

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Cabinet

## Agenda Item 53

**Subject:** WorkWell Programme

**Date of meeting:** Thursday, 17 September 2026

**Report of:** Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Youth Services

**Lead Officer:** Corporate Director for Families, Children and Wellbeing

**Contact Officer:** Carla Butler, Lisa Mitchell

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**Ward(s) affected:** (All Wards);

**Key Decision:** Yes

**Reason(s) Key:** Expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the expenditure of the City Council's budget, namely above £1,000,000 and is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards).

### For general release

#### 1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval for the council to enter into a Partnership Agreement with Surrey County Council to deliver the WorkWell Programme in the city. WorkWell is a national Department for Work & Pensions funded programme, commissioned through Integrated Care Boards, which will support residents whose health conditions or disabilities are affecting their ability to remain in, return to, or move towards work. The Department for Work and Pensions has appointed Surrey County Council as the Lead Accountable Body for WorkWell. Subject to this agreement, Brighton & Hove City Council will be responsible for delivering the WorkWell service to residents across the city.
- 1.2 Approval will enable the Council to claim up to £1.08m grant funding over three years and provide integrated work and health support to approximately 1,300 Brighton & Hove residents. The programme directly supports the Council Plan priorities, a fair and inclusive city, and a healthy city where people can thrive, by reducing health and economic inequalities and improving access to good work and tailored employment support.

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet agrees with the council entering into a partnership agreement with Surrey County Council (the accountable body) to deliver the WorkWell Programme.

- 2.2 Cabinet delegates authority to the Corporate Director Families, Children and Wellbeing in consultation with the Cabinet member for Children, Families & Youth to progress the Partnership Agreement with Surrey County Council and any ancillary documents required for delivery of the WorkWell Programme.

### **3. Context and background information**

- 3.1 WorkWell is a national early intervention programme funded by the Department for Work and Pensions. It is designed to support working age residents whose health condition or disability is affecting their ability to stay in work, return to work, or move towards work.
- 3.2 Funding for the programme will provide up to 12 weeks' person-centred support for residents who have lower-level health-related barriers to work. This includes people who are in work but struggling to remain well at work, people on sickness absence who may be at risk of leaving employment, and people who are out of work and need early support before their needs become more complex. Participants on the programme will be supported to complete a Work and Health Action Plan to address health and work barriers.
- 3.3 WorkWell responds to national and local priorities to reduce economic inactivity and improve health outcomes. It recognises that health, work, skills and wider support needs are closely linked, and that early help can prevent residents from falling further from employment.
- 3.4 The programme will be delivered across Surrey and Sussex through local partnerships between councils, health services and community partners. The Surrey and Sussex Integrated Care Board have entered into a funding agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions.
- 3.5 Surrey County Council has been appointed as the accountable body for the programme. To enable delivery in Brighton and Hove, it is proposed that Brighton & Hove City Council enter into a Partnership Agreement with Surrey County Council. This will allow the Council to claim agreed funding for local delivery by the council.
- 3.6 WorkWell is sited as key deliverable of the Get Sussex Working Plan (GSWP), overseen by the Growth Board. The GSWP was coproduced with stakeholders across the city and wider Pan-Sussex geography. It was endorsed by Cabinet and adopted by the Department for Work and Pensions in October 2025. The programme supports the government's ambitions to increase economic activity, respond to different place-based needs, and improve health and wellbeing outcomes. The GSWP will inform Sussex and Brighton Strategic Authority's Prosperity Strategy and Strategic Skills Plan.
- 3.7 The WorkWell Programme supports the Brighton and Hove Economic Plan 2024 - 2027 core imperative – to build a stronger, more inclusive labour market by ensuring that employability support is reaching areas of greatest inequality so that everyone who wants to work can do so. It also supports the Council Plan priorities by contributing to a fair and inclusive city and to a healthy city where people can thrive. It will help reduce health and economic inequalities by improving access to tailored work and health support for residents across Brighton and Hove.

- 3.8 A new team will be recruited to deliver the WorkWell Programme comprising of Programme Lead and Health and Health Coaches. WorkWell complements the Council's existing Connect to Work service, which supports residents with more complex barriers and priority groups into employment, including; refugees, homeless people, victims and survivors of domestic abuse and offenders or ex-offenders. The Council will deliver both programmes through the Skills and Employment Service which will enable ease of referral, make the best use of existing expertise, and provide a more joined-up offer for residents.
- 3.9 The Council's delivery costs will be reimbursed through claims to Surrey County Council, based on an agreed delivery plan and within the programme budget. Delivery will be monitored through a national framework model.

#### **4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options**

- 4.1 The recommended option is for the Council to enter into a Partnership Agreement with Surrey County Council and deliver WorkWell locally through the Skills and Employment Service. This would secure up to £1.08m of external funding over three years and support approximately 1,300 residents to access early work and health support.
- 4.2 The recommendation is made on the basis that WorkWell fills a clear gap in local provision. Existing national employment support funding is currently focused on Connect to Work, which supports residents with more complex barriers. Without WorkWell, there would be no comparable funded offer for residents with lower-level health-related barriers who need earlier support to remain in, return to, or move towards work.
- 4.3 The sole alternative option is not to enter into a Partnership Agreement with Surrey County Council. This is not recommended because there is no alternative route for the Council to draw down WorkWell funding. Residents in Brighton and Hove would lose access to the programme, and the funding and expected participant volumes may need to be reallocated elsewhere across Surrey and Sussex.

#### **5. Community engagement and consultation**

- 5.1 The Cabinet Member for Families, Children and Youth Services has been briefed on the WorkWell programme and its strategic contribution to improving health, wellbeing and employment outcomes through a coordinated partnership approach.
- 5.2 WorkWell has been discussed through established partnership governance structures, including the three Integrated Community Team (ICT) Leadership Forums. These forums bring together representatives from Brighton & Hove City Council, the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, GP practices, Primary Care Networks, Community Pharmacy, and Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust. The programme has also been presented to and endorsed by the Health and Wellbeing Board, ensuring alignment with the priorities and perspectives of elected members, health partners and the VCSE sector. This engagement has helped build collective

ownership and support across key stakeholders who will contribute to programme delivery and referral pathways.

- 5.3 WorkWell is designed to integrate health and employment support through a collaborative, person-centred approach. The Community Engagement Framework has not been used for formal consultation, as the WorkWell customer journey and delivery model are nationally prescribed. As a result, there is limited scope to influence the core service design through local consultation.
- 5.4 We will work closely with council teams including HR, Adult Social Care, housing prevention and public health to ensure join up and collaboration to support shared priorities.
- 5.5 We will work closely with external stakeholders, including Integrated Community Teams, Primary Care Networks, housing services, justice and probation partners, and VCSE organisations such as The Trust for Developing Communities (TDC) and Hangleton and Knoll Project, throughout the implementation phase and ongoing delivery of the programme. This collaborative approach will ensure effective and accessible referral pathways are established for residents facing barriers to participation, particularly those from communities experiencing the highest levels of inequality. By fostering strong partnership working across the health, employment, housing, justice and community sectors, we will provide coordinated, person-centred support that enables residents to access the right services at the right time, improving outcomes and reducing gaps in opportunity.

## **6. Financial implications**

- 6.1 The WorkWell programme will be fully funded the Department for Work and Pensions. The council will claim its delivery costs from Surrey County Council who are the Accountable Body. The Council can claim up to £1.08m over 3 years. The programme will be managed within the approved budget envelope and monitored through existing financial controls to reduce the risk of underspending, delays, or spending outside the grant conditions. There is no financial risk to the Council's General Fund.
- 6.2 The programmes aim is to improve residents' long-term health and wellbeing outcomes, rather than directly helping people into work. Vital to increasing economic activity, health and wellbeing outcomes for residents.

Name of finance officer consulted: Hannah Birch. Date consulted (12/08/2026):

## **7. Legal implications**

- 7.1 The Council will be required to enter into a Partnership Agreement with Surrey County Council to participate in the WorkWell Programme and access available funding. The agreement and any supporting documentation will be reviewed by legal services before it is finalised between the parties. Subject to completion of the agreement, there are no legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7.2 Name of lawyer consulted: Manjinder Nagra Date consulted (13/08/26)

## **8. Risk implications**

- 8.1 The principal risk is that, if the recommendation is not agreed, WorkWell cannot be implemented in Brighton and Hove within the planned timescales. This would mean residents would not benefit from early work and health support, and the Council would be unable to draw down the funding allocated for local delivery.
- 8.2 Not proceeding would also create a risk that the participant volumes and funding intended for Brighton and Hove are reallocated to other areas across Surrey and Sussex, subject to capacity. This could weaken the local work and health offer and create reputational risk with regional partners, health services and local stakeholders who have supported the development of the programme.
- 8.3 There are delivery risks if the recommendation is agreed, including the need to mobilise the service quickly, onboard and train staff, establish referral routes, and meet the programme requirements set by funders. These risks will be managed through the Council's existing Skills and Employment Service governance arrangements, clear project planning, regular monitoring and close working with Surrey County Council as the accountable body.
- 8.4 There is a financial and compliance risk if delivery costs, claims or performance do not align with the agreed programme requirements. This will be mitigated through established financial controls, regular claims monitoring, performance reporting, and oversight of delivery against the agreed partnership agreement and delivery plan.

## **9. Equalities implications**

- 9.1 WorkWell will be available to all eligible residents across Brighton and Hove. The programme is expected to have a positive impact on equality by providing early, tailored support to people whose health condition or disability is affecting their ability to remain in, return to, or move towards work. The Council will work with Integrated Community Teams, Jobcentre Plus, health partners and the voluntary and community sector to promote access for residents who may experience greater health and economic inequalities.
- 9.2 The Department for Work and Pensions requires the Council to collect and report participant information, including age, ethnicity, address, disability status and educational attainment. This information will be used to monitor who is accessing the service and to identify any groups or areas that may be under-represented. Where gaps are identified, the Council will review and adapt its outreach and referral arrangements to improve access and maximise the programmes contribution to reducing health and economic inequality.

## **10. Sustainability implications**

- 10.1 WorkWell will be delivered from existing council premises at Montague House. Using existing accommodation will avoid the need for additional premises and will make best use of the Council's current estate.
- 10.2 The service will use a mix of office-based, community-based and online support where appropriate. This flexible approach will reduce unnecessary travel for residents, staff and partners, while still enabling face-to-face support where this is needed.
- 10.3 The programme will use digital case management and communication systems wherever possible. This will help reduce paper use and other physical materials, while ensuring residents can still access information and support in appropriate formats when needed.

## **11. Health and Wellbeing Implications:**

- 11.1 WorkWell will support health and wellbeing outcomes through the development of Work and Health Action Plans and referrals to public health services, support organisations and NHS services. WorkWell aligns with the theme of 'living well' as it is focused on supporting working age adults.
- 11.2 WorkWell provides an opportunity for collaboration across health and employment to support residents to make meaningful steps forward in their recovery.

## **12. Conclusion**

- 12.1 Cabinet is recommended to approve the partnership agreement to enable implementation of WorkWell for the benefit of Brighton & Hove residents. The risks identified have clear mitigations and the approval of the recommendation will enable Brighton & Hove City Council to enter into a partnership agreement with Surrey County Council and secure up to £1.08 million of external funding over three years. The programme directly supports the Council's priorities for inclusion, health and wellbeing, and addresses economic inactivity through integrated health and employment support.
- 12.2 WorkWell fills an important gap in local provision by supporting residents with lower-level health-related barriers to work who are not eligible for existing programmes. It aligns with the Get Sussex Working Plan, complements the Council's Connect to Work service, and has strong support from local health and community partners. Delivery through the Council's existing Skills & Employment Service provides an efficient and cost-effective approach, maximising opportunities for joined-up support and positive outcomes for residents.