

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 121(a)

Subject: Member Questions

Date of meeting: 9 January 2025

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- Devolution White Paper

What is the likelihood of Brighton & Hove remaining a separate unitary authority of 280,000 residents? Or will the city be forced to expand to 500,000 residents?

(2) Councillor McNair - Devolution White Paper

Will Brighton & Hove lose its city status?

(3) Councillor Meadows- Devolution White Paper

When will we be able to see the proposed boundaries of our new unitary authority?

(4) Councillor McNair- Devolution White Paper

Will Brighton & Hove expand to include Adur & Worthing? If so, will Brighton & Hove have to take on the debt of Adur and Worthing?

(5) Councillor McNair- Devolution White Paper

Will we go east to Lewes? How far will we need to go along the coast to get the appropriate numbers? To Newhaven?

(6) Councillor Meadows- Devolution White Paper

When can you clarify the process for the creation of a shadow unitary authority in 2027?

(7) Councillor McNair- Devolution White Paper

Will the number of local councillors in the city be reduced?

(8) Councillor Meadows- Devolution White Paper

Will the City's boundaries change in the process?

(9) Councillor McNair- Devolution White Paper

Are residents right to be worried about an expanded Brighton & Hove losing its distinct identity?

(10) Councillor Pickett- Devolution White Paper

Cityclean services are struggling with modernisation of rounds which are more frequently missed in our city than in surrounding areas, although improvements are being made in this regard. A larger authority presents a challenge for this service assuming some form of it persists with the new authority. Will you look at modelling changes to Cityclean that reflect potential new geographies that will inevitably present challenges to service delivery?

(11) Councillor Pickett- Devolution White Paper

If fewer councillors are representing more residents how does this make representation more local?

(12) Councillor Pickett- Devolution White Paper

Why are we rushing this process to be fast tracked? Other than a few financial incentives, what do we have to gain by doing so?

(13) Councillor Sykes- Devolution White Paper

If the problem definition is incorrect, the solution is likely to be incorrect. The so-called devolution proposals in front of us in the white paper put the need for growth front and centre in terms of justification for this massive upheaval and reduction in local influence. Does the Leader agree that issues of economic growth or lack of it are more to do with national /international blockers including Brexit, which unsurprisingly gets zero mentions in the white paper?

(14) Councillor Sykes- Devolution White Paper

The White Paper and by extension these proposals for B&H recognise the fact that people value the role of governance at the community scale and that it can be a concern when local government is reorganised. The paper talks about the need for stronger community arrangements when reorganisation happens. But the way this exercise is starting now appears to be communities once again having politics done to them rather than collaboration. The council and the government are not walking their talk. How does the Leader justify this?

(15) Councillor West- Devolution White Paper

Would the Leader agree with me, that, given the timescales with the White Paper published just before Christmas with a deadline for response of 10 January on such a momentous matter for local democracy is grossly disempowering, and that any decision taken by Cabinet to join the priority programme will therefore need to be ratified, or amended, by Council and be subject to receiving the mandate of a public referendum?

(16) Councillor Hill- Devolution White Paper

If a mayor is elected who is opposed to publicly owned systems like bus or rail services, surely it then they won't happen? These publicly owned services should be protected. Am I missing something?

(17) Councillor Hill- Devolution White Paper

Paul Marshall, West Sussex County Council Leader has stated that 'The task which will fall to all local authority leaders across Sussex is to come as close as possible to consensus on what unitary footprints might look like.' Could you share some of the detail of discussions that have been had by the administration with Paul Marshall on the Local Government Review boundary changes?

(18) Councillor Hill- Devolution White Paper

On 22 December 2023 Cllr Bella Sankey co signed a letter to the then Secretary of State Michael Gove stating concern about 'seemingly arbitrary criteria for Growth Hubs around resident and business populations'. The seemingly arbitrary criteria was that it required a minimum delivery area of 500,000 residents or 22,000 businesses. That 500,000 number was arbitrary then and it is arbitrary now. Does Cabinet believe this 500,000 number for unitary authorities to be an arbitrary one?

(19) Councillor Hill- Devolution White Paper

The areas surrounding Brighton & Hove, such as Adur & Worthing, have a lower LGBT+ population than our city. Our city is unique in having the highest LGBTQIA+ population proportionally of any UK city. By expanding the unitary authority, I'm concerned that the new political balance of the new unitary authority will lead to worse life outcomes for LGBTQIA+ people like myself. Can a more thorough equalities impact assessment be considered for this?

(20) Councillor Hill- Devolution White Paper

The unitisation of County Councils could lead to County Councillors in East and West Sussex holding office for a 6 year term from May 2021 until May 2027 This means part of the area that Brighton & Hove will likely share a unitary authority with in future will have had a democratic deficit for a long period of time. I believe this will lead to disillusionment with politics

particularly in these areas as those in power will lack a mandate. How was this handled previously when other councils unitised and are there lessons learnt from issues in those processes that can be drawn upon?

(21) Councillor Hill- Devolution White Paper

Will a new authority keep the same ward boundaries within Brighton & Hove?

(22) Councillor Hill- Devolution White Paper

How will local government work between May 2027 in May 2028 before vesting when Brighton & Hove City Council will still technically exist but the new unitary authority has been elected in the May 2027 shadow unitary authority elections? Will we have 2 mayors and Council Leaders?

(23) Councillor Hill- Devolution White Paper

Brighton & Hove City Council has high levels of debt. This debt would become the responsibility of the new unitary authority without government intervention. Can you describe how negotiations will happen to resolve this with government? Lots of Councils also have debt and we've seen with Croydon the government back out of debt forgiveness due to the implications this has for all councils.

(24) Councillor Hill- Devolution White Paper

Why is the Council opting not to go for a Foundation Strategic Authority, which is a non-mayoral combined authority? My understanding is that those have less devolved powers, why should that be the case?

(25) Councillor Hill- Devolution White Paper

Can the Council Leader confirm for the record that she prefers the Supplementary vote election system over First Past the Post for the Sussex Mayoral election?

(26) Councillor Shanks- Devolution White Paper

Have staff and or unions been consulted about the submission of this application which will have far reaching employment consequences for them

(27) Councillor Shanks- Devolution White Paper

I presume the leader would agree with me that the biggest challenge local govt faces is lack of funding. How will the devolution proposals address this?