

Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

Agenda Item 38

Subject: Written questions from members of the public.

Date of meeting: 19 October 2023

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed for questions submitted by a member of the public who either lives or works in the area of the authority at each ordinary meeting of the Council.

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

The following written questions have been received from members of the public.

1. QUESTION From: Julia Basnett

Will Council review how it interprets rules on public questions, deputations and petitions? For some years, I've been aware of public attempts to assert scrutiny arbitrarily blocked by council officials and/or leaders. There's a good reason why the efficient running of committees requires a defence against persistent submissions on exact same issues when satisfactory answers were already given. Rejecting a submission because a Chair feels, with democratic principles in mind, it will cause undue irritation, worry or clearly damage the good reputation of someone can also be reasonable. However, some feel rejections are too often unreasonable and essentially undemocratic (i).

Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council provided the below response.

Thank you for your question, Ms Basnett. We took office as an administration on the 25th May following the local elections on 4th May. I cannot therefore say what happened or did not happen in the past. I can however give you our administration's commitment to openness, transparency and active public engagement. We have rules in our constitution that are designed to enable Members of the public to submit questions, petition and deputations. We also have the Mayor, the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer who oversee the application of the rules in an objective and impartial way. My understanding is that we have more public engagement items than most comparable authorities. But, whatever the position, as an administration, we definitely value the contributions from the public and will not do anything to stifle it. I would also like to highlight that public engagement and scrutiny is not limited to formal council and committee meetings. In fact, most members of the public are not necessarily aware of or feel inclined to use them. One of the main criticisms we heard from residents over the course of the local election campaign was the previous Green Administration's refusal to listen to residents and consult properly on their ideas. We are therefore committed to looking at ways of enhancing public involvement and engagement. Next month

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I will commence monthly Leader's surgeries, visiting a different ward across the City each month to hear directly from residents about the issues that are affecting them so we can take action where necessary. In the autumn we will also announce a City-wide consultation exercise aimed at engaging as many residents as possible in developing our vision for the City and while me and my Policy Chairs are spending some of our time at both Hove and Brighton Town Halls, we are also out and about on a daily basis meeting civil society groups, speaking with residents and being as visible and accessible as possible. I would finish by reiterating our absolute commitment to openness and transparency.

2. QUESTION From: Pete Ranson

Beryl bikes removed their 'Minute Bundle' offering in August, an offer available in other UK regions. We feel they are failing to adequately deliver the scheme to the community, especially to infrequent users. By removing the 'minute bundle' option, Beryl appears to be profiteering from our tourist credentials, to the detriment of the community, denying us an economically viable option. Can the council apply pressure to Beryl to re-introduce the "Minute Bundle" option, therefore reintroducing the scheme's sustainability whilst broadening its appeal to the community who live here and not just the tourist?

Councillor Muten, Chair of Transport & Sustainability Committee will reply.

3. QUESTION From: Theresa Mackey

Bella Sankey recently stated that the Council is reviewing parking 'in the round'. Does this include the issue of digital exclusion that particularly, though not exclusively, affects older residents, and if so, in what ways?

Councillor Muten, Chair of Transport & Sustainability Committee will reply.

4. QUESTION From: Kay Lyons

I note the committee decision to increase time for public questions from 15 to 30 minutes and to reduce the number of "notices of motion" at full council meetings. I speak for many citizens when I say that 30 minutes is still insufficient. Nor should there ever be time restrictions on what our elected representatives need to say. In the light of Cllr Sankey's commitment to widen public participation will she agree to either monthly full council meetings or a new, radical and additional forum for direct democratic engagement? A quarterly Citizens Council would facilitate nuanced exchanges and better outcomes.

Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council will reply.

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5. QUESTION From: Nigel Furness

In view of the alarming increase in cases of severe, weather-related flooding across our City in recent years (including this one), Councillor Sankey, are you of the same persuasion as your 'Green' predecessors in that the blame for such disasters lies SOLELY at the door of Climate Change?

Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee will reply.

6. QUESTION From: Michael J. Adams

Can the Council confirm that Residents and Traders vehicles when they are parked with the engine off, do not produce any CO2 emissions.

Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee will reply.

7. QUESTION From: Heidi Stone

Does the council have plans to update the 2019 - 2030 Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which is based on statistics dating from 2011-2018.

Councillor De Oliveira, Chair of Health & Wellbeing Board will reply.

8. QUESTION From: Carol Wilson

How does BHCC measure its performance against its Constitution?

Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council will reply.

