

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

The following questions have been received from Councillors and will be taken as read along with the written answer which will be included in an addendum that will be circulated at the meeting:

(1) Councillor Yates:

Can the lead member please provide a breakdown of the 198 EV charging points installed over recent years by ward please? Along with ward car ownership numbers in real terms for comparison.

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

(2) Councillor Allcock:

At budget Council in February it was agreed to allocate £60,000 to establish a post-Covid Family Coaches project within the city Children's Centres. This is intended to improve provide early intervention with families with babies and young children recovering from the impacts of Covid and other forms of disadvantage, to support their development and improve their future educational attainment. Can you please inform me how this this project in progressing including how many Family Coaches have been recruited and when they were appointed, and a brief update on their achievements to date?

Reply from Councillor Clare, Chair of the Children, Young Persons & Skills Committee

(3) Councillor Allcock

At budget Council in February it was agreed to allocate £168,000 to establish a Community Drug Impact Co-ordinator role for 3 years to address the impact of illegal drug sales, drug use and cuckooing on our communities. Can you please inform me how this work is progressing including when the coordinator will be appointed?

Reply from Councillor Osborne / Powell, Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee

(4) Councillor Childs:

Will the Council provide an assurance that St Luke's Swimming Pool will not be closed and that it will be allocated appropriate funding and investment as part of the proposed City Leisure Plans?

Reply from Councillor Osborne / Powell, Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee

(5) Councillor Childs

What percentage of Local Authority Schools contain blue and brown asbestos?

Reply from Councillor Clare, Chair of the Children, Young People & Skills Committee

(6) Councillor Childs

Will the administration commit to installing an adult disabled changing place as part of the Black Rock regeneration project?

Reply from Councillor Osborne / Powell, Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee

(7) Councillor Childs

Given that the revenue generated from library reservation and inter library loan charges is less than £1000 a year, will the Council agree to cease the practice of charging children to access books?

Reply from Councillor Osborne / Powell, Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee

(8) Councillor O'Quinn

There have been a large number of anti-social incidents in local parks in Brighton and Hove in the last few weeks. What preventative actions, alongside the police, are the council implementing to deal with this very concerning issue?

Reply from Councillor Osborne / Powell, Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee

(9) Councillor Janio

Can the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board confirm what active measures the council, including the Planning Department, are taking to support the provision of a Health Hub in H&K?

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

(10) Councillor Janio

Can the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board confirm if the council supports the provision of a Health Hub in Benfield Valley?

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

(11) Councillor Janio

Can the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board would confirm if the CCG supports the provision of a Health Hub in Benfield Valley?

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

(12) Councillor Janio

Private households and organisations have formed over the last few years that seek to reverse the decline in 'the nations favourite 'non-captive' animal' - the Hedgehog. Indeed, the Janio family has 5 regular visitors who welcome the food provided for them by Mrs J. This helps, in a very small way, but there are dangers to the Hedgehog in our modern urban environment. In suburban Brighton and Hove many gaps between the pavement/road/soakaway have widened over the years and are now large enough for Hedgehogs to fall into – if they do, they then become trapped and suffer a horrible lonely miserable death. Can the Chair of the ETS Committee list any ways in which the council could identify these enlarged spaces and any measures they think might be taken to avoid unnecessary deaths and suffering of hedgehogs across Brighton and Hove?

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

(13) Councillor Janio

Will the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board state if they believe there are good bus routes across Benfield Valley?
If they do, would they confirm that this would be very useful for patients attending a Health Hub in the area?

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

(14) Councillor Simson – Population:

Please can you provide the following information relating to my ward of Woodingdean.

- a) Number and percentage of families with young children - pre-school or primary
- b) Number and percentage of the population claiming unemployment benefits
- c) Number and percentage of the population claiming health-related benefits

Reply from Councillor Osborne / Powell, Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee

(15) Councillor Simson – CCTV in the City

Can the Chair of the TECC Committee advise?

- a) The total number of Council-operated CCTV cameras deployed in the City, including:

- a. Fixed CCTV cameras
- b. Mobile CCTV cameras
- b) The location where these cameras are monitored.
- c) How many council staff members are employed to monitor output of these cameras?
- d) The number of offences successfully identified and prosecuted as a result of CCTV evidence during the past municipal year.

Reply from Councillor Osborne / Powell, Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee

(16) Councillor Mears - Housing repairs and maintenance service insourcing policy (Industrial action)

The policy decision made by the Labour/Green Coalition on Housing to insource the City's Housing Repairs service on 1 April 2020 has resulted in a long industrial dispute with GMB Union.

This dispute has included:

- Weeklong strike action in the week commencing 7 September 2020.
- A threat of all-out strike action from GMB Union then followed

In the minutes from the meeting on 17 March 2021, The Co-Chair of the Housing Committee advised that the dispute had been settled.

However no public statement has been issued by the council as to what the terms and the cost of resolving this industrial dispute has been, and furthermore who is bearing this cost.

Despite a number of questions from myself at the Housing Committee, no information as to the nature of any settlement has been provided.

This is a prime example of the lack of accountability and transparency at Brighton & Hove City Council generated by the Coalition arrangement between Labour and Green Parties on housing.

Can you please advise:

- a) What is the current backlog for Housing Repairs in the City?
- b) What concessions were made by the Council to resolve the industrial dispute with GMB Union over its housing repairs insourcing policy?
- c) What is the cost to the taxpayer of this settlement, including:
 - Cost to tenants through funds paid out of the Housing Revenue Account
 - Other administrative costs including legal fees incurred by the council during this year long industrial dispute

Will the Council put out a press statement to advise tenants and Councillors of the above information (a-c)?

Reply from Councillor Gibson / Hugh-Jones, Joint Chair of the Housing Committee

(17) Councillor Mears - Green Wall

The removal of a segment of Brighton & Hove's Green Wall has caused great upset among Brighton and Hove's residents and environmental groups such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Building Green.

The living wall along Madeira Drive was planted by the Victorians in the 1870s and is also a wildlife reserve listed in council planning documents. It has grown and survived intact in this city for a century and a half until April when it was severed.

The damage, relayed in shocking pictures published in The Argus, includes about eight Japanese spindle plants, planted in 1872 and a large fig tree which were cut down by the council.

It is noted that Brighton & Hove City Council has been reported to the police for a wildlife crime.

To date, there have been a number of conflicting explanations from the Green Administration as to why a section of this Green Wall was removed.

These have been published in the Argus Newspaper (Brighton Council apologises for cutting down Green Wall, The Argus 23/04/21):

On Monday, residents were told the work was conducted during planning for a "possible" cycle lane on Dukes Mound.

On Wednesday, the council then said it took place for a cycle lane and a pedestrian crossing.

Now it claims it had "nothing to do with the cycle lane in particular".

The Chair of the Black Rock Task and Finish Group has subsequently provided a new explanation as to why the Green Wall was cut down.

In an email to members of this Task and Finish Group, the Chair stated:

I thought it was established that the reason the green wall was cut back was because of a traffic safety survey that recommended cutting back to enable pedestrians to see traffic coming up the hill so they can safely cross the road.

When I asked the Chair of the Task and Finish Group if this was correct, Cllr Druitt said that he stood by what said in this email.

Can you please advise what the reason was for Brighton and Hove City Council cutting down the Green Wall?

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

(18) Councillor Mears – Protests in the City

There have been many recent protests in the City involving large numbers of people.

These large gatherings have been a threat to public health during the pandemic.

The Communications Department at the Council has not been providing public information to help residents avoid areas with protest activity on the regular protest days.

Will the Council instruct its communications department to warn the public when such protest activity occurred?

Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council.

(19) Councillor Barnett - CCTV and Cuckooing

Action is required from the Council to get on top of this issue of cuckooing occurring on council-run property.

There are many over-50s housing blocks up by the hospital and on the Ditchling Road that have been targeted for cuckooing and we need to protect our elderly residents there. These council-run over 50s blocks have some vulnerable residents in their 80s.

We are aware of cases where council flats have been targeted for cuckooing three or four times but nothing has been done. It is deeply troubling that drug dealers consider the council's over 50's housing blocks as a safe haven for their activities and to target the elderly and the council needs to get on top of this which is happening in its own back yard.

The over 50s blocks need CCTV cameras in the entrance to see who's going in and out because there have been cases of cuckooing in those blocks with the very elderly.

I understand that the Council has been talking about the issue of cuckooing for a while and is now saying it is thinking of holding a drug summit to talk about it more - but our tenants need action now.

Until the Council gets on top of this drug dealing and cuckooing going on at Council-owned property we're not going to get anywhere with tackling drugs in the city.

I understand that the Council has the facilities for monitoring CCTV including a Council CCTV control room which should be being utilised better.

Will the Chair of the Housing Committee commit to installing CCTV cameras at the council-run over-50's blocks to protect our vulnerable residents from cuckooing?

Reply from Councillor Gibson / Hugh-Jones, Joint Chair of the Housing Committee

(20) Councillor Barnett - Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs)

Brighton and Hove City Council previously had PSPOs in place to deal with antisocial behaviour in parks and green spaces. Certain parks that were trouble spots were named and had these PSPOs attached to them. They were described as 'having a positive deterrent effect on antisocial behaviour' by Council Officers. They were initially brought in to help tackle unauthorised encampments in City Parks.

Inexplicably, in December 2019, the then Labour Council allowed these Antisocial behaviour Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) for our parks to expire.

Despite calls from our Conservative Councillors to reinstate the Public Space Protection Orders, Labour and the Greens have never brought forward a measure to do so.

In its opposition to PSPOs the Labour/Green Council has put our City out of step with neighbouring authorities, such as Conservative Worthing which has PSPOs dealing with begging and overnight camping.

Given the recent spate of antisocial behaviour in the City, including unauthorised encampments of travellers (such as those that set up in the middle of Portslade Cricket Club) and the ongoing problem of begging throughout the pandemic, will the Green Administration reconsider its opposition PSPOs?

Will the Green Administration reintroduce PSPOs for parks and begging to bring us back into line with our neighbouring authority Worthing?

Reply from Councillor Gibson / Hugh-Jones, Joint Chair of the Housing Committee

(21) Councillor Theobald – Patcham Roundabout Precinct

I would like to draw your attention to several council issues that are providing a poor first impression to visitors arriving to the city via the Patcham Roundabout precinct.

- a) The 'London Road' road sign at the top of London Road, next to the roundabout, is in a state of damage.
- b) The area behind the 'London Road' sign, including the stunning brick wall, is overrun with weeds. This is an area that should be planted and maintained during the summer.
- c) The Cricket Pavilion at Patcham Place Recreation Ground is covered in graffiti on 3 sides. This was reported by myself to the Council on 16 April but has not been actioned yet.
- d) Patcham Roundabout remains unplanted and in a terrible state. In response to my question to Cllr Heley on 17 December 2020 I was told that: 'Negotiations and due diligence are progressing and we hope this will be finalised shortly so that works can start in the New Year'. It is now July and works have still not started.
- e) There is a recurrent problem with unlawful encampments of travellers on Patcham Place due to insufficient boundaries to prevent vehicles entering the park.

Please can you advise what work will be undertaken to resolve the above issues (a-e)?

It is noted that in this year's City Budget (25 February 2021), the Conservative Group secured funding for a gateway entry signage for the Patcham Roundabout precinct as follows:

£0.005m revenue to fund:

- a. £0.050m borrowing from £0.004m revenue, to support capital investment into a gateway welcome to Brighton and Hove on and adjacent to Patcham A27/A23 Roundabout to include a piece of iconic public artwork.
- b. £0.001m revenue to maintain this gateway welcome

Please can you advise the progress and timeframe for the implementation of this initiative?

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

(22) Councillor Theobald – City in Bloom

Brighton and Hove City in Bloom folded on 24 February 2020 after running competitions in the City for many years.

When the committee decided to cease operation, the final Facebook post noted the challenges of having to leap the hurdles of council directions. They had to exclude less sustainable categories and embrace more ecologically sound practices for the competition.

Their post said: “As volunteers, we have found the running of City in Bloom to be complex and unsustainable.

“While we are saddened that we can’t continue, we are very pleased with our achievements over the seven years that we have been running as a voluntary organisation.

“Our sponsors have supported us and allowed us to award many community groups for their outstanding work and achievements.

“It was the decision of the committee (five members in total) to cease operation due to the extreme amount of time and energy that was needed and, having worked to update the process in which the competitions were run to exclude less sustainable categories and embrace more ecologically sound practices, the operation was deemed to have become unsustainable for the volunteers involved.”

This was noted in the Special General Meeting of Dissolution Minutes of Monday 24 February 2020.

The council’s lack of support is a key factor. While sustainability is important, a more proactive council would have worked with City in Bloom to find a way to bring in sustainable displays alongside traditional colourful flowers for a time in the summer.

The annual competition did much instil civic pride and showcase the city.

This is so important to Brighton & Hove which is a tourist town that relies on visitors and the contrast with other tourist towns in our county right is striking – a look at the presentation of Eastbourne and Worthing right now puts Brighton and Hove to shame.

Many of the City’s flowerbeds are in a poor state, overgrown with weeds and some filled with rubbish.

Examples include Viaduct Road and even outside Hove Town Hall.

What efforts will be taken to improve the current state of Communal flowerbeds and tubs, such as those on Viaduct Road and outside Hove Town Hall?

Will the Administration commission a report on the merits of bringing back City-wide City in Bloom Competition for 2022?

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

(23) Councillor Theobald - Contractors

Residents on Stoneleigh Court Patcham have reported their street being left in poor condition following recent contractual work by a telecommunications provider.

Residents have found it difficult to have the work remediated.

Does the Council have a system in place for monitoring the standard of work undertaken by contractors on City streets and responding to residents when it fall short of expectations?

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

(24) Councillor Theobald – Cycling on the Promenade

Cycling on the promenade continues despite the display of notices indicating that cycling is not allowed. The continued cycling creates a danger for pedestrians.

Council employees make no attempt to impose the rules.

I have seen several letters on this subject in the Argus.

What efforts will be taken to enforce these bylaws in future?

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

(25) Councillor Brown – King George VI Avenue (River of Tulips)

In April the Council accidentally cut down a display of tulips along King George VI Avenue, upsetting many residents.

This river of tulips was planted at public expense. One resident has said that although not native wildflowers, residents were assured at the time of planting by David Larkin that they would provide a corridor of habitat up the road as well.

Can you reassure the public that the administration supports the residents' river of tulips along King George VI Avenue?

What efforts will be made to make sure this mistake is not made again next year?

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

(26) Councillor McNair – Birch Grove Crescent (Poorly designed bins)

The Council's General Waste Bins on Birch Grove Crescent leak litter due to a design flaw.

The cages inside the bins are too small for the shell. As a result, much rubbish slips down the space between the cage and the shell and returns to the street, creating a health hazard for local residents.

I have reported this issue to the Council and asked for the design problem to be fixed.

Can the Council advise the progress in rectifying this issue?

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

(27) Councillor McNair – 5G Mast Camouflaging

Extra funding for camouflaging 5G masts was achieved at budget council by the Conservative Group.

It is good news that the new 5G mast in London Road by the Brangwyn estate will be camouflaged by trees. However, when will this take place, and what will it look like?

Can we have a guarantee that other 5G masts not requiring planning approval that may be erected in Patcham & Hollingbury in future will also be camouflaged?

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

(28) Councillor McNair – Peace Gardens

The work in the Peace Gardens to replace two benches and repair the paving has been going on for many months, and residents are frustrated with the progress.

When is it going to be completed?

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

(29) Councillor Peltzer Dunn

I would like to draw your attention to the following Platinum Jubilee event that would be ideally suited to Brighton & Hove City Council:

Civic Honours competition - Local authorities have the chance to showcase their civic pride, interesting heritage and record of innovation - putting their hometowns on the map and bringing greater prosperity and opportunity.

This would be an ideal opportunity for our City of Brighton & Hove, which embodies all these attributes.

Rare awards will grant winning towns and cities with 'city status' and 'Lord Mayor or Provost status' for the first time in 10 years.

Further information on how to participate can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prestigious-civic-honours-to-be-awarded-by-her-majesty-the-queen-for-first-time-in-10-years?fbclid=IwAR3cs6vEN-WZGjyje_zNdaprH3S70zLHGmGUqiFzl-uvarDrJURgCrPLY-8

Please can you advise:

1. Whether Brighton and Hove City Council will participate in the Civic Honours competition for Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee?

If yes, when will planning commence for our participation in this Civic Honours competition?

Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council

(30) Councillor Wilkinson

Labour was pleased to work cross party with the Green Party in January 2021 in successfully asking for update our city's road safety strategy to include road danger reduction measures such as:

- creating an environment that supports the use of active travel methods, as they pose a lower level of threat to other road users.
- expanding interventions designed to cut drivers' speed.
- working on ways to encourage a reduction in journeys by motorised vehicles.
- measuring danger on our roads through metrics other than a reduction in casualty numbers.

Safe mobility around our city is central to the quality of life of all who live and work in Brighton and Hove. An updated road safety strategy will set out our vision for road safety and inform policies to achieve that goal. The citizens of Brighton and Hove should be able to go about their daily lives without being placed under undue risk of injury from traffic. Our city should be a place where it is safe for every child to walk independently to school.

Can you please provide details on the progress of this strategy?

Low traffic neighbourhoods are being successfully introduced both across the UK and abroad as a means of tackling traffic issues in communities.

As you know I have long supported my residents in championing the feasibility of creating a low traffic neighbourhood in my Central Hove Ward, something you said you support.

Labour also gained committee approval in March 2021 for officers to explore options for other Low Traffic Neighbourhood schemes and suitable complimentary measures across the city, and begin work with member oversight on a wider Low Traffic Neighbourhood delivery strategy for the city.

Can I further ask that you provide details on the progress of this strategy?

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

(31) Councillor Barnett - Weeds on the pavement in Hangleton & Knoll

The state of the pavements in Hangleton & Knoll has deteriorated and many are now overgrown with weeds.

Some weeds have become so large that they are growing into people's front gardens.

Something must be done before someone slips and falls and hurts themselves.

Can the Council confirm:

1. Is it the responsibility of Brighton & Hove City Council to ensure the pavements are free of weeds?
2. What is the council's current policy on removing weeds from the pavement?
3. Will the council arrange for weeds to be removed from all pavements in Hangleton & Knoll ward before Autumn?

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