

# Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

## Agenda Item 100

**Subject:** Written questions from members of the public

**Date of meeting:** 26 March 2026

A period of not more than thirty minutes shall be allowed for questions submitted by a member of the public who either lives or works in the area of the authority at each ordinary meeting of the Council.

Every question shall be put and answered without discussion, but the person to whom a question has been put may decline to answer. The person who asked the question may ask one relevant supplementary question, which shall be put and answered without discussion.

The following written questions have been received from members of the public.

**1. Robert Brown asked:**

This current administration promised “Reliable rubbish collection.” where they “will review where communal rubbish bins are placed and consult with residents and business owners on where they could be better sited.” – this is not the case in Kemptown Ward.

Residents frequently have to deal with overflowing bins, a lack of regular collections and a ‘who knows when’ approach to reporting overflowed bins waiting for them to be emptied and not once have we been consulted on where bins should be placed. Instead, Kemptown Ward have had many bins taken away and not replaced.

There also continues to be no KPIs with which to monitor performance. Will this administration confirm when they will:

- a) consult local businesses and residents on where they feel communal bins should be located;
- b) renegotiate contracts for refuse collections and share what the KPIs are to ensure transparency.

**Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services.**

**2. Daniel Harris asked:**

Bartholomew House — a 32,000 sq ft council building in the Lanes used for housing and homelessness frontline services — is being marketed on a 250 year peppercorn lease for around £5m. The listing allows future residential, hotel or institutional use, despite the city’s severe housing pressures. Recent patterns in Brighton show former council or office buildings being acquired cheaply, then later converted into high yield short let or residential units. With

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long leases, flexible use classes and opaque bidder information, the risk is that another public asset becomes a private revenue scheme rather than housing or community space. Residents deserve clarity on who is bidding and what due diligence has been done.

Before any sale proceeds, will the council publish the full due diligence assessment and beneficial ownership of all bidders for Bartholomew House, and explain how a £5m peppercorn rent lease aligns with the city's housing and social value obligations?

**Reply from Councillor Taylor, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and City Regeneration.**

**3. Helen Dawson asked:**

Avenue Bridge Club is looking for a permanent base in Hove. Our activities fit exactly with the Council's objectives for the King Alfred re-development area. Is it possible for the club to lease dedicated space within the new building and how could this happen?

We have been based in Hove for over 50 years, largely in Third Avenue premises which were sold in 2022. We are now a registered charity, with 180+ members and open to anybody who has an interest in bridge. We cater for all levels of expertise and run playing sessions and a comprehensive teaching programme.

**Reply from Councillor Robins, Cabinet Member for Sports, Recreation & Libraries.**

**4. Mike Goodrich asked:**

The only public toilets between the volks railway station by the marina and the pier volks station are located within the children's Peter Pan playground. Those toilets are not set up for adult use. The promenade is heavily used day and night and the lack of toilets has led to fouling on the beach. What are the council's plans to change this?

**Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Cabinet Member – Net Zero & Environmental Services.**

**5. David Gibson/Sarah Gorton (tbc) asked:**

The Right to Buy (RTB) was created under the Thatcher government and continued under Blair, and now under Starmer. Under the RTB, billions of pounds of public housing assets were privatised and 1.8 million social council homes lost on England alone between 1980 and 2015 (estimated loss from discounts was £12.7 billion between 1998 and 2015!) - see Alan Murie) This is a tragic waste of public assets. Thankfully the RTB has been abolished in Scotland and Wales. In Brighton and Hove over 3,000 homes have been sold. Now that the discounts have been reduced, the RTB will slow down in England, but there is nothing to stop the next government putting discounts back up. So will the council write a public letter to the Westminster

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government urging that they follow Scotland and Wales and legislate to abolish the Right to Buy?

**Reply from Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing.**

**6. Sheila Rimmer asked:**

The councils reserves have been run down so much and the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation has risen costing an estimated £5 million this year alone. All this has led to pleas to government to bail the council out to rebuild reserves and pay for homeless overspends.

Given that government says that austerity is over, please can you explain which of the following factors and council decisions have contributed to the deterioration in council finances?

Excessive cuts to council staff leaving insufficient capacity to deliver council services damaging income collection.

Reduced council housing allocations to homeless households in temporary and emergency accommodation contributing to soaring numbers and costs.

Falling HRA rent collection rates currently costing around £1.5 million a year.

Selling off too many council assets, “family silver” which previously provided a steady income for the council coffers.

**Reply from Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing.**

**7. Diane Montgomery asked:**

I met a young couple who in good faith bought a share of a one-bedroom home in Lewes Road Brighton. They diligently saved the £6000 deposit, along with help from family. Their service charge rocketed from £130 to £450 per month in three years. Both have average income jobs and have since had a child and need a larger home. They can't sell as who wants to buy a part of a property with an ever-growing service charge, pay rent and a mortgage on top. They are under stress due to the increase, being trapped in a property that no longer meets their needs. This is not what they were promised.

Given the council agrees that shared ownership is not an affordable housing offer, and doesn't reduce housing waiting lists, will you publicise the risks, so others do not become trapped like this couple?

**Reply from Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing.**

**8. Alison Woolfenden asked:**

The Council's new Constitution requires public questions be submitted two days before agenda and reports are published. Effectively, residents are expected to ask questions about decisions and reports they've not seen. That doesn't enable scrutiny; it turns public participation into guesswork. It risks excluding residents —those who want to read reports, understand proposals, or who aren't familiar with council procedures. A system that only works for insiders isn't an inclusive one.

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Until recently, residents could submit questions 48 hours after the agenda was published—I did so myself last year. The Council has already acknowledged that this rule is flawed for Scrutiny Committees and has corrected it.

If the rule is recognised as flawed elsewhere, why is Full Council—the city’s highest decision-making body—still operating under it, and will you commit tonight to restoring the 48-hour post-publication deadline and confirming when the Constitution will be amended?

**Reply from Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council.**

**9. Lyn ora Knott asked:**

Recent figures show that under the current administration the number of homeless households in temporary and emergency accommodation has increased by over 250. Life in private temporary and emergency homeless accommodation is insecure and unhealthy. It is very costly. Recent estimates of cost to the council are around £5m and have caused the council to ask government for bailout loans. As a critical friend the Living Rent Campaign welcomes that the council is looking to increase the allocations for homeless households and is continuing with and expanding the previous approach buying of blocks for temporary homeless accommodation. No stone should be left unturned which is why we ask the council to further alleviate this crisis by designating a greater percentage of home purchase purchases as temporary accommodation (which also saves money) until the number of households in temporary accommodation have fallen back to the levels inherited in 2023 (1715 households)

**Reply from Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing.**

**10. David Gibson asked:**

When asked about the need for step change increases in social housing grant, the Housing lead, Gill Williams stated that the £39 billion housing investment from over 10 years was exactly what we are wanting. Sadly if she looks at the detail, it isn't. The £39 billion spread over 10 years fund is not solely for more council homes and only provides for a maximum of 18,000 social homes a year. Yet since the Right to Buy around 45,000 council homes have been sold on average each year in England. To make an impact we need 90,000 additional homes a year. This could be actually achieved if the money already earmarked for social housing was brought forward to years 27/28-28/29. I know you agree with the need to urgently increase social housing to tackle the housing crisis. Will you raise this with government so they can make a real difference?

**Reply from Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing.**

**11. Ian Needham asked:**

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Key worker housing is clearly needed, given that private rents in Brighton and Hove are comparable to those in London (and given that government in England is still refusing to bring in rent controls). The Living Rent campaign argues that key worker housing must be truly affordable and swallow no more than a third of income after tax. Given that typical incomes for key workers would be approximately:-

Nurse 35 K, Teacher 40K refuse collector 28K, and a care worker earns around 25K. Do you agree that rents for these key workers should be set at levels less than the Local Housing Allowance?

**Reply from Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing.**

