

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 71

Subject: Update on Women's Football in Sussex

Date of meeting: Thursday, 13 November 2025

Report of: Leader of the Council

Lead Officer: Name: Alison McManamon Corporate Director- Operations

Contact Officer: Name: Ian Baird

Email: ian.baird@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Key Decision: Yes

Reason(s) Key: Expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the expenditure of the City Council's budget, namely above £1,000,000 and is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards).

For general release

Note: Urgency

By reason of the special circumstances below, and in accordance with section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 ("**the 1972 Act**") , the Chair of the meeting has been consulted and is of the opinion that this item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Note: Reasons for urgency

The special circumstances for non-compliance as required by Council Procedure Rule 3, Access to Information Procedure Rule 5 and Section 100B(4) of the 1972 Act (as amended) (items not considered unless the agenda is open to inspection at least five days in advance of the meeting) were that negotiations on the content of this Report were ongoing up to the date of publication.

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report seeks to outline the context relevant to the Council's decision regarding whether to submit a bid to be a host city as part of the UK's bid to host the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2035.
- 1.2 The report sets out the potential benefits to the city and the Sussex region of hosting major international sports competitions and seeks authorisation for officers to actively pursue inclusion in such bid.

- 1.3 The Council Plan outcome to deliver a city to be proud of includes a commitment to invest in our city to develop a flourishing local economy that attracts both talent and investment from outside the city. Committing investment in plans to be a host City for the FIFA Women's World Cup would help deliver this outcome, promoting economic growth and inward investment which could support local businesses across the city and the Sussex region.
- 1.4 As detailed in sections 9 and 11 below, hosting of international sports, and specifically Women's sport which historically has not had the same levels of state investment as men's sport, has significant positive impacts on enhancing equality and helping to support Brighton and Hove being an increasingly healthy and active city.
- 1.5 Whilst the economic and social benefits are clear, this decision needs to be carefully considered in the context of the council's very challenging financial position. The Council does not have sufficient reserves to fund the tournament and has a significant budget gap from April 2026 onwards. Therefore, any decision to proceed needs clarity regarding how the Council's commitment / liability will be met.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Agrees the submission of a bid by Brighton & Hove City Council to be a host city for the 2035 FIFA Women's World Cup;
- 2.2 Delegates authority to the Corporate Director City Operations, following consultation with the Director Property & Finance and the Cabinet Member Finance & City Regeneration, to enter into the Host City Agreement and Host City Declaration attached to part 2 of this report, and any related documentation; and
- 2.3 Notes the commercial arrangements and the associated potential costs of being selected as a host city as set out in the Part 2 Report and the safeguards in place should funding not be available as also set out in the Part 2 Report.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 After significant success as a host city for Men's and Women's Rugby World Cups in 2015 and 2025 respectively and the UEFA Women's Euros in 2022 Brighton & Hove has developed a reputation as a key host city location for international sport and especially international women's sport. Successfully bidding to host the FIFA Women's Football World Cup to the city, the first time that England will host a Football World Cup event since 1966, will generate worldwide exposure, foster beneficial social and cultural impacts for residents and business, and create a growing sporting legacy for the city and the wider Sussex region.

- 3.2 When Brighton & Hove hosted the UEFA Women's European Cup in 2022, it leveraged the highest Gross Value Added (GVA) yield of any host city of £8m due, in part, to extended stays and overnights from fans. Sussex as a region is particularly well placed to capitalise on the 2035 competition, with Gatwick Airport likely to have more than 100,000 additional visitors, and with the AMEX stadium likely to host a number of games within the group stages of the competition. Outside of the public games there will also be requirements for team bases and training sites that will likely be across the Sussex region.
- 3.3 Beyond GVA, the benefits across many sectors in the region are clear as detailed below.
- 3.4 **Increased Tourism:** The influx of international visitors boosts local businesses, including hotels, restaurants, and retail outlets.
- 3.5 **Global Media Exposure:** Worldwide coverage of events, estimated at 4bn viewers enhances the regions reputation as a premier destination for sports and tourism.
- 3.6 **Social Impact:** Hosting international athletes, particularly within Women's sport, increases active lifestyles and inspires the next generation to participate. In post competition resident surveys after the Women's European Cup, 76% said the event made them feel positive about where they live and 72% said it made them feel happier
- 3.7 **Volunteer Opportunities:** The event will provide numerous volunteer opportunities, fostering community engagement and skill development.
- 3.8 **Environmental Initiatives:** Events promote sustainability and environmental awareness through various initiatives. For example, the citywide tree planting project funded as part of the 2025 WRWC.
- 3.9 **Funding and Budgeting** While the competition has specific targets regarding Host City contributions which are detailed in a Part 2 Report, the positive impacts can be transformative. Continuing with the bid process will need to be carefully considered before making final commitment. Any commitment in the future and up to 2030 will be made with full consideration of the council's current financial position, and the estimated budget gaps over the coming years.
- 3.10 Entering into agreement to be a host city requires careful financial and legal planning to ensure the council is not put at financial risk by this proposal. The detailed implications and measures to mitigate risks are outlined fully in the Part 2 Report.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 Brighton & Hove City Council could choose not to actively pursue this opportunity and remove any potential spend associated with this proposal.

This would mean the potential economic and other benefits across the Sussex region would not be realised.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 The Outdoor Events team actively engage with communities across the city on a quarterly basis. Feedback from past events and the appetite for future activity is always a key subject of these conversations. Major international events are generally well received by communities across the city.
- 5.2 When possible, detailed plans for this event would be shared and discussed at engagement meetings to help shape the scope and scale of activity and how it can be focused to support the specific needs of all neighbourhoods and communities.
- 5.3 Engagement with key stakeholders and partners will take place to ensure that the event has citywide engagement and ownership, and to maximise the economic benefits for the economy and our local businesses across Sussex. There has already been engagement with the local Hotel Association, and with Brighton & Hove Albion Football Club, whose AMEX stadium would host the matches. These ongoing discussions will explore how we can collaborate to maximise the benefits to the city and region, and mitigate the costs involved in hosting the tournament.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 The detailed financial implications are included within the Part 2 Report.

Name of finance officer consulted: Craig Garoghan Date consulted :07/11/2025

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The detailed legal implications are included within the Part 2 Report.

Name of lawyer consulted: Jane Woods Date consulted: (10/11/25)

8. Risk implications

- 8.1 Contracting to major events will often have significant requests to the host city and with long timelines there can be some variance in actual delivery cost against planned budgets. Detailed risk registers should always be maintained on major projects. More detail is discussed in the associated Part 2 Report.

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 Women's sport has strong reputation for enhancing community ties and welcoming people with protected characteristics. The expansion of the women's game is providing greater opportunities for women to be involved in sport and develop skills in elite sport. Women are under-represented in

Elite football, and the coverage of the Women's World Cup helps to raise the profile of the game, increase participation and address historic discrimination.

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 Brighton & Hove have committed, from 2026, to enter the Green Events Code of Practice (GECOP) pilot programme. Over the next 12 months, all outdoor events will be required to carry out detailed tracking of environmental impacts and sustainability practices. This process will form the basis on which future improvements will be secured. The outdoor events team remain committed to driving better practices across the programme and for Brighton & Hove to be at the forefront of best practice in the industry.

11. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 11.1 Brighton and Hove, through its 10-year physical activity and sport strategy 'Let's Get Moving' (2024-2034) has a vision of being one of the most active cities in England 'where everyone has the opportunity, the encouragement, and the environment to move more, live well and be healthy'.
- 11.2 In 2023-24 according to the Active Lives survey 26% of Brighton & Hove residents attended 2 or more live events in the last year, above that of the England average.
- 11.3 Large scale sports events inspire residents to adopt healthy lifestyles and become more physically active. They can foster a sense of community and a celebration of well-being in the city. The 2022 UEFA Women's Euros inspired more than half of residents and 2 in 5 spectators and tournament volunteers to do more sport and physical activity generally. Since the tournament Sussex has double the number of female friendly clubs and 1,200 women now play recreational football. Large scale tournaments have a social impact on the city with 74% of residents feeling that the tournament has brought their local community closer.
- 11.4 In 2025, Brighton & Hove are one of the proud host cities of the Women's Rugby World Cup and in support of the Legacy programme as a city we hope to inspire 2500 new women/girls to participate in rugby. To support the event, 140 volunteers were also recruited known as the 'Seaside Scrum'.
- 11.5 As a city we're aware of the health benefits that 'moving more' has on our residents such as reducing all causes of mortality by up to 30%, cardiovascular disease by up to 35% and depression by up to 30%. We also know that being physically active helps people manage long-term health conditions.
- 11.6 International local events can provide inspiration for residents, be a catalyst for moving more, support the Prevention, support social cohesion and reduce loneliness, support the local economy and provide job or volunteer opportunities.

Other Implications

12. Procurement implications

- 12.1 Once Brighton and Hove has been selected as a host city the Council will then need to procure services to enable the running of the FIFA Women's World Cup. This will involve advice from procurement specialisms on the route to market.

13. Crime & disorder implications:

No significant impact

14. Conclusion

- 14.1 Hosting the FIFA Women's World Cup 2035 is an opportunity to leverage economic benefits to the wider Sussex region but needs to be considered taking full account of the challenging financial situation of the Council.