

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

4.00pm 17 MARCH 2026

HOVE TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBER

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Parrott, Cattell, Lyons, Mackey, Shanks, Sheard, Winder and Sykes

Other Members present: Sara Fulford (Older People's Council), Joanna Martindale (Community Works Rep), Adam Muirhead (Community Works Rep), Fiona England (PaCC), and Dr Anusree Biswas (Community Works)

PART ONE

46 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

46.1 Giles Rossington, Scrutiny Manager, said:

“Good afternoon and welcome to this meeting of the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee. I’d like to inform those present that this meeting is being webcast live and will be capable of repeated viewing.

Neither the Chair nor the Deputy Chair of People O&S Committee are in attendance today. Committee Procedure Rules state that “In the absence of the Chair or Deputy Chair at a meeting of a Committee or Sub-Committee, those voting Members present shall elect a person from amongst their number to preside over the meeting”. (Committee Procedure Rule 3.3)

I therefore need to ask if any member wishes to nominate themselves as Chair for this meeting only.”

Cllr Sam Parrott nominated herself as Chair.

Giles Rossington said:

“Thank you. Does the committee agree that Cllr Parrott be elected as Chair for this meeting?”

This was agreed.

47 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

- a) Cllr Sykes for Cllr Mcleay
- b) There were no declarations of interests

48 MINUTES**48.1 RESOLVED**

The draft minutes of the 19th January 2026 Special People Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

The draft minutes of the 28th January 2026 People Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

The draft minutes of the 19th February 2026 Special People Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

49 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

49.1 Daniel Harris asked a public question. The Chair responded as follows:

Thank you for your question. Cabinet will be considering the future of the Large Panel System (LPS) blocks, including St James House, Nettleton Court and Dudney Lodge and the North Whitehawk Bird Blocks, at a Cabinet meeting on Thursday this week.

If Cabinet agree to proceed with the demolition of the LPS blocks a rehousing process of all residents living within the blocks will begin and be carried out in a phased way over a number of years – homes will certainly not disappear overnight.

The intended trajectory accounts for the possibility of needing to move Temporary Accommodation tenants from these blocks over the council's Medium Term Financial Plan, and the potential reduction in these homes is partly offset by the intended increase in acquisitions of new council homes and an expansion in block-booked arrangements.

50 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

50.1 There was no member involvement.

51 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATION

51.1 The Chair gave the following communication:

As the Labour Group's nominee to take the vacant position as Chair of the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee, I'd like to thank my predecessor, Cllr Jackie O'Quinn for her work over the last couple of years as the first Chair of the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Today we have a report on changes to temporary accommodation, giving us the opportunity to feed into the consultation on these changes. It is very important that scrutiny takes part in this as, if approved by Cabinet, these changes will have a big impact on temporary accommodation and council housing in the city.

I understand that Cllr Gill Williams is due to join us for this item straight from work and so I'm going to change the order of the items listed on the agenda so that this will be our final item this evening.

The committee's current Task & Finish Group on antisocial behaviour in social housing will shortly be coming to an end. It was due to report to this committee but following Cllr O'Quinn's resignation from the Labour group, and therefore from the Task & Finish Group, members of the group felt it necessary to have an extension to enable them to come up with an excellent set of recommendations rather than rush to put something together. I agree that this is the best way forward. They will now report to the next scheduled meeting of the committee in July. In the meantime, we can be thinking about the subject of the next Task and Finish Group and therefore we will now have a discussion on potential ideas that members may have.

We are joined today by new members of the Youth Council one of whom will be joining this committee. They are Ilona, who is here in person, and Clemmie and George who are joining us online. Welcome to all three of you, I look forward to working with you.

52 CONSULTATION ON USE OF EMPTY COUNCIL HOMES AS TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

52.1 Cllr Gill Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing, and Harry Williams, Director for People Housing Services, presented to the committee. The main points were:

- the exceptionally high levels of demand
- the social and financial impact of this demand
- the changes that the council wants to make including reducing the number of nightly paid units and increasing the number of council owned TA units
- improving outcomes for residents
- reducing the financial pressure on the council
- the ongoing consultation on the use of empty homes as TA
- the use of the committee's feedback to shape the next phase and its inclusion in the report to cabinet in April

52.2 Cllr Lyons asked how the current numbers in TA compare with previous figures, asked how many of them were from Brighton & Hove, requested the number of voids and a list of them, and asked about the length of time for properties being voids. Cllr Williams said that the numbers in TA had gone up significantly, with very few from outside Brighton & Hove. She said that where people were from outside the city it was because the council had a statutory duty to help them, such as those from the armed forces or those experiencing domestic violence. She said providing a list of voids would cause problems. Harry Williams said that they had a statutory duty to help those who are homeless and would consider people's local connections and if necessary, would send them to their own council. He said that the growth in those in TA was largely from single men with mental health problems. He said that he did not have the numbers on void turnarounds but could provide these.

52.3 Cllr Cattell asked for information about the process of spot purchasing. Harry Williams said that because of the demand they had to use any property and that spot purchasing providers would let them know when properties became available.

52.4 Cllr Sheard asked about the use of HMOs as temporary accommodation rather than turning them back into large homes as many single people would live in HMOs in the private sector. Cllr Williams said that they had looked at acquisitions and that many HMOs were no longer being used for student accommodation and could be turned into much needed four-bedroom council homes.

52.5 Jo Martindale asked about support for people living in TA. Harry Williams said that moving into a better home was support itself. He added that the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy included increased support for people in TA including wrap around care and help to move into permanent accommodation. He said that they were exploring more support for families in TA.

52.6 Cllr Sykes said that he was in favour of the policy and asked about its interaction with the allocations policy. He asked about the expected savings £665k to general fund with pressure on HRA of £500k, which is like a transfer from the general fund to HRA. Harry Williams said that the allocations policy applies to Homemove whereas this policy was using some of the properties that would have gone on them for TA. He said that there were already 260 TA properties in HRA account and it is normal to use HRA homes as temp accommodation and the rent would go back into HRA. Harry said the pressure on HRA was how quickly they could turn homes around.

52.7 Adam Muirhead asked how the council planned to mitigate the loss of HRA to ensure that this short-term solution for TA does not undermine the long-term goal of increasing supply and quality of social housing and support for young council tenants. Harry Williams said that the rental income coming from the properties will still sit in the HRA account. They have expert officers helping people to pay their rent. He said that they needed to be clear with cabinet that there would be a greater turnover of people because of the transient nature of TA. Harry said that it was not stopping them increasing supply and acquiring new homes.

52.8 Cllr Mackey asked if the policy would help families that are moved into TA in places like Eastbourne and those who have been in TA for a long time. Cllr Williams said that those in TA can bid on permanent homes and that they were increasing supply. Harry Williams said that they had successful housing solutions team. He said that they had demand that was greater than supply but that they wanted to increase the supply particularly for children.

52.9 Sara Fulford asked if the council was doing enough to prevent homelessness and about the impact on older people's housing. Cllr Williams said that they had an excellent homelessness prevention team. Harry Williams said that prevention was the top priority and they recognised that TA was not the solution. He said that seniors housing was exempt and would not be used for TA.

52.10 Cllr Shanks said that it would have been good to have seen the responses to the consultation. She also mentioned that TA isn't quick and that people would be in there for a long time. She said that we needed action from the national government such as rent controls. She also asked if people would then be asked to bid on the TA homes that they were living in. Cllr Williams said that it was a problem that people were in TA for too long, but she said that at least they were in better quality TA. Harry Williams said that TA was not the solution but part of a process. He said that they had around 200 responses and that there was a mix of responses, which he would be happy to share after the consultation. He said that there were 5800 people on the housing register as well as 2200 in TA and that they had to balance them.

52.11 Dr Anusree Biswas asked about safeguarding and complex needs such as domestic violence victims, equity of access such as language or digital barriers, and about the standards that empty homes needed to meet. Harry Williams said that on safeguarding part of the housing assessment was to look at needs and link people with agencies as required. Regarding equity of access, he said that the criteria of access was set out in legislation and that they had a matrix to allocate fairly. He said that there was a list of standards for properties and as they were in control of the properties, they could meet them.

52.12 Fiona England asked about families in these TA properties and if there could be flexibility to allow them to bid on the homes that they would be living in. Harry Williams said that they would not be able to bid on the properties but could bid on other properties. He said that he did hear the committee's views about whether the homes should be used as permanent homes. Fiona said that sometimes flexibility to allow people who have been in the properties for a long time might be helpful to the whole system. Harry said that they do have a direct offer ability under very exceptional circumstances, but it is used rarely to ensure fairness.

52.13 Cllr Shanks asked about the allocations policy and why couldn't the people living in these TA properties for extended periods be given a preference for a permanent tenancy. Cllr Williams said that the point is that they don't have much TA and that turning TA into permanent homes reduced the amount of TA. She said that they were building more homes and that these families could bid on other homes in the area. Harry Williams said that they were trying to transform the TA portfolio and needed to build more homes.

52.14 The Chair asked about the risks of extension, and the criteria for ending, amending, or extending the policy. Harry Williams said that the proposal was for a 12-month extension with a decision due to be made at cabinet. He said that the greatest impact would be on those currently on the register. He said if extended it would be 20% of properties in the year and that they would be trying to smooth it over the year to mitigate the impact.

52.15 The Chair asked how the council were engaging with people in TA now. Harry Williams said that they have had responses from people in TA and that email was the most effective way. He said that they had also engaged with the lived experience group, and the TA Action Group. He said that there was always more to do to engage more.

52.16 No specific recommendations were made by the committee. Feedback on the policy was provided during the discussion, and the draft minutes of the meeting will be shared as a response to the consultation.

53 DISCUSSION OF NEXT TASK & FINISH GROUP

53.1 The chair said that some good idea had already been sent to her, but she felt that some might be better as agenda items brought to the committee rather than Task & Finish Groups, and that the same might be the case with suggestions at the meeting. These would be raised with senior officers as potential committee agenda items.

53.2 The following were suggested by members:

- Drugs policy
- Youth strategy
- Equitable rights to care

- Accessibility of council services
- Young people’s mental health
- Cost of living support
- Improving council consultations
- Mental health across all age ranges
- Ensuring consultations are reaching those who are digitally excluded

53.3 The chair said that young people’s mental health and improving consultations & engagement seemed to be preferred by members of the committee. She said that officers would go away and scope both ideas to bring them back for a vote. The other ideas would be fed into work programming.

The meeting concluded at 6.02pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of