

**DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Council for the hearing of depositions from members of the public. Each deputation may be heard for a maximum of five minutes following which one Member of the Council, nominated by the Mayor, may speak in response. It shall then be moved by the Mayor and voted on without discussion that the spokesperson for the deputation be thanked for attending and its subject matter noted.

Notification of one Deputation has been received. The spokesperson is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

**(1) Deputation concerning the Council Communication of the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency****Spokesperson – Venetia Carter**

Supported by:  
Josie Darling  
Sue Goodwin  
Carn Hemingway  
Tash Fairbanks  
Amza Henery  
Sarah Gorton  
Penny Bay

**Ward affected: All**

Councillor Heley, Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee will reply.

**(2) Deputation concerning SWEP****Spokesperson – David Thomas**

Supported by:  
Barry Hughes  
David Croydon  
Jim Deans  
Daniel Harris  
Charles Harrison

**Ward affected: All**

Councillor Gibson / Hugh-Jones, Joint Chair of the Housing Committee will reply.

**Deputation concerning the Council Communication of the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency****Spokesperson – Venetia Carter****Summary**

We are at a time of ecological crisis.

The science is clear that we are in the sixth mass extinction event and that untold human suffering\* will result if we fail to act proportionately on the climate and ecological emergency.

It is hard to face these facts and easy to look the other way. But just because we do, the problem will not cease to exist.

Both the natural world and human civilisation depend on a stable climate. The climate crisis is accelerating faster than most scientists predicted and is more severe than anticipated. This threatens global food supplies bringing the threat of global hunger and conflict that will disproportionately harm the most vulnerable. The changes will last many generations.

This Council was one of the first in the UK to declare a climate and biodiversity emergency and did so unanimously. Since then Covid has shown us what an emergency response looks like and how the people are willing and able to change their behaviour for the public good.

Courage to speak of the dangers we are in is needed.

Difficult financial decisions will need to be made to meet the 2030 target set by the Council. However, the act of making clear that we are in an emergency is not expensive. There is nothing on the home page of the council website page to indicate that a climate emergency has been declared. The page that is headed “climate change”, similarly makes no mention of an emergency. The website should be changed to reflect the declaration of emergency.

When there is danger, the alarm must be sounded. How else are we to prepare ourselves?

We appeal to you as representatives of your community to find the courage to face an uncertain future and tell the people of Brighton and Hove the truth so that we can work together to be part of the solution.

\*Bioscience Journal, Jan 2020, <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/70/1/8/5610806>

**Deputation concerning Homelessness - By Brighton & Hove Housing Coalition Spokesperson – David Thomas**

This deputation concerns two groups of homeless people in Brighton & Hove. In this cold winter in the middle of the pandemic, this council has decided that although it has helped these two groups in the past it is now no longer prepared to do so.

**SWEP:** The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol, or SWEP, is what every local authority has to do to provide shelter to rough sleepers, anyone at all, when the weather is bad. In this city we have generous criteria for opening SWEP. Last year, when it was open, it was announced on the council's website and emails were sent to community groups, and everyone knew that you could go down to the shelter at Brighton Town Hall between 7 and 10pm and get shelter and something to eat, and people could tell the rough sleepers they knew that it was open.

This year there is the pandemic, and so arrangements have to be different to be covid-safe. Despite the "everyone in" programme, there are still many rough sleepers, and more every day – the council estimates 30. But also – and this has nothing to do with any pandemic – it is secret. This year we have Secret SWEP. It is not announced on the website when it is open, we don't know where it is, and the community groups are not being told anything. St Mungo's outreach workers, we are told, will contact the people they know about and tell them. We know this is not reaching everybody. On Monday morning 7<sup>th</sup> December, when the triggers were met and it was miserably cold, Jim Deans had two men waiting for him at his office in the morning who had used SWEP last year and would have used it this year, but who had no idea it was open. The only reason given for this is that if people knew it was open they might arrive from outside Brighton. That is not good enough, it is a disgrace.

**NRPF:** In March this year in the first wave of the pandemic the government asked local authorities to "bring everyone in", to offer accommodation to everyone who was homeless. There are some people living here who have "no recourse to public funds", NRPF; they are people with limited leave to remain, or none, who are not normally entitled to help unless they have children or serious care needs. The government said these should be accommodated too, but they wouldn't change the NRPF rules, despite many people including this Council asking them to, so the council had to pay the full cost for this group under their emergency public health powers.

Nevertheless, the city has looked after this group through the pandemic so far, and that was the position when the administration changed from Labour to the Green party. However, in the last few weeks, this council has decided that they will not be helped any more.

Here are two groups of homeless people who need help this cold and wet winter; rough sleepers who St Mungo's can't reach, and people with NRPF who have no other resource. We call on the council to reverse its policies, to let the community know when and where SWEP is open so that we can help people who need it to get shelter, and to make "everyone in" so that it includes absolutely everyone in this City of Sanctuary.

## APPENDIX - SWEP

Brighton & Hove has generous opening criteria for SWEP. However, if people don't know about it or can't get to it, that makes no difference.

David Thomas for the Housing Coalition asked a supplementary question at the last Housing Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> November, as follows:

**"Homeless Link national guidance** on the operation of SWEP says: 'Simple and effective communication is essential. If SWEP is going to open, **this information needs to be shared quickly and as widely as possible**, for example via the website and social media channels of the local authority and partners' ... In Brighton and Hove we have a large network of concerned community organisations, including our own SHS and many others. In the past information has been put out to and through this network. Will you ensure that information gets out to the community as early as possible in the future?"

The Council response was as follows:

Our street outreach partners St Mungo's are currently working in the city seven days a week to engage with everyone rough sleeping to help support them into safe accommodation.

Some people with complex needs can find it difficult to move from the streets, and we are aware there are around 30 people currently sleeping rough in the city.

When SWEP is triggered, St Mungo's Street Outreach Service will go out seeking the people we know to be rough sleeping during the day to find them self-contained warm accommodation. Anyone not accommodated during the day will be referred into self-contained accommodation in our newly-commissioned council-run SWEP venue by the street outreach service.

For these reasons, we will not be publicly announcing when SWEP is triggered this winter. We have also found the wider publicity has increased the inflow of rough sleepers in to the city from elsewhere, placing greater pressure on the service and restricting our ability to support homeless people with a local connection to Brighton & Hove.

If a member of the public sees someone rough sleeping, please report them via the Streetlink website or by calling 0300 500 0914 and our outreach team will seek to accommodate them.

The Streetlink service promises a response within 48 hours and cannot provide an emergency service. This is Secret SWEP. The reason given (for which there is no evidence; the only study undertaken says that the quality of homeless services is not a significant factor in homeless people coming to Brighton and Hove<sup>1</sup>) would prevent any improvement in homeless services whatsoever. It is also in defiance of the national guidance for this year.

The council repeated essentially the same facts in a press release on 10<sup>th</sup> December.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Picture the Change" by Homeless Link/CAIERS, 2015; we can provide a copy to any interested.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/18933978.brighton-hove-opens-severe-weather-shelter-rough-sleepers/>