

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Policy & Resources Committee

## Agenda Item 57(b)

**Subject: Member Questions**

**Date of meeting: 6 October 2022**

The question will be answered without discussion. The person who asked the question may ask one relevant supplementary question, which shall be put and answered without discussion. The person to whom a question, or supplementary question, has been put may decline to answer it.

The following written questions have been received from Members  
This Committee:

**(1) Councillor Fishleigh – Black Rock**

Has the development brief for Black Rock been written yet and, if not, what are the timescales and why the delay as it was supposed to be ready by autumn last year?

**(2) Councillor Fishleigh – i360 / Christmas Big Wheel**

What is the i360's estimated revenue loss to the Christmas big wheel for 2021 and 2022

Supplementary Question

How much revenue will the council be receiving from the big wheel for 2021 and 2022?

**(3) Councillor Bagaen – Modern Conference Facility and Venue**

I refer the Chair to my question put to him at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 7 July 2022, which asked about the lack of progress towards building a modern conference centre and indoor venue in the city, specifically relating to the previous plans to build such a facility at Black Rock. Since my question, the Chair has subsequently announced on 11 August 2022 that Brighton & Hove's City Council's bid to the BBC to host the 2023 Eurovision Song Contest in the city was not accepted and did not make the shortlist, largely on account of the city not having a large enough indoor venue to hold the event. The minimum venue requirement from Eurovision for a host city is a 10,000 seat indoor arena, which Brighton & Hove's bid did not fulfil. This has gone to show that the City is missing out on opportunities by not having a large modern indoor venue and has been overtaken by other cities around the country with more modern facilities.

The Council's own premier facility, the Brighton Centre, has been at the end of its life and in need of replacing for some time now. The Council had in fact

stopped taking bookings at the Brighton Centre at one point, however its life was extended to keep revenue coming into the city. It can hold a maximum of 4,270 for a seated event and up to 5,515 for a standing concert. There have been several proposals to replace the Brighton Centre over the past 10 years, including the proposal for a new facility to be built at the derelict and vacant site at Black Rock near the Marina. The concept had been based around the Council selling the Brighton Centre site to Churchill Square for an extension and using the proceeds to build the new indoor arena at the Black Rock site. One of these proposals involved combining an ice rink with the conference facility at Black Rock. These proposals gathered pace around the time that the Council received a £12.1 million grant from the Government in 2017 to fund some basic public regeneration works at Black Rock, including to decontaminate the site and make it good for a public works development. This project involved moving the seawall to extend the area available for development. However five years after this grant was attained, the works at Black Rock are still nowhere near being completed after costly delays. In March the Council announced that the local taxpayer would had to pay £3.9m to fill the council's overspends. In the interim, the proposal for a new indoor arena appears to have run out of steam and fallen to the wayside. The reason Brighton & Hove lacks such a modern facility can only be explained by years of dithering from its Council, which has neither grasped the issue nor provided a strategic vision to develop one.

In the response to my question of 7 July 2022 to this committee, the Chair stated the following:

*Reports in December 2019 and December 2020 to Policy & Resources Committee set out that the city council and Aberdeen Standard Investments are exploring options for a city centre conference facility and venue. The city centre is considered to be the best location in terms of access to transport, hotels and other leisure facilities.*

*Work is currently being done by Theatre Projects, a venue specialist, to advise on the optimum size and arrangement for a new facility, and whether there is a viable business case to support investment.*

Question:

Why was the proposal for a new conference center at Black Rock abandoned and when can we expect to see detailed plans for a modern new conference facility laid out before this committee?

Supporting information:

<https://www.brightonhoveconservativecouncillors.com/news/cllr-samer-bagaeens-written-question-black-rock>

**(4) Councillor Bagaeen - Eurovision Song Contest 2023**

How much was spent on Brighton & Hove City Council's bid to host the 2023 Eurovision Song Contest?

Supporting information:

<https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2022/08/11/brighton-and-hove-fails-to-make-eurovision-host-city-shortlist/>

Supplementary Question

Will the Leader be publishing both a copy of Brighton & Hove City Council's official bid document submitted to the BBC on behalf of the City and the response received from the BBC for the inspection of Councillors?

**(5) Councillor McNair - High Taxing Council**

According to the Live Tables on Council Tax statistical data set, over the course of the past ten financial years from 2012-3 to 2022-3, Brighton & Hove City Council has increased its Band D Council Tax by 42.8%. This is the 12th highest increase of any local authority in the UK over this period. Only 11 local authorities out of over 302 available for comparison have imposed bigger increases, putting Brighton & Hove in the top 4% of authorities for its council tax rises over this 10-year period. According to the UK Council Tax index for 2022/3, Brighton & Hove City Council is now designated a 'high taxing council', coming in at 303<sup>rd</sup> out of 362 UK local authorities in a ranking of lowest to highest taxing councils. According to this index, Brighton & Hove is now on the cusp of becoming a 'very high taxing' council.

Question:

Why has Brighton & Hove City Council increased council tax so steeply compared to 96% of other councils in the UK over the past 10 years and what measures will he take to make sure Brighton & Hove doesn't slip any further down the UK Council Tax Index and become a 'very high taxing' council next year?

Supplementary Question

Does the Leader share residents' concerns that they are not receiving value money from their council tax contributions?

**(6) Councillor McNair – Cost of Living pressures**

Over the past 10 years of Green and Labour Administrations, Brighton & Hove City Council has become one of the highest taxing councils in the UK. With families facing high cost of living pressures across the board, what financial measures will the Chair take to reduce pressure on local family budgets and help with the cost of living rises, particularly in relation to:

- a) The council's local taxes
- b) The council's fees and charges

