

Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

Agenda Item 61

Subject: Council Budget and Public Participation

Date of meeting: 18 December 2025

Proposer: Councillor Jacob Taylor

Seconder: Councillor Gary Wilkinson

Ward(s) affected: All

Notice of Motion

Labour Group Amendment

This council notes:

- 1) Our highly constrained council budget, described as one of the most challenging this council has seen, with in-year and multi-year pressures impacting on services.
- 2) Resident frustration about council finances in areas of particular concern to them, including about the basis for decision-making on significant items of spend, and service cuts **desire to have a well-run council, with good financial management, and services protected and improved.**
- 3) The commitment by the council Administration to ensuring open and transparent local government under the Cabinet system.
- 4) The value that Participatory Budgeting (PB) and Participatory Advocacy (PA) can add, **that Brighton & Hove City Council already uses participatory approaches, including for the recently launched Better Brighton & Hove Fund**, and the availability of the new Your Voice channel on the council website to facilitate participatory approaches.

Therefore, Council resolves to:

- 1) ~~Proactively shift from a culture of 'need to know' to one of trust, openness and transparency in budget decision-making.~~
- 2) **Acknowledge that a draft budget has been published in December this year, welcome this as good practice, and agree that publication of draft budget proposals in December should remain the aim in future years.** Request of the Finance Lead in future years to publish a draft budget in December, prior to Budget Council in February; to allow the public, businesses and the VCS time to provide constructive comment and input on draft proposals.
- 3) ~~Request of the Finance Lead to raise the profile of budget communication material, aiming to increasing public knowledge and awareness of budget~~

challenges. **Request that all councillors seek to understand the budget-setting process and play their part in promoting public understanding of budget challenges.**

- 4) Propose to our Scrutiny Committee chairs that they jointly commission a Task and Finish Group to review potential for PB approaches in council budget development and to suggest that this review may consider (a) earmarking a small proportion of a Directorate budget to PB approaches (b) piloting PA approaches to help inform Administration messaging to HMG on Council finances. **Ask Cabinet to continue and, where appropriate, expand targeted and proportionate participatory approaches to budget-setting, including building on the Better Brighton & Hove Fund and use of the Your Voice platform, and invite Scrutiny Committee chairs to consider whether any refinements are needed within existing arrangements to strengthen budget scrutiny and engagement, while avoiding the creation of new resource-intensive structures during the current financial challenges.**

Supporting information:

- 1) Early budget publication and participatory approaches have previously been used by this Council.
- 2) According to the LGA, participatory budgeting can be most useful after a devolution deal has been agreed and decisions need to be made about budget allocations. Budgets can be spent in a way which better reflects the strengths, needs and aspirations of the local community and can improve self-confidence, increase volunteering and faith in local service providers, helping to establish positive relationships with citizens and organisation within devolution areas. [Participatory Budgeting | Local Government Association](#)

Recommendations to read if carried:

This council notes:

- 1) Our highly constrained council budget, described as one of the most challenging this council has seen, with in-year and multi-year pressures impacting on services.
- 2) Resident desire to have a well-run council, with good financial management, and services protected and improved.
- 3) The commitment by the council Administration to ensuring open and transparent local government under the Cabinet system.
- 4) The value that Participatory Budgeting (PB) and Participatory Advocacy (PA) can add, that Brighton & Hove City Council already uses participatory approaches, including for the recently launched Better Brighton & Hove Fund, and the availability of the new Your Voice channel on the council website to facilitate participatory approaches

Therefore, Council resolves to:

- 1) Acknowledge that a draft budget has been published in December this year, welcome this as good practice, and agree that publication of draft

budget proposals in December should remain the aim in future years.

- 2) Request that all councillors seek to understand the budget-setting process and play their part in promoting public understanding of budget challenges.
- 3) Ask Cabinet to continue and, where appropriate, expand targeted and proportionate participatory approaches to budget-setting, including building on the Better Brighton & Hove Fund and use of the Your Voice platform, and invite Scrutiny Committee chairs to consider whether any refinements are needed within existing arrangements to strengthen budget scrutiny and engagement, while avoiding the creation of new resource-intensive structures during the current financial challenges.

