

Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

Agenda Item 82

Subject: Written questions from Councillors

Date of meeting: 1 February 2024

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

S106 money - In response to my written question at the 19 October 2023 Council Meeting, Cllr Williams kindly confirmed in the written answer, that since 2018 121 units have been provided which have been supported by section 106 commuted financial sums, totalling £4 million six hundred and sixty-seven pounds. I have been informed that the Council collected over 5 times this amount. Is this true? What is the total sum currently being held by the council from developers who have been unable to provide onsite affordable housing?

I am also advised that the Council has not invoiced all developers for the commuted sums that they owe, so that the total sum is even higher. Is this the case and why has this been allowed to happen?
What is the total sum owed to the council by developers?

Reply from Councillor Loughran, Chair of Planning

The council has accumulated a balance of circa £20 Million for all s106 across all types of contribution (sustainable transport, education, recreation etc) and circa £4M of that was held at 1st April 2023 for affordable housing. All of the detail is included in the Annual Infrastructure Statement which was approved by the Culture Heritage Tourism Sport & Economic Development Committee in November.

The council had a period of several months at the start of the current financial year when s106 demands were not able to be issued pending the recruitment of a new officer. This was resolved in the summer, invoicing is up to date, demands for circa £1.6M have been issued for affordable housing and payments of £293k have been received. The balance of £1.2M has not yet fallen due.

2. Councillor McNair

Claims - How much money has the council paid out to residents in compensation in relation to potholes and flooding? In the period 01.01.23 - 31.12.23

What percentage of claims are successful?

How is the council planning to improve the ease with which residents can claim?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Chair of Transport & Sustainability Committee

Thank you, Cllr McNair, for your question.

BHCC are committed to improving the road and drains across our city and work closely with insurance companies and the wider industry to ensure we respond well to those affected by large potholes and localised flooding.

Between 01.01.2023 and 31.12.2023 BHCC has received 184 claims relating to potholes and 1 claim in relation to highway flooding.

Of the total 185 claims, a total of £2,190.16 has been paid in compensation to date

i. What percentage of claims are successful?

Of the 185 claims received, 42 remain open. This means 143 claims have been through the claims handling process and 10 of the 143 have had a successful claims settlement which equates to 7%.

ii. How is the council planning to improve the ease with which residents can claim?

The council is in the process of developing an online claims process which will be more efficient for both the claimant and the councils claims handling team. This will be progressed during 2024/25.

We recently sent out comms to reminded residents and visitors to report potholes and other environment related concerns directly via our existing council webpages. These feed straight into our operational rotas and are therefore the quickest way of getting action taken.

We ask people to give us as much information as they can, including photographs and description of locations – including What3Words app - if possible.

Our webpage for reporting potholes is at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/roads-pavements-and-potholes-report-damage

We are committed to fixing potholes that are assessed as being urgent within 24 hours of us being notified.

We also have a gullies clearance paper coming to the Transport and Sustainability Committee in early February with sets out our commitment to clearing road gullies and drains to reduce localised flooding.

3. Councillor Meadows

Dog Poo bins - Recently, many dog poo bins went uncollected across Patcham & Hollingbury for many days and were overflowing. We have waited years for new bins. When will they be provided?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

Where possibly Cityclean have been removing dog poo bins and replacing with normal litter bins. This is because there is no need to separate out the waste, and litter bins are emptied more frequently. Cityclean have also relocated bins from countryside locations to adjacent car parks to improve the reliability of collections. Bins located in rural/park land take much longer to empty. Collections from these bins are also affected by the weather, in very wet weather it is difficult to access the bins and they remain unattended for several days. There were over 500 dog bins in the City and the programme of work replacing with litter bins is ongoing. Cityclean apologise for the recent disruption to collections from the dog poo bins – this was due to staff shortages. The service is now back on track and additional staff have been trained on the round to provide a more resilient service in the future.

4. Councillor McNair

CCTV - CCTV at Stanmer Heights has recently been found to be out of focus and providing poor quality footage if any at all. Is all Council-owned CCTV in Patcham & Hollingbury now in good working order?

Reply from Councillor Williams, Chair of Housing and New Homes Committee

The CCTV camera installed at Stanmer Heights is operating as expected and regular maintenance is carried out to ensure this. All other cameras in Hollingbury and Patcham are in good working order, with high-definition picture quality.

5. Councillor Meadows

Flooding in Winfield Avenue, particularly at the junction with Ladies Mile Road, is worsening. What is the plan to reduce flooding in Winfield Avenue, and to reduce the effects on properties near the junction being flooded?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

Thank you for your question. The council has apparently not received any formal reports of flooding for the area since 2014. However, in 2016 the Council were a partner in SCAPE which was a European-funded initiative to investigate retro-fitting SuDS in an urban environment. One site which was

identified as part of SCAPE was a proposal to construct SuDS on Patcham Primary School playing fields.

To deliver flood risk management schemes there will be a capital burden to the Council, and so these projects will be funded through Flood Defence Grant in Aid from the Environment Agency. A stipulation of the FDGIA in addition to the requirements of the HM Treasury Green Book, is to remove properties from flood risk.

The Council will begin working on a city-wide feasibility study for Surface Water Management in the next quarter, this location will be included in the study for consideration.

More broadly, Southern Water are undertaking a mapping exercise to identify suitable locations for SuDS around the city to alleviate pressure on the sewage system. We are seeking to work more closely with them in order to make sure that this is joined up with the council's efforts to find solutions to this shared problem.

6. Councillor Theobald

Birch Grove Crescent - Residents report litter to Estates Management only to be told it is Cityclean's responsibility. Cityclean report it is Estates Management responsibility. Can residents be directed to the correct contact to expedite work.

Scaffolding has been there for over a year, but no work appears to have been carried out. If it hasn't been removed yet, when will it be?

Behind no 68 Birchgrove Crescent is a collection of abandoned children's bikes and scooters as well as at least three sheds which people are using to dump their unwanted items (furniture, tyres, toys beer cans etc). When will the sheds be renovated?

Reply from Councillor Williams, Chair of Housing and New Homes Committee

Missed rubbish collections should be reported to City Clean, reports of bulk waste or general litter on Housing land should be reported to the Housing Estates service. The Estates Service have attended and cleared the litter and bulk waste in the area.

The scaffolding will be removed within the next week.

The children's bikes and scooters behind Birchgrove crescent all appear to be in good working order and in use. Housing will undertake a survey of the sheds and contact residents once this is done, with the view to refurbishment or looking at alternative storage options.

7. Councillor Shanks

What is the total predicted cost of closing St Peters and St Barts schools, including paying the deficit, staff redundancies, extra support for children transferring, cost of moth balling buildings?

Reply from Councillor Taylor , Joint Chair of Children Families & Schools

Thank you for the question Cllr Shanks. As was referenced in committee on Monday evening there are some known and unknown costs should a school close. There is the cost of the school's deficit on its closure and for both St Peter's and St Bart's this is approximately £200,000 each. Then there is the cost of redundancy for staff, this will be dependent upon a number of factors including the number of staff, their age and entitlements, but also the extent to which staff are redeployed (therefore avoiding redundancy). During the consultation and at Committee an indicative figure of £200,000 for a one form entry primary school has been quoted.

The Council has approved up to £200,000 of spending to support teams to help support the transition process. Other costs will be dependent on the needs of the children and their families. We have not calculated that cost but should the closures proceed we can request that officers report back to committee about the costs at a future meeting.

As for the accommodation costs to maintain the building and retain its security and integrity, this will be dependent on its future use and the length of time it remains unoccupied. We will seek to minimise the time the building is not utilised and will ensure it remains maintained in the meantime.

8. Councillor Shanks

At what point in the budget process has consultation occurred with our city's valued community and voluntary groups on the impact of cuts to their grant funding and other council services, what opportunity was given for them to input into the shaping of the budget papers before the drafts went to committee, and can the council commit to ensuring a longer timeframe for discussion and consultation on the budget in the future, given the scale of cuts and the seriousness of their impact?

Reply from Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council

Consulting on budget proposals is not a statutory requirement for councils but I fully accept it is good practice and can be valuable. Unfortunately, the announcement of the government's Autumn Statement and subsequent Local Government Finance Settlement on 18 December came very late in the day. Not only that, but the announcements caused huge shockwaves across local government by confirming no additional funding compared to the 2022 announcement. This has meant that very substantial additional savings proposals have had to be identified at extremely short notice to close an unprecedented budget gap that has now grown to £33 million. Inevitably,

these final savings include significantly more difficult choices and cuts than earlier proposals which focused on finding as many savings as possible from efficiencies or operating services differently. The recent additional funding announcement is welcome but does not fundamentally change the council's financial situation.

That said, we have held confidential discussions with our recognised trade unions to alert them to potential staffing implications and we have signalled to all parties and residents that difficult choices lie ahead through our communications on the budget and the council's financial situation. Along with many other councils, we continue to lobby government to recognise the perilous position that the financial settlement has left local authorities in and to provide additional resources.

I would absolutely prefer to consult and engage more widely, however, the financial position of the authority inevitably means prioritising statutory provision over most other services. With finances now at a critical level, a multi-year financial settlement instead of a very late, single-year announcement would also enable the council to plan and consult for the longer term.

9. Councillor Pickett

Preston Park velodrome is a well-used and much-loved part of Preston Park. It seems some locals are using the area to train their dogs because it is fenced in, while some families are choosing to take their children there rather than the nearby playground or open spaces in Preston Park. This has created problems for people using the velodrome for its primary purpose of cycling and cricket, with a number of accidents, collisions, and other unfortunate incidents, including one which left a cyclist in hospital. Could the council explore the potential for a) clearer signage urging families with young children to be mindful of cyclists and other velodrome users, b) a potential PSPO preventing dogs from being let off their lead within the velodrome, or c) another practical solution which would enable all users of velodrome to continue to enjoy the area without the added risk of collision and injury?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

We currently have four dog control public space protection orders; two relating to dogs on leads, one relating to defecation by dogs and one setting out areas of the city that from which dogs are excluded. These were recently extended for a further three years by the Equalities Community Safety and Human Rights committee, until Oct 2027.

We are currently evaluating evidence with regard to the impact the use of this space by dog owners is having. In order to create additional PSPOs or to extend the areas that the current orders cover, there would need to be both statutory and public consultation regarding the possible introduction.

Following that a report would need to go to committee seeking member approval to introduce a PSPO.

In the meantime, if there is evidence that signage is necessary to protect users of the velodrome, and there is a significant case for investing in signage, the council could take this forward. There are a limited number of entry points that would need signage.

10. Councillor Pickett

Will this council be making representations in response to the open consultation from the Planning Inspectorate on the proposals for Gatwick Airport Northern Runway, in line with previous stated opposition to the plans? Given that the Leader of the Council has previously stated that ‘any airport expansion must pass our tests on air quality, noise pollution and delivering economic benefits while enabling us to meet our obligations on climate change,’ can we have more detail on what the criteria for the ‘tests’ referred to on air quality and noise pollution constitute in practice?

Reply from Councillor Robins, Chair of Culture, Heritage, Sport, Tourism & Economic Development Committee

The Council has submitted a ‘Relevant Representation’ in response to the consultation by the Planning Inspectorate relating to the Northern Runway. This raised an objection to the scheme on the basis that it would result in an unacceptable impact on climate change. With regards to impacts on air quality and from noise pollution, having reviewed the detailed information submitted, which was based on agreed methodologies for Environmental Impact Assessment, officers did not consider that the scheme would result in any unacceptable impact on the City. It is noted that the local authorities in closer proximity to the airport, including Crawley Borough Council, have submitted detailed responses to the application, including in relation to noise and air quality impacts, and are expected to have specialist representation on these matters at the Examination in late February/early March.

11. Councillor Hill

Last June at the Culture, Heritage, Tourism, Sport and Economic Development Committee we were told that a draft version of the Council’s new 5 year Economic Strategy would be used to guide the implementation of the new Council budget. Will the draft of this plan be made publicly available? It is important that the public understands what the Economic Strategy of this Council is given the last one expired last year.

Reply from Councillor Robins, Chair of Culture, Heritage, Sport, Tourism & Economic Development Committee

The council has commissioned a new Economic Strategy to cover the period from 2024-2027. Work on this strategy is nearing completion and will comprise of a Strategy and accompanying Evidence Base. These

documents will go to CHSTE Committee for approval in a public forum, and will be published on the Council website once finalised.

12. Councillor Hill

A recent Local Government Association report raised the alarm over “unprecedented increases in demand” for sexual health services which is partly due to a steep rise in gonorrhoea and syphilis cases. Cases of HIV transmission also have been plateauing despite the government’s goal to end new transmissions by 2030. Cuts to sexual health services have been a key contributor to this, with some Local Authorities elsewhere no longer funding sexual health provision due to budget cuts. Will funding for sexual health services be protected in the upcoming budget in light of a rise in sexually transmitted diseases and a lack of progress in ending new HIV transmissions?

Reply from Councillor De Oliveira, Chair of Health & Wellbeing Board

Sexual health services are funded through the ring-fenced public health grant and there are no plans to reduce current levels of investment locally. Brighton & Hove City Council provides good access to clinical sexual health services which offer face to face, booked and walk-in appointments from three sites across the City – including a dedicated young persons’ clinic. The service also provides STI and HIV self-testing kits for people to use at home. In 2022/23 over 34,000 sexual health appointments were provided and over 12,000 self-test kits processed. A dedicated website www.brightonsexualhealth.com provides up-to-date, accurate and accessible information and advice regarding all aspect of sexual health, including translation function into several languages.

The website also provides a comprehensive guide to where to get an HIV/STI test in Brighton and Hove including a number of community settings and the award-winning vending machines at several locations across the City.

England continues to experience worrying levels of poor sexual health with high rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and this is also reflected locally. Brighton & Hove rates increased by 3% from 2021 to 2022, compared to a 24% increase for England, these increases follow a decrease during the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, in 2022, the rate of diagnosis for all new STIs in Brighton & Hove was 1,141 per 100,000 people, which is almost double the England rate of 694 per 100,000. The local profile of STIs locally is more in line with rates seen in London boroughs and Manchester.

Brighton and Hove has a high rate of diagnosed HIV infection at 7.3 per 1,000 (aged 15-59 years) compared to 2.3 per 1,000 in England. However, the rate of new diagnoses in Brighton and Hove has fallen from 28.2 per 100,000 in 2016 to 9 per 100,000 in 2022, which is a greater reduction than in England.

We are currently undertaking a sexual health needs assessment to ensure an up to date full and clear understanding of the sexual health needs of our residents and to inform the development of a new sexual health strategy for Brighton and Hove later in 2024/25.

13. Councillor Hill

How many vacancies exist in each directorate because of the Council's recruitment freeze?

Reply from Councillor Sankey , Leader of the Council

The council does not hold detailed information on vacancies held in lieu of recruitment controls because these controls have been in place since July and vacancies will therefore have occurred at different times and for different lengths over the period. For example, some vacancies are held indefinitely whilst some have only been held for a short period due to pressures on the service or an unsustainably high number of existing vacancies. However, I can advise that vacancy savings of approximately £3 million have been reported through the Targeted Budget Management (TBM) monitoring reports to date, which is the equivalent of approximately 86 full-time staffing vacancies. However, over the same period the use of Agency Staffing has also fallen significantly by around 14% which should also be taken into consideration.

14. Councillor Hill

Has Councillor Rowkins received a response about the amount of diesel used per annum in the Newhaven Energy Recovery Facility? I was told last October that he requested information pertaining to this.

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

Thanks for your question Cllr Hill. I can provide the following update.

To start a boiler from cold to "waste on a grate" in accordance with the Environmental Permit conditions, Veolia typically uses between 15,000 - 20,000 litres of fuel. Similarly, Veolia use fuel to shut down the plant which is approximately 8,000 - 12,000 Litres. Startups and shutdowns are strictly limited to planned maintenance and unplanned downtime. This ensures the continuity of Service for the Contract and similarly electricity generation of which the Councils are vested in both.

Veolia are on a 24-month outage strategy for planned maintenance. On occasion, when there is an issue with furnace temperature, Veolia also "put a burner in". This adds to the fuel usage which is significantly less BUT contingent on the nature of the object causing the issue in the boiler. Such objects would be a NOx canister or medical canister that residents have erroneously placed in bins.

15. Councillor McLeay

What is the average estimated cost per property needed to bring all council properties up to an EPC C and EPC B?

Reply from Councillor Williams, Chair of Housing and New Homes Committee

Using the current Housing Energy Modelling software the estimated average cost of improving all council tenanted properties to an EPC band C is £4,069 per property affected.

To improve all council tenanted properties to an EPC B the estimated cost is an average of £6,621 per property affected.

It should be noted however that the modelling identifies that in both scenarios even this level of investment would not see all properties meeting these standards due to the SAP methodology behind the EPC process, the amount of work required to achieve this, the technical feasibility of the work required and other restrictions in place. The number **not** achieving minimum EPC B currently would be a significant proportion of all properties.

16. Councillor McLeay

November housing and new homes committee reported 88 council home having an EPC of band E or below. How many of these 88 council homes have an EPC of E, of F and of G?

Reply from Councillor Williams , Chair of Housing and New Homes Committee

Of council tenanted properties 63 homes are EPC band E, 24 homes are band F and 1 home is band G

Due to the archetype of some of these properties i.e. age, solid walls, in conservation areas we are limited on the improvements that can be made that would currently reflect a significantly improved EPC band based on the current methodology.

17. Councillor McLeay

Quarter 2 2023/24 HRA rent collection returns showed that rent collection was falling and predicted that only 93.66% of the rent would be collected this year against a target of 95.36%. If this prediction proves correct, how much less rent will be collected compared to if the target of 95.36% collection rate were to be achieved?

Reply from Councillor Williams , Chair of Housing and New Homes Committee

A collection rate of 95.36% would result in c.£1.1m being received as opposed to a collection rate of 93.66%.

18. Councillor McLeay

How much does a by-election cost the Council?

Reply from Councillor Sankey , Leader of the Council

The cost of a by-election can vary depending on the size of the ward's electorate and the proportion of postal voters. The higher the electorate and/or the proportion of postal voters – the higher the cost. This is because the majority of the cost of by-elections is the postage/return postage of poll cards and postal voting packs.

Although the cost differs depending on the size of the electorate and proportion of postal vote, by way of an indicative figures, a 3 member ward with approximately 2,500 postal voters would cost around £17k to deliver. The Electoral Services team budgets for one by-election per year.

19. Councillor Earthey

What is BHCC's latest position on the use of glyphosphate weedkiller in the city, and how does it reconcile the perceived benefits of using it against the real environmental damage that will be caused to city food chains and biodiversity?

Reply from Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

Thank you for your question. The January meeting of the City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee agreed a new approach to tackling weeds. The Committee voted to use a controlled-droplet application of glyphosate to manage and remove weeds from hard surfaces. This will involve mixing the glyphosate with an oil that helps it stick to the weeds. It means we'll use less of the herbicide than traditional methods while reducing the risks to other plant species and wildlife.

This will only be applied to visible weeds on roads and pavements. There will be no use in parks, on verges or at any other green spaces.

This is a very different approach to what BHCC used to do and what most other local authorities still do. The conventional approach taken here prior to 2019 saw quad bikes driving up and down every street in the city three times a year, blanket spraying every road and pavement, regardless of the extent of weed growth. The glyphosate was sprayed in a fine water-based mist that was prone to drift beyond the intended area.

The committee voted instead to use the controlled droplet application, which is a safer and more environmentally friendly method and will be applied in a far more targeted manner. The cost of this approach is substantially higher for the council, but the committee felt strongly that every effort should be made to limit any risks to biodiversity while also ensuring we get the problem back under control.

We must balance the need to keep our residents safe and our pavements accessible with protecting the city's biodiversity and we believe that this represents a sensible middle ground.

Once the problem is back under control, we will reduce the use of glyphosate to the lowest level possible. We will of course keep this under review and explore any viable alternatives should they become available. For now, this new approach will mean our streets will be safer and our city will look all the better for it.

20. Councillor Earthey

In view of Central Government's increase in the budget for repairing potholes, by when will BHCC be able to claim a share of these funds, and accelerate its pothole repair programme?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Chair of Transport & Sustainability Committee

Thank you, Cllr Earthey, for your question.

The Department for Transport have awarded BHCC an additional £13m of highway maintenance funding over the next 10 years as part of the Network North Fund.

The Council have received the first allocation of £413k in 2023/24 which is being used to fund the resurfacing of London Road between The Level and Preston Circus. These works have been tendered and are programmed to start in February. In 2024/25 the Council will receive a further £413k which will be used to supplement the programme of planned works which will include resurfacing as well as surface extension treatments such as microasphalt and surface dressing.

The Department for Transport plan to confirm future allocations in the near future. Once the breakdown has been confirmed it will be incorporated into the forward works programming for delivery

The additional funds alone are not sufficient to halt the decline of the Highway Network, Further details on future ways of working will be included in a committee report that is planned to be presented later in the year.

These actions demonstrates our commitment to improving road and paved surfaces and ensure our pothole repair programme can advance at pace.

21. Councillor Earthey

Can the Labour Administration confirm a recent BBC report that BHCC faces a Judicial Review over its decision to move from paper parking vouchers to Pay-by-Phone? If yes, how much council-taxpayers' money is going to be wasted defending this action, brought about by the Labour Administration's insufficient attention to detail?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Chair of Transport & Sustainability Committee

Thank you, Cllr Earthey, for your question.
Brighton & Hove City Council does not face a judicial review on this matter. The application for permission to seek a judicial review was rejected in summer 2023 and a recent appeal to this decision was also rejected. No costs have been incurred by the Council in relation to these applications.

22. Councillor Earthey

Residents east of the Marina only have one direct bus per hour to the Royal Sussex County Hospital (14C). What pressure can the Labour Administration bring to bear on B&H Buses to improve this service?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Chair of Transport & Sustainability Committee

Thank you, Cllr Earthey, for your question.
The 14C bus service is run commercially by Brighton & Hove Buses, and any decision to increase its frequency per hour is the responsibility of the operator. However, their Customer Service team can be contacted with this feedback via email at info@buses.co.uk or they can be contacted by phone on 01273 886200.

Council-supported service 47 provides an hourly service from Saltdean via Rottingdean via Brighton Marina to the Royal Sussex County Hospital, and the 52 bus also offers an hourly service to Royal Sussex County Hospital from Ovingdean via the Marina. Services 47 and 52 are operated by The Big Lemon under contract to the city council.

Other buses (services 12, 12A, 14 and 27) run every 5 minutes from east of the Marina to the Paston Place bus stop on Marine Parade, from this bus stop it is approximately a 5-minute walk to the Royal Sussex County Hospital.

We are committed to substantive improvement to our city's bus services as a whole though the funded Bus Service Improvement Programme or BSIP enhancing one of the nation's best used bus services. Brighton and Hove has the highest passenger journeys per head of population for any English local authority outside London.

23. Councillor Earthey

BHCC parking fees imposed on visitors to the Royal Sussex County Hospital are outrageously high, and discriminate unfairly against visitors of more modest means. What steps is the Labour Administration going to take to reduce these charges?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Chair of Transport & Sustainability Committee

Thank you, Cllr Earthey, for your question.
This financial year, the Labour administration stopped the proposal in the 23/24 Budget to increase parking fees significantly around the Royal Sussex

County Hospital area due to the concerns you outline. We took swift action to stop the quadrupling of on-street visitor parking prices as proposed by the previous administration for implementation in July 2023. We could not countenance such discriminatory and regressive parking hikes affecting many on low pay, working in essential services and hospital visitors. A Parking Review was commissioned in response to this and is currently underway. The parking review is looking into how parking prices compare with comparable cities in the UK and this will inform recommendations for the way forward. As part of the parking review, we set out to make parking simpler, more equitable, accessible and inclusive and to make parking work well for residents, visitors and the prosperity of our city.

24. Councillor Fishleigh

Subject: Valley Gardens 3

Is it administratively possible to re-allocate to other capital projects the £5m loan and the £1.8m from BHCC funds assigned to Valley Gardens 3, and if not, why not?

Reply from Councillor Muten, Chair of Transport & Sustainability Committee

Thank you, Cllr Fishleigh, for your question.

Although it is administratively possible to reallocate the £5M Council Loan and the £1.8 LTP match funding, this is not considered prudent. Such reallocation would likely jeopardise the Valley Gardens Phase 3 scheme, most likely resulting in a loss of Coast to Capital funding which is £6M making the improvements needed unviable. Essential road maintenance of the area would then need to be funded which is estimated to be between £1M - £1.5M.

Further, as generally acknowledged by many, including local residents at a recent meeting held on Saturday morning 13th January as also attended by Cllr Fishleigh; the Old Steine area is looking fairly “shabby” and is in a general state of decline. Moving money allocated and losing substantial grant funding for the planned improvement works would inevitably lead to further decline and deterioration. As this is one of the most prominent parts of our city centre, we cannot advocate for its further decline by moving allocated money. With no plan, timeline, design or budget to replace the planned scheme, this would not be in the best interests of our city and its reputation. Rather, investing to deliver Phase 3 of the important Valley Gardens project will enhance and make this area a city centre gem, great for residents, visitors and the prosperity of our city.

25. Councillor Fishleigh

Subject: Universal Basic Income

It was mentioned in passing in a previous full council that BHCC is exploring introducing a UBI trial. Please would you provide a few details.

Reply from Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council

The council received an approach from the Head of Corporate Strategy at Camden London Borough Council informing us that Camden is developing a proposal for a Universal Basic Services pilot working with a number of other local authorities and an academic institution. Camden have offered to lead a detailed briefing discussion with city council officers once they have onboarded other interested local authorities and secured an academic partner, potentially University College London who have previously published research in this field. We are awaiting confirmation of the status of the pilot with interest and our Policy Team are ready to engage.

