

A better Brighton & Hove for all

What we want to deliver
Brighton & Hove City Council

Foreword.....	1
Introduction	3
Outcome 1: A city to be proud of	5
Investing in our city.....	5
An accessible, clean, and sustainable city	7
Outcome 2: A fair and inclusive city	10
Homes for everyone	10
An inclusive and fairer city	12
A city where people feel safe and welcome	15
Outcome 3: A city that helps people to thrive.....	16
A better future for children and young people	16
Developing our prevention and family support offer	17
Living and ageing well	18
Outcome 4: A learning council with well-run services.....	21
Innovation and technology at the heart of our strategy	21
Transforming our ways of working	22
Ensuring good governance and financial resilience.....	23
Delivering a better Brighton & Hove for all – feedback on our progress	24

Foreword

Brighton & Hove is an incredible city – full of energy, character and creativity. Recently recognised on the world stage by Time Out magazine as one of the top 50 cities globally and ranked among the top 3 destinations in the UK, our city’s reputation as a welcoming, colourful and vibrant place to live, work and visit is strong.

This recognition reflects what so many of us already know and love about Brighton & Hove. We are proud to be the most active and walkable city in the UK, which is increasingly diverse and inclusive, with a bustling independent retail sector, beautiful green spaces, an iconic seafront and more electric vehicle charging points than anywhere else in the country outside of London.

In July 2023, we launched our council plan: *A Better Brighton & Hove for All*, which set out bold ambitions for the future of our city. Those ambitions remain firmly in place, and we are as committed as ever to delivering them. This refresh of our Council Plan reflects our vision for a fairer, healthier and more sustainable city and the progress we are making together to turn that vision into a reality.

We have achieved so much over the past two years, but we know there is much more to do. We continue to listen closely to our city’s residents and businesses, our staff, and our partners, taking on board what we’ve heard and what the data is telling us about how we are doing.

Over the next two years, we will double down on our mission to improve the look and feel of our city, tackle inequality, address housing supply and prevent homelessness. We will drive sustainable economic growth and reap the benefits of devolution for our city – by improving and better integrating our transport systems, building more council and genuinely affordable housing, attract investment and maximising efforts to decarbonise at pace.

We know that following many years of underfunding by past Governments, councils are facing significant financial challenges. We are proud to have successfully balanced our books over the last two years and financial sustainability will continue to be at the forefront of everything we do. This will ensure the council’s resilience and the longer-term sustainability of services that our communities depend on. We remain ambitious to grow our city and will continue to target investment in the regeneration of our heritage assets, beautiful seafront and public realm amenities.

Brighton & Hove has incredible strengths - and together, we can continue to build on them to create a city that delivers a Better Brighton & Hove for all.

Councillor Bella Sankey

Leader Brighton & Hove City Council

Introduction

When I joined Brighton & Hove City Council as Chief Executive in 2024, I was excited to lead a forward thinking, values driven organisation. A year and a half on, my excitement is undiminished. With a majority Council for the first time in 20 years and committed, hard-working staff, I believe the council is well placed to continue delivering for the city and to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

The council plan provides us with a strategic framework to guide our decision making. It sets out our overall vision and our priorities for the future. Two years on from our Council Plan being implemented, we have decided to review and refresh it. We have made significant progress in many areas but there is still much work to be done.

We have a lot to be proud of – outstanding children’s services; our regeneration efforts are making a visible impact, especially on the seafront. We are proud to be a City of Sanctuary with a clear ambition to be inclusive, fair and welcoming to all communities. Alongside our partners in East Sussex and West Sussex, we have successfully applied to be on the Devolution Priority Programme, making us one of the first areas in England to receive devolved powers under the government’s new framework, bringing significant opportunity.

We have aligned the council’s structure to our priorities, set out our vision to be a Learning Council and introduced our five pillars of working: connected, confident, innovative & creative, diverse & inclusive, healthy and psychologically safe. We have a new, streamlined system of decision making in the Cabinet system, and a focus on culture change and service improvement. All of this was reflected in the Corporate Peer Challenge we undertook in April 2025.

We know that there is still much work to do and some significant challenges facing our city and council. Continued pressure on public finances and rising demand for services mean that public services are increasingly stretched. Brighton & Hove has a shortage of good quality, affordable housing, unacceptable levels of homelessness, and a worrying increase in social inequality. The cost-of-living crisis continues to impact the lives of residents.

In this refreshed document we reflect on our performance data, feedback from residents, staff and others, and set out the areas that we will focus on going forward. It is developed alongside our Medium-Term Financial Plan, to ensure that we invest in our priorities while securing our financial sustainability for the longer term, which is critical to ensuring we can continue to deliver vital services that our communities rely on and target investment in areas of improvement and transformation.

We know we can't do it alone. At the heart of this Council Plan is our residents, our communities, our public sector partners and our businesses. It is only together, by listening to and working in genuine partnership that we can achieve our ambitions.

Like other local authorities, our finances are impacted by more than a decade of structural underfunding and rising demand for services. To remain financially sustainable, we need to increase our efficiency, transforming the way we use data, technology and our assets. We need to invest in prevention and take some tough decisions on what we can and cannot do.

We also need to be creative and innovative, focused on our priorities, and not afraid to embrace change. Opportunities brought by AI, for example, or the devolution of power from central government, give us the scope to work with our partners to tackle the big issues facing the city. Above all, we need to be a learning organisation, one that listens to its staff and customers, that builds on its strengths, but also one that seeks out and addresses its weaknesses.

I am optimistic about the city's prospects and ambitious about what we can deliver. By remaining focused on our priorities, working with our partners and communities, I believe we can meet the challenges, seize opportunities and deliver the things that really matter to residents. We remain resolute in our commitment to delivering *A better Brighton & Hove for All*.

Jess Gibbons

Chief Executive, Brighton & Hove City Council

Outcome 1: A city to be proud of

Investing in our city

Our goal is to develop a flourishing and inclusive local economy that attracts and nurtures businesses and talent.

Developing Brighton & Hove as a place where people want to live, work, and learn

We will **celebrate our city and welcome external investment, including new employers that will create jobs for our residents**. We will also work collaboratively with partners on support for innovation to allow existing businesses to scale and access funding opportunities.

Last year we began consulting on the key issues that our **new City Plan to 2041** will seek to address. We will continue to work with residents, businesses and our partners to **shape planning policy that enhances the city's unique built and natural environment, and ensures accelerated housing delivery alongside, employment and infrastructure needs** are met as the city grows.

We will **continue to invest in our parks, allotments, sports and leisure facilities** across the city. In July 2024 we took the decision to replace the King Alfred Leisure Centre and design a new, modern facility on the existing site. We will drive this work forward, sharing designs with the local community and centre users before submitting a planning application later in 2025.

We are proud of our city's swimming offer and are investing to make our pools fit for the next generation. We plan to expand our swimming facilities to **deliver the city's first additional pool in forty years in Withdean**. We will also start work on **procuring a new leisure services management contract** that is fit for the future. We will continue to deliver our Sports Facilities Investment Plan by improving sports facilities in the East of the city, and developing plans for a further swimming pool in Moulsecoomb.

We will implement our new ambitious playing pitch strategy and **work to raise the profile of women's sport** in support of our goal to get people moving and remain one of the nation's most active cities. In 2025, we join 8 cities across the country as **hosts for the Women's Rugby World Cup**. This is a once in a generation opportunity to accelerate the growth of the game for women and girls and showcase Brighton & Hove as an international sporting city.

Growing a diverse and sustainable city economy

Devolution presents a significant opportunity to grow our city and regional economy. We will **seek to maximise the opportunity of gaining devolved powers** from central government and learn from established devolved areas. Greater Manchester, for example, is leveraging its autonomy to attract investment, talent, and innovation. This momentum has enabled the city-region to become one of Europe's fastest-growing tech cities, achieve a projected 2.2% economic growth by 2027—outpacing London – and increase employment among 16–64-year-olds from 67.8% in 2022 to 71.4% in 2023.

We will **deliver the commitments set out in the city's Economic Plan working with our partners to stimulate sustainable economic growth across the city and city region**. This includes our new city Economic Growth Board, ensuring the business voice is fully heard and engaged in council activity.

We will work with our fast-growing digital and tech sector, strengthen knowledge and innovation partnerships working with the city's two universities, embed our circular economy route map to help create a more regenerative economy as we move towards Net Zero, and work with all our education partners and employers to develop a stronger and more inclusive labour market.

We will chair and work with regional partners on the Greater Brighton Economic Board for the coming year and with our wider devolution partners to grow the economy, including **identifying and capitalising on the economic opportunities brought through devolution**. We will work with the new Mayoral authority to develop and deliver a Growth Strategy for Sussex and Brighton. We will continue to grow and support Sussex Energy aligned to our net zero ambitions outlined below.

We will begin delivery of the priorities set out in the Visitor Economy Strategy for Growth **collaborating with our private and public sector partners to raise the profile of Sussex and Brighton as a domestic and international visitor destination**.

We will review our place brand and city narrative and ensure that our corporate brand recognises our internationally recognised identity as a vibrant and welcoming city, reflects the city's diverse communities and tells our story consistently.

We will continue to recognise the importance of the culture and creatives sector in growing our economy building on the uniqueness of the city as a world-leading creative destination. We will work in partnership, seeking opportunities to develop new infrastructure and workspaces that supports the whole industry and nurtures talent, ensuring the city retains its reputation as a centre of creative business.

Promoting and protecting what makes Brighton & Hove unique

Developing our **strategic approach to the city's night-time economy** we will use the assets, planning tools and licensing policies in our gift to achieve positive change.

We will work to build on the strength of the city's successful Business Improvement District **to attract visitors to our city centre and to our smaller independent retailers.**

Protecting our seafront heritage is one of the central ambitions of our new Seafront Development Board, which will shape our vision for the 13km of coastline and encourage further investment. As well as ongoing major regeneration projects, such as Maderia Terraces, we will continue to develop innovative solutions to invest in and restore our listed Victorian seafront railing, heritage lanterns, shelters and benches. We will continue to invest in future proofing the shoreline and surrounding area from erosion and flooding, upgrading sea defences and stabilising our shingle beaches.

We will bring forward new plans to improve and develop the Brighton Centre and Brighton Town Hall, preserving our heritage while ensuring our key civic spaces are reflective of our needs and fit for the future.

Developing talent and enabling lifelong learning

To secure the long-term future of the city's libraries we will develop a Library Sustainability Plan to ensure a thriving provision of services for residents across the city. Plans include focussing our investment and revenue spend on libraries serving areas of most need, promoting Libraries Extra, which enables customers to access libraries when they are unstaffed, and extending our wide range of online services, with free access to e-books and e-audio.

Jubilee Library is one of our greatest community assets in the heart of the city. To support our ambition to bring several services together, the Adult Education Hub will relocate to the library. With £3.1 million awarded by central government, **we will also deliver new Skills Bootcamps** at the library. These will be free sector-specific courses for people aged 19 or older. The courses run for up to 16 weeks and give participants the opportunity to develop their skills with a fast-track to an interview with a local employer.

An accessible, clean, and sustainable city

Our goal is to deliver an accessible, clean, and sustainable environment that we can all be proud of.

Keeping our city clean and managing waste

The look and feel of the city is a key priority. We will continue our **focus on improving streets cleanliness and safety**, with investment in pavement repairs, new jet washers, graffiti tag removal, the removal of disused parking meters and staying on top of weeds and basal roots. **We will improve the city's waste and recycling collection service as we strive to drive down missed collections** and provide certainty to residents about the action we're taking. In 2025 **we will introduce wider recycling and a phased introduction of a new food waste collection service to the city.**

Our environmental services are undergoing a cultural reset to address discrimination, bullying and harassment within the service. Sabotage and criminality will continue to be addressed whenever it arises and the positive behaviours modelled by the vast majority of the workforce will continue to be championed and built upon. Alongside a culture change programme, we are introducing new technology to optimise our collection rounds, improving reporting systems to manage missed collections more effectively, and investing to improve the reliability of our fleet.

We will plan and seek to secure funding to deliver further infrastructure projects such as the A259 scheme, Elder Place and bring forward plans that enable us to seek funding for a new 'Station to the Sea' project to improve the appearance outside of Brighton Station, Queens Road and West Street.

Working towards carbon net zero

We will **continue with our efforts to achieve carbon net zero by taking advantage of government initiatives** such as Great British Energy, a new publicly owned company, which will deliver clean power by co-investing in leading technologies, the 'solar rooftop revolution' strategy to deliver solar power to homes, and the Warm Homes Plan that offers grants and low interest loans to support investment in insulation, solar and low carbon heating. Through a strong partnership and shared vision with Brighton & Hove Buses we will introduce more zero-emission electric buses to the city so that passengers can enjoy quieter, smoother and greener journeys as they travel in a more environmentally friendly way.

Our **work to improve energy efficiency** will enable us to meet our ambitious carbon reduction goals as well as reducing bills for our tenants and leaseholders. We will continue to invest in energy efficiency measures in council homes and complete our 3-year programme to install solar panels on 800 council homes. We will enforce energy efficiency standards in private rented housing.

We are also working to **bring in large scale private investment to help deliver some of the bigger infrastructure projects**, as well as working with UK Power Networks to ensure the city has the right grid capacity and flexibility. Having secured £2.8 million of grant funding at

the end of 2024, **we will be installing an additional 500 public electric vehicle charging points every year** for the next 3 years to expand our charging network.

We will seek to build upon our circular economy achievements through adoption of a new Route Map to continue to engage with DEFRA as one of their 'pathfinders' leading the way on **developing a more circular and regenerative economy**.

Protecting and enhancing the city's natural environment

We will continue our efforts to protect the city's trees, **updating our tree planting plan** with a focus on additional planting in areas that lack tree coverage across the City and where trees have been lost to disease and helping the city to combat climate change and biodiversity loss. We will work to improve public awareness and understanding of our tree management approach.

We will also **introduce more ways to involve members of the public and organisations** in our programmes to protect and improve our green and open spaces.

Making it easier for people to move around the city

We will develop and launch a **new ten-year strategy setting out a long-term vision for the city's transport network** and the pipeline of transport projects to deliver it. We will **continue to find ways to make parking fairer and simpler (including by reintroducing 20 parking meters)** and provide **more options for residents and visitors to travel sustainably**, using the Bus Service improvement Plan funding to increase passenger numbers and implementing and improving active travel schemes including the A259 and A23.

We will **continue work to improve the city's roads, taking a preventative approach to maintenance and resurfacing more roads while also completing increased patch repairs**. This will ensure we extend the life of our roads and reduce costs in the future. We will also **improve people's ability to report potholes and request road or pavement repairs**, with a new system to plan our work and keep our customers informed.

As a high priority, **we are introducing a pilot park and ride project in summer 2025 as proof of concept before looking for a site to introducing a permanent Park & Ride facility on the outskirts of the City** to help reduce congestion and vehicle emissions along key routes in the city. **We will expand red routes** and apply for further powers from government to enable enforcement of moving traffic offences, for example in box junctions and at school street sites.

We will **work to reinforce and improve main routes in the city, including Valley Gardens and the seafront arches supporting the A259**.

Outcome 2: A fair and inclusive city

Homes for everyone

Our goal is to deliver accessible, affordable, and high-quality homes for all residents of Brighton & Hove.

Improving housing quality

We will continue to **invest in council homes** with almost £37 million allocated to our planned and major works programmes for 2025/26. The health and safety of our residents and those who visit and work on our homes is our key priority. Following the judgement from the Regulator of Social Housing, we will continue our work to **deliver compliance and improvements in building, health and fire safety in our homes** with investment of almost £15.2 million in 2025/26. We will continue to reduce our backlog and **increase the number of routine housing repairs** completed on time.

We will continue our **work to improve standards in the private rented sector**. This includes reviewing our enforcement policies and taking a zero-tolerance approach to rogue landlords. We will review the impact of our Selective Licensing Scheme introduced in 2024 and begin the phased extension of the scheme to more wards in the city. We will prepare for the introduction of new legislation on renters' rights, including the extension of the Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector and the application of Awaab's Law. We want to ensure that all rented homes are made safe where they contain serious hazards, in particular damp and mould.

Increasing housing supply

The update of the City Plan will set out the strategic planning framework to 2041. We will use this to **set revised housing delivery targets** and to address the mix of housing that the city needs, including the need for more affordable family homes. For context, there were 6,422 on Housing Register at the end of March 2025 with 583 social housing lets in 2024/25.

We have committed in our housing strategy to **deliver at least 2,000 affordable homes** over the next 5 years. In 2025/26 we aim to deliver 418 affordable homes including 110 additional council homes. Our successful 'buy back' programme has delivered over 400 homes so far with a further 72 expected to complete this year. Work begins on our largest New Homes for Neighbourhoods Scheme to date in Moulsecoomb this year which will deliver 208 new homes. As part of our long-term programme of investment, in 2025/26 we will invest just over £50 million in creating additional council homes for the future. We will

also **create additional social housing lets by reducing under-occupancy** to make best use of available housing in the city.

We will develop a Housing Company in 2025 with the goal of improving our ability to provide decent quality temporary housing and increase housing supply.

We will continue work to **reduce the number of second homes** in the city, including the introduction of a 100% council tax premium on second homes from 1 April 2025. We will participate in a government led research project on a potential new national registration scheme and new planning use class on short term lets.

We will take forward the **refurbishment or regeneration of our 8 large panel system housing blocks** to design and create better homes with the right infrastructure for our tenants and residents for decades to come. This programme of work will be a catalyst in driving wider placemaking across our neighbourhoods and estates.

Improving housing support for residents

We will undertake a **statutory review of homelessness** in the city and develop a **new homelessness and rough sleeping strategy**, setting out our priorities for the next five years, including our aim to eradicate rough sleeping in the city.

Working with our partners in the city's Multiple Compound Needs Partnership, **we will continue to integrate our specialist homelessness, rough sleeping and homeless healthcare services.**

Faced with a 10% increase in placements in temporary accommodation in 2024/25 we aim to **reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation**, by further improving homelessness prevention as well as increasing move-on support and housing options for people placed in temporary accommodation by using data to support households at the earliest opportunity where they are at risk of becoming homeless.

We will **work with people with lived experience of homelessness** to improve our homelessness and housing options service offer. We will take forward key recommendations made in the Safe Haven by the Sea report to **improve housing solutions for domestic abuse survivors.**

We will continue to **work to improve customer satisfaction**, including satisfaction with repairs and phone and email response times. We recognise that a key part of customer satisfaction among tenants and leaseholders is knowing that we are listening to them and learning from their feedback, being proactively transparent about the safety and quality of stock as well as the quality of experience of our landlord services.

We will work to become a great landlord where tenants know that they are valued and are treated with respect; and where the staff who work with residents are empowered and have the time to be creative and kind. We will **strengthen delivery of resident focused housing services**, investing nearly £1.8 million in 2025/26 to expand and improve our tenancy services, including training frontline staff to use a psychologically informed approach and implementing a new policy to deal with hate incidents. We will continue to work to **address anti-social behaviour and improve community spaces** on our estates. We will work to **engage and involve our tenants and leaseholders**, including residents of Large Panel System blocks, as we make decisions about the future of the blocks.

We will **improve support for our most vulnerable residents and tenants** with a greater focus on early intervention and reflective practice.

We will **review and improve supported living services** including reviewing our seniors housing support model. We will deliver a new council-run supported-living scheme with 28 homes providing long-term affordable accommodation for people with physical disabilities and brain injuries. **We will prepare for the anticipated changes to supported housing standards and develop a supported housing strategy** as required under the Supported Housing (Regulatory) Oversight Act 2023.

An inclusive and fairer city

Our goal is for Brighton & Hove to be inclusive, accessible and equitable – a place where everyone can thrive.

Engagement and collaboration

We will continue to listen to and work with residents, tenants, community and voluntary sector organisations, ward councillors and our partners **using our refreshed Community Engagement Framework to ensure the varied needs of our diverse communities are reflected in our policy and services and best practice in engagement is shared across the organisation.**

We will increase participation through digital engagement and consultation, building on the development of our new engagement platform, Your Voice, and expanding how we use it to engage communities, staff and stakeholders in innovative ways.

We will **engage with our city's disabled, LGBTQ+, Black and Racially Minoritised (BRM) communities and women and girls recognising intersectionality.** We'll do this through the city's Equality & Inclusion Partnership (EQUIP), our Disability Panel and wider Reference

Group, including our Trans, Non-binary and Intersex Round Table, other partnerships and ongoing consultation and engagement with local disability and LGBTQ+, women and BRM groups. The Health Counts 2024 survey response indicates that our city has much higher numbers of Trans, Non-Binary and Intersex (TNBI) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Queer (LGBQ+) adults than previously reported in the national Census 2021. 28% of adults identify as LGBQ+ and 5% identify as TNBI. These groups also report higher rates of poor health and disability. 68% of TNBI adults and 62% of LGBQ+ adults report having a disability compared to 37% across the city. Mental health concerns are also significantly higher. 24% of adults identify as Black and Racially Minoritised and many also report higher rates of disability and mental health concerns.

We will **collaborate with our partners in city and across the wider region to drive change for the benefit of everyone in the city.** This includes making the most of opportunities such as the Devolution Priority Programme, the Local Visitor Economy Partnership and the Brighton & Hove Economic Growth Board to build greater equity through inclusive economic growth.

Fighting discrimination and embracing diversity

We will **refresh the purpose and priorities of our Equality and Inclusion partnership approach to deliver equality actions,** initiatives and strategies in the city and lead with impact.

Through our Accessible City strategy, we will **continue to embed accessibility and disability inclusion principles into how we work as an employer and service provider,** to ensure our city is welcoming, inclusive and accessible for the diverse community of people who live, work or visit Brighton & Hove. We will **put accessibility at the heart of how we think, work, design, and deliver our services** from the very start. We will aim to support all individuals we serve to have equal access to everything our city has to offer.

We will continue to work with communities to prioritise actions in our Anti-Racist strategy, particularly in our education and learning settings, to **challenge racial inequality, address racial discrimination wherever we find it and create a better, fairer and more equal city.** We will develop Black and Racially Minoritised community and voluntary sector infrastructure support.

We will work with community groups to continue to build connections and community cohesion. **We will increase participation in local decision making** through delivery of a civic leadership programme.

We will **strengthen our partnership with key third sector LGBTQ+ charities and groups** to ensure council and community priorities are aligned and that community data directly

informs our decisions and policy development. We remain committed to supporting new emerging LGBTQ+ community spaces and working to secure sustainable funding sources to ensure their long-term viability and community benefit.

We remain committed to trans inclusion, aligned to our response to the Equality and Human Rights Commission consultation and will work closely with Trans, Nonbinary and Intersex communities to develop trusted spaces for community engagement and councillor dialogue, with regular meetings established to assess and respond to community concerns.

We will **develop a new gender inclusion toolkit for council staff** as part of our broader approach to gender equity and social inclusion.

We will be **working to secure our re-accreditation as a City of Sanctuary**, delivering our City of Sanctuary action plan and reconfirming our commitment to offer sanctuary for people fleeing violence and persecution. This includes promoting our Libraries of Sanctuary and our adult education offer as inclusive and welcoming for all.

We will **continue to work to embed equality, diversity and inclusion into all council services** through our ongoing programme of Equality Impact Assessments, to ensure that decisions about changes to services and budgets consider the needs of all protected groups. We will **continue to increase the diversity of our workforce at all levels** to achieve proportionate representation of the city's communities.

Working to reduce inequality

Our Thriving Communities Investment Fund will provide **investment in the community and voluntary sector over a four-year period** from 2025 to 2029, with annual funding to be agreed through the annual budget setting process. The fund recognises the role of sector as a valued partner in supporting marginalised communities to thrive and flourish. The fund is focused on delivery of the council's four core missions and built on the principles of tackling inequality and promoting fairness.

We will continue to grow the council's new **Fairness Fund (including through third party donations) to provide financial and practical support for residents struggling with the cost-of-living crisis**. The fund will support access to nutritious, low-cost food, provide help with fuel bills, and contribute to the purchase of essential items.

We will continue our work with communities in the most deprived areas of the city to **reduce barriers to and increase residents' confidence and uptake of health and well-being services**. Our **Community Health Inequalities Programme** is being taken forward by the Healthy Communities Programme, funded until March 2026.

A city where people feel safe and welcome

Our goal is to keep people safe and to create a city that is welcoming for all.

Tackling crime and antisocial behaviour

Our Community Safety Partnership will continue to **deliver work to address serious violence and exploitation, including modern slavery and human trafficking, hate crimes and incidents and the harm they cause.**

We will **continue to address the risk of extremism and terrorism** through our multi-agency Prevent Board, working in close partnership with Police colleagues. Our Channel Panel and Adolescent Risk and Vulnerability Meetings will continue to **support people at risk of being radicalised and criminally exploited.**

With our partners in the Brighton & Hove Combatting Drugs Partnership, we will agree and implement a **new multi-agency Drug and Alcohol Strategy, to reduce drug and alcohol-related harm and crime.**

Creating safe public spaces that are accessible for all

We will **take forward our work to tackle violence against women and girls**, including establishing working groups to drive forward our new strategy. We will build collaborative working partnerships across Sussex to deliver our plans.

We will work closely with the police and the Business Improvement District to **protect the public and our town centres from antisocial behaviour, retail crime and shop theft.**

We will **develop a new Community Cohesion Strategy**, to ensure that all residents and visitors feel safe and welcome in our city.

As a leisure destination hosting events, attractions and festivals with an international profile and more than 150 community events spread across open spaces in the city, **our events programme will continue to reflect our creative, diverse and inclusive city**, and aim to enrich the lives of residents.

Outcome 3: A city that helps people to thrive

A better future for children and young people

Our goal is to keep children safe, for no child, young person or family to be left behind, and to provide high quality, inclusive, and accessible services.

Keeping children and young people safe and ensuring no child or family is left behind

We're expanding our **Mockingbird project to support foster carers and children in foster care** keeping more children with **local families**. We're also working in partnership on a **Sussex Fostering Hub** enabling **more children to remain within the local region**.

We will continue our **expansion of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision in our mainstream schools**, so children with disabilities can be better supported and achieve their potential alongside their friends. We are working on development of a children's neurodiversity plan working towards alignment with the Adult Autism Strategy. We're continuing our involvement in the **Special Educational Needs and Disability and Alternative Provision Change Programme** pilot, trialling proposed SEND reforms ensuring they support our children, their families.

We will open Rainbow Lodge, a new council run **residential home for children with complex needs, enabling them to stay in the city near their family, friends and their schools**. We are planning a new project this summer to **provide disabled children who have very high support needs with a summer holiday activity scheme**.

We will **review how the city's home to school transport arrangements can be best delivered - safely, effectively and within budget** – enabling children with disabilities to have the best experiences in their school days.

We will **seek service improvements and value for money through collaborative commissioning arrangements**. We will work with the South East Regional Care Cooperative around the children's social care market to improve placement sufficiency and achieve best value.

Developing our prevention and family support offer

Our Family Hubs Transformation Programme will continue, developing a single view of children's records to enable better multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working.

Implementing the Families First reforms to transform children's social care, creating a continuum of family help that focuses on prevention and provides the right support at the right time. Locally, this will involve integrating our Family Hubs and social work teams to provide seamless services alongside a multi-agency child protection team.

We will **develop a local youth strategy** with our partners across the city, in response to the expected national Youth Strategy. This will deliver better coordinated youth services and put young people at the heart of decision-making through development of our youth participation and engagement arrangements. **We will support the opening of new Youth Centres** in central Brighton and Hangleton and Knoll and other areas that lack youth facilities.

Supporting the provision of high quality and inclusive education from early years through to adult learning

We will **review and refresh the city's special educational needs and disability (SEND) strategy**. This will draw on evidence from a new Joint Strategic Needs Assessment focusing on special educational needs, learning disabilities and neurodiversity. It includes the latest advice and guidance on what helps pupils learn. The framework will benefit all pupils, especially those with special educational needs and disability or who are disadvantaged.

We will **keep school organisation in the city under review and work to secure schools' financial sustainability**. We will also work with school leaders to ensure a more focussed and prioritised approach. This includes **reviewing and refreshing our approach to tackling educational disadvantage** and **ensuring that school buildings are safe and fit for purpose**.

We will **continue to deliver our early-years programmes of work**, providing structured support to ensure that children have a strong start in their educational journey and are school ready at 4 years.

We will work to **enable children to receive their education locally**, avoiding the need to attend schools far from their homes, families and friends.

Working with partners to deliver ambitious employment, training and apprenticeship opportunities

With neighbouring local authorities, we will continue to **develop a Get Sussex Working plan working toward the government's goal of reducing economic inactivity and achieving an 80% long-term employment rate**. We will set immediate objectives and actions for the next 1-2 years and develop a longer-term strategic plan to enhance employment, address key challenges and utilise resources efficiently. To deliver the plan we are setting up a **Connect to Work programme** to help people with disabilities and long-term health conditions, to find and maintain employment.

Living and ageing well

Our goal is to promote and improve health and wellbeing, to reduce health inequalities, and to support people to live independent and fulfilling lives.

Enabling people to live healthy, happy and fulfilling lives

We will **improve how we offer information, advice and guidance** to help people stay healthy and independent, and to access the care and support they need. This includes **developing online information services** while also providing alternative options to best meet the diverse and changing health and wellbeing needs of people in the city. We will continue to **make our information more accessible for people with a learning disability**. We will **ensure cancer health promotion materials are appropriate and accessible** for people with learning disabilities and LGBTQ+ communities.

We will **support people to age well** and continue our work to make Brighton & Hove a **dementia friendly city**.

We will strengthen partnership working with local communities, primary care and secondary mental health services in the **recommissioning of community mental health support services for adults**. We will also continue work to **deliver our Suicide Prevention Action Plan** to reduce the risk of suicide and improve support for people affected by suicide and for people who self-harm.

We will **extend our stop smoking offer** by recruiting more people to deliver stop smoking support, making sure everyone who wants to stop smoking can access free support quickly and easily, utilising newly available government funding. And we will continue to embed targeted interventions to improve air quality in the city.

We will also publish a new Sexual Health Strategy **setting out our plans to improve sexual health and wellbeing** in the city.

The Health Counts 2024 report highlights how people living in the city's most deprived areas report poorer health than those in the least deprived areas. We will use data, including the latest Health Counts report, **to inform decisions about what services and support are needed to meet people's needs and to help us target interventions to tackle health inequalities.**

We will work with our NHS and community partners to provide **a joined-up approach to protecting the public's health**, including our response to infectious diseases and vaccination coordination.

Providing services to ensure everyone has access to the information, advice and services they need

Our adult social care services were inspected by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and we await the outcome of their assessment. We are committed to learning from this process and will use the findings to strengthen our services. This inspection is an important step in our journey of continuous improvement, and we remain focused on delivering high-quality, person-centred care for all our residents.

Providing joined up services for unpaid carers to ensure they have access to the information, advice and services they need

We will launch a new Carers Strategy with plans **to improve information and support for unpaid carers** and encourage health, social care, education and employers to strengthen and publicise their commitment to carers.

We will also work to ensure that the Carers Hub is central to reaching all carers and has dedicated pathways with key service areas, from the Social Care Assessment Services, through to the development of Integrated Community Teams, to ensure as many unpaid carers as possible become registered with the service. We will develop the Carers Card to enable easier access and extend the offers available to carers. We will also enhance the support available for carers of residents in our seniors housing schemes.

Ensuring there is safe, effective, sustainable and high-quality health and care provision in the city

We will **work closely with our NHS partners to improve health and care outcomes for our local population**. This includes a commitment to jointly commission services where this can deliver better outcomes and better value for money.

We will work with our NHS and voluntary sector partners and with local communities through our established health forums to **develop integrated community services tailored to support health and care needs in the city as set out in the Integrated Care Strategy**. This includes work with partners to co-design and implement **the new Integrated Community Teams across our local neighbourhoods and city wide for people who are homeless with multiple and complex needs**. This programme of work is informed by recommendations from an external evaluation of our pilot scheme. We will **increase opportunities for people with lived experience to help shape services**.

With our NHS partners, we will implement three new neighbourhood mental health teams across the city **to better integrate assessment, treatment and emotional wellbeing support and services** delivered across primary care, secondary care, community care and through the voluntary sector.

We will **review our support for residents in our seniors housing schemes** to increase the benefits of our service and help residents live and age well. We plan to **meet future demand for extra care housing** and care and support services for older people, maintaining their independence in self-contained accommodation wherever possible.

We will work with existing and new providers to **increase the options for community support and supported living for adults** in the city.

We will move forward with the delivery plan of our Transitions Strategy **to ensure services are in place to support young people with additional needs** as they prepare for adulthood, alongside their parents and carers.

Outcome 4: A learning council with well-run services

Our goal is to be a learning council, with responsive and well-run services, and a council that listens to its communities to deliver positive outcomes for the city.

Innovation and technology at the heart of our strategy

We will rise to the challenge of meeting growing demand for our services, ensuring they are agile and customer-responsive, and doing so within our means. We consider digital technologies, including emerging technology such as AI, to be critical in meeting this challenge and thriving as an organisation that delivers for the people we serve.

We will **research and invest in cutting-edge technologies** that deliver tangible benefits in our services for residents and help us keep our running costs low; including agentic and generative AI, predictive analytics and robotic process automation (RPA) ensuring the council's values are embedded in the way these new technologies are utilised.

We will devise a **new internal 'digital first' strategy**, placing technology at the forefront of thinking when planning our services, so that we can free up staff and resources to focus on more complex problems and on residents who most need help and support.

We will **use technology to target our most complex and time-consuming processes**. We recognise the urgency of many of our residents' needs, and we will use the opportunities technology brings to find ways of delivering quicker, more simply, and to a high standard.

Learning from our residents and other customers

We will **continue to drive customer service innovation and develop different ways for residents to access council services**, including further **enhancing face-to-face support** at libraries and in the Family Hubs.

We will offer **new features in our telephone services** including a call-back option, allowing customers to retain their place in the queue, and a feedback option to give people the chance to tell us how we did. We will also consolidate our telephone lines to make it easier for residents to reach the right service quickly and efficiently.

We will continue to **improve our website and digital service offer**. We will champion digital content design that is accessible, user-friendly, quick and easy to access, and responsive to people's needs. We are actively exploring how emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, can help us deliver a more efficient and responsive customer experience.

We will **strengthen our approach to customer handling to ensure that we offer timely and appropriate remedies when things go wrong**, using customers' feedback and community insights to monitor performance and drive innovation and service improvement.

We will **communicate timely and accurate information on how to access and use council services and opportunities to engage with the council** and our missions.

We will **learn from the people who use our services, including from people with lived experience of disadvantage and discrimination**, drawing on their insights as well as data from a range of sources including the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and population wide surveys such as Health Counts.

Transforming our ways of working

We are **transforming our organisational culture to meet our ambition to become a learning council**. We are operationalising our five pillars of a learning organisation to be: connected, confident, innovative and creative, diverse and inclusive, healthy and psychologically safe.

Our five pillars will drive our transformation to **deliver change in our ways of working and continuous improvement in our services** that's responsive to the needs of our diverse communities. We will adopt an agile and iterative, test and learn, share and grow method to

spark innovation in our services and encourage active participation from our staff, customers and communities, learning from their insights.

We will continue our work to **recruit and retain a diverse workforce at all tiers of the organisation which reflects the communities we serve and has the modern skills we need to deliver our missions**. We will embed anti-racist and neurodiversity understanding and practices with psychologically safe training and conversations to enable more effective working within our teams, partners and communities. We will monitor how we are making improvements in the development and progression of Black and Racially Minoritised staff, for example, through participation in the Workforce Race Equality Standards for our social workers.

We will **strengthen our health and safety compliance** to promote a safer working environment and practices for our staff and communities.

Information technology, digital and data remains a core area of focus to help staff to do their very best and deliver our services more effectively and efficiently. We will continue our work to get the basics right, innovate service delivery by using cutting-edge technology and harnessing the skillset of the Brighton & Hove technology and information sector. We will launch a programme of digital literacy to ensure our staff have the tools to support our residents quickly and effectively and the knowledge and skills to do this.

We will take forward a 'digital first' approach, placing technology at the forefront of thinking when planning our services, **so that we can free up staff and resources to focus on more complex problems and on residents who most need help and support**. This includes automating time-consuming processes and seeking to invest in cutting-edge technologies that deliver tangible benefits in our services for residents and help us keep our running costs low.

Ensuring good governance and financial resilience

We will **ensure that we have clear processes and structures in place and that Members are well briefed**, for example through holding all councillor briefings, attendance at Group Meetings and through a review of the overview & scrutiny process.

Changes brought by **devolution and local government reorganisation** will be a new area of focus going forward. Alongside East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council, we have successfully been enrolled on the Devolution Priority Programme. We will be preparing for creation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority and forthcoming mayoral elections in May 2026. Concurrently, we are also preparing for Local Government Reorganisation, which may see the boundaries of our authority shift. With both these major changes, we will work to ensure any decisions are evidence based and in the best interests of residents.

The council's **financial sustainability** is a critical concern due to the very low level of reserves balances. Our recent Local Government Association corporate peer challenge fed back that 'The council has very little, to no, tolerance in its financial resilience... it needs to prioritise a plan to increase the overall level of reserves at pace'. The council's external auditors noted in their annual opinion that 'a significant weakness in arrangements for financial sustainability remains'. The 2024/25 outturn position enables the council to begin to address these concerns. The target general fund reserves position will be increased to £12-15m, and our refreshed Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2025 onwards puts in place a plan to move the Council towards improved financial sustainability.

We will **develop our Innovation & Change portfolio of projects and programmes** designed to deliver our Council Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy and operationalise our Learning Framework.

We will work to ensure **best possible management of available council** resources through improved processes for managing contracts of commissioned services, ensuring greater oversight, value for money and cohesive, outcomes-based commissioning.

We will **develop our strategic asset management plan to ensure we are making best use of our land and buildings**. This will also aim to generate capital receipts to support our capital investment programme and financial strategy, supporting our work on financial sustainability. We will continue to ensure that our council buildings and schools are used effectively and creatively across the system to offer safe spaces which maximise their earning potential.

We know that our **partnerships are key to delivering for the city**. Whether that's working collaboratively to grow a diverse and sustainable economy, improving health outcomes, creating opportunities for employment and skills with our public sector partners, or developing our youth strategy. We will **continue to collaborate and utilise our strategic partnerships** such as the City Leadership Board and work with our anchor institutions and thematic partnerships to enable us to be a connected and enabling council.

Delivering a better Brighton & Hove for all – feedback on our progress

We're committed to making Brighton & Hove a better place for all. As a learning organisation, we use feedback from our residents and communities, regulators, inspectors, peers, staff and senior leadership to shape our priorities and improve services.

We continue to focus on our four strategic priorities but now looking at how we deliver them through our 5 pillars of being a learning organisation. This chapter identifies key feedback themes that are helping guide our work.

Be connected

Being a connected organisation is a key priority for our senior leadership team to develop Brighton & Hove as a place where people want to live, work and learn. Providing joined up services will ensure we deliver access to information, advice and services that people need.

Senior leaders see a clean, safe and well-maintained city as essential to attracting investment and boosting our economy. Protecting our historic, cultural and natural environment is also another tool for us to build Brighton & Hove as a key destination.

Financial sustainability remains a top priority. Our external auditors identified three major challenges in January 2025:

- Ongoing financial challenges
- Failings identified by the Regulator of Social Housing
- Issues identified by the King's Counsel investigation into CityClean (now Environmental Services)

We are actively addressing these challenges, with good progress made so far.

Our Performance Management Framework supports us to achieve our council plan outcomes by helping us to track progress and improve services. We report twice a year to the Cabinet and annually to the full Council.

Residents and other customers offered positive feedback when staff provided clear responses and resolved queries without additional complications. Customers appreciated when their queries were acknowledged and kept informed about progress of their requests. However, some community representatives asked for better tracking systems for councillor response times and better cross-department and cross-organisation communication.

We've also seen some positive trends in our data to:

- Visitor numbers increasing by 8% in 2024/25
- Improved air quality (lower Nitrogen Dioxide levels)
- 65% of homelessness prevention cases being successful
- 100% of eligible two-year-olds accessing early education places

Community groups asked for better engagement with the Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS).

Be confident

Our staff take pride in continuing to deliver vital services despite significant change and constant financial pressures. We must be agile and continue to test our approach to problems to improve as we go. Staff named over 30 achievements, including:

- Culture change work in Environmental Services
- Diverse interview panels in recruitment
- “Outstanding” Ofsted rating
- New council homes and use of sites like Brickfields
- Afghan and Ukrainian resettlement schemes
- Support for older residents in seniors housing

Ofsted rated our children’s services as Outstanding in March 2024, praising the consistent quality of work, and the positive difference this is making for children and families in the city. They noted just 2 areas for improvement around placements for children with complex needs and ensuring consent was consistently gained and recorded when referrals are received at the Front Door for Families.

Be innovative and creative

Harnessing the use of technology, especially Artificial Intelligence, offers opportunities to free up staff time and improve resident interactions. Senior leaders have prioritised strategic use of digital tools to support how we deliver a Better Brighton & Hove for all.

We know we must improve in key areas. Our data shows that last year:

- Only 27% of household waste was reused, recycled or composted last year
- While we exceeded our housing targets last year, over the past 3 years we met only 84% of the target
- Nearly 2,000 households are still in temporary accommodation, which negatively affects lives and puts additional pressure on council budgets

Community representatives said we have a strategy vs reality gap. While we have excellent strategies on paper (like our Anti-Racism and Accessible City strategies), the visible impact to communities is lacking. They requested public dashboards of Key Performance Indicator trackers to be available to track this.

Our data revealed:

- Some residents struggle to use our website
- Many want to be able to speak to helpful, empathetic and compassionate staff when issues can’t be resolved online
- Difficulties when trying to reach services by phone and complaint handling need improvement

Social housing remains a concern. A 2024 report from the Regulator of Social Housing called for significant improvements to the safety and quality of council homes. We are committed to providing safe, good quality homes and in response are investing in improvements to meet this expectation.

Be diverse and inclusive

Building a dynamic workforce and leadership that truly reflects our diverse communities will embed our vision that everyone can learn and grow.

Feedback from our staff focus group, senior leadership and community voices called for continued work to tackle inequalities, including health disparities, especially as voluntary sector closures impact marginalised groups. They asked for better safety measures for vulnerable communities (Black residents, Jewish community, LGBTQ+ individuals). This will be a key part of our Community Cohesion work and a priority area for our senior leadership.

The Local Government Association (LGA) provided us with valuable feedback from their Corporate Peer Challenge visit in April 2025. Areas of strength identified included:

- Strong leadership and committed staff
- Outstanding children's services
- Positive results from regeneration and infrastructure work
- National leadership on equality, diversity and inclusion

They recommended we:

- Strengthen our financial position
- Improve the safety and quality of council homes
- Build an organisational culture focused on learning
- Take full advantage of the opportunities brought by devolution and local government reorganisation

Be healthy and psychologically safe

Staff told us that supporting mental health and wellbeing is essential for a resilient workforce. They said that work to embed equality, diversity and inclusion was something that we should be proud of but must keep it an area of key focus.

They support ongoing efforts to transform workplace culture and asked for:

- Clear definition of what being a learning council means
- Consistency in data use and management practices
- Clear, honest communication from senior leaders
- Continued prioritisation of equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives

Senior leadership highlighted the need for a healthy city for all people. We are proud that Brighton & Hove is an active city – there were nearly 1.8 million visits to council indoor sports facilities last year.

We recently had an inspection of our adult social services by the Care Quality Commission. We will ensure that their recommendations are implemented as a future priority.