

Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

Agenda Item 74

Subject: **Written questions from Councillors**

Date of meeting: **29 January 2026**

Report of: **Director of Governance & Law**

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Ward(s) affected: **All**

For general release

The following questions have been received from Councillors and will be taken as read along with the written answer detailed below:

1. Councillor Bagaeen asked:

If the new city licensing policy is meant to keep our communities in the city safer, why have we as a council allowed a substantial number of vape shops, lit up like show rooms, to operate on the North Street – St James's Street corridor?

Response provided by Councillor McGregor, Chair of Licensing Committee:

2. Councillor Bagaeen asked:

What went wrong with gritting during the icy weather in early January at the start of the year and are we learning from past mistakes? This was a reminder of the significant disruption in the city in early January 2025 as a result of a lack of gritting (<https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/24844990.snow-chaos-brighton-council-explains-roads-werent-gritted/>).

At the beginning of this January, there were a large number of complaints on Facebook pages for groups in Westdene, Patcham and many others across the city. A number of cyclists sustained injuries during this period for lack of gritting, a postman in Westdene fell and broke his elbow, and our refuse collection service in Westdene and food waste collection services ground to a halt as refuse trucks were unable to access a number of streets.

Response provided by Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

3. Councillor McNair asked:

Brighton & Hove City Council

All major roads in Hollingbury such as Westfield Crescent, Hartfield Avenue, Fernhurst Crescent and Elsted Crescent should be gritted because of the steepness of the roads and lack of sunlight, making the pavements and roads particularly challenging for the elderly. Could grit lorries be diverted along these roads while in the area to avoid the elderly and vulnerable being left isolated?

Response provided by Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

4. Councillor McNair asked:

Over Christmas, there were many missed rubbish and recycling collections across Patcham & Hollingbury (e.g., Sunnydale Avenue, Orchid View) and Westdene; is this due to a shortage of crews despite real-time collection updates, and has crew availability for collections changed since May 2023?

Response provided by Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

5. Councillor Meadows asked:

When the owners of Patcham Place submitted a planning application to the South Downs National Park Authority to build homes on the site, was the council informed, and if so, why weren't councillors and residents notified, and can the council liaise with the SDNP to ensure residents' views are considered in decisions within our local authority boundaries?

Response provided by Councillor Taylor, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

6. Councillor Meadows asked:

Local residents in Patchdean are looking for a place where their children can play and the vacant land at Patchdean appears ideal. It is situated below 27/29 Patchdean on Carden Avenue/Winfield Avenue. It has already been established that it is housing land. I have asked if the residents can be given permission to use it for their children as a safe place to play, but received no response. The individual gardens in Patchdean are too small for many activities. This would require the two entrance points by Carden Avenue to be gated off so no child can run out in the road and to protect any furniture placed in there. Could this be completed under the Estate Development Budget?

Response provided by Councillor Robins, Cabinet Member for Sport, Recreation & Libraries:

7. Councillor Theobald asked:

Brighton & Hove City Council

Residents have written to the Safer Better Streets team concerned about their children crossing Carden Hill at the top of County Oak Avenue. They were told it would be undertaken this year (2025/6) and if it meets the initial criteria, fully assessed next year (2026/7). Has this location been assessed yet and if not, do we know when?

Response provided by Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

8. Councillor Theobald asked:

How much CIL money is expected from the Royal Mail development and when can residents expect to receive it?

Response provided by Councillor Taylor, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

9. Councillor Lyons asked:

Last month we were assured at Full Council that lessons were learned for the city to be winter prepared & ready. How come that during the first period of icy conditions, roads in Westdene, that in particular were not on a bus route, were not gritted, causing accidents, falls & preventing residents leaving their homes?

Response provided by Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

10. Councillor Lyons asked:

I understand from an Officer that the Council has specialist graffiti removing machines that are stored away under bubble wrap, purchased at some considerable expense, some time ago, but never used. Is this proof that the Administration have a laissez-faire attitude towards graffiti removal?

Response provided by Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

11. Councillor Hogan asked:

What are the council doing to make local tourist attractions more attractive to the public?

Response provided by Councillor Miller, Cabinet Member for Culture, Heritage & Tourism:

12. Councillor Pickett asked:

Re: Item 46b (amended Notice of Motion on Gaza and Council financial exposure) of the meeting of Council on 13th October 2025: Will the

Brighton & Hove City Council

administration specify the precise timescale for the report from officers, on the Council's exposure to companies on the OHCHR list?

Response provided by Councillor Taylor, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

13. Councillor Pickett asked:

Which other local authorities within the East Sussex Pension Fund were contacted following the Notice of Motion, when were they contacted, and what responses were received?

Response provided by Councillor Taylor, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

14. Councillor Hill asked:

Does the administration support calls to remove the Aim to Permit principle from the Gambling Act 2005? The principle places a legal duty on licensing authorities, including local councils, to favour the approval of new gambling premises unless there are clear grounds to refuse them. Critics argue this significantly restricts councils' ability to respond to local concerns about the social impact of gambling. Politicians including Dawn Butler MP and campaigners from across the political spectrum, have said that the rule 'ties the hands' of local authorities and forces them to grant licences 'regardless of clear social harm or strong local opposition'.

Response provided by Councillor McGregor, Chair of Licensing Committee:

15. Councillor Hill asked:

In Wales, the Children and Families Measure 2010, introduced a Play Sufficiency Duty on Welsh local authorities to assess and secure enough play opportunities. I believe there should be a similar legal obligation for English local councils to ensure sufficient, high-quality play opportunities for children in their areas, recognizing play as crucial for health, happiness, and development. Leeds is seemingly leading the way in England by becoming the first city to complete a Play Sufficiency Assessment, should Brighton & Hove follow?

Response provided by Councillor Daniel, Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Youth Services:

16. Councillor West asked:

On 2 January a Special Urgency Notice reported that a decision had been taken by the Leader of the Council on 31 December to direct award contracts to a temporary accommodation provider. The thin published report, covering less than seven pages, states the contract will run for 6 years, with a total

Brighton & Hove City Council

value of £18.861m. The reason for the urgency and use of Direct Award are unclear other than the stated need to address a £4.8m in-year over-spend and suggestion this contract will save £1.127m annually. No explanation is offered as to why the decision could not have waited until the 22 January Cabinet meeting or been taken at the Special Cabinet arranged for 9 January. While I appreciate the administration is panicking about their failure to manage budget costs, is it appropriate to railroad through such significant decisions without consultation and opposition scrutiny of potential alternatives?

Response provided by Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Chair:

17. Councillor West asked:

I am grateful to the cabinet member for his response to my recent question about the summer park and ride. This clearly reveals the scheme to have been an expensive experiment that made little, if any, difference to travel choice. Rather than repeat this political vanity project this summer, can I ask, has any consideration been given to the alternative of investing these precious public funds into supporting and incentivising use of scheduled sustainable transport journeys arriving into the city, e.g. by offering visitors bus and rail ticket price discounts or local retail rewards for taking the green option?

Response provided by Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

18. Councillor Lademacher asked:

It transpired in December that the annual fire safety letter sent to residents in Dudeney Lodge, an LPS block found to no longer meet current safety standards for withstanding a collapse in the case of an explosion or large fire, gave residents incorrect evacuation information - advising them to stay put in their homes rather than evacuate. Following this serious mistake was highlighted to the council by an alert resident and Sian Berry MP, the council did thankfully send a corrected letter to residents in the block. The explanation communicated since for the error was "it was an automated mailshot and unfortunately had not been checked for the updated information". Will the administration confirm that all other automated annual fire safety letters sent to residents in other blocks have now been checked to ensure that incorrect fire evacuation advice has not been miscommunicated in any other council blocks.

Response provided by Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing:

19. Councillor Lademacher asked:

Brighton & Hove City Council

Have all fire risk assessments of external walls (FRAEWs) identified as being required in fire risk assessments undertaken by the council been completed. If any have not yet been completed or commissioned, how many are outstanding, and when will the FRAEWs be completed or commissioned?

Response provided by Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing:

20. Councillor McLeay asked:

A recent report regarding a new Temporary Accommodation (TA) contract states that the council's use of TA has increased, with 2,150 households placed in such accommodation at the end of November 2025. In January 2023, reports show the number of homeless households in TA were falling, but numbers have since risen. To what extent is the new allocations policy responsible for the increase, and what lessons can be learnt from previous years when numbers were declining?

Response provided by Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing:

21. Councillor McLeay asked:

As we approach budget council, what actions are being taken to improve HRA rent collection, given that the current rate of 92.75% is down from 98% previously and below the 95.92% benchmark for similar-sized councils, considering that matching the benchmark by 3% could generate over £2 million (enough to fund energy efficiency upgrades for approximately 200 homes) and, while universal credit is an issue for all councils, why are we underperforming and what is the plan to close this gap?

Response provided by Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing:

22. Councillor McLeay asked:

How does BHCC justify awarding a 6-year Temporary Accommodation contract to Base One, a company incorporated only in 2023, after a two-week decision process without sharing oversight on alternative options, and what safeguards are in place to ensure quality and transparency given reports of poor conditions in other licensed TA properties?

Response provided by Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing:

23. Councillor Sykes asked:

At end December 2025, how much of the £125k budget allocated to the Palmeira Sq north works from the Parks capital budget remains, will this be spent within financial year and if not will it be carried over to 2026-7?

Brighton & Hove City Council

Response provided by Councillor Robins, Cabinet Member for Sport, Recreation & Libraries:

24. Councillor Sykes asked:

At O&S Place on 21st Jan 2025, when asked about publication of fire risk assessments, I was told that:

“it is our intention to publish them, but at the moment we’re going through and verifying them all and looking at all the information to make sure it is up to date. So we’ve given assurances that we want to first publish the fire risk assessments for large panel system blocks where a lot of our work has focused, and then we’ll have programme to publish them going forward.”

A year on, why have fire risk assessments still not been published if it remains the council’s intention, and by what date will this happen so residents can access and scrutinise important information about the safety of their homes?

Response provided by Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing:

25. Councillor Shanks asked:

What progression has been made on the agreed policy to bring Seaside homes in to council housing provision , what savings will be achieved from this?

Response provided by Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing:

26. Councillor Shanks asked:

What is the Administrations decision on the future of New England House?

Response provided by Councillor Taylor, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

27. Councillor Fishleigh asked:

When will the second (or third or fourth...) hand street bins that recently appeared on Longridge Avenue in West Saltdean be replaced?

Response provided by Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

