

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

CABINET

2.00pm 17 JULY 2025

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

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

PART ONE

13 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

13a Declarations of interests

13.1 There were none.

13b Exclusion of the press and public

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

14 MINUTES

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

15 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

15.1 The Chair provided the following Communications:

"I'm absolutely delighted to announce hot off the press that the government has confirmed that Brighton & Hove and Sussex is on the government's devolution priority program. The responses to the consultation have been assessed by government and we have met their statute test. So, we will be proceeding to receive devolved powers from central government to our region by next May when a new strategic authority will be established. Once all the councils have given consent, a new mayor for Sussex and Brighton will be elected and funding will be transferred from central government to that new regional authority to start the work of improving our connectivity, investing in our communities, aligning affordable housing with future jobs, and generally improving things for people right across our city and our wider region.

So really pleased to be able to announce that your Labor council is restless for progress and change. We don't duck the difficult issues. In fact, we like to run towards them and find a way through for our communities.

We've got a really busy agenda today which demonstrates the level of ambition and commitment we have to this very fine city of ours. I would also say this that we are always committed to listening to our residents in our communities and I'm pleased to see we've got some public engagement today. As I say, we're in the business of listening, trying to understand, and then trying to work a way through that gets the best possible outcome for our residents, for our communities, and our businesses.

Since this cabinet last met, the news is out that IKEA will be opening at our Churchill Square Shopping Mall next month on the 14th of August. I want to welcome and thank IKEA for choosing Brighton for its only third city shop in the country. It's another vote of confidence in our amazing city. It will bring jobs, visitors, and all sorts of classic home interiors.

I can't wait to see the impact that it will have on our already thriving high streets in the city. Indeed, the Centre for Cities has recently published a report which put Brighton and Hove 58 out of 63 for high street occupancy of the key cities in the country.

The Council Plan Refresh comes at the halfway point for our Labour Administration. It's needed because we've already ticked off many of our manifesto commitments from expanding plastics recycling to supporting residents with the cost of living. And because so much has changed, we now have a Labor government aligned to our goals in the city. We now have devolution on the way. And because we've also now learned much more about what we have inherited at the council, including the judgment by the social housing regulator and the very important issue of LPS blocks which we'll be discussing in detail today. We decided to refresh our Council Plan and make sure that we are all facing in the right direction in the same direction for the remaining two years of our term. I believe that we are in the business of a new era of regeneration in our city. From IKEA to another item on today's agenda, the Seafront Development Board to today's confirmation that we're in the government's devolution priority program. I think this shows that with ambition and the right approach, there is so much we can do to build a better Brighton and Hove for all. Just look at the accomplishments and the stature of the Board that we'll be discussing today that we've attracted to come and support us in acquiring greater investment for our seafront. Just look at how we've managed to develop an exciting case for a new publicly funded five lane 25m community swimming pool at Withdean and how quickly if we do decide to proceed today we will get to work in building it.

Crucially, and as we will discuss today, we want no community left behind as we rebuild our city's ambition from the bottom up. So, today we'll be discussing our housing strategy, and you'll hear how we're improving housing quality, making sure that homes are safe and vitally doing more to prevent homelessness. Everyone deserves a decent, safe, and affordable place to live. That is not a radical ambition. But after the wreckage that the last Tory government left us, it's currently only a vision and not a reality.

Cabinet are set to make crucial decisions today on whether or not to develop and consult on plans to demolish our eight large panel system buildings and replace them with new modern council homes. We recognize that these buildings have happy memories and we have explored every option to look at what can be done. I believe that our tenants deserve better than a short-term fix. Our tenants deserve the very best. And let me say this again that this council is intent on building as many affordable council homes as we can. We want to deliver more homes and we can't build or buy back council homes fast enough. As I said, we don't duck the difficult things that we face. Our

Labor government has protected local government funding in the spending review, but the housing crisis and the broken model we've inherited means that demand for temporary accommodation and other services continues to outstrip our budget and our income.

We have important items on today's agenda concerning our finance reports. And we also have an item concerning a consultation on the future sustainability of our libraries. Later we will be discussing whether to consult on the closure of three community libraries and changing to the opening hours of Jubilee and Hove libraries. It's not something we want to do, but we need to do things in a different way. We don't want and believe any of these libraries need to close if we can find a creative way to work with communities to keep them going as community assets. I'm really pleased that we've already had positive responses from Rottingdean and we're keen to discuss community transfer. If we proceed with today's consultation, we'll be trying to start similar conversations for Westdene.

And finally, our Brighton Dome Corn Exchange restoration project continues to gain local and national acclaim. It's recently won a Sussex Heritage Trust award. The ambitious project saw buildings restored, improved, and upgraded, leading to a renowned role as a cultural landmark and helping to ensure the arts continue to flourish in Brighton and Hove. The project would not have been possible without vital funding from the council, Arts Council England, Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. We've also received support from trust and foundations and many individual donors who all see the value of culture and arts in our city. The awards it has received are a fitting way to demonstrate what can be achieved through collaboration and a commitment to creativity. And in the last few weeks, we've shared some exciting improvement work across the city. From plans to restore and reopen the public toilets at Victoria Road Recreation Ground to the extra 1.6 million pounds we have this year to invest in our roads, pavements, and other highway assets. 35 roads covering 176,000 square meters have been included in our planned maintenance program for this financial year. And in the coming months, our teams will be fixing roads that have fallen into an unacceptable condition following years of Tory underinvestment. The double-sided green benches on Hove lawns, lovingly named by a seafront team as the cucumber benches, will be returned to their former glory in a new social value scheme. Our highways contractor RJ Dance is providing a team to carry out the repairs of the wooden structures while local building merchants and paint suppliers are providing the materials. Residents engaged with the community payback scheme will also help with the sanding and redecorating of the benches. This type of regular maintenance of our seafront is crucial to keep our seafront looking good and ensure it's a place that residents and visitors want to spend their time.

Like every year, we're very proud to support Trans Pride and we stand firmly beside our Trans and Bi residents and communities. Celebrations will take place across the city this Saturday. And with just a few weeks to go, Brighton and Hove Pride is now right around the corner and will be taking over the city on the 2nd and 3rd of August with a parade, a two-day music festival, and a revamped street party. I want to thank council teams who've been working closely with partners across the city making preparations to ensure that it is a safe and successful weekend. Both events are joining forces this year to create a two week festival of diversity, joy and unity between the events."

16 CALL OVER

16.1 All items were reserved for discussion.

17 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**(a) Public Questions****(1) Library Sustainability Plan****14.1 Dylis Brown read the following question:**

If Rottingdean library could be housed in another venue negating the maintenance cost of £68000 would BHCC keep it open. However, what would then BHCC do with the Grange building long term which given its great historic interest should be preserved for the nation

14.2 Councillor Robins provided the following reply:

The reference to £68,000 shared with councillors was from a broader discussion of the costs of managing the whole building – not the library within the building.

The savings identified for the closure of Rottingdean Library are £25,000 in staff and running costs of the library space within the Grange. This covers cleaning, security and provision of the library space only.

Any decisions about the future of the Grange building are a separate matter, and not being consulted upon in this process, which concerns library provision only.

(2) Library Sustainability Plan**14.3 Nicky Lloyd Owen read the following question:**

Rottingdean has an ageing population with issues such as mobility and dementia. Not all have cars. Does the Cabinet not think that to get on a bus to Woodingdean/Saltdean to access library facilities (particularly in winter using slippery, broken pavements) is asking too much? Could not the Cabinet be accused of ageism?

14.4 Councillor Robins provided the following reply:

Many of our libraries are co-located with or are near to other local amenities such as shops, pharmacies and leisure facilities, and residents sometimes reduce journeys by combining visits to these facilities.

We have a wide range of e-resources and the online library enables customers to manage their accounts remotely, ordering and renewing online and checking whether their reservations are ready, to reduce unnecessary journeys.

The Equalities Impact Assessment, appendix to the Cabinet Report, details some identified impacts on particular groups, including older residents.

The Needs and Use Analysis appendix also explores how changes could impact older people in particular areas.

Both of these pieces of work have been started using the information available to us through existing data sets and our library management system. The public consultation will give residents the opportunity to tell us more about how the libraries are used and what the impact of the changes will be. We encourage as many people as possible to

engage with the process and fill in the survey, so we can identify areas of impact and work to mitigate them.

The Library Service already supports people to access digital services with our network of volunteers. The Home Delivery Service supports those who are disabled or carers who cannot visit libraries in person. Other mitigations to support all affected groups, including older people, will be explored as part of the public consultation process.

(3) Library Sustainability Plan

14.5 On behalf of Patricia Dixon, Nikki Lloyd Owen read the following question:

What plans does BHCC have for Rottingdean Grange building? This is used as the hub of the village - not just for the library which is at threat despite the 6th largest footfall of nearly 30k visits a year but for The Grange Gallery and the volunteers who look after it (over 50 local people - for some it is their main, or only, social contact for mental well-being) but for The Grange Gardens (historically of huge value and tended by loyal volunteers), the tea rooms and the artisan gallery.

14.6 Councillor Robins read the following reply:

The savings identified for the closure of Rottingdean Library are £25,000 in staff and running costs of the library space within the Grange. This covers cleaning, security and provision of the library space only. Any decisions about the future of the Grange building are separate from the consultation on the proposed library closure.

As the Chair said we've had quite positive discussions already with Rottingdean Parish Council and Rottingdean Heritage Society which we we'll come on to when we get to the report. But I think it time now to say that myself and the Head of Service are going to make personal visits and you can come along and talk to us at all the affected libraries. Our intent is to do our very, very best to keep what we've got as well as making the savings that we've got, and I hope that reflects in the report when we come to it later on. So again, thanks ever so much for coming to ask your question.

18 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS

(a) Member Questions

18.1 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 Fishleigh - Withdean Community Pool

Why is building a new swimming pool in the city more important than keeping existing libraries open?

Response from Councillor Robins:

Well, there there's a slightly longer answer which we can send you in writing, but I think for the sake of brevity and so we can get through as many questions as possible, the simple answer is one's revenue and one's capital. We can borrow money to build swimming pools. We can't borrow money to keep libraries open.

2) Councillor Fishleigh - Seafront Development Board

Do you agree that including a current community activist who lives locally such as Derek Wright on the Seafront Development Board would be a good idea and, if so, will you add a condition into the report to that effect please?

Response from Councillor Taylor:

I agree with the first premise of your question, which is that Derek Wright is not just a great community activist. He's an asset to the whole city and he does so much work in Kemptown and the rest of the city and St. James Street in promoting that area and has a great love for the city and we work closely with Derek on many, many things and we continue to do so.

In terms of the process of applications, we had an open and rigorous process to join the board. We received over 90 applications for effectively nine places. So, 10 applications per space on the board. And I hope and I know it's only been announced today and I'm sure Councillor Fishleigh will have a look at it that you'll see that the people we have appointed to the board or proposed to appoint have great breadth and depth of experience and will bring huge insight to the future of our seafront.

We're always looking at ways to ensure we can engage residents including those that were not successful in the process on the work of both the board and the council. And a key part of what the board will be doing is doing that resident engagement, deep engagement. That's why we've appointed nine different people, different backgrounds, different parts of the city to get under the skin of the city, get under an understanding of the opportunities and challenges on the seafront. So resident engagement will be a core part of the work of the board and the work of this cabinet.

3) Councillor McNair - Library Sustainability Plan

What has the council done to try to improve footfall to Hollingbury and Westdene libraries?

Response from Councillor Robins:

The Library Service monitors and reports on footfall each year. The number of visitors to our libraries has grown steadily since 2021, with over 1.2m visits each year from 2023-24, almost back to pre-Covid levels. The use of the e-library has grown in this time, too.

The library service is promoted through regular social media posts and campaigns, and press releases to highlight our programme of events and activities. These include the Summer Reading Challenge which attracts several thousands of children to the service each summer, many of whom are new library customers.

In 2023-24 the service bid for and was granted external funding from the British Library for an innovative and engaging marketing campaign, which included posters and billboards across the city.

These promotions and marketing are for all libraries across the city.

4) Councillor Meadows - Library Sustainability Plan

Are there any plans to try to improve footfall across all libraries by adding more services to ensure all our libraries thrive?

Response from Councillor Robins:

The Library Service monitors and reports footfall each year. The number of visitors has grown steadily since 2021, with over 1.2m visits each year since 2023-24, almost back to pre-Covid levels. The use of the e-library has grown in this time, too.

The library service is promoted through regular social media posts and campaigns, and press releases to highlight our programme of events and activities. These include the Summer Reading Challenge which attracts several thousands of children to the service each summer, many of whom are new library customers.

In 2023-24 the service bid for and was granted external funding from the British Library for an innovative and engaging marketing campaign, which included posters and billboards across the city.

The Council Help Desks which have recently been opened in Jubilee and Hove Libraries are increasing footfall, with over 2,000 visitors in the first two months. While they are being supported to access council services, customers are able to see some of the other services available in the library, for example, our volunteer programme, which supports digitally excluded customers, and our toy libraries for families who may struggle to or choose not to buy new toys.

Adult Education and Skills teaching will be hosted in Jubilee Library from September 2025 and will bring more new people into the spaces who could benefit from access to our free to use PCs and the Business and IP Centre.

5) Councillor McNair - Library Sustainability Plan

Can we be assured that the books will be saved for other libraries, or perhaps more importantly locally in a school or community centre?

Response from Councillor Robins:

It is worth noting that we are only voting on whether to proceed with a consultation this afternoon. The books in the libraries proposed for closure would be reallocated to other libraries across the city.

If a community is interested in hosting a Community Collection, such as those at St Lukes and Hollingdean Community Centre, or are looking at alternative options for delivering some services when the library closes, then the books could be handed over to the community for these purposes.

6) Councillor Hill - Library Sustainability Plan

The administration has previously stated their support for 15-minute cities which we also support. Concerns have been raised by Councillors in my party and Cllr Mark Earthey that the library cuts are being justified partly by car ownership rates. The administration making an assessment that residents in places like Rottingdean will choose to drive to the library once their local library has closed. Making people drive to their community library seems to go against the idea of the 15-minute city, would the administration agree?

Response from Councillor Robins:

In short, no. The administration wouldn't agree. Car ownership rates are just one part of the extensive needs and use analysis attached in the appendix of the cabinet report. While traveling distances have been included between libraries, it has not been assumed that all journeys would be by car. There is an excellent bus network across the city and most of the areas affected are well served by this. For example, Rottingdean to Saltdean has a number of bus routes including the 12 and the 14 routes which run multiple times each hour. There are bike parking facilities at most libraries and many of our libraries are located near other local amenities such as schools, shops, pharmacists, leisure facilities and we would encourage residents to reduce journeys by accessing all those at the same time. We know that many of our community libraries are busiest around the school drop off and pickup time. And we have a wide range of resources and an online library to enable customers to manage their accounts remotely and order and renew online checking whether their reservations are ready to reduce unnecessary journeys. And I did just check times traveling from the White Horse in the center of Rottingdean to Saltdean Lido and it's 5 minutes by car, it's 3 minutes by bus, 9 minutes on a bike and 20 minutes if you walk. So, walking would be the only thing that would fall outside of a 15-minute city. And that would be if you lived by the White Horse in Rottingdean. So, I think we could claim partially that we're still within a 15-minute ride for most things

7) Councillor Hill - Seafront Development Board

Through what process was Lord Steve Bassam chosen for the position as chair? Were other people given the chance to put themselves forward for the role? On what criteria was Lord Bassam chosen?

Response from Councillor Taylor:

Lord Bassam has a particularly relevant background and set of skills for chairing the seafront development board given his work within the city over many decades. He's a former leader of Brighton Borough and Brighton & Hove City Councils and was a minister within national government. His work in the Lords included chairing a select committee on regenerating seaside towns and communities which produced a report in 2019 that was received nationally with widespread interest, and he's acknowledged as being one of the leading voices in arguing for more funding support and regeneration of our seaside towns. I think he's going to be a superb chair.

8) Councillor Shanks - Council Plan Refresh

Member development is mentioned as important in the plan, will the administration include opposition members in the development of any plans?

Response from Councillor Sankey:

Thank you for your question. Member development is indeed a key priority for the Council, as outlined in our Council Plan. At page 37 of the papers, in the Council Plan refresh document, we outline that we will ensure good governance and financial resilience by ensuring *that we have clear processes and structures in place and that*

Members are well briefed, for example through holding all councillor briefings, attendance at Group Meetings and through a review of the overview & scrutiny process. We are committed to ensuring that all members have access to opportunities for professional growth and development. To shape an effective programme, in January 2025 a Training Needs Analysis was circulated to all members. So far we have received 24 responses, which provide useful insights, but a stronger response rate would help ensure the programme reflects the full range of member needs. We encourage all councillors, including opposition members, to complete the survey so that we can design a balanced and inclusive development plan.

All Councillor Briefing sessions will provide *all* members with the latest information on important upcoming policy, project, service changes and consultations. Such as the one we held last week advising of this Council plan refresh, giving all members a chance to ask questions. The recordings, presentations and briefing notes will be held in the members area of the SharePoint site so every elected member of BHCC can access the briefings.

Overview & Scrutiny will continue to work with executive colleagues to identify key plans and strategies for scrutiny at an early stage of development, where there is the greatest opportunity for non-executive member and community co-optee input to influence and add value. We will consider more Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups which provide in-depth scrutiny, enable learning from best practice, and meaningful engagement with stakeholders. Which will enable non-executive members to make recommendations to Cabinet such as the valuable recent findings of the short term lets task and finish group.

9) Councillor Shanks - Council Plan Refresh

How will rent collection be improved?

Response from Councillor Sankey:

Thank you for your question. We work closely and fund Money Advice Plus (MAPs) to provide tenants with specialist benefits and debt advice. In 2024/25, this delivered £474k in additional benefit income as well as £63k in council tax and discretionary housing payments. Money Advice Plus also secured long-term debt solutions totalling 369k.

The Housing Income team have been trained on Universal Credit migration; this is a significant shift in the benefits and welfare system. Residents that have migrated and are migrating over to Universal Credit are being contacted by Income Officers to check Universal Credit payments and establish new payment plans as migration to Universal Credit changes the way they need to pay their rent. Tenants that fail to migrate, are at greatest risk of losing transitional protections. They are being offered further support, such as home visits or support with Job Centre appointments to help them move over to Universal Credit successfully.

The Housing Income service has conducted targeted work to increase the uptake of specific benefits, for example Pension Credit and Winter Fuel Payments in 2024/25. For 2025/26, proactive contact is proposed for claimants that we believe will be migrated over to Universal Credit by March 2026 (approx. 1000 residents).

10) Councillor Shanks - Council Plan Refresh

Has the new system of customer service centres in the libraries been successful?

Response from Councillor Sankey:

We relocated our customer service centres from Bartholomew House to Jubilee Library and from Hove Town Hall to Hove Library on 6th May so these changes are new. Over 2,000 people visited our Help Desks in the first two months. As with any change, we are experiencing some teething issues. Due to sickness, vacancies and associated shortage of trained staff, staffed hours have had to be temporarily reduced, but security staff have remained available to assist customers with self-help facilities. We apologise to residents for the inconvenience caused. However, in-person support for families has remained available at Family Hubs, and the Homelessness Helpdesk has been open at Bartholomew House.

Over 20 Library Officers have now been trained with 30 more in training. Consequently, there are currently no unstaffed days at Jubilee Library from this week, and Hove Library will follow suit as of 1st August. Despite initial challenges, the new service model will provide increased resilience, improved self-serve options, and good customer service by trusted library staff. Other benefits include enhanced digital inclusion and sustainability. We remain committed to providing good face-to-face services in a truly One Council way and will continue to make improvements based on customer feedback.

11) Councillor Shanks - Council Plan Refresh

Is there enough capacity in the council to deal with the ongoing issues outlined in view of the Red status of the percentage change in employment?

Response from Councillor Sankey:

Thank you for your question. Much of the change to employment rates will be driven by macro-economic factors outside of the council's control. The Get Sussex Working Plan, Skills Bootcamps and other Employment and Skills initiatives will be our best tools for tackling these issues.

The 80% long-term employment ambition is central governments and not a specific target for Brighton and Hove, however we will be working towards this goal as outlined in the papers at page 32 of the Council Plan Refresh; *Working with partners to deliver ambitious employment, training and apprenticeship opportunities. With neighbouring local authorities, we will continue to develop a Get Sussex Working plan working toward the government's goal of reducing economic inactivity and achieving an 80% long-term employment rate. We will set immediate objectives and actions for the next 1-2 years and develop a longer-term strategic plan to enhance employment, address key challenges and utilise resources efficiently. To deliver the plan we are setting up a Connect to Work programme to help people with disabilities and long-term health conditions, to find and maintain employment.*

Connect to Work is one of many initiatives set by government to increase activity that the council will be delivering on. The council's teams will work collaboratively across directorates and with external partners to address known issues.

12) Councillor West – Seafront Development Board

Having previously disbanded a number of working groups and boards suggesting they were not a good use of officer time, the administration is now reversing their approach, setting up new boards that call upon considerable officer resources. How is this u-turn explained and justified?

Response from Councillor Taylor:

It is not a u-turn, and I'm afraid Cllr West is suffering from a basic misunderstanding. The administration disbanded many cross-party working groups, which were a necessary function of a no-overall-control council. We did not disband outside bodies – as evidenced by the fact that many were maintained – for example the Greater Brighton Economic Board, the Downland Advisory Panel, the Transport Partnership etc. The Seafront Development Board is a chance to bring together members and key experts and stakeholders to take a fresh look at how we can best shape the future of this key asset for the city. The aim is for the board to work with officers to bring forward development and improvements to the seafront and complement existing projects, programmes and work-streams. It is deliberately meant to be wider than just the city council and so does not replicate the former member working groups.

13) Councillor West – Seafront Development Board

The proposed SDB will have considerable power of influence and will make recommendations to the Cabinet. While board membership is proposed to include several members of the Labour administration, members of the official opposition are excluded. With no diversity of elected political representation, how will it be possible to ensure it meets the stated expectation that the “board is broadly representative of the wider community”?

Response from Councillor Taylor:

It's very important to state as in the terms of reference that the Board does not have decision-making power. It's an advisory board and it's an independent advisory board to the Cabinet. The Board does not have subcommittee status and the political balance rules in section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act therefore will not apply. I hope that Councillor West can see when he looks at the list of appointments that we have real breadth depth and experience on the board that represents a variety of interests and businesses backgrounds and all parts of the city.

14) Councillor West – Seafront Development Board

The proposed SDB is to be created by the Cabinet and to report to the Cabinet. How will it be possible for the Opposition, Scrutiny and Council to hold the Board to account?

Response from Councillor Taylor:

The Board will not be a decision making body and report into Cabinet. This will enable transparency and opportunities for scrutiny in line with the council's constitution.

15) Councillor West – Seafront Development Board

It is proposed that Cabinet agree to the appointment of Lord Steve Bassam to Chair the Board. Ennobled by Tony Blair, Lord Bassam is a former Labour leader of the City Council, Labour member of the House of Lords, and guru to the current Council Leader. This is a political appointment which risks undermining the integrity and independence of the Board's leadership and advice. Is it not, in fact, a prime example of the sort of 'jobs for the boys' nepotism that has so damaged public trust in government in recent years?

Response from Councillor Taylor:

The answer to that is no. It's bad faith, cynical questions like the one we've just heard that damages trust in public servants. We've got nine people from outside the council, all of significant experience, passion for the city, who are volunteering their time for free to try and improve the seafront. It should be welcomed, not cynically criticised like we've just heard from Councillor West. It's questions like that that undermine public servants and people trying to improve life in this country and this city. As I said earlier, Lord Bassam has particularly relevant background and set of skills given his history as leader of the council on multiple occasions, a senior government minister and somebody who's authored a report on seafront redevelopment.

16) Councillor West – Withdean Community Pool

3.9 of the report states "the council is committed to creating a swimming facility that is fully accessible and inclusive..." While it then goes on to describe welcome design features aimed to support the mobility impaired, what consideration has been made of the needs of the 1 in 3 UK adults who have hearing loss or tinnitus, including 1.2m adults who have hearing loss severe enough they would not be able to hear most conversational speech? What consideration has been given to matters such as: acoustics to minimise echo and suppress noise; corridor width to support comfortable conversation distances; lighting brightness and evenness to support lip-reading; information access; and contact methods such as Relay UK? Have hearing loss organisations, such as the RNID, been consulted for design advice?

Response from Councillor Robins:

The pool roof will be lined with a perforated metal deck to improve acoustics, but a full acoustic assessment will be conducted during the next stage of design (RIBA 4), where further acoustic panels and recommendations will be considered. Engagement with key stakeholders and community organisations, including those representing people with disabilities, will continue throughout the project to help further refine the scheme and to inform operational practices. We do however recognise the importance of acoustics and have already engaged with Thomas Pocklington Trust who are a charity supporting people who are visually impaired, as acoustics are equally as important to them given that they will rely heavily on being able to hear and recognise sounds to help them find their way around the facility and to be able to participate safely.

17) Councillor West – Withdean Community Pool

The report gives a great deal of focus to the provision for motorists, seeking to meet anticipated increased demand, including committing extra cost to create additional

parking to mitigate spaces lost due to the development. Why is no significant consideration and investment given to improving accessible cycle parking and connectivity to the A23 cycle lane?

Response from Councillor Robins:

The project team are exploring the option of increasing cycle parking provision on the site and are also considering how we may be able to create safer access routes through the car park to the main entrance for those arriving by bicycle. A full transport statement is being developed as part of the formal planning application process and there will be further engagement with the Highways/Transport team. The Beryl Bike Hub which has been recently installed on site, has been popular so we will also be considering if an additional Hub could be beneficial to centre users.

18) Councillor West – Withdean Community Pool

With the higher utilisation of car parking spaces encouraging increased access by motor vehicles, how will safety and ease of access for 42% of respondents who said they will walk and 21% of respondents who said they would cycle and 13% who said they would use the bus, be improved and prioritised - especially given the highway space constraints under the narrow Tongdean Lane railway bridge? Why is it not proposed to reduce the speed limit under the bridge from 30mph to 20mph nor to re-configure the highway space there to better support active travellers? How many conveniently located Sheffield cycle parking loops will complement the current 15 at the main entrance?

Response from Councillor Robins:

The number of car parking spaces on the site will actually decrease ever so slightly, which may in fact discourage the use of motor vehicles. The project team, along with transport consultants, are exploring how to improve both pedestrian and cycle access through the car park to the main entrance and are considering additional secure cycle parking provision at the main entrance or elsewhere on the site. As part of the recent 3G pitch development at Withdean we created a build out of the pavement with a dropper kerb and tactile paving to make crossing Tongdean Lane near the railway bridge easier for pedestrians and cyclists. Where the footway does narrow under the bridge, there are also guard railings in place to segregate pedestrian and vehicular movements in this space. Reviewing the speed limit of the surrounding roads would need to be led by highways.

19) Councillor West – Withdean Community Pool

What facility will the pool offer to support the sport of diving?

Response from Councillor Robins:

The new pool will have a constant depth of 1.35 to meet the FINA regulations for competitive (racing) diving into the pool, and the intention is to have starting blocks at one end to enable club swimmers to dive into the pool. There will however be no public diving allowed in the pool, and this new facility will not have diving boards. Throughout

the public consultation and engagement that has been undertaken to date, there was no clear demand for diving facilities.

20) Councillor West – Library Sustainability Plan

With the proposed closure of Westdene Library, will the toilets within the library, which offer baby changing, wheel chair access and all gender facilities, remain open and publicly accessible, and if not how and when will they be replaced?

Response from Councillor Robins:

The toilet at Westdene Library is open to all members of the public one day/week, on Tuesdays when it is staffed by a Library Officer. The impact of withdrawing access to this facility one day/week would be minimal.

The toilet is available for Libraries Extra customers only on the other 6 days/week and is not a public toilet facility. Residents can only enter the building on those days if they have the enhanced Libraries Extra library membership and can use their PIN and card to access the space

21) Councillor McLeay – Housing Strategy

Increasing affordable Housing supply by all means possible is desirable and the councils progress in terms of new homes made available through acquisitions and new build need to be fully recorded. The council's actions in reducing housing supply should also be recorded and deducted - for example when the LPS block homes are removed from the available housing stock and left vacant as part of a decant decision. How will the council account for these homes going forward – the housing lost and the homes built to replace them?

Response from Councillor Williams:

We monitor the delivery of the new supply of council housing through our suite of corporate performance indicators. We report our quarterly performance to Area Panels and will continue to report back to Cabinet on our progress through the annual updates on the Housing Strategy. We also report on our stock numbers to determine changes in stock levels each year.

We have a target to deliver at least 2,000 affordable homes through the lifetime of the Housing Strategy and alongside our Registered Provider partners we have a pipeline of sites and opportunities to achieve this. We'll aim to use the redevelopment of the LPS block sites as an opportunity to increase the number of affordable homes on or around the sites taking a place-based approach to our programme. This will focus on the quality of housing, the surrounding environment and community.

22) Councillor McLeay – Housing Strategy

Given the rise in households in temporary accommodation and rough sleeping, shouldn't the council prioritise setting and monitoring clear, ambitious targets for reducing homelessness, rather than relying on lengthy strategy reviews as referenced in HS20 of the action plan? What targets is the housing department working to currently while the strategy is worked on?

Response from Councillor Williams:

We have clear targets for preventing homelessness, and Brighton & Hove City Council continues to lead the South-East in this work, with a strong focus on securing long-term housing outcomes. In 2024/25, the council achieved a significantly higher proportion of prevention duty cases closed with accommodation secured for six months or more than the regional average.

This success reflects our commitment to early intervention and tailored support. We've expanded our early prevention work, including innovative partnerships with GPs and health services to identify and support at-risk residents before crisis point. This proactive approach helps individuals remain in their homes or secure alternative accommodation, reducing the need for temporary placements.

Where temporary accommodation is necessary, we've increased supply through block-booking arrangements and improved move-on pathways into settled housing. This ensures placements are safer, more stable, and closer to the city, minimising disruption for families.

23) Councillor McLeay – Housing Strategy

Given the high cost and quality concerns of private temporary accommodation, why is the council's 10% target for using buy-backs as in-house temporary housing (see HS17 in the action plan) so low? Can this be raised significantly, especially since the previous proposals, set during the long gone days of the housing and new homes committee, aimed for 100%?

Response from Councillor Williams:

We apply criteria to buying back homes. As part of this, we review the financial viability of the purchase to ensure that it offers value for money. This is often harder to achieve at TA rents and therefore we don't always rely solely on buybacks for TA. A 10% target as a minimum of this particular programs included based on recent experience of purchases. This is a minimum and we are on track to exceed this target this year with up to 20% in fact of purchases being used for TA. Now, increasing council loan temporary accommodation is a priority given the climate that we are in now and it is a priority in our supply programs and our programs support both a provision of permanent housing which is so important create and creating a supply for residents to move on from temporary accommodation plus dedicated new temporary accommodation. And we achieve this through delivering a range of new builds and acquisitions. We'll delivering 11 new homes at Palace Place. I believe we're going to see that starting to be built this week, which I'm pleased to see. And we're on site to deliver some three more homes at Rotherfield Crescent as well. We're also actively reviewing lots of other acquisition opportunities and we've been successful in securing funding from three phases of the local authority housing fund to increase those temporary accommodation acquisitions and look forward to securing new funding under this fund which was announced in the recent spending review which we were pleased to hear. And in addition, we are using empty homes and buybacks from the eight LPS blocks as council owned temporary accommodation.

24) Councillor McLeay – Large Panel System Blocks

In light of concerning reports from Eastbourne about out-of-area placements in temporary accommodation, can you confirm whether residents from the 8 LPS blocks will need to be rehoused outside the local area during the decant process?

Response from Councillor Williams:

Brighton & Hove City Council is committed to ensuring that secure tenants affected by the regeneration of the eight Large Panel System (LPS) blocks will be offered like-for-like homes within the city. This means residents will be rehoused in properties that match their current home in size and type, and crucially, remain within Brighton & Hove. The council's proposed Rehousing Policy and Local Lettings Plan will formalise this commitment, ensuring minimal disruption to residents' lives and preserving community ties.

Importantly, all secure tenants will retain a right to return to the redeveloped sites once new homes are built. This right is a central part of the council's tenant offer, as outlined within the report, and reflects its commitment to fairness, inclusion, and housing stability.

25) Councillor McLeay – Large Panel System Blocks

Discussed briefly during a recent overview and scrutiny meeting was the challenge of financing this redevelopment. Given the national scale and cost of addressing safety issues in LPS buildings, and the recognition that housing providers cannot tackle this alone, what is the council doing to secure government funding and support? Will it actively join or lead calls for a coordinated, well-funded national strategy as urged by the Building Safety Regulator?

Response from Councillor Williams:

Brighton and Hove have backed a critical campaign 'Secure the future of England's council housing' alongside a coalition of over 100 local authorities. This sets out a full roadmap to renew our country's council housing over the next decade and critical policy changes for the realisation of the government's social housing ambitions. Some of these changes were announced through the recent Spending Review including significant investment in new affordable housing but further work is still ongoing with this campaign.

Officers have also spoken to Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Members have lobbied for funding but there is no funding currently available for LPS remediation. The focus for remediation remains on fire safety and the recent extension for social landlords to be able to apply to the Cladding Safety Scheme. There remains the need for a clear, well-funded national strategy to assess, prioritise and address the risks associated with LPS buildings and we have joined a coalition of sector wide partners to campaign further on this issue. Finally, I'd note the £39 billion allocated by the government for social housing, which will support major housebuilding and regeneration activity up and down the country, including here in Brighton & Hove.

26) Councillor Pickett – Withdean Community Pool

The proposal states that to cover the costs of building the pool there will be a reliance on future income streams from the introduction of padel courts at Withdean. If the padel tennis doesn't go ahead, a revenue pressure of £0.101m will mean the service will need to manage within the existing reserves. Can you explain further what that might actually mean for the day to day business of the Leisure Centre and does this mean the padel tennis is critical for the financial success of this project?

Response from Councillor Robins:

Although it is anticipated that the new pool will generate a surplus, there may be additional revenue funding required to service the annual borrowing costs. If taken forward, the proposed indoor Padel courts at Withdean would be expected to contribute significantly towards this but the outdoor Padel courts also planned for Withdean, which already have planning permission, should be complete in the Autumn and will generate revenue for the council. Alternatively, there would also be an option to use the additional income generated from other recent capital projects at Withdean to service the borrowing repayments, for example the new 3G pitches and 'Level Up' Soft Play facility.

27) Councillor Pickett – Library Sustainability Plan

The continuing squeeze on our statutory library services is worrying. This report claims that concentrating resources on fewer physical library locations, whilst maintaining a geographic spread across the city, will support longer-term sustainability of the wider city service, as well as safeguarding the quality of library provision. Can you confirm that once this current process is complete that there will be no more cuts to service for libraries including the reduction of hours or further community libraries forced to close?

Response from Councillor Robins:

The savings identified are for the financial years 2025-27.

I can't confirm what the financial situation will be beyond that time or what the impact on individual services might be as the budgets for future years have not been set.

28) Councillor Pickett – Library Sustainability Plan

With formerly non-library services such as car permits now outsourced to libraries, how will these Council Help Desks fare with the reductions to library open times, taking into consideration the need to cut staffed hours in order to reduce the cost of running library services?

Response from Councillor Robins:

The Council Help Desks will not be affected by the reductions to opening hours. The reduction in staffed hours will be from the proposed evening and weekend reductions and some out of hours rota changes.

29) Councillor Pickett – Library Sustainability Plan

I note that the report states that a reduction in opening hours at Jubilee could impact the service's ability to offer Libraries Extra as an option in community libraries, as this

currently relies on library staff phone support from Jubilee. Won't this bring the statistical number of visits to community libraries down and open them up as they next option to cut?

Response from Councillor Robins:

We are exploring ways to minimise the impact of reductions in opening hours at Jubilee on Libraries Extra.

If the hours were to reduce, they could impact footfall at community libraries on Monday evenings and Sunday afternoons. These are already some of the quietest times across all of our libraries and would affect a very small number of customers in the community libraries.

30) Councillor Pickett – Library Sustainability Plan

Where the report notes that where community libraries were transferred to local community groups at point of closure, the local authority no longer takes any responsibility for the operation or provision of these spaces. Can you please explain how this would work? Does this mean the library can remain in the original building? Are the books, furniture, etc., given over to the community group?

Response from Councillor Robins:

There are a wide variety of delivery options in place across the country, with varying levels of input and support from the remaining libraries.

In the example of East Sussex Libraries, an arrangement was agreed where some of the community libraries proposed to close remained in the original buildings, and the furniture and books were handed over to them to kick start their offer. Other libraries have moved into alternative premises which may better suit their needs as a community space. It will vary from place to place depending on the ownership and management of each building and the intentions and capacity of the community groups who might be interested in offering some services in their area. If groups are interested in exploring these options with Brighton & Hove, we would encourage them to contact us through the public consultation and we would be keen to discuss options for the future.

31) Councillor Pickett - Library Sustainability Plan

When one takes into account the true impact cuts and closure such as these will have on older members of the city, can we really agree that the equalities impact has been properly taken into account here? Many older residents cannot access digital services or travel around the city to find the next library. If the Libraries Extra service is to be impacted by reduction in hours at Hove and Jubilee libraries, this will also not work. What steps have been taken to help the older populace?

Response from Councillor Robins:

The Equalities Impact Assessment, appendix to the Cabinet Report, includes some identified impacts on particular groups, including older residents.

The Needs and Use Analysis appendix also explores how changes could impact older people in particular areas.

Both of these pieces of work have been started using the information available to us through existing data sets and our library management system and will continue to be developed as the process of consultation progresses. The public consultation will give residents the opportunity to tell us more about how the libraries are used and what the impact of the changes will be. We encourage as many people as possible to engage with the process and fill in the survey, so we can identify areas of impact and work to mitigate them.

The Library Service already supports people to access digital services with our network of volunteers. The Home Delivery Service supports those who are disabled or carers who cannot visit libraries in person. Community book collections have been provided in other areas for those who cannot regularly travel to another library. Other mitigations to support all affected groups, including older people, will be explored as part of the public consultation process.

32) Councillor Sykes – TBM

Temporary Accommodation costs. TBM shows a forecast variance in 2025/6 of £6.5m which is twice the original 2025/6 budget of £3.2m. For FY 2026/7, pressure funding for TA is £12m (this is from Item 27, General Fund 2026/7 planning). TA spending is out of control. Councils are at the whim of the market and additional costs are going to private landlords. This has potential to lead to bankruptcy for this and other councils. What urgent representations are they making nationally to control this crisis?

Response from Councillor Taylor:

Cllr Sykes is absolutely correct in his analysis, and Temporary accommodation costs are the most significant budget pressure for BHCC and many other Councils across the country, and these costs are increasing rapidly.

We are actively liaising with government to ensure they understand the extent of the crisis, and are making funding available to try and tackle the root causes. I would note the significant investment that has been announced (£39bn) for affordable housing grants, although this will take time to feed through.

There is also much we are doing locally to help manage these pressures and improve outcomes for residents of the city, for example by building and purchasing more affordable accommodation and investing in prevention.

33) Councillor Sykes – TBM

Page 741 refers to a new capital project namely the purchase and installation of 10 new beach huts for £51k. Is this the installation near the new Meeting Place cafe, for which the council has recently applied for retrospective planning permission?

Response from Councillor Taylor:

The company, Kairos Global, are running the new temporary beach huts venture near to The Meeting Place Café. They have applied to BHCC Planning department for temporary planning permission to have 11 huts on Hove Promenade to rent from June to September.

The planning application for the temporary installation of 11 timber beach huts for a 4-month period, was made on the 7 May, and is valid from the 2 June until the end of September 2027. The consultation expires on the 18 July – to date we have received 9

objections and a councillor representation in objection. Planning will review the representations to see if this is a committee item. The organiser is operating under 28 days permitted development (change of use).

The Seafront Office have been offered the opportunity to purchase ten of the huts from Kairos Global. Any commercial income derived from these beach huts will be set against the budget savings programme being driven by the council. The Seafront team will submit a Planning Application for any new locations for the ten huts post the temporary beach hut venture.

19 MATTERS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE

19.1 There were none.

20 REPRESENTATIONS FROM OPPOSITION MEMBERS

20.1 Cabinet received a representation from Councillor McLeay on Item 25: Housing Strategy 2024-29 Annual Monitoring Report 2024/25.

20.2 Cabinet received a representation from Councillor Shanks on 24: Library Sustainability Plan.

21 COUNCIL PLAN REFRESH

21.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought endorsement for a refresh of the Council Plan 2023-2027. The refresh had been informed by resident, stakeholder and staff engagement, and reflected the recommendations of the recent Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge.

21.2 Councillors Miller, Allen, Williams, Rowkins, Muten, Robins and Daniel contributed to the debate of the report.

21.3 Resolved-

- 1) Cabinet recommends the updated Council Plan refresh at Appendix 1 to full Council for approval.
- 2) Cabinet notes the achievements made since the Council Plan was adopted in July 2023 as set out in Appendix 2.
- 3) Cabinet notes the progress made in relation to delivering the Council Plan in 2024/25 as detailed in Appendix 3.
- 4) Cabinet notes the recommendations in the Corporate Peer Challenge at Appendix 4 and the response to these in the Council Plan Refresh and agrees a future report on progress to be brought to a future Cabinet meeting, as part of the quarterly performance update.
- 5) Cabinet delegates to the Head of Cabinet Office, following consultation with the Leader, the authority to make changes to the design and layout of the documents before publication on the Council's website.

22 SEAFRONT DEVELOPMENT BOARD

22.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought approval to establish a Seafront Development Board 'the Board' that would advise on the strategic development, commercial future regeneration and sustainable management of Brighton & Hove's iconic seafront, ensuring it is a vibrant, playful, accessible, and economically thriving destination for residents, visitors and businesses.

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

22.3 Resolved-

- 1) Cabinet agrees to establish a Seafront Development Board and the Terms of Reference in Appendix 1.
- 2) Cabinet agrees to the appointment of Rt Hon Lord Bassam as Chair and to the appointment of the Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration as Vice Chair of the Board.
- 3) Cabinet note progress with the recruitment process for Board members and delegates authority to the Director for Place, in consultation with the Cabinet member for Finance & City Regeneration and Chair of the Board, to finalise membership and operational arrangements.

23 WITHDEAN COMMUNITY POOL

23.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought approval for design proposals and budget for a community swimming facility at Withdean Sports Complex.

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

23.3 Resolved-

That Cabinet:

- 1) Agrees to the current designs shown in Appendix A being progressed to a submission of a full planning application.
- 2) Approves a total project budget of £6.880m to deliver this new facility (inclusive of the previously approved £0.451m for Design Stages 2-4 to date) to be funded from a combination of s106 and capital borrowing.
- 3) Delegates authority to the Corporate Director City Operations, in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member, to take all steps necessary to award and enter into a suitable contract with a main construction contractor, together with all associated contractual warranties and documents.

- 4) Delegates authority to the Corporate Director City Operations, in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member to take all steps necessary to enter into an ongoing professional services contract with the preferred bidder, together with all associated contractual warranties and documents.

24 LIBRARY SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

- 24.1 Cabinet considered a report that provided an overview of the sustainability plan for the Library Service, which supported delivery of the council priorities to invest in the city and to enable lifelong learning. This involved a proposed reduction in the number of community libraries and opening hours in central libraries. The report sought agreement to start a public consultation to seek views from a range of stakeholders on these proposals.
- 24.2 Councillors Taylor, Daniel, Robins, Miller and Sankey asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

24.3 Resolved-

That Cabinet:

- 1) Notes the sustainability plan for Libraries as set out in this report
- 2) Agrees to commence a public consultation on the proposals, specifically covering the following suggestions:
- 3) Consult on the proposed closure of Hollingbury Library
- 4) Consult on the proposed closure of Rottingdean Library
- 5) Consult on the proposed closure of Westdene Library
- 6) Consult on the proposed changes in opening hours at Hove Library
- 7) Consult on the proposed changes in opening hours at Jubilee Library

25 HOUSING STRATEGY (2024-29) ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2024/25

- 14.1 Cabinet considered a report that provided an update on the progress made on delivery of the Housing Strategy action plan (April 2024- March 2025) and included proposed actions for 2025-26.
- 14.2 Councillors Sankey, Allen, Daniel, Robins, Muten and Miller asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.
- 14.3 **Resolved-**
 - 1) That Cabinet consider and note the progress made towards the ambitions set out in the Housing Strategy 2024-29 and agrees actions to be undertaken in 2025-26 as set out at Appendix 1.

26 LARGE PANEL SYSTEM BLOCKS - OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 26.1 Cabinet considered a report that presented an options appraisal undertaken for 8 large panel system (LPS) blocks within the housing portfolio.
- 26.2 Councillors Sankey, Taylor, Robins, Rowkins, Muten and Miller asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

26.3 Resolved-**St James House**

- 1) Cabinet agrees that in principle the preferred option for addressing the structural and strengthening issues identified in respect of St James House is the demolition and replacement of St James House with new homes in keeping with the housing needs of the city, and regeneration of the site.
- 2) Cabinet agrees for officers to progress with the delivery of the design and feasibility work for the development, inclusive of demolition, planning, through appointment of a multi-disciplinary team.
- 3) Cabinet agrees for officers to further explore options for the delivery mechanism of any regeneration scheme for St James House, including through Homes for Brighton & Hove LLP or direct council delivery.
- 4) Cabinet agrees to proceed to a consultation in respect of the preferred option with leaseholders, tenants, and other relevant stakeholders.
- 5) Cabinet notes that subject to approval of recommendation in paragraph 2.1, then, following consultation with the Homemove Manager, may exercise discretion under the Allocations Policy to allocate Priority Band B to secure tenants of St James House seeking transfers to alternative council owned homes.
- 6) Cabinet agrees for officers to develop and consult upon a Rehousing Policy and Local Lettings Plan which would apply to the temporary and/or permanent rehousing of all Council tenants who are accommodated by the Council under a statutory duty and who are affected by the regeneration schemes of St James House and which incorporates the proposed tenant offer described in the report, including in relation to the priority of existing Council tenants of St James House for allocation to the new housing on the site, in keeping with the intention to offer right to return.
- 7) The Cabinet notes the support and offer to leaseholders outlined in the report and the intention to engage with leaseholders further regarding the development of proposals.
- 8) Cabinet agrees to a Housing Revenue Account capital budget of £3.013m to cover initial development work, resident support, and a rehousing programme in line with the anticipated 'tenant offer'.

Nettleton Court and Dudeney Lodge

- 9) Cabinet agrees that in principle the preferred option for addressing the structural and strengthening issues identified in respect of Nettleton Court and Dudeney Lodge is their demolition and replacement with new homes in keeping with the housing needs of the city, and regeneration of the site.
- 10) Cabinet agrees for officers to progress with the delivery of the design and feasibility work for the development of the site of Nettleton Court and Dudeney Lodge, inclusive of demolition, planning, through appointment of a multi-disciplinary team.
- 11) Cabinet agrees for officers to explore delivery options for the site, including through a 3rd party partner.
- 12) Cabinet agrees to proceed to a consultation in respect of the preferred option with leaseholders, tenants, and other relevant stakeholders.
- 13) Cabinet notes that, subject to the approval of recommendation in paragraph 2.9, then, following consultation with the Homemove Manager, may exercise their discretion under the Allocations Policy to agree to allocate Priority Band B to secure tenants of Nettleton Court and Dudeney Lodge seeking transfers to alternative council owned homes.
- 14) Cabinet agrees for officers to develop and consult upon a Rehousing Policy and Local Lettings Plan which would apply to the temporary and/or permanent rehousing of all Council tenants who are accommodated by the Council under a statutory duty and who are affected by the regeneration schemes of Nettleton Court and Dudeney Lodge and which incorporates the proposed tenant offer described in the report, including in relation to the priority of existing Council tenants of Nettleton Court and Dudeney Lodge for allocation to the new housing on the site, in keeping with the intention to offer right to return.
- 15) Cabinet notes the support and offer to leaseholders outlined in the report and the intention to engage with leaseholders further regarding the development of proposals.
- 16) Cabinet agrees to a Housing Revenue Account capital budget of £2.488m to cover initial development work, resident support, tenant offer and future rehousing programme.

**Falcon Court, Heron Court, Kestrel Court, Kingfisher Court, and Swallow Court
("North Whitehawk")**

- 17) Cabinet agrees in principle that the preferred option for addressing the structural and strengthening issues identified in respect of Falcon Court, Heron Court, Kestrel Court, Kingfisher Court, and Swallow Court is their demolition and replacement with new homes in keeping with the housing needs of the city, and regeneration of the site.
- 18) Cabinet agrees to initiate a masterplanning and stakeholder visioning exercise for the wider Whitehawk area.
- 19) Cabinet agrees to proceed to a consultation in respect of the preferred option with leaseholders, tenants, and other relevant stakeholders.

- 20) Cabinet agrees to a Housing Revenue Account capital budget of £1.988m to appoint a multi-disciplinary project team for the masterplan work, for the feasibility and design of North Whitehawk (phase 1), and to fund additional resident support and future rehousing programme.
- 21) Cabinet notes that, subject to approval of recommendation in paragraph 2.17, then, following consultation with the Homemove Manager, may exercise their discretion under the Allocations Policy to agree to allocate Priority Band B to secure tenants of Falcon Court, Heron Court, Kestrel Court, Kingfisher Court and Swallow Court, seeking transfers to alternative council owned homes.
- 22) Cabinet agrees for officers to develop and consult on a Rehousing Policy and Local Lettings Plan which would apply to the temporary and/or permanent rehousing of all Council tenants who are accommodated by the Council under a statutory duty who are affected by the regeneration schemes for Falcon Court, Heron Court, Kestrel Court, Kingfisher Court and Swallow Court, and which incorporates the proposed tenant offer described in the report, including in relation to the priority of existing Council tenants for allocation to the new housing on the site, in keeping with the intention to offer right to return.

27 GENERAL FUND BUDGET PLANNING & RESOURCE UPDATE - 2026-27 TO 2029-30

- 27.1 Cabinet considered a report that provided a budget planning and resource update as a key part of the preparation for the 2026/27 annual budget and Council Tax setting process together with Medium Term Financial Plan projections over the next 4-year period. The report was considered in tandem with Item 28: Targeted Budget Management 2025/26 Month 2.

- 27.2 Councillors Williams, Muten, Miller, Robins, Taylor and Sankey asked questions and contributed to the debate of the reports.

27.3 Resolved-

That Cabinet:

- 1) Note the planning assumption of a Council Tax increase of 2.99% over the 4-year Medium-Term Financial Plan period and an Adult Social Care Precept of 2.00% or the equivalent in grant funding in 2026/27.
- 2) Note the funding assumptions and net expenditure projections for 2026/27 including a projected budget shortfall of £39.765 million.
- 3) Note the Medium-Term financial projections for 2026/27 to 2029/30 and the predicted budget gaps totalling over £95 million over the period.
- 4) Agree the proposed budget development approach and that members will use this to develop 4-year medium-term service and financial plans and proposals for Budget

Council consideration, including savings targets, to enable a legally balanced budget in 2026/27 and enable the Council Tax for the year to be set.

- 5) Note that projections for next year and the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) will be updated following government funding announcements expected in Autumn 2025.

28 TARGETED BUDGET MANAGEMENT (TBM) 2025/26 MONTH 2 (MAY)

14.1 As per minute Item 27.

14.2 Resolved-

- 1) Cabinet notes the forecast risk position for the General Fund, which indicates a potential forecast overspend risk of £15.486m.
- 2) Cabinet notes the forecast overspend risk for the separate Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which is an overspend of £0.450m.
- 3) Cabinet notes the forecast overspend risk for the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant, which is an overspend of £4.437m.
- 4) Cabinet notes the forecast position on the Capital Programme which is an underspend variance of £0.417m.
- 5) Cabinet approves the capital budget variations and re-profiling requests set out in Appendix 5.
- 6) Cabinet approves the new capital schemes requested in Appendix 6.

The meeting concluded at 6.05pm