

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

4.00pm 16 JULY 2025

HOVE TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBER

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Evans (Chair) Cattell, Loughran, Goddard, Winder, Fishleigh, Sykes, Lyons and Parrott

Other Members present: Mark Strong (CVS), Mary Davies (OPC)

PART ONE

11 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

11. Procedural Business

11a Declarations of substitutions

11.1 Cllr Lyons substituting for Cllr Meadows

11.2 Cllr Parrott substituting for Cllr Fowler

11b Declarations of interest:

11.3 There were none.

11c Exclusion of the press and public

11.4 Amongst the papers circulated to elected members were confidential (Part 2) minutes from the call-in meeting held on 19th May. Any discussion of these minutes will need to be in confidential session and will need to exclude the press & public from these discussions. If amendments are required for these minutes, we will move into a Part 2 confidential session to discuss at the end of the meeting.

12 MINUTES

12. There were four sets of minutes for approval:

12.1 Place Overview & Scrutiny Meeting 21st January 2025: minutes were approved by members

12.2 Call-in on 19th May 2025 Part One and Part Two minutes: both sets of

minutes were approved by members

12.3 Special Place Overview & Scrutiny Meeting 5th June 2025: minutes were approved by members

12.4 Special Place Overview & Scrutiny Meeting 1st July 2025: minutes were approved by members

13 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

13.1 The Chair gave the following communication:

Today we only have one formal agenda item which is an update on City Plan. At our October meeting, we discussed the City Plan refresh and agreed that scrutiny should play a role at key stages in the development of the new plan. Today we are being asked to note the work that has been done to date, following the initial consultation and looking at the next steps.

On the agenda, we also have a short presentation by Steve Tremlett on the Heritage Strategy, which we will be looking at later in the year. I have asked for an introduction to the topic so that members can get a good understanding of it in advance.

Lastly, I would like to have a discussion about the topic for our next Task & Finish Group.

Before we begin, I would like to give you an update on the work of our last Task & Finish Group on short-term lets:

We all know how long we've collectively been talking about STLs – I've been going on about them for more than 6 years, and certainly it wasn't a new subject then. In fact, the recent TFG we did on this isn't even the first scrutiny deep dive on the subject, since there was one 11 or 12 years ago. Added to that, LAs here and in other tourist areas have been doing Notices of Motion and lobbying successive governments for various 'asks' pretty much since the extraordinary rise of the internet booking platforms began a couple of decades ago.

And, following on from our working group and the report we finalised earlier this year, there remains no magic wand that we can wave to transform the thorny STLs vs housing picture overnight, and the conversation continues. However the report is, I think, a really worthwhile piece of work, the recommendations we made were recently passed by cabinet – obviously with all the usual caveats that change will be painstakingly arrived at rather than magicked into being, but passed nonetheless.

And, things do finally seem to be moving forward nationally at last, too – all three of the national operators we spoke to during our work – DCMS, MHCLG and York MP Rachael Maskell asked to see copies of our report when it was done, and we duly complied. All were very complementary about it, and if nothing else, the report seems to have ensured that B&H is now part of the national conversation.

I was invited up to Westminster to a committee about Rachael Maskell's private members bill on this subject, and I should add that there are now TWO such bills - Ben Maguire MP, the Lib Dem MP for North Cornwall, has tabled one too, and whether or not both are in the end timed

out by the brutal PMB process, MHCLG are talking to Rachael and others about possible changes in regulatory powers in the most affected areas that will help cities like B&H and York manage both their tourist economies and their housing crises more effectively.

Also in the works, DCMS are hoping to have a light-touch (but mandatory) national registration scheme up and running as early as 2026, and invited our own Helen Gregory and Julia Gallagher to a meeting to discuss what it might contain, as well as inviting the council to be part of the software testing for the next phase. The briefing note they provide on this was extremely interesting, and although we and other towns and cities would probably prefer more powers, along the lines of the ones in the private members bills, even the huge boost in data to local authorities that would come from this scheme would be enormously helpful to us as a city.

14 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

14.1 There were none

15 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

15.1 There were no member questions.

16 CITY PLAN UPDATE

- 16.1 Max Woodford, Director for Place, and Steve Tremlett, Planning Policy and Heritage Manager, presented the slides on the City Plan update. Key points included the timeline for the new City Plan 2041 leading up to submission in early 2028, a review of the recent consultation and key outcomes of the survey that included concerns over affordability of homes, a strong demand for industrial floorspace and concerns over the cleanliness of the city and condition of the seafront and city centre. The survey had performed well on Facebook, X and LinkedIn, receiving over 96,000 post impressions and the completion rate had doubled since the equivalent stage during the preparation of City Plan Part Two. There was also a separate survey for young people that gained 200 responses.
- 16.2 Councillor Parrott asked about engagement with disability groups. Steve Tremlett said that they had reached out to groups such as Amaze, Badge Brighton, Speak Out, and Possibility People, and asked them to circulate the survey and let their members know about the engagement events. They met with some of the groups in person including the Older Peoples' Council. Councillor Parrott quoted the recent Health Count Survey that 37% of respondents said their disability or ill health affected their ability to get around the city. She suggested meeting with these groups in person would be more effective than asking them to complete a survey and to find different ways to connect. The feedback from group discussions should be allowed to form part of the consultation response and not just individuals completing the survey.
- 16.3 Councillor Sykes raised concerns about potential abortive work given upcoming legislative changes introduced in February 2025 and the ongoing devolution process, both of which has a large impact on planning. Steve Tremlett said that some work is paused until there is more clarity from the government and the team will continue to work on things that they know won't be changing.

- 16.4 Councillor Goddard asked why the City Plan is important and what is scrutiny's role at this stage. Max Woodford explained that the City Plan is one of the most important things that the council does as it shapes development for the city for the next 15 years, it is a very long process and touches on many council priorities. This is when the framework is set and that often conflict comes up at the planning permission stage later in the process when the plan is already in place. They want scrutiny members to understand the City Plan fully and to make suggestions to take forward. The plan can be used to fix issues such as the lack of affordable homes by potentially giving up industrial space but this only moves problems around. This is why the plan is important and that people feed in at this early stage.
- 16.5 Mary Davies from the Older People's Council asked a question about the equality impact assessments including potential impacts on health and wellbeing and that this may dilute the focus on equalities. She also felt that she should have been able to make an organisational response to the survey rather than expecting individuals to complete it. Steve Tremlett said that the process of conducting equality impact assessments is set out in plan making guidance but that he would take her points on board for future consultations.
- 16.6 Councillors Loughran, Winder, Lyons, Cattell, Fishleigh, Evans and Mark Strong (CVS) asked questions about the consultation and increasing engagement. Suggestions and comments included: having an explanatory preamble to go along with the survey, using illustrative material and digital tools, not presuming prior knowledge, having a shorter survey with accessible language, giving people the option to comment on specific sections of interest to them, the importance of engaging with young people who are currently unable to afford to live in the city, holding group meetings for key stakeholders to provide feedback, explaining the relevance and importance of City Plan, being really provocative in the questions to get people talking about it, using different media to engage young people such as TikTok, sending out printed copies with council tax letters and using different venues other than libraries such as places of worship, museums, and reaching out to the universities. Councillor Winder said that the public have a different understanding of what they're contributing to and we need to know if they want innovation or just for the city to be better, cleaner and a more pleasant place to live; it is unclear whether the plan is looking to benefit residents or visitors and that the consultation could ask more questions about making the city more equal.
- 16.7 Councillor Fishleigh asked how likely it would be for the government to reduce the housing target and how local neighbourhood plans interact with the City Plan and whether it takes priority. Councillor Fishleigh also asked whether they could end up building on the South Downs National Park. Steve Tremlett explained that the government's standard method for calculating housing need is the starting point that the Plan must seek to meet. A lower housing target for the City Plan might be agreed by a planning inspector when the Plan is examined, but only if robust efforts have been made to explore all means of increasing housing supply to meet the government figure. The City Plan would be unlikely to allocate for housing any sites recently agreed for protection in a neighbourhood plan. The National Park is its own planning authority so the council can only look at sites outside of the park.

- 16.8 Councillor Evans said she was disappointed not to see the short-term lets recommendations from the Task & Finish Group mentioned in the City Plan presentation. Max Woodford explained that they will be looking into the short-term lets recommendations following the approval from Cabinet. Councillor Sykes asked whether permitted development rights, which gives the freedom to change how properties are used, might undermine the city's plans for designated use classes and development areas. Steve Tremlett explained that there is an extensive Article 4 Direction over large parts of the city that restricts permitted development from business and service uses to residential.
- 16.9 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee RESOLVED to note the report.

17 INTRODUCTION TO THE HERITAGE STRATEGY - VERBAL PRESENTATION

- 17.1 Councillor Evans requested an early introduction to the Heritage Strategy at Place O&S Committee as the current strategy ends in 2025. Steve Tremlett presented the slides which outlined that the updated strategy will guide the management of the city's historic environment, reflect new council priorities and Historic England regulations, and explore how heritage assets can support net zero goals, the capital asset strategy, tourism, and culture. Public consultation is planned for the autumn.
- 17.2 Councillor Parrott asked about conservation areas and the issue of preserving beautiful old houses and trying to meet regulations to improve the housing stock, such as EPC standards. Conservation rules make it very difficult for homeowners to tackle issues such as poor ventilation and mould.
- 17.3 Councillor Sykes said there is a lack of consistency in the enforcement of conservation regulations where residents must adhere to them but utility providers can dig up pavements to do works in a historic square and put them back however they like, for example using tarmac to replace historic paving stones. Max Woodford said this was a budget and resource issue and ideally, there would be one member of staff dedicated to this work.
- 17.4 Councillor Fishleigh asked if supporting the capital asset strategy meant they would be looking at heritage buildings that can be sold. Max Woodford said that the document wouldn't make decisions and would only be looking at the heritage assets owned by the council and what opportunities there are to breathe new life into them.
- 17.5 Mark Strong raised a point about climate change mitigation if heritage buildings end up under water or destroyed by storms or hot weather and that consideration needs to be given to this.
- 17.6 Councillor Loughran said that they could produce some guidance for developers to follow in terms of their approach to landscape and townscape visual assessments to combat discrepancies and create a more uniform approach.
- 17.7 Councillor Evans said we need to think about how to design the consultation to include lesser known heritage assets that people might not be aware of. Councillor Allen added

that he has been in contact with the Diocese to ensure that heritage buildings they are responsible for are also properly preserved.

18 TASK & FINISH GROUP - DISCUSSION

- 18.1 Councillor Evans lead a discussion on the topic for the next Task & Finish Group (TFG) for Place O&S Committee. The constitution states that only one TFG can run at any time and currently People O&S Committee has a TFG on anti-social behaviour in social housing. However, it would make sense for Place committee to agree on its next Task & Finish topic so as to be able to begin work on it as soon as work on the anti-social behaviour in housing group has concluded. At the last Council, the Conservative group put forward a Notice of Motion for Place O&S Committee to consider looking at heritage assets for their next TFG.
- 18.2 Members discussed various options for the next topic, some suggestions were:
- Year-round tourism offer
 - Transport for visitors coming to the city
 - Service level agreements between Parks Service and “Friends of” groups for the benefit of open spaces
 - Night time economy
 - Heritage of the city
- 18.3 Members agreed that the next TFG should be on the heritage of Brighton & Hove. Councillor Parrott said this should include a definition of “heritage” so it is not just about preserving old things but looking at what makes the city what it is, it’s culture and identity. This could include looking into landscapes and trees, mods & rockers, the lack of small music venues, LGBTQ+ spaces etc.
- 18.4 There was a discussion about the relationship between the council and utility companies following reports of utility equipment being left on the street for months and mysterious roadworks appearing with no prior notices. It was agreed this would come back to Scrutiny as an agenda item.
- 18.5 A scoping report for a Task & Finish Group on the city’s heritage will be presented at the next committee in September.

19 PART TWO MINUTES

20 PART TWO PROCEEDINGS

The meeting concluded at 6.32pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

