

# BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

## CABINET

2.00pm 26 SEPTEMBER 2024

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL, NORTON ROAD, HOVE, BN3 3BQ - HTH/CC

## MINUTES

**Present:** Councillor Sankey (Chair) Taylor (Deputy Chair), Alexander, Burden, Daniel, Muten, Pumm, Robins, Rowkins and Williams

### PART ONE

#### 55 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

##### 55a Declarations of interests

55.1 There were none.

##### 55b Exclusion of the press and public

55.2 In accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the Act"), the Committee considered whether the public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any item of business on the grounds that it is likely in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during it, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act.

55.3 **Resolved** That the public are excluded from the meeting from items listed on Part 2 of the agenda.

#### 56 MINUTES

56.1 **Resolved-** That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as the correct record.

#### 57 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

57.1 The Chair provided the following Communications:

"I started this week in Liverpool at the Labour Party Conference, our Party's first conference in power for 15 years. I was pleased to Chair our rally for local government which featured our Deputy Prime Minister, our Transport Secretary Lou Haigh and the Minister for Local Government, Jim McMahon. It was inspiring to hear from our new ministers about the scale and pace this government is looking to deliver at, particularly in the areas of housing, planning and economic growth, areas we know we have huge challenges for in this city and which will make a significant difference to us.

It was also reassuring to hear the Labour Government addressing the deep-rooted inequalities that still exist within our society at every level.

Fourteen years of Conservative rule has entrenched rather than closed the inequalities gap and we now have a government that is driving change to bridge that gap.

Soon after the General Election, our Deputy Prime Minister announced that it would be inviting applications for devolution deals in areas where none currently exist and subsequently sent a letter to all upper tier authorities, inviting us to express an interest in devolution.

I believe this presents an excellent opportunity for our city so over the summer, I have engaged with as many Leaders as possible over Sussex and I look forward to continuing those conversations.

Brighton & Hove will be submitting an expression of interest, and I look forward to continuing to work with all neighbouring authorities to identify a devolution option that would deliver maximum benefits for the residents of our city and the wider Sussex region.

We also eagerly await more detail from the government on the English devolution deal and a White Paper that is expected at around the same time as the Budget next month.

I know that many of our residents feel deep climate anxiety which is why Ed Miliband trailblazing work as our Secretary of State for Energy is so important.

The government has already established a Great British Energy, the first publicly owned energy company to be established in this country for 75 years. In Brighton & Hove we are also making great strides, and we have recently appointed a Head of Net Zero, Alice Berry who will lead our new Net Zero team and will take forward our ambitions for energy and transport decarbonisation, climate adaptation and biodiversity. And they will work in partnership with central government organisations, businesses and communities to secure investment for large scale Net Zero projects. They will support the creation of new, sustainable homes and be a key part of the Greater Brighton Energy initiative which I was also pleased to launch earlier this summer.

Last week I visited Ricardo's combined heat and power demonstrator plant just outside Haywards Heath which is an excellent example of this kind of innovation that could allow us to decarbonise our industries at pace.

I'm delighted that on today's agenda we will be discussing a Housing Strategy for the city that sets out a clear vision for Housing services and support and outlines five priorities for the next five years and our clear ambition to tackle the housing crisis in the city.

The housing supply and affordability crisis in our city is well-documented, we know many people are unable to afford a mortgage or pay their rent and too many people are in our temporary or emergency accommodation. Our number one priority is to increase the number of genuinely affordable homes being built in the city with the ambition to deliver 2,000 of the homes and more over the next five years. We particularly need more council homes and to be building them and buying them back at a greater rate than has been the case over the past few years.

As well as making this a priority in the Housing Strategy, in response to the government's consultation on the new national policy planning framework, we have made clear requests to government including a review on land availability and boundaries, giving council's greater enforcement powers to manage developments and the ability for council's to introduce principle residence policies to manage short-term lets in our city. We look forward to implementing our strategy and working at pace to

deliver affordable homes. Our new Director of Housing Regeneration, Darren Levy will be joining us next month and will be driving the regeneration of our ageing housing stock.

Finally on Housing, I want to address head on the work we are doing in response to the Housing Regulators report. The report identified a number of serious failings in the safety and quality compliance around certain area of health and safety and a backlog of routine repairs.

We fully accept the regulators findings and welcome their engagement with us over the past year. We've introduced a raft of urgent measures to ensure we are fully compliant with the building safety and quality standards under the Buildings Safety Act and the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 as soon as possible.

Our key priority will always be the safety of our residents, and we are fully committed to meeting these regulatory requirements.

Before we move on to today's business, I want to highlight one of the papers that is before us today, the Parking Review. I want to thank everybody that has been involved with progressing this piece of work. The policies on parking that were implemented by the last Administration were ill-thought out, costly to our residents, damaging to our visitor economy and completely undermined the Council's own Accessibility Strategy. Since May 2023, our Administration has taken significant steps to correcting this, immediately putting a stop to further parking charges hikes, we have reduced the parking charges in the council's car parks and we are trialling the return of pay and display machines to ensure that our older residents who may be digitally excluded can access parking in the city.

## **58 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

### **(a) Public Questions**

#### **1) Housing Strategy**

58.1 Daniel Harris read the following question:

Brighton & Hove's Housing Strategy 2024-2029 proposes 2,000 affordable homes, but it lacks clarity on what affordable truly means. Only 14 responses from 1,700 residents in temporary accommodation (just 0.82%) were recorded. There has been no consultation with residents of 1960s tower blocks, which are often unsafe, or any mention of the Brighton General Hospital site, a key redevelopment area. Given these omissions and the lack of genuine input from vulnerable communities, will the council pause the strategy and commit to a thorough consultation process before proceeding?

58.2 Councillor Williams provided the following reply:

"First of all, the Housing Strategy itself proposes 2,000 homes delivered over the lifetime of the Strategy. The Strategy has set out the different types of affordable homes, our aim is to deliver as many genuinely affordable homes as possible. I know there are lots of issues about the meaning of affordable homes but to me, that means the average person can afford to live there on the average wage. We do need to work on those

definitions, I agree and that is always in a little bit of contention. Our aim is to provide homes for the people of our city that are clean, decent and affordable for everybody. This is going to be kept under review especially as we are now about to refresh the City Plan and identify opportunities for new sites for hopefully many, many social houses to be built.

As far as the Strategy is concerned and the consultation, this council undertook extensive consultation, we widely advertised proposals, we held a number of public events and at my request, extra public events in the city to gather as many people as possible to engage in the consultation. We advertised it in our area panels and posters.

As detailed in appendix three of the report, over the eleven weeks of the consultation there was a 67% increase in responses compared to the previous strategy. The vast majority of respondents to the previous consultation was from professionals and stakeholders whereas for this consultation, 85% of responses were from residents.

We all know what is happening with the LPS blocks at the moment. This was as a result of a very invasive survey that we initiated, consulted on and commissioned. We as a council really wanted to understand the condition of these blocks because I recognise, as we all do that they are very old. We are acting on the outcome of those surveys in trying to make them as safe as we possibly can in consultation with our Fire Authority.

Every one of the residents of those blocks have had or will soon have a one to one visit with a council officer so the consultation is ongoing, is thorough and I agree that we must continue to consult. We don't quite know what the future of those blocks are yet because that's a wide conversation we need to have with our residents and lots of issues to consider. As has been mentioned by the Chair, we are engaging a very, very experienced regeneration Director and the focus will be those blocks, I hope that's reassured you.

The other areas you mentioned, the gas works and the hospital, we don't actually own that land. I would love to build on them personally, but we don't own the land. I objected controversially to the planning application for the gas works as there was no social housing provided for and I will continue to do so. Unfortunately, we don't have all the power there as we don't own the land but we will work to getting as much affordable housing on there as we possibly can.

## 2) Housing Strategy

58.3 Jim Deans read the following question:

Having read the Draft I find it encouraging a large number of statements that we all agree on but little in the way of how these will be achieved. 8 years ago councillors vote 100% to give "us" a building to create a Triage and safe zone, a place anyone made homeless could go regardless of day or time, yet again a new strategy without the basic first step in prevention and live saving support mentioned. If you are a Victim of Domestic Violence or simply made homeless you have nowhere to go this triage base is the first step in cutting the tap on Homelessness can I ask the councillors to put this first step at the top of the agenda and strategy?

58.4 Councillor Williams provided the following reply:

There have been significant changes nationally since the last Housing Strategy, with the implementation of both the Homelessness Reduction Act and Domestic Abuse Act

coming into law. Consequently, any household who is homeless, or at risk of homelessness as a result of domestic abuse will automatically be in priority need.

What I am pleased to talk about, and this project is lead by Councillor Nann who is going to do all the hard work and take all the credit. I'm proud to say we are in the first stages of development of a one-stop homeless hub which is exactly what I think you've been asking for over the years. There will be more details to come on this, it is in the early stages and there's lots to be considered and talked about, I believe but our aim is to get that up and running as soon as we can.

### 3) **Parking Review Update**

58.5 Max Glaskin read the following question:

If parking charges are changed and attract more drivers, there would be more traffic. Apart from the environmental consequences, will the Council publish how much the increased traffic will reduce the city's amenity and what the cost will be to the safety, health and wellbeing of residents, businesses and visitors?

58.6 Councillor Muten provided the following reply:

"Thank you, Max, for your question. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be taken forward alongside the proposals if agreed. This will be discussed further with the Communities, Equalities and Third Sector team to ensure any equalities impact alongside the safety, health and wellbeing of residents, businesses and visitors are fully considered.

The Parking Review sets out to reduce car miles in oversubscribed city centre parking zones and make our parking fairer, simpler and more accessible for residents, visitors and businesses. The absence of a city-wide strategy for over 2 decades as parking zones spread had no overall impact assessment, nor did excessive parking hikes targeted by the previous administration to hit hardest key workers and others on lower incomes who often most needed to get around the city. Their "big stick" flat tax hit those on lower income the hardest without addressing air pollution and the impact oversubscribed zones have with residents routinely driving around street after street, causing more pollution and putting others at greater avoidable risk. Our parking review offers better for residents, for businesses, for visitors and for our city environment. There is a climate emergency, and we cannot have policies that leave some behind based on income and privilege.

Parking must not be seen in isolation and the heavy "stick" without "carrot" is not the answer. This is why we are committed to ensuring we have better bus services through our £28M BSIP - we have recently been seen as an exemplar local authority for bus services. Our holistic approach is why we are committed to delivering better and safer active travel, enabling residents to safely walk to bus stops and train stations, with better safer more accessible pavements and crossings. And this is why we are delivering higher standard cycle routes such as the A23 Phase 1A and 1B Active Travel north of Preston Circus; the first strategic overview of the A259 Active Travel from the Marina to our western City Boundary including a high standard LTN 1/20 bi-directional cycle path along Hove seafront; and delivering Valley Gardens Phase 3 with excellent walking, cycling, bus and traffic flow improvements. This with our commitment to Park and Ride and removing potholes in road and pathways means we can frame our parking reforms

in a holistic approach to transport and travel, better and safer for residents, businesses, visitors and our city environment”.

## 59 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS

### (a) Written Questions

The following questions were received from Members that were either responded to at the meeting or a written reply provided:

#### (1) Councillor Shanks- Supported Accommodation for Young People Placements

How will the council ensure that all placements are within the area of Brighton and Hove?

#### **Response from Councillor Daniel:**

One of my three key missions is to bring kids back into the city for education and care whenever possible and we're already developing a service at Ireland Lodge that we're hoping to open in April next year that will bring back severely disabled children to live in their own city.

We're also looking to develop a crash pad for teens, so they won't in an emergency with their parents or carers have to be placed elsewhere.

My aim is also to have a new service for teens as well.

We have at the moment a very small number of young people (3) being placed outside the city boundaries. It is sometimes necessary from a child protection perspective for young people to be placed outside of the city due to exploitation risks.

We work with 9 supported accommodation providers in the city and commission 2 block contracts unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people who have supported accommodation needs.

For the very small cohort who are not housed in the city, this is to protect them, essentially.

#### (2) Councillor Davis- Parking Review Update

What was the cost of the external consultants?

#### **Response from Councillor Muten:**

£60k for the Parking Strategy Review and £5k for the further Parking Machine Study (excl VAT). This is the first review of citywide parking since the first Control Parking Zone (CPZ) was set up 23 years ago. It is shocking that previous administrations – notably over the past 5 years - implemented major policy decisions including imposing financially unsustainable price hikes on residents, businesses and visitors without a clear plan. This was irresponsible. If you fail to plan you plan to fail. We are an evidence and data-led administration. Professional fees enable the first data-informed strategic plan for parking for over 2 decades. The value of this informed approach will serve our city well. Better for our residents, for businesses, for visitors and for our city's environment.

**(3) Councillor Davis- Parking Review Update**

What are the procurement costs of bringing back pay and display machine?

**Response from Councillor Muten:**

The ongoing parking meter trial is at the cost of the provider. Future procurement costs are not yet known and will be subject to the number of pay & display machines required. On the 31st March 2023, the previous Green administration announced the scrapping of all pay and display parking machines – an indiscriminate policy without any assessment of how it impacted on some of the most vulnerable. No consideration of those digitally excluded - many elderly - by this decision. Our parking meter trial has been well received. We are a listening council with an Accessible City Strategy and will respond well to the consultation associated with this trial.

**(4) Councillor Meadows- General fund budget planning and resource update 2025-26**

When can we expect an increase in our budget from central government? What level of uplift is expected?

**Response from Councillor Taylor**

An Autumn Statement announcement is expected on 30 October. We have no detail of the likely change to Core Spending Power, Council Tax levels or any possible precepts. However, the government has publicly indicated a £22 billion gap in public finances and has given warnings of difficult spending choices ahead. It is clearly difficult to predict how this may impact future local government settlements.

**(5) Councillor McNair- Parking Review Update**

What do you mean by 'increase accessibility of 3rd party reporting for enforcement'? Appendix 3.

**Response from Councillor Muten:**

What this means is that we want to make it easier for residents and businesses to report illegal parking. Where we are notified that a vehicle is parked illegally, our Parking Enforcement team can be directed there. This is all part of making this clearer for residents, businesses, and visitors on how to report parking contraventions to us. This is all part of providing a better parking service for the city that our residents rightly expect.

**(6) Councillor McNair- Parking Review Update**

Where are new red routes planned? (appendix 1)

**Response from Councillor Muten:**

No decision has been yet taken on proposals for further red routes as it requires discussions with Network Management and Transport Projects on the overall strategy and proper engagement with the local communities and local businesses. The public consultation on Red Routes on Lewes Road, London Road and Preston Road is ongoing until 30th September. As a listening council, the outcome from public feedback on these routes will inform our view of potential future red routes.

**(7) Councillor McNair- Parking Review Update**

The council receives almost £46m from parking. How much income from motorists is the council aiming to achieve in the next 5 years?

**Response from Councillor Muten:**

Decisions on any budget pressures will be identified and taken forward as part of the annual corporate fees & charges budget process and the Parking Review will be used to inform this process. The policy from previous administrations of treating motorists as “cash cows” has proven to be an ill-conceived failure – a financially unsustainable policy. Our Parking Review sets a new course that will work well for our city.

**(8) Councillor McNair- Parking Review Update**

How much did the consultants Mott MacDonald cost the council for their parking review?

**Response from Councillor Muten:**

£60k for the Parking Strategy Review and £5k for the further Parking Machine Study (excl VAT). A robust, data informed professional assessment to reset citywide parking better for residents, businesses, for visitors and our city environment

**(9) Councillor McNair- Parking Review Update**

If residents reject any plans in the consultation will residents' decision stand?

**Response from Councillor Muten:**

Not all elements of the Parking Review require consultation. However, as we are a listening council and very much welcome feedback from residents and business on our Parking Review and citywide strategy. Implementation of changes to parking within zones will, where required, involve initial and detailed consultation and / or a formal consultation through the advertisement of Traffic Regulation Orders. Residents will have the opportunity to support, comment or object to each proposal under the current Council procedure. Some actions may be undertaken as trials to review the effectiveness of short-term changes with public feedback used to shape the way forward.

**(10) Councillor Meadows- Supported accommodation for young people placements**

What is the ethnic makeup as percentages of those seeking mental health support services?



**Response from Councillor Daniel**

We produce data on the breakdown on ethnicities of young people accessing mental health support through the Schools Mental Health Service on a quarterly basis. We are not able to comment on those accessing CAMHS or Community Wellbeing as these services are commissioned through NHS Sussex

The data we hold shows that the Black and Global Majority young people currently accessing schools' mental health services is not in line with the school population. 30% of the school population are Black and Global Majority but only c14% of young people accessing our services are.

To support access to our services we

- have recruited a Family Support Worker, who specifically works with Black and Global Majority, refugee and asylum-seeking families;
- are working with a secondary school to understand the challenges for Black and Global majority young people in accessing mental health services

**(11) Councillor Meadows- Supported accommodation for young people placements**

What percentage of young people in care/supported accommodation enter mental health support services?

**Response from Councillor Daniel:**

We do not currently hold this data and are looking into how we can record it going forward in that format.

All young people in supported accommodation provided by children's social work services will have a named social worker or Personal Advisor who will assist them in accessing services, including mental health services, as required.

**(12) Councillor Meadows- Cleaning Services**

Are there any cleaning services provided to private tenants and homeowners? Is this something that we could offer to create an income stream thereby supporting families who don't receive adult social care?

**Response from Councillor Burden:**

Most people in the city purchase their own cleaning services from a variety of different companies or private cleaners and it is not the intention to create an in-house cleaning service for use by private tenants, but commission it from an experienced supplier. Our own cleaning services have plenty of homes to clean across all of our housing stock! We're not seeking to enter the market as a supplier of cleaning services to private tenants anytime soon.

With regards to income, where people are financially assessed as able to contribute, they are asked to pay for all or some of the cost of their cleaning service, as is the case with many of the adult care services we provide.

**(13) Councillor Hill- Cleaning Services**

10% of total quality score is given on grounds of sustainability and social value framework respectively. What is the remaining 80% of the total quality score?

**Response from Councillor Burden:**

The remaining 80% assesses bidders on how they will meet the requirements of the service specification, for example:

- The response time targets
- How they will supply high quality cleaning services to people with a variety of different support needs
- How they recruit, train and support staff

**(14) Councillor Hill- Cleaning Services**

Will the procurement consider if the company itself is locally owned and run, as opposed to simply just that it employs local people which is implied in the papers in point 12.3?

**Response from Councillor Burden:**

Whilst we would prefer that a company is locally owned and run, we cannot take into account the specific location of ownership of a company. We will however prioritise engagement with local SMEs encourage them to take part in the process.

**(15) Councillor Hill- Mental Health Support Services for Adults**

Point 6.1 states that 'if public health funding were to cease or reduce in the future within the duration of the contract, then the outstanding contractual obligations link to the programme could then fall on the BHCC general fund. This would result in an unplanned expenditure, which could affect the overall expenditure of BHCC'

The NHS is going to experience cuts as part of austerity measures implemented by the new Labour government as part of what Kier Starmer has stated is their 'reform or die' agenda for the NHS. How do we ensure that nationally imposed cuts to the NHS are not going to lead to additional costs being put onto the Council to support vital mental health support services?

**Response from Councillor Burden:**

Thanks for the question, Cllr, Hill, but I'd say the NHS has experienced 14 years of devastating cuts from the Tories and is limping along trying to deliver a standard of health and care that its current structures and systems can't adequately handle - we've inherited a broken system

Contracts can be varied to take account of funding changes, and the council would not be contractually expected to pick up ICB cuts. If there were to be a reduction in ICB funding, commissioners would look to mitigate potential impacts on communities through detailed equality impact assessments. Throughout the life of the contract, the council

and the ICB will monitor value for money, impact on outcomes and inequalities and work with the provider who wins the contract to maximize these.

**(16) Councillor Hill- Mental Health Support Services for Adults**

'3.4.4 The annual budget for the new Brighton and Hove MHS service will be £1.837m which represents a reduction in funding of approximately 15%. Both the ICB and the council are reducing their contribution. The annual BHCC contribution will be £0.27m per annum funded from the Public Health ring fenced grant (see Table 1 below). This equates to a BHCC expenditure of £1.89m over the lifetime of the seven-year contract.' Given the rise of mental health issues in our city, is it wise for the Council and ICB to be cutting back costs on mental health services?

**Response from Councillor Burden:**

The majority of mental health services are commissioned by the Integrated Care Board and include, for example, inpatient services, secondary Mental Health community services, urgent care and others. Funding levels for these are set annually by local NHS Sussex bodies and the council has no direct influence over those decisions. For the community support services described in this cabinet paper, both the council and the NHS have reduced budgets. But we are a partnership - through working in a more integrated way with primary care and secondary mental health services, the service can provide a more targeted and joined up offer, reduce potential duplication and get the best outcomes for people in need.

**(17) Councillor Goldsmith- Parking Review Update**

I've had residents in parking zones with waitlists get in touch because they have missed their reminder email and re-applied slightly too late (sometimes by just a few days), only to find they have to go right to the back of the wait list, which can be a year plus. Will the administration consider a) sending out more reminders to people in these zones, and b) giving a longer grace period for people within these zones to re-apply for their parking permit without having to go right to the back of the waiting list?

**Response from Councillor Muten:**

Customers have six weeks to re-apply for their permits. If the permit was issued through "My Account," they will receive a reminder six weeks before the renewal date. The back of the permit also includes information about renewing, When we came into administration, we found a number of shortfalls in the reminder process which we worked hard to resolve last summer. We have recently experienced a reduction in the levels of service due to staff vacancies and leave which we are focused on fully resolving presently. While it is ultimately the responsibility of the customer to renew their permit, we are looking to improve our communication to make this clearer as well as ways to provide more flexibility and help prevent missed renewals. The Parking Review sets out to improve our parking service to residents, businesses and visitors.

**(18) Councillor Sykes- General Fund Budget Planning and Resource Update**

The GF budget planning timeline allows for consultation, and general detail of planned stakeholder engagement is set out in s12 of Item 64. However the promised Star Chamber process is not included in the outline budget timeline and it not clear when line-by-line draft budget proposals will be made available for public and member review. Can the Cabinet Member for Finance please indicate when we can expect Star Chamber meetings to occur and when initial draft budget proposals will be made public?

**Response from Councillor Taylor:**

I always think that it's important to learn from previous process and indeed previous people who have sat in my seat as Finance Lead so I really welcome his input on this process. Indeed, somebody asked me the other day about some technical question on the i360 and I went back and looked at some of the papers. The decision obviously was agreed by the committee and then went through the Budget process and lo and behold the Finance Lead who took that budget process through Council was Councillor Sykes. So, it'll be really important to get his feedback into this budget process and perhaps some reflections on how disastrously wrong that capital decision went, perhaps he could write an op-ed about how disastrously that process went.

In terms of our process to answer the questions, the star chamber doesn't exist in statute, it's not defined anywhere. Star chamber is really a senior group of Members or officers that review budget proposals and that will be happening throughout the budget process.

In terms of when the line by line will be public that is an entirely fair question, we haven't yet put that out there. My honest answer to him is that I want that to come as early as possible and earlier than last year. As he'll remember from last year, we got the settlement really late in the year so it was very difficult to put together a budget and make it public, but my honest answer is I'd like it to be as early as possible so that people can engage with it.

**(19) Councillor Sykes- General Fund Budget Planning and Resource Update**

Options to address budget shortfalls (s3.14) include reviewing the capital programme to reduce associated revenue commitments. Additional capital financing cost pressures in 2025/26 are already greater than £5m for 2025/6 (s5, table) and recent capital project financing decisions have added to the capital financing cost pressure. Would the Cabinet Member for Finance agree this deteriorating position chosen by the administration feels like somewhat of a gamble with perilous council finances?

**Response from Councillor Taylor:**

Gambling, what a word to use in the context of the Green Party's record on the capital programme. I like a flutter sometimes on the football or the cricket, but Councillor Sykes would be a Las Vegas high roller for gambling as they did with the money on the i360. I mean, one of the great gambles in local government history that has spectacularly not paid off. Again, keen to hear the Green Party's reflections on that in this budget setting process.

To answer his question, no I don't really agree, and we did cover this in a previous Cabinet meeting. Which is to say, yes, the King Alfred and Madeira Terraces are large capital projects, including in some cases increases in budget but they are the capital projects the city wants to see. They want to see those terraces restored and they want

to see a King Alfred on the existing site. So, it's really important to we are investing in things that are assets for the city that the public want to see and perhaps not giant spikes that go up in the air and cost the city millions for years to come.

**(20) Councillor Sykes- General Fund Budget Planning and Resource Update**

Please can the Cabinet Member for Finance provide the build-up for 'All other pressures across council services', £6.605m, in s5, Table?

**Response from Councillor Taylor:**

Unfortunately, this covers too many areas to describe or list here and includes a wide range of above-inflation cost pressures across many of our statutory and essential services together with losses of specific grant support, for example for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. Additional cost pressures include the increased cost of transport network maintenance, bulky waste collections and retendering supported bus routes, as well as the doubling of external audit fees and significant increases in the cost of computer system and software licensing to name just a few items.

However, these are best estimates at present and we will be continually reviewing these estimates as latest information becomes available and will continue to look for options to try and reduce or mitigate these pressures in the current year to try and alleviate pressure on the budget both this year and next.

**(21) Councillor Sykes- General Fund Budget Planning and Resource Update**

Please can the Cabinet Member for Finance inform us of the three key areas of advocacy he is pursuing with Treasury and MHCLG with respect to the financial pressures BHCC and other LAs are experiencing?

**Response from Councillor Taylor:**

We're pursuing a number of advocacy points across a wide range of policy areas, both via the LGA and directly with ministers. In terms of local government finance, I'd highlight:

- Requests for medium-term settlements to facilitate longer term budget planning and investment.
- Increases in core funding, perhaps linked to high-pressure areas (adult social care, homelessness (TA), children's services).
- Increased options for revenue raising.

**(22) Councillor McLeay- Housing Strategy**

We have heard for a long time about the backlog of routine housing repairs. Is there a target date or timeframe for when this might be resolved?

**Response from Councillor Williams:**

We have appointed two contractors to assist with reducing the backlog of routine repairs. The backlog of routine repairs is expected to be clear by the end of this financial year.

**(23) Councillor McLeay- Housing Strategy**

Great to see in Appendix 2 that BHCC will explore the opportunity to bid for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund – making the most of external funding? Can you confirm if the housing team have started preparing their application for Wave 3? The guidance in May was to start preparing.

**Response from Councillor Williams:**

We have begun preparing to bid for Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding alongside a potential delivery partner. We are at the stage of reviewing data on potentially eligible properties and measures that could be delivered through the funding in anticipation of applications opening soon. We have also provisionally ring-fenced some capital budget to act as match funding for this scheme in the financial year 2025-26. We will provide further detail in due course.

**(24) Councillor McLeay- Housing Strategy**

Has the refresh of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping partnership arrangements been done? The strategy suggests it would be by Sep 2024. Could we receive an update on this?

**Response from Councillor Williams:**

Work on the new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy commenced in September, initiating with the data sources which will be utilised to support this strategy. Once analysed, this will be the basis for wider engagement with stakeholders, with the final version of the strategy due for approval in July 2025.

**(25) Councillor McLeay- Housing Strategy**

There are three examples I've come across in my ward since May 2023, where limited housing options have meant survivors are placed in unsuitable accommodation. How will this be addressed differently going forward, if lack of supply continues to be the key challenge?

**Response from Councillor Williams:**

Making sure appropriate measures are put in place to safeguard survivors is one of my highest priorities. Preventing homelessness and meeting housing need is a key priority in our Housing Strategy. Our action plan includes development of joined up approaches for those most at risk of harm or where there is greater impact if they become homeless. Key areas for delivery in Year One of the Housing Strategy Action Plan include to: provide support and safe accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse; develop Pan Sussex reciprocal arrangements for survivors of domestic abuse; and develop a VAWG resource toolkit for frontline staff. I was very pleased that last month we signed off on the

Safe Haven by the Sea report, independently produced by Stonewater, and we will now be implementing the recommendations of this report. There will be further measures we will be bringing forward to support joint tenants as part of the review of the Allocations Policy.

**(26) Councillor McLeay- Housing Strategy**

It was a shame to hear about the closing of Leslie Best House in my ward. That low level supported accommodation was housing women who were survivors of domestic abuse. They were very happy there and felt safe and secure. How can BHCC make sure these women are placed in accommodation where they continue to feel secure? I am conscious that low support need can very quickly ramp up to medium or high if people suddenly lose the right level of support. Their low support need should not be taken for granted.

**Response from Councillor Williams:**

Leslie Best House was always commissioned as low support accommodation for women as part of a pathway toward living independently. The council is working with the current residents and the service provider to ensure that suitable accommodation is available to all affected. Leslie Best House will continue to provide supported accommodation, but specifically for single women low level mental health support needs.

**(27) Councillor McLeay- Housing Strategy**

At a meeting last week it was suggested that how consultations are currently conducted excludes a lot of people whose perspective the service would really benefit from. They suggested a short form at food banks or sent to homes might be one way to make it more accessible. Is this something BHCC might consider for the next role of housing strategy consultation as well as other non-traditional engagement methods?

**Response from Councillor Williams:**

When undertaking consultation, the council is always keen to ensure that as many of the relevant stakeholders as possible are included in that consultation. In the case of the Housing Strategy, consultation was widely advertised across the city, and residents were invited to attend a number of publicly held events as well as providing responses online or in writing. In the case of the Allocations Policy, every council tenant and household on the housing register was written to and again invited to attend public events and submit responses online or in writing. To assist with this the council uses a network of stakeholders to be engaging with. We would welcome any groups who wish to be added to this network to contact the council.

**(28) Councillor McLeay- Housing Strategy**

Improving engagement with residents - the response times from some parts of the housing department is currently not great. Will we increase staff for that department to achieve the ambitions to improve communication and engagement? Is more investment being given to this department to support this additional work?

**Response from Councillor Williams:**

We are always seeking to improve our response times, communication and engagement.

The Housing Performance Report Quarter 1 considered at September Area Housing Panels reported that call answering performance by both our Housing Customer Service Team and Housing Repairs Helpdesk were above target (at 89% and 95% respectively, against a target of 85% of calls answered).

Some parts of the housing service have been undergoing significant change recently. For example, the Homelessness Transformation Programme has resulted in a complete redesign of the Homelessness [Housing Needs] service. The transitioning of this new way of working has unfortunately led to some interim disruption during Quarter 1, which has meant the service has not been as responsive as I would have hoped. However, these changes are embedded and we are seeing improvements to customer service during Quarter 3. If there are specific parts of the service being referred to, could these please be raised with me, so I can investigate further.

**(29) Councillor McLeay- Housing Strategy**

HS28 - take a resident centered approach to developing future options for the regeneration of LPS blocks. Residents, particularly leaseholders, don't sound too happy about the approach so far. There is concern about how news on LPS blocks and possible demolition has impacted the value of their property. If BHCC are able to purchase these properties, will BHCC commit to paying what the value of the property was before the BBC reported news of demolition on July 25, 2024?

**Response from Councillor Williams:**

With regard to our resident led approach. We are currently undertaking enhanced tenancy visits to all residents of the 8 LPS blocks. As of week ending 20th September 2024, we had undertaken 477 enhanced tenancy visits, covering 89% of occupied homes, across the 558 dwellings. This includes visits to leaseholders living in the blocks. Our enhanced tenancy visits have been well received and in general feedback we have had from residents on the level of contact remains positive, with specific feedback that residents have valued communication being open, honest and transparent. The first resident newsletters have been sent and we plan for a series of drop in meetings. We are committed to maintaining positive and proactive communication as we start to navigate next steps.

No decisions have been made at this time about the future of the 8 LPS blocks. We will take a resident-led approach on the future options for each of the blocks, including consideration of refurbishment or regeneration.

There have been no changes to our Home Purchase Policy with regard to buying back homes in the LPS blocks.

**(30) Councillor McLeay- Improving Housing Services: Response to the Regulator of Social Housing Ruling**

(3.8) Providing a clear timeline for completing lower-risk actions. Will these clear timelines be published or shared with residents – and how?



**Response from Councillor Williams:**

We will be providing regular updates to residents on progress towards reaching compliance on all areas of health and safety in council homes. We will be providing regular updates to Area Panel meetings, we are considering how we use social media, the council web pages and through established tenant groups. We will also report progress in the quarterly edition of Homing in and are planning some tenant engagement events, including at City Wide Tenant Conference on 23rd October.

**(31) Councillor McLeay- Improving Housing Services: Response to the Regulator of Social Housing Ruling**

(3.14) Additional contractor capacity is being deployed to work alongside Council teams to undertake these remediation actions and the financial implications forecast an overspend. How much is that overspend and how do you plan to mitigate and bring the HRA back into balance?

**Response from Councillor Williams:**

The 2024/25 HRA budget includes a revenue budget of £2.689m and capital budget of £14.714m specifically relating to the Health & Safety works. As part of our monitoring of these budgets an overspend is currently forecast which is being kept under review. To manage the revenue overspend, regular progress monitoring and forecasting takes place. This will be included within the month 5 Targeted Budget Monitoring (TBM) report to Cabinet in October 2024. If the overspend cannot be managed in year then it will require a contribution from reserves to bring the budget back into balance. In respect of the capital overspend this will form the overall borrowing requirements for the HRA at the end of the financial year. An increased level of borrowing will result in higher financing costs during 2025/26 for which the budget will be approved in February 2025.

**(32) Councillor McLeay- Improving Housing Services: Response to the Regulator of Social Housing Ruling**

Appendix B – the letter – there is only one method of contact given to raise safety concerns, a phone number. In the event that this phone number doesn't get through to an officer, could an email address not be provided also? The ways in which residents can reports needs to be clear and accessible

**Response from Councillor Williams:**

Thank you for your comments. We will add the contact email address to the letter.

**60 MATTERS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE**

There were none.

**61 REPRESENTATIONS FROM OPPOSITION MEMBERS**

61.1 Councillor McLeay made a representation on Item Item 62: Housing Strategy 2024-29.

**62 HOUSING STRATEGY 2024-2029**

62.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought endorsement for a new Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029 prior to its adoption by Full Council.

62.2 Councillors Sankey, Nann and Rowkins made comments and contributed to the debate of the report.

**62.3 Resolved-**

1) That Cabinet recommends the draft Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029 set out at Appendix 1 to go to Full Council for approval.

2) That Cabinet agrees the Year 1 Action Plan set out at Appendix 2.

3) That Cabinet receives a report on the delivery of the Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029 on an annual basis.

**63 IMPROVING HOUSING SERVICES: RESPONSE TO THE REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING RULING**

63.1 Cabinet considered a report that set out the response to the recent Regulatory Judgement by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) that identified serious failings in the Safety and Quality compliance category in the areas of health & safety and the routine repairs backlog. The report outlined progress and the work that remained to meet the regulatory requirements.

63.2 Councillors Sankey and Taylor commented and made contribution to the debate of the report.

**63.3 Resolved-**

1) Note the Regulator of Social Housing Regulatory Judgement, following responsive engagement with the Council, that there are serious failings in how the Council is delivering on the standard of Safety and Quality, and that significant improvement is needed.

2) Note the update on progress on actions being undertaken toward Safety & Quality compliance to address the Regulator's concerns, meet our statutory and regulatory obligations, and improve housing services for our residents.

3) Agrees Overview & Scrutiny oversight arrangements as set out in section 6 of this report.

**64 GENERAL FUND BUDGET PLANNING AND RESOURCE UPDATE 2025-26**

64.1 Cabinet considered a report that provided a budget planning and resource update as a key part of the preparation for the 2025/26 annual budget and Council Tax setting process together with Medium Term Financial Plan projections over the next 4-year period.

64.2 Councillor Daniel commented on the report.

**64.3 Resolved-**

That Cabinet:

- 1) Note the planning assumption of a Council Tax increase of 2.99% over the 4-year Medium-Term Financial Plan period and an Adult Social Care Precept of 2.00% or the equivalent in grant funding in 2025/26.
- 2) Note the funding assumptions and net expenditure projections for 2025/26 including a projected budget shortfall of £36.730 million.
- 3) Note the Medium Term financial projections for 2025/26 to 2028/29 and the predicted budget gaps totalling over £105 million over the period.
- 4) Note the proposed budget development approach and that members will use this to develop 4-year medium-term service and financial plans and proposals for Budget Council consideration, including detailed budget proposals to set a legally balanced budget in 2025/26 and enable the Council Tax for the year to be set.
- 5) Note the planning assumption of recurrently funding transformation enabling resources of at least £1 million, as set out in paragraphs 7.5 to 7.6, from the revenue budget rather than the previous practice of utilising capital receipts since 2016/17.
- 6) Note that projections for next year and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) will be updated following government funding announcements expected in Autumn 2024 and Spring 2025.

**65 PARKING REVIEW UPDATE**

65.1 Cabinet considered a report that set out the outcome of the Parking Review and sought approval of a new Parking Policy.

65.2 Councillor Taylor commented on the report.

**65.3 Resolved-**

- 1) Cabinet agrees to taking forward the new Parking Policy aims and objectives as detailed in paragraph 3.9 below and in Appendix 1.
- 2) Cabinet agrees to the Parking Services 24/25 Action Plan as summarised in Table 1 to ensure actions are included as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. This

aims to reduce the current under-achievement of the £45.5m parking income budget this financial year.

- 3) Cabinet agrees the medium to long term action plan and financial appraisal to deliver the new Parking Policy contained in Appendix 3.

## **66 SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE PLACEMENTS**

66.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought approval for the procurement of good quality accommodation and support for young people (aged 16-24), to prepare them for independence, via an Accredited Provider List (APL).

### **66.2 Resolved-**

- 1) Cabinet agrees to the:
  - (i) procurement of an APL and the award of an Agreement to successful applicants to be admitted onto the Approved Provider List for the provision of supported accommodation for young people placements in the independent sector for an initial term of four (4) years commencing on 1 July 2025 with an option to extend for a period or periods of up to two (2) years; and
  - (ii) call off contracts and individual placement agreements under the APL Agreement outlined at 2.1(i) above, for an estimated value of up to £25.36m.
- 2) Cabinet agrees to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Families, Children & Learning to take all necessary steps to procure, award, implement and extend arrangements set out in recommendation 2.1.
- 3) Cabinet agrees to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Families, Children & Learning to integrate the outcomes of the Equalities Impact Assessment into the arrangements set out in recommendation 2.1.

## **67 MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICES FOR ADULTS**

67.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought agreement to jointly commission community mental health support (MHS) services for adults with NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board (ICB). The procurement is to be led by the ICB, and the proposed contract is to be for seven years (five years plus optional two-year extension) from October 2025.

67.2 Councillor Sankey and Pumm made comment and contributed to the debate of the report.

### **67.3 Resolved-**

- 1) Cabinet delegates authority to the Corporate Director of Housing, Care and Wellbeing to participate in a procurement process, conducted by the NHS Sussex ICB for community mental health support services for adults.

- 2) Cabinet agrees to the award of a contract via the procurement process set out in 2.1 and delegates authority to the Corporate Director of Housing, Care and Wellbeing to enter into the contract with the successful bidder for the provision of community mental health support services for adults. The length of the contract to be five years from 1 October 2025 with the option to extend by a further two years on the basis of satisfactory performance by the service provider.

## **68 PUBLIC HEALTH COMMUNITY NURSING SERVICES**

- 68.1 Cabinet considered a report that agreement to re-procure the current Public Health Community Nursing (PHCN) contract for up to 5 years (3+2) from April 2025.
- 68.2 Councillors Sankey and Robinson made comment and contributed to the debate of the report.
- 68.3 **Resolved-**
  - 1) Cabinet approves the direct award of the PHCN contract to Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust for a period of up to five years (3+2yrs)

- 2) Cabinet agrees to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Housing Care & Wellbeing to finalise the terms for the contract and award the contract for PHCN for a term of five years.

## **69 CLEANING SERVICES**

- 69.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought delegated authority to conduct a procurement exercise and award contract/s for the provision of cleaning services across Housing and Adult Social Care.
- 69.2 Councillors Robinson, Williams and Nann made comment and contributed to the debate of the report.
- 69.3 **Resolved-**
  - 1) Cabinet agrees to the procurement and award of a contract/s for a period of three years with options to extend for a further two years for the provision of cleaning services for vulnerable residents and grants delegated authority to the Corporate Director Housing Care & Wellbeing to procure and award the contract/s.
  - 2) Cabinet grants delegated authority to the Corporate Director Housing Care & Wellbeing to agree the optional extension of the contract/s referred to in 2.1 subject to satisfactory performance.

The meeting concluded at 3.50pm

