

Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

Agenda Item 104

Subject: Written questions from Councillors

Date of meeting: 26 March 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 Wilkinson asked:

Subject: Improving Signposting and Promotion of Kemptown
Kemptown is one of Brighton & Hove's most vibrant and distinctive neighbourhoods, with a strong LGBTQ+ heritage, and a thriving independent business community. However, many residents and businesses feel that Kemptown is often overlooked in citywide wayfinding and visitor promotion. Better signposting and promotion could help increase footfall, support local businesses, and ensure visitors are encouraged to explore beyond the city centre and seafront.
Will the administration consider working with local businesses and ward councillors to review how Kemptown is signposted and promoted across the city, and explore opportunities to strengthen the area's visibility as a destination?

Reply from Councillor Miller, Cabinet Member for Culture, Heritage & Tourism:

Thank you for highlighting this issue.

Directional signage across the city already includes Kemp Town, although this is primarily aimed at road users. The council will review the existing road and directional signage to consider whether any improvements can be made to better highlight Kemp Town as a distinctive destination, with its unique blend of stunning Regency and Georgian architectural and centrality to Brighton and Hove's reputation as the LGBTQ+ capital of the UK.

VisitBrighton, BHCC's tourism arm, is also actively promoting Kemp Town and supporting local businesses, attractions and accommodation. Kemp Town features prominently across VisitBrighton's website, blogs and social media, generating strong engagement and helping to drive awareness and footfall. Dedicated Kemptown pages and blogs attract thousands of views, particularly for food, drink and accommodation content, demonstrating sustained visitor interest. Social media reels featuring Kemp Town businesses also achieve high organic reach. Overall,

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VisitBrighton's digital activity is keeping Kemp Town front of mind for visitors and residents, supporting local hospitality, independent businesses and the area's wider cultural identity.

However, Cllr Allen, Cabinet Member for Customer Services and Public Realm, and I would also be delighted to meet with the St James's Street Traders' Association, to establish how we can work together with local businesses to further highlight Kemp Town as a wonderful destination in the city.

2. Councillor Wilkinson asked:

Subject: Developing a Kemptown Environmental Strategy
Residents in my Kemptown ward have consistently raised the importance of improving the local environment, including cleaner streets, more greenery, better air quality, and enhanced public spaces. While the council has citywide environmental commitments, there may also be opportunities to work with the local community to develop neighbourhood-level initiatives that support these goals.
Will the administration consider working with ward councillors, community groups, and residents to explore the development of a "Greening Kemptown" environmental strategy to support greener streets, increased planting, and improved public spaces within the ward?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

Kemptown is an incredibly vibrant and exciting part of the city but, like other central areas, is significantly impacted by the amount of footfall.

Along with several other members of the Labour Group of councillors, I was very pleased to join you and Councillor Mackey recently on your community clean-up day. It is clear that you as ward councillors take an immense amount of pride in the area, and it was great to speak with the many residents who stopped by to say hello.

Last year, we created the new City Centre Manager role, who is tasked with taking a 'whole place' approach to improving the city centre, including St James St in Kemptown. He has recently completed an action plan for the area and will begin implementing it shortly.

Parks and Leisure are reviewing the council's Open Spaces Strategy which will give strategic direction across the city regarding green spaces. We are certainly happy to work with councillors, community groups and residents to help bring about these improvements.

3. Councillor Earthey asked:

(BHCC Rights of Way) What progress has been made on establishing public access rights to the orphan BHCC land by Looes Barn in West Saltdean, and if none has been made, why not? This matter was raised by Dr Richard Stow as a Public Oral Question to December's Full Council following months of resident questions, but

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despite repeated follow ups by Cllr Fishleigh and myself, no resolution to this case appears to have occurred.

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

There are two interrelated issues here, the first is access to the council's land and the second is access over it.

There are no rights of public access to or over the council's land.

The land is an isolated plot which has been leased to the same farming business for at least the last 20 years. Access to it is over adjacent land the council does not own. The adjacent land is owned by our tenant. The council has the benefit of access rights.

Access to the council's land would have to be negotiated with the owner of the adjacent land. The council cannot require this.

Access over the council's land would have to be negotiated with our tenant and here the council has more influence, albeit meaningless without access rights.

The council has raised this issue with our Commercial Agents (Knight Frank) to begin these discussions.

4. Councillor Earthey asked:

Large stretches of the Marina to Saltdean Undercliff are frequently submerged under shingle resulting from storms, resulting in danger to pedestrians and cyclists. The shingle is mainly cleared by local volunteers (the "Pebbledasher Project") using manual equipment such as brooms and shovels. Given that under climate change, we can expect more storms and thus more shingle, what steps are being taken to provide the Pebbledasher Project with the resources they are requesting, plus restoring the original Undercliff maintenance team to full strength (personnel and equipment)?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

The Undercliff acts as essential cliff toe protection and is a designated sea defence asset. During storms, shingle and debris are naturally thrown up onto the walkway and when deposits become excessive they must be removed using mechanical plant due to their weight. This mechanical clearance is arranged by the Seafront Service on an ad hoc basis after winter storms. Road sweepers are deployed but are only suitable for chalk and light deposits as heavy shingle damages the machines. The Community Payback Service is utilised for clearing chalk, drainage channels and light sand and stones.

The Pebbledasher Project is a fantastic volunteer initiative which the council is delighted to facilitate. The council is already supporting the group by offering a storage unit in Rottingdean for wheelbarrows and equipment for shingle and chalk clearance around Connor's Court. A space on the Undercliff in Saltdean can also be

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made available for a future unit provided by the group. There may also be opportunities for the council to supply basic equipment such as brooms and shovels if they think that would be helpful.

The physical sea defence structure continues to be maintained and inspected but there are currently no directly employed cleaning staff, general labour operatives or dedicated plant for routine Undercliff chalk or shingle removal. It is not financially viable to employ a full inhouse maintenance team for this type of work. Therefore, the council's operational approach is to combine post-storm mechanical clearance, appropriate use of road sweepers, the Community Payback Service and enabling local volunteers through storage, equipment support and integration with council volunteer programmes.

We will of course continue to review our arrangements and monitor the frequency of storms after which significant clean-up is required.

5. Councillor McNair asked:

We believe funding is being sought to reduce flooding in Winfield Avenue, Warmdene Drive and Dale Drive/Carden Avenue. Could we have any update on progress and what measures are likely to happen and when?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

Thank you for this question, Cllr McNair regarding funding to reduce flooding in Winfield Avenue, Warmdene Drive and Dale Drive/Carden Avenue.

For too many years, tackling the root cause of persistent and repeated flooding has not taken an holistic catchment approach. Rather, a more reactive response to flooding events rather than reducing the risk seems to have been the priority. Reducing flood risks across the city, particularly in areas known to be vulnerable to flooding following heavy rainfall or seasonal high groundwater is a priority to our administration. This is why funding is being sought to reduce flooding in this part of the city. Our Flood Risk Management team has commissioned a citywide Surface Water Management Feasibility Study, due for completion by the summer.

The study will identify a preferred option for this area, covering both traditional highway drainage solutions and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), and will provide a business case to support funding bids to Southern Water, the Environment Agency and the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

6. Councillor McNair asked:

Patcham Dovecote is an early 17th century dovecote – an extremely rare example. However, it is currently in a very poor state, with a sagging roof, collapsing boundary wall, and its door needing secured. Could we have an update on when Patcham Dovecote will be restored to its former glory?

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Reply from Councillor Allen, Cabinet Member for Customer Services & Public Realm:

A budget has been identified to complete works to the dovecot and a specification for tender is currently being prepared. This includes repairs to the boundary wall and external walls, roof and door.

The works will also be subject to obtaining any necessary consents.

7. Councillor Meadows asked:

It is now two years since the Scape project on Carden Avenue was implemented; could we have an update on its progress, including any successes or shortcomings?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

Thank you for your question, Cllr Meadows.

SCAPE was a European-funded Interreg pilot project designed to test how Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) perform in an urban environment and is, therefore, still being monitored.

Following several years of operation, the inlet design has been adjusted and refined, and the project team continues to develop a better understanding of effective long-term maintenance of this rainscape. Research by project partners at the University of Brighton has positively quantified the effectiveness of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in managing and treating highway runoff, improving the quality of water returning to the aquifer below.

The Flood Risk Management team has also developed expertise in designing and delivering highway SuDS, resulting in cost savings on the Norton Road SuDS scheme.

Working with our project partners, we continue to refine and improve the rainscapes in Carden Avenue, Norton Road and elsewhere in our city to inform the design and position of new rainscapes and to reduce flood risks and flows into the city's combined sewer system and increase contributions from rainwater runoff to the valuable water resources beneath our feet.

8. Councillor Meadows asked:

The caravan at the bottom of Carden Hill is still present despite the court order of 1st October granting the Council the power to move it; can the Council provide a full explanation covering the cost of obtaining that order, why it has not been enforced, how much could potentially be saved annually if court orders are not pursued but left unused, and when the new policy on van dwellers will be published?

Reply from Councillor Daniel, Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Youth Services:

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Thank you for your question.

The Section 78 order cost £404 to obtain. Any officer time involved falls within existing duties and does not create additional spend.

The order has not yet been actioned because the Council cannot remove a caravan until safe storage, cleansing and disposal arrangements are in place. Those arrangements are complex, involve multiple partners and legal requirements, and could not be finalised earlier. We now have a longterm storage site and a cleansing contractor, and are close to securing the final short term location required to complete the process safely and compliantly.

The £404 court fee is the smallest element of the overall cost of enforcement, so choosing not to pursue orders would generate only minimal savings.

The Council is finalising its updated policy on vehicle dwellers. This is a crossdirectorate piece of work and will be brought to Cabinet later this summer.

9. Councillor Theobald asked:

On December 18th, Cllr Theobald was told in a written response that a timeline to re-open Patcham Place pavilion could not be given because a member of staff was on maternity leave. The cricket season is fast-approaching and urgent action is required. Will cricket teams be able to use Patcham Place this season as they will need toilet access?

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

Patcham Pavilion is in need of refurbishment. Currently we do not have resources to facilitate this. We are looking at the pavilions refurbishment program going forward and will propose future works to pavilions on a case by case basis.

10. Councillor Theobald asked:

In answer to a written question from Cllr Meadows at Full Council on 23rd October 2025, Cllr Allen responded that "officers have a landscape design for [Patcham] roundabout for which we now have approval from National Highways. Officers continue to liaise with the landscaper and have a proposed contract with them to carry out the landscaping and maintenance on the roundabout for free, in return for sponsorship boards. This requires a planning application and legal sign-offs for the contracts with the landscaper and National Highways. There is progress on these items but there is key issue to resolve as financing enabling works (salt margin and access hardstanding) and the cost of traffic management have not yet been secured."

Could we have an update on current timelines for the work to commence?

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Reply from Councillor Allen, Cabinet Member for Customer Services & Public Realm:

Many thanks for your question, and I recognise the importance of this site as the gateway to the city for motorists.

There was a proposal to install welcome signage above the existing planted bed adjacent to the roundabout. This was developed as a community-led initiative, with responsibility resting with the local community to identify and secure the necessary funding. At this stage, the project is not part of a council-funded programme.

Once funding has been confirmed, officers would be happy to engage with the community to discuss the proposal further and, where appropriate, provide advice on delivery considerations.

I note there is a Better Brighton & Hove Fund submission on this matter which ward councillors may wish to consider supporting with their allocation of the fund.

11. Councillor Lyons asked:

In regard to many residents living within Nevill Rd, Nevill Ave, The Closes & Woodland Drive having asked for a Parking Consultation; the response received from Cllr Muten to my question at Full Council in December 2025, was that Officers will arrange to meet with Ward Councillors early in the new year to discuss the boundary and details of the scheme. We are now in March and no meeting has yet been forthcoming. Please advise as to when this will be arranged.

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

Thank you for your question, Cllr Lyons. I have written to all respective ward councillors for the areas concerns proposing that a meeting is set up. As a result, I am discussing with the Parking Design & Implementation team the scheduling of meetings with both ward councillors and residents to understand local needs and concerns and invest time to develop a parking scheme through co-design principles that works well for the local community. We will be planning these initial meetings very soon.

12. Councillor Lyons asked:

Within Westdene & Hove Park Ward (and no doubt elsewhere within the city), many drains are blocked and haven't been cleared in some cases for years. Wards that are particularly hilly are susceptible to flooding as a result. Residents and I have been requesting for many drains to be cleared – but weeks & months later, these are not being done. What is the policy for drain clearance & timescales for clearances in 2026/27 tax year?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure:

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Thank you for your question, Cllr Lyons.

The 2026/27 policy remains the same as 2025/26, with a gully programme that prioritises higher cleansing frequencies in areas at greatest flood risk. This approach considers current and historic silt levels. The Council recently passed the annual budget and as a financially responsible administration, without additional funding we are constrained to increase frequencies as a whole in delivering our current citywide risk-based assessment programme. This does not preclude some changes within the resource available as passed by Council in February.

The existing policy provides the framework for ensuring gullies are cleared based on this risk-based approach. We are presently reviewing the implementation of the policy with the contractor to ensure is delivered effectively and as intended. Further, using a data-led approach, we do review gullies' risk score and will amend frequencies based on new information where necessary.

In addition, a storm management plan is in place so that, when weather warnings are issued, resources can be targeted to areas where they are most needed. This means that many gullies are cleared more often than the minimum requirements of our proactive policy.

More widely, we are working in partnership with Southern Water, the Environment Agency and other partners such as the Universities, to develop our holistic approach to flood management. I will continue to pursue this with the team. Preventing flooding is about much more than clear gullies, and we must develop our holistic approach to keep our city safe into the future.

13. Councillor Hogan asked:

Why were Christmas trees in some areas of the city not collected until 21st February 2026?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

Our Christmas tree drop off sites are cleared by agency staff using Hiab vehicles. This year, the provision of staff from the agency was not reliable in the opening weeks of the collection window, and that meant the team was behind schedule.

On top of that, surprisingly we also saw trees being deposited well into February.

A full review of the collection regime will take place shortly.

This year, for the first time, we added Christmas tree collections to our Garden Waste offer.

The total volume of trees collected this year was over 130 tonnes, and we raised around £7000 for charity.

14. Councillor Hogan asked:

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Residents have contacted me about planting wildflowers in green spaces, but sometimes we're told the space is too small. Is there any criteria for where residents can plant wildflowers and what is the process for applying to do so?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

I'm very pleased to hear that residents in Westdene and Hove Park are keen to see more wildflowers in the area. Any enquiries for this can be directed to the city parks email address. Each enquiry can then be taken on a case-by-case basis factoring in elements like – species, location, sightlines if by a road etc, suitability of plants in specific location etc.

15. Councillor De Oliveira asked:

How will the administration set out what actions the council is taking—through commissioning, contract management, and partnership work with the NHS/ICB—to ensure people with learning disabilities and autistic people are proactively supported to access cancer screening on an equal basis?

Reply from Councillor Alexander, Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities, Public Health & Adult Social Care:

Public health will continue to fund the voluntary and community sector (Trust for Developing Communities) to carry out specific work to identify and improve cancer screening attendance by people with a learning disability in Brighton and Hove GP practices. The public health team will also continue to work on a bespoke project - together with adult social care - to make GP practices more accessible for people living with neurodivergence. The aim of both projects is to improve outcomes around cancer screening.

16. Councillor De Oliveira asked:

How will the administration ensure that free public assets—such as the Paddling Pool on King's Road, which provides overstretched families with an affordable day out on the seafront—remain open, functional, and protected for long term use?

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

The King's Road paddling pool is a fantastic space and we're very aware of how much it's loved by the families who use it.

This site is certainly not being closed for good. We are doing work in that area on strengthening the road, but the paddling pool itself was also reaching a stage where a replacement is needed given its age.

We want to work with the community on designing a new facility for children to enjoy for years to come.

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We're very committed to making this part of our seafront a space families can enjoy for free and will be working this through as a priority.

17. Councillor Hill asked:

I feel it was inappropriate for administration Councillors to wish a 'Merry Budgetmas' to each other during budget Council whilst pushing through potential cuts to places like Wellington House. Do you understand why statements like this might be considered inappropriate given the very real fear families like those affected by proposals regarding Wellington House are currently feeling due to cuts from this budget?

Reply from Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council:

I feel it was inappropriate for the Leader of the Green Party Zack Polanski to say 'Now, I don't know about you, but I don't particularly want to wipe someone's bum' on Question Time in December. Does Cllr Hill understand that this comment implies that his Party Leader believes that the important, sensitive and complex care work undertaken by care workers should be reduced to 'wiping someone's bum'. It also implies that her Party Leader believes that he is too good to do such, in his view, demeaning work and that this should instead be reserved for migrants who are by this implication less important.

I also feel it was inappropriate for the Deputy Leader of the Green Party, Mothin Ali, to say "indigenous people have the right to fight back" and called for an end to "white supremacist European settler colonialism" on the day that Hamas unleashed a devastating attack on innocent Jewish Israelis on 7th October 2023 – the most deadly attack on Jews since the Holocaust. Does she understand why comments such as this are deeply offensive and inappropriate.

18. Councillor Hill asked:

Investigations by the Councils Planning Enforcement team are taking longer at the moment than as advertised in the Council's adopted Planning Enforcement policy document as they have had vacancies in the team now for the past year. Is the Council able to provide additional support to this overstretched team? Residents of mine on D'Aubigny Road has complained for a long time now about difficulties to enforce a persistent noise problem which I am told is affected by this staffing issue.

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

The planning enforcement team is a small team within the planning service. Since January 2024, the team have been operating with 1 vacancy and at times 2 vacancies. Recruitment has been on hold. However, the team are currently advertising for 2 officers to join the team to fill the vacant posts.

19. Councillor Hill asked:

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Government policy changes restricting UK social care visas showed that in 2025 there was an over 90% drop in visas compared to 2023. This will cause nationwide severe staffing shortages, including in Brighton & Hove. How does the administration intend to respond to this and will that response include lobbying the government to U-turn again on this policy?

Reply from Councillor Alexander, Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities, Public Health & Adult Social Care:

In Brighton and Hove, we are taking coordinated action to support continuity of care and provider resilience. This includes routinely sharing guidance and updates with providers; working closely with any commissioned services experiencing existing overseas licence challenges; ensuring international recruitment and visa related risks are covered during contract reviews and provider forums. We are also developing a local workforce survey to assess workforce risk across all service types. We are reminding providers to ensure that their Business Continuity Plans consider the potential loss of visa-dependent staff and set out robust mitigation measures such as rota escalation and scenario planning.

20. Councillor Sykes asked:

Please can the Finance Lead provide additional information about the £4.775m Housing Benefit subsidy loss mentioned in the 26th Feb Council Budget papers, section 3.14, including how this loss appeared, what the multi-year impact is, whether back-office cuts may have increased the likelihood of this happening and any lessons on avoiding such in-year shocks in the future?

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

Thank you for your question.

A recent audit has identified that procedures overlooked a key criterion in determining vulnerability in Supported Accommodation claims. This is partly due to the migration from legacy benefits to Universal Credit, with the distinction around employment vulnerability now being less clear.

Back-office resourcing had no impact on the likelihood of this happening. Work is continuing to determine what the impact will be on the council's financial situation. This will be reported through the TBM process.

Housing benefit subsidy rules are complex. The largest losses are due to the registered status of the landlord of the Supported Accommodation schemes. If the landlord is a non-registered provider, local authorities face up to a 100% subsidy loss above the Rent Officer Decision.

A cross-council Recovery Plan is in place to reduce the housing benefit subsidy loss. Actions include:

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- Reviewing all relevant claims to ensure they are reported accurately in the subsidy process using a new claim form to ensure all relevant information is collected and processed
- Supporting non-registered providers to change their registered status, where they can do so
- Improving the knowledge in all non-Registered Providers about the issue and the impact it is having to ensure they are supporting their tenants to maximise their benefit entitlement where it may impact on housing benefit subsidy
- Improving knowledge in the voluntary and community sector around how housing benefit claims and Universal Credit applications interplay
- Maximising powers under the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act
- Reviewing commissioned supported accommodation.

We are also in conversations with the government to highlight the issues caused by the complex housing benefit subsidy rules and the impact it is having on local authorities across the country.

21. Councillor Sykes asked:

Please can the Finance Lead provide additional information about the 'planning legal challenge' referred to in the 26th Feb Council Budget papers, section 3.14, including the quantum of the loss or the provision made if it has not yet been finalised, and any lessons on avoiding this nature of financial risk to the Council in the future?

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

The planning legal challenge referred to in the February Council Budget papers is still a matter that is being negotiated and it would not be appropriate to discuss the amount until this matter is finalised.

The Councillors that sit on Planning Committee currently and those that were part of Planning Committee when this item was determined have attended a session to discuss the lessons learnt from the decision.

22. Councillor West asked:

Due to the slow action to remove bird boxes at the King Alfred redevelopment before the start of nesting season, some work will now be delayed by the need to protect wildlife. The administrations' choice to redevelop the King Alfred leisure centre in situ was always going to be a complex process, highly at risk of known and unknown factors leading to delay and cost overrun. We don't wish the project to flounder. We don't want to see the council embarrassed and financially exposed by its own version of the HS2 debacle. What effective risk management is being employed to prevent further delays?

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

The discovery of the early nesting of migratory birds on the site has meant that some elements of the enabling works have been reorganised. However, this has been

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done in a way to ensure that the overall delivery schedule for this year remains unchanged.

The ecological mitigation works on the adjacent events space, and the construction of the temporary car park will go ahead as planned. During the nesting season work will also progress, including:

- Further surveys of the bowling alley area to inform the planning and execution of the demolition
- Completing the soft strip of the bowling alley,
- Creation of the site compound
- Completion of slip trenches to determine if diversions are needed for the two adjacent UKPN cables are required diversions, and if so, carrying out those diversions
- Other diversions, including of foul and surface water drains and BT OpenReach cables.
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As before, we expect the enabling works to begin in May and conclude in November, so that construction work on the new facility can begin before the end of the year.

23. Councillor McLeay asked:

I am reading increasingly concerning information about BHCC's proposed role as a Primary Authority. My understanding is that other local authorities have chosen not to take on this role due to the potential financial and legal liabilities it can create. Could the Cabinet lead clarify what assessment has been made of these risks, and whether BHCC's legal team has formally reviewed and signed off the proposal?

Reply from Councillor Miller, Cabinet Member for Culture, Heritage & Tourism:

There has, unfortunately, been some mis-information spread online regarding this proposal. The Primary Authority (PA) scheme, established in 2009 under the [Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008](#) (RESA), allows businesses to form legal partnerships with local authorities for consistent regulatory advice. Evolving from the late-1990s "Home Authority" principle, it was expanded in 2013-2014 to include smaller businesses and fire safety. It is currently managed by the [Office for Product Safety and Standards](#) and is commonplace in other local authorities.

The proposed Primary Authority between Brighton and Hove City Council and the Events Industry Forum (EIF) to function for the Purple Guide is different to traditional PA arrangements as it pertains, not to regulation, but to guidance. As such, legally binding Assured Advice will not be issued but instead non-binding advice or opinions.

While the scheme has been explored by EIF with several other Local Authorities. As far as Brighton & Hove City Council are aware, the decision not to pursue the scheme has been purely down to staff resource and changes in structures and in no way was due to legal risk or financial liabilities. Brighton & Hove City Council have been through a vetting process with the OPSS to ensure suitability for the scheme and the details have been submitted for sign off from the Secretary of State.

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If an issue of regulation is raised with the PA, the scheme allows for consultation with supporting regulatory bodies, such as the Health and Safety Executive, to review any assured advice before it is published to ensure any advice given is suitable and compatible with regulatory standards.

24. Councillor McLeay asked:

In light of the council's substantial overspend on temporary homeless accommodation, approximately £5m above budget and largely benefiting private landlords, will the council agree to pause all asset disposals pending evidence that none of these assets could be used as temporary accommodation to help reduce ongoing financial pressures?

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration

All assets identified for repurposing are first considered for the provision of housing within the context delivering best value. We have a housing first approach to our asset portfolio.

All assets are considered in the context of the Housing Supply Programme and the Asset Strategy Programme in advance of formulating recommendations for disposal.

The council has identified a number of assets as part of the Asset Strategy Programme that have been or will be appropriated to the HRA for the provision of housing. This includes:

- Former Oxford Street Housing Office – refurbished to provide 10 homes
- Palace Place – being converted to provide 11 Temporary Accommodation units
- 8 Shenfield Way – To be converted to provide 3 units
- 10 Hangleton Way – To be refurbished to provide a family home
- Slipper Baths – To be converted to provide 11 Temporary Accommodation units
- Land at Mile Oak – To be developed to provide 20 units
- Land at Southdowns Riding School – To be developed to provide 15 units
- Portslade Village Centre: To be developed to provide 28 new homes and a Community Centre
- St Peters Primary School - Feasibility work underway and architects appointed to work up proposals for up to 20 new homes
- Woodingdean Cottages and Swimming Pool: Feasibility work underway and architects appointed to work up proposals for up to 50 new homes

The creation of General Needs housing supports the release of temporary accommodation as all General Needs vacancies (including newbuild) are advertised on Homemove. Residents living in Temporary Accommodation can bid for these and will be given priority to reflect their circumstances. Alternatively, vacancies may be let to existing tenants, which will create resultant vacancies for which Temporary Accommodation applicants can bid as part of our wider strategy for Homes for All.

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Where sites are suitable and viable for TA, and where the provision of TA will form part of a mixed and sustainable community this will be considered.

It should be noted that the Council is currently in the process of beginning to bid for grant funding under Homes England's SHAP programme, and Temporary Accommodation isn't eligible for this funding.

A capital contribution of £10m has been ringfenced from the capital receipts achieved from asset disposals to acquire properties for the provision of Temporary Accommodation.

BHCC has recently been awarded an additional £9.2m local authority housing fund grant from central government to support provision of TA and Resettlement Homes. This will be used to fund conversion of existing assets as well as acquisitions of ex RTB sales.

Evidence can be provided to show why assets identified for disposal were not considered suitable for the provision of affordable housing.

25. Councillor Lademacher asked:

Given that only 453 Airbnbs in Brighton & Hove currently pay business rates, can the Council provide a full explanation covering the average amount paid by each of these properties and the additional income the Council would receive if the estimated further 2,000 Airbnbs operating 'under the radar' were also paying their full business rates?

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

Thank you for your question.

As at 16 March 2026, there were 458 properties classified by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) as Apartment / House:

- 216 accounts (47%) are in receipt of 100% Small Business Rate Relief.
 - This means the accounts have nothing to pay.
 - The total discount for 2026/27 is £383,000.
- 10 accounts (2%) are in receipt of partial Small Business Rate Relief.
 - The total discount for 2026/27 is £22,744.
 - The income due for 2026/27 is £13,570.
- 218 accounts (48%) do not receive any Small Business Rate Relief.
 - The income due for 2026/27 is £552,779.
- 14 accounts (3%) are registered as either unused or the liable company is in liquidation.

Please note, due to the 2026 business rates revaluation, transition relief applies and therefore increases in business rates due is capped for some accounts in 2026/27.

It is not possible to determine what income the council would receive if other Apartments / Houses used for commercial purposes were classified as such by the

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VOA, as this depends on what the Rateable Value of the property is, as determined by the VOA, and any reliefs they may be entitled to.

For a commercial property to become liable for business rates, it must be valued and added to the business rates list by the VOA.

If a property becomes liable for business rates, it will not pay council tax.

26. Councillor Lademacher asked:

What is the current average annual net revenue cost to the council for a unit of each of the following types of homeless temporary/emergency accommodation?

- Spot purchased
- Block booked
- Seaside homes
- Private sector leased
- Manoj House (council owned)
- Bed and Breakfast
- Home purchase scheme council TA units

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

The figures below set out the current average net revenue cost to the council per unit per week for different forms of homeless temporary and emergency accommodation.

These costs vary by provider, property type, contract terms and support arrangements, and should therefore be viewed as indicative averages rather than fixed rates.

Based on current information:

- **Spot purchased accommodation averages £225 per unit per week.**
- **Block booked accommodation averages £219 per unit per week.**
- **Private sector leased accommodation averages £84 per unit per week.**
- **Seaside Homes averages £59 per unit per week.**
- **Manoj House (council owned) averages £93 per unit per week.**
- **Home Purchase Scheme council TA units average £93 per unit per week.**
- **Bed and Breakfast costs are not readily available in a comparable format.**

These figures illustrate the importance of the strategy we are pursuing: to rapidly build up the population of council-owned TA, and increasing long-leases (versus spot-purchased).

27. Councillor West asked:

Does the administration believe it is appropriate to release a report about a highly controversial matter, a report they know to be poorly informed and partial, into the public domain and then use it for party political purposes?

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Reply from Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

What an absurd question. The Council has published an independent report prepared by The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy which considers the lessons learnt from the council's decision to approve a loan to fund the construction of the Brighton i360. The purpose of the report was to understand the information and where decisions could have been better, and to ensure lessons are applied to future investment decisions involving public money. No – it is not inappropriate to release reports into the public domain. That's the point of public reports.

The report makes a number of recommendations to help reduce similar risks in the future, including the need for more robust and realistic financial modelling, improved benchmarking against comparable local markets, independent market validation and clearer governance and assurance arrangements.

The Brighton i360 went into administration in December 2024 after a prolonged period of financial difficulty and the council's original investment came at considerable cost to the public. That is why as an Administration we consider it important to learn from past mistakes and use those lessons to inform future commercial and investment decisions involving public money.

You can read the full lessons learnt report from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy: [Brighton i360 - Lessons Learnt](#).

What has been inappropriate, is the shocking response from opposition councillors, who have sought to smear and undermine the independence of the highly respected Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy.

28. Councillor Pickett asked:

With regard to what has happened at Middle Street School, will the administration be calling for an external investigation and report in order to fully understand the complexity of what occurred?

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

Thank you for your question. The Council has already taken significant steps to respond to the challenges at Middle Street, including the introduction of an Interim Executive Board in response to concerns about governance and leadership.

I agree that it is appropriate that the council looks at what has happened and of course, we will share whatever answers we can at any stage. It's also important to ensure the council draws any potential learnings from what's happened – which is why I have announced that the council will launch an independent lessons learnt review on this issue. It is worth noting that issues relating to HR and staffing are often difficult to communicate in a public setting.

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29. Councillor Pickett asked:

With regard to the audit report of January 2025, on the KC report, related to Hollingdean depot, it was noted that there were 'lessons to be learnt' and that these should be actioned. Cabinet noted the audit report but what were the lessons learnt and how have these recommendations been actioned in real terms within the council?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services:

The KC report that was commissioned in 2023 revealed a toxic culture in place in our Environmental Services that prevented the provision of a decent service to residents.

In January 2024 the council accepted all the recommendations and apologised to the staff and the city for the situation that had been allowed to fester over many decades. Following this, the council set about putting in place an action plan to implement all the recommendations and these have been reported back to cabinet on a regular basis.

Actions included taking forward some specific disciplinary actions, embedding a culture change programme, removing elected members from employment processes and changing archaic working practices that impeded service improvement. Further updates on culture change will be reported to cabinet this year.

The external audit report for 2024/2025, which was reported to Audit, Standards and General Purposes committee in January 2026, highlighted substantial improvements, and provided reflections on lessons learned around unchecked behaviours, citing political vulnerabilities, union dynamics and weak managerial support. Positive engagement with staff has substantially improved the culture and this was also recognised as being effective by the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge. These reports also highlighted that some counter cultural behaviours still persisted and full cultural transformation is expected to take 2-5 years. The work continues with absolute determination.

30. Councillor Goldsmith asked:

I've had an increase in the number of people getting in touch with me over incorrect council tax bills, who have had a lot of trouble getting the council tax team to address the problems, which only seem to get resolved after councillor input. Errors like these understandably cause a huge amount of stress for residents, so it's vital we get it right. Is the administration aware of an increase in issues and what steps are being taken to ensure the council tax has the support, capacity, and resources to carry out their role?

Reply from Councillor Allen, Cabinet Member for Customer Services & Public Realm:

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The Council has just completed its annual council tax billing process which involves sending bills to nearly 140,000 households in the city.

Every year there is a lag between system closedown at the end of February and the new financial year. If someone has an amendment to their account during this time, it will not be reflected in the bill sent as part of the annual billing. This is the case for all local authorities that use the same case management system.

In addition to this, the council have struggled with issues with stemming from the software which has meant that the department are unable to process amendments as quickly as we would want. We are working with the software provider to resolve this.

If a resident has received an annual council tax bill that does not reflect information that they have recently given to us, the council will issue a revised bill as soon as possible.

I appreciate delays can be frustrating but the council tax officers are working hard to combat the backlog of work and customer enquiries. I thank you, fellow councillors and residents for your continued patience as we work to get to improve the situation.

31. Councillor Goldsmith asked:

What work is being done by the council to support staff, students, and parents at Middle Street Primary School throughout the stressful process of consultation on closing their school, especially after what has already been a period of difficulty for those at the school?

Reply from Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member for Finance & City Regeneration:

Thank you for your question and I recognise the deep sense of loss felt by so many who have a connection to Middle Street School. It is clear that this is a school which has meant a great deal to its community, and I want to continue to acknowledge that sincerely.

The Council has already taken significant steps to respond to the challenges at Middle Street, including the introduction of an Interim Executive Board in response to concerns about governance and leadership.

Various support arrangements are in place or will be expanded upon should a decision be taken to close the school. These include

- Staff have access to support through the ongoing HR processes that are underway as a result of these proposals.
- All pupils with EHCPs will have an individual annual review to inform the decision about future provision. Pupils who are currently undergoing statutory assessment will see no disruption to that process as a result of the proposal to close the school. Evidence collected for pupils in advance of a formal request for statutory assessment will be made available to a receiving school

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and will be taken into consideration when considering what the appropriate next steps might be to meet a pupil's needs.

- A transition support group will be established, including educational psychologists and school admissions staff, to assist families in selecting schools and to support pupils through transitions. This group will work closely with the existing Middle Street Primary School staff and staff at receiving schools to ensure the transition of pupils is managed in a child-centered, caring and considered way.

If anyone is concerned about their child they should make the interim Executive Headteacher aware so that they can liaise with the council teams who can then consider what additional support may be required.