

Brighton & Hove City Council

Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item 46

Subject: Heritage Task & Finish Group Scoping Report

Date of meeting: 14th October 2025

Report of: Chair of Place Overview & Scrutiny

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Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Key Decision: No

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report provides information on issues facing the preservation of heritage assets in Brighton & Hove. It includes a scoping report for the Task & Finish Group (Appendix 1) and draft Terms of Reference (Appendix 2).
- 1.2 The Council is currently working on its new Heritage Strategy. This Task & Finish Group will ultimately form recommendations that will feed into the development of this strategy. The timeline for the strategy has been altered to cater for this.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee agrees to establish a Task & Finish Group to scrutinise the issue of preserving heritage assets in the city.
- 2.2 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee agrees the Terms of Reference, membership and duration of the Task & Finish Group as set out in Appendix 2.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 The look and feel of the city is a key priority for the council where conserving and developing the unique culture and heritage of the city contributes to Outcome 1 of achieving the Council Plan: "A city to be proud of". The Council wants to reimagine its role as facilitator in helping people to look after their buildings, of which some may be in disrepair, at a time when there is not much funding or resources available.

3.2 The purpose of the Heritage Task & Finish Group is to scrutinise the issues faced in preserving the city's heritage assets and to investigate what other initiatives or measures could be put in place.

3.3 Areas to investigate include:

- Private ownership; barriers that they face in looking after heritage buildings that they own and how the council can effectively engage with them to provide advice and assistance.
- Council owned heritage assets; how the Council can ensure heritage assets under their ownership are preserved during a time of limited funding to ensure that they remain accessible to the public and to the benefit of the local community.
- Conservation areas and conflict with modernisation; there is a balance to strike between protecting the heritage asset and allowing sustainable additions to a building in a conservation area, which can cause frustration for residents.
- Lack of enforcement powers; the council or government can take action if a heritage asset has reached a stage of disrepair where its preservation might be at risk. Historic properties often require ongoing, intensive care that is difficult for a local authority to mandate and oversee, particularly when there are large numbers of them.
- Lack of funding; maintaining a heritage building or asset can come with high costs which some owners may not be able to afford. Grants or incentives from councils are limited or non-existent, which leaves a gap between what's required and what's financially feasible for owners.
- Working with community groups; there are many community groups and local societies with an interest in the local heritage and it would be worthwhile to investigate how the council can use these groups to assist in this work.

3.4 The report will focus on the following areas:

- To better understand the barriers that owners and residents face when looking after heritage assets and what kind of support would be useful.
- To explore how the Council might reimagine its role as a facilitator, especially in the context of reduced funding, by identifying alternative solutions and sources of funding for heritage projects
- To understand how other councils and relevant organisations ensure heritage sites are protected and whether there are initiatives or examples of best practise that the council might want to adopt.
- To explore how the council might work with community groups to assist them in leading on some heritage projects.

3.5 Task & Finish Group Scoping Report and Terms of Reference

More information on Heritage in the city is included in the Task & Finish Group scoping report (Appendix 1), including suggested areas of enquiry and witnesses. The draft Task & Finish Group Terms of Reference (Appendix 2) include suggested membership and duration of the Group.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 Members are free to amend the details of the Terms of Reference if they wish to pursue alternative options

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 This has not been considered at this stage, however, the recommendations will feed into the development of the new Heritage Strategy which will be presented to Cabinet following a period of public consultation.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no expected financial implications associated with the establishment and operation of the member task and finish group as it is anticipated that any costs associated with their operation will be managed within the existing revenue budgets of each respective service area involved.

- 6.2 Recommendations from the Task & Finish Group will drive recommendations that will feed into the development of the new Heritage Strategy which will be presented to Cabinet. Any financial implications identified will be included within the Heritage Strategy report to Cabinet.

Name of finance officer consulted: John Lack Date consulted: 01/10/2025

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 There are no expected legal implications arising from the actions identified in this report. The Council holds significant statutory duties and responsibilities concerning heritage assets. National planning policy and guidance set out clear expectations that councils must have a positive and proactive approach to the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets. Councils are required to address heritage assets positively and proactively through their local plans and planning functions. Any legal implications that arise from the proposed Heritage Strategy will need to be considered in that report.

Name of lawyer consulted: Katie Kam Date consulted (02/10/25):

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 None specifically for this scrutiny report and the establishment of a Task & Finish Group

9. Sustainability implications

- 9.1 None specifically for this scrutiny report and the establishment of a Task & Finish Group

10. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 10.1 None specifically for this scrutiny report and the establishment of a Task & Finish Group

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee is being asked to establish a Task & Finish Group to scrutinise the preservation of heritage assets in the city and to agree to Terms of Reference and membership of the group taking on this work.

Supporting Documentation

Appendices

- 1. Heritage Task & Finish Group Scoping Report
- 2. Heritage Task & Finish Group Terms of Reference