

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

CABINET

2.00pm 11 DECEMBER 2025

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

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

PART ONE

75 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

75a Declarations of interests

- 75.1 Councillor Robins declared a pecuniary interest in Item 90 and 91: Royal Pavilion & Museums Trust Service Fee 2026-2031 as a Trustee of The Royal Pavilion Trust Board. Councillor Robins stated that he would leave the Chamber during consideration of the item.

75b Exclusion of the press and public

- 75.2 In accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the Act"), the Committee considered whether the public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any item of business on the grounds that it is likely in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during it, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act.
- 75.3 **Resolved-** That the public and press are excluded from the meeting from items listed on Part 2 of the agenda.

76 MINUTES

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

77 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 77.1 The Chair provided the following Communications:

"Since our Cabinet meeting last month, Members and officers have been working incredibly hard as ever to deliver for our city. The multi-use games area in Hangleton has been refurbished and is looking fantastic and already being well used.

As is the games area in Saltdean, we are investing in facilities that residents need to stay healthy and to play sports to match this, our Labour Government announced yesterday that Brighton is one of only 8 early adopters to pilot the Government's new Young Futures hubs, which are a key part of the new National Youth strategy.

The Conservatives overlooked young people for far too long, and the Young Futures programme will create a national network of inclusive youth spaces for 10 to 18 year olds, along with support for those up to 25 years old that have special educational needs.

It's a brilliant opportunity for us to work with our young people here in the city and with our partners to co-design a space that offers real support. This comes, of course, alongside the new child Poverty Action Strategy, which was published very recently by our government, today's homelessness strategy and the scrapping of the two child benefits limit in last month's budget.

Also this month, we've rolled out real time bin collection tracking all part of our ambitious modernisation of the service and most recently, food waste collections have started across the west of the city. Our plans for a new swimming pool in Withdean have received planning permission, the first new swimming pool in the city for 40 years, while our draft budget would protect our offer of free swimming for under eighteens in our Council run swimming pools.

We've received 2 gold awards in the last month, the first from the Sutton Trust for our package of school reforms, meaning our secondary school admissions policy is now one of the most progressive in the country putting Labour's values into action and our councils planning team has very well deservedly jumped from bronze to gold in their rating this year by Planning Resource the sectors leading publication for the speed and quality of its decision making.

We've participated in the 16 days of activism campaign highlighting the Council services and 3rd party organisations available to support women and girls in the city facing domestic abuse. We've commemorated World AIDS Day and renewed our achievable commitments and all new HIV transmission in the city by 20-30 and we've commemorated Trans Day of remembrance, remembering trans lives lost to violence following the decision made at Cabinet last month.

We've also formed part of the government's official bid for the women's FIFA Football World Cup in 2035 as one of the potential host cities, one of 16, and we've launched a new campaign on the harm caused by particle pollution from wood burners over the winter months.

We've also launched a new consultation on a planned Community Safety Strategy.

I'm really proud to announce for the first time today that we've also rolled out operating women's only emergency accommodation and temporary accommodation in response to feedback we received about the lack of safety that some women experience who have been housed by us due to their experiencing homelessness.

Today's agenda is shaped by strong focus on our finances and the strategic decisions that will define our city's future. We begin with the October 2025 targeted budget management report which examines the impact of our risk management measures on our current financial position and our year end forecast. While we've seen improvements since the start of the year, the financial year significant overspend risks remain in the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Schools Budget. Critically low reserves, an inheritance from the previous Conservative government and local Green Party mean we must maintain our drive for continuous improvement through tighter controls, Directorate recovery plans and our ongoing transformation work including digital transformation.

Looking ahead today, we'll also consider the General Fund Draft Budget and Resources update for 26/27 to 29/30. This is where our Council plan comes to life. In financial terms, aligning our budgets with our ambition for a better Brighton and hope for all.

The draft budget and medium-term financial strategy highlight the scale of our challenge, projecting a gap of around £24.9 million next year and over £80 million across the period before savings. The report details the savings and transformation programmes proposed for key services such as adult social care and housing and set out our assumptions on Council tax and national funding reforms ahead of the provisional local government finance settlement, which we expect next week.

We also have a report today on libraries and I note the keen public interest in this and residents in the public gallery.

No one enters politics wanting to make difficult decisions about closing certain public facilities, but the challenge we face from past chronic underfunding across the public sector, from health to local government, is real. And even though our government is now providing real terms, funding uplifts, pressures on our services and the complexity of issues we face is also real. This was very much evidenced by our CQC inspection into adult social care this month, which ranked us as requiring improvement. We aim to reshape how libraries operate, exploring new income streams, partnerships and changes to the estate, while maintaining as much access for communities as possible.

Our City Transport Plan 2035 will set a strategic direction for safer, cleaner and more inclusive transport over the next decade. It brings together our climate and air quality goals with improvements in public transport, active travel and road safety underpinning future bids for external funding and investment in our city's transport network.

We will also discuss our homelessness and rough sleeping strategy 2035 to 30, which responds to the sharp increases in homelessness, temporary accommodation costs and rough sleeping.

This strategy takes a prevention first partnership approach to reduce demand for expensive temporary accommodation, improved pathways out of rough sleeping and align closely with our financial recovery work in homes and adult social care.

I was privileged earlier this week to visit the Clock Tower Sanctuary, which is an organisation that provides support for young people between 18 and 35 experiencing homelessness and I just want to put on record my deep appreciation for the many charities and organisations in the city that provide excellent support services and the increasing partnership working we are doing with them to ensure that together we can deliver as much support as possible.

Our agenda includes the Royal Pavilion and Museums Trust Service fee for 2026 to 2031. The proposed funding agreement gives the trust stability, while recognising the Council's wider financial pressures, framing the service fee as an investment in our heritage, our visitor economy and our cultural offer.

Finally, I want to highlight our response to the regulator of social housing regulatory judgement. This six-month update demonstrates significant progress on compliance and a major reduction in the historic Council house repairs backlog, strengthen leadership, governance and data quality are helping us to move from short term recovery to a more embedded systems led model.

We're also seeking delegated authority to procure a two-year stock condition survey, ensuring we can plan for the long-term condition of our homes and meet our emerging and evolving, legal duties.

Taken together, today's agenda shows a Council that is ambitious for its residents, honest about the financial pressures we take and determined to keep delivering improvements

across the city. I'm grateful to all colleagues and officers in particular for their hard work, and I look forward to our discussions and decisions this afternoon".

78 CALL OVER

78.1 All items on the agenda were reserved for discussion.

79 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

(a) Public Questions

1) Sustainability plan for Libraries

79.1 Ruth Williams read the following on the questioner's behalf:

We know the savings from closing our library has been estimated at £20,000. Given the school it is attached to doesn't need the additional space, there is no realistic future for this building. If Westdene closes, what is the plan if the building sits empty and incurs security, maintenance, and deterioration costs that wipe out the claimed saving?

79.2 Councillor Robins provided the following reply:

Should Westdene Public Library close, discussions will take place with the school about their potential use of the space. Any exploration of other options for future use will consider costs, suitability and practical matters, given its attachment to the school.

2) Sustainability plan for Libraries

79.3 Ruth Williams read the following on the questioner's behalf:

Part of your consultation mentions that the southern part of our ward go to Hove library instead of Westdene. This is of course true, the southern part of our ward being Hove Park. Because our Ward is so big, you've disproportionately allocated low footfall and low responses in the consultation to a large ward. Westdene is a small community with a one-room library, and the response it has generated is huge relative to the area it serves and the library's size.

Moreover, Westdene pupils access the library daily through the internal school door, including during unstaffed hours. We don't believe this footfall was counted. Why has flawed and incomplete data continued to be used as the basis for recommending closure?

79.4 Councillor Robins provided the following reply:

Thank you for your feedback. Footfall and usage were only one of a number of considerations when proposals were drafted. While the ward is geographically large, the number of people visiting Westdene Library is smaller than that of most other libraries in the city.

The school do access the library through the internal door and, while we do not have access to data for the number of pupil visits, we are able to track the number of items issued and the number of library cards in use, which would reflect school usage of the

book stock. These measures were low compared to other libraries in the city and this data was included in the rationale for proposals for change.

We are aware the school uses the space in lieu of a more developed school library space; the recommendations include the offer for officers to work closely with the school to explore how the Library Service can support pupils to access books and study space. There are options to explore which could provide an improved school library offer, with donations of books and furniture.

3) Sustainability plan for Libraries

79.5 Ruth Williams read the following question:

Clause 3.50 records that the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee formally recommended that Cabinet 'do not proceed with the libraries closure plan at this time'; why is Cabinet choosing to advance the closure of Westdene Library despite this scrutiny warning?

79.6 Councillor Robins provided the following reply:

We recognise the Scrutiny Committee's recommendation and have carefully considered their recommendations alongside other factors before making our final recommendations to Cabinet today. The report sets out in detail the rationale for the final recommendations.

4) Sustainability plan for Libraries

79.7 Ruth Williams read the following on the questioner's behalf:

Given that the Equality Impact Assessment identifies elderly residents, disabled residents, and SEN children as disproportionately affected by the closure of Westdene Library, how can councillors lawfully proceed with a permanent closure without first demonstrating that all reasonable alternatives have been fully explored and transparently costed in a way that satisfies the Public Sector Equality Duty?

79.8 Councillor Robins provided the following reply:

We are committed to meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and therefore have explored and described the impact on residents and other stakeholders in detail in the accompanying EIA. The report concludes that action can be taken, with caution.

5) Sustainability plan for Libraries

79.9 Ruth Williams read the following on the questioner's behalf:

The report relies heavily on not only the use of alternative libraries, which are genuinely challenging for primary age, elderly and disabled in our community to access (and a double bus option with a major A road between is not an acceptable alternative for these vulnerable groups) but also strong reliance is placed on the Home Delivery Service. The service is only staffed and operated by volunteers and, as such, is irregular (only running when suitably mobile volunteers are available) and unreliable. As the library service has also placed a ban on recruiting new volunteers, how will councillors ensure that this

service is up to the job that you claim it needs to be in order to provide a genuinely workable acceptable alternative for those that need it most if Westdene Library closes?

79.10 Councillor Robins provided the following reply:

We acknowledge concerns about the Home Delivery Service.

The Library Service does include permanent staff allocated to the management of this service, and they will continue to review the service and respond to changing needs as a result of the proposals.

6) Sustainability plan for Libraries

79.11 Ruth Williams read the following on the questioner's behalf:

Councillors are being asked to vote on permanently closing Westdene Library when some of the most important information still hasn't been published. We still haven't seen the financial figures for what Jubilee Library will actually cost once the PFI ends, we haven't seen our feedback properly incorporated into your consultation papers, and we haven't seen the assessment of the city-wide alternative that could save money without closures. Without those pieces of evidence, what is this decision actually being based on?

79.12 Councillor Robins provided the following reply:

Councillors have been provided with a substantial and detailed report and appendices on which to base their decisions, including the rationale for the proposed changes, exploration of alternative suggestions for savings, the Needs and Use Analysis and Equality Impact Assessment.

Public Consultation responses are included in the appendix and Cabinet members have been given access to the full text of all consultation responses, including emails and letters from residents of Westdene and pupils of the school.

Given the financial challenges presented by end of the Jubilee Library PFI contract and associated funding, we know there will be further work needed around the future sustainability of the Library Service. More information is available the interactive PFI dashboard on gov.uk. However, those changes will not impact the council until 2029 and the service was allocated savings targets to meet in 2025-27. The revenue budget reduction has already been agreed at Budget Council in February 2025.

The administration is confident that the current recommendations can be delivered and still provide an effective and comprehensive library service.

7) Sustainability plan for Libraries

79.13 Ruth Williams read the following on the questioner's behalf:

The footfall data on which the review of Westdene Library's use was based appears to have been from a period prior to the announcement of proposed closure and consultation. The footfall and use since that announcement has increased significantly. Residents often move in/out of Westdene and many were not aware of the library's existence (if you enter the school only from the bottom field or do not pass through the one-way system on Bankside you would not see that it exists because it is very small). The proposal to close

the library has highlighted its existence to local residents and the need/use mix has since increased. Why has there been no attempt to look at the current data, in the light of the recommendation by the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee not to go ahead with the proposals to close the library?

79.14 Councillor Robins provided the following reply:

It's been good to hear from local residents that they value their local library and we can see from the data that use has improved slightly over the summer. Footfall and usage were only one of a number of considerations when proposals were drafted. We also looked at need, geographic spread and costs of delivery. While there are some fluctuations in use over the year, Westdene membership, borrowing and visitor figures continue to be among the lowest in the city. Changes at this library therefore would affect a relatively small number of residents.

8) Sustainability plan for Libraries

79.15 Ruth Williams read the following on the questioner's behalf:

Like Rottingdean, Westdene residents cannot resource a library in the timescale proposed and have a much higher number of elderly residents and disabled residents than other parts of the city. Additionally, Westdene has no public transport route to the proposed alternative library and long walk over two miles with hills and crossing the busy A23. Given the similarities, why is Rottingdean library recommended to be retained but Westdene to close?

79.16 Councillor Robins provided the following reply:

Consideration was given to a number of factors deciding which libraries to recommend for closure. These included levels of need in each area, including car ownership, measures of deprivation and use.

We recognise the make up of the community living in this area. Library closures will negatively impact residents and could have a disproportionate impact on older residents and those who are disabled, who may find it more difficult to travel to alternative sites. However, the usage figures at Westdene are considerably lower than those at Rottingdean, so any changes there would impact less residents. On balance, in order to achieve savings targets, these recommendations are brought to Cabinet today.

For those who would not be able to travel to alternative sites, the Home Library Service and online offer could support continuing access to library services. We will be working with residents in the areas affected to support them to access alternatives between now and the proposed closure date of 1st April.

9) Sustainability plan for Libraries

79.17 The questioner was not present at the meeting.

10) Sustainability plan for Libraries

79.18 Ruth Williams read the following on the questioner's behalf:

You've described these closures as the 'first phase', with additional community-library closures already being planned or modelled for the next phase. Why has the public not been told that this is the beginning of a wider programme?

79.19 Councillor Robins provided the following reply:

There are no plans or models for additional community library closures. The proposals being discussed today are to meet the savings target assigned to Library Services. There are no further savings identified for libraries in the next financial year.

11) Sustainability plan for Libraries

79.20 Julie Lawrence read the following question:

We welcome the fact that the proposal to close Rottingdean library has now been removed from the proposals for Cabinet. This responds to the serious concerns raised by residents about losing Rottingdean library that acts a crucial community hub and welcomes nearly 30,000 visits annually, fosters literacy among local school children—especially those without access to books at home, as well as providing older residents with vital educational information, support, and opportunities for social interaction. Will the Cabinet now remove any uncertainty by providing an assurance that if your officers find that “alternative community-based provision” is not possible, Rottingdean Library will remain as part of the library network and that all possible alternatives will be fully explored and presented to Cabinet before any libraries are considered for closure in the future?

79.21 Councillor Robins provided the following reply:

The proposal for closure is not currently being taken forward. Officers will be continuing to work with the community to explore options which could support the longer term sustainability of the service, as we recognise any changes would impact a considerable number of residents. The recommendations today suggest a report back to Cabinet in 12 months time.

If any proposals were developed for significant changes to how community libraries in the city are managed in the future would require us to follow similar process to those undertaken this year, including a public consultation.

80 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS

80.1 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- Sustainability plan for Libraries

We never received a breakdown of how BHCC came up with the figure of £25k to run Rottingdean library. Now that figure has increased to £40k. Please would you provide a breakdown of this.

Response: Cllr Robins

The financial impact of the recommendations is detailed in the accompanying report, at point 6.

The impact on savings of removing the proposal to close Rottingdean Library is £30k, which is made up of £25k direct costs and £5k associated management costs.

£25k savings were allocated to the proposed closure of Rottingdean Library. This does not reflect the whole cost of delivering library services at this location. It includes around £16k for Library & Information Officer time, plus some of the running costs of the space, including cleaning and security.

As a consequence of rising costs and Rottingdean Library remaining open, there is likely to be an additional pressure of £10k in the next financial year for this library. Therefore, in total the proposed Libraries savings have been reduced by a total of £40k.

(2) Councillor Fishleigh- Sustainability plan for Libraries

Several statements justify library closures as our city has more libraries per person population. This justification is inappropriate.

UK Gov reports by The Centre for Cities shows our population has 56% high level qualification (NVQ4 or above). This puts our city 5th in the UK, just below Oxford, Edinburgh, Cambridge and London. Brighton and Hove is above 57 other UK cities/urban areas

Students require books and digital access to learning materials and spaces.

The outcome of closures and restrictions on student access to learning materials is to reduce learning outcomes, employability opportunities, taxable earnings and public services relying on taxable incomes. Why is this demographic context omitted?

Response: Cllr Robins

Thank you for highlighting Brighton's highly qualified population. We acknowledge the importance of access to learning resources and will continue to ensure that demographic factors are considered in this and future decisions. While book and online resources will continue to be available 7 days/week, we recognise the potential impact of a reduction in study spaces, and the report sets out some mitigations to those including access to digital resources and Libraries Extra.

(3) Councillor Fishleigh- Our City Transport Plan

On page 426 of the cabinet report it gives £18.626m as the total funding allocation for transport 2026/7. Please would you tell me the breakdown between ring-fenced grants and BHCC funds?

Response: Cllr Muten

May I respectfully stress, as Our City Transport Plan 2035 does, the £18.626m total funding allocation for 2026/27 as shown is indicative. We await confirmation of all our external grant funding, so this is an estimate based on previous allocations. The exact funding level of our capital programme for transport will be confirmed in a separate cabinet decision early next year. The papers for this will provide the full detail.

At this stage, only the budgets for Valley Gardens 3 and maintenance contain some BHCC funding. The vast majority of that £18.626m is from external grants. It is also

important to understand the level of 'ringfencing' that different grants come with. A section of Our City Transport Plan 2035 explains the transport funding we receive. The most restrictive grants are those for electric vehicle charge points through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund, active travel through Active Travel England and buses through the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The Local Transport Grant has the greatest degree of flexibility, but it is provided in two parts; one intended for capital projects and the other for maintenance.

(4) Councillor Fishleigh- Our City Transport Plan

Given the maintenance backlog of £57 million on our roads and £37.3 million on our footways, do you agree that all non-essential, nice to have schemes paid for from BHCC funds should be deprioritised in favour of mending existing pavements and roads?

Response: Cllr Muten

Thank you, Cllr Fishleigh, for your question; which seems to assume there are 'nice to have' schemes in our programme. I don't consider the targeted safety improvements to reduce casualties on our roads as 'nice to have'. Nor the accessibility improvements or funding for Park & Ride. If we want to make our city better, we need to be bolder. Rightly, you highlight that the previous government's underfunding of our roads and paths over more than a decade was shameful and national disgrace. Local authorities across England report a backlog and the Tory pothole became an emblem of their legacy. Consequently, we have a backlog – objectively prioritise based on need and risk. We welcome Labour's significant uplift in central government grant funding for highways maintenance this year compared with last year's Tory allocation; and signals from the DfT around future funding. Our priority is fixing our roads and pathways, filling potholes and resurfacing; using and not losing the funds we are granted. In 2025/26 we allocated £5.3m in our capital programme to planned maintenance - chiefly because of a significant uplift in external grant received. We budgeted £2.2m of council revenue funding for reactive safety repairs to roads and footways. This compares to an average of £3.7m in our programmed maintenance budget for the years 2022/23 - 2024/5. I cannot agree with giving back a £6 million grant to central government, as reiterated in local media this week, neglecting the opportunity for much needed city centre renewal. Rather, we get on with our ambition for city transformation. We also use and not lose additional grants available and received to do much more.

(5) Councillor Fishleigh- Our City Transport Plan

The report states that Pavement parking is a major issue in the city and BHCC has campaigned central government for the power to be able to enforce pavement parking. Should we ask our three MPs to raise this again with the Government?

Response: Cllr Muten

Thank you, Cllr Fishleigh, for raising pavement parking. You are quite correct; I have consistently called for new powers to enforce pavement parking restrictions.

Unlike in Greater London, parking on the pavement is not explicitly prohibited in legislation outside London. However, powers are available to the police to undertake enforcement.

Options for changes to pavement parking outside London were consulted on in 2020 and looked at providing more powers to councils. Options include giving local authorities powers to enforce against unnecessary obstruction of the pavement; introducing a London-style pavement parking prohibition across England; and improving the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process by which local authorities may implement local pavement parking restrictions. This options assessment was presented to the then Secretary of State in 2020. The Tory government chose not to act.

As a PATROL Joint Committee member, I have persisted in raising this matter, most recently at the PATROL JC Executive Sub-Committee meeting in October.

I made a media statement in October which still stands.

DfT intends to publish a formal response to the consultation, summarising the views received. The DfT recently confirmed their urgency, and an announcement of the Government's next steps is expected as soon as possible, which we strongly welcome.

(6) Councillor Fishleigh- Our City Transport Plan

Figure 7 on page 426 of the cabinet report doesn't show that Rottingdean High Street has congestion and capacity issues. Previous studies have identified the High Street is a problem area so why is it being excluded in this report for measures to address the issues there?

Response: Cllr Muten

The answer to this question has been combined with question 7.

(7) Councillor Fishleigh- Our City Transport Plan

Figure 7 also shows average delays on the A259 between Saltdean and Roedean of 30-50 seconds which is not people's lived experience. The plan is to create additional bus and cycle lanes but these will not help. Congestion of west-bound traffic is caused by the existing bus lane just east of the Rottingdean High Street/A259 junction and congestion of east-bound traffic is caused by issues in Telscombe and Peacehaven as well as bus stops. Will you commit to a more detailed analysis of the issues and working with ESCC to resolve them?

Response: Cllr Muten

Thank you, Cllr Fishleigh, for your two questions concerning Figure 7 on page 426 of today's cabinet report. The information is from DfT traffic counts, which shows average delays, as updated annually and publicly available on an interactive map. The 30-50 seconds of delay refers to the road link from Rottingdean High Street to Arundel Road. Officers advise that they have made a presentation error on the map by also applying this to the link west of Rottingdean High Street and will correct this on the version of the plan that goes onto the council website. We sincerely apologise and will ensure this is correct on the final published version of the report.

By means of a correction, the data confirms the average delay on the road link from Rottingdean High Street to the city boundary was 76.9 seconds per vehicle per mile in 2023. During peak times, travel time may be expected to be above average. Average delays are a useful way to compare acute congestion on different roads. Average travel times on the A259 are well below those seen in some areas of the city centre where they are over 200 seconds per vehicle per mile. An objective of Our City Transport Plan 2035 is to reduce congestion, with priority focus on areas worse affected.

(8) Councillor Meadows- Sustainability plan for Libraries

When Hollingbury library was closed, residents were promised a new library, which was located in Old Boat Corner Community Centre. However, this library has over the last couple of years been reduced to only opening one day a week. There has been a lack of advertising on the part of the council. No wonder footfall is low. Has Hollingbury library been set up to fail? Is the use and needs analysis flawed because of this?

Response: Cllr Robins

No libraries are set up to fail; officers do all they can to support and promote library use across the city.

The location of the library within the Old Boat Community Centre places certain restrictions on the use of the room. It cannot be opened with Libraries Extra and relies on the support of the Community Centre staff. With high levels of anti-social behaviour, there have been some restrictions to opening hours in the last year.

The service has done all it can to keep the space open and it has been open every morning for most of this year, as well as a full day on Thursdays when it is staffed. The Needs & Use analysis looked at data from the last three years, to take a broad view of use since fully reopening post covid.

(9) Councillor McNair- Sustainability plan for Libraries

At budget council in February 2025, the Conservative Group proposed maintaining library funding and keeping all three libraries open by reducing the Advisor-Led Antiracism Strategy funding of £80,000. Does the Administration regret not using our suggestion to protect community assets?

Response: Cllr Robins

The proposals being discussed today are to meet the savings target assigned to Library Services, as agreed at Budget Council in February.

(10) Councillor McNair- Sustainability plan for Libraries

Why did the Labour Administration propose closing Rottingdean library in their carefully planned budget in February only to reverse their decision and support Rottingdean library ten months later?

Response: Cllr Robins

The rationale for the original proposals and current recommendations are explored in the report at points 3.73 to 3.83.

No decision had been made to close Rottingdean Library; Cabinet agreed in July to go begin a 12 week public consultation to hear more from residents and to further explore the potential impact of the proposed changes.

The savings which could be achieved through closure of the library are relatively moderate and, on balance, the retention of the service is recommended while alternative options for community involvement are explored.

(11) Councillor Meadows- Sustainability plan for Libraries

With Rottingdean library being saved, what will be cut in its place?

Response: Cllr Robins

The retention of Rottingdean Library has necessitated a reduction in the Library Service savings target of £40k. Alternative savings will need to be made from elsewhere in the council revenue budget to offset the savings not made in Library Services through retention of this location.

(12) Councillor Meadows- Sustainability plan for Libraries

As only £35,000 is being saved by closing Westdene and Hollingbury libraries, surely money can be found to protect these community assets?

Response: Cllr Robins

The proposals being discussed today are to meet the savings target assigned to Library Services, as agreed at Budget Council in February.

(13) Councillor Meadows- Sustainability plan for Libraries

The council has been working to propose means of maintaining some level of library service in Westdene and Hollingbury libraries for months. What concrete plans are there for these libraries to continue under different auspices?

Response: Cllr Robins

No decisions have been made at this time. If the decision is made to close these public libraries, officers will work with partners in exploring alternative options for future community-based provision.

(14) Councillor Meadows- Sustainability plan for Libraries

What further cuts to library services are coming?

Response: Cllr Robins

The proposals being discussed today are to meet the savings target assigned to Library Services. There are no further savings identified for libraries in the next financial year.

(15) Councillor Meadows- Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030

Why has there been a reduction in funding for homelessness?

Response: Cllr Williams

Table 1 of the General Fund Draft Budget Report shows an expected loss of grant of £0.700m. The government has consulted on changes to how it will distribute the Homelessness Prevention Grant. This is the expected 2026/27 impact on the council as a result of the change in methodology but we do not yet have confirmation of this. The final impact will be reported in February once the provisional and final Local Government Finance Settlements have been published.

(16) Councillor Meadows- Royal Pavilion & Museums Trust Service Fee 2026-31

The Royal Pavilion Trust has been able to secure £6m in funding from outside of the council. Despite this, why is the council still going to give the Trust £2.1m despite the it being unable to meet its £4m repayment plan agreed with the council?

Response: Cllr Miller

The £6m identified in the report relates to capital investment secured for the estate. The Council's revenue contribution for 2025/26 is estimated to be £2.1m. An annual fee from the council is outlined through the contractual Services Agreement. This includes a substantive service fee of £880k to deliver services across the assets.

The report included in this meeting's agenda seeks to consolidate the funding provided to the Trust. The proposed annual fee of £1.9m will account for 21% of the Trust's overall income. The remainder of the Trust's income is secured through fundraising and commercial activities. When the services transferred from the council, the newly established Trust had no working capital or reserves. Policy & Resources Committee agreed in 2020 to provide a £4m loan facility to the Trust. A total of £3m has been drawn down under the loan agreement, while this facility was available to the trust. The £1.9m fee that is being proposed today would make it challenging for the Trust to commence loan repayments. However, if the Trust's business plan sees them meet and exceed their reserves position, the council will claim loan repayments. Otherwise, the repayment plan will commence in 2030.

(17) Councillor Hill- General Fund Draft Budget & Resource Update - 2026-27 to 2029-30

On page 232 there is a proposal that the £65,000 Cemeteries Maintenance Reserve is to be pooled with other risks under a general risk reserve. It would seem the future financial position of the council will lead to extreme pressures on the general reserves. What reassurances can the administration give that taking away a dedicated maintenance reserve for cemeteries will not harm cemetery maintenance?

Response: Cllr Taylor

Thank you for your question, Councillor, which is an important one, not least because cemeteries are clearly a really important service to the city. It's really important to

residents and families. These are sacred spaces where they visit the memorials to loved ones. We've had experiences in the past couple of years where our cemeteries haven't lived up to the standards we expect and we've taken action to remediate that and it's really important first thing to say is we're not removing the cemeteries maintenance budget at all. There's no proposal relating to that as you say. And as I know you understand, Councillor Hill, this is about accounting for reserves for potential additional needs of maintenance and the view from finance is that it's not an efficient way to have little pockets of reserves but to put that in within the general risk reserve of the Council, so in some senses it's an accounting change. It is not removing the maintenance budget of cemeteries. And clearly if there was something completely unforeseen and dangerous that happened in a cemetery, the general risk reserve would have to be called upon to remediate that in a cemetery.

(18) Councillor Hill- General Fund Draft Budget & Resource Update - 2026-27 to 2029-30

Page 131 regarding Registration Services says there will be a 'Comprehensive transformation of registration services by streamlining processes, optimising resources and embedding efficiency into service delivery risk and impact: Implications of managing change and challenging old ways of working – potential staffing challenges during the transition period'.

This is very opaque language that does not explain what the proposed changes to registration are, leaving me unsure how the 60k savings will be realised. Is this just a long way of saying the Administration is cutting jobs in the registration services team?

Response: Cllr Allen

Thank you for your question on Registration Services – a team I have really enjoyed working with since becoming a cabinet member.

We are forecasting an underspend for 2025/26 in the service driven by income achievement and management of staffing vacancies. Going forward into the next financial year, there are several areas of transformation that will deliver the proposed savings. These include:

- **Procurement of new software for managing delivery of registration appointments and ceremonies:** A comprehensive procurement process will enable savings on software costs;
- **Reduction in spending on administrative costs:** The introduction of new software and digital-first communications will reduce printing, postage and stationary costs;
- **Realignment of the service budget:** With a forecasted £40k income overachievement for 2025/26, realigning income targets to reflect historic actuals and current fees will secure a significant share of the savings.

Therefore the £60k savings proposed are set out above and are not predicated on changes to staffing numbers. A service-wide redesign is planned to be taken forward in 2026 to increase resilience and rationalise use of casual staff.

(19) Councillor Shanks- Sustainability plan for Libraries

Why has the Cabinet decided to ignore the recommendation from the People Scrutiny committee to shelve the library cuts, and the subsequent one which was to moth ball even if closed which was passed unanimously even to the extent of not mentioning them in the report?

Response: Cllr Robins

We recognise the Scrutiny Committee's recommendation and have carefully considered their concerns alongside other factors before making our final recommendations to Cabinet today.

They are directly referenced in the cover report at point 3.50

(20) Councillor Pickett- Sustainability plan for Libraries

Residents are in agreement that this plan is too rushed and hasn't given interested residents, such as those in Westdene, the opportunity, and in the main, time, to fully engage to work out ways to keep a community library running, possibly by volunteers. Why can't this plan be mothballed, as suggested by the People Scrutiny and Overview Committee, so that residents have time to properly work out ways to make this can happen?

Response: Cllr Robins

We recognise the Scrutiny Committee's recommendation and have carefully considered their concerns alongside other factors before making final recommendations to Cabinet today.

Savings need to be made in the next financial year and cannot be delayed, however, the site is not proposed to close until April, giving some months for actioning next steps.

If the library at Westdene is to close, then officers will work with residents and partners in exploring alternative options for future community-based provision in the area.

(21) Councillor Pickett- Sustainability plan for Libraries

As the library service is currently rewriting its current strategy regarding services, finances and forward plans, why can't the proposed closures wait until this strategy is complete so that we have a more thorough idea of how to move forward with possible closures and ways of making savings?

Response: Cllr Robins

Savings need to be made in the next financial year and cannot be delayed. The service was allocated savings targets to meet in 2025-27 and the revenue budget reduction has already been agreed at Budget Council in February 2025.

The Library Service Strategy for 2026-31 will be developed in the next year and will inform future service delivery decisions. The current Strategy is still live and informed the proposals considered to meet the current savings targets.

(22) Councillor Pickett- Sustainability plan for Libraries

Once the library at Westdene closes the children of Westdene Primary School will no longer have access to a school library. What provision will they have to access books, other than text books, in school?

Response: Cllr Robins

Public Library Services and Local Authorities are not required to provide school libraries. In the case of Westdene, the offer has been made for officers to support the school, to continue to work closely with them to explore how the Library Service can support pupils to access books and study space. There are options to explore which could provide an improved school library offer, with possible donations of books and furniture.

(23) Councillor Pickett- Sustainability plan for Libraries

What will happen to the empty buildings once the libraries cease to function? I note that Westdene library is part of the school. How will this work?

Response: Cllr Robins

Public Library Services and Local Authorities are not required to provide school libraries. In the case of Westdene, the offer has been made for officers to support the school, to continue to work closely with them to explore how the Library Service can support pupils to access books and study space. There are options to explore which could provide an improved school library offer, with possible donations of books and furniture.

(24) Councillor Sykes- General Fund Draft Budget & Resource Update - 2026-27 to 2029-30

To the background of the impact of the cost of temporary accommodation on council budgets, what actions are the administration pursuing to influence the cost of housing to residents and how is the effectiveness of these actions being monitored?

Response: Cllr Taylor

A great question and a really important question. Simple answer is we're buying and building on a greater scale than any previous administration probably in the last 25 years. The only solution out of the dire housing crisis in this city in the South of England is to build more affordable and genuinely affordable housing. And we're also pursuing a strategy that I know you're aware of, Councillor Hill of acquiring property, something that has cross-party support. I know that was pursued under the previous administration. We're now accelerating that, that's purchasing housing into the Housing Revenue Account for long-term tenancy's, but also purchasing accommodation to use for temporary accommodation, to bring down the financial pressure and give more security to those families facing temporary accommodation, we're also doing a range of other things that the service are pursuing in terms of how they try and purchase and doing longer lease as opposed to spot purchase working with registered providers and charities and working with our homelessness services to prevent homelessness. How will it be tracked? It will be tracked through the Council plan overall tracking and budget tracking, places like TBM and then other Cabinet reports that Councillor Williams brings on updates to the overall housing position.

(25) Councillor McLeay- Regulator of Social Housing - response to regulatory judgement including Procurement of Stock Conditions Contractor

Are all FRA reports available for inspection by residents and if not, when can they be made available?

Response: Cllr Williams

The health & safety of our residents and of those visiting residents or working on their homes is the council's key priority, as part of this, the council remains committed to publishing FRAs.

The council have undertaken a full new set of fire risk assessments across our 639 blocks in order that we have a complete and up to date appraisal of fire risks and remediation requirements. This work is ongoing, particularly in relation to our High-Rise Residential Blocks

A number of FRAs have already been shared with MPs, councillors and residents in response to enquiries. We want transparent and meaningful information about fire safety to be freely accessed by residents so that the sharing of this information is not limited to responding to enquiries.

In order to publish our 639 FRAs in a form that is accessible to residents, our 2025/26 HRA budget planning includes funding an additional resource to focus on FRA publication. This additional resource will focus on reviewing each and every FRA with a view to ensuring that information is published in the public domain so that it helps residents to understand the fire safety arrangements in their home and communal areas. By taking this approach, we avoid publishing unhelpful information that will include technical language or jargon, and we will also ensure that any personal or sensitive information about individual households is not inappropriately shared.

We look forward to recruiting this resource and supporting them in this important work.

(26) Councillor McLeay- Regulator of Social Housing - response to regulatory judgement including Procurement of Stock Conditions Contractor

In a recent report, it stated that the fire safety actions remain high, although it has reduced from 6420 to 4855. Of the 4855 outstanding actions, how many of them are serious breaches, and if there are any serious breaches, how many of them have not been completed within the target remediation date mentioned on the FRA? We have been awaiting an update since Place Scrutiny.

Response: Cllr Williams

Our Housing Safety and Quality Compliance Update to Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 22nd September 2025, reported that *'Although the total number of Fire Safety remediation actions remains high, progress continues to be made. As of July 2025, the number of FRA remediation actions has reduced to 4855 from 6,420 as of March 2025 reported to May Cabinet'*.

The Cabinet report being considered at today's meeting (11th December 2025) demonstrates continued positive progress in further reducing the total number of fire risk assessment remediation actions.

As of October 2025, this number had reduced to 2,918, a reduction of more than 60 per cent. Within this total, the number of total high-risk actions fell from 417 in August 2025 to 14 in October 2025. Of these 9 of the 14 had not been completed within target timescales.

The high number of remediation actions followed completion of updated fire risk assessments across all our blocks. The most common high-risk

actions identified through our Fire Risk Assessments relate to fire doors remediation or replacement, signage, communal electrical systems, compartmentation, and ventilation. These themes are consistent across our housing stock and reflect known areas of historic underinvestment. We have established, or are in the process of mobilising, planned programmes of work to address each of these risk areas.

81 MATTERS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE

81.1 There were none.

82 REPRESENTATIONS FROM OPPOSITION MEMBERS

82.1 Cabinet received a representation from Councillor Earthey on Item 87: Our City Transport Plan 2035.

82.2 Cabinet received a representation from Councillor Hill on Item 84 General Fund Draft Budget & Resource Update - 2026-27 to 2029-30

82.3 Cabinet received a representation from Councillor Shanks on Item 85 Sustainability Plan for Libraries.

83 TARGETED BUDGET MANAGEMENT (TBM) 2025/26 MONTH 7 (OCTOBER)

83.1 Cabinet considered a report that set out an indication of forecast risks as at Month 7 on the council's revenue and capital budgets for the financial year 2025/26.

83.2 Councillors Taylor, Williams, Robins, Robinson, Allen, Sankey and Miller contributed to the debate of the report.

83.3 Resolved-

- 1) Cabinet notes the forecast risk position for the General Fund, which indicates a potential forecast overspend risk of £7.776m.
- 2) Cabinet notes the forecast overspend risk for the separate Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which is an overspend of £1.216m.
- 3) Cabinet notes the forecast overspend risk for the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant, which is an overspend of £2.463m.
- 4) Cabinet notes the forecast position on the Capital Programme which is an underspend variance of £10.963m.
- 5) Cabinet approves the capital budget variations and re-profiling requests set out in Appendix 6.
- 6) Cabinet approves the new capital schemes requested in Appendix 7.
- 7) Cabinet notes the Treasury Management mid-year review as set out in Appendix 8 and summarised in paragraph 9.

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

84.1 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, including any changes in assumptions and estimates together with a high level assessment the key impacts of the government's Autumn Statement, , and the Local Government Finance Policy Statement, as far as they could be locally interpreted.

84.2 Resolved

That Cabinet:

- 1) Note the updated forecasts including funding assumptions and net expenditure projections included in this report.
- 2) Note the updated predicted budget gaps totalling over £86 million over the Medium Term Financial Strategy period, including £24.926m in 2026/27.
- 3) Note the draft savings proposals totalling £12.446m at Appendix 1.
- 4) Note the draft accompanying Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) at Appendix 4, and note that the final EIAs will be provided to Cabinet and Budget Council in February 2026.
- 5) Approve the extension of the Innovation Fund to 2029/30, committing additional total funding of £8.140m, as detailed in Section 6, to ensure the continuation of transformational activity across the full Medium Term Financial Strategy period to 2029/30.
- 6) Approve the release of £1.041m of earmarked reserves into a new general risk reserve as set out in Section 8 and Appendix 5.
- 7) Note that plans to arrive at a legally balanced budget for 2026/27, and the legal requirement to set a Council Tax will be presented to Cabinet and Budget Council in February 2026.
- 8) Note that projections for next year and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) will be updated following the announcement of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, expected week commencing 15 December 2025.

85 SUSTAINABILITY PLAN FOR LIBRARIES

85.1 Cabinet considered a report that made recommendations for savings to the library service revenue budget following the decision taken at the Full Council Budget meeting in February 2025.

85.2 Councillors Taylor, Muten, Allen, Miller and Sankey contributed to the debate of the report.

85.3 Resolved-

- 1) That having considered the information provided in this report and its appendices, Cabinet agrees to make the following changes to existing library provision, being satisfied that its remaining provision complies with its statutory obligation to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service
 - 1a Cabinet agrees to reduce opening hours at Jubilee Library by 5 hours/week on Monday evenings and Sunday afternoons from 1st April 2026 ;
 - 1b Cabinet agrees to reduce opening hours at Hove Library by 5 hours/week on Wednesday evenings and Saturday afternoons from 1st April 2026;
 - 1c Cabinet agrees to close Hollingbury Library on 31st March 2026 and notes that officers will work with partners in exploring alternative options for future community based provision;
 - 1d Cabinet agrees to continue the existing library provision in Rottingdean with a further report to be brought back to Cabinet in 12 months to review the outcome of work with community partners;
 - 1e Cabinet agrees to close Westdene Library on 31st March 2026 and notes that officers will work with partners in exploring alternative options for future community based provision;
- 2) That Cabinet delegates authority to the Corporate Director for Families, Children and Wellbeing, working in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sport & Leisure, to take all steps necessary or incidental to the delivery of the recommendations in paras 2.1.1 to 2.1.5 inclusive.

86 DEVOLUTION UPDATE

The item was withdrawn.

87 OUR CITY TRANSPORT PLAN 2035

- 87.1 Cabinet considered a report that updated Members on the development of Our City Transport Plan 2035, with a focus on the changes made to the draft document following public consultation. The adoption of Our City Transport Plan 2035 as a council policy would deliver on a commitment made in the Council Plan 2023-27, to develop and launch a new ten-year strategy setting out a long-term vision for the city's transport network and a pipeline of transport projects to deliver this vision.
- 87.2 Councillors Muten, Rowkins, Allen, Robins, Miller and Alexander asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

87.3 Resolved-

- 1) Cabinet agrees to adopt Our City Transport Plan 2035 (Appendix 1) as the city's overarching transport policy.

88 REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING - RESPONSE TO REGULATORY JUDGEMENT INCLUDING PROCUREMENT OF STOCK CONDITIONS CONTRACTOR

- 88.1 Cabinet considered a report that provided a six-month update on Brighton & Hove City Council's response to the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) C3 Regulatory Judgement (August 2024) relating to the housing Safety and Quality Consumer Standard.

- 88.2 Councillors Robinson and Rowkins contributed to the debate of the report.

88.3 Resolved-

- 1) That Cabinet note the progress made in improving compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing, Safety & Quality Consumer Standard since the last Cabinet update in May 2025.
- 2) That Cabinet delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Homes & Adult Social Care), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to procure and award a two-year Stock Condition Survey Contract via procurement of specialist contractor, with an estimated value of £2 million, and to take all necessary steps to mobilise and manage the contract.

89 HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2025 TO 2030

- 89.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought approval of the draft homelessness and rough sleeping strategy 2025 to 2030 which set out plans to prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping and for ensuring that sufficient accommodation and support are available for people who are at risk or those who become homeless.

- 89.2 Councillor Williams, Daniel, Nann, Robins, Muten and Sankey contributed to the debate of the report.

89.3 Resolved-

- 1) Cabinet agrees to adopt the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2025 to 2030.
- 2) Cabinet delegates authority to the Corporate Director – Homes & Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Cabinet Adviser for Homelessness to agree council led actions for inclusion in a joint delivery plan and structure agreed with our partners.

90 ROYAL PAVILION & MUSEUMS TRUST SERVICE FEE 2026-31

- 90.1 Cabinet considered a report that sought approval of the fee term 2026-31 for the Royal Pavilion & Museums Trust (RPMT) Service Agreement.

90.2 Councillor Taylor contributed to the debate of the report.

90.3 Resolved-

- 1) Subject to the matters set out in the part 1 and 2 reports Cabinet agrees to the proposed annual fee of £1.9m for the fee term 2026-31 for the RPMT Service Agreement.
- 2) Cabinet agrees to the deferral of loan repayments to 2031.
- 3) Cabinet agrees to delegate authority to the Corporate Director City Operations in consultation with the cabinet member to make such variations as required to the contractual documentation between the Council and RPMT to give effect to the recommendations above.

91 ROYAL PAVILION & MUSEUMS TRUST SERVICE FEE 2026-31 (EXEMPT CATEGORY 3)

As per the Part One minutes.

92 PART TWO MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 92.1 **Resolved-** That the Part Two minutes of the previous meeting be approved as the correct record.

93 PART TWO PROCEEDINGS

- 93.1 **Resolved-** That Cabinet agreed that the confidential items listed on the agenda remain exempt from disclosure to the press and public.

The meeting concluded at 5.53pm

