

Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

Agenda Item 56

Subject: Written questions from Councillors.

Date of meeting: 15 December 2022

Report of: Executive Director for Governance, People & Resources

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Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

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

1. Councillor Appich

Mental Health Rapid Response service:

The Mental Health Rapid Response Service was launched during 2015 to improve community mental health services across the city. Sadly, I am informed that it is neither rapid, nor responsive, and only staffed by one person. Despite numerous complaints, there appears to have been no discernible improvement in the service provision, as reported to me.

Could the Chair of the Health and Well Being Board explain what actions she will take to ensure this vital service is improved given the mental health crisis we are experiencing and that we are now in an era of partnership working with the NHS?

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

2. Councillor Grimshaw

Roof Repairs:

Please can I be provided with an update as to who is responsible for roof repairs of ex council properties if the premises below the roof is now in the possession of a leaseholder?

Who maintains responsibility for repairs to the roof?

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

3. Councillor Allcock

Weeds:

How many times have each street in our City had weeds cleared by Council or other contracted staff since Summer 2020?

How many times have each street in our City had leaves cleared during the Autumn since and including 2020?

Reply from Councillor Davis / Hills, Joint Chairs of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

4. Councillor Grimshaw

EPC legislation:

Can the Chair of Housing confirm that housing associations who house residents through our Homemove policy are being urged to observe EPC legislation (in line with privately rented housing which came into force in 2020 but SHL have until 2030)?

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

5. Councillor Grimshaw

Damp Surveys:

Can the chair of housing confirm if Housing Association and Local Authority properties are surveyed by an CRDS or CSRT (certified remedial damp) accredited surveyor?

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

6. Councillor Grimshaw

Mould:

Does the chair of housing agree that Mould is life threatening so should be investigated by a qualified expert as a vast subject? Can the chair of housing confirm that tenants are advised they should not try to remove themselves due to sporing? And recognise that hidden mould in cavities is more dangerous than visible mould? Dead mould is even more dangerous as particles/spores smaller so more invasive to humans. Condensation mould sits on the surface, dangerous toxic mould lives in building materials and is usually caused by water ingress or burst pipes. Can the chair of housing also confirm that training is given on Environmental Health and that the relevant housing staff should be properly educated about mould?

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

7. Councillor Grimshaw

Ventilation:

Can the chair of housing seek to ensure that ventilation in housing is a priority and that windows should have filtered trickle vents for fresh air entry? There should then be a quiet extractor strategically placed to draw the old air 24/7.

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

8. Councillor O'Quinn

Enforcement – dogs off leads and cyclists on seafront lower promenade:

There are regularly a large number of dogs who are walked off lead on Brighton and Hove seafront, lower esplanade, which causes significant issues for those people who obey the rules and walk their dogs on leads. There are also a number of cyclists who cycle along the seafront where they are banned from doing so creating a hazard for pedestrians. How many enforcement notices have been given in the last year in the two situations described?

Reply from Councillor Davis / Hills, Joint Chairs of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

9. Councillor Wilkinson

Parking Enforcement:

Given the increasing numbers of parking schemes, ETROs, and TROs across the city, what plans are in place to increase officer capacity to take action on parking infringements?

Reply from Councillor Davis / Hills, Joint Chairs of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

10. Councillor Wilkinson

Hanover and Tarner LTN Pilot Scheme:

- a) When can the city's residents expect to see the complete results of the consultation into the Hanover and Tarner Low Traffic Neighbourhood Pilot Scheme?
- b) What specific monitoring of traffic levels has occurred to date in respect to the scheme and if so, at which locations?
- c) Is there any indication to date that congestion will occur in any part of the city as a result of the schemes current design?
- d) Is air quality monitoring specific to the scheme taking place and what data is currently held on the levels of the various pollutants on the surrounding roads before the implementation of the LTN, now and what is predicted to happen on the surrounding roads. Please specify any roads on which this information is held and how residents can access such information?

- e) What criteria is to be used to evaluate the scheme and which areas will be included in any such evaluation. Will account be taken of the quality of life to people outside this area through any changes such as increase in traffic movements, compromised road safety for pedestrians and raised levels of pollution?
- f) Has any monitoring been carried out on travel behaviours or car ownership before the implementation of this Low Traffic Neighbourhood?

Reply from Councillor Davis / Hills, Joint Chairs of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

11. Councillor Wilkinson

VAWG:

What actions has the Council taken over the last 12 months to tackle the issue of violence against women and girls?

Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council

12. Councillor Wilkinson

Care co-operatives:

What work has the Council done to explore the role of co-operatives in the social care sector, and whether the co-operative model could support adult social care in Brighton and Hove, and what is your assessment of the viability and benefits of more co-operatism in the city's social care sector?

Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council

13. Councillor Wilkinson

Cost-of-Living Emergency:

In October this Council supported a Labour motion to declare a Cost-of-Living Emergency in the city. It is clear to all that the cost-of-living crisis is spiralling out of control and will affect all our residents, from the most vulnerable to homeowners and renters, pensioners and businesses. What has the council done since to;

- a) Promote the emergency?
- b) Develop plans for a formal emergency response?
- c) Convene a cost-of-living summit?

Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council

14. Councillor Yates

Can the administration reassure residents of Moulsecoomb that the authority has no intention of allowing properties it owns the freehold of in Moulsecoomb Way become additional student housing. These properties provide valuable employment and economic benefits to the area and the whole city and should not be sold off or leased out for a quick buck from developers to the detriment of the local community.

Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council

15. Councillor Bell

Proposed Happy Valley cycle path

The council is proposing constructing a new cycle path through Happy Valley adjacent to Falmer Road, whilst there is already a cycle path that runs between Ovingdean and Woodingdean that is well-used. The current path would be used even more if it had a proper surface which it doesn't, despite having been repaired several times.

Can the Chair provide a breakdown of how many times the walking & cycling path between Ovingdean and Woodingdean that serves Old Parish Lane has been resurfaced over the past five years, how much this has cost and the reasons why the Administration is considering funding a second path so close to the first one?

Reply from Councillor Davis / Hills, Joint Chairs of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

16. Councillor Simson

Problems with solar panels on council houses in Woodingdean

Several years ago the council fitted solar panels to a small number of tenants' properties in Woodingdean.

There have subsequently been problems with birds nesting under the panels, as no protective netting was fitted at the time.

Also, I'm told by tenants living in those properties that they've never seen any reduction in the cost of their electricity supply, despite hosting these solar panels.

Can the Chair advise:

a) Why protected netting has not been fitted to solar panels on council houses to protect them; and whether council is considering installing such netting now?

b) What monitoring the council has done on these panels, including into whether electricity costs are being reduced, considering the substantial original cost of supplying them?

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

17. Councillor Barnett

Housing repairs answerphone

Council tenants chasing up their housing repairs are still having to listen to a council voice mail when they call. The voice mail says that the council is behind on its repairs 'due to covid' and that the council is 'working hard to catch up'.

This information is not correct. Since the Council insourced the housing repairs service in March 2020, the housing repairs backlog has been going up each and every month and been increasing consistently. For example, since October this year the backlog has increased from 9,000 to above

10,000. This is nothing to do with Covid and there is no catch-up going on.

Can the chair advise:

- a) Will this voicemail be changed to reflect the accurate current situation?
- b) When can residents expect to speak to a person when they call the Housing Department Housing Repairs line instead of receiving an answer phone message?

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

18. Councillor Barnett

Empty seniors council houses

Statistics from the Council's Seniors Housing Department show that there are currently 37 seniors housing properties sitting empty.

Why, when there are many elderly residents in the city desperate for a place in a sheltered block, are there so many empty seniors council homes with no one living in them, right across the city?

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

19. Councillor Bagaeen

Greenest city centres in the UK

In a recent study on Britain's greenest city centres published in November, which compared 68 municipalities in Great Britain with populations of at least 100,000, Brighton and Hove came 40th out of 68.

Three metrics of "greenness" were used:

- 1) Tree cover using an algorithm to randomly sample recent aerial imagery
- 2) The presence of green spaces using open-source data from Ordnance Survey (Great Britain's national mapping agency)
- 3) The normalised difference vegetation index (NDVI), which uses satellite observations of light absorption and reflection to measure vegetation cover in a given area

This is another unwelcome ranking result for Brighton city centre, after it was ranked the 8th most crime-ridden out of 33,000 LSOAs in England and Wales.

Much of the vegetation in the city centre has been neglected by the Council and areas that were once vibrant vegetation spaces have become desolate and deprived of vegetation. Victoria Gardens is a case in point. Planter boxes are left vandalised and overrun with weeds.

Why after twelve years of Green/Labour Councils is Brighton performing so poorly in the greenest city centre national index and what steps will be taken to turn this around?

Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council

20. Councillor Brown

Hove drains

Parts of Hove Park Ward, particularly Goldstone Crescent and Goldstone Close were very badly flooded recently. The leaves were obviously part of the problem but as a state of the art pumping tanker was unable to completely unblock a drain there has to be a serious maintenance failure.

How often are the drains inspected and what is going to be done about the badly blocked ones?

Reply from Councillor Davis / Hills, Joint Chairs of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

21. Councillor McNair**Security at the Gathering Place, Hollingbury**

The Gathering Place laundry keeps on being vandalised despite recently having a new door fitted. Would it be possible to have CCTV fitted to reduce the prevalence of antisocial behaviour?

Reply from Councillor Davis / Hills, Joint Chairs of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

22. Councillor Meadows**Parking arrangements at Old Boat Community Centre, Hollingbury**

Many children and vulnerable adults visit the Old Boat Corner Community Centre and the Nautical Training Corp at the bottom of Carden Hill. Carden Hill is a major artery where cars drive fast, and there are many parked vans and a bend at the bottom of the road making crossing particularly dangerous. Would it be possible to investigate providing a pedestrian crossing at the bottom of Carden Hill to help children and adults negotiate the road safely?

Reply from Councillor Davis / Hills, Joint Chairs of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

23. Councillor Theobald**Council flood prevention measures in Patcham**

Homes in Warmdene Road have gates to prevent water flooding their homes. During the recent torrential rain, it is also apparent that selected homes in Winfield Avenue also suffer from significant flooding, possibly because of inadequate drainage and also because of the camber of the road. Will Officers look into fitting gates for relevant flood victims in Winfield Avenue?

Reply from Councillor Davis / Hills, Joint Chairs of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

24. Councillor Lewry

Bin service on Harmsworth Crescent, Hangleton

There are recurring issues with the City Clean bin collection service at Harmsworth Crescent that are related to the council's dedicated bin storage area.

The bin storage area at Harmsworth Crescent serves three flats and was put in place by the council. However, City Clean frequently does not move these heavy bins out from the storage area for collection. This means that bins are often not collected, resulting in residents having to subsequently chase up catch-up collections with City Clean.

Can this situation be resolved, so that residents' bin services are completed each week for the residents of Harmsworth Crescent?

Reply from Councillor Davis / Hills, Joint Chairs of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

25. Councillor Theobald

Schedule of public toilet refurbishment

At the last meeting of the Full Council, in response my oral question, I was promised a schedule of refurbishment for public toilets in the city, which I have yet to receive.

Please can you provide me with this information here, in written form.

Reply from Councillor Davis / Hills, Joint Chairs of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee