

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

The following questions listed on pages 37 - 39 of the agenda have been received from Councillors and will be taken as read along with the written answers listed below:

(a) Councillor Phillips

"At the meeting of Full Council on the 20th October, the Green Group's amendment to the Fast-Track Cities Notice of Motion was passed. Please could Councillor Yates update me on progress since that meeting, especially around putting a plan in place to achieve this work and launching an investigation into the impact of the 20% cut in HIV support services?"

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

"Following the approval of the amended notice of motion at Full Council on the 20th October 2016 the actions were agreed by the Health and Wellbeing Board at its meeting of 22nd November 2016.

Fast-Track Cities

Officers have contacted the International Association of Providers of AIDS Care (IAPAC) regarding formalising Brighton & Hove City Council sign-up to the Paris Declaration on ending the HIV epidemic and we are awaiting advice on the next steps to becoming a Fast Track City.

The mobilisation of this work will include the development of an action plan in partnership with local and international partners. The action plan will be informed by analysis of local data which will be supported by our IAPAC technical partners. The action plan will be shared with the Health and Wellbeing Board in due course.

Impact of funding reduction in HIV prevention and social care contract

Prior to the procurement process an exercise was undertaken with the provider of HIV prevention and social care services to identify areas of work that could be stopped or reduced in order to achieve savings targets with the minimum impact on service users. Several areas with a robust rationale for changing, reducing or ending were identified. These included changing the way outreach is delivered to focus more on on-line working, reducing capacity in less productive areas of community engagement and ending the use of sub-contracted nurses in community HIV and STI testing. This allowed the value of the contract being offered for tender to be reduced by 20%.

Following an open procurement process the contract for HIV prevention and social care has been awarded to the current providers of the services – The Terrence Higgins Trust.

The new contract commences on 1st April 2017. Any impact of the reduction in the contract value will be assessed through contract performance monitoring and service user consultation as well as assessment of unmet need that is identified through HIV and sexually transmitted infection data and changes in the demand for other services."

(b) Councillor G. Theobald

“Will the Chair of Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee outline the frequency in which the city’s parking machines are emptied, how many recorded instances of these machines being blocked or full were reported in 2016 and how long it took to subsequently unblock them?”

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

“High income Pay and Display machines in the city centre are emptied every other day whereas low income machines are emptied weekly.

There were 30 reports of machines being full in 2016 and 9 reports of machines being blocked. They are recorded as having been emptied and resolved on average within 48 hours.”

(c) Councillor G. Theobald

“Whilst I note the Unions financial support for his Party and consequentially the reluctance of his Party nationally to criticise the Unions, what efforts has the Leader of the Council made to the RMT and ASLEF Trade Unions to convey the effect of their strikes on the residents and businesses of our City and bring pressure to bear to end the dispute in light of the fact that they are striking when not one of their members is losing their job or losing any salary?”

Reply from Councillor Morgan – Leader of the Council

“It is disappointing that Cllr Theobald seems to be siding with many of his Party’s MPs in making this rail dispute an exercise on union-busting, with the city’s businesses, commuters and tourists as collateral damage. I’m sure my views carry as much weight with the rail unions as Councillor Theobald’s do with Secretary of State for Transport Chris Grayling.

What Brighton and Hove wants are positive solutions to this dispute, not party political blaming and name-calling. Here is mine:

A new body comprised of representatives from Brighton and Hove, East and West Sussex County Councils and businesses, operating within the framework of the new Transport for the South East sub-national transport body, acting in a statutory role approved by the Department for Transport. Based on the model approved in Yorkshire, it would give passengers a democratic representative in the process of appointing a new train operator for the routes currently run by Southern GTR as a concession rather than a franchise on behalf of the DoT, on service delivery and standards of operation, and link with Transport for London on services to and from both the capital and Gatwick Airport, ensuring a robust and responsive rail network. It would also work with Network Rail and the LEP on the improvement of rail line infrastructure to London sufficient to meet the current and future needs of our city region economy. A real and democratic say in our regional rail network.”

(d) Councillor Nemeth

“How many members of staff have resigned from their posts in the Planning Department (a) between May 2015 and now; and (b) a similar period preceding May 2015; and how does (a) compare in percentage terms with other comparable teams (i.e. administrative) within the Council?”

Reply from Councillor Cattell – Chair of the Planning Committee

“From May 2015 to December 2016 - 13 staff left the Planning Service (excluding Admin and Building Control staff) which represents 25%. This relatively high proportion of turnover was largely due to a restructure of the service implemented in June 2016 which focused on removing a layer of management (four posts removed) and merging Planning with City Regeneration. Taking this into account it would give a turnover of 19%.

For the preceding period from October 2013 to April 2015 - 7 staff from the Planning Service left.

With regards to comparable teams – this has been taken as comparable professional services in the same department. Covering the period April 2015 to March 2016 – the turnover is:

Transport = 12%
Planning & Building Control = 20%
Housing = 16%
City Infrastructure = 13%
City Regeneration = 17%

This rate is comparable, but at the higher end, of rates experienced by other services largely for the reasons set out above.”

(e) Councillor Janio

“Will the Administration please identify and quantify all the funding streams and programmes, including those of partner agencies that are available to help street sleepers and the wider street community (as distinct from the overall homelessness budget) in the city?”

Reply from Councillor Moonan – Deputy Chair of the Neighbourhoods, Communities & Equalities Committee

“It is important to consider that the Council may not be aware of every charity funding stream in the city – for example, church groups may fundraise to support services etc.

Specific money allocated to rough sleeping may well not represent the total amount of resource/ service going on rough sleeping as some could be subsumed in mainstream budgets.

Council Commissioned

£422,000.00 is for street outreach services, day centre services provided by First Base and St Mungos. The 422k also includes 40K for the SWEP service. These are all provided exclusively to rough sleepers.

£3.8 million includes the young people's housing advice service which works with rough sleepers and a variety of accommodation and support services accessible to locally connected rough sleepers and single homeless people. This includes externally commissioned hostels and supported accommodation for single homeless people, rough sleepers, young people and those with mental health needs. As well as supported accommodation this also includes support services such as work and learning, and floating support to settle people in independent tenancies and prevent eviction.

The £3.8m is accommodation and associated support, it is not specifically for rough sleepers. Accommodation is accessible for rough sleepers, those with a housing duty in B&B, those referred from prison or discharged from hospital.

Public Health provides approximately £200k (+/- 10%) in Equinox, through Pavilion, to provide substance misuse services for homeless people

BHCC awarded just over £352k for the last quarter of this financial year and the following two years.

Aim of the funding was to target interventions to help new rough sleepers

- Reduce the flow of new rough sleepers
- Provide a safe place to stay
- Help new rough sleepers from the streets to independence

Sussex Police fund a Street Community Team which currently consists of:

1 X Police Sergeant, 2 X Police Constables and 2 X Police Community Support Officers.

The aim of this provision is have bespoke intervention and engagement with persistent offenders and offer support to those most vulnerable. This requires a detailed multi-agency approach. The police aims are primarily to protect the vulnerable, reduce offending and ASB, reduce demand on services and maintain trust and confidence of communities in the city."

(f) Councillor Mac Cafferty

"In December the Local Government Ombudsman found the London Borough of Southwark had failed for years to monitor whether developers were providing promised social housing in accordance with Section 106 Agreements. In essence this has meant that the London Borough of Southwark has no procedure to ensure that social rented housing approved by the Council's planning committee is actually being delivered. Can the Labour Administration

assure us with adequate evidence that this will not be the case in Brighton and Hove? In order that Brighton and Hove avoids such an outcome, can the administration outline (a) how they will properly check compliance with housing provision conditions under Section 106 Agreements and (b) explain what auditing they are conducting throughout the city to check compliance with Section 106 Agreements after completion of developments?”

Reply from Councillor Cattell – Chair of the Planning Committee

“The Planning Service has a dedicated Section 106 officer who monitors compliance in accordance with s106 developer obligations. In terms of affordable housing - this is to ensure direct provision or transfer to Registered Providers before occupation of a development. There is also close working between the Planning and Housing services and regular meetings held between Registered Providers and the city council through the Brighton & Hove Housing Partnership.

The Housing Service also maintains a Development Schedule which monitors new affordable units in the city. A further safeguard is monitoring by the Homes Community Agency (HCA) which aims to ensure delivery of funded schemes. In addition, the Housing Service requires monitoring forms from Registered Providers to ensure letting and sales accord with agreed priorities (a local connection and in demonstrable housing need).

In terms of commuted payments towards affordable housing, now secured from developments of 5 to 14 dwellings, these are also monitored by the Section 106 Officer. The payments are required on commencement of development and go towards the agreed priorities set out the Developer Contributions Technical Guidance – which was agreed at ED& C Committee in June 2016.”

(g) Councillor Mac Cafferty

“According to FOI request 7141: *Council Tax Recovery* In the last year Brighton and Hove City Council officers organised an eye-watering 5,567 “enforcement agent visits.” Can the Labour Administration outline (1) the costs to the council of using this quantity of bailiff visits, (2) what this vast number of bailiffs were needed for and (3) why of this quantity of visits, 22 families had their belongings taken?”

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

“First of all to clarify for Cllr Mac Cafferty that the FOI7141 request was not specific to Council Tax but a question relating to all enforcement agency activity by the Council. Therefore the figure he quotes is inclusive of Enforcement Agent visits to recover Business Rate and Car Parking debt as well as Council Tax. In 2014/2015 under the previous administration the number of visits was 5,296 which is comparable with the last year.

1. There is effectively no net cost to the Council in administering Enforcement Agent visits. The value of the income consequently collected is well in

excess of the cost of running an Enforcement Team. If costs were higher than the income collected, we would not run the service.

2. Council services and particularly the Business Rates and Council Tax teams, have a service model that is designed to collect debt / taxation at the earliest point with the minimum cost and effort for the customer. A great deal of work has taken place in recent years to improve collection while reducing the number of customers summonsed or subject to debt enforcement and in improving support for those with hardship and / or vulnerability. It is only after a succession of reminders, court actions and a filtering process for vulnerability, that the service considers enforcement action. Enforcement Agents are trained to identify vulnerability and are tasked with obtaining suitable and reasonable arrangements to recover debt when other routes have failed. In the context of 140,000 households and business premises in the city and in excess of 200,000 tax bills to collect each year, the number of visits, as a necessary element of effective collection, is proportionate.
3. The actual FOI request refers to the removal of debtors' goods and all 22 incidences relate to vehicles being removed and sold to offset council tax / parking debts; none relate to removing families' belonging from inside their homes. The Council makes every effort to settle debt amicably before this stage."

(h) Councillor Mac Cafferty

"Across the entire Council workforce, how many staff in which departments are currently engaged in a redundancy consultation process?"

Reply from Councillor Morgan – Leader of the Council

"Currently, approximately 309 staff are (or have recently been) engaged in consultation exercises which could result in around 39 redundancies. These are taking place in Civil Contingencies, Childcare Workforce Development, Transport, Facilities & Building Services, ICT, Policy Partnership & Scrutiny and Finance. Further consultation exercises will start in the near future affecting approximately 123 staff which could result in around 45 redundancies. These will be taking place in Communities and Equalities, Youth Service, Disability Services Management, Early Help Services, Economic Development and Bereavement Services.

Further consultation processes relating to the potential TUPE transfer of staff will also take place in the coming months in Learning Disability Accommodation Services, Hostels and the Music Service. These will impact approximately 91 staff.

In addition to the above some budget proposals may require formal consultation with staff later in the year as detailed proposals emerge."

(i) Councillor Mac Cafferty

“Building on the work between 2011-2015 can the Administration outline if they have applied for any of the government grant for energy efficiency of public sector buildings and if so what projects will they apply it to?”

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

“The prevalent external funding source for local authority energy efficiency work would be the government funded Salix Finance loan scheme. However, the council does not have any current applications underway through Salix and have not been involved in the scheme since 2012 as our experience was that the scheme was restrictive in terms of project scope and administratively complex. Salix loan applications are still open to schools who can apply for the fund directly with Salix. These have been advertised to schools by the Energy & Water Team who have organised a workshop and guidance to encourage uptake together with an offer to support any applications but no school has taken up the offer to date.

Since 2015 we have been concentrating our efforts to improve the energy efficiency of Hove Town Hall during the refurbishment works. This project has included the installation of energy efficiency lighting with light and movement sensors; new efficient gas boilers and the removal of oil fired burners; a building management system to allow control of heating and cooling equipment; as well as an extension to the solar panel array.

We also continue to make various improvements to the energy efficiency of other corporate buildings and schools through our annual planned maintenance programmes. These include replacement energy efficient boilers, conversion of oil to gas burners and taking opportunities to improve insulation during relevant projects such as re-roofing programmes.

Property & Design are making good use of the Automated Meter Reading equipment which was rolled out from 2014 to key gas and electricity meters and have successfully used this information to help schools and other public buildings make changes to their heating settings to save money on their bills across the heating season.

The council has been successful in securing the funding for heat networks feasibility studies which have the potential to benefit the energy efficiency of council owned stock and in particular, Housing. Sites include Hove Station, Shoreham Harbour and Eastern Road.

Going forward, the council is in the very early stages of developing an energy plan. This includes exploring potential approaches for community energy generation on school buildings and looking at other options to deliver energy efficiencies, renewables and decentralised energy across the corporate asset portfolio. This project is on-going.”

(j) Councillor Knight

“The number of UASC we have taken in has risen to 38 and is set to rise. Whilst this is good and welcome news, there is already an overspend on the current budget (mainly resulting from using agency, rather than in-house foster carers). Given this overspend, how does the council propose to manage the financial demand, whilst offering the full support services these young people need and deserve?”

Reply from Councillor Chapman – Deputy Chair of the Children, Young People & Skills Committee

“The total number of unaccompanied asylum seekers coming to the city is not fixed and has moved up and down in recent months. The Home Office have stated their expectation that no upper tier Authority should have more than 0.07% of the total child population who are unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Their calculation assumes a total child population for the city of 50,951 and therefore a maximum number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children of 36. This therefore means that although our number may go slightly above this figure it is not expected to go significantly above it. The city has been fantastic at welcoming these children and young people and I hope and expect that this welcome will continue in the future.

The Home Office does provide some additional funding to the Council, but although this covers accommodation costs we do not believe that it covers all costs. We have made our concern about this known to the Home Office and through the LGA continue to lobby for additional funding. As you point out this does provide some pressures on the council’s budget – together with a range of other pressures. In response we have been looking to manage the wider demand on the social care system and I’m pleased that the number of children in care across the city has reduced in the last 18 months. In addition we have been working on our placement costs. Recently we have been successful in increasing the number of in house foster carers who support children in care with an estimated saving of about £350,000. We continue to provide good quality support for all of our children in care, including those who are unaccompanied asylum seeking children.”