

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Cabinet

## Agenda Item 152(a)

**Subject: Member Questions**

**Date of meeting: 13 February 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 Shanks- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

Will the cabinet consider lobbying government for the power to implement a tourist tax on overnight visitors?

**(2) Councillor Shanks – Targeted Budget Management (TBM) 202/245: Month 9 (December)**

Will cabinet consider bringing some home to school transport in house and supporting schools to deliver some journeys.

**(3) Councillor Shanks- Targeted Budget Management (TBM) 202/245: Month 9 (December)**

Will cabinet consider developing more inhouse temporary accommodation e.g. in empty council buildings.

**(4) Councillor Meadows- Visitor Economy Strategy for Growth 2024-2034**

Will it affect our city's ability to attract tourists by bringing VisitBrighton in-house? If VisitBrighton is brought in house, will it end up costing the taxpayer twice as much

**(5) Councillor McNair- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

What will it mean for communities by transferring the Community Infrastructure Levy over to the Thriving Communities Fund? Will residents lose out on vital traffic improvements?

**(6) Councillor McNair- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

Have other councils, where private rentals are more affordable, agreed to accept residents discharged from the care of Brighton & Hove City Council? Is it feasible to uproot 90 households as outlined in the budget papers, to save £0.705m.

**(7) Councillor Meadows- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

Will the reduction by £0.050m from the Highways Operations Team mean fewer potholes are filled?

**(8) Councillor McNair- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

Areas of Brighton have recently been decimated through the loss of trees due to Dutch Elm and Ash dieback. We note the council intends to directly sell the ash that is cut down in our woodlands for use by biomass power stations and sell elm to construction and landscaping businesses. Will this policy risk spreading these diseases across our city, and undermine the council's policy of restricting woodburners?

**(9) Councillor West- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

Impact Initiatives have expressed grave concern about the impact of the proposed cut to the Ageing Well Service included in the BHCC 25-26 budget proposals. Over the past 6 years of contract delivery the service has experienced a real term decrease of at least 15%, with no uplift in BHCC or NHS funding. Going forward, the NHS is cutting their funding by £100,000 from April, and there is also significant increased NI costs to bear. The addition of the BHCC cut will further threaten the ability to deliver essential elements of this nationally recognised service. A viability tipping point for delivery partners will be reached, risking decline of health and well-being of thousands of older adults, quickly increasing knock-on cost for adult social care. What sense is there to cut this cost-effective service when the disbenefits to older people's health and ASC expenditure will be so great?

**(10) Councillor Hill- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

Do you agree with me that the cuts to public services we are continuing to see across the country will have a harmful contribution to the situation we find ourselves in where 52% of people of my generation believe 'the UK would be a better place if a strong leader was in charge who does not have to bother with parliament and elections'? A third also prefer the army to run the state all according to recent Channel 4 polling? I do not think this government wants to push young people towards supporting fascism, but do you understand why I perceive this as connected to systemic degradation of our public realm which it is contributing to?

**(11) Councillor Hill- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

The decision to 'decommission the service care pathway for sexual dysfunction' mean there won't be therapeutic support for woman needing help with what is termed in the document as 'female sexual dysfunction'. The impact assessment states that this will significantly impact woman who are unable to identify or afford a paid for therapy service. The only mitigation for this is just letting the ICB know you have made the cut which they will likely not fill as they are making cuts of their own. This is rated the worst possible outcome by your own equalities impact assessment, in part because this disproportionately harms survivors of sexual violence who very often cant afford to pay for this support themselves. Can you do everything you possibly can to reverse this cut?

**(12) Councillor Hill- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

The reduction of the Knowledge and Library Service to realise budget savings of £18,000 per annum will negatively affect an 'essential service needed for evidence-based decision making to fulfil our statutory duties'. Given this impacts the council's ability to support a statutory service, how will the council ensure it is maintained despite the serious concerns raised in the equality impact assessment?

**(13) Councillor Hill- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

The Equality Impact Assessment for the cut to residential respite provision at Drove Road says that 'There is a recent example that Drove Road has been able to provide a week's respite for a child who's baby sister was born with a heart defect and had to stay in intensive care in a specialist hospital in London, it was not appropriate for her to be in London with her mother and due to her learning disabilities and behaviours that challenge this would not have been a safe place for her or others around her. Without the provision of Drove Road this child may have had to come into Local Authority care.' Assuming this goes ahead, can the Council ensure this cut does not force children into local authority care when this would be both cruel to families and costly to the council?

**(14) Councillor Hill- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

What do you suggest people do to receive civil fair-trading advice now that this is being cut by the Council? Can Citizen's Advice adequately cover this cut?

**(15) Councillor Hill- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

Do cuts to the aging well service and public health run contrary to the council plan of Living and ageing well as part of a healthy city where people thrive? It seems the opposite of a preventative approach.

**(16) Councillor McLeay- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

Looking at the Homelessness and housing options, where plans to implement the new Housing Allocations Policy is to move people in TA to out of area placements in PRS, reducing costs from £950k to £705k. There is reference to " Delivery Risk: If residents decline a reasonable offer that is out of area, then they risk street homelessness." How have you modelled this when considering the rent saving vs the financial impact on BHCC homeless services? What happens if someone would be more interested in sleeping on the street rather than being moved out of area?

**(17) Councillor McLeay- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

For the section on temporary and supported accommodation, where new initiatives to incentivise landlords will help landlords to reach their EPC rating. Has this been tested anywhere? Where will specialist advice will be sought? Ref: (Pg 58) " Delivery Risk: Specialist advice will need to be sought due diligence before entering into a long-term arrangement."

**(18) Councillor McLeay- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

Appendix 4 - Management and Service Costs: A year ago the allocated budget was £25,685m (2024/25) which was then projected to be £26,384m for 2025/26. In these papers the number has jumped up to £28,589 (8% increase). That seems a lot. Is there a reason for that increase?

**(19) Councillor McLeay- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

Appendix 1 - Tenancy Services: Wondering if you could explain this increase? Why are we seeing an increase of £1,780m (vs £526m last year - 2024/25)? What is this increase being spent on? What will it pay for? That detail is missing in the budget papers.

**(20) Councillor McLeay- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

Appendix 3 – New Supply: £36,009 was budgeted last year. I spotted we carried over £19,603m which is about 50% of the amount budgeted. We now have a budget of £50 million for new supply this year - which is great. Of course, we want to see new home building and purchases. Can you reassure us that the budget will be spent this time? Why was so little spent last year? What is causing the failure to spend it? Where underspend is being considered in other parts of the budget – should we be considering

underspend here as being an opportunity to replenish the Sustainability and Retrofit Reserve or the Rent Reduction Reserve?

**(21) Councillor McLeay- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

Where homelessness prevention is often supported by voluntary sector organisations across the city and with their funding being further squeezed, how possible would it be to allocate a percentage of the Homelessness Prevention Grant to these services – where housing advice and mediation have helped to keep people housed in our community – reducing demand on TA? Has the council evaluated the potential impact on their own service if voluntary groups lose their ability to fund their homelessness prevention service?

**(22) Councillor West- General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26**

With non-smoking related lung cancer now a growing cause of early death, and the prevalence of other life-limiting respiratory diseases severely impacting people of all ages, there is a very real and urgent need to drastically curb air pollution and improve air quality. However, the new Government has continued the fuel duty freeze while ending the £2 bus fare cap. Cabinet are seeking to increase parking availability through Park & Ride, with a cost to the council, and the BHCC 25-26 budget proposals seek to freeze residents' parking charges. While the cost of all forms of sustainable travel is allowed to rise, the Cabinet and Government are clearly keen to encourage and support use of motor vehicles by holding back the cost for motorists. How is this approach reconciled with the need to encourage affordable sustainable travel, and to address air quality and climate change?

