

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 95(c)

Subject: Deputations

Date of meeting: 14 November 2024

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Council for the hearing of deputations from members of the public.

Notification of a further Deputation has been received. The spokesperson is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

2) Deputation: transparency concerns over Patcham Court Farm sale

I am here to express concerns about the council's potential deal with Royal Mail for the lease of Patcham Court Farm at a peppercorn rent.

Firstly, the council has kept a refurbished, council-owned three-bedroom house just metres from the site, intentionally vacant for over five years. Emails between council officers obtained via FOI reveal that this decision was made to support Royal Mail's potential access needs. This choice implies two alarming things: 1. That the council values corporate deals over addressing the needs of the 4,700 families on the social housing waiting list, and 2. that this deal was effectively decided in 2018.

With trust in Royal Mail at an all-time low, it is bizarre that our council is considering giving a 250-year lease to them on sensitive land within a crucial tap water protection zone. This land was safeguarded by parliament for its role in our water supply. Yet, the proposed lease gives the keys to a logistics company and also awards them the flexibility to sublet to others - alarming given increasing water insecurity.

Previously, the council estimated a maximum of £8.84 million from this deal—bringing the city just £35K per year, far below market rates. This deal provides no new jobs. Claims that the project supports net zero are misleading, as it will actually increase HGV traffic and will merely relocate congestion from the city centre to Patcham without reducing overall emissions. So what is the real motive? Furthermore, we question the integrity of the Planning Committee's process. FOI emails show that Brighton and Hove Bus Company, under pressure from the council, was persuaded to support Royal Mail's bid. Southern Water's voiced concerns about the bid as late as the day of the committee itself, but these were left unaddressed. Highways Agency objected for years and then when quiet at crunch time, why?

The council has also been inconsistent in defining the land's use classification, B1 versus B8, hindering resident participation. Before the September committee meeting, residents were promised an opportunity to ask questions, yet were denied this chance. The Planning Committee allowed a mere 11 minutes to the case against development and gave over 3 hours to Royal Mail and its allies.

If the cabinet approves this deal, we ask them to ensure that Royal Mail's current properties, do not become luxury developments. Developers should not be allowed to sidestep social housing obligations by paying penalty fees. We also remind the council of its duty to protect Patcham residents from increased pollution, flooding, and safety risks if this project proceeds. Finally better, more sustainable options could be considered for Patcham Court Farm, like a solar farm, community hub,

tech hub or low-impact housing. Please choose a future that reflects our city's values.

Supported by:

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