

# **BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

## **CABINET**

**2.00pm 26 JUNE 2025**

### **COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL**

## **MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor Sankey (Chair) Taylor (Deputy Chair), Allen, Daniel, Miller, Muten, Robins, Rowkins and Williams

### **PART ONE**

#### **1 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS**

##### **1a Declarations of interests**

1.1 There were none.

##### **1b Exclusion of the press and public**

1.2 There were no Part Two items included on the agenda.

#### **2 MINUTES**

2.1 **Resolved-** That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record.

#### **3 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

3.1 The Chair provided the following Communications:

“Here in Brighton will be an opportunity to mark the anniversary of the Battle of Boars Head. Known as the day that Sussex died, where 62 men from the city died in battle in the First World War, the city's greatest loss of life, ever in one day, the significance of this battle for our city means that our Administration has added it to our civic calendar and I look forward to joining our Mayor and anyone else that would like to attend at the plaque down at the Old Steine on Monday to mark the battle this Saturday. There will be celebrations at Downes Junior School and at 2.55pm precisely, you can enjoy a fly over of the legendary Spitfire fighter aircraft and listen out for the distinctive roar of its vintage engine engines at the take shelter. We thank our armed forces for their bravery and service to our country.

Cabinet will be discussing important issues today including short term lets, investing and improving the city's playing fields and sports pitches, our drug and alcohol strategy and the Council's current financial position. We'll vote on proposals to gather more data on the

number of short term lets in the city and lobby the government to introduce new powers to help us manage this sector.

The number of short-term letters in Brighton, Hove is currently unclear and with significant pressures on the supply of local housing and concerns over other associated problems we're keen to better understand the landscape locally and act to address any challenges. It's important that we work together with the short term lets sector to build a better picture of the local situation to lobby government for the powers we need to help manage it and to do all we can to make sure we're striking the right balance between supporting our important visitor economy and minimising any negative effects on our residents.

Our playing pitch strategy paper today will mean that we are considering ambitious plans to improve and invest in the city's playing fields and sports pitches over the next 15 years, as the city looks forward to hosting the women's Rugby World Cup later this summer, enhancing our reputation as a major sporting city, demands for good quality sporting facilities looks set to surge even further. Access to community sports and physical activity facilities are vital for improving the health and well-being of our residents. We are already a really active city and we know that and that's something to be hugely celebrated. But we know that we could be even more active.

Residents have access to the right sporting facilities in the right places so that they can stay physically and mentally well and lead happier and longer lives.

Today we'll also be discussing our drugs and alcohol strategy. Since my childhood, I've known that Brighton and Hove has severe challenges with drugs and high rates of drug deaths, and we see daily the harms associated with drug and alcohol use and abuse, and the impact on individuals, their friends, families and our communities here in the city. Drug and alcohol abuse can increase inequalities in health outcomes. It reduces the number of years that people spend in good health, it exacerbates poor mental health and can also lead to lead to insecure housing, estrangement from family and friends and employment issues. As a council intent on advancing health equity, reducing the harms of drug and alcohol is a priority for us.

On our agenda today is our financial position and we'll be considering the last outturn from the last financial year. It's been really positive to see that we ended the last financial year with a £1,000,000 underspend but we must be clear that it's taken a lot of hard work and effort to achieve this with tough decisions and difficulties for our staff and unavoidable impacts on service delivery. However, it does mean we've entered the new financial year in a stronger position than we expected to a few months ago. This is a great start, but like all local authorities, we'd still have financial challenges and service pressure ahead and there's more we need to do to build our reserves and ensure that we remain financially resilient as a Council.

And finally, I've been pleased to see the number of opportunities we're giving residents to have their say on the future of Brighton and Hove.

Since this Cabinet last met last month, in the last week alone we've launched consultations on ambitious plans for active travel improvements on the A259 the expansion of our electric vehicle network, the use of disposable barbecues, balloons and lanterns in our public spaces, and our city transport plan for the next decade. Also, over the course of the last month, we have celebrated Windrush Day refugee week, and we've hosted a fantastic anti racist education conference.

This Council will always be one, as long as we're in Administration that invests in anti-racist education and anti-racism and proudly flies our flags of inclusivity from our city town halls.

We've also refurbished our basketball court on the seafront. We've gone out to consultation on the design of a new swimming pool in Withdean and improvements to the multi-use games area. We've announced that we are going to be reopening Kings Road paddling pool. We've recently gone out to consultation on improving Elder Place corridor. And this Monday and please spread this message far and wide anybody that is listening, we will be expanding our plastics, recycling in the city. So plastic pots, tubs and trays from this Monday you can put in your household recycling in communal recycling, in household recycling and we're adding them to our collections.

Also, over the last month, we have run a love your cervix campaign which is aiming to improve the take up of smear testing by women and people with cervixes in the city. I have recently had my own smear test, and I really encourage anybody receiving notification from the NHS to take it up. I know that people have incredibly busy lives and it's not many people's favourite thing to go and do, but it's vitally important. It can prevent cancer, and I'd really encourage people to take up the opportunity when you get your notification from the NHS".

#### **4 CALL OVER**

- 4.1 All items on the agenda were reserved for discussion.

#### **5 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

- 5.1 There were none.

#### **6 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS**

- 6.1 A copy of the questions received was circulated ahead of the meeting. Responses provided both at the meeting and in writing are as follows:

##### **1) Councillor Hill- Drug and Alcohol Strategy**

How do cuts to the Sussex ICB funding as well as our own public health affect the ability to carry out this strategy?

##### **Response: Cllr Allen**

Thanks to our Labour government there has been no cut to the Public Health Grant which funds The Drug and Alcohol Programme. This has enabled increases in service capacity, workforce development, and harm reduction initiatives.

The Drug & Alcohol Treatment Recovery Grant is in its final year and is scheduled to finish in March 2026 and we are awaiting confirmation of grant funding going forward. The strategy explicitly acknowledges the challenge of future uncertainty around funding and commits to adapting delivery plans should funding levels change.

##### **2) Councillor Hill- Drug and Alcohol Strategy**

Does the Cabinet consider the criminalisation of cannabis possession in particular to be of beneficial to the 'harm reduction' which the strategy alludes to? I feel this causes far more harm and the priority should be on tackling county lines and working with Sussex Police on that

**Response: Cllr Allen**

No – Prohibition is a failed dogma. Hence this strategy takes a public health and harm reduction approach rather than a criminal justice approach.

Priority is placed on early intervention, reducing stigma, and targeting high-risk supply chains, particularly where organised criminal exploitation like county lines is evident.

The strategy aims to divert individuals from the criminal justice system into treatment, especially young people.

While cannabis enforcement continues under national law, our local focus remains on reducing harm and safeguarding rather than on punitive approaches.

**3) Councillor Hill- Drug and Alcohol Strategy**

Earlier this year, Glasgow has opened a safer drug consumption facility which reduces HIV transmission and the likelihood for death by overdose. This has worked in places like Switzerland for many years. Would you agree that it is a shame that consideration was not given to this in the strategy?

**Response: Cllr Allen**

Consideration was given to this but was quickly discounted as a serious proposal. Therefore, the strategy does not include safe consumption rooms as part of its action plan.

Firstly, they are currently illegal in England. To open one would require an accord between local partners and the police which is not forthcoming. The Home Office and the Association of Chief Police Officers are clear they would not support a drugs consumption room where illicit drug use and supervision of drug use took place.

On top of this, there is the silly situation where the city council would facilitate the use of serious drugs but would have to intervene if the user was to drink alcohol or smoke tobacco – as these are banned in local authority premises.

The Glasgow centre is funded by the Scottish government at £2.3m a year. That is just above the revenue earmarked to pay off the i360 green party tax each year. I would be curious to know how the green group would propose raising the funds for this venture each year.

So, our administration is working to mitigate drug harm without spending £2.3m annually on an illegal operation – Clearly Cllr Hill would do the opposite.

**4) Councillor Meadows- Playing Pitch Strategy**

It is disappointing to see Patcham Place cricket pavilion deteriorate to the point of closure due to vandalism. It is an important part of Brighton heritage. Only last year, the cricket season was almost cancelled because of the closure of the pavilion, possibly the first time in 70 years. Therefore, we are pleased to see the intention to invest in Horsdean, Braypool and especially Patcham Place recreation grounds and sports facilities. What is the predicted timescale for Patcham Place pavilion to be renovated?

**Response: Cllr Robins**

This cabinet report sets out the clear need for improving, protecting and developing inclusive playing pitches and facilities across the city.

As the report states this is especially important in ensuring our facilities are inclusive and especially to actively encourage girls/women's sports.

Over several years there has been a lack of available resource to invest in our indoor and outdoor sports facilities which has seen them deteriorate.

Alongside the major capital works being planned for the new King Alfred, a programme of regeneration is being planned to update and improve several pavilions across the city. This programme is dependent on securing additional funding, although the council has allocated over £3m towards these renovations and secured over £1m in external funding.

A priority programme and timeline of works is currently being developed.

The next action for Patcham Place is to commission joint ECB and FA pitch power assessment and deliver recommendations to raise quality from poor. Once we have this report we will be in a better position to understand potential timescales for renovation. Officers are happy to respond separately on this matter with any further info directly to Cllr Meadows.

**5) Councillor McNair- Targeted Budget Management**

30/55 schools had deficits in 2024/25. How many schools are expected to be in deficit next year?

**Response: Cllr Taylor**

Based on budget plans received for 2025/26, it is expected that there will be 29 schools in a budget deficit position at the end of the 2025/26 financial year

**6) Councillor McNair- Targeted Budget Management**

Are all schools on track to complete their recovery plans? If not, why not?

**Response: Cllr Taylor**

A number of schools with previously agreed licensed deficits have breached the terms of their licensed deficit agreements. This may either be in terms of exceeding the value, or the number of years the agreement operates for. The reasons for this will vary by school but examples include delays in implementing planned recovery strategies e.g. staffing reorganisations, additional unidentified costs emerging (such as higher costs of increased pay awards), additional supply costs for staff absences or additional support required for children with high needs). Schools who do not deliver against their original recovery plans are required to submit new recovery plans, and re-apply for revised licensed deficits, which are then considered by the Chief Finance Officer and Corporate Director of Families, Children and Wellbeing. Furthermore, where schools exceeded the value of their licensed deficit agreement in 2024/25, they have been required to attend a separate meeting with the Director of Education and Learning and the Head of Education.

**7) Councillor McNair- Targeted Budget Management**

Is there an expectation that no schools should be in deficit? If so, when is this expected to be achieved?

This may be the aim but it's highly unlikely that there will be a point in time when no schools are in deficit. This has never been the case within Brighton and Hove, even at a time when the overall net school balances position was a significant surplus e.g. in 2021/22 there was a net surplus school balances position of £8.1m but there were still 15 schools with deficits.

**8) Councillor Meadows- Targeted Budget Management**

As happened with West Hove Primary School, will Woodingdean Primary School be offered a support package to encourage it not to become an academy?

**Response: Cllr Taylor**

Conversations continue to take place with the leadership of Woodingdean Primary School regarding their consultation on joining the Eko Academy Trust. This includes setting out the support offer available from the council, which can be further adapted to meet the individual needs of the school. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this in more detail with the school leadership and governing body.

**9) Councillor Sykes- Targeted Budget Management**

The 2023-24 TBM provisional outturn reported a £0.296m overspend under Cityclean due to 'increased vehicle costs within fleet due to purchased vehicle delays and recent sabotage'. This year the 2024-5 provisional outturn reports a £1.527m overspend under newly-named Environmental Services due to 'Overspend on Refuse /Recycling collection vehicle hire in addition to ongoing maintenance charges and other vehicle costs in keeping an ageing fleet operational.' This is a massive and increased overspend.

Does the Finance Lead expect this item to be better controlled in the new financial year?

**Response: Cllr Taylor**

There is a significant amount of work ongoing within the Environmental Service both to improve the service but also to manage the budget effectively. We also have a programme in place to replace vehicles across the service which will improve reliability and also reduce maintenance and vehicle hire costs, although this will take some time to be implemented fully. I would certainly like to see this area come in much closer to planned budget for 25/26.

**10) Councillor Sykes- Targeted Budget Management**

The provisional outturn for Temporary Accommodation this year (£9178k) compared with last year (£4281k) evidently shows a massive increase, well over a budget for these costs that was itself doubled. What modelling has the Finance Lead done to understand the impact of the housing crisis on council finances over the next years?

**Response: Cllr Taylor**

The rise in Temporary Accommodation (TA) costs reflects the severe pressures of the national housing crisis, which continues to drive both demand and expenditure. Like many councils, Brighton & Hove faces a limited supply of affordable housing and a growing number of households in urgent need.

To respond effectively, the council conducts monthly in-year forecasting and projections across the medium-term financial plan based on trend analysis of homelessness demand and TA expenditure. This includes scenario modelling that factors in inflation, increases in demand, unit cost pressures and supply constraints to support informed decision-making. This is very challenging given the pressures in recent years and the volatility of activity and unit costs within the Temporary Accommodation budget.

Our broader commitment is to prevent homelessness through early intervention, targeted support, and partnership working. Brighton & Hove is recognised as a leader in homelessness prevention, consistently outperforming other South East authorities.

That's why it's so significant and important that the government have doubled their capital investment in Affordable Housing to £39bn over ten years.

As part of our Housing Strategy 2024–2029, we are also delivering 2,000 new affordable homes by 2029—an ambitious step toward long-term housing stability.

I should also be transparent with members – the pressures are increasing, particular on unit cost of spot-purchased TA.

**11) Councillor McLeay- Response to the Short Term Lets Task & Finish Group Recommendations**

For the recommendations that are not reliant on a change in legislation – how soon could these recommendations be implemented? What timeline are you working to?

**Response: Cllr Taylor**

The time taken for the actions not reliant on a change in legislation will varies – but quite a few are linked to the timeline for adoption of City Plan 2041 is 2028. A progress report is anticipated to be taken to Overview & Scrutiny in January 2026.

**12) Councillor McLeay- Drug and Alcohol Strategy**

How will this new strategy support front line workers leading recovery programmes? Where organisations like the YMCA and St Mungo's come under fire for their housing facilities attracting ASB in communities, how will this strategy factor in the challenges they and their residents face – especially when service budgets are under pressure?

**Response: Cllr Allen**

Thank you for your question, Councillor McLeay.

Our strategy acknowledges the pressure on frontline services and highlights a need to improve cross-agency working, particularly with supported housing providers like YMCA and St Mungo's. It commits to:

- Reducing caseloads through workforce investment;

- Expanding trauma-informed care and specialist training;
- And supporting community-based outreach and engagement.

Importantly, the strategy seeks to effectively address anti-social behaviour through a multi-agency neighbourhood harm approach, aiming to support both residents and providers navigating community tensions. There's a commitment to shared accountability and not leaving housing providers isolated in the commission of their work.

### **13) Councillor McLeay- Drug and Alcohol Strategy**

Where police resource is already at a critically low point across the city, with less officers on duty on any given day/night compared to previous years, what scope is there to improve cross agency working? Especially where communities feel nothing happens despite consistent reporting.

#### **Response: Cllr Allen**

Thank you for your question, Councillor McLeay.

You are quite correct that the Conservative government chucked out of office last year has left our country and our city less safe.

For too long, our town centres and high streets have been gripped by crime leaving members of the public feeling intimidated and unsafe.

That is why I welcome the Labour Government's commitment to alter this narrative.

Everyone has a right to feel safe and secure in their communities, especially in local areas like high streets, parks and town centres.

To address this, the Government has taken steps to make our streets safer by introducing new police powers, such as Respect Orders.

It also aims to restore neighbourhood policing, which will include more police personnel on the beat up and down the country. This administration welcomes these proposals.

On top of this, the Government has announced that police funding will increase by £1 billion, which will help to put 3,000 additional neighbourhood police officers and police community support officers in post within the year. By 2029, the Government aims to put 13,000 more officers into communities, which will be an increase of more than 50%.

This will be transformational for your ward especially, Cllr McLeay, all thanks to the Labour Party.

The drugs and alcohol strategy before us recognises community concerns about visible enforcement and responses to drug-related ASB.

It proposes:

- A multi-agency "drug-related harm" meeting to target hotspot areas;
- Stronger intelligence sharing between services;
- Early intervention pathways (e.g. Test on Arrest) and community support;
- Using of lived experience and community voices to shape local responses;
- Advocating for smarter partnership approaches to maximise the impact of limited resources and improve public trust.

### **14) Councillor McLeay- Drug and Alcohol Strategy**

The arguments for legalising and regulating drugs such as cannabis have been discussed for decades. The 'War on Drugs' approach has failed on all meaningful

measures. This generational failure is driving a process of cannabis reform worldwide. What is the cabinet's stance on pushing for legalisation reform for drugs like cannabis?

**Response: Cllr Allen**

Thank you for your question Councillor McLeay.

Yes, it is true: the so-called War on Drugs has been a monumental failure. Prohibition as a concept is flawed. And new approach is required.

I am however concerned about drug liberalisation if rushed.

We must ask ourselves: who profits, and who pays?

I am worried about the scramble for commodification. The emerging cannabis industry, already dominated by big capital in countries that have legalised, is not controlled by communities, nor by public need. It is controlled by shareholders, speculators, and the tobacco industry.

The same forces who flood our high streets with gambling shops, vapes and junk food will just as eagerly push intoxicants to our youth if it serves their bottom line. Is that what the Green Party want? Sick kids on our doorstep for the worst international company's profit.

We cannot ignore the very real harms that drug misuse inflicts on our communities.

What this Labour administration is focusing on is promoting a public health model, investing in treatment, prevention, and addressing root causes of usage like trauma, poor mental health, and housing issues.

There is no endorsement or opposition to legalisation in the new drugs and alcohol strategy. The local authority is responsible for driving public health and so we commit to innovation and evidence-led practice within current legislation to deliver better health outcomes and change lives for the better.

**15) Councillor McLeay- Drug and Alcohol Strategy**

Cities are on the frontline of both the failings of the war on drugs and the debate around alternatives. Would Brighton & Hove City Council be willing to work with cities like Amsterdam to support a new network of cities innovating drug policy?

**Response: Cllr Allen**

The strategy supports collaboration and learning from other cities. It states a clear intention to use national and international best practices and explore innovative models in harm reduction. Amsterdam could very well be one of the case studies we look at.

**7 MATTERS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE**

3.1 There were none.

**8 REPRESENTATIONS FROM OPPOSITION MEMBERS**

8.1 Cabinet received a representation from Councillor Hill on Item 11: Drug and Alcohol Strategy.

**9 RESPONSE TO THE SHORT TERM LETS TASK & FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 Cabinet considered a report that set out and requested approval of the recommendations made by the Short Term Lets Task & Finish Group. The report was presented by Councillor Evans as Chair of the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

9.2 Councillors Taylor, Miller, Rowkins, Muten and Williams contributed to the debate of the report.

**9.3 Resolved-**

1) Cabinet agrees the recommendations as set out in section 3 of the report.

**10 PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY 2025 - 2041**

3.1 Cabinet considered a report that set out the Brighton & Hove Playing Pitch Strategy 2025-2041 for approval.

3.2 Councillors Sankey, Rowkins, Allen, Taylor, Muten, Miller and Robins asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

**3.3 Resolved-**

1) That Cabinet approves and adopts the Playing Pitch Strategy 2025 – 2041 as set out in Appendix 1.

2) That cabinet approves all of the recommendations (set out in 4.6 below), including the longer term need for more pitch provision, in all future place planning.

**11 DRUGS AND ALCOHOL STRATEGY**

3.1 Cabinet considered a report that requested approval of the 'Reducing Harms from Drugs and Alcohol' a Drugs and Alcohol Strategy 2024-2030.

3.2 Councillors Sankey, Williams, Allen and Miller asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

**3.3 Resolved-**

1) Cabinet approves 'Reducing Harms from Drugs and Alcohol' a Drugs and Alcohol Strategy 2024-2030 (Cabinet paper appendix)

2) Cabinet supports the approach that the Brighton & Hove Council Strategy is best delivered in partnership with the multi-agency Combatting Drugs Partnership Board, and that this Board retains oversight to the effective implementation and monitoring of the strategic aims and action planning to deliver the strategy aims.

**12 TARGETED BUDGET MANAGEMENT (TBM) PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2024/25**

3.1 Cabinet considered a report that set out the Targeted Budget Management (TBM) Provisional Outturn 2024/25.

3.2 Councillors Muten, Taylor, Miller, Rowkins and Sankey asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

3.3 **Resolved-**

- 1) Cabinet notes that the provisional General Fund outturn position is an underspend of £1.091m and that this represents an improvement of £2.416m compared to the projected and planned resource position at Month 9 and taken into account when setting the 2025/26 budget.
- 2) Cabinet approves General Fund carry forward requests totalling £4.283m as detailed in Appendix 5 and assumed within the provisional outturn.
- 3) Cabinet approves the proposed allocation of additional resources as set out in paragraph 11.3.
- 4) Cabinet notes the provisional outturn for the separate Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which is a break-even position.
- 5) Cabinet notes the provisional outturn position for the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant, which is an overspend of £0.680m.
- 6) Cabinet notes the provisional outturn position on the Capital Programme which is an underspend variance of £4.025m.
- 7) Cabinet approves the capital budget variations and re-profiling requests set out in Appendix 7.
- 8) Cabinet approves new capital schemes requested in Appendix 8.
- 9) Cabinet notes the Treasury Management end of year review 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 10.

The meeting concluded at 3.45pm