

Brighton & Hove City Council

Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item 8

Subject: Report of the Heritage Task & Finish Group

Date of meeting: 22nd July 2026

Report of: Chair of Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Key Decision: No

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the Heritage Task & Finish Group (TFG) for consideration and review by Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The report looks into the issues faced in preserving the city's heritage assets and investigates what other initiatives or measures can be put in place to help the council support owners, residents and community groups to look after their buildings at a time where there are limited resources available.
- 1.2 The report has produced 15 recommendations based on evidence gathered during the TFG process. The report is included as Appendix 1.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee notes the Task & Finish Group report on Heritage attached as Appendix 1
- 2.2 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee refers the findings of the Task & Finish Group on Heritage to Cabinet for consideration.

3. Context and background information

3.1 Task & Finish Groups

- 3.1.1 Brighton & Hove City Council's Constitution permits Overview & Scrutiny Committees to establish informal task & finish groups (TFGs) to look in depth at specific issues.
- 3.1.2 A Notice of Motion was agreed by Full Council in July 2025 calling for better protection of local heritage and noting the significant reputational damage

the council suffers when heritage is left to deteriorate. At the 14th October 2025 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee, members agreed to establish a TFG to explore issues related to preserving heritage assets in the city. The group's aim was to develop a report with recommendations that will support the development of the council's new Heritage Strategy.

- 3.1.3 TFGs typically hold a series of meetings with witnesses, potentially including council officers, executive members, other councils, public sector partners, national organisations, businesses, and members of the public. Using the evidence gathered, the TFG agrees a report with recommendations which is then submitted for consideration, initially by the parent O&S committee. If the parent O&S committee so decides, the TFG report is then referred to the appropriate decision-making body, such as Cabinet or Council for consideration.

3.2 The Heritage TFG

- 3.2.1 The Heritage TFG consisted of: Cllrs Amanda Evans (Chair), Julie Cattell, Amanda Grimshaw, Carol Theobald, Ollie Sykes, Mark Earthey, and Mark Strong (Community Voluntary Sector).
- 3.2.2 The TFG held 7 evidence-gathering sessions between December 2025 and April 2026, hearing from 20 witnesses. In May 2026, the TFG agreed a report which included a series of recommendations for consideration by Cabinet.
- 3.2.3 The Task & Finish Group recognised that the definition of heritage can encompass a wide range of elements, including cultural, historical, and social aspects. However, for the purposes of this work, the focus was on historic buildings, structures and artefacts in the city, including lesser known, but still 'at risk' assets.
- 3.2.4 The Heritage TFG was established to look at the challenges facing the preservation of Brighton & Hove's heritage assets and to identify practical measures to support their long-term sustainability. The deteriorating state of heritage assets across the city has been raised by residents and councillors. Acknowledging the current difficulties in local authority funding and the high demand from statutory services, the council wants to reimagine its role as facilitator in helping people to look after their buildings.
- 3.2.5 There are high costs involved in maintaining heritage assets, which can make them unaffordable to custodians. This is further impeded by strict planning policies and the effects of climate change. There is a lack of funding available and national pots like the National Lottery are becoming increasingly competitive. It is difficult to restore assets to a reasonable standard from which they can explore financially sustainable models. There is a strong level of public interest in heritage with residents and community groups keen to help; it would make sense for the council to harness this and find new ways to work collaboratively for the benefit of the city.
- 3.2.6 The report planned to focus on the following areas:

- To better understand the barriers that owners and residents face when looking after heritage assets and what kind of support would be useful
- To explore how the Council might reimagine its role as a facilitator, especially in the context of reduced funding, by identifying alternative solutions and sources of funding for heritage projects
- To understand how other councils and relevant organisations ensure heritage sites are protected and whether there are initiatives or examples of best practise that the council might want to adopt
- To explore how the council might work with community groups to assist them in leading on some heritage projects.

3.2.7 The TFG engaged with a wide range of witnesses throughout the process, including council officers from heritage teams and Visit Brighton; custodians of heritage assets such as local residents, community groups and the University of Sussex; representatives from heritage societies and trusts; and officers from other local authorities to share best practice. The group also heard from Cllr Birgit Miller, Cabinet Member for Culture, Heritage and Tourism, who outlined the administration's vision for the city; and a representative from Historic England, who provided insight into the national funding landscape.

3.3 Recommendations from the report

3.3.1 The TFG has made 15 recommendations. These are:

Council support

- The council to undertake a review of signage and wayfinding in the city in partnership with community groups
- To review council owned heritage assets and consider the different Trust models that exist that could allow community groups to take on the responsibility for some assets, whether through direct ownership or management; and to support groups to do so
- To support community groups to develop plans or strategies for heritage assets, ensuring that well-prepared, fundable proposals are in place so projects can move forward quickly when funding opportunities arise.

New Initiatives

- To support community groups in creating art and heritage trails to encourage visitors to disperse more around the city and visit areas they wouldn't normally go. To consider using incentives to increase participation.
- The council to support joint-ticketing and promotional partnerships between larger heritage assets (such as the Royal Pavilion) and smaller assets (such as the Regency Town House) to raise their profile, increase visitor numbers, and improve their long-term financial sustainability
- To explore alternative funding mechanisms where people can choose to invest in parts of the city/heritage assets
- The council to enable and support community-led maintenance of heritage assets.

Managing expectations

- To introduce a “code of conduct” or “service agreement” between the council and community groups when working in partnership.

Pooling resources and knowledge

- Create a network of community groups who can provide advice and mentorship to other community groups wanting to look after a heritage asset.

Lobbying government

- Depending on the outcome of the revised National Planning Policy Framework, the council should lobby central government to review and streamline planning requirements for routine building maintenance of listed buildings to reduce barriers for custodians
- Alongside Historic England, lobby central government to introduce more preventative funding for historic structures

Changing attitudes

- To add a paragraph to the Heritage Strategy committing to open and honest conversations about commemorating difficult periods in the city’s past and sensitively explaining and contextualising their impact for local communities
- To ensure the Heritage Strategy protects and restores heritage assets, reflects the full range of the city’s history, and supports good quality new development, so that heritage is not frozen in time but can continue to change and be used in ways that benefit the city and its communities.

Specific actions

- Consider adding Brunswick Square pavements on the local list (see appendix 1 p17)
- To support the installation of a sculpture in the Pavilion Gardens commemorating the Indian Soldiers in the First World War

3.3.2 The TFG report (Appendix 1) provides more information and context for each of these recommendations.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

4.1 Having noted this report, the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee could choose not to refer the findings of the TFG report to Cabinet.

5. Community engagement and consultation

5.1 The TFG included a co-optee from the Community Voluntary Sector and the group spoke to a wide range of witnesses. It will be presented to all members of Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

6. Financial implications

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this process.

Name of finance officer consulted: I CHAGONDA Date consulted
(dd/mm/yy): 12/06/26

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The recommendations provide that the report of this informally constituted Task & Finish Group be noted only by Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee before being referred to Cabinet for its consideration. As a result, no direct legal implications have been identified at this stage.

Name of lawyer consulted: Victoria Simpson Date consulted 16.06.2026

8. Risk implications

- 8.1 There is a risk that some recommendations would require a certain amount of time from a relevant council officer, and it is acknowledged that there is low staff capacity in this area. This may affect the implementation of some recommendations.

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 The report makes a number of recommendations aimed at improving the inclusivity and accessibility of heritage assets, including enhanced wayfinding, the introduction of heritage trails across the city, stronger partnership working with residents and community groups, and a commitment to representing the city's full history within museums and heritage sites. In areas of higher deprivation, where residents may face barriers to accessing heritage, a focus on community involvement, skills development and better connections between groups could help encourage wider participation, particularly among those who may not traditionally engage with the city's heritage.

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 The report has positive sustainability implications, promoting the long-term preservation and active use of heritage assets through preventative maintenance, adaptive reuse, and community involvement. These approaches support environmental sustainability by reducing the need for new development and minimising deterioration. However, there is a need to balance the preservation of heritage assets with adaptation to modern standards and the impacts of climate change, to ensure they remain viable and contribute to a greener future.

11. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 11.1 Heritage assets contribute to a sense of place, community pride, and social connection. The proposed heritage trails, better wayfinding and community involvement can encourage walking, outdoor activity, and greater engagement with the city's environment. Strengthening partnerships with community groups and enabling local participation can also support social cohesion and volunteering opportunities, which are positive for personal wellbeing.

Other Implications

12. Procurement implications

12.1 None identified

13. Crime & disorder implications:

13.1 None identified

14. Conclusion

14.1 The committee is asked to refer the findings of the Heritage Task & Finish Group report to Cabinet for consideration. The TFG recommendations are based on a robust process of hearing and evaluating evidence from a number of witnesses.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

1. Report of the Heritage Task & Finish Group
2. Minutes from the Task & Finish Groups