

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 West - Resident Parking Permit surcharges

What additional administrative cost is incurred from offering quarterly or half yearly residents parking permits? Given digital transaction costs are low, is the current and proposed surcharge justifiable? Low income households can experience cash flow difficulties which prevent their paying upfront for longer permit periods. Will the Budget proposal ensure the surcharge is minimised and only covers justifiable cost?

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

The unit cost of a resident permit is £5.22 which consists of direct material costs, direct staff costs, other apportioned direct costs and apportioned overheads. 4 quarterly permits per year costs £20.88.

The current proposal for 20/21 is to raise the price of an annual resident full scheme permit from £130 to £150 but keeping quarterly prices (£45) the same to reduce costs to those who find the upfront annual costs more difficult.

(2) Councillor West - Business Parking Permit Surcharges

Is the proposed 15% surcharge on quarterly business parking permits, over and above the proposed annual charge, justifiable on the basis of additional administrative cost?

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

The unit cost of a business permit is £5.22 which consists of direct material costs, direct staff costs, other apportioned direct costs and apportioned overheads. 4 quarterly permits per year costs £20.88.

The current proposal for 20/21 is to increase the price of business permits (£350 to £400 yearly and £100 to £115 quarterly) but also double the allocation of business permits from two permits to four permits.

This is a good value permit allowing use of resident / shared bays for a particular zone at any time (just over a £1 a day).

(3) Councillor West - Budget readiness for carbon neutrality

Transport makes up over a quarter of the city's carbon footprint, much of which relates to the use of the city's 100,000 private cars. Private car use needs to be reduced to help tackle air pollution, congestion and road danger in the city; freeing space and supporting more people to travel actively on foot and bike or by public transport. The Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to the city becoming carbon neutral by 2030. Parking charges are a strong lever the council is able to use to encourage less car use. The Administration's draft budget proposes to raise income from parking charges by a very modest amount, is that sufficient? Will the budget as a whole show strong ambition in readying the city for carbon neutrality?

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

The proposed 2020/21 fees follow a review of parking demand in the city and the objectives set out in the councils Local Transport Plan, therefore changes to the tariffs will not reflect the assumed 2% standard budgetary inflation value.

A number of proposed increases have been made in high demand off street car parks as well as parking spaces on the seafront which are also at capacity in summer periods. In terms of paid parking charges within the wider Controlled Parking Zones the focus for 20/21 has been on increasing the price of various permits across the city where vehicles displaying these permits have been shown to park in a significant amount of shared parking spaces across the city. If the proposals are agreed this officers will then review these paid charges in Controlled Parking Zones for 21/22.

(4) Councillor West - Park and Ride and "EV Car Revolution"

Meeting the challenges of climate change requires bold, community-focused change. So, I am concerned the Chair of ETS is intent on including consideration of Park and Ride in LTP5. Park and Ride is not a solution, it merely shifts toxic car emissions from one part of our city to another – it will not cut congestion, reduce air pollution or make the option to travel by bike or on foot safer and more attractive. It's also difficult and costly to implement. For decades successive Labour and Council councils have promised Brighton & Hove voters Park and Ride, yet never delivered it. Despite this truth, the Labour Party just can't let go of their fantasy of a 'big solution'. Just last week, we also read the Leader of the Council, Nancy Platts, stating that an 'electric car revolution' is on its way. Emissions from transport equates to more than a quarter of our local carbon footprint, with personal car travel a big contributor. There are 100,000 cars in the city, can that continue? Will changing them all for electric cars make much difference? Given the investment that would be required in electricity generation, transmission and charging infrastructure, as well as the high level of energy embodied in making the vehicles, the answer is probably no. We must acknowledge for many, cars are still the only accessible mode of transport – but that an RAC survey found that people would ditch the car, if public transport was cheaper and more available.

Let's be clear: piecemeal solutions will not meet the challenge of climate crisis. If we agree there is an emergency, we need to shift our conversations towards supporting people to make positive changes. Whether it's pushing for action on dirty air pollution, a boost to public transport, walking and cycling, or a Green New Deal to create jobs in renewable energy sectors, there are important and ambitious ways to create a positive change. We need our leaders to grasp the scale of the problem and lead the way on city-wide solutions – not put all their energy into promoting ineffective sticking plasters.

Will the Chair of ETS make clear that Park & Ride will not aid realising carbon neutrality by 2030, and therefore will not be progressed in LTP5?

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

It is correct to say that there is a need for a strategy and joined up to delivering a sustainable and active transport strategy for the city. Any consideration of Park & Ride therefore needs to be explored with the context of the city and wider region's overall transport strategies,

We are currently reviewing the transport strategy for the city (the Local Transport Plan). It will include a new and exciting long-term strategy for transport and travel in the city. It will probably look ahead as far as 2030 - that critical date for all of us in terms of the climate emergency – and it will be bold and ambitious.

It will need to address many issues – safety, accessibility, health and the economy, for example – and in doing so, it will recognise that our city is a place that has a diverse and wonderful mix of residents, workers and visitors. They all have many different needs and travel habits, so we have to plan for all of those in the short, medium and long term.

It is recognised that Park + Ride is not a panacea to the city's transport or wider problems, but it has worked effectively in other cities where it is integrated alongside other sustainable transport schemes and initiatives.

Park + Ride should also not just be viewed as part of sustainable transport solution for the city but could also serve the wider city region. The city has the South Downs National Park on our doorstep - a magnificent, nationally recognised landscape that we want everyone to visit and enjoy – but we don't want it clogged by cars and traffic. A Park + Ride site might help us and other authorities manage those issues in more economically and environmentally sustainable ways.

Electric vehicles are also part of our journey towards decarbonisation. It's happening nationally and globally, and we need to be a part of it to ensure that we are playing our part in reducing harmful emissions that affect people's health and our environment.

It is important that we engage with local residents and business on these issues. We also need to take action. We are in the process of one of the biggest roll-outs of electric vehicle infrastructure in the country, with over £1 million pounds of investment. Investment in infrastructure that will enable people to choose to use an electric vehicle and make our local air quality much cleaner and healthier for everybody. The current, limited availability of that infrastructure is preventing them from making those choices. It is also recognised that electric vehicles are not the only solution to a sustainable transport system but are one step towards a cleaner and more sustainable transport system.

Buses will also be part of the city's future transport strategy, and we fully intend to continue to work in partnership with operators to seek and secure more Government funding on our Road to Zero [Emissions] by bidding to become the country's first all-electric bus town. This will build on the fantastic level of investment that they have already put into their fleets. Likewise, walking and cycling be an essential part of our strategy and the current development of our Local, Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan will form a key part of future strategic approach.

(5) Councillor Heley

At the last full council meeting I was delighted that the Green New Deal Motion that myself and Cllr Hills proposed received unanimous, cross-party support. Will the Leader of the Council provide an update on the Green New Deal report that was requested in the motion, including details on:

- If any stakeholders are involved
- Who the lead officers are that have been assigned to this report
- What the proposed timescale is
- When the city can expect to see the final version.

Reply from Councillor Platts, Leader of the Council.

At the full council meeting on 24 October, I was also pleased that the council approved a Notice of Motion (NoM) on a Green New Deal. The NoM requested that certain issues relating to a Green New Deal be referred to P&R for decision.

A report on the Carbon Neutral 2030 Programme and Climate Assembly was taken to the following P&R Committee on 5 December. This included a Recommendation to note the Notice of Motion agreed at 24th October Full Council and agree that work on these measures be taken forward as part of the Carbon Neutral 2030 programme.

Through the programme we will be working with residents and a wide range of stakeholders to address the Climate Emergency. We are already working with the Greater Brighton Economic Board and its Infrastructure Panel to develop an Energy Plan. The overall aim of the Greater Brighton Energy Plan is to identify opportunities for energy infrastructure that will support the city region in achieving its objectives in terms of decarbonisation and economic growth. It is anticipated that the Energy Plan will be finalised in April 2020, and deliverables

include a project pipeline and development models. The Greater Brighton Water Plan follows a similar approach and timetable and will identify water projects aimed at improving water efficiency.

We will also work closely with Coast to Capital LEP, particularly around the emerging Local Industrial Strategy, and regional collaboration to lobby government for funding for low-carbon, 'green' jobs and decarbonisation projects.

(6) Councillor Heley

Does the Administration have any plans to change existing emissions-based tariffs for residents parking permits, e.g. to expand beyond the 2 tiers of high and low emission vehicles? In order to tackle air pollution and to incentivise use of low emission vehicles, it would be good to have a further breakdown of emission levels with more being charged for higher emitting vehicles?

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

This is very complex and although the review has begun officers do need time to prepare a comprehensive emissions model. This would take into account Vehicle age, fuel type and engine size, in addition to CO2 emissions. This is also requires detailed discussions with our parking IT system operators to discuss any limitations with the current application systems and take into account future IT modernisation. Therefore, this is something that will be a focus for the financial year 2020/21, with intended implementation 2021/22 at the earliest.

(7) Councillor Ebel

Can you please give us an update on how many of the Non-British EU citizens in Brighton & Hove

- a) have applied for Settled Status so far
- b) have been granted Settled Status so far
- c) have been granted Pre-Settled Status so far
- d) have not yet applied for Settled Status
- e) have used the service in Brighton Town Hall to scan their ID and documents to apply for Settled Status

The New European and other newspapers recently revealed that the Android app that is used to apply for Settled Status can be easily hacked and that sensitive information, such as passport information, passwords and facial scans can be stolen without circumstance. Can you please confirm that the scanners provided by the Council in Brighton Town Hall have been checked following these revelations and that the security flaws do not affect the scanners?

Reply from Councillor Platts, Leader of the Council.

Thank you for your question regarding the EU Settlement Scheme and the city's EU nationals.

Latest EUSS figures released by the Home Office on 7th November 2019 show that **9,750** EU nationals in Brighton & Hove had applied to the scheme between 28th August 2018 - 30th September 2019.

Of that number **8,070** applications concluded with:

- **4,860** granted settled status
- **3,140** granted pre-settled status
- **70** given 'other' status

Which leaves **1,680** that were still 'in-process' at the time the data was recorded.

Figures from the ONS in December 2018 estimated that there were **19,000** residents in Brighton & Hove who were born in the EU. This figure is presented with confident intervals of 7,000 either way which could mean many more or less actually live in the city but these are presently the best estimates the council has. It is important to note that some EU residents may have been granted citizenship in the past. We presently don't have an exact figure of who in the city has not applied.

The service at Brighton Town Hall has so far assisted **361** EU nationals in accessing the scheme.

The Brexit Coordinator will seek assurances from the Home Office on the security of the ID Document Check android app but notes that the public statement by the Home Office in Nov 2019 says:

"We take the security and protection of personal information extremely seriously. The EU Exit: ID Document Check app is regularly tested by independent security firms against all known and emerging threats and adheres to industry best practice on security, performance and accessibility. Over a million people have used the app safely and we continually review our systems to ensure that it is kept safe."

The document scanners being used by the Registry Office have regular technical updates to the app which are automatically applied, and the devices usually updated overnight – the assumption is that these are to improve performance and/or security. They are informed directly by email that an update is being applied and to ensure that it has completed.

(8) Councillor Rainey - Single-use plastics

Efforts to make Brighton and Hove single-use plastic free have been going on since 2017 when a petition and Notice of Motion from the Green Party, calling for the city to pledge to become plastic free, were passed at full council. Many of the city's large events, and a number of businesses, have now committed to phasing out single-use plastics and earlier this year a campaign was launched for Brighton to achieve Plastic Free Community status.

This autumn Penzance was declared the UK's first town to achieve Plastic Free Community status. This status involves the council eliminating all single use items from their premises and supporting Plastic Free Community initiatives across the town. In Penzance local businesses and communities have been engaged with, and 12 local schools have become plastic free.

Brighton and Hove has the ability to become the first city in the UK to be awarded Plastic Free Community status, and we have already committed to becoming plastic free. However single-use plastic is still being used by many businesses, communities and schools across the city. Please can we have an update on what has been successfully done so far, and when we expect to achieve plastic free status?

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

In my response to a similar question that was brought to committee in October I talked about the council's commitment to the Plastic Free Pledge campaign and listed many areas of work to reduce single-use plastics that have been going on across council buildings, in our operations and across the city. This work continues to make progress and the council continues to work collaboratively with city partners in finding solutions and alternatives to single-use plastics and identifying opportunities to do this through our procurement process, contract management and through collaboration across departments and with city partners. It is great to see more and more individuals doing their bit to eliminate the use of single-use plastics in their day to day lives and seeing reusable alternatives becoming more of the norm.

With regards to the Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) Plastic Free Community status, there is a huge amount of work that has already been done in this regard, especially within the actions put forward by the council itself. The rest of the 'certification' is being led by volunteers within the Brighton & Hove community - and we are continuing to carry on this work with the hope that we would be certified in 2020. The volunteers are already speaking to schools about plastic free status and this is being supported by council through the school's environmental education programme and through an emerging new cross-departmental schools project where the council is collaborating with a local marine plastics expert and Southern Water. Volunteers are also sending a letter to every councillor to see how they can engage their local community.

It should also be mentioned that Penzance is much smaller than Brighton and Hove. This is being recognised by SAS HQ, but we cannot compare the two locations!

(9) Councillor Clare

Amendments passed in the 2019-20 budget included £0.022m for City Clean to support Universities with a recycling project to minimise fly-tipping at the end of term. How has this been used?

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

A Council communications officer and projects officer have been working with the Universities of Sussex and Brighton to target students on fly-tipping and general waste.

A plan is being drawn up that will target the city's student population (of around 40,000) on recycling, cutting contamination and warning of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for littering and most importantly fly-tipping.

Student landlords will also be targeted on fly-tipping at the beginning and end of terms.

Joint communications will be carried out through liaison with the Universities' community ambassadors and targeted comms through direct mail, leaflets, face to face visits, and having a stall at student fresher's weeks and fairs.

The budget will be used for producing a suite of communications to help deliver the above including leaflets, pop-up banners, traditional and social media education campaigns, paid for advertising in university and other student-popular media.

The universities have advised the best time to target their students is in the New Year as new students are more settled in then.

(10) Councillor Clare

Could you supply me with the proportion of CTR recipients in council tax arrears per year from 2015-2019?

Reply from Councillor Yates, Deputy Chair (Finance) of the Policy & Resources Committee

There is no straightforward percentage calculation, because the caseload is not static enough to measure like for like, with individuals starting and stopping CTR throughout the year. The following information gives an indication of the number of Liability Orders produced during the year in question, where the individuals had a CTR claim in payment at some point during the year. Alongside this, there is a snapshot of the number of claims as at the fourth quarter of the relevant year, to give a rough idea of scale.

	Number of Liability Orders	Count of claims Jan-March
2015 to 2016	3,260	23,382
2016 to 2017	3,263	22,163
2017 to 2018	3,021	19,934

2018 to 2019	2,444	18,722
2019 to 2020	2219	18,076

(11) Councillor Clare

What proportion of events in the city have incurred fines for the state of land at the end of events and of these, are any on Hove Lawns?

Reply from Councillor Robins, Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee

Events are not fined as such. A reinstatement deposit is taken or, in the case of the very largest events, indemnification against any damage caused is agreed by contract.

A total of £19,241 has been spent by event organisers towards re-instatement in 2019. £1502 was spent on Hove Lawns and charged against the Ladyboys of Bangkok.

As stated previously 2019 has not been the best year for reinstatement. The unseasonably wet Autumn / early winter has resulted in some of the works not establishing themselves. It is the intention to have another round of works in the early spring in three key areas – Hove Lawns, Stanmer Park and Old Steine. The estimated cost of these works is £5000, again this will be charged to event organisers.

(12) Councillor Hugh-Jones

Since 1 April 2018, private landlords are no longer permitted to let domestic properties on new tenancies to new or existing tenants if the property’s Energy Efficiency Certificate rating is F or G (unless an exemption applies). From 1 April 2020, this exemption will apply to all such properties even where there is no change in tenancy.

Enforcement is a matter for the local authority. Local authorities may serve compliance notices up to 12 months after a suspected breach has occurred. Where a local authority confirms that a property is (or has been) let in breach of the Regulations, it may impose a financial penalty up to 18 months after the breach and/or publish details of the breach for at least 12 months. By way of example, penalties for renting out a non-compliant property for 3 months or more are up to £4000 per property.

In light of the above, what steps is the Council taking to prepare to enforce EPC ratings in the private rental sector after April?

Reply from Councillor Williams, Chair of the Housing Committee

The Housing Committee Work Plan 2019-23 seeks to improve private rented housing, including to:

- Develop the enforcement approach to private sector housing to reflect the full range of potential options available to improve management and standards.
- Develop an action plan to set out how we will work collaboratively to ensure housing contributes to making the city carbon neutral by 2030.

November Housing Committee approved a Private Sector Housing Enforcement Strategy agreeing that procedures will be devised and the policy implemented from April 2020.

As part of our development of these procedures, we will, in liaison with other regulatory departments in the council who may also have responsibility for this area of work, review and report upon our approach to EPC enforcement.

(13) Councillor Fishleigh

The i360 says that it will contribute £640million to the local economy over the next 25 years which amounts to £70,000 a day every day, can you give us a breakdown of this figure in terms of financial benefits to hotels and other accommodation, restaurants, cafes and bars, car parks, independent shops and other tourist attractions?

Reply from Councillor Robins, Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee

A copy of the Brighton i360 Economic and Social Impact Report can be found on the i360's website. This was an Independent report commissioned by the i360 and prepared by local economic development experts. The report includes further information on the breakdown of those figures. It is not the council's report and we do not hold the data that sits behind it.

(14) Councillor Hills

Following the motion put forward by Councillor Amy Heley at the last full council meeting, we've agreed as a council to work towards a Green New Deal policy framework, which means restructuring our economy to work towards eliminating carbon emissions and increasing biodiversity, while boosting local jobs. To do this effectively, we will need to train a high number of workers in a range of skills.

- I'd like to ask the leader of the council if the skills and specialisms needed for this transition have been identified and if so, could this made public?
- What will the council do to make sure that we can recruit enough local people to take up these roles?
- What work is currently being done to ensure local colleges, training providers and employers can provide effective training for these new positions?

Reply from Councillor Platts, Leader of the Council

Skills demand and identification of skills gaps are a national, regional and local priority. The Coast to Capital Skills 360 Board was established to provide

direction and strategic support to boost the productivity of our economy by giving people the skills they need to secure and maintain high quality jobs. Additionally, the Skills Board is undertaking the role of Skills Advisory Panel ([link](#)). The remit and responsibilities of Skills Advisory Panels is specified by the Department of Education, the panel brings together local employers and skills providers to pool knowledge on skills and labour market needs, and to work together to understand and address key local challenges existing and future skills gaps and employment priorities. Brighton and Hove representatives on the board include the Vice Chancellor of the University of Brighton and the Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Brighton Metropolitan College. The final skills report produced ([link](#)) which maps skill demand and supply was finalised in September. The Local Authority will need to work with the skills board with regard to the Green Deal Policy in 2020.

The specific skills required will be determined by the nature of the jobs, which are evolving or unknown. Where there is awareness of rapidly changing technical solutions we will look at how the Council and Higher Education Institutions can respond. Brighton and Sussex Universities have established courses in sustainable design and materials solutions and in sustainable and ethical procurement and supply chain management which meet local need.

Nationally, the introduction of the T Levels, a 2 year technical education offer designed with employers ([link](#)) will dictate the post 16 provision offer (phased nationally from 2020). T Level's will be available in subjects including Design, Surveying and Planning, Building Services Engineering and On-site construction.

Apprenticeships developed by employers provide a wide choice of pathways from intermediate to degree level. The Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education detail a clear process for the establishment of new occupational standards especially where skills gaps have been identified. As an employer we have contributed to the creation of new apprenticeships including an apprenticeship in Planning at degree level.

The local provision offer has the flexibility to respond to identified demand subject to financial viability and the supply of skilled teachers.

During 2020 the National Retraining Scheme ([link](#)) will be rolled out across the UK. The programme will help adults retrain into better jobs, and be ready for future changes to the economy, including those brought about by automation. The scheme will also help to meet the needs of businesses for a multi-skilled workforce in the future.

The Council is currently working with stakeholders in the City in order to identify and address barriers to work and learning; provide an adult education and community learning offer with progression routes, and accessible information, advice and guidance support.

Across the city there is a need to raise skills, knowledge and awareness for this across key sectors particular in STEM subjects, and within the council itself.

As a council we continue to support staff to upskill in their roles through the apprenticeship programme which contributes to retraining and retention of staff, keeping key skills within the organisation. A female employee is currently undertaking Digital & Technology Specialist Professional (Data Analyst) L7 Apprentice.

Through the Council Apprenticeship Levy we are able to support SME's to take on new apprentices and develop existing employees. So far we have allocated over £339,000, including Civil Engineering Degree Apprenticeships with Brighton University. The University of Brighton are one of the first university's to offer this apprenticeship and provides a useful platform from which to examine the issues associated with sustainable development.

(15) Councillor Nield

Varndean School has recently sent out plans to local residents showing its proposed expansion. Residents are concerned about the effects on local traffic of an increase in pupil numbers. There have already been serious accidents involving pupils on both Ditchling Road and Preston Drove, and parking at the top of Balfour Road at school pick up and drop off times can already be dangerous and chaotic.

Residents would like to know what plans the council has to mitigate the repercussions of increased pupil numbers on traffic and parking around the school, and what plans they have to improve the safety of those pupils who walk and cycle to both Varndean and the other schools which share the grounds of the Surrenden campus.

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

I appreciate your concerns about this location given that this is a very big campus already, with two colleges, two secondary schools, a primary school and it also has some busy local roads surrounding it.

Your question is about traffic, safety and parking, but it has been prompted by the planned expansion of the Varndean School. I have therefore discussed this response with Councillor Allcock, as the Chair of the Children, Young People & Skills Committee (which you also sit on) and he is happy that I respond on both of our behalves.

The decisions to expand the school to accommodate 30 more children were made in 2018, and it is expected that a planning application for this proposal will be submitted very soon. The application will include a transport assessment, which will assess the possible impact of the increased number of pupils on local roads and it will propose any appropriate mitigation measures that may be required.

I hope that residents, including those in your ward who have concerns, will look at the traffic information and make comments on the application when it is submitted. They will be able to do this on the council's website.

In addition, the Council has a rolling programme of capital investment through its Safer Routes to School programme which provides improvements in the areas around schools to ensure a safer environment for children where there are known safety related issues. Much like your suggestion of School Zones the Safer Routes to School programme looks to introduce a range of measures such as - safer crossing points, speed limit reductions, improved signage and road markings. To date the Council has introduced Safer Routes to School improvements at 18 locations across the city that has benefited 46 schools across the city. There is another scheme underway at West Blatchington Primary due for completion shortly. The assessment criteria to introduce Safer Routes to school is very much safety led and looks first and foremost at reducing accidents that have involved children and young people and to create an environment in which children feel safe to walk in. The council also has a rolling programme of investment to install new pedestrian crossing points to benefit all users, including children across the city.

There has been some past work done in the Varndean school area to make it safer. In 2012, the council developed a Safer Routes to School scheme for the Fiveways area and works were done in Ditchling Road and Preston Drive. We do monitor road safety data across the city, and last month the ETS Committee agreed to receive a report which will set out the ways in which the council can work in close consultation with schools and local communities about the creation of walking zones to improve safety.

Earlier this year, we also used the 'Streetwise' initiative to help keep children safe as they travel to and from school. Streetwise is a touring theatre production which is aimed at new Year 7 students starting at secondary school, and Varndean and Downs View were included.

A consultation will take place in early 2020 in the Surrenden area on a resident parking scheme. The results of this consultation will then be taken to an ETS Committee in Summer 2020. If there is strong support and the recommendation from ETS Committee is to proceed the next step would be to consult again with the residents with a detailed design.

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/parking-and-travel/parking/surrenden-area-parking-consultation>

(16) Councillor Hugh-Jones

When Boots and the Coop closed on London Road in preparation for the redevelopment of that site, it was anticipated that Boots would move across the road. There have since been reports that this has fallen through. Will the Health and Wellbeing Board be raising this serious failure of provision to local residents, particularly as this relates to prescription services?

Reply from Councillor Moonan, Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board

A report was submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) 10th September 2019 as part of its Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA)

responsibilities. The report updated the HWB following the previous information in July 2019 that the Boots in the London Road was moving premises from its current address to across the London Road.

The PNA is a comprehensive statement of the need for pharmaceutical services of the population in its area. The National Health Service (Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013 (“the Regulations”) set out the legislative basis and requirements of the Health and Wellbeing Board for developing and updating the PNA as well as the responsibility of NHS England in relation to “market entry”.

NHS England holds the contract for community pharmacy. The provision of NHS Pharmaceutical Services in community pharmacies is a controlled market. If an applicant wants to provide NHS pharmaceutical services, they are required to apply to NHS England (NHSE) to be included on a pharmaceutical list. Since April 2013 pharmaceutical lists are compiled and held by NHSE. NHSE will use the PNA when making decisions on applications.

HWBs have the responsibility to carry out and publish a PNA for its population at least every three years and publish supplementary statements stating any changes to local pharmaceutical services.

At the July 2019 HWB meeting Public Health advised that this relocation did not represent a gap in provision because the relocation was 100 metres across the same road and would provide the same level of service and opening hours. Since July 2019 the situation changed. NHSE informed the Public Health team on 28th August 2019 that Boots had requested a temporary suspension from NHSE for the provision of its pharmaceutical services at 119-120 London Road, due to problems in obtaining alternative premises before the lease on their current premises was due to expire. They made this request under Section 29.4 of the NHS (Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulation 2013. NHSE have granted Boots a temporary suspension of provision for up to 6 months whilst they seek alternative premises, which is expected to be at a different address. The Boots at 119-120 London Road closed on September 20th 2019.

Brighton and Hove City Council Public Health team have remained in contact with NHSE who have confirmed that if Boots are not able to find premises within the six months of 20th September 2019, the contract will automatically terminate and the pharmacy will be considered as closed. However In the circumstance that they found premises at the last minute they could apply for an extension to the contract, to allow time for a relocation application to be processed. The Public Health team will continue to monitor the situation in relation to the HWB’s PNA responsibilities.

(17) Councillor Hugh-Jones

Also, on the subject of London Road, where can residents find information about the proposed redevelopment? The information on the Council’s website appears to date from 2013.

Reply from Councillor Robins, Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee

Assuming that this question relates to the London Road shopping centre. There are various development proposals within and around this area. Information can be found in various places on the council's website.

Planning permission was granted earlier this year for the demolition of the former Boots and Co-op supermarket on the corner of London Road and Oxford Street. This building will be replaced with a five-storey building – with student accommodation above ground floor retail.

Just off London Road itself, the Longley Industrial Estate will be redeveloped by Legal & General for a mixed-use development of offices and 'build-to rent' residential apartments. This was granted permission earlier this year.

The planning applications containing full information on both of these developments can be found on the 'Planning' section of the council's website. New England House (next door to the Longley site) is owned by the council and is proposed for expansion and refurbishment. The most recent details on this project can be found in the agenda pack for the recent 5th of December Policy & Resources Committee. This information is also available on the council website. P&R granted permission for the next stages of design work.

Planning policy information relating to the central London Road area can be found in the council's City Plan (Parts 1 and 2) and the London Road Central Supplementary Planning Document. These documents are also available to view and download on the council's website.

(18) Councillor Mac Cafferty

Can you please tabulate the quantity of complaints about licensed premises for each street in Brunswick and Adelaide Ward per year in the past five years? In 2019 which licensed premises and the corresponding street; in 2018 which licensed premises and the corresponding street; in 2017 which licensed premises and the corresponding street; in 2016 which licensed premises and the corresponding street; in 2015 which licensed premises and the corresponding street.

Reply from Councillor O'Quinn, Chair of the Licensing Committee

We can provide the information requested and an officer will send it to you directly.

(19) Councillor Mac Cafferty

Can you please tabulate the quantity of fixed penalty notices for environmental offences of littering, littering from vehicles, dog fouling, graffiti, fly posting, unauthorised flyering, industrial and commercial waste receptacle offence, residential fly tipping, commercial fly tipping, disposing of commercial waste illegally, failure of business to produce a waste transfer note per year from

March 2016 to December 2019. In 2016, how many FPNs and for which offence; in 2017 how many FPNs and for which offence; in 2018 how many FPNs and for which offence; in 2019 how many FPNs and for which offence. The last time I asked this question I was informed that the council didn't have data before March 2016, why is that given that we have had FPNs since the 1990 Environmental Protection Act.

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

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Littering/littering from vehicles/ spitting, urinating or defecating	1324	2581	3950	548
Dog fouling	3	4	6	1
Graffiti	18	1	3	6
Fly posting	7	43	16	13
Unauthorised flyering	53	79	66	21
Industrial and commercial waste receptacle offence/disposing of commercial waste illegally	295	166	6	323
Residential fly tipping	99	202	274	285
Commercial fly tipping		450	215	
failure of business to produce a waste transfer note	341	486	427	41

Please note, during the 3GS contract, Residential fly tipping and Commercial fly tipping were recorded separately. Since the service has been in-house (and pre-3GS) the offences have been combined.

Some explanations for variances:

- Littering: through environmental enforcement education, there has been an element of behaviour change.
- Industrial and commercial waste receptacle offence/disposing of commercial waste illegally: issuing of FPNs was put on hold in 2018 due to the uncertainty of successful prosecutions under the legislation that was used at the time. This has now been rectified.
- Failure of business to produce a waste transfer note: through environmental enforcement education, most commercial entities across the city are aware of their roles and responsibilities relating to waste management and now have the relevant documentation. Officers frequently check a business's duty of care certificate should they commit an offence.
- There have also been fewer members of staff meaning there has been less coverage across the city. Recruitment has now been completed and all positions are filled.

It has not been possible to locate a complete set of data for the number of FPNs issued pre-2016.

(20) Councillor Mac Cafferty

As records have been kept only by ward since 2018/19, can you please tabulate new reports of, or enquiries regarding, ASB for each street in Brunswick and Adelaide Ward per month. This would mean each street will have a clear record of reports for each month for this period. As reports weren't kept per ward what was recorded prior to this, and how do I understand what incidents, reports or enquiries happened on the streets in my ward before this point?

Reply from Councillor Childs, Lead Member for Community Safety

We can provide the information requested. However due to the way that the information was captured prior to 2018/19 this may take a little while. Officers will provide the information to you directly in the New Year.

(21) Councillor Mac Cafferty

At last full council I tried to ask questions about:

- (1) the quantity of complaints about communal bin collections;
- (2) the quantity of complaints about the state of communal bins and;
- (3) the age of each communal bin,

on each street in Brunswick and Adelaide Ward for the past five years? But was told that this information is not available as complaints have not been recorded in this way. As the area of the city where communal recycling was trialled in 2012 and as one of the first areas of the city with some of the oldest communal waste bins how am I to understand now, not after the audit, how the council understands

- (1) the quantity of complaints about communal bin collections;
- (2) the quantity of complaints about the state of communal bins and;
- (3) the age of each communal bin. Especially as the city does record quantities of missed collections for recycling and this is captured in the KPIs report.

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

Complaints about communal bin collections

Based on previous feedback from Councillor Mac Cafferty, the classification of complaints was amended and now include *issue with a communal bin*. Since this change in October 2019, there have been four complaints about communal bins. One was in the Brunswick & Adelaide ward.

Complaints about state of communal bins

Complaints about the condition of communal bins are very rarely received by the Corporate Customer Feedback Team. Since October 2019, there has been one complaint, and this was not in Brunswick & Adelaide.

Instead, complaints are received directly to Cityclean via telephone or email or to the Assistant Director. These are dealt with on a case by case basis with a site visit to inspect the bin to determine what action needs to be taken. The number of these complaints is not recorded centrally.

Age of each communal bin

This is currently unknown. Once the audit is complete, Cityclean will have a better understanding of which bins are the oldest.

The missed collections in the KPI report relate to kerbside missed collections, not communal missed collections.

(22) Councillor Gibson

Please provide a table showing the additional council homes provided for each year (or part year) 2015/16 through until the part year 2019/20 up till December 15th and for each year (or part year) show the additional annual rent income receivable for these homes at today’s rents?

Reply from Councillor Williams, Chair of the Housing Committee

<u>Financial Year</u>	<u>Number of units</u>	<u>Full year effect of rental income £</u>
2015/16	29	178,220
2016/17	26	238,870
2017/18	108	860,790
2018/19	76	627,090
2019/20	43	331,190

(23) Councillor Gibson

For the home purchase policies operation up until December 15th 2019, please can you provide:

- the number of homes on which a purchase has been completed and of the number used as temporary and as general needs?
- A breakdown of the numbers charging social rents, 27.5% Living wage, 37.5% Living wage and Local housing allowance?
- A breakdown of the number of properties coming from the “first refusal” option when RTB homes are sold on and the numbers coming from other routes?

Reply from Councillor Williams, Chair of the Housing Committee

- 43 homes have completed – 25 for general need and 18 for temporary accommodation

- Of those 43: 0 have been charged social rents, 2 have been charged 27.5% living wage rents, 23 have been charged 37.5% living wage rents and 18 have been charged LHA rates
- Of the 43: 16 were right of first refusal and 27 were other routes

(24) Councillor Gibson

Please can you explain the “anomaly” experienced with the DWP indicating how this is hampering the councils collection of rent on behalf of seaside homes and when it is anticipated that this anomaly will be resolved (also some details on how the collection procedures are being reviewed and what (if any) changes are being implemented to improve on the 85.6 % collection rate reported to P&R)? (see answers to P&R – 5th December)

Reply from Councillor Yates, Deputy Chair (Finance) of the Policy & Resources Committee

We can advise that Seaside Homes rents are currently subject to Universal Credit at Local Housing Allowance rates rather than being classed as Temporary Accommodation which is excluded from LHA. This is despite the council providing written information for tenants to submit with their application concerning our use of Seaside Homes as TA. We have also had issues with the DWP reflecting our most recent rent increase (Feb 2019) in UC payments, delays in UC payments being actioned and issues with applying for and receiving direct rent payments and payments for arrears.

We have secured a meeting with DWP, scheduled before Christmas, in which we hope to achieve an understanding and acceptance by DWP of Seaside Homes properties and how to treat them in future with the aim of resolving the current delays in assessment (which cannot be backdated). In terms of rent collection, it has been widely reported that many housing organisations and landlords are seeing reduced income collection as a result of Universal Credit.

Moving forward to improve rent collection. We are recruiting additional staff resources to be in place early in the new year and increasing the focus of most of the existing officers in the temporary & emergency accommodation income team on Seaside for the last quarter of the current financial year (3 officers out of 5.5 Full Time Equivalent posts).

We are also undertaking a business process review across Housing to consider income collection across all types of accommodation and potential efficiencies to improve overall collection rates.

(25) Councillor Gibson

Of the borrowing taken out at 2.17% (average rate) what percentage of the assumed borrowing was actually taken up? (see written answers to P&R on 5th on December)

Reply from Councillor Yates, Deputy Chair (Finance) of the Policy & Resources Committee

The original assumption was that the HRA would need to borrow approximately £32 million to fund investment in the projects in question. However, due to changes in the timing of HRA project investments, approximately £14m other HRA resources became available to be utilised for other projects instead of requiring borrowing. This ensured that the HRA did not incur financing costs unnecessarily and it is anticipated that borrowing will therefore be required in the future to fund the capital investment programme. Currently, this means that the HRA has utilised £18m or 56% of the assumed level of borrowing at an average rate of 2.17%.

(26) Councillor Gibson

As of 15th December, how much of the £1m rent reserve created in the 2019/20 budget to support social rents and 27.5% Living wage rents has been spent, and how many additional homes at social rents and 27.5% living wage (living) rents is it projected will be supported during the rest of the current financial year?

Reply from Councillor Yates, Deputy Chair (Finance) of the Policy & Resources Committee

It was approved at the September Housing Committee to consider the use of the rent reserve (£1.050m) to reduce rents for the properties being purchased through the Home Purchase Policy. Officers are currently considering the most efficient way to apply this reserve to properties which are offered to the council from September 2019 as the application of this reserve needs to consider how to optimize the use in order to lower the rents on the maximum number of properties possible. The intention to use this on properties being offered from September is likely to mean that purchases using the new methodology will take place from December/January onwards. The number of homes supported will depend on the varying level of subsidy for each home.

In addition, January Housing Committee is considering a report on Rent Policy for new council homes to maximise the number of council homes replaced at social or living wage rents which will inform rent setting going forward.

(27) Councillor Gibson

What is the proposed (2020/21) CPZ permit increase per week for a full scheme permit and the proposed cost of “surcharge” per week on each of 2nd and 3rd permits?

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

These are the current proposals:

- Raise the price of the basic annual resident full scheme permit from £130 to £150 (about 38p a week) but keeping quarterly prices (£45) the same to reduce costs to those who find the upfront annual costs more difficult.
- Raise second/additional full scheme by means of an additional surcharge (annually £80 and quarterly £20 which works at about £1.54 a week).

(28) Councillor Gibson

As of December 15th, 2019;

- How many council homes have been sold under the RTB during this financial year?
- What is the current level HRA borrowing and how much is this under the previous borrowing cap?

Reply from Councillor Williams, Chair of the Housing Committee

- As at 15th December there have been 24 sales under the RTB during 2019/20.
- The current level of HRA borrowing at 15th December is £129,291m this is £27,509m below the previous HRA borrowing cap.

(29) Councillor Osborne - Possibilities to claim extra support and how the Administration is encouraging this

With the complicated means-tested benefit system that we have in the UK there are millions of people each year that don't realise that they are due extra support and fail to claim. As a result, there is extra demand placed on council run services.

1. What extra support is available for residents to apply for in terms of benefits, tax relief etc both from the council and nationally?
2. What are the take-up rates of these various possible support schemes in terms of number of eligible people vs actual number of claimants (in Brighton and Hove)? How does this compare with other local authorities?
3. Are these figures regularly tracked to see if there are any trends emerging?
4. What actions are the administration currently taking to promote the availability of these schemes and how are they supporting people when applying?
5. Are there any further plans to support people when applying in the future and to help to increase their uptake?

Reply from Councillor Yates, Deputy Chair (Finance) of the Policy & Resources Committee

1. Examples of help include Universal Credit, Employment Support Allowance, Carer's Allowance, Tax Credits, Personal Independence Payments... locally we offer a Council Tax Reduction scheme, alongside Discretionary Housing Payments and the Local Discretionary Social Fund. There are a number of websites that explain in more detail the possible benefits and help that residents can apply for nationally and locally, including the [gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk), and there are online benefit calculators that can give an indication of what someone might be entitled to depending on their circumstances.

2 and 3.

The number of potentially eligible people city-wide is unknown, due to the complexity of the various schemes, the complexity of individual lives and circumstances, and the fact that we do not have data about residents' personal circumstances unless they are already known to us. However, in our Council Tax Reduction report to Policy and Resources Committee on 5 December ([Council Tax Reduction Review 2020-21 and Working Towards a New Welfare Framework](#)), we outlined plans to develop a new Welfare Board, and one of the early pieces of work will be to undertake some mapping work to analyse demand for help with financial and welfare benefit support. Another of our aims is to ensure that all support services within the council are better able to identify the key signs of when somebody might be missing out on financial assistance, and then either signpost them to the appropriate service, or support them directly. Many teams and officers already successfully highlight potential eligibility to people who they support, so this is an ongoing exercise. We will be exploring new models of data analysis, using existing data to identify households most at risk in terms of financial resilience. We would also be working with our partners in the voluntary sector to understand and interpret data that we identify concerning financial and welfare benefit take up in the city.

4. In terms of promoting availability of benefits and financial support, our website has information about our local Council Tax Reduction, Discretionary Payments and Local Discretionary Social Fund (LDSF) schemes. Residents are advised about the schemes if they present in financial difficulty (for example if they have rent arrears, or council tax arrears). Colleagues in housing regularly assist their clients to access the LDSF. We also provide training on Welfare Benefits for other council officers and colleagues in the voluntary sector, so that they can recognise when vulnerable residents need more targeted and specific intervention. We have a Welfare Rights team that can advise residents on their potential entitlement to benefits, and we proactively work with residents whose Benefit entitlement has been capped by the government, so that they can either find work, find more suitable accommodation, or we assist them in claiming PIP, if they have a health condition that would mean they qualify. When we are made aware that somebody has claimed Universal Credit, we advise them to claim CTR, either whilst speaking to them, or in writing. On an ongoing basis, our partners in the Jobcentre have been working with us

and other organisations on how to support individuals with complex needs. The city's voluntary sector also plays a crucial role both in promoting the help available and supporting people in accessing that help.

5. We are embarking on a development programme with the Local Government Association, alongside five other Local Authorities. We want to explore how to join up our services strategically and operationally, and find innovative ways of supporting our residents with their financial resilience. The intentions and next steps for this work are outlined in a report to Policy and Resources Committee on 5 December: [Council Tax Reduction Review 2020-21 and Working Towards a New Welfare Framework](#)

(30) Councillor Osborne - Universal Credit

The national government embarked on an overhaul of the welfare system when they started the transition towards universal credit. There have been several delays in the roll out of this but how far through the roll out are we as of December 2019 in terms of the % of claimants who now receive universal credit? When do we expect all claimants to be moved onto this system?

Reply from Councillor Yates, Deputy Chair (Finance) of the Policy & Resources Committee

Universal Credit is a combination of six legacy benefits and we do not hold information about the residual caseloads of national benefits. Migration is ongoing and the DWP's programme is not expected to be complete until at least 2023. In terms of Housing Benefit caseload, since January 2017, some 2,500 cases have naturally migrated across to the DWP, where their Housing Costs are paid as part of Universal Credit. Cases usually transfer where somebody makes a new claim, or where they have had a change of circumstances. The transfer rate currently averages 60 per month. Combined with those making new claims directly to Universal Credit, it means that the overall Housing Benefit caseload has reduced from 24,000 to 18,000. Nationally, since July 2019 the DWP has been testing the next phase of migration with a pilot in Harrogate, moving over cases where there has not been a triggering change of circumstances. However, the pilot is proceeding very cautiously and is understood to have migrated extremely low numbers while they test processes and support mechanisms. Even if the government achieves its current target of completing migration during 2023, there will be a significant number of cases still on Housing Benefit, for example pensioners and those in supported and temporary accommodation. There is no information on when or how the Harrogate pilot will expand, or when managed migration will happen in Brighton and Hove.

(31) Councillor Powell – Tree Planting

In July 2019, the BBC reported that "*Ethiopia has planted more than 350 million trees in a day, officials say, in what they believe is a world record.*"

How many trees were felled by BHCC in the last year? And how many trees were planted in the last year by BHCC? Crucially, what plan has this labour

administration committed to (along with ideas such as Plant Your Postcode) to plant even more trees in the next few years, now that our council has declared a climate emergency?

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

The Administration is committed to increasing the overall number of trees in the city and working towards the Friends of the Earth suggested target of doubling tree cover by 2045. However, in light of ash dieback and other tree diseases we also need to commit resources towards preserving our existing tree stock.

The council has taken steps to reduce the decline in tree cover in the City. Exact figures for felling of woodland trees are not available however the Councils Arbotrak system shows 1105 fellings for this calendar year which will include some of the woodland trees, housing and cemeteries trees. It will include losses to elm disease and ash die back. Because of the way the figures are recorded it will include any tree work including the removal of self-seeded trees in the City. The council has also taken steps to improve the inspection and maintenance of our existing trees.

There are currently in the region of 500 confirmed tree plantings for this year which have either been completed or are in progress. We have also identified a possible 3 other sites where we are hoping to work with residents through 'Plant Your Postcode' to do some additional tree planting. As these are large areas we are hoping to get significant number of trees in and we will be aiming to ensure that there is no net loss of trees overall and ideally that we will be able to increase the overall number.

An additional £200 k has been allocated this year for street tree planting. To put this into perspective Cityparks annual budget for tree planting is £15k. This will help to reverse the trend of loss of street trees. In addition, an additional £300k has been put into maintenance and safety work on trees for this financial year.

Ash Die back has hit the country and will hit some of our woodlands badly and Elm Disease is increasing in the City. It is thought the increase in elm disease is due to poor control of the disease on non-council land in the City but the sources of infection have not been confirmed. Infection numbers do fluctuate but this year we lost 300 trees as opposed to an average of just under 200 for the previous 3 years.

We are working closely with residents and 'plant your postcode' in order to accelerate the number of tree plantings from next tree planting season. We will also be looking at opportunities to involve residents in tree conservation as tree warden alerting us at an early stage when there are problems.

There is a significant amount of public interest in tree planting and tree preservations. We recently had a workshop with 'Plant Your Postcode' and representatives from City Parks, Housing, Estates and Community Engagement attended. We do have issues with skilled technical officer capacity to deliver the increase in tree planting and we are exploring option for addressing this.

Our priority at the moment is preparing for next year's elm disease season failure to control the disease will lead to the loss of our elms which make up one third of our street trees. Unfortunately, there is nothing we can do to halt Ash Dieback which will hit the wooded area on the Cites edge hard. In terms of planting our aim is to use the additional funding identified for street tree planting to plant up some of the stump sites, on wider pavements, we have inherited in the Cities streets.

The consultation on our new Tree Strategy will commence in the New Year. We will be promoting this widely and will bring the results back to ETSC as soon as possible next year.

(32) Councillor Powell

Since the eligibility age for concessionary bus fares is set to rise to the age of 66 by October 2020, can the ETS Chair please confirm if this has in fact, already been actioned by BHCC? And if not, when?

And importantly, what specifically will the surplus income be used for, going forward? Could Companion Passes for those residents accompanying disabled passengers be an option, as in other authorities? As currently, BHCC do not offer these.

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

Eligibility for older persons passes has been gradually increasing since March 2019 to reach age 66 by October 2020. We have been issuing bus passes in-line with the raise of the pensionable age of the woman. Overall the amount of bus passes on issue has increased by 193 or by 0.5% in the period between March 2019 and 10th December 2019. Nationally and locally bus pass usage is declining. There were 380,000 bus journeys in Brighton made by passengers aged between 65-66 between November 2017-October 2018. Forecasted journeys for next financial year have taken in a number of factors including the age increase in eligibility.

Overall we estimate there will be 8,730,992 journeys made in total next year, after an initial decrease we expect to see an increase of 0.22% from October 2020 totalling an overall annual decrease of 1.4% in journeys made. Potential savings are being investigated in this area. However it is important to note that this includes a proposal to extend the concessionary travel scheme to allow 24hr travel for disabled pass holders. We are currently negotiating the reimbursement deal options with bus operators.

We have researched the possibility of issuing companion cards on the same basis as other local authorities and estimate we would issue 2279 cards, generating 622,187 journeys costing over £659,518pa. There are no current plans to recommend this option due to lack of available funding. We do however offer £70 of taxi vouchers to those residents who are not able to use their bus pass through mobility problems.

(33) Councillor Powell – Blue Badges

BBC in June 2019 reported: “About 2.35 million people in the UK have blue badge permits because of physical mobility difficulties or are registered blind. People with hidden disabilities are now also being considered as the change came into force on 30 August 2019. Scotland and Wales have already implemented similar rules to include some mental health impairments, (but the criteria is yet to be altered in Northern Ireland). The government said it would provide an extra £1.7m to help councils cope with the expected increase in applications”.

Has BHCC advertised this change, and informed Service users and community groups (as I am not aware of any such publicity)? And have they seen such applications increase? If not, will BHCC look into this matter forthwith?

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

A press release was issued by the communications team in conjunction with the Blue Badge team on the 20th August 2019 and was also picked up in local press. It was also advertised by central government and in received coverage from national press across June, July and August 2019. To date we have received over 400 applications for the new criteria which include applications from organisations and is a 100% increase in the amount of new applications received per month. There is currently no intention to advertise this further.

(34) Councillor Druitt

Recently a small number of councillors from Labour & Green parties visited Tablehurst Farm in Forest Row and experienced what sustainable community farming looks like. By its own admission it was not a perfect example, rather they were ‘on a journey’. However, they haven’t used pesticides or herbicides for over 40 years; the quality of their soil and their biodiversity is outstanding; and the level of employment, community engagement and educational opportunity is second to none.

Bearing in mind most of our city’s water comes directly from our own downland estate and currently the (untreated) water quality in the city is amongst the worst in the whole South Downs, isn’t it high time we stopped allowing herbicides and pesticides on our land and managed the transition to sustainable, community farming practices that do not pollute the environment, have a much lower carbon footprint and offer far more in terms of employment, community engagement and education?

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

The question recognises both the challenges and opportunities that changing our Downland Estate existing farming practices could achieve in contributing to

the council carbon neutral target by 2030 in addition to improving the environment and ground water quality.

It raises a number of current, topical and challenging issues that are being considered and developed in preparation for the council's Whole Estate Plan, which will be the successor document to the City Downland Estate policy, originally known as the Downland Initiative which was created in 2005/6.

Whilst ground water quality, sustainable farming and community farming are not mutually exclusive it would be inappropriate to say that only community farming or sustainable farming could deliver a reduction in our carbon footprint and the improvements in ground water quality we would all like to see, particularly within the challenging existing tenancy structure of the council's rural estate.

Clearly, there is significant opportunity to achieve much more in this area and with both the Agriculture Bill and Environment Bill making their way through Parliament the council is hopeful that there will be significant central government legislation and financial funding to support these changes and mitigate any future reduction in the Downland Estates income as we transition to a new land management approach.

At a local level the biggest opportunity to drive significant change in land use and its management is through the renewal and or granting of new tenancies when existing Agricultural Holding Act tenancies (restrictive by nature with three generation inheritance rights) and or newer more modern Farm Business Tenancies expire. This would enable the council to impose Sustainable Farming techniques to new occupiers who are willing to sign up to these, be they sole traders, farming partnerships, companies, Cooperatives or Community Trusts which as a consequence will ensure that over the longer-term ground water quality can only improve.

BHCC Officers and Agents have worked closely with tenant farmers across the Downland Estate to maximise up-take of environmental stewardship schemes available under European Agricultural Policy. We have successfully worked with the South Downs National Park, Natural England, Southern Water, the University of Brighton, the Environment Agency and other organisations, farmers and stakeholders in groundwater projects, particularly the on-going ChaMP project, seeking to reduce nitrate and ammonia inputs and encourage the uptake of sustainable farming practices.

We are in the process of making an investment in replacement septic tanks and sprayer-filling locations on farms, in collaboration with Southern Water and the capital grant schemes they are offering. This is a good example of a privately funded payment for eco-system services which forms an important part of emerging environmental legislation.

There is much that we have done, are doing and intend to do working towards delivering sustainable agriculture and as consequence sustainable food without detriment to ground water quality. The attached Appendix explains in more detail the context and challenges of the City Downland Estate, our achievements and successful collaborative working.

