

Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

Agenda Item 26

Subject: Written questions from Councillors

Date of meeting: 28 March 2024

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 Fishleigh

I thought that there is a hiring freeze, however, I keep seeing posts being advertised on BHCC's linkedin profile. Please would you confirm what the situation is with regards to recruitment.

Reply from Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council

The Council introduced recruitment controls in September 2023 to manage a significant projected overspend. Whilst this has been successful in bringing the Council's budget under control, with a projected balanced or underspent budget, there are some roles in the council that are essential for the safe and effective running of services. These include roles where there are statutory minimum staffing requirements such as in social care, vital roles to keep our most vulnerable residents safe such as social workers, and also our essential front-line services that need the right level of staffing to maintain the look and feel of the city. The council's staff across many teams have continued to work with dedication and commitment, whilst in some areas coping with an increased level of vacancies to support the proper and effective management of the 23/24 budget.

2. Councillor Earthey

Bin collection standards are slipping again, and there are fears regarding the outbreak of a strike at CityClean. What steps is the Labour Administration taking to raise bin collection standards to an acceptable level, while at the same time, seeking to maintain good industrial relations with the CityClean workforce?

Reply from Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council

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I am sorry that some residents have recently had disrupted services after a considerable period of improvement. We are absolutely committed to modernising the city clean service and improving the reliability and quality of the cityclean collections service.

The recent disruption to services was due to deliberate sabotage of bin lorries, an increase in vehicle defects as well higher than normal levels of sickness.

I'm pleased to report that most collections have now been caught up. Managers have recently finished consulting our collections staff on new ways of working which is aimed to ensure that staff work more flexibly in order to meet service delivery needs. We will be implementing changes to the way our staff work in the coming weeks and we have conducted positive and constructive discussions with GMB to avoid strike action.

Cityclean is undergoing a culture change programme at present with a view to making it a more welcoming and safe place to work and in doing so improving the resilience of the service to residents.

A number of staff have moved on recently and we will be undertaking a recruitment campaign soon in the new financial year with a view to attracting a more diverse workforce who will be committed to providing an excellent service to residents.

We are also continuing to invest in the fleet and new technology and waste infrastructure to improve the efficiency and reliability of the collections service going forward.

3. Councillor Earthey

Many residents have expressed great concern about BHCC's decision to re-introduce the use of Glyphosphate weedkiller and its consequent impact on biodiversity, even when applied in droplet form. What opt-out mechanism is BHCC proposing to offer residents so that they can choose to eliminate weeds from their pavements using more environmentally-friendly methods, rather than relying on BHCC's strategy?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

Since 2019, the council has been manually removing weeds. After five years, the problem is out of control and many pavements present safety and accessibility problems for residents.

Some streets are inaccessible to wheelchair users, parents and carers with buggies and those with visual or mobility impairments.

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2024 is a reset year to get our city's weed problem back under control. Once the problem is back under control, we will reduce the use of glyphosate to the lowest level possible.

Because this is a reset year, there is not yet an opt-out scheme in place. This is to make sure the deep-rooted vegetation is tackled.

We are keen to establish an opt-out scheme going forward, although obviously this would be conditional on streets being maintained to a good standard by those seeking the opt-out.

It is important to note that the treatment in 2024 will only be applied where vegetation is visible and growing on hard surfaces and not the hard surface generally. If there is no visible vegetation, the treatment will not be applied. Therefore, if residents want to remove vegetation from their road, they can do so, and this will eliminate the need for treatment.

4. Councillor Earthey

What steps is BHCC taking to align its new Glyphosphate-based weed-killing strategy with the strategies of neighbouring councils? There are cases where council boundaries run down the centre of a road such that one side is in BHCC and the other is in, say, Lewes District Council. It would make sense to agree a common weed-killing strategy along common boundaries, especially where biodiversity projects are nearby or span council boundaries.

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

Thank you for your question. Officers do undertake research when looking at options for strategies and in some cases we do work with neighbouring local authorities to deliver services. The removal of weeds on the highway for Lewes DC is carried out by East Sussex County Council. At present, ESCC use a conventional glyphosate application, not the controlled droplet application agreed at the City Environment, South Downs & The Sea committee in January 2023.

Therefore, our policy approaches do not align and it would not be an option to combine contracts. We would encourage ESCC to adopt the more sustainable approach we are taking, and will happily share details and outcomes with them.

5. Councillor Earthey

Looking across all B&H City Council buildings (excluding Council Houses), what percentage of electricity and gas meters have been upgraded to SMETS2?

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Joint Deputy Leader of the Council.

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The council currently have 812 AMR (Automatic Meter Reading) enabled metering installed across our electricity assets supplying corporate, education and housing sites. These meters provide half hourly consumption data and consumption profiles which is imported into our energy management software for interrogation. The meters currently installed cover 88% of the council's annual electricity consumption and 62% of the total meter assets serving the council. Of the remaining 503 meters which are not AMR enabled, 453 of these are classed as 'de minimis' supplies consuming less than 1,000 kWh per month, the majority of which serve housing communal areas.

Our supplier, EDF procured by Orbis through a Crown Commercial Services Framework, are currently undertaking an iterative rollout of SMETS2 enabled meters across around 450 of our supplies which once complete would take total AMR coverage up to 96% of total meter numbers.

However, whilst we are aware that there are some SMETS2 enabled meters in the portfolio we do not currently have access to the total installed and the vast majority of our AMR meters are likely to be utilising the original SMETS1 protocol. We will request clarification from our supplier about their progress on the rollout.

Across the gas portfolio there are 160 AMR enabled meters installed at council sites covering 83% of annual gas consumption and 70% of total meters installed. Again, it is currently unknown what proportion of these are SMETS2 enabled, and we will request this information from our supplier.

6. Councillor Earthey

In what position is BHCC in the league table of local government organisations having implemented SMETS2 meters across their portfolio of buildings?

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Joint Deputy Leader of the Council.

Whilst we are aware regional statistics for deployment of SMETS2 enabled meters, we are not currently aware of any league tables broken down into the coverage at authority level. We will explore this further with the relevant regulatory bodies and feedback as appropriate.

7. Councillor Earthey

If BHCC is below local government norms for fitting SMETS2 meters in its buildings, why has this situation been allowed to occur, and what steps is the Labour Administration taking to improving BHCC's standing in the league table?

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Joint Deputy Leader of the Council.

We will investigate further to see if there are available benchmarks broken down by authority. In terms of accelerating the rollout the council can assist

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by providing timely access for meter operators to attend sites to upgrade the meters.

8. Councillor Earthey

Has BHCC investigated what savings in its energy bill it could make if it moved over to 100% SMETS2 meters, and if not, why not? If it has performed this calculation, what are the savings (expressed as both £ per year and percentage saving per year) on BHCC's energy bill? (Note that SMETS2 meter are free on demand from the energy supplier, who will give better prices where SMETS2 meters are implemented.)

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Joint Deputy Leader of the Council.

From a customer perspective, it is very difficult to quantify any additional cost benefit attributed specifically to SMETS2 metering over and above our current AMR service which will be majority SMETS1 meters. Whilst the rollout of SMETS2 metering will be integral to establishing a "Smart Grid" and the matching of generation to demand, most of the tangible benefits will be on the supply side. However, the key benefit of the SMETS2 generation meters is the cross compatibility between suppliers, so the council will be able to retain the existing devices in the event that the supplier changes hands. In the future this could save some officer time in co-ordinating supplier engineer visits to upgrade meters, but again this is very difficult to quantify at this time. Whilst the meters are installed by the supplier free of charge, there are additional attributed costs for utilising these meters such as Data Collection standing charges. Although in most instances these costs would be far outweighed by the benefits of reliable billing information and the ability to identify waste in consumption profiles.

9. Councillor Earthey

Due to the criteria used in repairing potholes that focus primarily on the vertical depth of the pothole, subsidence around the pothole is often left unfilled, meaning another pothole appears almost immediately after the initial pothole is repaired (photo evidence can be provided on request). Given that BHCC has an increased budget for pothole-repair, can the repair criteria be broadened to include locational context (e.g. subsidence), because in some cases, the repairs are causing more problems than they are solving?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Chair of Transport & Sustainability Committee

Thank you, Cllr Earthey, for your question.

When a pothole is identified as meeting the intervention criteria the repair will take into account the whole area as it is important to reduce repeat visits to the same location. It is of course possible the poor structure of the road that is not visible results in additional damage and can lead to further

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damage. This is difficult to predict and exactly why the council has a wider patching programme to repair roads fully.

10. Councillor Shanks

We have been disappointed to see that the organisation has lost two executive directors in quick succession, with no farewell or notification given to all councillors, including former chairs/spokespeople for the portfolios they represent. Announcements have been made about their departure after they have already left. Presumably these officers have left ahead of time and presumably with some level of pay off. What is the estimated cost to the council of the reorganisation of executive senior management and has any assessment been taken of staff morale in the teams where these changes are suddenly and swiftly occurring? In future can fundamental changes of personnel be better communicated so that members have the opportunity to thank these officers and say farewell?

Reply from Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council

The new organisational directorate structure will come into effect on 1st April and will save £177K on a recurring basis through the reduction in the number of directorates from 5 to 4. This saving is part of a wider package of savings totalling over £2 million per year that will be achieved through further redesign of our structures and has been managed through the council's normal management of change and redundancy processes as applied to Chief Officers. There will be one-off costs relating to severance that will be disclosed in the usual way in the annual statement of accounts.

Through our redesign we will become an organisation that has a structure to reflect our vision for a better Brighton & Hove for all, with a stronger 'One Council' ethos, increased collaboration and reduction in duplication. The new Corporate Directors have wider remits and a greater responsibility for working corporately and across the organisation to promote joined up working and a streamlined use of resources. The recent departures of Executive Directors were announced before their departure, and through our corporate broadcast, as well as following discussions with cross party members and specific communications to those directly impacted. Interim arrangements have been put in place with the full collaboration of senior leaders and this has ensured of stability for the teams involved. As we work through the next phase of our organisational design, we will be engaging with staff across the organisation both on the structures we need in place and our culture and ways of working and will certainly ensure that communication on changes takes place as early as possible, subject to the usual considerations around confidentiality for individuals directly impacted.

11. Councillor Hill

At the last Budget Council, Cllr Sankey stated that she had spoken with Shadow Cabinet members about the proposal for a National Care Service. My understanding is that Labour have U-turned on this issue as their manifesto

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will omit funding of social care reform from their manifesto. Without funding coming from national government, rather than local councils, there will be no National Care Service. I am glad nonetheless that it sounds as though myself and Cllr Sankey are of the same mind as to the importance of the National Care Service proposal. Can Cllr Sankey clarify the nature of the conversation she had with shadow cabinet members on this topic and whether there will in fact be a manifesto commitment to fund social care reform to create a National Care Service? As I wished to convey at Budget Council, to leave ballooning social care costs with Local Councils will surely only lead to misery for those who need social care and for the future of council finance.

Reply from Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council

The National Care Service (NCS) is a proposed publicly owned system of social care. It was proposed by the last Labour Government but then abandoned by the coalition government led by David Cameron in 2010. The Labour Party recommitted to the idea in 2023 and Labour's Shadow Health Secretary and Shadow Minister for Social Care have restated the Party's support for this model in 2024, including at the Warwick conference for Labour Party councillors in February 2024 where I chaired Andrew Gwynne's debate and at a recent UNISON meeting on the issue. The proposal contains many strands including a groundbreaking Fair Pay Agreement for social workers and proper professionalisation, progression and recognition of social care workers to put them on a par with NHS workers. More information for on our plans for a decade of national renewal and the development of a National Care Service will made public in due course.

12. Councillor Hill

How does the council intend to carry out the functions of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee without having one? It is unclear how items usually reserved for HOSC should be carried out under the new Cabinet system arrangements.

Reply from Councillor Fowler, Chair of Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Health Overview and Scrutiny will be a function of one of the new Overview & Scrutiny Committees. All of the statutory requirements for HOSC will be covered in the Terms of Reference for that Committee. There is no requirement to have a stand alone HOSC.

13. Councillor Pickett

Fixed Penalty Notices: There has seemingly been a huge rise in the number of fixed penalty notices (FPNs) issued to residents and businesses in the city, which appear to be fined for leaving their recycling by the side of a communal bin because the bin was overflowing, and the recycling would not fit inside. Another, vulnerable resident who says they received an on the spot fine after

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leaving some recycling temporarily outside of their home as they had to make several trips to the communal bin, and propped cardboard on the private pathway between trips. Considering the current increase in missed collections in the city, which means more people might be tempted to place bags of household recycling next to them. I would like to know whether enforcement officers are being given guidance on proportionality in cases where an 'offence' is related to an inability to place waste or recycling in a communal bin because it has not been collected?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

When there is disruption to bin collections across a wide area, the Environmental Enforcement team do not issue FPNs to residents who leave waste next to communal bins and where no alternative bins have capacity for residents to dispose of their refuse.

If there are any instances where residents believe this has happened, we will review their case.

14. Councillor Pickett

Glyphosate opt out: In light of a recent public meeting in which Cllr Rowkins stated that there was a council document of streets and roads in the city that would be exempt from glyphosate use, can the administration tell me why this opportunity was not afforded to every street in the city – or enough time given before use begins in April to allow streets and residents to contact the council and register their preference for being excluded? Can this documented list be made public so that residents can see if their road is included? Also, what are the barriers to enable residents to opt out before glyphosate is used?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

The roads to be treated have been identified in two ways: existing Street Cleansing operations and the extent of the problems caused by weed growth.

Roads that are excluded from the treatment are:

- Those that have a daily street cleansing barrow service. This is because these are roads with high footfall which suppresses weed growth. The daily barrow operative also helps suppress weed growth.
- Those that do not have the potential to cause accessibility or safety issues as a result of weed growth.

The aim is to strike a balance between ensuring the problem is brought back under control whilst not using more glyphosate than is necessary.

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Cityclean are working with the Communications Team on putting the information about which roads are to be treated on the website.

As I said in response to a previous question, there is no-opt out scheme in place this year. This is to make sure the deep-rooted vegetation is tackled. The treatment will only be applied where vegetation is visible and growing on hard surfaces and not the hard surface generally. If there is no visible vegetation, the treatment will not be applied.

Therefore, if residents want to remove vegetation from their road, they can do so, and this will eliminate the need for treatment.

15. Councillor Pickett

Funding for recycling improvements: In light of the government timeframe for implementing new recycling improvements, has the council received any clear information about what funds will be available and if so, will there be a shortfall? When will the new PTT recycling be introduced?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

The council has continued to prepare for the new requirements, due from April 2026, under the newly termed 'simpler recycling', since the consultation outcomes were announced in October 2023.

Government indicate there will be three measures by which costs will be funded for simpler recycling:

1. reasonable new burdens funding for food waste collections
2. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) payments for packaging materials
3. continued ability to charge residents a subscription fee for garden waste collections

Defra wrote to all local authorities in January 2024 with allocations of new burdens capital transitional funding, for food waste collections. The amount allocated is intended to fund costs of food waste caddies, communal food waste containers and food waste collection vehicles. Initial estimated costs indicate there is a shortfall in the allocation to Brighton & Hove.

The council understands that EPR payments will be the mechanism to fund costs of the additional dry recycling materials, which includes the PTT you refer to in your question, and understand further announcements are due this year. This will support the council's planning and decision making on the changes required at the existing Material Recovery Facility which have not been finalised.

Cityclean continues to plan for the changes as far as possible, whilst awaiting further detail on resource/revenue and on-going funding for food waste collections, as well as further detail on the EPR payments.

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16. Councillor Pickett

City's allotments:

Last year, the council gave assurance that the allotment service was back to full strength and that the historic issues would now be addressed. However, a year later and things appear to have got worse: The allotment service has not completed full inspections at any site for at least the past two years, nor has it evicted a single tenant for not looking after their plot, and many plots are now overgrown and unused. The waiting list is at its longest ever (3000+) with people still signing up and paying £18 to join it. Plot vacancies are at their highest level for 10 years despite the demand being at an all-time high. The 10-year Allotment Strategy has now finished with only seven of the 83 recommendations completed. Could residents receive a timeline as to when the above will be achieved and if not, why not?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

It is agreed that our allotment service is not currently operating effectively. However, a service is being delivered and there are some key outcomes that are set out below.

- The inspection process requires each of the 3000 allotment plots being inspected three times between April and October across 166 acres of allotment land and 37 sites. We are working to improve our site inspections numbers. In 2023 we completed full site inspections at several sites (including The Weald, Roedale Valley, Moulsecomb Estate, Keston, Horsdean and Patcham), resulting in 72 terminations.
- The Maintenance Team has been working their way across the city preparing vacant plots for letting events. Any that are overgrown have been strimmed back prior to letting. Changes in Hand Arm Vibration laws limits the amount of time this work can be undertaken, we have trialled covering a percentage of vacant plots before reletting them, to minimise this ongoing task.
- Since June 2023, we have done 22 letting events, at 20 sites, resulting in an average 75% plots let per event. 8% of plots are currently vacant, but this includes plots that have been offered and the tenancies are being processed.
- Since January 2023, 253 new tenancies have been processed, this includes new lets, upsizes and downsizes and transfers, plus 26 pending offers. We have an event planned at Horsdean over Easter weekend, with 7 plots available.
- The waiting list is currently at 3,547 and the current admin fee is £18.80. There was a surge in waitlist applications during Covid.

Officers working with the Allotment Federation (BHAF) have recently completed a full review of the service. This review sets out many recommendations and in many cases highlights where several of the changes

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required have been enacted. The review document also sets out recommendations that haven't been delivered against and where improvements are needed, and will inform an improvement plan which will be put in place by 30 April.

We have committed resource to refresh internal leadership and management for the council service, and to look positively at how we can transform the service, working in collaboration with our amazing network of volunteer site reps in the city.

Council staff have met with the Allotment Federation to share plans being put in place imminently to improve the service. Cllr Tim Rowkins will join Officers at the Federation's annual general meeting on Tuesday 26 March to listen to people's views and discuss ideas for how the service can be better delivered in the future.

17. Councillor Pickett

School Closure Criteria: In light of recent school closures will the council commit to publishing detailed criteria which will be used in future to select schools which become identified for closure, or commit to an agreed period of consultation with staff and parents/guardians which will be carried out before any subsequent closures are able to progress? Furthermore, what steps are being taken to mitigate the current fall in PANs for primary schools in the city from impacting the future of secondary schools as those year groups progress through their education?

Reply from Councillor Taylor / Helliwell, Joint Chair(s) of Children, Families and Schools Committee

Cllr Pickett,

Thank you for the question. The Administration have had to take decisive action to address the surplus primary school places in the city which has led to the difficult decision to close 2 primary schools. Both proposals were subject to a public consultation and a representation period in line with government guidance giving all residents including parents and staff the opportunity to comment on the proposals. Having taken decisive action, we hope not to be needing to put forward further primary school closures. If we had to consider this, then we would engage with relevant stakeholders when developing proposals and consult residents, families and staff as part of the statutory process.

We know that the lower numbers of children in our primary schools will move into our secondary schools in future years. Officers continue to project future demand for secondary school places and we will work closely with Headteachers, Governing Boards and Academy Trusts to consider how best to respond to the challenge we can see coming. As an administration we need to work within the government's rules for admissions which means that a Council does not control the admission arrangements for academies or

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church schools both of which make the council's strategic role harder to implement for the benefit of all residents. However the Labour Party has committed to giving local authorities more control over school admissions across the board should we win the next General Election which is important and welcome.

We will be progressing our thinking on secondary school admissions in the coming months and engaging with the city to hear their views on possible ways forward, at the earliest opportunity.

18. Councillor McLeay

The Housing and New Homes Committee meeting benefits from regular public involvement from concerned residents and housing activists. Before the council transitions over to a cabinet system – can you explain how concerned members of the public and Housing Committee members could engage with proposals and decisions brought through this committee? How will progress reports be shared for scrutiny? Will Area Panels continue?

Reply from Councillor Williams, Chair of Housing and New Homes Committee

Thank you for your question.

Diverse tenant and leasehold voice are vital to ensuring the Council as their landlord is providing quality homes and housing services. Key housing decisions will be reported to Cabinet for decision, which will meet in public and will have opportunities for public engagement. Area Panels will continue as one avenue for residents and ward councillors to hear about progress and discuss issues with Housing Services. The Community Engagement Team will also continue to support tenants and resident groups to have a voice and link them with services in Housing and across the Council to discuss issues. We will also be utilising the council's new engagement platform 'Your Voice' to provide on-line opportunities for people to have their say about housing services.

19. Councillor McLeay

What will be the financial investment spent on converting the council from a committee system to a cabinet system? Was this budgeted for in the recent budget?

Reply from Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council

The financial implications of the proposed move from a Committee system to a Leader and Cabinet system are set out in the 14 March 2024 SFCR report. The proposed move has financial implications across Democratic Services support, Policy, Partnerships & Scrutiny (PPS) support and Members allowances.

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For Democratic Services and PPS support, the teams will be restructured to support the new arrangements, including overview and scrutiny, and this is expected to be cost neutral on an ongoing basis. While there is a need for additional staffing resources during 2024/25 to facilitate a smooth transition to the new system (estimated to cost £0.080m) this will be met from holding certain roles vacant within the Governance, People and Resources Directorate and therefore there will be no financial impact overall.

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20. Councillor McNair

How much money has the council paid out in compensation to residents who have tripped over paving slabs? In the period 01.01.23 – 31.12.23.

What percentage of claims are successful?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Chair of Transport & Sustainability Committee

Thank you, Cllr McNair for your question.

In the calendar year 2023 BHCC has paid a total of £45,775.00 for compensation payments relating specifically to personal injury claims arising from tripping incident due to paving slabs.

The payment total relates to claims settled within 2023, irrespective of when the claim was received.

What percentage of claims are successful?

In the calendar year 2023 BHCC received 34 claims relating specifically to personal injury claims arising from tripping incident due to paving slabs. Of the 34 claims received, 7 remain open. This means 27 claims have been through the claims handling process and 0 of the 27 claims have been successful. (0%).

We are taking proactive action to improve the state of pavements across the city, including tackling excessive and damaging weed growth, tree roots and protecting pavements from available damage such as from pavement parking.

There was substantive decline over recent years under the city's previous Green-led administration lack of an effective plan without the application of herbicides to tackle unchecked weed growth. Central government have been absent in making a decision about pavement parking after the 2019 consultation and options report published in 2020. Some four years on, it is about time the Tory government make a decision to effectively empower local authorities such as Brighton and Hove to tackle damaging and antisocial pavement parking.

The state of pavements is not helped by regressive public sector cuts affecting all English local authorities. These Tory cuts to public services is causing real detriment to effective maintenance of our pavements and streets and resulting in more and more costly claims hitting our city council budget. The root of this problem lies with some 14 years of underfunding and indecision from the Tory government causing real detriment to our city's pavements and the safety of our residents.

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21. Councillor Theobald

Scaffolding at Birch Grove Crescent block 61-72 remains despite residents being promised it would be removed in Full Council on 1st February. When will it be removed?

Reply from Councillor Williams, Chair of Housing and New Homes Committee

Thank you for your question.

This scaffold was erected by our previous Housing heating & hot water contractor and clearly was missed by them when they were closing down their operation for us in the City. We have checked with the new contractor, and they have no outstanding works requiring scaffold at this property. We will contact the scaffold company who erected the scaffold and request that it is struck at the earliest opportunity. We would like to apologise to residents for this oversight and the inconvenience this has caused.

22. Councillor Theobald

Can you please tell me when there are going to be improvements to the Patcham Roundabout on the London Road, Patcham? Patcham councillors were informed last year that there would be a planting scheme in place by the Autumn of 2023. So far yet again nothing has happened.

Reply from Councillor Muten, Chair of Transport & Sustainability Committee

Thank you, Cllr Theobald, for your question.

As you will be aware from previous answers to similar questions, there have been a number of conversations between the council and National Highways about this roundabout.

The roundabout is owned by National Highways and no work can be carried out on it without their permission. It is also at a high-speed junction where there are a number of safety concerns and legal requirements to work on the roundabout and so the situation is very complex.

It is a matter that the council has been trying to resolve for many years in order to improve the entrance to the city.

In June 2023 Full Council was informed that an agreement was reached but that some infrastructure work needed to be completed.

Regrettably the contractor who was going to take on the maintenance of the roundabout in exchange for sponsorship has decided not to go ahead with this because of the complexity and cost involved in regularly accessing and working on this roundabout. The contractor will be working with us on the site

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adjacent to the roundabout instead to improve this and to make a welcome entrance to the city.

We appreciate that this roundabout is unsightly, and we are keen to see it improved to be more welcoming. This is a high-profile location and seen by huge numbers of visitors and residents entering and leaving the city. We are keen to look at options that reflect this roundabout's prominent location. Officers are now actively looking at alternative low maintenance options. Any work to this roundabout will require funding which is not yet identified, will need to be low maintenance and will require the agreement of National Highways.

We will involve ward councillors in any improvement plans and welcome ideas from residents and community groups and businesses interested in working in partnership with the Council to enhance this area to reflect Brighton and Hove as the welcoming city we know it to be.

23. Councillor Lyons

Why are Cityclean not collecting abandoned bicycles within Westdene & Hove Park Ward? More than 4 months after reporting & with regular chasing, nothing is happening. Staff shortages and limited resources can only be given as a reason for so long

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

There are two vacancies in the team which collect abandoned bikes which have not been recruited to due to the recruitment freeze. Recruitment will start shortly.

Abandoned bikes continue to be collected from all wards across the city, albeit at a slower pace due to the limited resources available.

We will visit any reported locations as soon as possible.

24. Councillor Lyons

How deep does a pothole have to be before it is repaired within our City roads?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

Thank you, Cllr Lyons, for your question.

The intervention criteria is an abrupt level difference of 40mm.

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25. Councillor Lyons

When will the release of the results from ward consultations about the changes in parking restrictions be announced?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

Thank you for asking your question, Cllr Lyons.

The answer is the results are in the public domain and have been for 10 days now. Perhaps, Cllr Lyons, you do not follow or bother to take the time to follow Council committees. However, the results of the consultation were presented to the Transport & Sustainability Committee on 26th March 2024. They were made public on Monday 18th March 2024 and are available to view on the Council website under Council and democracy / Councillors and Committees: [Brighton & Hove City Council - Agenda for Transport & Sustainability Committee on Tuesday, 26th March, 2024, 4.00pm \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](#)

As ward councillor, Cllr Lyons surveyed residents using Brighton and Hove City Council logo headed paper as referenced by the Nevill Road and Nevill Avenue residents' deputation as welcomed to the previous Council meeting on 1st February. Cllr Muten specifically asked in his full Council meeting response to this deputation, whether Cllr Lyons would make this data available to council officers. Has Cllr Lyons made his data available to Council officers in the Parking Team?

With no clear reference given by Cllr Lyons to residents that their data might be passed on to third parties, political parties, other residents or groups not associated with the council; what consent was requested by Cllr Lyons or given by residents as to whether residents views and personal data could be passed on to third parties? With many residents in the Orchards and Nevill Area of his ward now under the false impression that the Council have recently consulted residents on a parking scheme, was their data made available to local Conservative Party members rather than Council officials? In his survey, did Cllr Lyons make it clear to his ward residents as to how their personal data might be used? To what extent did Cllr Lyons protect residents' personal data from a breach of the General Data Protection Regulation (or GDPR) as implemented under The Data Protection Act 2018? How and where is this data stored? Was appropriate consent sought and safeguards in place regarding residents' data?

26. Councillor McNair

Why has the council only given 3 months' notice of works? Namely, filling two arches with concrete and temporarily removing the club from the remaining arch. The club has been at the premises for 80 years.

Are the works necessary? We are told strengthening works are required to enable lorries to use the Dukes mound ramp. The arches are in great condition considering heavy vehicles have used Dukes Mound for years.

Brighton & Hove City Council

Have structural and traffic flow surveys been carried out? Would it be better to reinstate access to the Marina slipway via Black Rock?

What provision has the Council made for the longevity of Brighton and Hove Motor Club? Formed in 1904, one of the oldest Motor clubs in the country, it serves 400 members. The famous clubhouse has been occupied by the club since 1948 and is an important part of the history of Brighton.

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

The council regularly inspects all of its structures across the city and when issues are identified they have to be addressed. In this case the surveys identified issues with movement in the piers not the arches themselves. In principle if the piers collapse then the whole structure would follow including the road. As always with structures it is extremely difficult to place an exact timeline of collapse as this will depend on a number of issues related to use and loadings. The council employed qualified structural engineers to carry out the assessment who used modelling to assess loadings and based upon the movement identified.

This survey indicated that some form of strengthening was needed and following an option appraisal the infilling of every other arch was identified as the preferred approach when considering impact of any work and the associated cost to the council. With the upcoming works on both the terrace project and seafront replenishment it was considered that the strengthening is a priority due to the increasing number of HGV movements that will have to use Madeira Drive.

Council officers from the Seafront Team have met with members of the Motor Club Committee to explain the proposal to infill every other arch under Dukes Mound in order to strengthen the road above. This approach will reduce the size of the Motor Club premises from 3 interconnected arches down to 1 single arch. Following this meeting, Officers are in active discussion with the club Chairman and Secretary to establish what improvements could be delivered as part of the works to enable the club to remain and thrive in this location. These improvements include, building a new toilet, new doors and upgrade to the facade, upgraded utilities, new flooring, assistance to facilitate the installation of a new mezzanine for storage purposes and a longer lease.

Please rest assured that the council is fully aware of the heritage surrounding the Motor Club and its location on Madeira Drive and is working collaboratively to ensure the club can continue to operate for many more years to come.

27. Councillor Meadows

The drain and soakaway at the end of Surrenden Close are blocked. Residents' homes are flooded when it rains. Builders pour waste down the drain. When will the drain and soakaway be cleared?

Brighton & Hove City Council

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

Thank you, Cllr Meadows, for your question.

The gully is programmed to be cleansed on 01/08/2025 as part of the cyclical maintenance programme. If there is still flooding 48 hours after the rain has stopped, they will be prioritised and any photos can be sent through to the online reporting form as that would be helpful. The evidence will help with a decision on the need to implement jetting of the pipes before the next cleanse date. If builders are seen pouring waste if residents could please provide details so that we may issue letters to them and recharge for any damage caused to the gully.

28. Councillor Hogan

When will pavements be de-weeded using glyphosate in Patcham & Hollingbury and Westdene & Hove Park? Will residents be notified of the schedule of spraying to mitigate the risk of their pets being affected?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

It is anticipated the first treatment will start in late April / early May. The exact timescales will be determined when a contractor has been appointed.

Application of the treatment is weather dependent. Therefore, there may be a need to alter a schedule at short notice if wet weather is forecast, impacting on the accuracy of information communicated to residents.

Controlled-droplet treatments are applied in large droplets released under gravity and adhere to target items. This reduces drift and the likelihood of the application adhering to non-target items, reducing the risk to the environment and pets, when compared to traditional glyphosate.

Application will not take place in parks, green spaces or verges.

The appointed contractor will be required to provide the council Risk Assessment Method Statements setting out the contractor's approach to delivering the treatments, its assessment of risk in relation to this, and the mitigations they will have in place to ensure its effectiveness.

Those applying the treatment will be required to provide proof of PA1 and PA6 certification to demonstrate competence.

29. Councillor Meadows

Brighton & Hove City Council

There are no passing places in Carden Hill. Buses have been known to scrape and damage cars. Could the feasibility of a passing place be investigated to improve the flow of traffic?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Chair of Transport & Sustainability Committee

Thank you, Cllr Meadows, for your question.

Council officers will engage with the bus operator to understand how their services operate on Carden Hill and seek to explore what could be done to address your concerns raised.

30. Councillor McNair

How many host families are currently being sought to house Ukrainian refugees in need of accommodation? East Sussex council has produced a new leaflet and poster campaign. What is Brighton & Hove City Council doing to attract host families?

Reply from Councillor Pumm, Chair of Equalities, Community Safety & Human Rights Committee

Thank you for your question.

Currently, all our guests are in hosting arrangements or in the private rented sector.

We are grateful for support we have had from our hosts. Most of them have continued to host refugees beyond the initial six months. In turn, we have supported them with topped up thank you payments. We are also in regular touch with hosts for information and advice through our Community Hub.

We recognise we need more hosts available for new arrivals or sponsorship breakdowns. We have taken various initiatives to attract new hosts.

- We started with a video recruitment campaign on Latest TV and Youtube. Our guests and hosts shared their experiences and called for more people to host. The video is still available online: <https://youtu.be/o3QoLb-FC9Y?si=goBostq0rhsfY27>
- We then ran a host recruitment campaign with digital ads on bus stops
- Finally, we ran print ads in Brightonian and Hovarian magazines

As a result, we have seen an increase in our expressions of interests.

We have produced a digital leaflet available for circulation online and we can print it if needed.

Brighton & Hove City Council

While we appreciate the support we have from our hosts, our current approach is to support our guests into independence. We have therefore launched a Private Rented Sector Scheme to help them move into their own homes. Through this scheme we are supporting individuals and families with deposits, first month rents, tenancy support and incentives for landlords.

31. Councillor Meadows

What flood measures are to be put in place for the residents who suffer flooding every time it rains on Winfield Avenue/Ladies Mile Road?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

It is accepted that flooding within Brighton is getting worse because of climate change, and this is why a Flood Risk Management Strategy and Surface water Management Plan is being developed. I can confirm that £250,000 of grant funding has been applied for from the Environment Agency to undertake a citywide feasibility study for surface water management. This will provide the Council with options for managing surface water flood risk to areas at risk, including the Winfield Avenue\Ladies Mile area. I would urge members and the public that if a property floods, it needs to be reported to the Flood risk management team through the Council website. This is important as the amount of flood management grant we are eligible for is dependent on the number of properties which flood.

We are also working with Southern Water to identify suitable strategic locations around the city for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) that will attenuate surface water, alleviate pressure on the combined sewer system and mitigate flood risk.

32. Councillor Meadows

When is it planned for Vale Avenue Park be able to have new playground equipment?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

Currently there are no plans for new equipment for Vale Avenue Park Play Area.

This follows feedback from a public consultation, which closed in January 2023. The majority of respondents stated they would like to see the £45,000 funds available to improve play area facilities in Mackie Park, rather than Vale Avenue.

The results of the consultation were shared with ward councillors in June 2023.

