

Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

Agenda Item 26

Subject: Review of the Council's Constitution

Date of meeting: 23 July 2026

Report of: Elizabeth Culbert, Director Governance & Law (Monitoring Officer)

Contact Officer: Anthony Soyinka, Head of Democratic Services
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Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report seeks full Council approval for updates to the Constitution.
- 1.2 The report aligns with the commitments in the Council Plan 2023-2027 to ensure we are a learning council with well-run services. Specifically, this report seeks to achieve good governance and ways of working that meet the needs of staff, residents and customers. The proposals focus on the effective management of council resources, ensuring value for money and making the best use of our resources.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Council formally approves the changes to the Constitution relating to the deadlines for public questions for Full Council set out in the report and in Appendix 1, with immediate effect.
- 2.2 That Council authorises the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer to take all steps necessary or incidental to the implementation of the above changes, and that the Monitoring Officer be authorised to amend such parts of the Council's constitutional documents as they consider necessary or incidental to incorporate the changes, and to republish the Constitution.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 The Council is required to keep its Constitution under review with a view to achieving efficiency, economy and effectiveness. This report reviews the deadline for public questions to Full Council in line with the Council Plan priorities to ensure good governance and ways of working that meet the needs of staff, residents and customers.

Extended time for submission of public questions to Full Council

- 3.2 It is proposed that the deadline for public questions to Full Council be amended to four working days before the meeting rather than eight. This

new deadline will enable public questions to be submitted after the agenda has been published so that questions can directly address issues covered on the agenda for the meeting. The suggested change is reflected in Appendix 1. The intention behind this change is to support public engagement in Council decision-making processes,

- 3.3 The proposed change would align the public questions deadline with Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny Committees where the deadline for public questions is already four working days before the meeting.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 The option of retaining the current deadline of eight working days before the Full Council meeting has been considered. This would preserve the current level of time available for officers and members to process questions, prepare responses and manage the overall volume of public engagement items. However, this option would continue to require questions to be submitted before publication of the agenda, limiting the ability of residents to frame questions by reference to the reports and items of business that are due to be considered by Council.
- 4.2 A further option would be to adopt a different intermediate deadline, for example six working days before the meeting. This would provide a modest increase in time for the public to submit questions while retaining more preparation time than the proposed approach. However, this would not fully address the underlying concern that members of the public should have a meaningful opportunity to consider the published agenda before deciding whether to submit a question to Full Council.
- 4.3 The recommended option is therefore to amend the deadline for public questions to Full Council to four working days before the meeting. This aligns the deadline more closely with the arrangements for Cabinet, supports greater transparency and public engagement, and enables questions to be informed by the published agenda. The revised deadline will reduce the time available to coordinate responses, particularly where a high volume of questions is received which may impact response rates. The operation of the revised deadline will therefore be monitored and kept under review to assess its impact and ensure the process remains effective and proportionate.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 The proposals set out in this report were discussed with Group Leaders and feedback is incorporated in the report.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 The costs of administering meetings are managed within the Democratic Services budget. It is considered that the cost of the proposed constitutional changes can be managed within the current budget envelope.

Name of finance officer consulted: Ishemupenyu Chagonda Date consulted: TBC 14/07/26

7. Legal implications

7.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

Name of lawyer consulted: Elizabeth Culbert Date consulted: 130726

8. Risk implications

8.1 No risks have been identified, and the arrangements will be kept under review.

9. Equalities implications

9.1 The changes to arrangements proposed relating to Full Council, including the timing of public questions, are recommended with the priority of enhancing opportunity for all stakeholders to engage with the democratic process.

10. Sustainability implications

10.1 No sustainability implications have been identified.

11. Other Implications

11.1 No other implications have been identified.

12. Conclusion

12.1 The proposed changes are recommended for the reasons outlined in this Report.

