

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

The following questions listed on pages 41 - 44 of the agenda have been received from Councillors and will be taken as read along with the written answers listed below:

(a) Councillor Bell

“In light of the recent blunder by the Planning Department which has led to a 12.5 metre mast being erected next to a school and historic site in my Ward of Woodingdean, would the Chair of Planning Committee please explain how such an error has been allowed to happen and how many other known instances there have been if, as it has been reported, there are no checks to ensure that applicants have receipt of their planning decisions within the time period?”

Hollow apologies, from the Administration are a distraction to a systemic failure within the planning department and despite emails and phone calls we still are unable to inform our residents of what action this Administration is going to take to rectify their mistake. I respectfully request urgent action and response to this question.”

Reply from Councillor Cattell – Chair of the Planning Committee

“I am very sorry for the delay that occurred and resulted in the mobile phone mast and cabinets having received deemed approval, even though the Council opposed the proposals. This was due to an administrative error within the Council following a delay in the application being received by the Planning Department. I apologise to the residents of Woodingdean who initially opposed the application and have raised concerns and campaigned against the installation of the equipment following the works starting on site.

I am aware of three other instances in the last 10 years of other mobile phone installations gaining deemed approval in the City. I have raised this issue with senior managers who are carrying out an investigation into the circumstances behind this deemed approval and the Council’s procedures. Senior managers have met with Cllr Simson and community representatives and have contacted the mobile phone company to seek a resolution. The procedures for handling incoming post have now been changed to eliminate, as far as possible, a repeat of this unfortunate situation.”

(b) Councillor Wares

“Recently in the Argus, the Chair of Environment, Transport and Sustainability commented on her sadness at the decline of our parks and open spaces in the wake of £600,000 savings required to Cityparks’ budget over the next 3 years. What is of greater sadness is the misrepresentation of this figure. According to the Council’s budget papers, Citypark’s overall budget for the next 3 years is gross £11,061,000 of which £7,743,000 is for parks and open spaces. The

actual overall saving proposed for the 3 years is £430,000. £200,000 saving against the parks budget which is proposed as a cut in service and £230,000 saving against leisure and allotments dealt with by increasing charges and fees. Conservation and arboriculture's budget are unchanged.

Therefore, over the next 3 years, the parks and open spaces budget reduction is £200,000; nothing like Cllr Mitchell's £600,000.

Over the same 3 year period, the traveller budget is £1,839,000 of which a saving of £133,000 is proposed. The City has seen a reduction in unauthorised encampments following the £2.4m traveller site development that was supplemented with £700,000 of Council tax money coupled with the Police now responding swiftly to end them and PSPOs coming into force later this year.

Rather than Cllr Mitchell continuing with her proposed reduction in Cityparks' budget of £430,000, will she now inform us how much she intends to re-allocate from the over-funded traveller budget towards Cityparks, and how much she anticipates this will reduce her sadness and increase our residents' happiness?"

Reply from Councillor Mitchell – Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

"I would confirm that there are savings of £600k in the City Parks budget for the three years 2016/17 – 2018/19 inclusive that directly relate to parks and open spaces and are being informed by the 'Big Conversation' consultation. These savings were agreed at budget council in February 2016 and mainly comprise: new service delivery model for parks and open spaces service £200k, reduced contractor budget £38k, achieving self-managed sport and recreation facilities £250k, aligning the retained Ranger Service with the new delivery model to focus on public engagement and statutory functions £102k.

The Traveller Service budget for 2016/17 is £573k. The figure for the three years budget quoted in this question does not take into account the year on year savings being applied. In 2016/17 there was a budget reduction of £41k. Total savings agreed by council for the next three years are £133k. NB This figure may be revised as part of the budget setting process.

The permanent traveller site opened in July 2016 and the transit site opened in August 2016 with 21 pitches. The permanent site development and installation of a suitable drainage system for both sites cost just under £2.4m of which £1.74m was funded by a government grant and £649k funded by the council.

The number of new, unauthorised, encampments has reduced since the opening of both sites as expected, however, we are continuing to review the situation as part of making any recommendations to revise the budget, based on clear evidence, as part of the annual budget process. It should be noted, however, that the Traveller Services budget is held within a directorate separate from City Parks and would not necessarily be used to offset budgets elsewhere."

(c) Councillor Mac Cafferty

Preventing flash floods: Rooftops study

A roof audit study in 2014* found that there was 87 football pitches' worth of new green roof space in the city centre of Brighton and Hove.

The equivalent of up to 100 Olympic swimming pools of water could be held back from the city's roads and drains which could have a significant effect in reducing flooding and the need for infrastructure. Over 2 megawatt hours (MWh) of electricity could be saved every year on cooling costs for buildings – via reduced or avoided air conditioning.

Greening roofs would also reduce the so-called 'Urban Heat Island Effect', potentially providing an additional saving in cooling costs in the city of 1.3million kWh per annum, as well as decreased carbon dioxide emissions. New green roofs create new habitats for plant and animal species and help building energy efficiency.

Can the Chair of the Planning Committee advise on what work is being done by the Administration to bring this important study to fruition.

[*https://building-green.org.uk/2015/01/24/huge-potential-for-green-roofs-to-improve-the-centre-of-brighton/](https://building-green.org.uk/2015/01/24/huge-potential-for-green-roofs-to-improve-the-centre-of-brighton/)

Reply from Councillor Cattell – Chair of the Planning Committee

“Brighton & Hove City Plan Part One recognises the importance of green infrastructure and green roofs in enhancing biodiversity, energy efficiency and mitigating climate impacts. These impacts include urban heat island effect and flash floods caused by heavy rainfall events.

There are direct and indirect references to green roofs throughout City Plan Part One which have facilitated and encouraged the inclusion of green roofs within a number of development schemes in the city, especially major developments (e.g. The Keep, Falmer and applications on several schemes in the New England Quarter).

The council will look for opportunities to consolidate this approach in City Plan Part Two Design policies and the forthcoming Urban Design Framework planning guidance.

Opportunities for green roofs are investigated for schemes where the council has involvement in design, for example:

- The Level Cafe

New Homes for Communities Programme, there are green roofs on:

- Robert Lodge, Whitehawk
- Brooke Mead, City Centre
- And a green wall at Kite Place

The council's Architecture Team also explores opportunities for green roof applications and these have been successfully installed at:

- Downsview Link College
- Balfour Junior School
- Whitehawk Hub”

(d) Councillor Mac Cafferty

Free and accessible water in Brighton and Hove

Single-use plastic bottles expend finite natural resources, they also create transport and waste. As a seaside city, single-use plastic bottles and bottle tops add to sea pollution: 8 million tonnes of plastic waste enter the sea from land each year. Plastic bottled water is also excessively expensive for the consumer.

The public health benefits of water are widely acknowledged; 1.6 litres of water are needed a day to avoid dehydration. The Refill Project established in Bristol in 2015 works by having free and accessible tap water provided in venues across the city centre. Over 200 participating venues such as cafes, bars, restaurants, banks, galleries, museums and other businesses simply promote their participation. The public has access to free tap water.

Can the Chair of the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee advise if the Administration will investigate the idea and bring forward a report to committee?

Reply from Councillor Yates – Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board

“As part of Sugar Smart Brighton and Hove the public health team have taken some initial steps to investigate the feasibility of a Refill style model for Brighton and Hove. We are all eating 2-3 times as much sugar as we should and we know that sugary drinks make up to 30-40% of young peoples’ sugar intake. Making drinking water more freely accessible across the city is a sustainable and low cost way to improve our residents’ health and reduce plastic bottle waste. The next stage is to develop a project plan including the identification of potential sources of funding. Progress will be reported through the Health and Wellbeing Board.”

(e) Councillor Mac Cafferty

Can the Chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee outline what information housing officers are now legally permitted to routinely collect on tenants?

Reply from Councillor Meadows – Chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee

“The types of personal information that Housing staff routinely collect from tenants is that which is deemed relevant and necessary to the relationship which we have with our tenants as their landlord, our legal responsibilities to them, and their contract with us.

As a data controller under the Data Protection Act (DPA), the Council is required to deal with the personal data of its tenants in a way which is compliant with the data protection principles. It has therefore put in place a raft of arrangements to ensure that the personal data of its tenants is processed fairly and lawfully and only to the degree which is compatible with the Data Protection Act.”

(f) Councillor Taylor

“The works to Westdene Library agreed as part of the Libraries Plan are now some 2 months behind schedule. Will Councillor Hamilton please tell me how this will impact on the savings in the Libraries service budget for 2016/17?”

Reply from Councillor Hamilton – Deputy Chair (Finance) of the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee

“The delays were a result of the complexities of implementing a new door access system, new IT systems and carrying out the necessary checks to ensure that everything will work effectively once the library is open. The delay to re-opening Westdene Library will not have any impact on Library Service budget savings for 2016/17. Westdene Library is now expected to re-open in November.”

