

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 77(a)

Subject: Member Questions

Date of meeting: 17 October 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 Meadows- Targeted Budget Management

Is spending £15000 on period products a good use of money? How do we know it's going to genuine need?

(2) Councillor Meadows - Targeted Budget Management

Pensioners fund: is £150000 enough to support pensioners across the whole of the city? How many pensioners will that support? Why is this necessary?

(3) Councillor Meadows- Targeted Budget Management

Why do we need around £600000 of support staff funding for the fairness fund?

(4) Councillor Meadows- Targeted Budget Management

Why are Local Discretionary Social Fund claimants repeatedly claiming (see 3.13)? What is the council doing to help claimants support themselves? What do council staff need to do to support claimants to manage their money better?

(5) Councillor McNair- Targeted Budget Management

When will the Hollingbury library site be finished? What does reprofiling the delivery actually mean? How much will it cost? Will it exceed £2.9m?

(6) Councillor McNair- Targeted Budget Management

When can residents expect the statutory roll out of the food waste collection service? Is the council asking the Labour government for financial assistance?

(7) Councillor Hill- Targeted Budget Management

What are the underlying reasons behind the 37.9% rise in temporary accommodation costs in past year? Is this purely from demand led pressure from the cost of living crises being worsened by continued austerity or are there other non demand led pressures?

(8) Councillor Hill- Targeted Budget Management

How will future multi year budgets affect how the council does targeted budget management?

(9) Councillor Shanks- Housing Allocations Policy

Women who have had children removed by the local authority are often left homeless, if they are not able to access housing they will not be able to rebuild their lives and hopefully go on to be able to establish a family, can they be treated as a priority. Very small numbers but a big impact on resources and lives

(10) Councillor Hill- Options for the re-procurement of advocacy services for adults

Why have 4 options been suggested for cabinet? Surely you have already decided?

(11) Councillor Sykes- The Brighton & Hove Fairness Fund and Household Support Fund

It's good news that the Household Support Fund has been continued and updated as this increases the breadth of possible support to families in crisis and also adds flexibility to add preventative work. However, as the paper intimates, this 6 month extension repeats the short-term piecemeal approach used by the previous government. Is the Cabinet Member for Finance able to provide any insight into the timescale to support for longer term planning by Local Authorities under our Labour government?

(12) Councillor Sykes- Targeted Budget Management

Since TBM 2, the forecast CT collection rate has fallen by a further 0.25% to 0.5%, now costing the council more than £1m in lost revenue. This is a significant deterioration in the position. What analysis has been undertaken about causes for the negative trend, and what action is the Cabinet Member for Finance taking to address this issue?

(13) Councillor Sykes- Targeted Budget Management

In the TBM 5 report, forecast costs of Bulk Insurance Premia have risen by £700k to £4.5m this year, due it is stated to increased claims. Please can the Cabinet Member for Finance provide some information about the nature of these increased claims and do they for example include pothole damage to cars and damage from council trees?

(14) Councillor McLeay- Housing Allocations Policy

Suitability assessments were references under “medical assessment accepted homeless case” and in the footnote on page 26 with a strike out of “Suitability assessment required under Housing Act 1996 Part VII”. Could I ask for clarification on whether suitability assessments will continue to be carried out for those placed in temporary accommodation, within or out of area, if the accommodation is not deemed to be a suitable living standard? For example, where property is riddled with damp and mould.

(15) Councillor McLeay- Housing Allocations Policy

Where reducing demand for temporary accommodation is the ultimate aim, is there a target as to what we expect these changes will have on temporary accommodation allocations? Will a reduction in out-of-area allocations be prioritised first?

(16) Councillor McLeay- Housing Allocations Policy

Financial Income Assessment: The Government’s own consultation on social housing allocations published in September 2024 suggests they will “explore raising the income threshold over time with reference to inflationary indices e.g. the Consumer Price Index.” Could the impacts of inflation be referenced in the BHCC Housing Allocations Policy, so the household income threshold would be adjusted accordingly in respect to inflation?

(17) Councillor McLeay- Housing Allocations Policy

It has been acknowledged the financial impacts will not be known at this stage, but will need to be monitored carefully. How will the ongoing careful monitoring be recorded and shared with member as the policy is implemented?

(18) Councillor McLeay- Housing Allocations Policy

“Should obtain independent legal advice” is referenced throughout the policy document. As this will be the core document applicants or tenants will use for reference, would it be possible to list examples of where affordable or free independent legal advice might be obtained? Law Stop or Brighton Housing Trust for example are two local options that could be referenced.

(19) Councillor Shanks- Targeted Budget Management

In view of the rise in temporary accommodation costs what progress is being made on inhouse emergency accommodation e.g. the Old Steine building development.

(20) Councillor Shanks- The Brighton & Hove Fairness Fund and Household Support Fund

Please give us a breakdown of how much has been raised in public donations each year since this fund was set up. How do you intend to increase this and encourage public donations? For instance, through official council communications such as council tax.