125th anniversary, untapped student market, and regional collaborations that could be better aligned through the LVEP and the Sussex and Brighton Strategic Authority. Following devolution, there will hopefully be more investment from central government.

The Look and Feel of the city is important, it was felt that the council could be doing more with the deep cleansing programme as GS hasn't noticed a huge difference. A visitor levy could be spent on improving how the city looks.

PD said that in a recent Time Out poll, Brighton was number 8 globally for the best city to go out. IB added that 84% said that Britain is a welcome place to go, people like to bar hop and it offers a diverse experience.

Ben Garcia (BG) works for Brighton & Hove buses, Spirit of Sussex coaches, the Destination Experience Group, Possibility People and Metrobus. Brighton & Hove Buses, Metrobus and Spirit of Sussex operate over 500 vehicles and carry the highest number of bus passengers per head in the UK, with over 50 million journeys per year. Successful partnerships have been delivered through discounted tickets with attractions including Sea Life Centre, Volks Railway and Brighton Museum. The "Days Out" campaign promotes attractions and events across the city. Metrobus operates a 24-hour bus service via Gatwick, connecting visitors to Crawley. From Crawley, the 273 operates a fast service to Brighton. The City Sightseeing bus receives positive feedback. There are nine night bus routes, eight operated by Brighton & Hove, providing overnight connections to places such as Lewes, Peacehaven and Eastbourne and supporting the 24-hour economy. To put the scale of the network into context: Greater Manchester has 19 night bus routes and approximately 1,600 buses. Brighton & Hove has 9 night bus routes and approximately 300 buses. Of Greater

Manchester's 19 night routes, serving all ten boroughs, only two operate seven nights a week. Brighton & Hove has eight night routes operating seven nights a week, at least hourly throughout the night. Greater Manchester has a population of around 3 million people, compared with around 280,000 people in Brighton & Hove. Greater Manchester has around ten times the population of Brighton & Hove and more than five times the number of buses. Despite this, Brighton & Hove operates four times as many night bus routes that run seven nights a week. With eight all-week night routes, Brighton & Hove has one of the most comprehensive night bus networks in the UK for a city of its size, helping support residents, visitors, hospitality workers and the wider night-time economy both within the city and across the wider region. The bus company has leader status in accessibility and has been working with disability groups to introduce low level flooring, audio announcements, discounted tickets for unpaid carers, dementia friendly flooring, the helping hand scheme and create space for 2 wheelchairs. They are working with the council on Park & Ride service. JW asked about the Sightseeing bus and how long it operates for. BG said it stops in November and the number 77 reduces its service over the winter months.

IL said having an open top bus along the seafront would attract more people. BG said this was trialled but there wasn't much demand.

PA asked about the Christmas markets and ice rink. IB said there won't be an ice rink this year and there isn't the power infrastructure to run an ice rink except to use diesel which they felt was irresponsible. DM said the provider doesn't want to use diesel and they had looked at every option. Christmas markets haven't worked in the city. He suggested the buses had an announcement at some bus stops to say "get off this stop for the i360 etc". BG said they do have some of those announcements, such as Preston Manor, but are happy to look at specific suggestions. Next-stop announcements on buses provide vital audio and visual information to ensure all passengers can travel confidently and independently. Primarily, these systems deliver essential accessibility support for blind, partially sighted, or hearing-impaired passengers who rely on clear cues to navigate their journeys. They also offer valuable reassurance to tourists and passengers unfamiliar with a route, keeping everyone informed of upcoming stops, route directions, and sudden service diversions. Furthermore, providing these clear announcements is increasingly becoming a legal requirement for local bus and coach operators under UK Department for Transport rules.

DM said it would be good to get more people to explore the wider Sussex region. JW said a visitor card would be good that includes transport and entrance fee to attractions. IM said it needs a strategic leadership and vision.

AE said if these schemes existed, what channel would be used to promote it. It would be good to have deals where you buy a rail ticket from a different city that offers discounted entry to a Brighton attraction to encourage them to visit.

JW asked when the last train is back to London and the general feeling was it was too early. BG said it is an issue and East Sussex Council says people spend more when they travel by bus than by car.

Prepared notes from Gavin Stewart shared after the meeting:

The State of Tourism in Brighton & Hove (2026)

Good afternoon everyone, my name is Gavin Stewart and I am the CEO of Brilliant Brighton, the city's Business Improvement District. I also chair the city's Destination

Experience Group (DEG) and sit on the Sussex LVEP. The DEG is made up of wide selection of tourism focused businesses, from hotels and attractions to transport, retail and education.

Drawing on feedback from the DEG, as well as day to day observations from the Business Improvement District, I want to take ten minutes to reflect on where Brighton & Hove's visitor economy stands today - its strengths, its pressures, and the opportunities we must seize together.

1. A Visitor Economy Built on Experiences, Culture, and Events

Brighton & Hove continues to punch above its weight as a cultural and experiential destination. The city's outdoor events programme remains one of the most significant drivers of visitor activity. As Ian Baird highlighted to the DEG group, the city hosts three major events, ten festivals, and over 150 community events, generating more than £120 million in economic benefit.

Events like Pride, the Marathon, the Great Escape, and the Rugby World Cup don't just bring visitors - they shape the city's identity. And the council's renewed strategy, with the appropriate events planning permissions now being secured across key sites, shows a commitment to keeping events central to our visitor offer.

But we also heard a clear message: we need to diversify into shoulder season and winter programming, and that will require commercial partners willing to take on risk. The opportunity is there; the question is whether the ecosystem can support it.

2. A Mixed Picture for 2026: Strong Demand, Soft Spend

Across the sector, the story of 2026 so far is one of cautious optimism mixed with real pressure. It's too soon to get an overall feel for the 2026 summer season, so we will need to revisit this in the near future, however, feedback up until mid-July suggested that some attractions are performing exceptionally well. As Sea Life noted, "2025 was one of their highest performing years," and they continue to see strong evening event demand linked to conferences. The Palace Pier reported a good Christmas period. Bus services are seeing year on year growth.

But hospitality and leisure businesses are facing a different reality. Rising costs, business rates, and inflation are biting hard. As one member of the DEG put starkly, "Spend is down on hospitality and there is a lack of confidence." Rates are dropping, recruitment is slowing, and secondary spend is under pressure.

This divergence - strong footfall but weaker spend - is becoming a defining feature of the city's visitor economy.

3. Transport, Mobility, and the Visitor Experience

Transport continues to be one of the most frequently raised issues. From Valley Gardens delays to weekend rail replacement services, travel friction is affecting both residents and visitors.

Brighton & Hove Buses are doing excellent work - new sightseeing services, expanded regional connections, and partnerships with attractions - but the broader

picture is more challenging. Coastal congestion, east west connectivity, and parking pressures remain structural barriers to growth.

If we want visitors to stay longer and spend more, movement around the city must feel effortless. Right now, it doesn't.

4. Business Events: A Growing Strength

One of the most encouraging trends is the growth in business events and conferences. VisitBrighton's 2026 diary is strong, with a solid event bookings in the conferencing diary (such as NEU, IATEFL, PCS and BISA). Hotels are hosting healthcare conferences, fam trips, and international delegations. Cultural venues are seeing increased demand for evening events linked to conferences.

As we all know, this matters because business visitors spend more, stay longer, and return for leisure. The city's ability to attract and retain this market is a major competitive advantage.

The rise of multi venue events, as noted by IMEX, also plays to Brighton's strengths: compact geography, diverse venues, and a strong cultural backdrop.

5. Talent, Skills, and the Future Workforce

Skills shortages remain one of the biggest threats to the visitor economy. Hospitality Connect's model - linking venues with schools, SEND provision, and careers hubs - is exactly the kind of long term intervention the city needs.

The University of Sussex's expansion—from 4,000 to 7,000 beds—creates new opportunities for student engagement, internships, and consultancy. Erasmus and youth mobility schemes will bring more international students, who are both visitors and part time workers.

If we want a resilient visitor economy, we must invest in the talent pipeline now, not wait for the next crisis.

6. Digital Discovery and AI Driven Visitor Behaviour

A major emerging trend is how visitors find and choose destinations. As discussed in the July DEG, AI driven discovery is reshaping trip planning. Businesses were encouraged to ensure their content is "clear, accurate, and optimised for AI-driven discovery."

It's important to stress that this is not a technical detail - it's a strategic shift. If Brighton's digital presence is fragmented, inconsistent, or poorly structured, we will lose visibility to destinations that invest in digital storytelling.

The LVEP work is crucial here: aligning branding, content, and regional narratives so Brighton & Hove is discoverable, compelling, and competitive.

7. Regional Partnership Opportunities

Work with the Visit Gatwick Partnership looks positive moving forward, with VB being a central supporter of upcoming China fam trips to the city and region. The role of the Sussex LVEP too is important in placing B&H as a central pillar of the wider

regional tourism story, ensuring we are front and centre of international campaigns along with the region's other major assets.

Upcoming work in this area includes:

- i. Guanxi China Roadshow
- ii. VisitBritain China Fam Trip dinner
- iii. Arrivals graphics within Gatwick terminals showcasing the Brighton & Hove and Sussex offer.

8. Opportunities We Must Seize

Looking ahead, several opportunities stand out:

- Gastro tourism and Sussex wine: a growing regional brand with huge potential for itineraries, experiences, and storytelling.
- Black Rock redevelopment: a future cultural anchor with meanwhile uses already underway.
- Anniversaries and heritage moments: from the Regency Ball to BHAFC's 125th anniversary, these are ready made narratives for destination marketing.
- Student engagement: a major untapped market for both workforce and visitor activity.
- Regional collaboration: the Combined County Authority and LVEP structures give us a chance to align transport, growth, and visitor strategy at scale.
- Look and Feel: this comes up time and time again with BID and DEG businesses. The BID has delivered a short-lived chewing gum and graffiti removal scheme, which was well received but costly. The council has begun a deep cleansing programme, which is welcomed, but we could maybe be doing more to advertise this and let people understand that the city cares about the visitor experience at every level.
- Focus on specific markets: We all want more people who fly into Gatwick to head south instead of north to London, but the reality is, that decision is made at point of booking, not point of landing. We need to work on those territories with focused campaigns to drive visits to the city. A good example of this is the great work that VB has done with the Nordic markets as well as the proposed partnerships to focus on the Chinese market which I've spoken about previously. Building on that success feels like an obvious positive move.

9. A Realistic Conclusion

Brighton & Hove's visitor economy is resilient, creative, and full of potential. But it is also under strain. Costs are rising, confidence is fragile, and transport challenges persist.

Yet the city's strengths remain undeniable: culture, events, experiences, business tourism, and a brand that resonates nationally and internationally.

If we can align strategy, improve mobility, invest in skills, and embrace digital discovery, Brighton & Hove will not just maintain its position - it will grow it.

The visitor economy is not a side industry. It is one of the city's greatest assets. And with the right coordination, leadership, and ambition, 2026 can be a year of renewal rather than retrenchment.

Thank you.

DATA

Brighton & Hove's visitor economy generates significant economic output, with clear, well evidenced headline figures. These bullet points summarise the latest available data from the 2024 Cambridge Economic Impact Model, published by VisitBrighton.

Economic Output of the Brighton & Hove Visitor Economy (2024)

- £1.39 billion total economic value generated by tourism (direct, indirect, and induced).
- 12.2 million total trips (day + staying).
- £979 million direct visitor spend from trips.
- £414 million indirect and induced spend, supporting supply chains and wider economic activity.
- 25,677 actual jobs supported, representing 18% of all employment in the city.
- Staying visitors generate 65% of total tourism value (£909 million), despite being only 14% of trips.
- International staying visitors contribute £233 million, with longer stays and higher spend.
- Day visitors generate £378 million, representing 35% of total value.
- Overnight visitors spend significantly more per trip:
 - Holiday visitors: £359.87 per stay
 - Business visitors: £324.64 per stay
- Breakdown of direct expenditure:
 - Accommodation: £200m
 - Retail: £229m
 - Catering: £281m
 - Entertainment: £117m
 - Transport: £91m

Strategic Overview

- Brighton & Hove's visitor economy is high value, not just high volume.
- Staying visitors - especially international - are the core economic engine.
- Tourism is one of the city's largest employment sectors, underpinning nearly one fifth of all jobs.
- The sector's value is spread across accommodation, food, retail, culture, transport, and events, making it central to city centre vitality.

Task & Finish Group Meeting 3 – 16/09/26

Members present: Cllrs Evans (Chair), Cattell, Earthey,

Apologies: Cllr Lyons, Thomson,

Witnesses/Officers supporting: Lucy Davies, CEO, Brighton Dome and Festival, Michael Kill, [Night-Time Industries Association](#), Howard Barden, Head of Culture and Events (BHCC), Darren Johnson, Conference Sale Manager (BHCC), Emma Thurlow, Business & Sales Manager (BHCC), Ian Baird (Outdoor Events Development Manager), Neha Holmes (Local Growth and Visitor Economy Officer), Giles Rossington, (Overview & Scrutiny Manager), Natalie Sacks-Hammond, (Overview & Scrutiny Officer).

Cllr Evans (AE) welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanking witnesses for finding the time to attend. She reminded everyone that the meeting was not in public, but that the Task & Finish Group (TFG) would be producing a report which would be published, with evidence from witnesses referenced or quoted. A note of the meeting will be circulated to all witnesses to check for accuracy.

Lucy Davies (LD) explained that the Brighton Dome's work is strongly place-based, with most attendees being local residents who typically walk to the venue. During Brighton Festival, activities extend across the city and attract a wider regional and national audience, increasing visitor numbers. While the Dome plays an important role in fostering a sense of belonging and supporting the city's identity, the Festival makes a more significant contribution to the visitor economy. Their activities are closely linked to the nighttime economy, as most events take place in the evenings. LD described the experience of walking across Waterloo Bridge in the wintertime and looking at the lights on the South Bank, which are effective in making the area attractive at night, making it feel warm, alive and safe. When putting on events, there is going to be tension between meeting the obligations of Martyn's Law such as bag checks, and keeping activities inclusive and welcoming. The conferencing team at the Dome have said that conference delegates are future leisure visitors and we need to create easy ways for them to be familiar with the city through things like walking tours to persuade them to come back again with their family. Some organisers add a leisure day at the end of the conference. There also needs to be good links between the venue and the hotels. Cross-promotion is underdeveloped and attractions could collaborate better, such as doing more with the Pavilion Estate. The busy times in the artistic calendar are February, March, October and November; it would be good to see how to share the volume of activity and tap into it more. The touring companies are a potential source as they stay in the city for work but could be incentivised to stay longer or return later. LD talked about the National Theatre trialling earlier start times for their shows at 6.30pm and to encourage pre-show and post-show dinners. LD said they are planning a collaborative show at the Leonardo Hotel in February, which is a new, creative idea using a different space in the city and could be used to attract visitors in a less busy month. LD is a member of the newly formed Culture Sussex, which aims to join up with cultural leaders across East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove. It's a very dynamic group producing lots of new ideas linking in with the new Prosperity Strategy being put together by the Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority.

Ian Baird (IB) said it was an interesting idea to introduce an earlier start time for shows as there is a gap between cafes closing at 4pm and the nighttime venues opening around 7pm. This could bridge that gap for a non-alcohol lead audience outside of an alcohol dominated

environment. IB said he had been talking with the Flour Pot Cafe who also want to bridge this gap but don't have the market for it. It would be good to explore opening up different spaces and support businesses to find that market to open between 4pm and 6pm to lead into the nighttime economy.

LD said that February works for them and the hotel because it's quieter and they have the capacity to try new, exciting things. AE said that there are some restaurant offers in the 4pm to 7pm gap such as pre-theatre menus and First Table. There are places like Red Roaster in New Road where there are options for nibbles or coffees or proper meals.

Cllr Cattell (JC) said she had seen a show at the Komedia which started at 6.30pm and they had been able to book a table at a restaurant for 8.30pm which worked really well. They could encourage people to book at specific restaurants or even book a table at the same time as booking the show.

AE said that lighting at night is important. JC said lighting in trees is very effective in London and that it would help to make people feel safe, particularly on the seafront. Michael Kill (MK) said the safety element of lighting is important and talked about "light corridors" that were created in Luton to link hospitality hubs across the city to enable safe routes for people to go from one to the other. It transformed the way people moved around the city. AE said some parts of Brighton are spooky at night. JC said we could encourage different venues to introduce uplighting and they could do something with the twittens, for example, projections on the ground.

MK is the CEO for the Nighttime Industries Association, which is a trade body of 10,000 businesses across the UK and has strong links with central government. Local level representation is recognised as important. The appointment of the new Prime Minister has led to cautious optimism, as recent policy suggests a more supportive approach towards the sector. The sector has lost 28.7% of all nighttime economy businesses with 36.1% of nightclubs closing but more recently there has been a bounce back of around 4%. The sector has suffered due to safety issues and the transport offer after midnight. While there may be ambitions for a 24-hour city, businesses are unlikely to remain open later without clear evidence of demand. For the first time, they are seeing the evening economy outperforming the nighttime economy. There has been a 13% drop off for the late night economy – after midnight. Day parties are becoming more popular. Manchester is cited as performing very well which could be attributed to Andy Burnham and the "halo" effect that drives confidence for investment. Younger people spend less but the 35 – 40+ year old market are coming back; going out more and spending. There are different expectations where younger people want more tech-driven experiences and older people want more face-to-face human contact activities. The cost base has changed in the sector; the highest cost is staffing, but the second highest is now energy, which is a concern moving forwards. Businesses are creating procurement groups to collectively reduce energy costs as it is now 40% more expensive to operate than it was in 2020. This brings together businesses and the local authority to develop procurement strategies that help reduce operating costs. They could be encouraged to work collectively to purchase energy and other services, helping to lower their cost base and ease some of the immediate financial pressures they face.

The NTIA did a research piece asking consumers aged 18 to 30 what would make them go out later. The answers were: having more money, feeling safe at night and the guarantee of getting home easily. There are policy implications as well such as Martyn's Law which has made operating even more expensive. The security sector is moving to PAYE which creates additional costs. They will need 100,000 more security operatives to fulfil Martyn's Law.

National Insurance contributions have impacted young people finding work as everyone is paid at the same rates, so employers will hire the more experienced people. The Employment Rights Bill has also had an impact creating less flexibility in seasonal work, which has reduced the amount of work available for students. The sector is becoming more promoter driven who can hold events in non-traditional licensed spaces such as pop-up spaces and house parties, which bring a new set of challenges to police. The nights are getting earlier and people only have so much money and stamina so the challenge is how to keep them out.

MK talked about visiting China and how mobility is linked to commercial output, that transport should be treated as an economic infrastructure. In China it costs the equivalent of £2 to go anywhere in a taxi. Data is very important and the NTIA does a quarterly data review, which could be something that would benefit Brighton & Hove to really understand the state of the visitor economy. People want to go out but it is expensive. AE said that Brighton is recognised as the second most expensive place to go out in the UK.

JC said that a new Statement of Licensing Policy was introduced last year giving restaurants the flexibility to stay open later if they wanted to. It also has a focus on protecting music venues. She asked if the club culture had moved on. MK said it has evolved and the main challenge is that it is too expensive to operate clubs. The support measures offered during Covid were not good enough and clubs went into debt. The policing and transport offer doesn't exist after midnight so people are going home earlier. Young people, particularly students, tend to go to house parties more or if they are going out, they "pre-load" beforehand which means they spend less when at the club.

IB asked if there was a particularly successful city that is doing things the right way. Brighton is popular because it's small and people can venue-hop. He asked about the Purple Flag Scheme. MK said the Purple Flag Scheme allows the council to demonstrate that they're doing things the right way, but the industry doesn't rate it, and consumers don't know what it is. It does support consistent delivery and provides a clear framework. A stronger approach would be to establish a clear data structure, maintain performance indicators focused on cultural and social outcomes, and align these with wider policy objectives. New South Wales in Australia is a good example, and they have the first Nighttime Economy Minister in the world. They do quarterly reviews of data, judge how successful they are and adapt as needed. In the UK, people talk highly about Manchester whereas London has more challenges.

IB said that Brighton has some established night zones and asked whether it is beneficial to concentrate on those areas or to be more flexible. MK said that being adaptive is preferable because the market is flexible. It's tricky to shoehorn people into one location and it can result in pushback from the industry. It's better to be aware of what is going on in real time and be able to respond to the shift. He gave the example of Brick Lane in London that used to be a "no go" area and is now a hub of culture and creativity. This was caused by the market starting something new. We need to have a holistic approach to where people want to go and be up to date to adapt and ensure that the right services are in place.

Cllr Earthy (ME) asked what proportion of the cost base is for energy. MK said it was between 200% and 400% higher than it used to be. He suggested that the principle of bulk purchasing, such as for energy, could also be applied to staffing by creating a shared pool of people that organisations could access, which may be particularly useful for security personnel

ME said that he used to work in the energy business and that the idea of forming a collective purchasing group as a single block with a supplier such as Octopus Energy, could be

challenging. This is because for around four months of the year, the early evening period is the most volatile part of the energy market in terms of pricing. As a result, while suppliers may be willing to offer a group deal, it is unlikely to be as favourable as businesses might hope. Suppliers would also be likely to require members to commit to a tightly defined consumption profile, as significant changes in energy use during peak times can end up costing a lot. Any collective arrangement would need a mechanism to ensure that all participating businesses adhere to the agreed profile with the ability to penalise individual members whose energy usage deviates significantly from that agreement. ME offered support to help facilitate this arrangement.

Darren Johnson (DJ) said he echoed the issues about late night transport and that he had been speaking to restaurant and bar owners who need to leave work early just to get home on the last bus or train. AE said there are a small number of night buses and there is a gap between the regular service ending and the night bus starting. MK said that transport is a commercial entity and you can't deliver transport without customers and customers come from the businesses, so if they aren't going to provide things for the customers, it's a bit of a lost cause. There needs to be a collective approach to encouraging customers to stay later and use the transport services to make them viable. AE said that some people, particularly those working in the health service, work at odd times in the night and need transport to get home. Emma Thurlow (ET) said that young people tend to live further out from the city centre as rent is too high. AE said this is something the Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority could look at. There is a good bus service in Brighton & Hove but since most bus companies were privatised, they send the money out of the city to the parent company every year in profit. If a bus route doesn't make a profit, then they close it without considering whether the people in that area depend on that bus route.

DJ presented slides on the conference provision in Brighton & Hove. He explained that Visit Brighton is split into 3 departments: conferencing, partnership and marketing. Neha Holmes reaches out to the business community to sell partnerships and enable them to access benefits. Charlotte Barrow deals with the international marketing of the city. Darren and Emma work in the conferencing sector where they proactively go to conference organisers and bring them into the city. They generate proposals and host site visits. They have confirmed over 55 events per year and generated £1.1million in revenue for accommodation providers. Unfortunately, social and free time for conference delegates is an afterthought for the conference organisers. They are provided with suggested itineraries which some share with their audience and others don't. They do pre and post communications encouraging delegates to extend their stay especially if the conference leads on to a weekend. They offer a delegates deals card where discounts are provided at some bars and restaurants. They tie in with any outdoors events that are going on and will inform the organisers about the Brighton Festival in May, On the Beach festival etc which helps to sell the destination. Cultural activities and live music are very popular. They try to include local experiences like a Food Tour or a Health Walk and get these included on the conference registration site. There is an ambassador scheme working with local leaders in hospitals and universities to help drive their events into Brighton. They explored the idea of having an app but it was very expensive and many conferences have their own apps anyway.

AE said that 51 events translates to 1 per week and asked about capacity to expand. Howard Barden (HB) explained that Visit Brighton covers all venues in the city, not just the Brighton Centre. The conference market is in the spring and autumn so it brings people into the city in the less busy months. It is fairly quiet during mid June to early September. There are trade events that are less seasonal. JC asked if the Brighton Centre was a big enough venue. HB said that some conferences need a really big area with breakout spaces and the Brighton Centre doesn't have that capacity. It is a good venue because of its location as it has great sea views, lots of hotels nearby and transport hubs. The Brighton Centre has

grown with the industry and now plays a major role in entertainment for the city. It also hosts political party conferences and university graduations.

ET said she looks after the conference sales team at the Brighton Centre and they have recently opened up a new space at the back of the building called The Wing. It has been re-branded and can host conferences with an 80 – 400 delegate capacity. The Brighton Centre has 2 main sources of commercial income which are conferences and live entertainment. The Brighton Centre sells exclusive hire to one conference at a time which normally last around 4 days. Conferences have got shorter due to the cost of living as people want to meet in person but for not as long. The number of bed nights has dropped. Return customers are very beneficial and they get bookings way into the future. There is a return customer booking for 2037. They have hosted almost 100,000 delegates in 2026.

ET talked about The Wing which has been refurbished to have a younger, fresher vibe and is a multi-purpose space. They offer a simple day rate which includes all the spaces, catering, and the AV which is more accessible to new markets, including local communities and businesses. They have hosted the BTN Illustration Fair, job fairs, Create Conference and will be hosting the auction for the Amaze Book Bench trail.

JC asked if The Wing could host small gigs. HB said the AV isn't set up for that and they don't want to compete with smaller venues in the area who already offer this.

ET said the economic value of confirmed conferences was around £46 million in 2022 and is now £55.5 million in 2026. The average lead in time is 2 years and they are always looking at the future. Setbacks can have a big impact. DJ said there is a lot of value in international business as people will stay longer. He used to represent Brighton at international trade shows and events, but budget issues have meant he hasn't gone for a while. There are big trade shows in Barcelona and Frankfurt.

HB said there may be more money available with the new Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority and that a tourism levy might be coming. He questioned where the money generated from the levy would go. Liverpool has introduced a levy and directed the money into an international campaign and that Visit Liverpool is very big. Asked if the international market had a lot of repeated custom, HB said it did not as they tend to move conferences around different countries.

JC said that people would travel internationally to gigs for the big names. HB said the Brighton Centre is too small and they would go to the AMEX stadium or the cricket ground instead. They do host a lot of comedy because the space is big enough but still intimate. JC said the tourist offer is really important as it underpins hotels and retail and offers gateway jobs. ET said that shops and restaurants would close without tourism.

AE said that what benefits one business will benefit all. Visit Brighton only promotes its partners who have paid which means if a business isn't a partner they won't be promoted. HB said that a large proportion of Visit Brighton's membership is from the hotels and if they decided not to pay, it leaves it quite vulnerable. ET said that Visit Brighton is seen as a money generator and is always under scrutiny because it is not statutory. It needs to be nurtured and invested in because it's work is so important to the city.

JC said it would be good to make Brighton Town Hall into a proper civic space but it desperately needs repairs done. That space could be sold to people. ME said it used to be a venue at the Festival for ghost stories. ET said there is a potential for it to be used for cultural tourism tours. ET referred to an event called Brighton Unconventional that VisitBrighton and the council are hosting in collaboration with their hotel and venue partners across the city. It will take place in 2027 weekend 7-9th of May it will include a drinks

reception at Brighton Royal Pavillion and a Brighton hotel and venue exhibition for event buyers in the Skyline at the Brighton Centre. They have partner buy-in and expect to bring around 150-200 event buyers to the city for this event.

HB said that the Brighton SEO conference started in a room above a pub and is now hosted at the Brighton Centre. It is now going to America with the same branding and name, which is good promotion for the city.

Task & Finish Group Meeting 4 – 25/09/26

Members: Cllrs Amanda Evans (AE), Mark Earthey (ME), Ivan Lyons (IL)

BHCC Officers: Ian Baird (IB), Natasha Bridge (NB), Natalie Sacks-Hammond, Giles Rossington

Witnesses: Natalie Wyatt, Managing Director, Liverpool City Region and Destination Partnership (NW); Carly Heath, Nightlife Culture (CH); Herve Guyat & Rekha Sohun, Hotel representatives (HG) (RS)

Apologies: Cllrs Alison Thomson, Julie Cattell, Marina Lademacher, Bridget Fishleigh

Evidence from Natalie Wyatt, MD, Liverpool City Region Destination Partnership

NW described Liverpool City Region Destination Partnership:

- Responsible for promoting whole of city region, but uses Liverpool as access brand
- Public/private sector board chaired by Lord Birkenhead (Tony Hall, former BBC Deputy DG)
- Funded by Combined Authority and by Liverpool City Council
- Focus on increasing overnight stays through better marketing
- Liverpool is a recognised brand, but more needs to be done to promote local coast and countryside
- Work closely with local hospitality industry on workforce and workforce skills issues
- Work very closely with local and regional transport operators
- The local visitor economy has grown by 9% in recent years, but day trip numbers are doing better than overnight stays
- The Partnership works with a range of partners, including local authorities, universities, transport operators, attractions/venues, and the culture and business sectors
- Universities are a key partner as they have students from all around the world. Also, academics have a role to play as ambassadors
- The Partnership has a programme to plug downtimes across the year
- The Partnership employs an International Bidding Manager. This is an important role as business tourism is critical
- Data is key to understanding where to invest and promote. The Partnership works with an organisation called Sojourn to understand the ways in which marketing has

impacted (e.g. whether marketing campaigns have had a positive impact on train ticket sales). Also developing a data dashboard

- The Partnership works closely with LCC Culture team. There is regional funding for culture – e.g. £600k pa mayoral pot
- Business tourism – the Partnership looks at local business strengths across the city region, with a focus on promoting conference opportunities
- Labour Conference represents a major opportunity to promote the region. Events like this are important and may justify subvention - currently via ABID (Accommodation Business Improvement District) funding, but potentially via OVL (Overnight Visitor levy) in the future
- Focus on making venues accessible, both because it's the right thing to do and because there is value in promoting accessibility tourism
- Measures of success include overnight stay rates, hotel occupancy rates, visitor spend, number of events/conferences held, perceptions of city region as a destination
- Challenges include funding issues across public sector, competition from other UK destinations, and hospitality workforce pressures
- Recommendations for other areas would include: focus on growing your local partnerships and focus on value rather than volume.

IL: Are ambassadors paid? NW: no, all are unpaid. They do it because they are committed to the region and because it can help them professionally. The Partnership runs events to promote the ambassador role.

IL: has the ABID impacted negatively on visitor numbers? NW: no. The ABID charges a small amount to overnight visitors, raising C£4.9M pa. This is used for various things, including subvention of Lab conference. OVL is expected to raise significantly more than the ABID and there are commitments to reserve it to support the visitor economy. There are some practical issues here as ABID is due to end before OVL begins and planning will be needed on how to bridge this gap. IB: important to note that B&H does not have an ABID so the difficulties of moving from ABID to OVL do not apply. However, it will be important to ensure that local OVL funding supports a focus on attracting more high-spend visitors.

ME: where do your overnight visitors come from? NW: target market is mainly Europe and USA. There are lots of more local overnight stays also but not sure where these tend to come from.

NB: how joined up is marketing across the city region? NW: it's becoming more joined up, with Liverpool used as the 'attract brand'. There has been discussion about forming and centralised marketing team.

IB: what's the read-across to nighttime economy? NW: there's a nighttime economy rep on the Partnership board who lobbies on parking etc. The Partnership does promote nightlife as an attraction to visitors. Key to a successful nighttime economy is transport. The Partnership lobbies on this – we're not all the way there yet, but are making progress and more devolved powers will help.

AE: tell us about accessibility. NW: this is important. The Partnership holds 2 accessibility events pa and encourages local businesses to be more accessible, to share best practice

and to support bids for accessibility funding. People with disabilities have money to spend, so there is a financial incentive to get accessibility right. **Possible REC?**

Evidence from Carly Heath (CH), Nightlife Culture

CH works independently but previously worked with Bristol City Council (BCC) as their Nighttime Economy Advisor. CH told the TFG:

- 41% of Bristol's jobs are 6pm-6am. This is because of a large nighttime economy, but also Bristol has a large commercial tidal port which is often at its busiest at night
- Bristol has C60k students, soon to rise to 80K. The city has a very young population, even younger than BH.
- Rent to earnings ratio is now one of the highest in the UK
- There are big challenges with transport – CH wishes Bristol had BH level bus services
- The nighttime economy is relatively stable, having recovered well from Covid
- The city uses 'meanwhile' space effectively to support cultural activity
- Music is hugely important to the city economy. There is much more activity than indicated by licensing data. Much of this activity is delivered by small venues
- BR relief has helped the music industry survive. However, nightclubs are not eligible for relief which makes no sense
- 'Bristol Rules' was intended as a time-limited nighttime safety campaign but has been very successful and has effectively become embedded
- Lots of effective partnership working. There's a single city centre bid (managed by Visit Bristol/Visit West) and the city universities are increasingly good at working in partnerships
- There has been good work with experience businesses to integrate experiences into the Bristol visitor offer
- There is a well-established Bath/Cotswolds itinerary for international visitors and Bristol does try and tap into this, although it's generally a different type of tourist that's attracted to Bristol – lots of counter-cultural tourism. Bristol attracts lots of regional tourism from SW England and S Wales.

IL: what about Park & Ride? CH: there are 3 on the edges of Bristol. However, they are not available for overnight visitors. Bristol does not welcome cars into the city centre – there is a clean air zone that discourages drivers + very high parking charges.

IL: year-round tourism? CH: Bristol is actually busier in the winter than the summer, when it competes with Devon/Cornwall. There are year-round events such as St Paul's Carnival, Balloon Fest, Harbour Festival

GR: Are you worried about impact of Martyn's Law? CH: not really – Bristol is predominantly about smaller venues which aren't required to do a lot more under the new laws. BCC Licensing Team works very closely with businesses also.

Evidence from Herve Guyat (HG) & Rekha Sohun (RS), Hotel representatives

RS is General Manager, Brighton Hilton. She told the TFG:

- BH is a great city to operate in, but there are challenges in winter where there's a big drop in occupancies
- The city doesn't have much to offer in the winter – it doesn't feel very festive: no Christmas Market, no decorations on the seafront, no winter events
- Not enough is done to market BH – the fact that Visit Brighton no longer regularly attends trade shows is damaging
- We need a better narrative to sell BH – people in rest of world don't know what BH has to offer, its proximity to London etc.
- BH would benefit from a central marketing team
- Cleanliness is a major issue which really impacts on visitors. The council needs to ramp-up its operations in the summer

HG runs a small hotel in Kemptown. He told the TFG:

- Hotels are closing due to lack of winter custom
- The lack of events in the winter is a major issue, particularly as the ice rink won't be operating this year
- There are clear benefits to the city of people staying overnight – more needs to be done to encourage this
- BH must not become a seaside town in the summer that shuts in the winter. AE agreed, noting that particular efforts should be made to avoid boarded-up shops in iconic locations like Dukes Lane
- ASB is a real issue, particularly on St James St. Many visitors do not feel safe in Kemptown even in day time. RS agreed – similar issues on the seafront and especially around Regency Square. Police do little to help.
- BH should not be contemplating introducing an OVL when the city is unsafe and dirty. RS added that if OVL is introduced it should be ringfenced to tourism.

Task & Finish Group – Meeting with Bath & Northeast Somerset Council – 15/09/26

Members present: Cllrs Evans (Chair), Cattell, Earthey, Thomson, Lademacher

Apologies: Cllr Lyons, Luke Proudfoot (Overview & Scrutiny Officer)

Witnesses/Officers supporting: Robert Campbell (Director of Culture and Heritage, Bath and Northeast Somerset Council) Ian Baird (Outdoor Events Development Manager) Giles Rossington, (Overview & Scrutiny Manager), Natalie Sacks-Hammond, (Overview & Scrutiny Officer).

Cllr Evans (AE) welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanking witnesses for finding the time to attend. She reminded everyone that the meeting was not in public, but that the Task & Finish Group (TFG) would be producing a report which would be published, with evidence from witnesses referenced or quoted. A note of the meeting will be circulated to all witnesses to check for accuracy.

Robert Campbell (RC) said that Bath and Northeast Somerset is unique in the UK culture visitor attraction sector because they have an asset in the Roman Baths and Pump Room that delivers a net surplus back to the council. This year, the service will turn over £29 million

returning a surplus of £13.2 million back to the council. This is one of the only heritage attractions in the UK that delivers a profit, most other famous national institutions like the British Museum are operating at a loss and subsidised by national government. Bath accommodates a million visitors each year and the council is so reliant on the visitor economy that it would be bankrupt without it. The council will receive a similar amount from its parking estate and some from being a freeholder for properties in the city centre. The council's finances are intertwined with the fortunes of the visitor economy. As with most councils, the statutory pressures have increased and government grants have decreased which makes the risk profile much higher. At the end of August, they were £560,000 down on income targets primarily because there are less inbound visitors coming to the UK with a large decrease from America. The council doesn't have a visitor economy strategy and Robert is the only member of staff working on tourism. Before Covid, the council took the robustness of the visitor economy for granted and now need to put some strategies in place to make sure that Bath remains a significant destination in the UK. They are very seasonally driven and have traditional spikes during the school holidays, and mid-summer months which is when tourists visit and it gets very busy. They don't have any initiatives to bring people to the city off season but make the most of the busy periods through variable pricing structures by charging higher ticket prices in the busier months. This generates more income.

Cllr Cattell said she was surprised it was only Robert working with tourism and that their Cabinet Member is also responsible for the economy and sustainability. RC said that before Covid they had 20-years of consistent growth with steady income. Visitors don't vote so there isn't anyone representing them when there are well connected vocal people who have paid a lot to live in the city centre who are not welcoming to tourists. They support policies that prioritise the needs of residents over tourists. It's become a financial imperative as the money is plateauing and the council needs to make more people focussed on the importance of the visitor economy and not take it for granted.

Cllr Evans asked if he would get more staff. RC said it wasn't necessarily about having more people but better joined up working and having a strategic framework that prioritises the visitor economy when developing other policies such as transport or place management. They need to be aware of the visitor economy and make sure everything else supports it and makes it part of the process. The council is part of the West of England Combined Authority which recognises the visitor economy in its 10-year growth strategy and links up better with the wider region. The overnight visitor levy is coming.

Cllr Thomson asked about the freehold properties and whether they are rented to visitors. RC said they are part of the commercial estate and the council doesn't own any short-term lets or hotels. These properties are retail. There are 5.3 million trips made by visitors to Bath and the city centre has a vibrant retail and hospitality economy. There are around 90,000 residents which increases by around 30,000 students during term time whereas the total population of Bath and Northeast Somerset is 200,000, so visitors outweigh residents in the city. It is very popular due to being a filming location for shows like Bridgerton and the Roman baths attract a lot of people. The council has a number of assets which are economy dependent on attracting tourists, so when there is a global downturn it gets tricky, with factors such as the decline in America's economy and the war in the Middle East. This means there are less people visiting from abroad and it has an impact on the income generated.

Cllr Evans asked about the Christmas market which is always popular. RC said that it doesn't fall under his remit but there is a publicly available evaluation on the market on their website. The market is very central in the heritage core of the city and surrounds the Roman Baths and goes up the main shopping street. It is organised by the council but barely breaks even, the main economic benefit is for the businesses in the city including accommodation. Increasing security costs are an issue since the introduction of Martyn's Law as they spend a

large amount of money on vehicle mitigation bollards, enhanced CCTV in the city centre, and barrier systems.

Ian Baird asked about the retail offer; whether they are independent or high street outlets and what their attitude is towards the market. RC said that there are strong independent retail shops especially in the food and beverage sector. They used to complain about the market but they were reassured after being presented with the data that demonstrated that the market supported other businesses.

Cllr Cattell asked if they work with the rail company to offer deals or linked ticketing. RC said they had not but the attractions would like a joint ticket which would be a discounted offer to visitors. However, since the Roman Baths attract around a million visitors, they would essentially lose money if they were part of a linked ticket. They are not in the financial position to do so. They would like more people visiting from London and acknowledge at some parts of the day there are empty trains so a linked ticket could benefit both the council and the rail company.

Cllr Cattell said we are trying to encourage more people to stay overnight, that there are a lot of hotels on the seafront and the Seafront Development Board is seeking investment for new sites to improve those areas.

RC said that destinations prosper when they have a really clear idea of who their audience is. The council has outsourced its destination marketing to the Local Visitor Economy Partnership who are doing a good job but they need to work closer with them, the public and private sector who are all a part of the place management vision. It can be tricky working with the private sector as there are some tensions.

Cllr Earthey asked about a joint train and bus ticket. RC said they do not have this but that they have recently got a new mayor for their Strategic Authority and she is bringing these ideas to the table as they start to look more at the regional area than just the cities.

Cllr Thomson asked about space to develop in the city centre. RC said that they need to be creative, there are some sites but it's more about renovation of existing ones. They have a £45million project to create a new fashion museum in the city which is a redevelopment of an anchor building. Bath has an issue with a number of significant properties being landbanked by developers, which have a necrotic effect on retail sites around them. The council bought back the leasehold for the fashion museum which shows the council demonstrably driving inward investment into the wider retail estate across the city. They didn't do a compulsory purchase order as it came up for auction. Cllr Thomson talked about Dukes Lane and how it had 80% vacant units; it is owned by Kent County Council and they weren't interested in whether the units were vacant or not, only the value of the property. There was a similar issue with the Imperial Arcade which ended up being bought by a private company and those units are now shops and cafes. Could compulsory purchase orders be used to regenerate an area? RC said it's not an easy answer and there are large sums of money involved. They bought the building with a repayable grant from the Strategic Authority.

Cllr Thomson asked about the demographics of visitors to Bath and whether they tend to be older and more affluent than those visiting Brighton. RC explained that the starting point is to identify the audience you believe is most likely to engage with the offer and assess whether they align with the desired outcomes. Interventions can then be developed to attract or influence the target audience. Cllr Thomson noted that her ward sees a significant number of hen and stag parties, who often stay overnight and contribute to the local economy through accommodation spending.

Task & Finish Group - Meeting with Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council – 24/09/26

Members present: Cllrs Evans (Chair), Thomson,

Apologies: Cllrs Lyons, Earthey, Fishleigh, Cattell, Giles Rossington

Witnesses/Officers supporting: Amena Matin (Director of Investment and Development, Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council) Ian Baird (Outdoor Events Development Manager), Natasha Bridge (Senior Local Growth and Visitor Economy Officer) Natalie Sacks-Hammond, (Overview & Scrutiny Officer).

Cllr Evans (AE) welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanking witnesses for finding the time to attend. She reminded everyone that the meeting was not in public, but that the Task & Finish Group (TFG) would be producing a report which would be published, with evidence from witnesses referenced or quoted. A note of the meeting will be circulated to all witnesses to check for accuracy.

Amena Matin (AM) said that Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) have a thriving seasonal economy with 11 million visitors per year. However, this only translates into 1.65 million overnight stays. BCP has similar challenges to Brighton & Hove, and they have put clear strategies in place to meet them. They benefit from having three towns that offer something different and unique to visitors with Bournemouth being the place to go for the beach, entertainment and nightlife, Poole is about the harbour, water sports and marine heritage and Christchurch is a typical market town with heritage, nature and the harbour and is the more relaxing destination. Poole runs 36 international events per year which attracts people from abroad who will stay overnight. BCP has a good balance of attracting different kinds of audience demographics. They have been working on converting daytrippers into overnight stays and have 3 strategies to do so. The strategies are: working with existing partners and thinking of who else needs to be brought in; having a really clear plan and place marketing; and building their profile through external partners like Visit England. They have a Destination Management Board (DMB) which is like a tourist board who were set up in 2020 to advocate for the place. They have all the relevant businesses represented such as the BID, hoteliers, foreign language schools and universities. It has a diverse sector representation which is very valuable as they provide feedback on the current visitor economy offer and the reasons why people aren't staying overnight. Analysis shows that this is due to the cost of living as it's expensive to travel and stay overnight. To combat this, the DMB go out to different businesses and sectors and create a tourist partnership, which helps with the branding and marketing profile but also allows them to add to the visitor economy through individual offers. They feedback insights to the group, such as the hotels seeing people bringing food into the rooms rather than spending money in restaurants. To combat this, the team will reach out to local food and beverage retailers to create an offer to encourage them to spend in the local economy. They are working with their partners to build tourist partnerships and develop discounted offers that can be put into a value package for visitors. They work with the DMB to come up with a strong profile; the DMB do all the marketing and own all the websites. They are currently developing a "culture clash diary" to have one central place for the 1000 community and culture events to be listed and easily accessed by residents and visitors. They work with their Local Visitor Economic Partnership with Dorset and adopt a Destination Management Plan that's all about how they increase off-peak products throughout the year. This includes their markets, festivals and cultural programmes. They are in their 16th year of the Purple Flag Scheme. They use this in their promotion to challenge the perception that it's not safe to visit BCP.

Cllr Thomson (AT) said that safety is a key issue especially around recent reports of someone being spiked and mugged. She asked where BCP promote, whether it's national, the local region or including places like London. AM said the DMB are being less localised

with the promotion and looking more outwards including London. They opened Poole Museum this summer, which was funded with £10 million from the Arts Council, which will be a pull for visitors. They also do international trade shows with the hoteliers to encourage visitors from abroad. They are also working with the airport to promote the destinations. European countries and cultures like walking so they are creating walking trails, heritage trails and building packages that they think would attract those visitors.

AE asked about the international water sport events and whether they were one day or multiple days. AM said they tend to be during the week with some taking place over a series of days. They have competitions and participants generally stay in the area. People do travel to watch these events. They tend to take place during peak season although some stretch into the autumn but it depends on the quality of the water. Paddle Boarding events go into the autumn. They also provide courses and training and are building up the experience offer.

AE said they had a huge discrepancy between day trips and overnight stays and asked about the available accommodation. AM said the Bournemouth Hotel Association comes together to share intel and what the occupancy is looking like. The hotel offer varies in quality, with some properties benefiting from significant investment while others, despite their prime locations, offer a lower standard of accommodation. This provides a range of options, allowing visitors to choose between higher-quality hotels at a premium price and more affordable accommodation at a lower cost. The visitor economy levy acts as an incentive for hoteliers to improve their stock. BCP also has issues with short-term lets and they are trying to keep prices affordable.

AE asked if the hoteliers welcome the tourist tax as some can be resistant to it. AM said there is an appetite for the tourist tax but as long as it is reinvested into the place. In Scotland the levy was invested into other things like social housing. BCP have promised that it will go back into the visitor economy. Smaller hotels are concerned about the financial hit and there is a broader understanding that it could help if it was done well.

Ian Baird (IB) asked about the Purple Flag Scheme and whether they track the impact of it, do visitors know what it is and factor this in when choosing where to visit. AM said it's hard to measure but the main benefit is that it helps them promote the area with the ability to say it has been independently validated as a safe place. They also have Green and Blue Flags. They ask the hotels to collect data on their customer's reasons for visiting. The Purple Flag Scheme doesn't cost a lot and it is funded collectively by their partners.

IB asked about their commitment to reinvest the tourist levy if the powers for this is being transferred to the strategic authority. AM said they are not a devolved authority yet but they have been developing their growth plan with a stronger focus on the visitor economy. They are the main coastal attraction in the new proposed authority area.

Natasha Bridge (NB) asked about the data analysis and whether this was gathered directly from the hotels or through a third party. AM said the hotel association meets monthly and feed directly into the DMB that the council sits on.

AE asked to hear more about the DMB and their plans to specifically target year-round visitors. AM said that the DMB was set up in 2020 and are the tourist board for the area. It is chaired independently and made up of hoteliers, foreign language schools, universities, the town council, chambers and a whole mix of stakeholders. Their purpose is to champion the visitors economy in the area. They give updates on what is going on in their sectors that month, identify trends or issues and whether anything needs to be put in place. For example, the foreign language schools were having safety issues so they worked with the police to improve the situation. The members are any business that has a visitor or external person as part of their business and they feedback via the board. They come together as investment partners and generate income from the tourist websites they own. They say any funding would have the most impact on branding and marketing. They are developing the Culture

Clash Diary and using the cultural programme to attract year-round visitors. They have the Bournemouth International Centre that hosts big music events and conferences including the LGA but there are also smaller venues who also get some promotion. The Culture Clash Diary brings everything together so visitors can see everything and plan their visit. They have a festival called "Arts by the sea" which is held in September and aims to attract people back post-summer.

AE asked whether they have a big festival. AM said the "Arts by the sea" weekend is their main festival and there are others which are run by the BID all year round. They are planning a big event on the beach for next year which is out of season. AE said weather can be risky. AM said they need to keep people interested, to demonstrate that they are more than just the beach and there are other things happening. Following such as warm summer, they can use this to get people into the city centre to places with air con such as the museums. AE asked if the smaller festivals are indoors. AM said they are mostly outside at the moment but they are looking to do more indoor ones. They need to bring empty shops back into use in the city centre and plan to do pop-up events, music events and work with the universities to put things on. The Arts Council has a pot of funding for grass roots venues which they could bid into.

AE said that the high streets are struggling nationally, although Brighton is lucky to have so many independent shops. AT talked about Dukes Lane in Brighton which was 80% empty units and that EDF had sponsored some pop-up events there. During Pride, they had a drag act there. They do have some local investment in the city centre with Ikea buying Churchill Square and Uniqlo opening up soon. One empty unit is being turned into a boxing gym. AM said the high street comes up as the biggest challenge.

NB asked if having an external body marketing the city has been successful. AM said that the DMB has its own marketing team and it is successful because it is the industry putting together what they believe their place marketing should be. They use a membership model which is used to fund marketing. Each sector markets themselves as a sector so there is one distinct brand for the hotels, one for the football club and so on. For example, the hotel sector collectively contributes funding towards marketing, decides how those funds are allocated, and ensures the interests of the sector are represented.

Task & Finish Group – Meeting with Donna Close – 24/09/26

Members present: Cllrs Evans (Chair), Earthey

Apologies: Cllrs Lyons, Fishleigh, Thomson, Cattell,

Witnesses/Officers supporting: Donna Close (Director of White Night), Ian Baird (Outdoor Events Development Manager), Natasha Bridge (Senior Local Growth and Visitor Economy Officer) Giles Rossington (Scrutiny Manager) and Natalie Sacks-Hammond, (Overview & Scrutiny Officer).

Cllr Evans (AE) welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanking witnesses for finding the time to attend. She reminded everyone that the meeting was not in public, but that the Task & Finish Group (TFG) would be producing a report which would be published, with evidence from witnesses referenced or quoted. A note of the meeting will be circulated to all witnesses to check for accuracy.

Donna Close (DC) presented the slides on the White Night Festival. At the time, Donna was Head of Arts at Brighton & Hove City Council and festival development was part of her remit. She is now a Director of a company called Festivals and Events International where she has developed festival and event strategies for major cities such as a winter festival in Glasgow, a Halloween offer in Ireland that spans seven hubs and developing new concepts for places like Scarbrough Fair.

White Night ran from 2008 – 2011 from 6pm – 6am on the evening that the clocks go back. It became a new ritual for Brighton in the same way that Burning the Clocks did. Its tagline was "Do something different in the middle of the night". At the time, there was a lot of anti-social behaviour on Saturday nights and West Street was seen as a "no go" area. The festival encouraged people to go out at night and challenged artists to do something different and innovative. Everything was free and set in a public space in Brighton. It became so successful that it formed part of the council's bid for Purple Flag status and Donna spoke at a few conferences around the UK about it. White Night embodied the qualities that people associate with and take pride in about Brighton: being bold, independent and willing to take risks. Launched at a time when emerging technologies were opening up new creative possibilities, it provided artists with innovative ways to engage audiences. The event celebrated Brighton's identity as a European city, extending its vibrant café culture into the evening and partnering with the French sister festival, 'Nuit Blanche'. Transforming the entire city into a stage, it brought streets and public spaces to life through projections, installations and performances. Over four years, the festival grew significantly, attracting audiences of up to 45,000, expanding from 15 to 76 events, and showcasing more than 250 performances. They worked with a sound artist called Martin Ware and Driftwood Productions to create an immersive sound sculpture for when people came out of the clubs on West Street that would chill them out and make them happy. This was broadcast live to the University of Brighton where an academic who was a body language expert, was commenting on how the sound affected peoples' behaviours. They won an award for innovation. They also installed street pianos around the city. There was a takeover at the Open Market where they ran a soup kitchen and outdoor cinema. They had an act singing opera in the streets. They used the swimming pool and installed a film archive called "Dive in movies", they hosted a rubber duck hunt with 1000 ducks and had an underwater rave. These new partnerships allowed artists to be confident and ambitious and many of them went on to tour their work internationally and develop new careers. The budget was £2 million over four years which equated to £500,000 per festival. A million of this came from EU funding, which is obviously no longer available to the UK. The council, the Arts Council and partners all put funding towards the festival. They had a theme each year such as "love", "fortune" and "utopia". The festival took 18 months to plan. DC said that White Night shouldn't be recreated as it was and to make it relevant for the current time, as tech has developed and there are different challenges. It would be beneficial to focus on being truly "Brighton" and lean into this.

AE said that budget is a big challenge and it would cost a lot more to put a similar festival on now. Cllr Earthey (ME) said they could do an indicative budget in terms of who could bid in and questioned whether it would be open to commercial businesses or would that change the vibe in the same way that Pride has drifted away from its fundamental message. DC said it would be risky to call it "White Night" as for some people, there would be a high expectation. It would be better to call it something else and adapt to current times. They could make it very exciting to attract funders but it would need a lot of careful planning. We

don't want to set ourselves up to fail. AE said referring to "white" might have a connotation to the rise in racism and it wouldn't be good to have that kind of misinterpretation. IB said that people do remember White Night and the impact of it and the key thing now is its ability to make people think differently about the nighttime economy and how they interact with the city at night. It is a good opportunity to show the cultural organisations that they are valued and respected at a time of uncertain funding and budget cuts. There needs to be a reasonable budget because artists need to be paid effectively for the work that they do and not be reliant on doing it just for the good of the city.

DC said there is money out to be had out there, and you can be accessible and inclusive through charging those who can afford it and putting provisions in place to ensure those who can't can still have access. It is key to make sure activities are relevant to the now, co-creating with partners and planning it properly. White Night was cost effective because a lot of people were bringing their own resources, building it into their national portfolio funding applications or their own project funding because they really believed in it. To encourage more overnight stays, they could hold it over multiple nights, have multiple entry points, different trails and tours, and bookable offers.

AE asked about the winter festival in Glasgow and the Halloween event in Ireland. DC said that Fáilte Ireland (the Irish Tourist Board) wanted a new iconic festival to attract travellers. Ireland is the home of Halloween with the ancient pagan festival of Samhain. They pitched to the Irish government to invest in a 3 year project and was given funding of 750,000 Euros to develop the "Puka" festival. It was set near an ancient hill where the first fire was lit in 500 AD, which was part of the area that visitors didn't normally go to. It has turned into a bigger project called "Home of Halloween" which involves 7 different local authorities working to develop their unique visitor offer within that concept. It runs from mid-October and mid-November to coincide with the traditions of Samhain which are about the end of harvest, the coming of the darkness and the end of Autumn. Food is an important part of the festival and they have food fairs and nighttime feasting which are all bookable. DC noted that Glasgow's Christmas market offer was relatively limited, and there were many communities running separate seasonal activities. The city also had a range of lighting projects, cultural institutions and museum programmes operating independently. DC helped bring these various elements together into a coherent visitor offer, creating a unified winter festival experience for residents and visitors alike.

AE asked if there were other winter experiences that DC had been involved with. DC said she had been working on Scarborough Fair which had been commissioned by the Council. It became five different festivals including Scarborough Lights, that is held in January, which is a light show taking advantage of heritage buildings. This was funded by £1 million from the combined authority. It is effective because they understand what is already happening in the city at those times and tie them together into a cohesive offer.

AE said there was a clear story for White Night with the antisocial behaviour and the idea of reclaiming the streets at night. IB said they are opening another safe space at night near the Volks nightclub.

DC explained that White Night came to an end due to a lack of funding and the impact of austerity, which reflected a wider shift in attitudes towards cultural investment. She noted that her team was reduced from nine staff members to just Donna, illustrating the significant

capacity pressures and budget cuts experienced within the council. Further reductions have followed since then, creating additional challenges as councils are increasingly required to prioritise statutory services, with arts and culture often among the first areas to face cuts.

DC suggested holding the new version of White Night at the beginning of February to tap into the hope that winter is coming to an end and the beginning of spring.

Brighton & Hove City Council

Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item 38

Subject: Co-Operative Housing Task & Finish Group Scoping Report

Date of meeting: 3rd November 2026

Report of: Chair of Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer: Name: Natalie Sacks-Hammond

Email: Natalie.sacks-hammond@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Key Decision: No

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report is to establish a Task & Finish Group to explore co-operative housing schemes. It will examine the potential role of co-operative housing in addressing Brighton & Hove's housing challenges, including affordability, housing supply and housing insecurity. The Group will explore the benefits of co-operative housing, identify barriers to its growth, consider lessons from successful schemes in the UK and internationally, and assess what practical steps the council could take to support and expand co-operative housing as part of the city's housing offer.
- 1.2 This report includes a scoping report for the Task & Finish Group (Appendix 1) and draft Terms of Reference (Appendix 2).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee agrees to establish a Task & Finish Group to examine co-operative housing and its potential to address housing challenges in the city.
- 2.2 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee agrees the Terms of Reference, membership and duration of the Task & Finish Group as set out in Appendix 2.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 A Notice of Motion was submitted to Council on 29th January 2026 requesting that Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee establish a Task & Finish Group to explore how the council can support and expand the co-operative housing sector in Brighton & Hove. The motion highlighted the

need to raise awareness of co-operative housing, learn from best practice in other areas, and identify ways to support the delivery of affordable, community-led housing.

- 3.2 The Task & Finish Group will investigate the contribution co-operative housing can make to meeting the city's housing needs. This will include examining the opportunities and challenges facing existing and emerging co-operatives, considering funding and support mechanisms, reviewing the availability of land and housing stock, and assessing the role the council could play in facilitating future development. Evidence will be gathered from housing co-operatives, local authorities and sector specialists to inform recommendations.
- 3.3 Brighton & Hove faces significant housing challenges, including high private sector rents, growing demand for social and affordable housing, limited land availability and financial pressures. Co-operative housing has been identified both as an alternative housing management model that can provide more affordable and secure housing through resident control, and as a way of delivering new affordable homes and community-led development. It has the potential to contribute both to improving existing housing options and increasing the supply of genuinely affordable homes in the city. However, despite the presence of established co-operatives and interest from local residents and community groups, the sector remains relatively small and fragmented.
- 3.4 Area of focus for the Task & Finish Group may include:
- To explore what practical and realistic actions the council could take to enable the growth of co-operative housing and maximise its contribution to addressing housing need in the city
 - To understand how successful co-operative housing models operate in the UK and internationally
 - To identify barriers that prevent the creation and expansion of co-operative housing schemes locally and what support could be put in place to help
 - To explore how legal, governance and funding processes could be simplified or standardised to support new co-operatives
 - To see what funding opportunities are available through government, external organisations and the co-operative sector itself
 - To explore how to raise awareness of co-operative housing, particularly among younger people and those seeking affordable housing.
 - To see how the council can facilitate organisation of potential co-op groups and bring them together.
 - To see how the council could support co-operatives to access land and property for potential development of new affordable housing as well as the management of existing homes.
 - To speak with other councils in the UK who have successfully supported co-operative housing in their area
 - To speak with successful co-operative housing organisations both in the city and beyond

3.6 Task & Finish Group Scoping Report and Terms of Reference

More information on Co-Operative Housing is included in the Task & Finish Group scoping report (Appendix 1), including suggested areas of enquiry and witnesses. The draft Task & Finish Group Terms of Reference (Appendix 2) include suggested membership and duration of the Group.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 Members are free to amend the details of the Terms of Reference if they wish to pursue alternative options.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 This has not been considered at this stage but the Task & Finish Group will invite relevant community members to speak to the group as part of the process.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no expected financial implications associated with the establishment and operation of the Task & Finish Group as it is anticipated that any costs associated with their operation will be managed within the existing revenue budgets of each respective service area. The group will prepare a report that will be presented to the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee where the committee may decide to further refer the Task & Finish Group report recommendations to Cabinet for key decisions.

Name of finance officer consulted: John Lack Date consulted: 26/10/2026

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committees Terms of Reference in Part 2C of the Constitution provide for the Committee to establish informal task & finish groups to undertake in-depth reviews of specific issues. This group will then report back to the Committee with its conclusions next year.

Name of lawyer consulted: Allan Wells Date consulted 26/10/26

8. Risk implications

- 8.1 None specifically for this scrutiny report and the establishment of a Task & Finish Group

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 None specifically for this scrutiny report and the establishment of a Task & Finish Group

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 None specifically for this scrutiny report and the establishment of a Task & Finish Group

11. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 11.1 None specifically for this scrutiny report and the establishment of a Task & Finish Group

12. Conclusion

- 12.1 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee is being asked to establish a Task & Finish Group to examine co-operative housing and its potential to address housing challenges in the city and to agree to the Terms of Reference and membership of the group taking on this work.

Supporting Documentation

Appendices

- 1. Co-operative Housing Task & Finish Group Scoping Report
- 2. Co-operative Housing Task & Finish Group Terms of Reference

Co-operative Housing Task & Finish Group – Scoping Report

Membership: To be confirmed by Place O&S Committee.

Terms of Reference: ToR to be agreed by Place O&S committee.

Definition:

Co-operative housing ("Co-op") is a housing model in which residents collectively participate in the ownership, management, or governance of their homes through a democratically run organisation. Rather than housing being managed solely by a landlord or housing provider, residents have a direct role in decision-making and the operation of their community. The model aims to provide secure, affordable housing, promote community involvement, and give residents greater control over the management and development of their homes and neighbourhoods.

There are two main models of co-operative housing: the collective management of housing and the development of new homes through community-led ownership. Some co-operatives focus on the ownership and management of existing homes with multiple occupants, giving residents collective control over how their building is run and maintained. Others play a role in developing and building new homes and, in some cases, shaping the wider neighbourhood, bringing people together to acquire land, secure funding and commission the construction of affordable, community-led housing. As a result, co-operative housing can be both a management model and a means of increasing housing supply.

These kinds of schemes have historically been seen as a small scale, "niche" form of housing in the UK in comparison to European cities such as Zurich, where 20% of all residents live in a co-op that also typically include amenities such as shops, nurseries, hotels, restaurants and workspaces¹.

The Issue:

Today three in four new British homes are built by for-profit property developers² with the rest by housing associations and very few built by local authorities. This makes councils reliant on private developers to meet their targets for new social housing, and they often negotiate down the number that are actually delivered. Councils, under financial pressures, will accept the highest price offered when selling land or property which will generally be the big commercial property developers rather than community groups, who may have more sustainable and socially valuable ambitions³.

Brighton & Hove faces significant housing challenges, including high private sector rents, growing demand for social and affordable housing, limited land availability and financial pressures. Co-operative housing has been identified both as an alternative housing management model that can provide more affordable and secure housing through resident control, and as a way of delivering new affordable homes and community-led development. It has the potential to contribute both to improving existing housing options and increasing the supply of genuinely affordable homes in the city. However, despite the presence of

¹ [4. LG Co-Operative Housing.pdf](#)

² [Free land for those who will build social homes on it. Is this the radical solution to the UK's housing problem? | Phineas Harper | The Guardian](#)

³ [Free land for those who will build social homes on it. Is this the radical solution to the UK's housing problem? | Phineas Harper | The Guardian](#)

established co-operatives and interest from local residents and community groups, the sector remains relatively small and fragmented.

Barriers appear to include a lack of coordination across the sector, limited awareness and understanding of co-operative housing, lengthy and complex legal and organisational processes, difficulties accessing suitable properties and concerns that some existing groups may be difficult for new members or organisations to engage with. There are also questions about whether existing resources, expertise and funding opportunities are being fully utilised, and what role the council could play in supporting growth, facilitating partnerships, reducing barriers, and making co-operative housing a more mainstream housing option for residents, particularly young people.

Benefits

Co-operative housing can help create safe and supportive communities by giving residents a direct role in managing their homes and neighbourhoods. The shared responsibility involved in running a co-operative can foster stronger relationships between residents, increase community participation, promote social cohesion and a greater sense of belonging. As there isn't an owner, the homes are more secure and not subject to a section 21 notice from a landlord wanting to sell. Communal areas such as workspaces, kitchens, gyms, gardens and play areas further create a sense of community by bringing people together.

Co-operative housing can provide genuinely affordable homes because it is driven by community benefit rather than developer profit. As residents collectively manage the properties, rents can be kept lower, surpluses can be reinvested in the homes, and the housing can remain affordable over the long term.

High rents and house prices can make it difficult for younger people to remain in Brighton & Hove, potentially leading some to seek more affordable housing elsewhere. The expansion of affordable housing models, like co-operative housing, may help retain younger residents by providing lower-cost and more secure housing options. Existing properties, including HMOs, may be adapted for co-operative use, helping to increase the supply of affordable housing without the need for new development and create an alternative market that appeals to young people where they can afford to have a nice room in a nice house.

An additional benefit for the council would be the opportunity to link co-operative housing organisations with applicants on the housing register, helping to provide affordable housing options and potentially reducing pressure on housing services.

Co-operative housing can also have benefits for climate change as demonstrated by Zurich's largest co-operative housing organisation "Allgemeine Baugenossenschaft Zürich" (ABZ) through *"the delivery of energy-efficient homes, investment in renewable energy, the reduction of building-related carbon emissions, sustainable construction practices and the creation of environmentally responsible communities."*⁴

Opportunities

Other cities in the UK, such as Liverpool, have adopted policies designed to unlock vacant council-owned land, brownfield sites and empty properties for community groups to develop new homes⁵. Despite limited opportunities for new development in Brighton & Hove, co-operative housing could still expand through the purchase and conversion of existing housing stock. Changes to landlord licensing requirements, including HMO licensing

⁴ [Sustainability: This is where the ABZ stands](#)

⁵ [2023-Case-Study-Liverpool-2-Community-Led-Housing.pdf](#)

schemes, may have increased operating costs for some landlords, potentially contributing to properties leaving the private rented sector. This may present opportunities for co-operative housing organisations to acquire and manage properties as affordable housing. The Council could take on a facilitative role in bringing people together to buy these properties and run them as a co-op. This would be cheaper than trying to build new developments.

There are lots of groups in the community who are keen and willing to take responsibility for co-operative housing but they are not well organised and don't necessarily have the expertise or the knowledge to do so. This is where the council could provide the necessary support to expand the number of co-ops in the city to become more of a mainstream housing tenure option. In turn, this could create more social housing with low rents that could help with the housing problem. There could be opportunities to work with these groups and help reduce the housing waiting list.

It would be worth exploring what funding is available for this from central government and other sources outside of the city. Community groups can often access more funding than the council and could take advantage of this. The government is currently working with the Confederation of Co-operative Housing and other sector stakeholders to legislate for a co-operative form of tenure putting those tenants on the same footing as other social housing tenants; amending the Localism Act to provide more support; and provide access to low-cost capital finance for co-operative organisations currently priced out of the market⁶. These changes would free up resources for co-ops and make them more viable.

Potential areas of enquiry:

- To explore what practical and realistic actions the council could take to enable the growth of co-operative housing and maximise its contribution to addressing housing need in the city
- To understand how successful co-operative housing models operate in the UK and internationally
- To identify barriers that prevent the creation and expansion of co-operative housing schemes locally and what support could be put in place to help
- To explore how legal, governance and funding processes could be simplified or standardised to support new co-operatives
- To see what funding opportunities are available through government, external organisations and the co-operative sector itself
- To explore how to raise awareness of co-operative housing, particularly among younger people and those seeking affordable housing.
- To see how the council can facilitate organisation of potential co-op groups and bring them together.
- To see how the council could support co-operatives to access land and property for potential development of new affordable housing as well as the management of existing homes.
- To speak with other councils in the UK who have successfully supported co-operative housing in their area
- To speak with successful co-operative housing organisations both in the city and beyond

Potential witnesses:

⁶ [4. LG Co-Operative Housing.pdf](#)

- Representatives from successful co-operative housing schemes such as Allgemeine Baugenossenschaft Zürich, Coin Street in Lewisham, Marmalade Lane in Cambridge
- Other councils who have established community-led housing programmes such as Liverpool, Bristol, Lewisham
- Local co-operative housing schemes such as Two Piers, Brighton Rock Co-operative, Bunker Housing Co-op
- Experts in the sector such as Jonny Anstead, (Co-founder of “TOWN”), Martyn Holmes, (Confederation of co-op housing)
- Community Land Trust
- Community groups interested in developing co-operative housing
- Relevant Council Officers and Councillors (BHCC)
- Academics
- Representative/s from MHCLG

Examples of successful co-operatives:

- Allgemeine Baugenossenschaft Zürich: [ABZ Zurich: Leading Affordable Housing Cooperative | European Housing Coop](#)
- Marmalade Lane, Cambridge: [Marmalade Lane Cohousing, Cambridge | TOWN](#)
- Coin Street, Lewisham, London: <https://coinstreet.org/>

Terms of Reference for Co-operative Housing Task & Finish Group

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To examine the potential role of co-operative housing in addressing Brighton & Hove's housing challenges, including affordability, housing supply and housing insecurity. The Group will explore the benefits of co-operative housing, identify barriers to its growth, consider lessons from successful schemes in the UK and internationally, and assess what practical steps the council could take to support and expand co-operative housing as part of the city's housing offer.
- 1.2 The group will develop a report with recommendations that will be presented to the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee for agreement. Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee can decide to further refer the Task & Finish Group report recommendations to Cabinet and/or partners for consideration.

2. Status

- 2.1 The Task & Finish Group is an informal group that will report to the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

3. Areas of focus

- 3.1 The report will focus on the following areas:
 - To explore what practical and realistic actions the council could take to enable the growth of co-operative housing and maximise its contribution to addressing housing need in the city
 - To understand how successful co-operative housing models operate in the UK and internationally
 - To identify barriers that prevent the creation and expansion of co-operative housing schemes locally and what support could be put in place to help
 - To explore how legal, governance and funding processes could be simplified or standardised to support new co-operatives
 - To see what funding opportunities are available through government, external organisations and the co-operative sector itself
 - To explore how to raise awareness of co-operative housing, particularly among younger people and those seeking affordable housing.
 - To see how the council can facilitate organisation of potential co-op groups and bring them together.
 - To speak with other councils in the UK who have successfully supported co-operative housing in their area
 - To speak with successful co-operative housing organisations both in the city and beyond

4. Scope

- 4.1 The Task & Finish Group will consider the current and potential role of co-operative housing in Brighton & Hove, including its contribution to affordable housing provision, community development and housing security. The review will examine barriers to the establishment and growth of co-operative housing, opportunities to expand the sector through new and existing housing stock, available funding and support mechanisms, and the council's potential role in facilitating and enabling growth. The

Group will also gather evidence from successful co-operative housing organisations, local authorities and sector experts to identify good practice and potential recommendations for Brighton & Hove.

5. Membership

- 5.1. Voting Members: Groups will be offered membership as follows: 3 Labour, 1 Green, 1 Conservative, 1 BH Ind or Independent member.
- 5.2. Non-voting members: Anyone with an interest in this issue may be co-opted on to the TFG.
- 5.3. Any non-executive member may sit on a Task & Finish Group.

6. Meetings

- 6.1. Meetings will be chaired by the Chair of the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee who will be responsible for convening meetings of the Task & Finish Group.
- 6.2. The Group will meet on a basis to be determined by Group members.

7. Timeline

- 7.1 The Task & Finish Group report on Co-operative Housing will be presented to the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in March 2027