

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

The following questions have been received from Councillors and will be taken as read along with the written answer as detailed below:

(1) Councillor: Druitt

What measures are being taken in advance of the summer to maintain safety in the city centre, most especially in and around Regency Square, Clarence Sq., Bedford Sq., Norfolk Sq., St Nicholas' green spaces, Duke Street and Western Terrace which suffer high levels of anti-social behaviour, drug taking and even public defecation for much of the year but most especially during the summer, bearing in mind neither the council nor the police have been able to do very much about the problems in previous years?

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

The council works closely with partners to ensure that issues such as those described by Cllr Druitt are addressed as quickly and appropriately as possible.

Monthly partnership tactical tasking and co-ordination meetings are held to discuss and adopt solutions for issues / individuals / locations that are causing particular concern in the city. Relevant council departments are also involved.

I will ensure that that the locations identified by Cllr Druitt are included in these discussions and actions identified to address them.

(2) Councillor Druitt

The independent traders in the city centre are much of what gives Brighton & Hove its vibe and its appeal for visitors. Yet many continue to struggle with high rents, unfair business rates, and antisocial behaviour on their doorsteps. Many of the issues (e.g. rents and rates) are not ones the council has direct control over, but the council does have control over other things such as street cleanliness, graffiti, levels of anti-social behaviour and the way it collects business rates and enforces arrears. What is the council doing to support businesses struggling to stay afloat, especially those in areas that have faced declining trade such as Preston Street and Duke Street?

Reply from Councillor Robins – Chair of the Tourism, Development & Culture Committee**City Environment**

Preston Street and Duke Street are visited on a daily basis and cleaned both by a street cleansing operative on foot and by the mechanical sweeper.

The Environmental Enforcement Service has joined the council, having previously been delivered by an external contractor. City Environment has been reviewing their future deployment arrangements, as well as coming up with new ideas on how to tackle environmental offences, including littering, fly-tipping and graffiti. Environmental Enforcement Officers have also recently completed a series of educational visits to businesses across the city to remind them of their responsibilities with regards waste management.

A Graffiti Reduction Strategy was agreed at Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee in January 2019. City Environment is currently developing an action plan detailing how the strategy will be delivered by the council and its partners. The Strategy focuses on four key areas to reduce and remove graffiti to enhance the local environment through: prevention, enforcement, removal, and monitoring and measuring.

Brighton BID

The Council also works with the Brighton BID which is a private limited company that supports 517 businesses in the BID area. Preston Street is in the BID but Duke Street is not. The BID levy is 1.25% of a businesses' ratable value, currently bringing in £1.8m over five years. The BID delivers projects which include the provision of on street City Centre Ambassadors and a range of additional services to help make the BID levy as cost neutral as possible, for example, negotiated reductions with NCP car parking, a business cost reduction services to bring down utilities outgoings as well as discounts on professional services and advertising. In terms of the key issues raised:

- **Street Cleansing:** Since the BID came in to being in 2006, there has been an 'agreement' with the City Clean for additional cleansing in the city centre. The BID Ambassadors are in regular contact with the team at City Clean and call in issues as and when such as fly tipping, homeless community paraphernalia etc.
- **Graffiti removal:** The BID does not get involved with direct removal of graffiti but suggests to its members to get private sector support or to ask the council for help.
- **Anti-Social Behaviour:** The City Centre Ambassadors are at the front end of managing anti-social behaviour on a daily basis with excellent links with Sussex Police and the Business Crime Reduction Partnership and regularly attend agency meetings convened to support the street community. An increasing amount of work is spent engaging with the Street Community at around 50% of their time.

Economic Strategy

The Council has recently agreed a new Economic Strategy and Visitor Economy Strategy as part of creating the conditions for businesses to thrive. Our vision for the Economic Strategy is underpinned by five themes which are vital to delivering economic growth and providing a greater quality of life for residents. A diverse set of actions have been identified to support the delivery of this strategy over the next five years. The five themes are:

- **A growing city** that unlocks its capacity for growth, through the delivery of homes, space, and infrastructure and through the evolution of a better connected economy.
- **An open city** that achieves its potential evolving as an attractive, welcoming and modern place for investors and visitors alike
- **A talented city** which recognises the role that skills and the labour market has to play in driving economic productivity and inclusive growth outcomes.
- **A fair city** which is inclusive and responsible, encouraging engagement and participation across our communities and working to ensure the benefits of growth are distributed fairly.
- **A sustainable city** which looks to the future, focusing its economy on sustainable solutions to future challenges in order to protect and enhance the health and wellbeing of its residents and act as a leader in developing a robust response to climate change.

Living Wage Campaign and Campaign to End Unpaid Work Trial Shifts

- The work the Council is doing around the Living Wage campaign and the campaign to end unpaid trial shifts supports the end to any form of exploitation within the city. By making this a priority within the city's economy the council is ensuring that through decent wages there is more money circulating and therefore more spend with local businesses.

(3) Councillor Janio

At the last Full Council, I asked why the Labour Administration did not attempt to remove Hangleton Bottom from the Waste and Mineral Sites Plan. Her answer informed me who the other partners were in the plan, when it was signed and what period it covers. It did not answer the question. I am not permitted to ask the same question again, but could Cllr Mitchell explain any investigations that the Labour Administration has taken to identify other sites that could be safeguarded for use as a Waste Transfer Site in preference to Hangleton Bottom – an area that is more suitable for mixed use Development.

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

The site at Hangleton Bottom is allocated for waste management use in the East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove Waste and Minerals Sites Plan 2017. It is important that we have an up to date Waste and Minerals Sites Plan in place.

You can be assured that during the preparation of this Plan, officers did review the allocation. A comprehensive site search exercise was undertaken with 97 potential locations across Brighton & Hove and East Sussex which were assessed in detail against 29 different criteria. This process led to three safeguarded site allocations included in the Plan – Hangleton Bottom is the only

waste allocation in Brighton & Hove. The other are two sites in East Sussex (at Lower Dicker and Hailsham).

The site allocations proposed were carefully considered by the independent Planning Inspector during the Public Examination of the Sites Plan and were considered 'sound'.

The need for waste management sites and the site allocations will be next revisited at the review of the Sites Plan before 2026.

(4) Councillor West

The Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan offers a considerable opportunity to support an increase in active travel with all the clear benefits that will bring, including: reducing carbon footprint, traffic congestion, air pollution and the cost of travel, while also improving health and road safety.

It's very clear in the DfT guidance that the LCWIP should be a collaborative project with stakeholders fully engaged in the process, and not merely seen as consultees to a consultant led plan.

The first stage of the LCWIP process is to agree on governance. That should rightly be done by a steering group comprising members, including our cross-party cycle champions, and at least two co-optees representing local cycling and walking organisations. A key initial task for this group should be to develop with officers the LCWIP brief for consultants. It should also be tasked with informing spending priorities for additional LTP funds and development of a multi-million-pound capital bid to the LEP for active travel funding.

Would Councillor Mitchell agree that such an inclusive approach, ensuring the strengths of our active travel community are properly embraced in shaping and delivering investment in active travel, is the best and right approach; and will Councillor Mitchell therefore take the opportunity to initiate this?

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

The Government's recommendation that councils should develop a Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (or an L C WIP as it has become known) is fully recognised and, as I have confirmed on previous occasions, I am pleased to be able to report that work is now underway to enable the plan to be produced in a timely manner.

And I can fully reassure you that the work is being led by officers; but support from consultants will need to be sought at the appropriate time, especially to fulfil the technical requirements and techniques that the Government would like to see included, such as the use of modelling tools. The £75,000 pounds that has been secured within the Budget for 2019/20 will enable this to happen, and also ensure that the process is fully resourced to enable a comprehensive plan to be produced – a comprehensive plan that will be based on good governance, and informed and shaped by stakeholder engagement and public involvement.

These will be a critical part of the first stage of the process and they will be set out, within an anticipated timescale, in a Scoping Report that will be brought to the next meeting of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee in June to enable members to consider it and approve it. At that point, we will also know which Administration will be leading this work, and which councillors will be in roles that will enable them to be fully briefed about the L C WIP, and to also participate in the process as it moves forward.

Officers will therefore be following the approach set out in the Governments' guidance document– scoping the plan, gathering information, planning cycling and walking networks, and proposing prioritised improvements – and, through the agreed governance arrangements, they will be ensuring that each stage is fully completed. They will therefore leading the strategic planning that is required and are already developing the brief that we will need consultants to follow to help us develop the plan. The brief will be significantly shaped by the technical guidance issued by the Government, and that work needs to be started now to enable us to develop the plan and be ready at the earliest opportunity to bid for external funding, or allocate our own budgets, to invest in the cycling and walking infrastructure improvements that the city's residents and visitors both need and deserve.

I hope that I have therefore reassured you that this will not be a consultant-led plan which excludes or marginalises stakeholder input from any sector within the city, but that it will be a plan that draws on all the local knowledge and experience that exists amongst people, organisations and communities within the city which will provide safe, high quality and accessible routes and facilities that allow people to make walking and cycling their first choice for local journeys.

(5) Councillor Gibson

If all projected (received up till April 1st, 2023) and usable RTB receipts (already received) were utilised to build new council homes at the 30% rate allowed by government what would the estimated total spend be? If this total spend produced new council homes at an average cost of £220,000 a home how many new council homes would this yield?

Reply from Councillor Hill, Chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee

The total usable RTB receipts received and those projected up to 1st April 2023 total £87.266m. This level of receipts would support the delivery of 396 homes assuming an average cost per property of £0.220m. At this point in time receipts assumed for quarter 4 of 2018/19 and beyond are based on projected receipts, therefore the total usable receipts are subject to change.

(6) Councillor Gibson

What is the total number of homes sold under the RTB so far this financial year (as of 20th March 2019)? And adding this total for this year so far to RTB sales

in previous years since 1st April 2015, how many homes had been sold as of the 20th March (between 1st April 2015 and 20th March 2019)?

Reply from Councillor Hill, Chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee

The total number of homes sold under the RTB as at 20th March 2019 is 55. Since 1st April 2015 the council has sold a total of 232 homes under the RTB

(7) Councillor Gibson

Can you confirm that the table which collates rough sleeper count and estimate data below is correct and given that the table that rough sleeper estimates in the same year have been consistently higher than counts undertaken in the same year was it wise to switch from estimates to counts in November 2018 (in an election year)?

Rough sleeper counts and estimates

Year	10/11	2011	12/13	2013	2014	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Rough sleeper count	14	36	43	50	41	?	?	?	64 (Nov)
Rough sleeper estimate		76		90	132	78	144	178	?
% of estimate that is a count in the same year		47%		56%	31%				

Reply from Councillor Moonan, Lead Member for Rough Sleepers

The official November count is not the way Brighton & Hove City Council monitors levels of rough sleeping. Other ongoing robust methods are used throughout the year, which enable us to say with confidence that the number of rough sleepers has reduced significantly.

These methods are the B'think multi agency IT system which records rough sleepers as well as those in supported accommodation. This system allows us to look at the changing picture of rough sleepers over weeks, months and years.

The cumulative number of individuals recorded on Bethink for at least one night per month is below. It does not mean that all of these number of people were rough sleeping every night of the month, many will have been on the streets for a much shorter period of time. There is a constant change of individuals within the rough sleeping community as people are supported off the streets, and as more arrive. The number of rough sleepers also includes those who are known to have accommodation but have been found rough sleeping.

March 2019 (to date): 85 individuals
February 2019: 72 individuals

January 2019: 78 individuals
December 2018: 67 individuals
November 2018: 118 individuals
October 2018: 96 individuals

This data is used in conjunction with the regular street counts undertaken by St Mungo's and as set out below.

March 2019 66 people found
January 2019 30 people found
November 2018 64 people found (national count)
September 2018 78 people found

This data is part of the monitoring agreed with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government as part of our grant funding. The November national count represents a one day snap shot within these wider data gathering activities.

The table is not wholly correct as the estimates undertaken in 2013 and 2014 were not undertaken in November, they were undertaken in March so they are not directly comparable with the count figures which were undertaken and verified in November.

The official counts and estimates undertaken in November have all been undertaken to strict guidance laid down by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government and independently verified by Homeless Link. Both methods have their limitations and only seek to produce a one night snapshot of the situation in the city. The guidance provided is clear on who can be counted and the definition of rough sleeping that is to be used. We have been clear that the count in 2018 and the estimate in 2017 are not comparable to each other due to the different methodologies used.

(8) Councillor Gibson

The much heralded, very welcome and desperately needed additional 10 (government funded) Housing First Placement support packages are due to start 3 days after full council on Monday 1st of April. Can you confirm that 10 additional properties have been identified along with 10 ("revolving door") homeless clients are lined up to go and ready to move in as soon as the money is available?

Reply from Councillor Hill, Chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee

Officers from Health and Adult Social Care and Housing are working through options to secure the 10 units of accommodation to support the expansion of Housing First. Officers are currently reviewing 4 units of temporary accommodation that could be utilised to support the expansion and looking at other options.

Where individuals are eligible under the housing allocation policy will also be supporting people to access properties through the Council Interest Queue.

(9) Councillor Gibson

If 10 Housing First placements are not yet ready to move into accommodation, how many properties and people have been identified so far?

Reply from Councillor Hill, Chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee

There are a number of suitable clients identified and the sources of accommodation as set out support those who would be eligible through the housing allocations policy and the Council's Interest Queue and also those that currently do not but who might benefit from the Housing First Model.

The support for those people placed into accommodation under the Housing First model will be provided by St Mungo's who are mobilising staff teams in preparation for the expansion of the service. The support that is offered under the Housing First model provides a highly personalised approach to working with individuals often with multiple and complex needs and the existing housing first units have demonstrated the positive impact this model can have on outcomes for those in the service.

(10) Councillor Gibson

Given that BHCC has had many months to make arrangements for Housing first placements and given that they will make an important contribution to helping 10 individuals and easing pressure on supported accommodation at a time when the closure of the West Pier project is putting services under strain, how do you think the MHCLG will react if we do not have the placements up and running on the 1st of April? Will failure to do this on schedule damage our credibility with MHCLG and jeopardise our prospects for securing further funding?

Reply from Councillor Hill, Chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee

The Council has been successful in securing significant additional investment from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Council Officers are in regular contact with them regarding progress on the mobilisation and outcomes of this funding.

Any expansion of Housing First needs to be carefully managed and units of accommodation scaled up in a planned way.

The plans submitted to the MHCLG reflects the needs to expand this model in a planned way and ensure that individuals are settled in well to their property and accessing the support provided, the MHCLG are fully supportive of this approach.

(11) Councillor Gibson

Given Housing and New Homes Committee's desire to redress the under allocation of properties to the council interest queue and given that over the period since the commencement of the allocations plan the queue has been under allocated, can this under allocation be redressed by making Housing First allocations with immediate effect in conjunction with an associated support package?

Reply from Councillor Hill, Chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee

The Council has taken action to redress the previous under-allocation to the Council's Interest Queue through working with Health and Adult Social Care and Families, Children's and Learning and we are on target to achieve the full 10% this year. We work more closely now with colleagues in Health and Adult Social Care and Families, Children and Learning to ensure that we are maximising the Council Interest Queue. We are currently actively looking to see how many of the properties in the Council Interest Queue we can use for Housing First. We need to do this alongside other schemes which, for example, use the Council Interest Queue to prevent children being looked after by the Local Authority. Housing First clients placed in council properties through the Council Interest Queue will need to be eligible under the housing allocation policy and have substantial support in place right from the beginning of their tenancy.

(12) Councillor Gibson

Given that the very welcome all year night shelter is funded to open from 1st April 2019, can you confirm that a building has been obtained for use? And if it is not ready, when you plan for the shelter to open?

Reply from Councillor Moonan, Lead Member for Rough Sleepers.

We are very pleased that due to careful financial management we were able to identify funding, approved last month, for an all year-round night shelter for rough sleepers for the coming year. This will complement our current SWEP provision, which operates on one of the lowest triggers in the country. We hope to open the all year-round night shelter as soon as possible, so officers are working to identify an appropriate property at the moment. Once a suitable building has been identified officers will work to procure a service provider with experience of running homeless services. Opening the all year-round night shelter is a high priority, but we do have to find a building that is suitable so that a really effective service can be provided.

(13) Councillor Gibson

National figures on how well councils used their borrowing opportunities (under the cap) reveal that on 1st April 2018, Brighton and Hove Council were in the top quarter of councils failing to spend the borrowing available under the cap and

that neighbouring councils of Lewes, Eastbourne, Adur and Wealden had all used proportionately more of the borrowing available. Having not made the most of borrowing opportunities so far and given the housing crisis in our city, (given we now have a new chair of housing) will you undertake to use the 31m + unused borrowing under the previous cap and more to ramp up the council house building programme so that it achieves its potential in the future?

Reply from Councillor Hill, Chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee

The borrowing cap sum for each authority was calculated by the Government back in 2011 using a complex set of calculations which were in part based on assumed levels of debt for each authority at that time. It is therefore very difficult to make comparisons between authorities and the use they have made of the borrowing available to them. Since self-financing was introduced for HRA's in 2012, Brighton & Hove City Council's HRA has only needed to borrow in order to increase the supply of new homes (new build or purchase). Conversely, many other authorities have needed to borrow to fund their own capital programme and will therefore always have higher levels of new borrowing. It is also the case that the HRA has made efficiency savings and in-year cost savings which have enabled it to fund more works directly from revenue rather than needing to borrow. In summary, to use the amount of new borrowing as a measure of investment in new homes will not give an accurate picture. Overall, a better measure is how many new homes have been delivered. Since the council started building council homes again it has developed 197 new homes across around 16 projects. It has another 12 currently under construction at Kensington Street, and sites are currently identified for a total of around 500 more homes.

The council is committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing in the city as demonstrated in the recent report 'HRA Borrowing Cap' to Housing and New Homes Committee on 13th March 2019. This outlines the work to date and the ongoing pipeline of projects for building and purchasing new affordable homes as well as the resources being invested for supporting such an ambitious programme. Also, Budget Council recently approved the HRA capital Investment Programme for 2019/20, and indicative budgets for 2020/21 and 2021/22, with a total investment of £53.6m in new homes, £37m of which is estimated to be funded through borrowing. This exceeds the £31m which the council had available to it before the removal of the borrowing cap.

(14) Councillor Deane

How many prosecutions against perpetrators of tagging and graffiti have there been during the past year, two years and five years?

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

Over the last five years, the following have been issued:

Year	Number of Fixed Penalty Notices Issued	Number of Prosecutions
2014/15	0	0
2015/16	1	0
2016/17	17	0
2017/18	2	0
2018/19	3	0

One of the issues with tagging and graffiti is identifying the offender. The police and the council do attempt to identify and prosecute; however, it can be difficult to identify those responsible as they are often well practiced at avoiding detection by tagging at night and keeping hidden from CCTV cameras.

If an alleged offender does not pay their Fixed Penalty Notice, the case may go to prosecution. The case may go straight to prosecution if the offence is major e.g. racist graffiti. For both situations, the offender needs to be identified.

