

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 26(b)

Subject: Member Questions

Date of meeting: 18 July 2024

A maximum period of fifteen minutes in total shall be made available at each meeting of the Executive for questions from Members of the Council. The questions included on the list of questions referred to above shall be taken as read at the Cabinet meeting. The question will be answered either orally or at the discretion of the Chair by a written answer circulated after the meeting. Officers may assist the Leader or a Cabinet Member with technical answers to questions. No supplementary questions shall be permitted.

The following written questions have been received from Members:

(1) Councillor McNair- Council Performance Update

Recycling rates are at a mere 27.4% and falling. What is being done to improve our recycling rates? And at what timescale?

(2) Councillor McNair- Council Performance Update

Only 46.38% of routine council house repairs were conducted on time, and the figure is falling, even with the use of the private sector. What is being done to improve the timeliness of council house repairs?

(3) Councillor McNair- Council Performance Update

Only 93.46% of rent was collected from current tenants of council owned homes. What is being done to ensure council tenant rent is collected?

(4) Councillor McNair- Targeted Budget Management (TBM) 2024/25 Month 2 (May) and Council Productivity Plan Response

Many schools have been in significant deficit for years. Other schools balance their budgets well. What is being done to ensure schools with a deficit reduce it other than forcing federation? What is the expected timeframe for schools to do so?

(5) Councillor Meadows- Estate Management

While ensuring management decisions are taking account of the effects of climate change and managing tree planting and woodlands, and also improving water quality; Can a report be written into investigating the extra costs of selling the land, put flooding issue costs, subsidence issues and other unintended costs into that report before making a decision that will affect thousands of residents? This may end up costing the council more than they gain from a quick sale.

(6) Councillor Meadows- Estate Management

In the procurement paper for our Estate Management, page 314 it states that the Agricultural Portfolio was acquired to protect the city's aquifer. With that in mind why are the Council still supporting the land at Patcham Court Farm being redeveloped in a way that will destroy our aquifer and possibly contaminate it? In addition, by selling the land or putting it on a long lease will mean that this land could be developed by another organisation when the Royal Mail is sold and divided. What steps will the Council take to ensure our city's water is protected as in the original conception?

(7) Councillor Shanks- Targeted Budget Management (TBM) 2024/25 Month 2 (May) and Council Productivity Plan Response

Can the cabinet member tell me what is the issue with the proposed change in commissioning of Tudor House as agreed in the 2024 budget.

(8) Councillor Sykes- King Alfred Leisure Centre Regeneration Project

Although the economic analysis is stated to be Treasury Green Book compliant, the key options comparison presentation (Table 1) is unfamiliar. Why was the standard Green Book Appraisal Summary Table approach not used? Where is consideration of Net Present Social Value of options, risk, and optimism bias? Can we see the build up to the capital and revenue values presented? Additionally, were critical success factors developed and used in appraisal, as required by the Green Book?

(9) Councillor Sykes- King Alfred Leisure Centre Regeneration Project

Were greenhouse gas emissions, including transport emissions, of options considered in appraisal? What are the respective climate impact risks of options? Why is the BREEAM ambition for the new building limited only to 'Good' status - can we not aim for better than this?

(10) Councillor Sykes- Targeted Budget Management (TBM) 2024/25 Month 2 (May) and Council Productivity Plan Response

Given the council's immediate and likely medium term dire financial circumstances as set out under item 34 TBM 2, is it justifiable to add to long term revenue pressures by selecting the more revenue expensive option?

(11) Councillor Davis- King Alfred Leisure Centre Regeneration Project

The cost benefit analysis scores the two options for redevelopment of a leisure centre at the existing site as just 1.31 and 1.74. Neither of these ratings are considered to be 'good', whereas the score for developing a new facility at the land south of Sainsbury's is 3.7, a rating which the treasury consider to be 'very good'. If this project were directly funded by the government it would support the best rated options, especially where there is a clear best choice flagged as we have here. You have chosen to use the treasury green book approach then ignored its conclusions. Will funders be

comfortable with this? Notwithstanding preferences for maintaining a facility on the current site, by ignoring the findings of the analysis is this new Cabinet not at risk of making an insufficiently robust decision on a £40m+ investment?

(12) Councillor Shanks- Council Performance Update

I am interested in the performance information on allotments. Can the cabinet member please tell me what progress is being made on reletting empty allotments. Across the city there are many vacant allotments which are overgrown and therefore making life difficult for people keen to cultivate their plots. At the same time we have a long waiting list of people keen to take on plots.

(13) Councillor Hill- An Economic Plan for Brighton & Hove

The emphasis on addressing neighbourhood inequality in the economic plan is laudable and I hope has greater substance than the previous government's levelling up agenda. The draft economic plan states as a goal that it will 'give local people greater opportunity to influence neighbourhood economies as a foundation for greater participation in Brighton & Hove's economy'. Can cabinet further explain how the plan seeks to do this using practical examples? For instance, the plan later goes on to say it will 'work with Black & Racially Minoritised owned businesses to understand opportunities to better engage these companies, evolving mainstream support to better meet their needs' What is the nature of the work you will be doing to support these businesses? How can we apply community wealth building principles to support such businesses?

