

Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

Agenda Item 102

Subject: Written questions from Councillors

Date of meeting: 30 March 2023

Report of: Executive Director for Governance, People & Resources

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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 Theobald

Playground improvements

What were the results of the Mackie park playground consultation, when will residents find out, and when will the improvement work begin?

Reply from Councillor Davis / Hills, Joint Chairs of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

The results of the consultation in relation to Mackie Park will be presented to Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee in June for a decision on how to proceed, and residents will be informed of the decision following the committee. The works will be completed in 2023/24, subject to approval from Committee.

2. Councillor McNair

Tree trimming

Trees in Patchdean are so big they are causing moss to grow on residents' roofs which is very costly to remove. Could these trees be reduced in height?

Reply from Councillor Davis / Hills, Joint Chairs of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

The main focus of the Council's arborist team continues to be carrying out remedial work in response to health and safety concerns, including Ash Die Back. The trees in this area of Patchdean were recently inspected, there were no health and safety concerns which required height reductions to these trees. There has been some ivy severance and lifting noted; this work is scheduled to take place by the end of September

3. Councillor McNair

Rubbish collections

Residents in Rotherfield Crescent and Morecambe Road have been suffering from very sporadic rubbish and recycling collections since the new year, with collections missed for up to 6 weeks. What are the reasons for this and when can we expect a consistent service?

Reply from Councillor Davis / Hills, Joint Chairs of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

Unfortunately, there have been issues across the service in City Clean that has impacted collections. This has been caused by staff shortages, which this administration has worked to address. According to our online reporting system, Rotherfield Crescent and Morecambe Road have been missed on different occasions over the course of the last three weeks for refuse and recycling. We apologise for the inconvenience caused.

Rotherfield Crescent was collected as scheduled on 23 March for refuse and 22 March for recycling. Morecambe Road was collected as scheduled on 24 March.

4. Councillor Meadows

Long grass and fire risk

Last year, Hollingbury had at least one serious fire in an area of long dry uncut grass near Stanmer Heights. When will the grass be cut this year, and what measures will be taken this year to reduce the chances of grass fires?

Reply from Councillor Davis / Hills, Joint Chairs of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

For many years some grass area in the City have been left to grow long with a cut once a year without significant problems with fires. Recently, as a response to the biodiversity emergency, we have altered mowing regimes on most verges and some parks to provide food and habitat for our wildlife. In keeping with a lot of other authorities, verges are being allowed to grow longer and flower through the summer. The revised mowing arrangements agreed by ETS was for spring mowing and autumn mowing with a flowering period in between. Due to staff shortages last year in some areas no spring cutting was done, so there was a greater volume of grass by late summer.

These staff shortages were part of the national labour market issues experienced in Britain following the pandemic and Brexit. This administration has significantly increased the pay of the lowest paid workers. This has subsequently benefited Cityparks staff by enabling us to attract applicants for our vacancies. This means that we will be starting this year in a much better position than last, facilitating us to get the spring cuts done.

We know that the new approach to managing verges is improving them for wildlife. We have recently had the Wilder Verges Project Report, which found that 70% of the verges surveyed had downland species or

pollinators present in the most recent survey, that were not present at all in 2021.

5. Councillor Barnett

Payback team

Can you provide an update on the activities of the Payback team in the City?

I was told that the Council are not asking the Payback team to weed the pavements and clear the drains as the council does not have insurance for this. It is unclear whether the payback team is clearing graffiti.

Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council

The council has a long and established relationship with Community Payback which sees groups of offenders fulfilling their community payback hours by carrying out gardening, litter clearing and other tasks across council services. This was disrupted somewhat during the pandemic; the Community Engagement Team are working with Sussex Probation to re-establish this work within our housing areas and re-build partnerships with our Tenant and Resident Associations and Probation, so that this service can build its capacity.

Current examples include the Hampshire Court Garden Group who are being supported by Sussex Probation Payback teams clearing weeds from Paved areas around their estate gardens at intervals throughout the year, and the Albion Hill Estate TRA working to establish a tool library which will help Probation to resource work on their estate and others within the area. All activities and tasks are put together with consultation and input from City Parks, Estate Services and Housing management. Probation also has a local base on Woodvale Cemetery where they carry out weekly payback workdays around the burial ground.

In terms of the insurance restrictions around working adjacent to the highway, the Payback Team have their insurance cover. If you would like any further information on this, the contact is Sean Bligh at Sean.Bligh@justice.gov.uk.

6. Councillor Allcock

How many Local Authority Foster carers were registered with Brighton and Hove during each of the following years:

- 2019 -20
- 2020-21
- 2021-22
- 2022-23

Reply from Councillor Allbrooke, Chair of Children, Young, People & Skills Committee

- 2019 -20 – 143 in-house foster care households at 31st March 2020
- 2020-21 – 152 in-house foster care households at 31st March 2021
- 2021-22 - 170 in-house foster care households at 31st March 2022
- 2022-23 - 157 in-house foster care households at 28th February 2023

7. Councillor Allcock

How many children that were cared for by the council were looked after by Brighton and Hove Foster Carer placements during each of the following years:

2019 -20

2020-21

2021-22

2022-23

and how much did this cost?

Reply from Councillor Allbrooke, Chair of Children, Young, People & Skills Committee

2019/20

2020/21

2021/22

	FTE Placements	Total Spend £'000	FTE Placements	Total Spend £'000	FTE Placements	Total Spend £'000
In-House Foster Care	147.2	3,679	161.77	4,010	163.27	4,348
IFA	89.59	3,963	75.43	3,393	76.27	3,511
Residential	30.05	5,640	38.88	8,279	44.6	10,139

* Forecast reported at TBM 9

8. Councillor Allcock

How many children cared for by the council were looked after by agency foster carers during each of the following years:

2019 -20

2020-21

2021-22

2022-23

and how much did this cost?

Reply from Councillor Allbrooke, Chair of Children, Young, People & Skills Committee

Please see responses provided to questions 6 & 7.

9. Councillor Allcock

How many children cared for by the council were looked after by private children's homes during of the following years:

2019 -20

2020-21

2021-22

2022-23

and how much did this cost?

Reply from Councillor Allbrooke, Chair of Children, Young, People & Skills Committee

Please see responses provided to questions 6 & 7.

