

Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

Agenda Item 43

Subject: Written questions from Councillors

Date of meeting: 1 October 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 Bagaeen:

Aldrington Residents' Parking Scheme: Given that residents in and around Aldrington Avenue have previously expressed opposition to residents' parking controls, can the Council explain why Aldrington has again been included in proposals for a residents' parking scheme, what evidence demonstrates a need for such a scheme, and confirm that no scheme will be progressed without clear evidence of support from the residents directly affected?

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

Thank you for your question, Cllr Bagaeen. It was good to meet with you and residents at the public drop-in on Tuesday 28th September where we were able to discuss this very matter.

Aldrington Avenue and the surrounding roads have been included within the study area because parking issues are assessed on an area-wide basis, ensuring that all roads which may be affected by current or future parking pressures have the opportunity to be considered as part of the process.

Whilst previous consultations identified opposition to residents' parking controls in parts of the area, parking conditions, travel patterns and local circumstances can change over

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time. The most recent was a decade ago. This process therefore provides an opportunity to reassess both parking issues and the up-to-date views of residents and businesses.

No decision has been made to introduce a parking scheme at this stage and one size may not fit all. The purpose of the early-stage public engagement is to establish whether there is evidence of increased parking pressures -notably in light on new housing developments, behavioral change and changes in parking restrictions nearby - and whether there is now support for potential parking management measures. The Council is committed to ensuring that any future scheme is evidence-led, proportionate and informed by local views. A residents' parking scheme would only be taken forward where there is clear evidence of need and demonstrable support from those residents and businesses most directly affected.

2. Councillor Bagaeen:

Withdean Stadium – TrackMark Accreditation: Given the importance of Withdean Stadium to athletics in Brighton & Hove and across Sussex, why was its TrackMark accreditation allowed to expire, what is the timetable for completing the outstanding works and restoring accreditation, and what measures are the Council and Freedom Leisure putting in place to improve maintenance, accountability and communication with athletics clubs so that this situation is not repeated?

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

There have been numerous meetings over the last few years between both the club, ourselves and Freedom Leisure to improve the facilities at the site. The stadium at Withdean Sports Complex is such a busy site that programming and co-ordinating all the various required works for the various competing uses can be challenging but a more collaborative relationship has been developed between the Club and Freedom Leisure. Feedback is also given in the council quarterly meetings with Freedom Leisure.

Trackmark accreditation is extremely important to the future of the stadium and remains a priority for Freedom Leisure and the council. Improvement works have commenced and once finished an inspection will be arranged.

3. Councillor McNair:

Why can't motorcycles use the new stretch of bus lane in the London Road in Patcham when motorcycles can use bus lanes in the city centre? At peak times, could the bus lane be used by cars to reduce congestion and air pollution, especially as it is a short section of bus lane?

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

Thank you, Cllr McNair, for your question. The London Road northbound bus lane (A23 North) formed part of a wider scheme that included a mandatory cycle lane on a key strategic cycling route. During the design and consultation process, feedback from stakeholders highlighted concerns about allowing motorcycles to share this section of the route with cyclists, and these views were taken into account in the final scheme design.

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As a result, motorcycles were not included within the permitted vehicle classes for this bus lane, reflecting both the cycling function of the route and concerns regarding potential conflicts between cyclists and motorcyclists.

In relation to allowing general traffic to use bus lane during peak periods, bus lane restrictions are in place to provide reliable journey times for buses and to support sustainable transport objectives. This approach is applied consistently across the city's bus lane network and helps ensure that buses, which can carry significantly more people than private vehicles, are not delayed by congestion. By design, the merits of a dedicated bus lane are best demonstrated when general traffic is busy including at peak times and when congested. Bus lanes help bus service reliability, encouraging more people to take the bus and reduce congestion and air pollution.

Whilst this is a relatively short section of bus lane, opening it to general traffic would reduce the priority afforded to buses and cyclists and would be contrary to the objectives of the scheme, which were established through the design and consultation process.

4. **Councillor McNair:**

The green man at the new pedestrian crossing in London Road is only on for around 6 seconds. This does not leave nearly enough time for people to cross the road. Could the green man be adjusted, and the length of lights around the city be adjusted to take account of the elderly and disabled crossing the street?

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

Councillor McNair, thank you for your question.

While the green pedestrian signal at this crossing is displayed for around seven seconds, this should be viewed as an invitation to begin crossing rather than the total time available to cross the road.

The crossing has been designed so that anyone who starts crossing during the green man period, including in the final second before it changes, is provided with sufficient time to cross safely before traffic is permitted to proceed. Following the green man phase, there is a pedestrian clearance period and a further safety period before any conflicting traffic movement can receive a green signal.

At this location, the minimum time between the start of the pedestrian green signal and the release of vehicle traffic is approximately 18 seconds. In addition, the crossing is equipped with pedestrian detection technology, which can identify people still using the crossing and automatically extend the clearance period where required. This means that, in certain circumstances, the total crossing time available can be extended to around 30 seconds before traffic is allowed to proceed.

More broadly, pedestrian crossing timings across Brighton & Hove are designed in accordance with national standards and guidance, which take account of the needs of all users, including older people and disabled pedestrians. For many crossings across the

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city, we have also fitted detection technology that allows additional time to be provided when pedestrians remain on the crossing.

While the specific timings vary between locations depending on factors such as road width, traffic movements and the type of crossing installed, all crossings are designed to provide a safe crossing opportunity for pedestrians while balancing the needs of all road users.

5. Councillor Meadows:

Many of the roads in the Mackie Estate e.g. Sanyhills Avenue and Braeside Avenue are in desperate need of resurfacing. When is the Mackie Estate due for resurfacing?

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

Thank you for your question, Councillor Meadows.

We recognise that a number of roads within the Mackie Estate are in need of investment and resurfacing works.

Mackie Avenue is currently included within this year's provisional large-scale patching programme. This programme is subject to current budget constraints and as funding becoming available, the intention is for these works to be completed as soon as possible.

Looking ahead, we are currently developing the council's highway maintenance programme for the next two years, which will be subject to Cabinet approval in February 2027. As things stand, Barrhill Avenue and Braeside Avenue are included within the provisional programme for treatment during 2027/28.

Other roads within the Mackie Estate are also identified for future consideration and remain on our longer-term maintenance programme. This means they are on our radar for future investment, although at present it is unlikely that works would take place before 2029. This must be put in the context of too many years of under-funding of our city and nation's roads under the previous Conservative government, relating in a deep backlog, maintenance cycles delayed and the pothole becoming emblematic of their administration. Now with Labour government, we have seen a notable uplift in government grant funding and action by this our administration to tackle the backlog and remove the scourge of potholes in our city.

As with all highway maintenance programmes, the final prioritisation of schemes will be informed by ongoing condition surveys, risk assessments and the availability of funding to ensure that resources are targeted where they are most needed across the city.

6. Councillor Meadows:

The two disabled bays in the Patcham Community Centre car park are not fit for purpose because when parked in one of the spaces the driver is unable to open their door due to a wall. I believe the spaces are not the correct size. We would not want to see any loss

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of car park spaces, but with some adjustment these spaces could be made fit for purpose. When is this likely to happen?

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

Thank you, Cllr Meadows, for your question.

As the site is part of the PFI estate, it is leased to the PFI provider until March 2028. This means that the council will need to agree any alterations with and through the PFI provider. The Education Capital team within Strategic Property has spoken to the PFI provider and requested a price for a variation to contract to extend the bays. They are waiting to hear back. The car park is used by the Community Association and library users, so there is a need to consult with them also before instructing any works. The PFI provider is also consulting their board to determine whether they could help fund the alterations or contribute.

7. Councillor Theobald:

Could the drinking fountain at the bottom of the Peace Gardens in Old London Road be cleaned and the undergrowth cut back? And the paving around the feet of the Brangwyn lamps be repaired?

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

The parks and grounds maintenance team will investigate and clear the undergrowth as requested.

8. Councillor Theobald:

I have reported the appalling appearance of Patcham roundabout numerous times through written questions, verbal questions and emails over the last 12 years. On each occasion the relevant chairman, cabinet member and chief officer has replied stating that it would be improved in the near future. In July 2024, Cllr Muten wrote that "there is now general agreement with National Highways on the council facilitating a maintenance agreement with the sponsor...However, planning permission is still required." In 2025, Cllr Allen responded that "officers have a landscape design for [Patcham] roundabout for which we now have approval from National Highways." The roundabout looks worse than ever. It is now full of tall weeds. We should have pride in Brighton and Hove. This roundabout makes it look as if the council does not care for its environment. Could residents have a firm timeline for when Patcham roundabout will be landscaped attractively?

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

Thank you for your question. As Cabinet Member for Public Realm I am keen to see this important gateway for motorists to the city improved in terms of look and feel. A Section

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96 Agreement with National Highways has been prepared and is ready to proceed subject to completion of the necessary legal arrangements.

Once the required assessments have been completed and costs confirmed, the legal agreement can be finalised and the project progressed.

I concur with you that improving the appearance of Patcham Roundabout would be welcome, and our administration will provide a further update on delivery timescales once the remaining requirements have been addressed which will be subject to available funding.

9. Councillor Lyons:

A July 2025 Cabinet report projected that there would be on site construction starting in early 2026, with a completion targeted for spring 2027. Planning approved the community swimming pool on 3 December 2025, with official statements confirmed that the building work was due to start in the spring of 2026. We are now in the Autumn of 2026, but no construction has started. What is the reason for the delay & when will construction start?

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

The council is still reviewing the construction bids/tenders and documentation received with a decision being made in due course.

10. Councillor Lyons:

We have requested a number of times for an estimate of the costings for the short-listed projects, in W&HP ward to allow the Councillors to make a decision for our recommended projects to proceed. This has not been forthcoming. Residents & groups are naturally becoming frustrated. When can we expect this information?

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

I can understand why your residents might become frustrated, given the delays being brought about by the inability of Westdene and Hove Park Councillors to agree on a shortlist.

I understand that officers are spending time trying to mediate between the three ward councillors and get some agreement. If it requires intervention from myself as deputy leader to try and help mediate, I can do so – but I would that this could be avoided.

11. Councillor Hogan:

Residents with valid parking permits have received parking tickets over recent weeks. Is there an issue with the civil enforcement officer's software?

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

Thank you, Councillor Hogan, for your question.

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We are not aware of any issues with the software used by our Civil Enforcement Officers and, in recent weeks, we have not seen any pattern of appeals from residents with valid permits that would suggest there is a wider system problem.

Penalty Charge Notices can be issued for a variety of reasons, including where a permit is not valid for the location in which a vehicle is parked, where permit details have expired, or where there are other parking restrictions in place. While we do receive appeals relating to permits from time to time, there is currently no evidence to indicate an ongoing software issue affecting enforcement activity.

If a resident who holds a valid permit receives a Penalty Charge Notice, they should check the reason for issue shown on the notice and confirm that their permit was valid for the location and time concerned. If they believe the notice has been issued incorrectly, information on how to challenge or appeal the Penalty Charge Notice is provided on the notice itself, and each case will be considered on its individual circumstances.

12. Councillor Hogan:

Real-time electronic bus displays frequently don't work. The one at Surrenden Fields has not been replaced. The display at bus stop E by the Railway Bell public house 26-28 Surrey Street near Brighton Station has not been operating for over a year. This is a popular bus stop especially for people arriving by train. The bus timetable inside the station is not operating either.

When can residents and visitors to our city expect to see reliable working electronic timetables, and when will the one at bus stop E be operating again?

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

Thank you, Councillor Hogan, for your question.

We recognise the frustration caused when real-time passenger information displays are not working, particularly at busy locations such as Brighton Station and at bus stops that are heavily used by residents and visitors.

The council is currently working closely with the Distribution Network Operator, specialist electrical contractors and our Real Time Passenger Information provider to restore and replace affected signs across the city. Our current aim is to have all outstanding signs installed and operational by January 2027.

Unfortunately, progress has been affected by a number of factors outside the council's direct control. These include delays with mains power repairs, which can take several months to complete, and the replacement of damaged or vandalised feeder pillar doors, where manufacturing and supply lead times are currently around 12 weeks. We are also experiencing delays in the supply of some specialist equipment and software needed for installation and repairs.

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13. Councillor De Oliveira:

Following the introduction of the South Hollingdean residents' parking scheme, residents in North Hollingdean have reported significant displacement of commuter and non-resident parking, and residents signed a petition calling for urgent action. Will the administration now undertake and publish a post-implementation assessment of parking displacement across Hollingdean, and commit to consulting North Hollingdean residents on proportionate solutions, including a light-touch residents' scheme?

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

Thank you, Councillor De Oliveira, for your question.

Following the petition presented to Full Council on 23 July 2026, this parking displacement was recognised and it was agreed that the next step would be to undertake a further consultation with residents in the North Hollingdean area on the potential introduction of a residents' parking scheme.

Officers are currently preparing the consultation materials and supporting information, with public consultation scheduled for Autumn 2026. This will provide residents, businesses and other stakeholders with an opportunity to comment on the parking issues they are experiencing, consider potential options and indicate whether they would support the introduction of parking controls.

At the most recent public consultation, we sought to explain to residents in north Hollingdean the likelihood of displacement. We are aware of concerns that the introduction of the South Hollingdean parking scheme has resulted in displacement parking within North Hollingdean, and officers have been monitoring parking conditions in the area and reviewing feedback received from residents. We recognise that some residents have experienced increased pressure from commuter and non-resident parking and understand the concerns that have been raised.

We are also aware of a more recent petition calling for consideration of a light-touch parking scheme. However, Members should note that the earlier petition presented to Full Council, which was supported by more than 300 residents, sought the opportunity for North Hollingdean residents to consider parking controls similar to those introduced in South Hollingdean.

The forthcoming consultation will provide residents with the opportunity to express their views on the nature and extent of the parking problems they are experiencing and on the most appropriate solutions. The results will be reported back to Members before any decisions are made on how to proceed.

This approach will ensure that any future proposals are informed by the views of local residents and evidence gathered from the consultation process.

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14. Councillor De Oliveira:

Will the administration commit to publishing a city-wide plan showing which schools are financially vulnerable, what support they will receive, and how the council will protect community schools from closure or asset disposal wherever possible?

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

The Council already provides a range of support to schools through officers in the education & learning and Schools Finance services, officers work with school leaders in a schools finance working group, we are utilizing the Department for Education's School Resource Management Adviser programme to bring external insight to our school's finances and we have been able to support schools to manage financial pressures by setting a deficit position when there is a clear recovery plan for the school's financial provision to improve.

The number of schools in deficit has recently reduced from 28 to 20. Each year the outturn for each school is shared publicly through the Schools Forum providing the details of school budgets for those who are interested. The administration will not commit to publishing additional information to show which schools are financially vulnerable. The administration remains committed to supporting community schools to remain open despite the challenging conditions that the reduction in children needing school places is bringing. I would encourage Members who wish to support community schools including in supporting them to manage their budgets to consider taking up roles as school Governors. School Governors are unsung heroes of our education landscape – acting in a voluntary capacity to support the education settings our city children experience.

15. Councillor Hill:

Since November 2019, members of the Round Hill Society have been trying to have a council report commissioned on the suitability of the Veolia site in Hollingdean. One member said to me 'Chasing this has been a really dispiriting experience and a poor advertisement for encouraging community engagement with local government. Can you please push for a status update and deadline on our behalf?' In January, Cllr Rowkins promised an assessment was to come 'over the coming months'. Any information would be appreciated.

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

I appreciate the frustration felt by residents on this. The committee and council officers in 2019 should have ensured that this report was produced at the time as requested. We now have proper tracking processes in place to ensure that any actions resulting from a Cabinet, Council or Committee meeting are progressed in a timely fashion.

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I can confirm that the report has been produced. However, having reviewed it in September, I am not yet satisfied that it fully meets the requests made by the committee in 2019 and, as such, I have gone back to officers to request further work.

I expect to receive a further draft shortly and we will circulate when it is ready.

I'd like to thank your residents for their patience.

16. Councillor Barton Ahmad:

Marie Curie has found that terminally ill people are more likely to experience poverty than equivalent healthy populations. A terminal diagnosis can push households into poverty, which has long-lasting impacts on the dying persons household and others close to them. What can the council do to support terminally ill people facing poverty?

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

There is automatic award of Personal Independence Payment in cases of terminal illness and the council's Welfare Rights team can advise and support families through this process.

Discretionary Housing Payments can cover any shortfalls between Universal Credit Housing Element / Housing Benefit and rent, if there is a loss of income in the household due to illness or caring requirements and the Council's Crisis and Resilience Fund can provide an important source of support for residents experiencing financial hardship, including those living with a terminal illness.

A terminal diagnosis can often lead to a sudden reduction in household income alongside increased expenditure on heating, utilities, food, transport and other essential living costs. The Fund can help prevent immediate financial crisis by providing targeted assistance with essential household expenses, enabling residents and their families to maintain stability during an exceptionally challenging period. The Fund can also help them access welfare benefits, debt advice, energy efficiency schemes, housing assistance and other community-based services. By addressing the underlying causes of financial hardship and connecting households with ongoing support, the Fund helps to strengthen financial stability, maximise household income and reduce the risk of poverty both during illness and for surviving family members in the future.

While there is no specific provision within the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for residents who are terminally ill, support is available based on financial circumstances. For example, pension-age residents with a low income and savings below £16,000 may be eligible for up to 100% Council Tax Reduction.

As part of our ongoing review of debt recovery processes we will ensure that appropriate consideration is given to residents facing end-of-life circumstances. Each debt is reviewed on a case by case basis to consider all circumstances.

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We will also consider in our next review of our council tax reduction policy whether specific provision can be included for residents in those circumstances.

17. Councillor Barton Ahmad:

I am concerned that this consultation period for the upcoming City Plan has not had much uptake of responses for such a significant and long-term project. What can be learnt about communicating similarly large policy consultation periods to residents in Brighton and Hove?

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

Councillor Barton Ahmad, thank you for your question.

We have made extensive efforts to increase the response rate to the two most recent City Plan consultations – the Key Issues in winter 2024/25 and the more recent Scoping Consultation. They are very similar consultations and the communications for the scoping consultation made clear that responses to both will be considered together. The cumulative response is approximately 1,200, including 200 from young people using our first ever bespoke youth survey, significantly higher than the 250 received at the equivalent stage of the preparation for City Plan Part Two. It is not considered therefore that the uptake and interest in the consultations were low.

In both of these consultations we have tried to make it easier for people to engage with the process by shortening consultation documents, using less jargon, presenting multiple choice questions. For the early-stage consultation in 2024/2025 officers attended or presented at over 30 different events, including at hard-to-reach community groups and workshops in schools. The scoping consultation, by necessity, took place over the summer holiday period but the response levels were still considered good. Furthermore, neither consultation contained any controversial development proposals and site allocations which often result in higher levels of engagement.

Recent analysis by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) analysed Local Plan consultation data across the UK and found that the median response rate was 0.33% of the local authority population. Our response rate is above the national average.

We will, though, take time to reflect on lessons learnt from these consultations as we prepare our approach to the later City Plan consultations where draft policies and proposed development sites will be included.

18. Councillor Pickett:

Following on from a recent briefing that suggested a proposed increasing council reliance on technological innovation and AI, would the administration not agree that at its core, generative AI is not intelligent, but instead a probabilistic machine. Treating it as a well to draw ideas from, or even as a junior research assistant would be misguided. Besides frequently inventing facts, sometimes with tragic consequences, it is an opaque accountability sink, obfuscating the transparency expected from public officials. With these issues in mind wouldn't it be more prudent for the council to take care not to rush

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into decisions in which claims of productivity gain seem too fantastic to be true if we follow the suggestions of AI, and which could lead the council down a dangerous path if not given time to be thought out properly beforehand?

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

Thank you for your question – however many of your assertions are inaccurate in terms of the tools we are using at BHCC. So, I do not agree. AI is widely seen as a new technical capability with many applications to significantly increase productivity. Given the ongoing challenge of meeting the gap between the services the public expect to receive, and our increasingly stretched funding, it is right that the Council invests time in exploring promising technologies and deploying them where they can be tested and proven to deliver more efficiently.

You have assumed we have rushed things. Governance and procurement has been robust and teams have worked in a 'one council' way to implement new ways of working. As with any technology, responsibility for decision making should always rest with a human. We also recognise our responsibility to provide services that are accurate, transparent, and treat our residents and their data correctly.

19. Councillor Pickett:

Evidence suggests that scaling up (worldwide) the use of AI could potentially have a seriously negative impact on our natural resources, particularly in terms of water and energy use. Does the administration believe they have a clear understanding of these implications before planning to ramp up plans to fully incorporate AI into all aspects of running a council?

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

The council recognises that AI has environmental impacts, including energy use, water consumption and the resources required to manufacture computing infrastructure. We therefore consider the potential environmental implications of AI alongside the benefits it may deliver when evaluating any new project or technology.

The most accurate available data shows that UK data centre capacity attributable to AI currently requires around 0.03% of UK water used for non-domestic purposes. By comparison, it is reported that approximately 20% of all drinking water, both domestic and non-domestic, is lost daily through pipe leaks.

It is also worth noting that current projections for data centre electricity demand are more than covered by the UK's planned growth in electricity generation. Under the UK Government's Clean Power 2030 programme, substantial new offshore wind, onshore wind and solar capacity is expected to come online over the coming years, helping both to meet growing demand and to increase the proportion of electricity generated from renewable sources.

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We recognise, however, that some AI services are delivered through international cloud infrastructure and that not all of the environmental impacts associated with AI occur within the UK. The global footprint of AI, including the energy and water use of overseas data centres and the manufacture of specialist hardware, is an evolving area of research and one that we continue to monitor closely.

While the council cannot directly control the infrastructure used by global technology providers, we can ensure that any AI tools we deploy are considered carefully, used proportionately, and assessed against their expected benefits for residents, service delivery and organisational sustainability. Our proposed AI projects are currently well catered for by existing infrastructure provision and UK investment in digital and energy infrastructure, and we will continue to keep the wider environmental evidence under review as the technology develops.

20. Councillor Sykes:

Please provide rough figures for BHCC overall data usage in 2024-5 and 2025-6, and projections over the next two years with increasing use of AI.

Reply from Councillor Allen, Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Public Realm & Local Government Reorganisation.

BHCC are hosted in two data centers by Surrey County Council. Individual AI projects are still being evaluated for costs and requirements, but are expected to be catered for within our existing provision.

21. Councillor Sykes:

Please indicate when the results of the recent staff survey will be published.

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

The staff survey closed in August. Since then, our Learning Inclusion and Organisational Development team have been working to analyse the responses - alongside their other important workstreams.

22. Councillor Shanks:

Please provide an update on the Providence Place project.

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

The Elder Place Corridor project is currently progressing through detailed design for Phase 1, which covers Elder Place from and including York Hill through to New England Road/Street. This phase is funded through the remaining Section 106 contributions associated with the York & Elder development and focuses investment in the area closest

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to the development, and where the available funding can achieve some of the greatest improvements.

The project team is currently developing the agreed concept plan into a fully coordinated, deliverable, safe and affordable scheme. This includes resolving technical details, coordinating highways, drainage, landscaping and other elements, refining costs, and ensuring the project is ready to progress through the necessary approvals and consultation processes.

Subject to the necessary approvals, the project team is aiming to undertake the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process in late 2026/early 2027, procure a contractor in spring 2027 and commence construction in autumn 2027.

We do, however, recognise the importance of the wider corridor, including Providence Place and St Peter's Street. While current funding constraints mean these areas are not included within Phase 1, the concept plan has identified opportunities for future improvements and the council will continue to seek and bid for external funding to bring these forward as funding becomes available.

In the meantime, the project team continues to explore opportunities for smaller-scale improvements.

23. Councillor Shanks:

What use is being made of the schools St Peters, St Barts and Middle Street, that were closed?

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

The council does not own St Barts, which remains with the Diocese.

The council is negotiating with the Diocese for the transfer of the property back to the council and this will be subject to Member approval. On completion of the transfer the council will seek a short terms use for the property to maintain security, reduce council liability and make use of a vacant asset.

Middle Street is being let in the short term to Sutton District Training Ltd which is a SEND provider. They have already taken occupation under a Tenancy at Will in advance of completing the lease. This proposal was supported by Families Children & Wellbeing.

St Peter's is in part occupied by the Bike Hub and is also being used as short term storage by the council. We are looking to find additional short-term occupiers for the property.

24. Councillor McLeay:

Residents in my ward are increasingly reporting serious disturbance from excessively noisy motorcycles, often with modified exhausts, causing repeated sleep disruption and negatively affecting residents' wellbeing. Given the apparent difficulty in securing

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enforcement through existing mechanisms such as Operation Crackdown, and the growing perception that current regulations are not being effectively enforced, what action is the Council taking with Sussex Police and local MPs to improve enforcement, tackle anti-social vehicle noise, and advocate for stronger powers where existing legislation is proving insufficient?

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

Thank you, Cllr McLeay, for your question.

The enforcement of excessively noisy motorcycles, including those fitted with modified exhaust systems, is a matter for Sussex Police. Local authorities do not have powers to enforce vehicle noise regulations or offences relating to unlawful vehicle modifications.

Residents who have concerns about particular vehicles or locations can report these through Sussex Police's Operation Crackdown initiative, which helps the Police to target intelligence-led enforcement activity where issues are being experienced.

Whilst the Council works closely with Sussex Police on wider road safety and transport matters, responsibility for the enforcement of vehicle noise offences rests with the Police. Any consideration of additional enforcement powers would be a matter for Government and national legislation.

25. Councillor McLeay:

Residents of Theobald House and other council housing blocks are concerned by reports that communal laundry rooms may be closed. Many tenants rely on these facilities and are concerned that the loss of communal laundries could place additional financial burdens on households and lead to the installation of washing machines and dryers in properties that may not be designed for them, potentially increasing risks of leaks, flooding, fire hazards, and unsafe second-hand appliance purchases. Can the Housing Cabinet Member confirm whether the Council intends to close communal laundry rooms in Theobald House and other council blocks, what consultation has taken place with affected residents, and what assessment has been made of the financial, safety and property management implications of requiring tenants to provide and install their own laundry appliances?

Reply from Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing:

The council has reviewed communal laundries in general needs blocks, including Theobald House. The review considered usage, management, cost, residents' needs and the practical implications of any change. It proposed not renewing the contract for 14 lightly used laundries when it ends in November 2026, reflecting low usage, the cost of the service and the fact that most council blocks do not have communal laundry facilities.

However, we recognise that some residents rely on these facilities. We have therefore paused any decision on closure while we carry out a further review and engage with affected residents and their representatives.

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Our aim is to ensure that no tenant who depends on a communal laundry is left without a practical and affordable option. The review will continue to consider the financial, safety and property-management implications, as well as alternatives and support for residents with particular needs.

Where appropriate, support may include providing a washer-dryer for eligible residents, carrying out minor alterations or identifying another suitable solution. No final decision will be taken until the further review and resident engagement are complete.

26. Councillor McLeay:

Can the Cabinet Member for Housing provide an update on BHCC's readiness for Phase 2 of Awaab's Law, which comes into force on 30 November 2026 and extends statutory response timescales to a wider range of hazards including electrical safety, fire risk, excess cold and heat, structural defects, falling elements and domestic hygiene issues, and confirm whether the Council has sufficient staffing capacity, triage systems and monitoring arrangements in place to meet the new legal requirements for investigations, resident communication and remedial works within the prescribed timescales?

Reply from Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing:

The health and safety of our residents is our key priority. We are preparing for Phase 2 of Awaab's Law, which comes into force for council and other social homes on 30 November 2026. It extends statutory timescales to hazards including electrical and fire safety risks, excess cold and heat, structural collapse and falling elements, and domestic hygiene issues. A project lead is working with our services to review staffing, triage, case monitoring, resident communication and delivery of remedial works. We will build on the learning from our significant proactive engagement with tenants during Phase 1 and communicate directly with residents about what they can expect and how to report concerns. Existing housing safety and repairs arrangements already cover many of these hazards. We will address any gaps before implementation and monitor performance closely so residents receive timely investigations, clear updates and necessary works. Separately, the Government intends to extend Awaab's Law to the private rented sector under the Renters' Rights Act 2025, with the detailed requirements and implementation timetable subject to consultation. This work supports our wider Council Plan and Housing Strategy commitments to safe, healthy and well-maintained homes across the city.

27. Councillor McLeay:

Thanks for the response to my written question in July regarding Theobald House. In September 2024, residents were advised that major works were expected to begin in April 2025, but that delays were anticipated because a Principal Contractor had to be appointed before an application could be submitted to the BSR. Residents and I were also told that, while the BSR process could add significant delays, the Council would be in a position to submit its application once a Principal Contractor had been appointed following the tender process. However, your recent update states that the Council still expects to appoint a Principal Contractor in November 2026, more than two years later, and that only then will the full BSR application be submitted, after which residents must

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expect a further 40-plus weeks for approval. Can the Cabinet Member for Housing explain why the Council has been unable to appoint a Principal Contractor during the last two years, confirm the date from which the 40-week BSR approval period will begin, and provide residents with a clear timetable for when major works at Theobald House will actually commence, rather than continuing to cite future BSR delays as the reason for delays?

Reply from Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing.

I recognise residents' frustration with the time this has taken. The specifications are being finalised so that all necessary works at Theobald House can be included in a single, coordinated application to the Building Safety Regulator. This has required detailed design input from several specialist suppliers and is intended to reduce the risk of further approval delays or change applications once work is under way. Tender documents are also being completed so that a Principal Contractor can be appointed. The Building Safety Regulator application can be submitted once that appointment has been made and the contractor's competence has been confirmed. The current estimated assessment period of more than 40 weeks will begin when the complete Gateway 2 application is submitted. Theobald House is included in the council's 2027/28 budget forecast. A planning application will progress during the regulator's assessment, and work will begin as soon as the necessary approvals are secured. We will continue to keep residents informed as the procurement and approval stages progress.

28. Councillor West:

While recognising that the rapid introduction of AI to 'turbo-charge innovation' in delivering council services with reduced staff cost presents clear and uncertain risks, the administration has suggested that these risks are lower than the risk to services if these cost savings are not realised. Why should public service be propelled to take a leap in the dark when it is within the gift of the Government to solve the underlying problem by ending austerity and restoring council funding. Will the Leader ask her Government to increase grant funding to restore services and protect the jobs of our human staff?

Reply from Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council:

Since I was elected as Leader of Brighton and Hove City Council in May 2023 I have consistently and repeatedly fought this City's corner and lobbied for additional funding and as a Board member of the Local Government Association I spend a significant amount of time lobbying on behalf of the entire local government sector. This has reaped significant results – fairer funding reforms which mean central Government funding is more allied to need and deprivation, increased core funding from Government which has ended the Tory austerity years, multi year settlements for the first time in over a decade helping to give the sector greater certainty to plan. The devolution deal my Administration has secured will see a millions more each year of additional funding for Sussex and Brighton. In the last few months we have achieved a significant proportion of Government funding to end rough sleeping – the second highest award of funding nationally after Liverpool, and we received an additional over £6 million for transformation work in homelessness and adult social care. Alongside this our Labour Government is lifting residents out of poverty. From September 2026 an additional approx 8, 000 households

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became eligible for Free School Meals. We continue to talk to government about the pressures faced by local government and make the case for additional funding. We welcome the ambition set out in Rewiring the State for greater fiscal devolution and the announcement to give Strategic Authorities powers to introduce an Overnight Visitor Levy. All funding resources that will be secured through our devolution deal – something the local Green Party voted against.

29. Councillor West:

Just one week after the city celebrated Pride, two of our most loved LGBTQ+ venues, Charles Street and R-Bar announced their closure. These venues are vital queer community safe spaces and their loss following that of The Queery and Arcobaleno has caused alarm across the city. Campaigners are calling for the Council to work with the venues to look at what may be needed to save them and other venues under threat: understanding the financial and regulatory burdens, and how everyone can work together to develop an emergency plan for protecting Brighton's LGBTQ+ night-time economy. All hospitality businesses in the city are struggling and they now face the additional uncertainty of the Government permitting Mayors to set uncapped tourist tax which may reduce staycation levels and visitor spend. The Leader has pledged "the council would work with other city venues to help protect their future". How is that going?

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

The Council recognises the significant contribution that LGBTQ+ venues make to Brighton & Hove's cultural life, community wellbeing and night-time economy. Officers are continuing to work across services and with partners to understand the challenges facing venues and the wider hospitality sector, alongside broader work supporting the city's visitor and night-time economy.

While the Council is not currently providing direct financial support to individual LGBTQ+ venues or to the night time economy, it continues to invest in the infrastructure, safety and public spaces that help businesses thrive. This includes major investment in projects such as Hove Beach Park (£16m), Black Rock (£18m), and the restoration of Madeira Terrace (over £17m), alongside ongoing investment in the city's cultural assets and seafront infrastructure.

The Council is also investing in measures to improve safety and confidence in the night-time economy, including new city centre CCTV cameras, enhanced night safety and beach patrols, extended Safe Space provision, public safety campaigns and other initiatives arising from the Seafront Safety Review. These measures represent investment of around £140,000 in addition to approximately £25,000 recently spent on new CCTV infrastructure and ongoing Seafront Maintenance budgets of £217,000. Together, these investments are intended to support a safe, vibrant and sustainable city centre and seafront environment for residents, visitors, workers and businesses, including the venues that form an important part of Brighton & Hove's LGBTQ+ and wider night-time economy.

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30. Councillor West:

The LGA reacted with anger at the latest twist in the LGR debacle. Referring to Angela Rayner's 8 September announcement a spokesperson said: "Today's announcement... will have caused significant uncertainty, after councils have invested scarce public money and countless hours in the government's LGR programme. People's jobs, lives and wider commitments have been affected. Staff, councillors and their families cannot be expected to put their lives on hold while ministers undertake a review which is a mess of their own making. Particularly at a time when local services remain under real pressure, this is no way to treat local government".

Public questions deserve to be answered about how much scarce resource has been squandered by BHCC on LGR. What would have been saved if our over eager Leader had not entered us into the fast track and had instead taken a wait and see approach, as wiser heads advised?

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

The Council has spent £411k on the Local Government Reorganisation programme to date, offset by £100k of Government funding, resulting in a current net cost to the Council of £311k. Although participation in the Devolution Priority Programme shortened the proposal-development period by approximately nine weeks - the Council would still have been required to develop and submit an LGR proposal and meet the associated costs had it not joined the Priority programme.

Participation in the Devolution Priority Programme and the creation of the Sussex and Brighton Strategic Authority (SBSA) earlier this year has ensured that Brighton and Hove and the wider region will benefit from new funding at the earliest opportunity. This includes access to a new £1.14 billion long-term investment fund from 2026/27, capacity funding to support the creation of SBSA and funding to explore bus reform across the region.

31. Councillor West:

With the growing threat of cyber-attacks, climate breakdown impacting harvests and war disrupting flows of fertiliser and grain, the National Audit Office has warned Britain's food supply chain is at risk. Angela Eagle, Secretary of State for Food, has rather inadequately advised households: "If you've got a store of a bit of food that can keep you going for a while before the emergency services can get to you, you're going to be a lot better off than if you haven't". As the government doesn't maintain a strategic food stockpile, one wonders what people who cannot afford to bunker in the beans will do and what happens when even those that have followed government advice run out. What government guidance has the Council administration received for creating a city food stockpile and how will it be administered to fairly support those in the city at greatest need?

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

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Thank you for your question about municipal bunkers and food stockpiling, Councillor West.

Food security is serious. That is precisely why our response should be based on practical planning, not performative, expensive stockpiling.

The Council has reviewed the National Audit Office report and recognises the importance of strengthening resilience in the face of risks identified. The report highlights the need for stronger preparedness across national, regional and local systems.

We are drawing on the significant learning from the Covid-19 pandemic, when the Council worked closely with voluntary and community sector partners to support residents' access to food. Those strong partnerships still exist and lessons learned will be invaluable in shaping our response to any future disruption and ensuring support reaches those most in need. In parallel, we continue to seek information and share learning through the Sussex Resilience Forum, working alongside partner organisations as national policy and guidance develops.

32. Councillor Wilkinson:

Roads and Pavements in Kemptown: Residents regularly contact me about the condition of roads and pavements across Kemptown, and I welcome the recent and planned investment in resurfacing, including works affecting St George's Road and Upper Rock Gardens.

While individual pothole repairs remain important, repeated defects can indicate that a road requires more substantial treatment.

Can the Cabinet Member outline what further roads and pavements in Kemptown are currently being assessed for resurfacing or major maintenance, how reports from residents and ward councillors help inform those priorities, and what opportunities there are to accelerate improvements to streets where repeated repairs are no longer providing a satisfactory long-term solution?

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

Thank you, Councillor Wilkinson, for your question.

The council takes a data-led approach to prioritising investment in highway maintenance, ensuring that the limited funding available is directed to the parts of the network where it will have the greatest benefit.

Our maintenance programmes are developed using road condition survey data alongside a range of other factors, including the road hierarchy, levels of reactive maintenance expenditure, proximity to key services, ride quality and the strategic importance of routes for walking, cycling, public transport and general traffic.

While individual requests from residents and ward councillors are not used to determine priorities directly, reports of defects remain important. They help us identify emerging issues, inform our understanding of network condition and ensure that safety defects are

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inspected and addressed appropriately. In addition, the level of reactive maintenance required on a road is one of the factors considered when assessing whether a more substantial intervention may be needed.

Looking ahead, we are currently developing the council's highway maintenance programme for the next two years, which will be presented to Cabinet for approval in February 2027. Based on current assessments, this is likely to include works on Edward Street, St James's Street and Manor Road during 2027/28, with Upper St James's Street and Bristol Gardens currently identified for treatment in 2028/29. Depending on the condition of the asset, treatments may range from preventative maintenance and large-scale patching through to full resurfacing.

In addition, we have secured Bus Service Improvement Plan funding to deliver surface improvements on Eastern Road, with works currently being planned for later this year.

We are also developing a forward programme for footway maintenance across the city, which will be presented to Cabinet in February 2027.

I recognise the concerns that residents have about recurring defects and repeat repairs. For too many years, maintenance of our roads and pavements was underfunded and neglected under the previous Conservative government. In contrast, both the Labour government and our Labour council consider highways maintenance, including pavements, a priority. While both funding and the backlog remain a significant challenge, we continually review opportunities to secure additional investment and bring forward more permanent maintenance solutions where this represents the best value for money and the greatest long-term benefit for residents.

33. Councillor Wilkinson:

Accessibility and Condition of Communal Bins in Kemptown: I am regularly contacted by Kemptown residents about the condition and accessibility of communal refuse and recycling bins. While some require repair or replacement, I am particularly concerned that some bins can be difficult for older and disabled residents, including people with limited mobility, to open or reach into safely.

Communal bins are an essential part of waste collection in densely populated areas such as Kemptown, but they need to be accessible to everyone.

Will the Cabinet Member consider a review of communal bins in Kemptown to identify those requiring repair or replacement and, importantly, assess their accessibility for older and disabled residents? Can the Cabinet Member also outline what accessibility standards are currently applied when communal bins are purchased, replaced or relocated?

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

Thank you for raising this important issue. We recognise that communal bins need to be accessible to all residents, particularly older and disabled people.

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We have a programme in place to repair and replace communal bins, alongside a new bin-numbering system which will help us track individual bins and make it easier for residents to report issues.

Crews have been reminded to position bins so that foot pedals remain accessible. Residents who are unable to safely use communal refuse or recycling bins may also qualify for an assisted collection.

We will continue to consider accessibility alongside the repair and replacement of communal bins.