

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 146

Subject: A Cleaner City Centre

Date of meeting: Thursday, 19 March 2026

Report of: Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services

Lead Officer: Corporate Director- Operations

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Ward(s) affected: Regency; St Peter's & North Laine; Kemptown (small western section)

Key Decision: Yes

Reason(s) Key: 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

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

1.1 The Council Plan sets out a commitment to improve the look and feel of Brighton & Hove by delivering an accessible, clean and sustainable city. This report outlines the approach taken to address concerns raised by residents, businesses and partners regarding the appearance and cleanliness of the city centre. It details the introduction of a dedicated City Centre Manager, the outcomes of a Test & Learn pilot between Brighton Station and the seafront, the development of an enhanced graffiti removal approach, and the creation of an overnight cleansing team to support deep-cleaning activity.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet agrees to note progress to date on the Station to the Sea – Test & Learn Pilot.

2.2 Cabinet agrees to endorse the continued focus provided by the City Centre Manager.

2.3 Cabinet agrees to approve the introduction of an overnight cleansing service for the city centre from May 2026.

3. Context and background information

3.1 Brighton & Hove's city centre is a vital commercial, cultural and visitor hub. Increasing concerns from the Business Improvement District (BID), the Destination Experience Group (DEG), the Hoteliers Association and

- individual businesses have highlighted the need for a more focused approach to maintaining central areas.
- 3.2 Historically, responsibility for the city centre sat within a broader Street Cleansing Operations Manager remit stretching from Kemp Town in the east to Sackville Road in the west, covering the seafront, London Road and Hove, and managing up to 60 staff at peak, limiting the Council's ability to address the challenges of high-footfall areas. As visitor numbers and night-time economy pressures grew, it became clear that the needs of the city centre required dedicated leadership and a one-council, partnership-led approach.
- 3.3 To respond to these concerns, Environmental Services has developed a coordinated programme of improvement centered around three components: the appointment of a dedicated City Centre Manager; the implementation of the Station to the Sea Test & Learn pilot; and the introduction of an overnight cleansing team. These actions form a coherent programme designed to restore confidence in the city centre's presentation and ensure that high footfall areas are maintained to a consistently higher standard.

City Centre Manager

- 3.4 The City Centre Manager, appointed in September 2025, plays a pivotal role in bringing greater visibility, coordination and accountability to the management of the central area and is already delivering visible results. The role focuses exclusively on the city centre and provides a single leadership presence responsible for convening multiple teams supporting the delivery of a 'One Council' approach, building partnerships with businesses and external organisations, and ensuring that issues are addressed quickly and effectively.
- 3.5 The introduction of this role has brought a renewed and much-needed focus to the heart of the city, enabling a more coordinated, proactive and place-based approach to managing Brighton & Hove's busiest commercial and visitor areas. Working across multiple council teams and in close partnership with businesses, the Business Improvement District (BID), the Hoteliers Association and community groups, the role has significantly strengthened joint working arrangements and improved the speed, quality and accountability of operational responses. Daily site inspections, improved reporting pathways and hands-on engagement with businesses ensure that issues are identified earlier, resolved more quickly and tackled collaboratively.
- 3.6 Since being established, the role has already delivered substantial improvements. These include the installation of new double bins and cigarette waste facilities; extensive repainting of communal bins, utility boxes and signage; enhanced graffiti removal programmes; and a strengthened jet washing and cleaning regime across key pedestrian routes, including Brighton Station and the Clocktower. Repairs and refurbishments have been completed across public spaces, abandoned bicycle removal is now fully up to date, and a series of action plans have been developed to guide ongoing improvements in areas such as the Clocktower, Gloucester Road, North Road and Regency Ward.

- 3.7 External partnerships with the BID, the Hoteliers Association, Network Rail and volunteer groups have strengthened joint problem solving and introduced opportunities for sponsorship. Trials of innovative equipment are supporting future focused service improvements. Collectively, these achievements demonstrate the impact of a dedicated City Centre Manager and the value of sustained, coordinated oversight in maintaining a cleaner, safer and more welcoming city centre.

Station to the Sea – Test & Learn Pilot

- 3.8 A Test & Learn pilot between Brighton Station and the seafront was delivered to test new cleansing approaches and intensify maintenance work using existing resources. This area serves as a major gateway for visitors and residents. The pilot has produced significant improvements that have been well received by stakeholders. Forty new bins, ten cigarette bins have been installed, and fifty-seven new communal refuse bins will shortly be introduced. Routine cleansing was enhanced through increased jet washing and hot spot treatments, and the graffiti team removed more than one thousand stickers. Street furniture such as benches and railings were refurbished or repainted, signage was cleaned or renewed, and the entire pilot area was weeded and jet washed.
- 3.9 These improvements have raised baseline cleansing standards and demonstrated the effectiveness of a focused, place-based approach. Detailed action plans have been established to replicate this model elsewhere in the city centre, ensuring that the pilot's benefits are extended and sustained.

Graffiti Management and Public Realm Improvements

- 3.10 Graffiti remains one of the most visible issues affecting public confidence in the appearance of the city centre. To address this, the Council is implementing an enhanced strategic approach to graffiti removal.
- 3.11 A business case has been developed to introduce a commercial graffiti removal service to generate income for reinvestment. Advanced LaserTec equipment is being procured to enable faster and more efficient removal, particularly in high impact locations. A zoning model is being introduced to prioritise graffiti removal in areas where it has the greatest visual impact, and a more coordinated approach to street art management is being developed, recognising the role of high-quality artwork in deterring tagging.

Overnight Cleansing Teams

- 3.12 To support deeper, more transformative improvements to the city centre, an overnight cleansing team will be introduced from May 2026. This team is designed to complement the daytime Street Cleansing service rather than replace it. Daytime Street Cleansing remains responsible for essential daily duties including clearing litter, removing detritus, responding to fly tips, cleaning biohazards and maintaining hygiene and safety standards. Given

these operational pressures and the consistently high daytime footfall in central areas, Street Cleansing teams have limited capacity to undertake the intensive deep cleaning work required to significantly improve the city's overall presentation.

- 3.13 An overnight team will bridge this gap by delivering jet washing, deep cleaning of hard surfaces, extensive sticker and graffiti removal, cleaning and repainting of signage, and refurbishment of railings and street furniture. Working at night allows access to areas that cannot be effectively treated during the day. Intensive activity will be concentrated in one area at a time, bringing it up to a significantly improved standard before moving on to the next. Over time, this phased approach will deliver a visible and sustained improvement across the central area.
- 3.14 This model reflects practice from councils such as Westminster who operate overnight teams and responds directly to feedback from businesses and partners. Noise impacts will be carefully managed through scheduling work in locations where nighttime activity is already present or where disruption can be minimised. The introduction of an overnight cleansing team is expected to significantly improve the city's overall appearance.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 An alternative option to introduce a daytime cleansing team was considered but rejected for several operational and strategic reasons. Daytime delivery would significantly limit the effectiveness of deep cleaning activity due to exceptionally high footfall in the city centre. Street Cleansing teams already operate under substantial pressure during the day, undertaking essential statutory and safety critical duties including clearing litter and detritus, responding to fly tips, managing biohazards, addressing urgent cleansing reports, and supporting events and reactive incidents. The service is not resourced to undertake focused deep cleaning work during daytime hours. Doing so would require removing staff from their core duties, which would directly reduce daytime coverage.
- 4.2 If the Council were to deliver an overnight service it would need to establish additional management and supervisory capacity overnight to ensure staff welfare, quality control, and appropriate deployment. There are also significant risks relating to recruitment and retention, which would place additional pressure on existing managers who already oversee a large and complex operational service. Managing ongoing staffing turnover, covering absences, and maintaining resilience for an overnight team would draw managerial focus away from essential daytime operations and strategic service improvement work.
- 4.3 A contractor can provide a more efficient and sustainable option by supplying the necessary staffing stability, take responsibility for recruitment and turnover, and potentially introduce specialist equipment and machinery that enhances productivity. This will allow the City Centre Manager to focus on delivering ongoing service improvements aligned with the Council's

investment in the city, while ensuring that overnight operations are targeted effectively to achieve maximum impact.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 Engagement has taken place with the BID, DEG, Hoteliers Association, Small Business Association and other stakeholders through Visit Britain networking events who represent the views of their members. Residents have provided feedback on the need to improve the appearance of the Public Realm through Ward Councillors.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 A £250k recurring budget was allocated as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process. The programme is anticipated to last 3 years at which point the programme and budget requirement will be reviewed.

Name of finance officer consulted: Craig Garoghan Date consulted 11/02/2026.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The report makes a number of recommendations relating to the improvement of the appearance and cleanliness of the city centre. These are executive functions, and are matters reserved for Cabinet in accordance with Part 2E of the Constitution as they are key decisions.
- 7.2 The council has a statutory duty under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (section 89) to ensure, so far as is practicable, that its roads and pavements and public land are kept free of litter and refuse, and as regards roads and pavements to be kept clean. These measures will assist the council in meeting this duty.
- 7.3 The council also has a duty under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment). The report sets out measures that enable it to demonstrate how it is considering this duty.
- 7.4 The Equality Act 2010 states that, when carrying out their functions, public bodies must have “due regard” to the need to eliminate discrimination, and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a “protected characteristic” and those who do not (Equality Act 2010, Section 149). The report sets out the positive impacts of the actions being taken on different protected characteristics and has not identified any negative impacts.

Name of lawyer consulted: Allan Wells Date consulted (25/02/2026)

8. Risk implications

- 8.1 Failure to endorse the proposed approach presents significant reputational, economic and operational risks for the city. Key partners including the BID, Destination Experience Group, Hoteliers Association and individual businesses have already expressed concerns about declining standards and have linked the cleanliness and presentation of the city centre to decisions on future investment, event hosting and conference activity. Without a clear and coordinated improvement programme, confidence in the Council's ability to respond to public realm issues may weaken, with the risk of reduced visitor footfall, diminished business confidence and continued negative perceptions of the city's appearance. The successful outcomes of the Station to the Sea pilot demonstrate that visible improvements can be achieved, and not continuing this approach could result in a rapid deterioration of standards and loss of momentum.
- 8.2 There are also significant service delivery and strategic risks. Current daytime Street Cleansing teams have limited capacity to undertake the deep cleaning and restorative work required to raise baseline standards in high footfall areas. Without the overnight cleansing team, the city would continue to lack the capability to deliver the transformational activity needed and undermine the Council Plan commitment to create a clean, safe and attractive city centre.

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 The programme is expected to have positive equalities impacts, as improvements to cleanliness, graffiti removal, and public realm maintenance will particularly benefit groups who rely more heavily on safe, accessible and well-maintained public spaces, including disabled people, older residents, families with young children and those travelling at night. The introduction of a dedicated City Centre Manager and targeted cleansing approach strengthens the Council's ability to respond quickly to issues that may disproportionately affect these groups, such as obstructed footways, poor lighting, graffiti targeting protected characteristics and trip hazards. The phased overnight cleansing model also enables work to take place at times that minimise disruption to pedestrians, wheelchair users and people with limited mobility. No negative equalities impacts have been identified at this stage, and the approach supports the Council's wider commitment to ensuring Brighton & Hove's city centre is inclusive, safe and welcoming for all.

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 The program offers several positive sustainability opportunities by improving the condition and resilience of the city's public realm. Enhanced graffiti removal, repainting, refurbishment of street furniture, and systematic deep cleaning all help prolong asset life and reduce the need for premature replacement, contributing to lower resource consumption and waste. The introduction of an overnight cleansing team enables work to be completed more efficiently and without daytime obstruction, improving the effectiveness

of environmental maintenance while supporting safer and more accessible streets for walking and cycling. The use of advanced equipment such as LaserTec for graffiti removal also provides potential environmental benefits through more targeted, less chemically intensive cleaning. However, the program also introduces a modest increase in operational activity—particularly overnight—which will require careful management of water, energy use and noise to minimise environmental impact. Overall, the coordinated approach supports a cleaner, more attractive city centre that encourages sustainable travel, strengthens civic pride, and enhances the long-term stewardship of the urban environment.

11. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 11.1 The programme is expected to have a positive impact on health and wellbeing by improving the cleanliness and overall environmental quality of the city centre. A well-maintained public realm supports emotional wellbeing, reduces feelings of stress associated with neglected or disorderly spaces, and contributes to a stronger sense of pride and connection among residents, businesses and visitors. Cleaner, better kept streets and public areas encourage people to spend more time outdoors, socialise, walk and use active travel routes, all of which are beneficial to mental and physical wellbeing. The coordinated, place-based helps create a more welcoming and uplifting environment, contributing to improved collective wellbeing and a more positive experience of the city centre.

Other Implications

12. Procurement implications

- 12.1 To secure the overnight service, the Council will conduct a mini tender via the Procurement Services Framework Y23022. Using an established framework ensures that the procurement is transparent, competitive and fully compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, the Procurement Act 2023 and the Council's Contract Standing Orders

13. Crime & disorder implications:

- 13.1 Keeping the city centre clean and tidy reduces anti-social behavior primarily by signaling that an area is cared for. Unrepaired, dirty, or damaged areas (graffiti, litter, broken streetlights) signal that 'no one cares', and can encourage more serious antisocial behaviour and crime. Clean streets and well-maintained public spaces signify that an area is under active, positive control, discouraging potential offenders who prefer areas that are neglected.

14. Conclusion

- 14.1 The introduction of the City Centre Manager, the successful Station to the Sea Test & Learn pilot, the strengthened graffiti management programme and the forthcoming overnight cleansing team collectively represent a comprehensive and coordinated approach to improving the cleanliness and

appearance of Brighton & Hove's city centre. This programme directly responds to stakeholder concerns, aligns with the Council Plan and provides the necessary leadership and operational capacity to deliver long term, meaningful improvements. Together, these initiatives form a strategy for raising standards and restoring confidence in the city's most prominent public spaces.

Supporting Documentation

Appendices

1. City Centre Map