

Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

Agenda Item 20

Subject: Written questions from members of the public

Date of meeting: 10 July 2025

A period of not more than thirty minutes shall be allowed for questions submitted by a member of the public who either lives or works in the area of the authority at each ordinary meeting of the Council.

Every question shall be put and answered without discussion, but the person to whom a question has been put may decline to answer. The person who asked the question may ask one relevant supplementary question, which shall be put and answered without discussion.

The following written questions have been received from members of the public.

1. Question from: David Gibson

Bringing seaside homes back in house: When the decision was made by the previous administration with cross party support to bring seaside homes back in house, officers advised committee it would take around 6 months. At that time this was a priority since the buy out would reduce the rents of homeless households greatly amidst a cost of living squeeze. Also, at the time, interest rates were very favourable to the council buying out the bank loan. It is now well over 2 years and interest rates are becoming less favourable so the longer this is delayed the worse for council finances and less benefit for homeless households. Has the new council decided to reverse the previous decision to bring seaside homes back into full council ownership?

2. Question from: Ian Needham

Loss of housing income from falling rent collection performance
Last year the council collected a lower percentage of rents from council tenants than the year before. Had the council's target for rent collection been achieved there would be £1.7m extra to spend. It is estimated this uncollected money could provide:

- 1) Finance to enable the council to buy 25 council homes each year
- 2) 340 new boilers
- 3) 115 new kitchens
- 4) 425 window replacements

Around 98% of rent was collected in years pre COVID, now it is around 93%. It is understandable that rent collection rates drop in COVID, but that was 4 years ago and rates that should be climbing back to pre COVID rates are still falling. This is a waste of money that could be put towards improving homes, and building new ones. Why is council's rent collection still getting worse whilst other councils are improving?

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3. Question from: Diane Montgomery

Shared ownership is not truly affordable: Shared ownership is counted towards developer contributions as an affordable housing contribution by the planning committee. But the truth is that it is not truly affordable and is actually out of reach of most low income households in the city. Also, legally, shared ownership homes cannot be ring fenced to exclusively benefit local residents. Whilst it does have merit as an intermediate offer, it should not be counted in the way it currently is (on an par to affordable rented homes) when agreeing a developers affordable contribution in the planning process. "Affordable" rented housing actually benefits more low income households and should be prioritised locally. We urge the council to change its guidance for planning to favour affordable rented at 95% vs Shared ownership at 5%. Will the council agree to produce a report to consider making this change?

4. Question from: Anne Pissaridou

There have been reports of incidents of "water pollution" in the vicinity of the King Alfred Centre recently and that this has resulted in swimmers needing hospital treatment. Can you tell me how many people in our city have been affected by the poor quality of water in our sea and coming out of our taps and how serious these incidents have been in terms of the affect on the health of those affected please?

5. Question from: Sophie Odgers-Roe

Why is council land being sold off when it could be used for council housing? We're in the middle of a housing crisis and we desperately need more council housing. Surely this land needs to be kept and used to benefit the people of Brighton & Hove?

6. Question from: Toby Sedgwick

Does the council agree that time and again in Brighton, developers have attempted to reduce the amount of affordable housing they have pledged, such as at Circus St, the Gasworks, Sackville Road and Wellsbourne Rd? If so, will you pledge to work to keep these developers away from council land, ensuring it's used for council housing instead?

7. Question from: Heather McKnight

Why are decisions around the selling off of council land being kept secret from the public and press, are there proposals to address how the public are supposed to register their opposition to the council selling off our land if they aren't allowed to know it's happening?