

Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

Agenda Item 24

Subject: Written questions from Councillors

Date of meeting: 10 July 2025

Report of: Director of Governance & Law

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Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

The following questions have been received from Councillors and will be taken as read along with the written answer detailed below:

1. Councillor Hill asked:

At the Annual Council meeting, Cllr Sankey stated that due to proportionality rules the Administration would get 4 out of the 4 Deputy Mayor nominations from 2023-2027. Given that Administration have two thirds of the seats, how is it proportional to have 100% control of Mayor making?

Reply from Councillor Allen, Cabinet Member for Customer Services & Public Realm:

It is appropriate and democratic for the mayor to be elected by a voting majority of Councillors at the annual council meeting.

When excluding those who have already held the distinguished position of Mayor of Brighton and Hove (as serving once has been a longer standing historic tradition than the circulation of the mayoralty under no-overall-control political situation) the eligibility reflects as follows:

Labour: 68% of eligible candidates
Green: 15% of eligible candidates
Conservative: 6% of eligible candidates
BH Independents: 4% of eligible candidates
Independent (De Oliveira): 2% of eligible candidates
Independent (Atkinson): 2% of eligible candidates
Independent (Bagaeen): 2% of eligible candidates

Therefore, Councillor Sankey was correct in her statement that the Labour Group has the legitimate claim to the position of the mayoralty from 2023/24 to 2026/27.

Brighton & Hove City Council

2. Councillor Hill asked:

Residents of mine have contacted me with concerns relating to Brighton & Hove City Council selling off the council land. Previous areas of land have been snapped up by predatory private developers, resulting in more overpriced luxury flats and little to no social housing. When will details of proposed disposals be shared publicly?

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

When sites are recommended for disposal to Cabinet consideration is given to any potential redevelopment opportunities and changes to use to not only ensure we achieve best consideration in compliance with our statutory duties, but to also explore whether sites can be used by the council to fulfil its own objectives and service provision.

It is not the case that all sites sold are done so for redevelopment and many sites are sold for their existing use to continue. This may be due to restrictions under planning policy or viability.

The council's ability to utilise a site to fulfil its own objectives and service provision may also be restricted by existing legal interests in place, for instance the council may not hold a controlling interest in the land where leases have been granted.

In terms of when details of proposed disposals can be shared publicly that will be following completion of a sale as until that point negotiations between the council and a purchaser are commercially sensitive.

3. Councillor Hill asked:

Can I confirm that there has been no report done on the suitability of the Veolia site? I do not expect there to be but for the record.

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

I believe you are referring to the retrospective report requested by the ETS committee some years ago. I can confirm that, having looking into it, no such report has been completed.

4. Councillor Hill asked:

Bad odours coming from the Hollingdean Materials Recovery Facility continue to affect residents in Round Hill. What work is being done to mitigate this given the particularly high heat this summer is likely to intensify the bad odour? I appreciate that when there are missed collections also there will be worse smells.

Brighton & Hove City Council

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

Hollingdean Material Recovery Facility (MRF) operated by Veolia, plays a crucial role in managing waste and recycling for the city. It operates in full compliance with the site's planning consent and environmental permit, which includes an odour management plan. The facility is regularly inspected by the Environment Agency and local council officers.

Veolia has made several enhancements to ensure the site operates in accordance with industry best practices. They replaced the hall doors with a model that opens and closes much faster than the previous ones. Additionally, extra odour suppression units equipped with carbon filters have been installed to help extract dust and odours from the air. These improvements complement existing measures, including priority haulage to minimise waste levels, deep cleaning of the building twice a year, proactive replacement of worn panels, and annual odour management training for site staff.

The introduction of food waste collections will significantly reduce odour, as it will be tipped directly at the composting facility and so will no longer be stored at Hollingdean.

In the meantime, if local residents notice any unpleasant odours in the air, we encourage them to contact Veolia immediately at 01273 511310. The site manager will survey the site and surrounding area to identify and address the source of the issue.

5. Councillor Hill asked:

Will Cllr Rowkins consider allowing roads with more than approximately 100 houses to opt out of using glyphosate if they have enough volunteers? Have considerations been made to allow residents to opt out a clearly designated part of a long road next year?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

As part of the review which will take place at the end of the current weeding programme, we will also consider the opt-out criteria under the current scheme, including whether we can extend the scheme to cover more locations.

6. Councillor Hill asked:

Is chalk downland considered an irreplaceable habitat for the purposes of biodiversity net gain protection? How can it be protected within the new planning framework of the planning and infrastructure bill which does not protect irreplaceable habitats?

Brighton & Hove City Council

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill will maintain the existing legal and policy protections for habitats and biodiversity. The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 193) is clear that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats should be refused. This is not being changed through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. There is a very high bar for exceptions to this rule – with proposals required to be wholly exceptional with a suitable compensation strategy.

Lowland calcareous grassland (LCG) is classified as of High Distinctiveness under Biodiversity Net Gain. This indicates the value of this habitat and any loss of LCG requires replacement (onsite or offsite) with the same habitat. This is in place to ensure that any loss of LCG is not compensated through provision of lower value habitats.

7. Councillor McLeay asked:

Residents near Valley Gardens are distressed by repeated events with open-air bars and loud music until 2am, often without proper consultation. Given the area is already well-served by licensed premises and residents have reported ongoing disruption, how can the Council justify approving such events without consultation, noise assessments, or reasonable hours? Will the Council commit to reviewing Valley Gardens as a venue for these events and ensure local voices are heard in future decisions connected with its licence?

Reply from Councillor Miller, Cabinet Member for Culture, Heritage & Tourism:

The current licence under which this space is operated, was granted under the licensing act (2004) and was advertised in the press and with roadside notices for residents to make representations.

All music played in 2025 during the May Festivals after 11.00 pm was played at a low level as background music only. And was monitored by the Environmental Health Team.

Given the feedback in 2025 the premises licences for Valley Gardens will be reviewed for 2026. The new applications will be advertised publicly and flagged at our quarterly local resident forums for comment and representation.

Discussions are taking place with residents led by myself and colleagues, to discuss the ambitions for the Level and Valley Gardens and the wider vision for the events programme. These ambitions will be referenced in the new 10yr Events Strategy due to be published by the end of 2025/26.

8. Councillor McLeay asked:

Brighton & Hove City Council

With so much of the green space along The Level and Valley Gardens used for outdoor events this and last summer, and much of that grassland deteriorating further each year - will the council consider investing in greater reinstatement works such as sprinklers and fresh lawn turf (as done at Pavilion Gardens following the ice rink) so our green spaces can return to their former glory?

Reply from Councillor Robins, Cabinet Member for Sports, Recreation & Libraries:

City Parks will continue to balance our open spaces with events usage. The council's reinstatement will take into account funding available and the continued usage of the open space by the general public. There are no plans to use sprinkler and lawn turf at the current time but reinstatement will be carried out on a case by case basis based upon inspection of the sites after events 'season' have come to a close.

9. Councillor McLeay asked:

Anti-social behaviour on New Road is escalated for a third summer, with increasing violence, drug use, and public drinking. Despite arrests and court orders, offenders return the next day, and police presence remains inconsistent. Staff safety and mental well-being in local businesses are now real concerns. Given the ongoing issues, will the Council reconsider how the space around the benches is used, such as a food market or alternative seating that prevents concealment of alcohol? How can we design out anti-social behaviour in this area, and improve the environment for all?

Reply from Councillor Allen, Cabinet Member for Customer Services & Public Realm:

Thank you for this question, Cllr McLeay. The short answer is yes – I can give you that commitment. I agree with your perspective that the situation on New Road is escalating and needs addressing.

Since early 2024 a Multi-Agency Meeting has been led by the Police with stakeholders and agencies to monitor the situation, including officers from BHCC. The MAM have been tackling some of the specific issues related to ASB. This led to funding being secured for a Police Hub to be set up on New Road in Autumn 2024 which initially had a good impact. At the recent MAM the ongoing ASB issues have continued to be discussed.

Additionally, there have been concerns expressed about the role of the long bench in encouraging/enabling the ASB. Administration members and officers have been exploring various options, and a meeting is being arranged which you and Councillor Shanks will be invited to.

I look forward to working with you on this matter. This section of public realm has massive potential which I am keen to unlock.

Brighton & Hove City Council

10. Councillor McLeay asked:

Residents living on Zion Gardens are experiencing reporting fatigue. They've logged incidents ranging from public urination and graffiti to serious assaults, but see no visible outcome from public services. At a January meeting, we were told more reports are needed before more action could be taken, but no threshold has been given. What level of reporting is required before further action is taken, and how can residents without easy access to technology or with language barriers be supported in this process? How can we make sure these reports are being logged for the reporting tally, and won't be missed?

Reply from Councillor Daniel, Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Youth Services:

At the January meeting, officers agreed to keep the situation under review, and that Police, Clarion and Community Safety would update each other upon receiving any anti-social behaviour (ASB)/ crime reports to decide if further discussion at the Joint Action Group (JAG) is needed to plan a multi-agency response. Since then, Community Safety has received a single report of ASB, shared with partners as agreed. Clarion Housing have received no further reports, and we await confirmation from Police if there are other reports received. This is not sufficient to consider further action at JAG. I recognise that this is frustrating to hear, I recognise people experience a reporting fatigue, but I sincerely urge residents to please report every time something happens as this will be the evidence base to get action.

I would encourage that when reporting ASB residents and councillors should keep a record of reference numbers relating to their reports to enable these to be followed up easily; these can also be used to link reports together.

Several properties in Zion Gardens are owned by Clarion Housing, who have a duty to support their residents in relation to ASB-related issues. Residents in Clarion-owned properties can be supported by Clarion to make reports in a way that is accessible to their needs and circumstances. Residents in privately rented or owner-occupied properties can contact the Community Safety Casework Team if they require support with reporting. We do want to make sure that incidents are reported and we want to do what we can do to make sure they feel safe to do so.

11. Councillor McLeay asked:

At January's Full Council, Cllr Rowkins confirmed a commitment to in-house waste services while being open to exploring community-led elements that could augment the existing provision. Has there been any follow-up with the former management of Magpie to discuss potential partnership? Given the continued disruption and loss of public trust caused by the long-running issues and sabotage within the council-run service, what steps is the Council taking to engage with community-focused organisations like Magpie who wish to work in partnership on improving waste services?

Brighton & Hove City Council

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

We are focused on making the lasting improvements to our collections services that residents expect and deserve, as well as continuing to expand the range of items we collect for recycling, including food waste.

The council is always open to working with community groups in the city. For example, we already support the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership, where an inclusive, safe, compliant, community base point is made available for local residents and volunteers to convert food waste into compost.

12. Councillor McLeay asked:

Local businesses face rising business rates, increased leasing costs, and a loss of income during a challenge economic climate. Many pay for their own waste collection, security, and repairs and see very little return on their investment from fees paid to BHCC. They also report a lack of support from council services when issues arise, such as flooding from blocked drains or a rise in crime. What steps is the Council taking to improve relationships with businesses, and ensure better communication and support? How will the Economic Development Plan 2024-2027 work to address the challenges faced by these independent traders? What relief options are available when businesses can't operate due to damaged city infrastructure very much out of their control?

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

Business Rates is a national tax, not a local one, with the council retaining 49% of the charge. In respect of businesses that have been impacted by events such as flooding, we are limited to the reliefs/exemptions that have been prescribed. We can award hardship fund and we consider all applications that we receive.

Independent businesses are a vital part of the city's economy. We recognise that, although our economy has grown significantly by certain measures, it remains a challenging time for many of our small businesses. This is clearly understood and where we are able to, we want to work with businesses to support. The Economic Plan identifies the need to innovate, adapt and reposition Brighton & Hove for future opportunities whilst consolidating our key sectors, as well as emerging strengths.

We provide the Business & Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC), based at Jubilee Library, which is a free service for businesses of any lifestage (including pre-starts). It provides 121 expert advice and access to a wealth of free information.

We have also now set up the Brighton & Hove Growth Hub, which is primarily a digital service for scale-up businesses. This will link with the new national

Brighton & Hove City Council

Business Growth Service that will be launching later this summer – and will make it easier for businesses to access support information.

13. Councillor Pickett asked:

With reference to the recent Casey report findings, it recommends that the use of out-of-town taxis should be limited for under 16s to enable better safeguarding. When will the council be likely to start implementing these recommendations?

Reply from Councillor McGregor, Chair of Licensing Committee

Regarding the Casey report and its recommendation to limit the use of out-of-town taxis for under-16s as a safeguarding measure. Brighton & Hove City Council takes the safeguarding of children and young people extremely seriously and has already implemented a number of robust measures in this area.

All drivers operating on home-to-school transport contracts are required to complete additional compulsory safeguarding training. This training is delivered through the Brighton & Hove Learning Zone and consists of 10 comprehensive modules designed to ensure drivers are fully equipped to support and protect the young people in their care.

Furthermore, all school transport routes are equipped with CCTV systems that include audio recording, providing an additional layer of safety and accountability. Operators and drivers must also comply fully with the council's 'Blue Book'—our licensing handbook—which sets out strict standards for conduct, vehicle safety, and safeguarding responsibilities.

We are also awaiting further guidance from department of transport, particularly around national licensing reforms.

In the meantime, the licensing team, home to school transport teams and safeguarding partners work closely together along with the local taxi trade to ensure the highest possible standards of safety for young people in our city. Councillors will be kept informed as this work progresses and as any new measures are proposed or adopted.

14. Councillor Pickett asked:

The street opt-out scheme for residents who do not want glyphosate on their streets has failed to stop this happening on certain streets. Can Cllr Rowkins reassure residents that this will not happen again and can he explain what measures will be put in place to make sure?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

Brighton & Hove City Council

One street that was part of the opt out scheme was treated by our contractor in error. A second was started but stopped after a few metres once the operative realised the error.

To prevent this from happening again, we will be making several improvements to the street opt-out scheme. Firstly, the application submission period will be moved to start a month earlier than before, providing residents with additional time to submit their requests. Similarly, the closing date for applications will also be moved a month earlier, allowing for more thorough administration and review of each application.

These changes are designed to minimise the risk of errors and to ensure that residents' preferences are accurately recorded and respected. Additionally, all data collected from the opt-out applications will be passed to the contractor well in advance of the treatment schedule. This will enable better planning and communication, reducing the likelihood of unintended treatment on streets where residents have opted out.

15. Councillor Pickett asked:

With the knowledge that the council is failing to uphold its obligation to provide equality of access for disabled residents and visitors trying to use Preston Park train station and others in the city, when will the council use its power to request that Network Rail provide lifts?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

Thank you for your question, Cllr Pickett. Access to all to all the train stations in our city is very important. This is why I have consistently raised our concerns as an administration directly with Network Rail and Govia Thames Link at every opportunity. This priority reflects our invite to Network Rail to the Transport and Travel Partnership, with Network Rail now attending routinely at these partnership meetings.

The Council acknowledges that it does not possess the authority to carry out direct changes or works on land owned by Network Rail. However, accessibility and equalities issues at Preston Park Station have been raised and recognised as a priority, particularly in recent discussions held at the Transport Partnership meeting. Most recently, I met with Network Rail last Friday (5th July) to specially focus on improving and enabling access at Preston Park Station.

Network Rail advise that such improvements at Preston Park are not included in their present 5-year capital investment plan from 2024 to 2029. However, in response to these concerns, officers and Councillors are proactively engage with Network Rail. We have highlighted the urgency and significance of these matters, with a strong emphasis on the need to enhance accessibility and inclusivity at the station. We have discussed ways that developer contributions could be used to support a business case to bring this into their

Brighton & Hove City Council

capital programme. As a minimum, I will ask officers to pursue funds for a feasibility report for improved access at both Preston Park Station and Hove Station.

The Council remains committed to championing equal access across the city's transport network and will continue to work in partnership with relevant organisations to encourage Network Rail to take meaningful and timely action in addressing these important concerns.

16. Councillor Pickett asked:

Brighton & Hove taxis follow the rules of the Blue Book. This means that they have to follow the strict rules of updating their vehicles once they reach a certain age. However, other cities and towns do not impose such strict rules. This means that it is more costly for B&H drivers and they have to charge more to get some recompense and cannot compete with outside tenders on an equal basis. What can be done to help these drivers find parity and an equal basis when tendering for jobs?

Reply from Councillor McGregor, Chair of Licensing Committee:

We are aware of variance of approaches across local authorities, and the Blue Book is a BHCC specific document.

There are several important considerations:

Safety Standards: Older vehicles may not meet the same safety benchmarks as newer models, potentially putting passengers at greater risk.

Environmental Impact: Allowing older vehicles could undermine our city's clean air and climate commitments.

It is also worth noting that Brighton & Hove Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV) are permitted to charge 1.5 times the metered rate when carrying five or more passengers during private hire work. This policy helps offset the higher purchase and maintenance costs associated with WAVs.

However, we recognise that Brighton & Hove drivers face a competitive disadvantage when bidding for contracts against operators from areas with less stringent licensing requirements.

While operational flexibility is important, maintaining high standards ensures public safety, environmental responsibility, and fairness for all operators. We remain committed to supporting our licensed drivers and ensuring they can compete on an equal footing.

17. Councillor Pickett asked:

Brighton & Hove City Council

With the extra air quality monitoring systems in place around the city, when will the council make the results of these tests available and what is the plan once the results have been analysed?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

The monitoring network provides realtime readings that are publicly available at all times, including graphs showing trends across a range of pollutants. You can view the network here:

[Brighton & Hove and Sussex | EarthSense](#)

The forty sensors situated in Brighton & Hove, measure nitric oxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone and particulate matter as well as providing ambient measurements for temperature, pressure and relative humidity.

Our current annual status report for Air quality in Brighton and Hove is going through its final checks and will be released to Councillors once reviewed. The normal schedule is for the report to be in the public domain from mid-July.

One aspect of the report is to review, refresh and update our current air quality action plan list of measures running to 2027. This drills down on a suite of interventions to support our aims of improving air quality. The annual report presents gas and particle results from long term monitoring; regulatory standard automatic analyser and diffusion tubes.

18. Councillor Pickett asked:

Whilst I am aware that the council has an issue finding enough properties to house people in, does the council condone the use of unsuitable accommodation (eg excessive mould during winter months that causes respiratory issues,) for families when they know it could affect the health of that family?

Reply from Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing:

Thank you for your question. The council does not condone the use of unsuitable accommodation, especially where it may impact health. However, we are operating within the context of a national housing crisis, with a record number of households in temporary accommodation and thousands more on the housing register. Demand significantly outstrips supply, and while we are committed to building new homes, this takes time.

Our primary focus is on preventing homelessness wherever possible, through early intervention and support. When prevention isn't possible, we aim to offer suitable accommodation, but the shortage of available properties means this isn't always achievable immediately. We recognise the serious concerns

Brighton & Hove City Council

around property conditions, such as mould, and work with landlords and housing providers to address these issues swiftly.

We remain committed to improving housing standards and increasing the availability of safe, secure homes for all.

19. Councillor Pickett asked:

Having signed up to Zane's Law in 2024, will the council ensure that if the Gasworks redevelopment planning appeal is accepted, that the council will follow the principles of Zane's Law to ensure that remediation of the land is properly and safely carried out, thus protecting those living in the nearby vicinity?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

The appeal against the refusal of the Gas Works application is yet to be heard. The matter was discussed extensively during the planning committee when the application was refused. The officer report to committee included a number of conditions regarding remediation of the site and these were recommended to the Inspector as part of the appeal. It will be for the Planning Inspectorate when determining the appeal to decide what conditions will be attached to the decision, if the application is approved.

If it is approved, the council will have no recourse to require any measures not set out as conditions by the Planning Inspectorate.

20. Councillor Pickett asked:

With regard to the new 28 day rule that now includes event build and breakdown when will we be given clarity on how that will affect events in Brighton & Hove?

Reply from Councillor Miller, Cabinet Member for Culture, Heritage & Tourism:

The "28-day rule" is a planning regulation that allows land to be used for temporary events or activities for up to 28 days in a calendar year without needing planning permission. This rule is part of the permitted development rights, meaning it's an automatic right to use land for certain temporary purposes.

In Summer 2025, there was a court case brought in London, to establish whether the 28 days needed to also include the build and take down days. It was found that it should, and therefore if the full events period extends beyond 28 days, planning will be required.

Brighton & Hove City Council

Therefore, from 2026 onwards, for all sites where there is an events programme proposed, if the total period required exceeds the 28 days to include build and break activity, this will be subject to a planning application.

21. Councillor Pickett asked:

Nationally, statistics are on the rise for child deaths for those housed in temporary accommodation. How does Brighton & Hove fare with regard to these statistics and what is the council doing to ensure the safety of these children?

Reply from Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing:

Thank you for your question. Brighton & Hove City Council is deeply aware of the national rise in child deaths in temporary accommodation. Nationally, 80 children died in such settings between October 2023 and September 2024. Thankfully, there have been no recorded child deaths in temporary accommodation in Brighton & Hove over the past year.

We take the safety of children extremely seriously. All placements are subject to strict suitability checks, and families are only placed in bed and breakfast accommodation in emergencies and never beyond six weeks. Our housing teams provide tailored support, including access to mental health, wellbeing, and safeguarding services.

We are preparing for the implementation of Awaab's Law, which will enhance our ability to address hazards like damp and mould swiftly. In parallel, we are investing in long-term solutions, including a council-owned housing company and innovative move-on schemes.

22. Councillor Shanks asked:

Why do non-administration councillors only receive information via council press releases? How can we be kept informed of decisions for example closure of tennis courts at Withdean, housing development in Hove

Reply from Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council & Cabinet Chair:

It is incorrect to say that non-administration councillors only receive information via press releases. The Administration has initiated a system of All Cllr Briefings that officers have put in place to support them in fulfilling their responsibilities to keep all councillors informed of key developments - indeed there is one taking place this week on the refreshed Council Plan and corporate peer challenge, and another one planned shortly on local government reorganisation. This is in addition to All Councillor written Briefings that provide regular updates, and the involvement of ward Cllrs in decisions that impact their wards. It is however not appropriate nor possible for opposition councillors to be involved or alerted to every decision or development before it is announced – this is a huge organisation delivering hundreds of services - and it must be allowed to operate effectively without

Brighton & Hove City Council

grinding to a halt. Specific issues should be raised with officers and will be responded to, as has happened recently with the decision to pause the final decision on padel courts at Withdean to further engage with local tennis and padel players.

23. Councillor Shanks asked:

Why were trees allowed to die and are still dying at Hove Beach Park? Will the council ensure adequate watering of park trees throughout the city in the summer months? Have volunteer waterers been considered?

Reply from Councillor Robins, Cabinet Member for Sports, Recreation & Libraries:

The park, including the trees, is currently being managed by our contractor according to a landscape environmental management plan developed as part of the landscape design. Clearly it is very disappointing to see that the trees have not been managed effectively, and we are addressing this with the contractor.

All trees at Hove Beach Park are regularly assessed and any dead ones will be replaced in the next tree planting season at the contractor's expense. Our project team have identified factors contributing to the trees' failure and measures will be put in place to avoid this happening again in the future.

As the contract has provision for adequate watering for the trees we have not considered volunteer waterers at this time.

24. Councillor Shanks asked:

Why was there no consultation with users and the public about closure of the indoor tennis courts at Withdean stadium? This was a citywide resource and used by residents in my ward. What other indoor tennis is available?

Reply from Councillor Robins, Cabinet Member for Sports, Recreation & Libraries:

There was a communications and engagement plan in train, which couldn't be implemented as planned, due to information being shared with/picked up by the press – we acknowledge that this was unfortunate and would not have been the preference of the council. I can however confirm that the council, along with its leisure operator Freedom Leisure will shortly be inviting tennis players along to a meeting in the next fortnight to further engage with them; to listen to their concerns and to share information about the opportunities for the tennis programme and academy, both at Withdean and across our other leisure sites.

We will listen to concerns and respond in the near future having taken time to consider information shared with us.

Brighton & Hove City Council

Whilst there are no indoor tennis courts available there are high amounts of outdoor tennis courts available across the city. All aspects of the potential change will be considered on balance.

25. Councillor Shanks asked:

The government has announced that Healthwatch bodies are to be dismantled and not funded. Will the administration join with me in protesting about this destruction of a very valuable resource for residents in terms of support and research?

Reply from Councillor Allen, Cabinet Member for Customer Services & Public Realm:

The decision to dissolve Healthwatch, which provides opportunities to hear the patient and public voice in the oversight of health care services, forms part of new central government policy to streamline the regulation and oversight of healthcare services in England alongside around 200 potential other organisations.

The view from government is that we currently have an overly complex system of healthcare regulation and governance. The intention behind the reforms is to reduce duplication in this part of the NHS and invest money into frontline healthcare, which Matthew Taylor, the chief executive of the NHS Confederation, which represents providers of health services, has welcomed. Legislative changes will be required to effect this change.

Until that happens, Healthwatch in Brighton & Hove remains committed to gathering the patient and public voice, offering information and signposting support, and undertaking projects in the same dedicated way.

26. Councillor Sykes asked:

Concerning the UC and PIP Bill, can the Administration share its assessment of the impact of the amended Bill on sick and disabled claimants in our city, and of the indirect impact on council and NHS services of the expected cuts?

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

It is not possible to assess the impact of the amended Bill until the Timms review has reported. But we welcome the Timms review and the consultation and coproduction with disabled people. And we welcome several of the positive reforms that remain in the Bill such as an increase to the standard UC rate and greater investment in employment support.

27. Councillor Sykes asked:

Residents in Brunswick and Adelaide have reported cracks in their building on Western Road and that this may be associated with heavy vehicle traffic and a

Brighton & Hove City Council

degraded road surface. This could result in claims against the council. Is the possibility of claims for damage to private buildings considered in the way roads are prioritised for resurfacing?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

Thank you for your question, Cllr Sykes. Safety improvements to Western Road are a priority.

The Council were aware of the rocking concrete slab, and this was stabilised and repairs carried out. However, we recognise concerns about the condition of Western Road and the movement of traffic. There is more to do to improve the road surface, traffic flow and dedicated loading for businesses along Western Road and address persistent illegal parking and resultant double parking for deliveries and access leading to further concerns about vehicle movement an impact on the road surface and resultant risk of serious injury or worse to pedestrians, cyclists and others. This is why we recognise the need to act.

In terms of nearby structures, we do not have access to any data that would specifically allow us to prioritise roads in this way and it would be difficult to evidence whether or not road condition has had any direct impact in this instance. However, we do carry out a detailed value management process that allows us to prioritise the limited funds in order to make the best decisions for the network as a whole. The aim is to carry out the right treatment, on the right road, at the right time but we must also work within the budgets that are available.

Nonetheless, Western Road has been identified for further road strengthening as part of Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and these works are currently being designed and programmed for later in the year this is subject to coordination with the Red Routes programme of works. As a Council, we are committed to a co-design approach with traders and residents ahead of the formal consultation on the design.

28. Councillor Sykes asked:

As council resources diminish, we are increasingly reliant on local 'Friends Of' groups to help keep our city centre green spaces looking good. However, barriers to the involvement of these groups remain. What steps will the Administration take to enable both sides to get the most from these relationships?

Reply from Councillor Robins, Cabinet Member for Sports, Recreation & Libraries:

Council resources are not diminishing, but demand for our services has grown following 14 years of previous governemnt's managed decline. We are also paying millions of pounds each year to service the Greens i360 debt.

Brighton & Hove City Council

We are currently producing a volunteer policy to assist the council and friends of groups/volunteers with best ways we can work together. We are looking to ensure we limit barriers but at the same time meet our statutory H&S requirements. We hope the policy will clearly set out what we can achieve with volunteers.

29. Councillor West asked:

The cabinet member for Transport, when addressing the cabinet report on the Local transport Plan in April, answered my question about the dangerous state of the road surface of Ditchling Road between Viaduct Road to Fiveways, stating that it will be re-laid. When might we expect that important road safety work to actually happen?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

Thank you for your question, Cllr West. We recognise that the road surface of Ditchling Road between Viaduct Road to Fiveways need to be re-laid. The condition of the road is such that this has been identified as a priority within our capital delivery programme for highways maintenance for our city.

Subject to final confirmation of the road space being booked and permits in place, the resurfacing of this section of Ditchling Road is provisionally booked for next week between 16th - 18th of July. Prior to carrying out resurfacing we must coordinate with utility companies and other works to ensure the impact on the network can be managed effectively. This means that some dates are subject to change.

Further, we have set up a new page on our website where we will provide updates on the planned maintenance programme. As soon as dates are confirmed, they will be available to view on this page. We will also notify directly ward members, affected frontages – local business and residents – and communicate on social media.

30. Councillor West asked:

The impact of the recent fire at the Pines, which traumatised and displaced neighbouring residents, caused serious damage to property and personal cost. Given neighbours' expressed concerns previously there are questions over the adequacy of tenancy management. Residents and ward councillors are grateful to the phalanx of officers who attended a packed residents meeting in May, and for the follow-up actions now being undertaken. However, given the very serious nature of the situation, and need for quick and clear answers, why was the cabinet member not in attendance at the meeting nor seemingly engaging in the correspondence? Cabinet members have a significant leadership role to play and residents need to be reassured by seeing the hands-on involvement of the cabinet member ensuring officers

Brighton & Hove City Council

are giving their very best focus to all questions and concerns, and progressing renovations and improvements to security and safety at pace.

Reply from Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing:

Thank you for your question regarding the recent fire and concerns about tenancy management and leadership visibility.

Following the incident at The Pines, Brighton & Hove City Council officers attended a well-attended residents' meeting to hear concerns and outline immediate follow-up actions. These included support for affected residents, property repairs, and steps to improve safety and security.

The Cabinet Member had been fully briefed and remain engaged through internal channels. Officers led the operational responses and were present to listen, respond, and act to resident's need.

31. Councillor West asked:

Businesses in New England House provide hundreds of jobs and contribute crucial services to the creative, cultural and digital sectors. The internal audit requested by the Council's CEO has revealed fire safety concerns have been known about by senior council officers since July 2020. However, it appears those concerns were only made known to council members and tenants late last year. Businesses are now having to hastily leave so safety work may be carried out. Alternative light industrial premises are scarce and slow to procure. Business interruption and relocation costs are severely impacting financial viability. If the safety problems had been acted upon sooner, different outcomes may have been possible. Does the cabinet member accept that the council has neglected its duties to its tenants and should not leave them to shoulder the consequences. Will he agree to fully compensate businesses for the cost of the impact of their displacement?

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

The speed of the closure and uncertainty it has generated for businesses has been difficult for all New England House tenants and the internal audit shows the council has fallen short of the standards we set for ourselves as an organisation. There are clear lessons to be learned, and measures are now in place so nothing like this should happen again.

The term of most New England House leases allowed the Council to give tenants either 1 or 3 months' notice to leave the premises. We have already put forward a more generous compensation package than legally required under the terms of most leases, allowing tenants to remain in the building for 6 months' rent free, without paying service charges for the last 3 months, and providing an allowance towards moving costs. We are in negotiation with a small number of tenants in specific circumstances who have suffered a higher level of loss and are committed to supporting them fully. However, we must

Brighton & Hove City Council

weigh up the fact that all payments to tenants are payable out of the public purse and so are not looking to review the compensation package already on offer.

32. Councillor West asked:

For a second year the chief internal auditor was only able to provide partial assurance of the adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and internal control for the year 2024-25. Expressing particular concern over a number of key financial and corporate systems that relate to strategic risks, the chief auditor states that prompt and robust action is required to address findings. Capacity challenges and service resilience have been raised in several areas by management. It is notable that there has been an increase in actions not implemented by their due date. At AS&GP committee, Cllr Taylor acknowledged the reported concerns are serious and worrying and stated that improvements are being made that will address this. Given the continuation of Government austerity, what concrete measures are Cabinet taking to ensure this trend of decline will be reversed by the next annual audit report.

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

Cabinet are taking this position very seriously, as are CLT, who receive regular updates on audit actions being implemented and follow up to partial assurance audits.

33. Councillor West asked:

The presence of the unofficial memorial set up in Palmeira Square in November 2023 is causing community tensions. I understand the Council had taken the view that the memorial was temporary, yet it has now been present for 20 months. What is the current view taken by the administration of the status of the memorial and what is its intention regarding potentially removing or relocating it?

Reply from Councillor Allen, Cabinet Member for Customer Services & Public Realm:

The Labour Administration cares deeply about the impact of international conflicts on our communities across Brighton & Hove. The devastating events that continue to occur in the Middle East is impacting very directly on many communities and individuals.

Our parks and open spaces are for the enjoyment of the whole community, and we are committed to ensuring that these spaces are inclusive for all residents.

Whilst the installation of the very small temporary memorial at Palmeria Square was spontaneous and permission was not sought from the council, we

Brighton & Hove City Council

recognise that it is focused on victims and hostages of October 7th. There are vigils nightly and the organisers have complied with every request in terms of removing any potential hazards.

As part of our learning from these discussions, we are preparing a new memorial policy outlining what can and can't be tolerated in public spaces, and how communities should work with us going forwards. This new policy, that we will consult communities on, will support our approach in the future and help us take a sensitive approach working in partnership with those impacted, and as a city of sanctuary where everyone feels safe and welcome.

34. Councillor West asked:

What is the estimated impact of the recent Government announcement of changes to funding formula upon the funding the Council will receive from 2026?

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

We are still working through the implications of the changes to the funding formula. An initial assessment will be included in an upcoming MTFS report (going to Cabinet).

35. Councillor West asked:

It is good to see the long awaited improvements to cycle lanes along the A23, north of Preston Circus, are finally being rolled out. The project commenced under the former administration which developed and consulted upon the designs. It is disappointing then to find that the surfacing of the lanes are not being laid sufficiently smoothly resulting in a very bumpy and arduous ride. Can the Transport lead please explain if he has inspected the build quality and whether he is challenging contractors over the sub-standard running surface?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Youth Services:

Thank you, Cllr West, for your question. As an administrator, we are proud to have delivered this upgraded walking and cycling route to help make the area safer and more pleasant for cyclists, pedestrians and all road users.

Although nearing completion, these works are in construction. During construction, the contractor is closely supervised by council officers who regularly attend site. The quality of work is reviewed as work progresses and any issues raised formally through the contract management process. The construction is now largely complete; however, as this project is still 'in contract', the work will be reviewed and any defects raised with the contractor as is normal for a project like this.

Brighton & Hove City Council

More broadly, the scheme will be subject to a post-completion Road Safety Audit and is due to be reviewed by Active Travel England. We will act on any feedback received.

Where cycle lanes are level with the road or particularly wide, it is more practical to use machines to get the smoothest of surfaces. The design in this case is different and the surface was laid by hand. Where it is not acceptable, the surface would need to be re-laid or further work to improve. We will listen to feedback and follow through based on the assessment made to date, officers will take action as warranted based on their assessment of cycling and walking conditions for the completed sections of the route.

We hope pedestrians, cyclists and all road users will appreciate the improvement this scheme has brought to this important route.

36. Councillor West asked:

The Administration have abandoned No Mow May, increased the frequency of verge mowing, and called a halt to the beneficial rewilding of some larger verges which for the past decade were only receiving a single annual cut each autumn. How much more fossil fuel is being consumed, and how much more CO2 is being emitted, in this war on nature as the Administration drive to make these wildlife habitats neat and tidy? How does this approach sit with the Council meeting its agreed Net Zero and Biodiversity goals, ambitions I know the Cabinet member says he is keen to champion?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

We have not abandoned No Mow May. Instead, we have adopted a more nuanced and targeted approach that recognises that it may not be appropriate to treat everywhere in the same way.

There has also not been any halting of the rewilding of larger verges. In fact, we are expanding these, with a number of new Wilder Verges to be announced imminently and the council supporting a new wildflower meadow project in Woodingdean.

Not all verges are equal. Some, if allowed to grow for longer periods, can see a significant increase in biodiversity, while others do not. There are multiple considerations such as the grass species present, as well as safety and sightlines and underground utilities. The views of local residents are also important.

The most significant enhancements in biodiversity largely rely on “cut & collect” maintenance regimes, which are of course extremely challenging to manage on a city scale with the resources available to the council. Without this cut & collect regime, the impact on biodiversity of leaving verges to grow

Brighton & Hove City Council

in the spring is very small and leads to complaints from residents, not least when the extra-long cut grass is strewn about all over the streets.

What we are interested in is properly managed, focused biodiversity sites rather than just allowing everything everywhere to grow wild and assuming it's a good thing. Working with the Brighton and Hove Wildlife Forum we continue to survey potential verges that could be added into the Wilder Verges scheme. The emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy will provide additional opportunities and direction for increasing biodiversity in urban areas, including on roadside verges.

Finally, the parks team will continue to invest in battery operated equipment where feasible to assist in CO2 reduction.

37. Councillor West asked:

By any measure an exam score of 54% is not regarded as a great accomplishment. While the Carbon Disclosure Project may have put Brighton & Hove among only 62 councils to score over 50%, isn't this in fact a reflection of the consequential failure of successive UK governments, to take seriously the need to invest at sufficient scale and pace in measures to arrest climate change?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

I would ask Cllr West to retract his comment. Has he considered the impact of rubbishing an exam score of 54% on the students of this City that receive such scores. I would urge him to reflect and retract.

I believe you are conflating 2 different external assessments of our leadership on climate action.

Brighton & Hove City Council has been rated 'A' by the Carbon Disclosure Project for the second year in a row, one of only 48 of cities in Europe to have received this rating.

We were also awarded 55% overall by Climate Emergency UK in their Climate Action Scorecards, which puts us in the top 10% of UK councils.

The scorecards rate councils on several areas including buildings and heating, transport, planning and land use and waste reduction. We scored 87% for our work to improve energy efficiency and decarbonisation – one of the best in the country.

The scores were awarded for 2024, when the council published the city's first Decarbonisation Pathways Study – an evidence base and data set without which decarbonising the city would be impossible. To this day, I remain incredulous that this was not in place before we were elected and that we have been forced to make up for lost time.

Brighton & Hove City Council

I realise it must be uncomfortable for you to see these external organisations confirm that our Labour administration is outperforming the former Green council on climate leadership and action, but it does seem a little desperate to suggest that the score is in fact low, despite the fact that these judgements make clear that we are outperforming the vast majority of other cities globally and indeed have plans to do much more.

38. Councillor West asked:

The external auditor has flagged up some 1,600 legal claims arising from potential gender pay inequality as a financial risk to the council going forward. Should these claims succeed, they could put the council at risk of having to issue a section 114 notice – effectively a bankruptcy notice – if it was unable to meet its financial liabilities. The auditor's report also said that "the council considers that the claims are defensible and has commissioned external legal advice to undertake detailed analysis and advise the council on potential defences or any potential risks they may pose. This process is likely to take at least two years." In the meantime, what financial provision does the Cabinet member feel it is prudent to be making in case the legal opinion proves unsupportive of the council's case and for the possibility that the council might lose?

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

This was answered at the Audit and Standards Committee. Please refer to the minutes, or video playback, or your own committee.

39. Councillor Goldsmith asked:

A high number of residents in the city centre have been complaining to myself and colleagues about the level of noise from motorbikes keeping them awake very late at night. What will the council do to tackle this anti-social behaviour? There was a trial in other councils for noise cameras – will the administration lobby the government to allow us to introduce these here and see if it improves the lives of these residents?

Reply from Councillor Daniel, Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Youth Services:

This has slightly complicated regulations and I recognise that this is frustrating. I, too, am highly aggravated by loud vehicles too. The Environmental Protection team are unable to intervene under the Environment Act 1990 for vehicle noise, unless the alleged noise nuisance is linked to stationary vehicles. The Police reform act 2002 gives the police power to take action against drivers causing alarm, distress, or annoyance through their vehicle's noise. The council is aware of the Department for Transport (DfT) trial of noise camera technology to understand if it can be used to automatically detect when vehicles are excessively noisy. Environmental

Brighton & Hove City Council

Protection will look to approach the Department for Transport, following the trial to review and report to Members once the trials findings have been reviewed further. There is no current timescale for this action but officers will provide an update as soon as possible. It would be fantastic if we can use this technology going forward.

40. Councillor Goldsmith asked:

A camper van has been repeatedly parking on the grass in Regency Square since last summer, visiting almost every weekend when it's warm. This has understandably upset residents with this selfish behaviour, and is preventing others from using the square. The council has told residents it cannot fine the vehicle under current powers. Will the administration urgently investigate how No Parking signs could be installed, even temporarily, to allow our enforcement officers to fine this vehicle as a deterrent, while suitable long-term solutions are developed? The current inaction is simply not good enough for local residents.

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

Thank you for your question, Cllr Goldsmith. I am aware of this repetition of this camper van arriving at Regency Square despite action to serve notice to the owners.

From a parking perspective, we are currently unable to issue a fine against the vehicle as it is not parked on the public highways. We are pursuing all legal avenues to address this behaviour, however in order to issue any fine or penalty we need to know the owner of the vehicle. The vehicle is still registered to the deceased previous owner, with the new owner not transferring registration to themselves. Signage would not alleviate the situation, nor enable us to issue fines. Once we have the name of the person we can look at issuing a Community Protection Notice (CPN). In order to issue a CPN we must first issue a warning letter, if the behaviour persists, we can then issue a CPN, failure to comply with a CPN is a criminal offence under Section 48 of the ASBCPA 2014. The following sanctions are available:

- Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) of up to £100
- Remedial Action
- Prosecution

We are actively working with Sussex Police to identify the owner of the vehicle. We ask that residents continue to call the vehicle in on 101 in order to ensure the evidence for the CPN is collated and to enable Sussex Police to respond to the vehicle.

I understand the frustration that this continues to cause local residents and I am very keen to see a coordinated approach from Council teams and Sussex Police to see the measures set out here acted upon.

Brighton & Hove City Council

41. Councillor Goldsmith asked:

Related to my previous question – like many squares in the city, Regency Square had its railings removed during WWII, but unlike most others, it has never had them restored. There have been previous plans developed for the regeneration of the square, which included restoring the railings, but nothing has happened. Will the administration please work with Regency Squares Community and ward councillors on a plan to restore these railings? It would be a much-wanted improvement to the square, restoring some of its history, while also preventing the selfish behaviour we have seen with parking on the grass.

Reply from Councillor Allen, Cabinet Member for Customer Services & Public Realm:

We are open to this positive addition and will prioritise amongst other projects which are currently being managed subject to staff resource, funding becoming available and wider consultation. This may be a project you would wish to allocate some of your Neighbourhood CIL funds towards.

42. Councillor Goldsmith asked:

I have had residents and businesses alike complain to me that, when there are noise complaints out of hours and over weekends, there are no council services available to help. Noise diaries are all well and good, but when no enforcement happens and residents are struggling with loud music into the early hours of the morning, or performers playing at such high volumes over the weekend that they are disturbing local businesses, there is nobody then can call to solve the problem there and then. What can the administration do to better help these residents and businesses?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

The Environmental Protection team will investigate concerns reported by residents and local businesses. After receiving the initial complaint one of our officers will make contact to discuss the nature and basis of the complaint. To establish if the event was a one-off incident, which wouldn't normally be actionable under statutory nuisance legislation, the officer would need to gather further information, such as asking a complainant to keep a noise diary for a short period of time. Information received on the diary may require further investigation, normally using a manually operated recording device, to attempt to capture evidence of the alleged noise, or by officers attending to witness the alleged noise nuisance and making a subjective assessment. We will also accept reports and footage of incidents to enable our officers to follow up on any complaints during times outside office hours. Visits outside normal working hours can be arranged if necessary. The Regulatory Services enforcement policy sets out graduated steps to enforcement up to formal

Brighton & Hove City Council

actions such as, the service of a noise abatement notice or Community Protection Warning.

Setting up an out-of-hours rapid response team to visit the locations where complaints are received would present a very significant cost to the council and it is not something we are currently considering as a priority.

43. Councillor McNair asked:

Around half the exterior lights in blocks 2-24 and 26-60, Bramble Way, have not been fixed for months. One or two lights are on all day but not at night. When will they be fixed? Many exterior lights on other blocks across Bramble Way do not work either. No one seems to have checked the lights at nighttime. This problem has been raised by residents and councillors repeatedly yet has not been resolved. Residents should not have to walk around in the pitch dark – it is a serious safety risk.

Reply from Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing:

Thank you for your question. The safety of our residents and those who visit and work on our homes is our priority.

I am sorry that repairs to some of the exterior lights in blocks 2-24 and 26-60, Bramble Way remain outstanding.

Our team have previously attended Bramble Way and repaired several lamps around the block.

I have now asked our Electrical Team to investigate and arrange for remaining repair works to be progressed as soon as possible.

44. Councillor McNair asked:

Rustington Road and Withdean Court Avenue have both suffered very erratic rubbish and recycling collections. Both are narrow lanes that require small vehicles. Could you tell me what plan is in place to ensure these two roads and other narrow roads across the city receive regular rubbish collections?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

Rustington Road has now been assigned to another refuse crew which was tested last week, and the crew completed the collection successfully, allowing us to reduce reliance on a 7.5t RCV and provide more consistent service.

Withdean Court Avenue does however need to be serviced by a smaller vehicle. We have new small vehicles on order and, while we wait for these to arrive, we have hired 2 to improve resilience in the meantime. One of these has arrived and is now in service, and the other is due imminently.

Brighton & Hove City Council

45. Councillor Meadows asked:

Regarding Patcham Court Farm, why did the developers not complete the archaeological and ecological studies prior to removing every piece of vegetation on the land? There is now no wildlife left.

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

Ecological works commenced on 17 March to cut back vegetation and lay traps, which included the installation of site office container. These ecological works were carried out by Royal Mail's contractors and overseen by their ecologist. Details for all pre-commencement ecological conditions have been submitted by Royal Mail and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Details for all pre-commencement conditions relating to the existing trees on the site have also been submitted by Royal Mail and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Chippings from the site have been located to support the relocation of the reptile population. Small populations of dormice and reptiles were found on the site following a number of ecological surveys. As part of the pre-commencement conditions, a dormouse and reptile mitigation strategy needed to be implemented aligned with Natural England and best practice requirements. For the reptile mitigation, the site across the A27 was identified for translocation and the creation of a reptile mitigation area. This includes planting, hedgerow filling, creation of basking banks and log piles. The wood chip will be used to create some of these banks and undulations to provide areas with different aspects to the sun.

46. Councillor Meadows asked:

The developer of the Royal Mail sorting office on Patcham Court Farm has been removing chalk and other earth work from Patcham Court Farm to the boundary of the South Downs National Park. Will the developer be dumping all their waste from this build on Patcham Court Farm on the same site by the National Park? It is exceeding close to an important aquifer and threatens to pollute the water supplying Brighton & Hove.

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

Officers have checked with Royal Mail, and they confirm they do not yet have a main contractor on site and no excavations have taken place. Before they do start, Royal Mail will submit a full Construction and Environment Management Plan, to add to the ecology one they have already had agreed that will dictate how site waste is dealt with.

47. Councillor Lyons asked:

Brighton & Hove City Council

Following residents' requests for a parking consultation in Nevill Rd, Nevill Ave, Cranmer Ave in 2023- nothing has been heard since. Councillor Lyons emailed Cllr Trevor Muten on 9 April 2025 for an update, but did not receive a reply.

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

Thank you Cllr Lyons for your question. My apologies where I have missed an email. As I wrote to you last week, should you not receive a reply to an email, please do send another or ask me when we next meet.

As you may be aware, I accepted an invite to meet with members of the deputation including a follow up meeting and correspondence to better understand their concerns and have responded to their emails – most recently last month.

As previously communicated – including at previous Full Council meetings such as referenced in my response on another parking scheme on 19th December 2024 - we have added the Nevill area to our Parking Scheme Priority Timetable which was approved earlier this year. Officers will arrange a meeting with ward councillors within the next few weeks to provide an update regarding a parking scheme consultation in the Nevill Road, Nevill Avenue and Cranmer Avenue area.

I also note your recent email request to add Goldstone Crescent (western end - between Woodland Drive to King George VI Ave) to the consultation.

Building on the meetings with residents, correspondence and questions from ward councillors and reports of increasing pressures on on-street parking, I am very keen to see that we develop a scheme that works well for residents, responsive to the needs of the community whilst ensuring good access to services, schools, businesses and public amenities such as Hove Park, Nevill Sports Ground, Hove Rec, etc. The design needs to ensure that the parking scheme does not blight or limit access times to these important community resources.

I look forward to discussing the options available in taking this consultation forward with ward councillors, residents, community groups, schools and local businesses to develop a parking scheme that is tailored to the specific needs of this area of Hove.

48. Councillor Lyons asked:

With many hundreds of missed garden waste collections within the city, why is the onus on the resident or the councillor to claim for an extension of the standing order? Surely, the system should automatically extend the subscription or a rebate is given – after all it is the residents that are paying extra for the service.

Brighton & Hove City Council

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

After a period of significant disruption, garden waste collections have now stabilised and become more reliable.

As a thank-you to residents, we recently extended all garden waste subscriptions for one month free of charge.

Given the outdated systems we are in the process of phasing out, the administrative burden of manually tracking and extending individual streets' or properties' subscriptions would be very significant.

We are now rolling out the new digital system for garden waste and currently exploring the capability of extending multiple subscriptions.

49. Councillor Lyons asked:

I am making contact to ask if there is any up-to-date information about proposed parking management in Eldred Avenue, between Tongdean Lane and the shops? The last I heard was an e-mail of 4.1.25, which advised that the southern end of Eldred Avenue was to be added to the Parking Scheme Priority Timetable, and that a formal consultation with residents would be undertaken before any decision was made. It would be helpful for timelines to be provided to councillors so they can inform residents.

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

Thank you, Cllr Lyons. We recognise that there is a pressing need to alleviate parking pressures in this part of Eldred Avenue. As previously stated, to address this, we have added this to the Parking Scheme Priority Timetable.

The Parking Scheme Priority timetable was agreed earlier this year and part of this includes a review of Withdean Road area (Zone 12) and will include Eldred Avenue and the wider area. This year will focus on consultations within the Hollingdean and the Nevill Road area where there is significant high demand for parking causing issues to residents.

It is important to engage well with residents to ensure that the design of changes works well for the local community. As an administration, we favour a co-design approach before moving to a formal design and public consultation.

The timetable will be reviewed once these consultations have taken place to ensure the extension of Zone 12 is prioritised in the future. Prior to any consultation starting, officers will contact ward Councillors to discuss the options available via the review.

50. Councillor Hogan asked:

Brighton & Hove City Council

How many claims have been submitted for pothole damage caused to vehicles & how many claims have been settled between April 2024 and April 2025.

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

Thank you, Cllr Hogan, for your question. The most recent settled claim for vehicle damage relating to the highway was agreed on 19th June 2025. Brighton & Hove City Council do receive a number of claims of this nature and therefore need to ensure correct audit and substantiation. In the financial year 2024/2025 166 claims were received of these claims 30 were settled which represents 18.%.

It is recognised that there has been gross underinvestment in our nation's roads under the previous government. This has resulted in notably decay of the condition of many of our city's roads. Although we welcome this year compared with previous years the significant uplift in central government funding for highways maintenance including for fixing potholes for Brighton & Hove, fixing the backlog due to previous government's underinvestment will take time. This is a priority to our administration and with more we are and will do more.

51. Councillor Hogan asked:

Now that Withdean Sports Complex has had parking charges for the past year, please provide a schedule of income generated to the council v expected revenue. Will the charges be reviewed this year & if yes, when?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

Thank you for your question, Cllr Hogan. Parking income for Withdean Sports Complex is received by Freedom Leisure as the operator/leaseholder for the site. Based on the income share arrangements, circa £30k was generated for the council in the last financial year 2024/25.

It was difficult to estimate an income figure without knowing the true volume of people using the car park as an informal 'park-and-ride' however we had anticipated it could generate £3-4k per month in total, of which the council would receive a proportion as agreed with Freedom Leisure.

There are no imminent plans to change these parking charges, however there has been some initial discussion about reviewing them in the coming year – officers can share more detail once they have it. Alongside development and improvement of leisure facilities at Withdean Sports Complex, review of car parking arrangements and use are important contributions to ensuring this facility serves the city well.

Brighton & Hove City Council

52. Councillor Theobald asked:

Would you please list the roads in Patcham and Hollingbury and Westdene and Hove Park Wards that will be resurfaced in the next three years with the starting dates for the works? Road repairs in recent years do not appear effective, with road's breaking up within a few years of completion. Have specifications and monitoring of the works changed?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

Thank you for your question, Cllr Theobald. The previous government preferred annual settlements for than a three-year settlement as put forward by the new government. Because of this and the limits of grant funding for the nation's roads, we both welcome the new government's uplift in funding this year compared with previous years and recognise that there is a considerable backlog because of the previous government's gross underfunding for highways maintenance and pothole repairs.

Within the context of this previous government's backlog, the condition of the network changes on an annual basis. As a data-led administration, we assess this condition on an annual basis we use the annual surveys to determine the following years programme. Therefore, we do not have a confirmed three-year programme. This way we can use the most recent condition surveys to develop the programme and adapt to the most recent road condition surveys. This allows us to focus limited resource on the latest data available and therefore ensures that we are tackling the priority roads at the right time and in the right way.

There are times when roads fail without notice due to changing underground conditions, we must be able to be resilient and reactive and therefore our programmes are subject to change to accommodate these unplanned failures.

We are committed to deliver this year's highways maintenance programme as presented to and approved by Cabinet in April and welcome the uplift in grant funding from the new government. With more we are and will do more. With road resurfacing and pothole repairs planned across Brighton & Hove.

If you would like to provide details of any roads that you believe have failed following works, then officers would be happy to investigate further.

53. Councillor Fishleigh asked:

Parking revenue: How much revenue did the parking spaces that were removed to make way for the new bus lane east of the aquarium on the A259 generate over the past three years?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

Brighton & Hove City Council

Thank you for your question, Cllr Fishleigh.

As part of the installation of the new bus lane on the A259, great care was made to ensure that there was no let loss of parking as a result of this scheme. Although approximately 13 parking spaces were removed from this location with revenue from these bays calculated by Parking Services as approximately £84K per annum. Based on the project assessment, these bays will typically be used by people visiting the seafront and most of the demand and associated revenue is expected to be displaced rather than lost.

For example, people will continue on to other on-street parking locations or a council car park where there is capacity most of the time. It is possible that some revenue could be lost if people park in private car parks instead, but this would be expected to be offset by revenue from bus lane enforcement. Therefore, it is not expected that there would be an overall loss of income to the Council.

Furthermore, the benefits of this new bus lane to enhance traffic flows cannot be understated particularly in the context of the new junction design and enhanced traffic flow through signal design as part of the transformational Valley Gardens Phase 3 project – works ongoing.

54. Councillor Fishleigh asked:

Given the special allowance that the leader of the opposition receives, please could a mechanism be introduced whereby they list their activities and achievements, above being a ward councillor and political party member, on a regular basis so that residents are aware of their role?

Reply from Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council & Cabinet Chair:

Whilst there is no formal requirement for Opposition Leaders to report on their achievements or role, there is the opportunity for this to happen voluntarily through individual Group communications. I am aware that the Leader of the Opposition writes a weekly column in the Argus and attends a monthly Group leaders meeting but beyond that I am not aware of any activities or achievements beyond being a ward councillor and political party member.

The role was independently assessed by the Independent Remuneration Panel based on benchmarking with other authoirities and taking into account the responsibilities involved.

55. Councillor Earthey asked:

What progress in 2024 and 2025-to-date has BHCC's Glyphosate-based Weed Control Programme made towards achieving its stated targets?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

Brighton & Hove City Council

Prior to 2024, most streets in the city received no meaningful management of weed growth.

Now, every street in the city is managed, either manually or via the controlled droplet treatment programme.

The policy of the previous administration to allow growth to continue unchecked has been replaced with an approach that manages growth on every street on an ongoing basis. From that perspective, it has met its objectives.

A further objective has been to limit the use of glyphosate to the greatest extent possible. As well as more streets added to the exclusion zone, an opt-out scheme was available for residents who wished to manage weeds on their streets themselves, with the council providing support with tools and waste collection.

We are also carrying out a manual weeding trial in an area of Hangleton where no glyphosate is being used. The results of this trial will be reviewed at the end of the current 2025 weeding programme.

56. Councillor Earthey asked:

How many wards (or residents) elected to drop out of the Glyphosate Programme and weed manually?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

Based on the successful applications that met the criteria for, a total of 41 streets have elected to opt out of the treatment programme and manage growth themselves with support from the council.

Given that treatment is only applied to visible growth, residents not in the official opt-out scheme can still maintain their streets themselves and therefore prevent or limit treatment.

57. Councillor Earthey asked:

Based on (1) and (2) above, is it the Administration's intent to continue using Glyphosate into 2026, or is it evaluating alternative weed-killing methods (including chemical-free)?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

A review of the current weeding programme will take place once the weeding season is complete towards the end of 2025.

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We continue to explore viable alternatives as they become available.

58. Councillor Earthey asked:

What environmental impact studies have been completed on determining if the levels of environmental Glyphosate have risen since the start of the current Programme, and what are their findings?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

Local authorities do not routinely monitor environmental levels of glyphosate, but it is of course worth noting that it is an organic compound that breaks down. Our controlled droplet application method also greatly reduces the amount of glyphosate used as it is applied in a targeted fashion. This is in contrast to most other authorities, who still blanket spray all of their hard surfaces regardless of growth.

Southern Water have also made clear that glyphosate is not something that they are concerned about from a drinking water perspective.

We will be reviewing the programme at the end of 2025.

59. Councillor Earthey asked:

What progress in 2025 has been made by BHCC's pothole-filling programme towards achieving its stated targets?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

Thank you for your question, Cllr Earthey. The Council's approach to repairing potholes is set out in the recently updated Highway Reactive Safety Maintenance and Inspection Policy as published alongside our annual capital highways maintenance programme at the April Cabinet meeting.

Every road on the network is inspected a minimum of every 6 months but busier roads are inspected monthly or 3 monthly as set out within the policy. Any defects that meet our investigation levels are risk assessed and repaired as needed within 2 hours, 24 hours, 7 days or 28 days based on the risk categorisation score. The council are working towards this, and it has been published on our council website.

Additionally, to maintain the additional funding requirements the council have recently published its Maintenance Transparency report setting out how we are performing. This can be seen on the council's website and is a condition of the extra funding provided by Department for Transport. It is important to this administration that residents can readily access pothole repair data and highway maintenance in their communities and see the progress we are making to fixing our roads.

Brighton & Hove City Council

60. Councillor Earthey asked:

Where has the extra money on pothole-filling been spent, and what levels of improvement (in terms of reducing the number of potholes) have been seen?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

Thank you for your question, Cllr Earthey. The current Road Maintenance Grant Funding provided is to maintain all Highway assets and not just carriageways. Because of gross underfunding in our nation's roads under the previous government, at the current level of investment, we are in a state of *managed decline* for carriageways and footways. We very much welcome the sizeable uplift in grant funding for highways maintenance by the new government. However, for the Council to be able to clear the backlog, we would need continuous investment of £6.7m/year for 20 years for carriageways and £1.75m/year for 20 years for footways. In 2025/26 we have a budget of £3.95m for Carriageways and £0.62m for footways. You can see how this funding has been allocated in the Local Transport Plan Programme 2025/26 Report.

Progress is going well with good use of the funding we have. This year, we've repaired 173 pothole defects this year compared to 115 last year. On top of this we have a fully outlined programme of reactive and full surface maintenance which will largely take place this summer due to the required environmental conditions needed to lay the surfacing. These programmes will also fix various potholes seen in the failing roads particularly the resurfacing programme and the patching programme. This can be seen on our website. In total, up to May 2025 we have fixed a total of 1735 issues on the public highway, not just potholes but damage to footways, broken paving slabs, tree root issues, broken drains etc. We know there is much to do. With more we are and will do more.

61. Councillor Bagaeen asked:

The Tony Blair Institute recently published a report on how the day-to-day tasks of local government related to the delivery of public services can all be performed faster, better and cheaper with the use of AI.
(<https://institute.global/insights/politics-and-governance/governing-in-the-age-of-ai-reimagining-local-government>).

Will the Leader of the Council please respond to the following:

- How are officers in the council using AI driven tools when drafting reports and responses to members and residents?
- Are officers incentivised to use AI tools to deliver efficiency savings?
- If they are, what's the order of magnitude of these efficiency savings?

Reply from Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council & Cabinet Chair:

Brighton & Hove City Council

We agree with the main points of this report and are currently revising our corporate plan to put innovation with AI, and other promising technologies, at the core of improved and efficient public service delivery. As part of our Organisational Redesign we created a new role of Director of Digital Innovation to take a fresh look at all aspects of ICT and digital innovation/transformation across the organisation and make recommendations for the future.

Council officers are not currently using AI tools for drafting reports and messages in significant numbers. However, we have launched this summer an expansive internal research programme which will identify the most impactful uses of AI and other innovative tech, rapidly trial these over the autumn, and look to implement at large during 2026.

As with any technology – particularly when public data and finances are involved – we must properly vet what's proposed to ensure not only is it safe, secure and ethical; but that it is properly designed into how we work rather than tacked on, ensuring that we realise genuine efficiencies rather than just creating more complexity.

Nonetheless, we are very conscious of the need for pace and agility, and the programme we have launched will be testing and securing these tools over weeks and months rather than years, and we will rapidly deploy all of those that work effectively.

As this work progresses, we will get a clear idea of the order of magnitude of efficiency savings, and I will update on that in due course.

62. Councillor Bagaeen asked:

Brighton & Hove City Council has a duty to set school term dates for its community schools, community special schools and maintained nursery schools. Governing boards of voluntary-aided schools (Church of England and Catholic schools) set their own dates and academy trusts set the dates for academies and free schools.

Term dates for West Sussex County Council and East Sussex County Council have an impact on school staff and families living and working across borders. West Sussex and East Sussex have published their term dates and there are clear differences between them.

If East and West Sussex cannot agree on school dates, it is unlikely they will work well together in a mayoral combined authority.

Will the Leader of the Council please respond to the following:

- How would the creation of a Mayoral Combined Authority in Sussex impact school term dates in Brighton and Hove and any plans parents and carers may have already made?

Reply from Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council & Cabinet Chair:

Brighton & Hove City Council

Mayoral Combined Authorities do not have any responsibility for setting school terms dates.

For maintained schools (including community schools, community special schools, voluntary controlled schools, pupil referral units, and maintained nursery schools), term dates are set by the local authority or the school's governing body, depending on the type of school.

For academies, free schools, and voluntary-aided schools, the governing body has the freedom to set their own term and holiday dates

As a council we seek to work alongside other schools in the city and across neighbouring authorities to align term dates. The term dates for 2024/25 and 2025/2026 were identical across all three Local Authority areas. Our dates for 2026/27 are identical with West Sussex and are a one-day difference at the start and end of the year with East Sussex, which has minimal impact due to schools usually planning inset days at these times.

63. Councillor Bagaeen asked:

Residents have highlighted a number of coach parking incidents at Withdean Sports Stadium. Previous coach parking area has been converted to five-a-side football pitches, forcing coaches to park illegally to service Withdean Sports Stadium.

Will the Cabinet Member please respond to the following:

- Where exactly should coaches park for drop-offs and collections at Withdean?
- Where should coaches wait between drop-off and collection times?
- What is the capacity of each designated area for waiting?
- At capacity, are there any alternative designated coach parking areas other than double yellow lines?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

Thank you for your question, Cllr Bagaeen.

There is a protocol in place for bus/coach parking at Withdean Sports Complex which is shared by Freedom Leisure with these coach companies as well as the organisation hiring the facilities (if for example it's for an event in the athletics stadium).

For drop-offs and collections, coaches are usually advised to drop-off in front of the entrance to the 3G pitches, where users can then make their way through the two sets of gates into the stadium. In between the drop-off/collection times, coaches will utilise the designated coach parking on Withdean Road – providing no-one else has parked in these spaces, there is sufficient space for 2 coaches.

Brighton & Hove City Council

For larger events, access and allocated spaces within the main car park are made available and agreed, dependent on the size of the event and suitability of the vehicle. There are also multiple minibus spaces designated in the main car park.

Freedom Leisure, as the operator for Withdean Sports Complex, are aware of the issue related to coach parking on double yellow lines and is working with our civil enforcement partner (NSL) to address the problem. NSL can enforce if the coaches are on yellow lines and have issued a PCN to such a vehicle in recent weeks.

It's helpful if coaches observed can be reported via the rapid response number on the council website as this area doesn't tend to receive frequent patrols due to its location/lack of parking restrictions. NSL will dispatch a mobile enforcement patrol to the area when nuisance parking is reported.

64. Councillor Bagaeen asked:

A Parking Design and Implementation officer mentioned in an email response to a resident on 24 June 2025 that Goldstone Crescent will be getting this year a consultation for a residents parking scheme. This is not something that local ward members have been informed of.

The Cabinet Member responsible for this area has not responded recently to a number of emails from myself including forwarded complaints from residents about parking on Nevill Road.

Will the Cabinet Member please respond to the following:

- When did officers agree to a parking consultation for the Aldrington and Nevill areas?
- If Goldstone Crescent is included in this consultation, what is the extent of the boundary for the consultation area?
- Why were ward councillors not informed that this was under consideration given it had been requested a number of times in the past 3 years?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

Thank you, Cllr Bagaeen, for your questions in relation to the parking consultation in the Aldrington and Nevill areas of Hove. It was agreed at a previous committee in 2023 (which you were a member of) for the area to be considered for a parking consultation following a request from ward councillors after the implementation of the Withdean parking scheme.

The areas were then included into the Parking Scheme Priority Timetable which was agreed in early 2025. The extent of the consultation boundary has yet to be formally discussed and agreed with ward councillors and officers. The proposed boundary will be Amherst Crescent to Dyke Road Avenue. Officers sincerely apologise to ward councillors for any lack of communication. Officers will be liaising with Ward Councillors soon to arrange

Brighton & Hove City Council

a meeting within the next few weeks and look forward to discussing the options available in taking this consultation forward.

I will review all correspondence and ensure you have a response to any outstanding matters. To date, the focus of the Parking Scheme Priority Timetable has been on other priority areas – such as for Hollingdean. However, we are now well placed to soon move forward with improvements to parking in the Aldrington and Nevill area and welcome the positive engagement from ward councillors, residents and businesses to make this work well for all in this area.

65. Councillor Bagaeen asked:

Homes for Brighton & Hove, the partnership between Brighton & Hove City Council and the Hyde Group, has applied for permission to build 306 affordable and shared ownership homes in Hove.

Although the planning application states that the proposed building will be a similar size, height and design as the one originally given planning permission when that was secured for an extra care community, the new application presents serious challenges for the area's infrastructure ((transport, energy, water and wastewater, waste, and flood risk management), in stark contradiction to the Government's recently launched 10-year Infrastructure Strategy which promised a co-ordinated approach to social infrastructure when building new homes.

With serious problems uncovered around shared ownership - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cy8gplg6jv8o> - including difficulties in selling, Florence Eshalomi MP has recently criticised shared ownership saying that 'it is quite worrying when you see the amount of complaints going to the ombudsman'.

Will the Cabinet Member please respond to the following:

- I acknowledge the urgency to build more affordable homes in Hove but why is the council and its partner the Hyde Group proposing to build more problematic shared ownership homes?

Reply from Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing:

The council are tackling the city's chronic 'housing crisis' through our Home Purchase Programme, New Homes for Neighbourhoods council house building and our Homes for Brighton & Hove partnership with Hyde Housing.

Our joint venture collaboration has exemplified the power of partnership working, sharing risk as well as combining resources and expertise to tackle one of our city's most pressing challenges: the need for genuinely affordable homes.

While the Council prioritises delivery of rented homes, our joint venture developments, including completion of 346 new homes last year, offer a mix

Brighton & Hove City Council

of social rent and shared ownership homes, ensuring accessibility for a wide range of residents. We have just submitted a planning application for 306 affordable homes on the Sackville Road site, 60% of which will be let by the Council at social rents.

Shared ownership homes developed through the joint venture prioritise local households, many of whom are currently excluded from the owner-occupied sector in the city, with a fall in owners with a mortgage and increasing private rented sector. Shared ownership homes support overall scheme viability and are delivered and managed by Hyde subject to regulation and legislation governing registered providers of social housing.

66. Councillor Bagaeen asked:

With zero public consultation and engagement with ward members, the Council has decided (<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2025/indoor-padel-courts-coming-withdean>) to commission new indoor padel courts at Withdean Sports Complex replacing the only indoor tennis courts in the city.

This decision has unfortunately been ill-timed given the announcement coincided with the start of Wimbledon.

Will the Cabinet Member please respond to the following:

- Who initiated the conversations that led to this hasty and unfortunate decision?
- What EDI/DEI data for the use of paddle courts in the city was used to justify this decision given that the council has publicly claimed that this action contributes to increased accessibility and equality?
- Why was the tennis community in the city not consulted?
- Why did the ward members find out about this decision from members of the public and not from officers?

Reply from Councillor Robins, Cabinet Member for Sports, Recreation & Libraries:

There was a communications and engagement plan in train, which couldn't be implemented as planned, due to information being shared with/picked up by the press – we acknowledge that this was unfortunate and would not have been the preference of the council. I can however confirm that the council, along with its leisure operator Freedom Leisure will shortly be inviting tennis players along to a meeting in the next fortnight to further engage with them; to listen to their concerns and to share information about the opportunities for the tennis programme and academy, both at Withdean and across our other leisure sites.

We will listen to concerns and respond in the near future having taken time to consider information shared with us.

Brighton & Hove City Council

Whilst there are no indoor tennis courts available there are high amounts of outdoor tennis courts available across the city. All aspect of the potential change will be considered on balance

67. Councillor Atkinson asked:

I am currently involved with a serious situation involving anti-social behaviour from one council tenant to their neighbour, another council tenant. Most of the behaviour relates to extremely loud and constant swearing and arguing which can be clearly heard by the resident I'm involved with. The Housing Team and the Temporary Accommodation team, however, just describe this as "household noise".

How can I get a change introduced within the Housing Department to allow for different levels/definitions of household noise to be described including one that reaches the level of anti-social behaviour?

Reply from Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing:

Thank you for raising this important issue. Brighton & Hove City Council recognises that persistent, aggressive, or abusive noise—such as loud swearing and arguing—can have a serious impact on residents' wellbeing and may, in some cases, constitute anti-social behaviour rather than general "household noise."

The Council has already taken steps to improve how such cases are handled. A review of noise nuisance procedures has been completed, and there is now a stronger emphasis on early intervention and joint working between council services. This includes the use of Community Protection Warnings and Notices where appropriate.

