

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL**

**4.30pm 19 OCTOBER 2023**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillors O'Quinn (Chair), Bagaeen, Davis, Fishleigh, Grimshaw, Hamilton, Meadows, McNair, Robins, Sankey, Shanks, C Theobald, West, Wilkinson, Williams, Alexander, Allen, Asaduzzaman, Baghoth, Burden, Cattell, Czolak, Daniel, Earthey, Gajjar, Galvin, Goddard, Goldsmith, Helliwell, Hewitt, Hill, Hogan, Loughran, Lyons, McGregor, McLeay, Miller, Mistry, Muten, Nann, Oliveira, Pickett, Pumm, Robinson, Rowkins, Sheard, Stevens and Taylor

**PART ONE**

**34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 34.1 Councillor Oliveira declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in Item 50, a notice of motion concerning Women's Football in the City as Manager of Whitehawk Football Club.
- 34.2 Councillor Sankey declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in Item 49/51, a notice of motion concerning the Academisation of Schools in Benfield and Hangleton as her husband is a teacher at Benfield.
- 34.3 Councillor Willams declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in Item 52, a notice of motion concerning the UCU strikers as a UCU member and lecturer at the University of Brighton.
- 34.4 No other declarations of interests in matters appearing on the agenda were made.

**35 MINUTES**

- 35.1 The minutes of the Special Council Meeting held 20 July 2023 and the Council Meeting held on 20 July 2023 were approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record of the proceedings.

**36 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS.**

- 36.1 The Mayor gave the following communications:

“Dear councillors, ladies and gentlemen,

I'm sure I speak for all of us when I say how shocking the news has been from the Middle East in the last 12 days. I don't believe any of us expected such a devastating and horrifying attack on innocent civilians at a music festival and in kibbutzim in Israel and the major loss of life that ensued. The death and injury of so many innocent civilians in Palestine in the past few days has also caused widespread outrage and sympathy. This conflict has now gone on for many, many decades, far too long, and we pray that a long-term solution that brings peace can be brokered before countless others lose their lives.

I would thus like to propose a 2 minute silence in recognition of all the innocents who have lost their lives in the past 12 days and those who have been taken hostage or are deeply affected by the continuing hostilities. Please join me in standing for a 2 min silence now

I have now been Mayor for 4 and a half months and it has been a complete whirlwind of events, meetings and activities. I have found it a fascinating experience but am grateful that I still have enough stamina to deal with such a demanding role.

One of the great joys I have experienced in the past few months has been meeting so many amazing young people - from the students receiving their degrees in the awards ceremonies for Sussex and Brighton University – to seeing cadets having an exciting time on training camp learning to climb a training wall or set up a complex communications system - to speaking to 5-8 year olds at Assembly about what the Mayor does and answering questions from them – mainly about how heavy the Mayor's chains are. It is such a privilege to see these young people moving forward in life, developing their confidence, their teamwork, their curiosity about life and appreciation of the world around them. It is totally inspiring and energising. I also had the privilege of welcoming a Japanese deputation of students, teachers and local officials to the Mayor's Parlour and giving them a brief history of how democracy developed in Britain in the highly relevant setting of Brighton Council Chamber. What interesting and polite young people and with a fascinating range of hand signals that they delighted in but were a complete mystery to me!

Another highlight was the trip to Dieppe to commemorate the 81<sup>st</sup> year since the Anglo-Canadian Raid. I was accompanied on the visit by Cllr Amanda Grimshaw who is our Armed Forces Champion. I couldn't have asked for a better person to take on the trip as she is so knowledgeable about this area of history. The trip was made up of a series of deeply moving commemorative events both in and just outside Dieppe. The most emotional part for me was when a relative of a Canadian soldier who had lost his life in the raid read out a letter that the young man had written to his family - to be read in the event of his death. This really brought home the great sacrifices that were made in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, and all other wars. I was also struck by the changes in Dieppe since I had last been many years ago. Such a lively, bustling town now and I very much recommend a visit.

There is much to do in the next couple of months and I look forward to the Remembrance events where we remember the fallen which are such an important part of our national life. The city of Brighton and Hove is very supportive of Remembrance

events and there are always good turnouts to the parades, blessings, and services in the various parts of the city – including Portslade.

I have many carol services to attend to in the coming weeks and Mayoral receptions for Veterans, local communities, and care centres. The Santa Bus should be a fun experience although I am not offering to put on a Santa suit – I leave that to Councillor Robins.

We have a Full Council in December so hopefully we can bring some Xmas cheer to it.”

### **37 TO RECEIVE PETITIONS AND E-PETITIONS.**

- 37.1 The Mayor stated that she had been notified of 2 petitions to be presented and invited the submission of petitions from councillors and members of the public. She reminded the Council that petitions would be referred to the appropriate decision-making body without debate and the person presenting the petition would be invited to attend the meeting to which the petition was referred.
- 37.2 Christina Moore presented a petition signed by 804 residents concerning the cost of resident's parking permits.
- 37.3 The Mayor thanked the lead petitioner and stated that the petition would be referred to the Transport and Sustainability Committee for consideration.
- 37.4 Paul Griffiths presented a petition signed by 54 residents, concerning Car Parking at Clarendon Place.
- 37.5 The Mayor thanked the lead petitioners for presenting their petitions and confirmed that they would be referred to the Transport and Sustainability Committee for consideration.

### **38 WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.**

- 38.1 The Mayor reported that 7 written questions had been received from members of the public and invited Lesley Hammond on behalf of Julia Basnett to come forward and address the council.
- 38.2 Julia Basnett asked the following question; “Will Council review how it interprets rules on public questions, deputations and petitions? For some years, I've been aware of public attempts to assert scrutiny arbitrarily blocked by council officials and/or leaders. There's a good reason why the efficient running of committees requires a defence against persistent submissions on exact same issues when satisfactory answers were already given. Rejecting a submission because a Chair feels, with democratic principles in mind, it will cause undue irritation, worry or clearly damage the good reputation of someone can also be reasonable. However, some feel rejections are too often unreasonable and essentially undemocratic.”
- 38.3 Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council replied; “Thank you for your question, Ms Basnett. We took office as an administration on the 25th May following the local elections on 4th May. I cannot therefore say what happened or did not happen in the past. I can however give you our administration's commitment to openness,

transparency and active public engagement. We have rules in our constitution that are designed to enable Members of the public to submit questions, petition and deputations. We also have the Mayor, the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer who oversee the application of the rules in an objective and impartial way. My understanding is that we have more public engagement items than most comparable authorities. But, whatever the position, as an administration, we definitely value the contributions from the public and will not do anything to stifle it. I would also like to highlight that public engagement and scrutiny is not limited to formal council and committee meetings. In fact, most members of the public are not necessarily aware of or feel inclined to use them. One of the main criticisms we heard from residents over the course of the local election campaign was the previous Green Administration's refusal to listen to residents and consult properly on their ideas. We are therefore committed to looking at ways of enhancing public involvement and engagement. Next month"

- 38.4 Lesley Hammond asked the following supplementary question on behalf of Julia Basnett; "Councillors may have noticed that the initial publication of questions for the July 20<sup>th</sup> full council meeting included a question which was subsequently removed by the mayor or the chief executive, supposedly on the grounds of individual privacy. This question did not seek any detail of any individual and no answer to that question could have identified individual. The reason given for the removal of that question would therefore appear to be false. Many of us assume that Labour will want to do better than the Green administration on child protection and safeguarding; I've been informed of multiple legitimate and very serious concerns in the community about the promotion of gender identity theory by this council and the teaching of it in our schools. Following concerns around social transitions of children by teachers and council staff and even the medical transition of children, either this council do not know of these concerns or alternatively they do know of these concerns but don't want us to know of them. Which is it?"
- 38.5 Councillor Sankey replied; "I don't recognise any of the concerns that the questioner has put to me."
- 38.6 The Mayor thanked Lesley Hammond for their question and invited Theresa Mackey to come forward and address the council.
- 38.7 Theresa Mackey asked a question; "This is a short question, but one which probably needs a long answer, and I'm putting this question on behalf of the older people's council. Bella Sankey recently stated that the Council is reviewing parking 'in the round'. Does this include the issue of digital exclusion that particularly, but not exclusively, affects older residents, and if so, in what ways is it going to be reviewed?"
- 38.9 Councillor Muten replied; "Thank you, Ms Mackey, for bringing this question to council today. A wider review of how the city charges for parking is currently taking place. The initial results will be due to be presented to the Transport and Sustainability committee in December alongside a scope on the way forward. This parking review will include payment methods and is expected to consider ways to simplify the range of different parking tariffs we presently have across our city. We will consider your points within that review."

- 38.10 The Mayor thanked Theresa Mackey for her question and invited Kay Lyons to come forward and address the council.
- 38.11 Kay Lyons asked a question; “I note the committee decision to increase time for public questions from 15 to 30 minutes and to reduce the number of “notices of motion” at full council meetings. I speak for many citizens when I say that 30 minutes is still insufficient. Nor should there ever be time restrictions on what our elected representatives need to say. In the light of
- 38.12 Cllr Sankey’s commitment to widen public participation will she agree to either monthly full council meetings or a new, radical, and additional forum for direct democratic engagement? A quarterly Citizens Council would facilitate nuanced exchanges and better outcomes.”
- 38.13 Councillor Sankey replied; “Thank you Kay Lyons for your question. Starting at the beginning, the proposed changes that we’re bringing today will enhance and not restrict the time allowed for public questions. Most local authorities provide a set time for public questions and we’re no exception in Brighton and Hove. And it’s with no disrespect at all to my elected representative colleagues, who are always wise and learned, but I believe that there must be some time restrictions on what we say. If anything the time we allocate, with the extension that we’re proposing today, is more generous than in other local authorities. Under the new rules, every question is guaranteed a response either orally during the allocated time or in writing. We are therefore effectively undertaking to respond to each and every question submitted. No question will be left unanswered. It is simply that the questions not dealt with during the 30 minutes time will receive a written response. This is a significant improvement on what we had under any of the previous administrations. On the question of Notices of Motion I would like to make it clear that Members are not limited to submitting Notices of Motion to full Council. They can submit NOMs to any committee or sub-committee of the Council as well. In fact any Notices of Motion that require a substantive action are referred to the relevant committee for a decision with an officer report. Another facility available to Members is the ability to write a letter to any committee of the Council proposing a substantive action. If within the remit of the Committee, they are entitled to have it included on the agenda, and to address the committee before a decision is made. These opportunities, taken together, provide members ample opportunity, in my view, to submit Notices of Motion to Council or Committees as well as Member letters. We expect we will still have more Notices of Motion and Member letters than comparable authorities. In terms of widening participation, which you referenced, tomorrow we will be launching a new programme called Reimagine Brighton and Hove, which will set up regular forums for direct democratic engagement, similar to the type you foresee with your question. I have also commenced Leader’s Surgeries, giving resident across the City the opportunity to meet one to one with me so I can hear their views, ideas and recommendations. I hope this answers your question.”
- 38.14 Kay Lyons asked a supplementary question which was ruled out of order as not being relevant to the original question.
- 38.15 Councillor Sankey replied; “I would like to put on the record that I utterly refute everything that that questioner has just put to us as a council. We do not act illegally or unlawfully, we believe in protecting children in our schools including our precious trans

children in this city. I think the level of aggression that was just exhibited, reveals the agenda that underlines all of these protests.”

- 38.16 The Mayor invited Nigel Furness to come forward and address the council.
- 38.17 Nigel Furness asked a question; “In view of the alarming increase in incidents of severe, weather-related flooding across our City in recent years, Councillor Sankey, including this one, can you enlighten us please, are you of the same persuasion as your ‘Green’ predecessors in that the blame for such disasters lies solely at the door of Climate Change?”
- 38.18 Councillor Rowkins replied; “Whilst climate change has obviously meant that we now see more regular extreme weather events that can cause flooding, that is clearly not the only factor. All around the city, natural permeable surfaces have been built on paved or tarmacked over. We have a drainage system that was not built to cope with the kinds of weather patterns that we now see and becomes overwhelmed more frequently. We are also losing urban trees to elm disease faster than we can replace them, further compounding the problem. We are working closely with the flood risk team to increase resilience and minimise the risk. We’re developing plans for sustainable drainage systems at strategic locations as well as insisting on them as part of the planning process where practicable”.
- 38.19 Nigel Furness asked the following supplementary question; “As mother nature goes about her orderly business, so should Brighton and Hove City Council, and I would like to ask the councillor this business about a modern drainage system. Would you agree with me, we have a perfectly adequate drainage system which I used to work in over 50 years ago, we used to have a thing very popular in this city called gully suckers which would clean out road drains. Currently I can identify drains that have been for over 10 years in the centre of this city have been blocked solid, perhaps the guerilla gardeners should come back and start growing root veg in them as you’re taking over all the allotments for development.”
- 38.20 Councillor Rowkins replied; “I’m not exactly sure what the follow-up question there was, but I’ll take that away for sure. The point is that the perfectly good drainage system that you refer to now gets regularly overwhelmed and things have been put in to cater for events that used to be described as one in 10 year events or one in 100 year events and those are now happening far more regularly so there is a need to, and I take your point about maintaining what we’ve got, but there is a need to modernise and bring the system up to date to face the kinds of weather events that we now see.”
- 38.21 The Mayor thanked Nigel Furness for his question and invited Michael J. Adams to come forward and address the council.
- 38.22 Michael J Adams asked a question; “The council’s continuous tiered fee increases since 2018 on CO2 emissions based residents and traders permits are unfair, I now face an exorbitant year on year 75% surcharge for parking even though my vehicle emits no CO2 when parked with the engine off. The absence of any data from the council since 2018 supporting your claim that parked vehicles should be charged for CO2 emissions raises questions about the legality and fairness of these charges. Councillor Davis says the permit charge is for driving to and from a parking location, yet the councils transport

committee confirmed there is no CO2 ULEZ scheme in Brighton and Hove that charges residents and traders for driving. I urgently request a clearer explanation of how these CO2 charges and fee increases can be fairly and lawfully justified when applied to parked vehicles that produce no CO2 emissions with the engine off. This is imperative due to the substantial financial burden these unfair and misleading permit charges place on residents and traders.”

38.23 Councillor Muten replied; “Each vehicle that parks on a street uses space which could be used for some other vehicle or some other person using that space, so there is a limited space on the public highway for parking vehicles, so it’s not as simple as whether a car is moved or not, it’s whether or not that space can be used by somebody else and there is a limit to how many parking spaces and bays there are on an individual street or parking zone. In terms of your substantive question about the association with parking and carbon dioxide for static vehicles, I’m more than happy for somebody from the council to write to you to answer that in detail.”

38.34 The Mayor thanked Michael J Adams for his question and invited Heidi Stone to come forward and address the council.

38.35 Heidi Stone asked a question; “Does the council have plans to update the 2019 - 2030 Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which is based on statistics dating from 2011-2018?”

38.36 Councillor De Oliveira replied; “The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy was prepared by the Council and NHS Sussex in partnership with the Voluntary and Community Sector as a 10- year strategy running through to 2030. Whilst neither the Council nor its partners intend to update the Health and Wellbeing Strategy at the present, it is important to note both;  
Key priorities within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy are included in more recent plans and strategies including the Integrated Care Board strategy ‘Improving Lives’ and the Brighton and Hove Health and Care Partnership Shared Delivery Plan;  
Second, whilst the strategy is based on statistics from 2011-18 we have introduced a standing item at the Health and Wellbeing Board which reviews the latest data with agreed outcomes of the Health & Wellbeing measures. This will ensure that the Health and Wellbeing [Board] considers the latest data and strategy actions in place on a regular basis.”

38.37 Heidi Stone asked the following supplementary question; “There’s an additional key part of the strategy that’s been omitted that I’d just like to ask a question about, I’ll just give you a little bit of context to enable you to answer it better. The key aspect that’s been omitted actually is the way in which services are provided, autonomy is a prerequisite for psychological wellbeing but we’re seeing a surge in the negative impacts due to increased digital use. There’s increased rates of digital anxiety, burnout, addiction and depression correlated to the mounting pressures to self serve with either no alternatives provided, promoted or they’re made difficult by highly criticised nudge techniques. We also hear that when alternatives, specifically by the council, have been provided, specifically the paypoint, they’re so poorly designed they increase anxiety, stress and fear, all of which have been proven through psychoneuroimmunology to shut down peoples immune systems and increase their susceptibility to viruses and more serious health issues which seems in complete contrast to the outcomes that you’d really want with your health and wellbeing strategy. This demonstrates that the council has not been

able to review this and integrate it as part of their approach. The public sector equalities duty clearly lays out the obligations of service provision for example to be proactive that the citizens who use the services should be treated with dignity and respect and have their human rights protected, so whether it's a failing of the Equalities Act or the Human Rights Act regarding the service provision, I hope this demonstrates the direct link between service provision and our health and wellbeing. My question is, what steps is the council committed to taking in order to ensure that the design and delivery of its services are conducive to our health and wellbeing as citizens?"

- 38.38 Councillor De Oliveira replied; "I think I answered that question when I made sure that we reviewed on an ongoing basis, so we meet pretty much every week to review the data and act accordingly. So I think the answer is pretty much that we do use data that was from 2011-2018, however, it's ongoing and we're reviewing the data."
- 38.39 The Mayor thanked Heidi Stone for her question and invited Carol Wilson to come forward and address the council.
- 38.40 Carol Wilson asked a question; "My submitted question is, how does the council and its councillors check itself against the Brighton and Hove council's constitution?"
- 38.41 Councillor Sankey replied; "The Council reviews the effectiveness of its constitution regularly. On average, we have a review of the constitution every 6 months, if not more often. Members are free to propose changes, either through Group Leaders, Notices of Motion, or Member Letters.  
We do not have quantitative performance indicators, but we review the effectiveness of the arrangements, including the effectiveness of the public and member engagement items. We also look at good practice from other local authorities and incorporate it where appropriate.  
The constitution is a living document, and it is constantly developed to reflect the needs of Members, the public and the need to ensure the proceedings of the Council are conducted in an effective and efficient manner."
- 38.42 Carol Wilson asked the following supplementary question; "Against the context of the statements within the code of conduct for councillors and the seven Nolan Principles of public office, what should residents do if reasonable questions which have already been asked to councillors are not answered verbally or written? We are seemingly being ignored and does this constitute breach of the codes and the principles? And just to link Councillor Sankey's statement about 10 minutes ago where she has specifically put on public record 'No question will be left unanswered', but I'm afraid, dismally, there are a huge amount of outstanding questions that are not being answered so I have written to Democratic Services to find out what the process is for this, and I'm not impressed with what I've received back. We follow the channels that are open to us as concerned residents and we are not getting the response and also, just going to the answer to the answer to the question now about engagement, the engagement doesn't exist at the moment, and I raise serious concerns."
- 38.43 Councillor Sankey replied; "Over the last municipal year, the council has dealt with some 58 public question, 34 notices of motion, 14 deputations, and 15 petitions at full council; this is much higher than most local authorities and was definitely higher than the questions, petitions, and deputations received by Bristol, Camden, East Sussex, West



Sussex, Portsmouth, Southampton, and West Sussex and I am so proud of what a thriving democracy we have here in Brighton and Hove. We're committed to keeping this level of public participation and you'll see that we've got an item later on the agenda that proposes some changes to enhance public participation. The council's constitution has very clear rules and processes on what questions, petitions, and deputations are allowed. This is available for any member of the public to see on the council's website, and the mayor applies these rules objectively, impartially, and having regard to the council's desire to promote public engagement. The mayor is advised by the monitoring officer and the chief executive as necessary in the interpretation of the rules. I cannot comment on each and every case, and I don't have the information that you're referring to, but I can assure you that the council treats every question, petition, or deputation with respect and they are rejected if, and only if, they do not comply with the rules and the mayor, committee chair, or the chief executive have taken legal advice that considers that it would not be appropriate to allow them to be presented."

38.44 Pete Ranson asked a question but was not present at the meeting; "Beryl bikes removed their 'Minute Bundle' offering in August, an offer available in other UK regions. We feel they are failing to adequately deliver the scheme to the community, especially to infrequent users. By removing the 'minute bundle' option, Beryl appears to be profiteering from our tourist credentials, to the detriment of the community, denying us an economically viable option. Can the council apply pressure to Beryl to re-introduce the "Minute Bundle" option, therefore reintroducing the scheme's sustainability whilst broadening its appeal to the community who live here and not just the tourist?"

38.45 Councillor Muten replied; "Thank you, Mr Ranson, for your question. Lower prices and minimal rises were possible during the old scheme in a period of historically low inflation. This was a subsidised phase of the service using grant funding secured from the Local Enterprise Partnership in 2016. Our new scheme must operate under very different conditions.

Each Beryl scheme is priced according to the level of local subsidy it receives. It is not fair to suggest that Beryl is profiteering here. Active travel funding has been awarded to our City by the Department for Transport, and this has been allocated to other infrastructure schemes that improve cycling and walking journeys across the city. The city was not successful in securing other funding from the various Government grant funds we could use to support the scheme.

We are not eligible to bid for grants available to authorities that have elected mayors and with devolved transport authority powers. These are used to subsidise schemes such as London's Santander Bikes and Greater Manchester's Bee Bike scheme. We cannot ignore the current financial climate either. According to the Office for National statistics, Retail Price index inflation was running at 11.6% in the 12 months to December 2022 alone and is still well above 6% today.

A full business case shows the scheme can generate enough surplus revenue to allow us to service the borrowing which was necessary to purchase the new fleet. The scheme must remain financially viable during a high inflation period and considerable pressure on Local Government finances. For these reasons the new offers will not be able to match those the old one, including the annual membership offer.

However, since the 18th of August, three separate minute bundle offers have been available. The 2-day minute bundle is aimed at the visitor market, while the 7-day and 30-day bundles offer businesses and residents further savings for frequent use. The average ride time is 23 minutes, but the 30-day bundle allows for up to 30 minutes per

ride. A 23-minute pedal bike ride costs 92p and the same ride on an e-bike ride costs £1-92. Beryl will shortly be announcing a limited annual membership deal for students in full time education, jobseekers in receipt of benefits and pensioners. There may be further such packages for specific user groups in due course, but the Council and Beryl are prioritising these lower income groups. We hope residents will understand the need for the scheme to minimise cost to the council taxpayer in the current climate. The new scheme is delivering benefits such as cutting carbon emissions and air pollution. It offers improved health and wellbeing outcomes as well as some savings on bike ownership. We hope this will persuade residents to pay a bit more for the service. We will continue to look for grant funding opportunities to extend savings to scheme users and will ensure low-income groups are prioritised.”

### **39 DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.**

- 39.1 The Mayor reported that one deputation had been received from members of the public and invited Peter Moore as the spokesperson for the deputation to come forward and address the council. The deputation related to the residents of Upper Abbey Road demanding reinstatement of the protective barrier at the junction of UAR, Whitehawk Hill Road and the hospital South Service Road.
- 39.2 Councillor Muten replied; “As per the Council’s previous reply, the railings were removed to enable a crossing to be installed whilst development works are being carried out at Royal Sussex Hospital. It is understood that these railings were most likely installed in the late 1980s by East Sussex County Council prior to Brighton and Hove becoming a Unitary Authority. This in effect means that we do not hold digital records of why the railings were installed. However, these railings may have been installed after reports of vehicles driving over the footway. The railings were not suitable as a vehicle crash mitigation system and had become damaged beyond repair. The old railings are very unlikely to have prevented the vehicle involved in this incident from crashing into the wall. The council is reviewing the repair or replacement of all railings on a risk-based approach prioritised within existing budgets and is only replacing/repairing those that serve a clear safety purpose and are designed as such. The space available for a robust crash mitigation system at this location is very limited and would effectively mean there is insufficient access along this length of pavement. There have been more recent substantive improvements in this area including an improved pedestrian crossing with associated betterment of line markings and signage and introduction of a 20 MPH speed limit. The council undertakes a review of all streets on a 6-monthly to annual basis and an assessment of the Upper Abbey Road area will be considered within our Better Safer Streets Programme on the basis of priority, need and suitability of appropriate mitigation measures.”
- 39.3 The Mayor thanked Peter Moore for attending the meeting and speaking on behalf of the deputation. She explained that the points had been noted and the deputation would be referred to Transport and Sustainability Committee for consideration. The persons forming the deputation would be invited to attend the meeting and would be informed subsequently of any action to be taken or proposed in relation to the matter set out in the deputation.

### **40 NO TO ULEZ OR OTHER DISCRIMINATORY TRAFFIC SCHEMES IN BRIGHTON AND HOVE**

- 40.1 The Mayor stated that where a petition secured 1,250 or more signatures it could be debated at the council meeting. There were three petitions which had reached that threshold. The first was No to ULEZ or Other Discriminatory Traffic Schemes in Brighton and Hove and she invited Laura King to join the meeting and to present the petition.
- 40.2 Laura King thanked the Mayor and presented the petition.
- 40.3 Councillor Muten replied "May I firstly thank you, Laura King, for a remarkably successful petition. Be assured of your success. You have brought a petition that the electorate of Brighton and Hove overwhelming decided by ballot of 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023 to so do. Had you taken the time to compare, for instance the Green Party manifesto with the Labour Party manifesto, you may have seen that the former proposed a citywide ULEZ; which was not proposed within the Labour Party manifesto. Without wishing to suggest it may have bypassed your attention, the electorate made a decision to remove the Green Party administration reduced from 20 Green councillors to a mere 7; whilst choosing to increase from 16 to establish the overwhelming supermajority of 38 Labour Party councillors with Labour representation in 18 out of 23 wards in our city. Were you to be observant, you may have notice that the Labour Party opposed the proposed Hanover and Turner Low Traffic Neighbourhood in the February 2023 Budget Council, rediverting £1M to save public toilets across our city that the Green Party had decided to close. The unpopularity of the proposed Hanover and Turner LTN was perhaps one reason why the local community elected 3 new Labour councillors in the Green Party's second safest seat in the city. However, we do have a functioning ULEZ in our city that has been in place since 2015. This successful ULEZ does discriminate against drivers for driving in legally owned vehicles which have passed their emissions tests as unless drivers drive a compliant bus or taxi, they will be charged as they drive through our ULEZ along Western Road and North Street between Montpellier Road and Castle Square. We have no plans to remove this and, in this context, your petition is very unlikely to succeed in removing our existing ULEZ and thereby undermining our successful buses that service all our communities including those who can least afford alternatives. However, we do have an air quality challenge in many parts of our city. Although good progress in air quality since 2015 with some 60% improvement in North Street for example, the past 3 years have seen deterioration in air quality in some of the most polluted areas of our city. Much of our air quality monitoring data commenced from January 2020 when Labour was last in administration. However, although data was collected, there was a lack of strategic direction and political leadership over the past 3 years as we came out of lockdown both from the Green-led administration in our city seemingly taking an arbitrary, rather than evidence-based policy approach to air quality; and from a Tory government without a plan despite sound evidence to tackle the health risks associated with air quality. Opportunities were definitely missed. Air quality data was collected, with no clear strategic policy or plan to implement. It is no wonder that we are not where we should be as a city. Lip service has not been the answer; nor has abandonment of air quality policy leadership. Labour is committed to working up a realistic strategy for improving air quality through a targeted, data led approach, listening to communities and working in partnership to deliver for each of our 6 Air Quality Management Areas. One size does not fit all. We know residents across Brighton and Hove from Portslade to Rottingdean deserve a much better policy on air quality than before. Labour has the political will to deliver what works best for each area. We will be data and science led to

find the most effective way to protect human health, improve air quality and establish a low carbon transport system fit for the 2030s.”

- 40.4 Councillor Davis and Bagaeen spoke on the petition.
- 40.5 The Mayor thanked Laura King for presenting the petition and put the recommendations to the vote.
- 40.6 **RESOLVED:**
- 40.7 That the petition was noted and referred to the Transport & Sustainability Committee for consideration.

#### **41 MAKE SCHOOL BUS TRAVEL FOR KIDS FREE IN BRIGHTON**

- 41.1 The Mayor stated that where a petition secured 1,250 or more signatures it could be debated at the council meeting. There were two petitions which had reached that threshold. The second was Make School Bus Travel for Kids Free in Brighton and she invited Mark Juba on behalf of Tina Philips to join the meeting and to present the petition.
- 41.2 Mark Juba thanked the mayor and stated that the petition had been signed by over 1200 people. The petition stated to propose looking at ways to make the school travel free for all children, following example of London where all bus travel for under 16s is free of charge.
- 41.3 Councillor Muten replied “Thank you for coming to the committee today with your petition. Broadly, we actually do agree on much of this, but we do need to look at how we fund it. Our principles are very much aligned with this in principle but again, I'll give you some background on where we are at with this and our constraints as well. I recognise the burden of travelling costs for parents and carers in the city. The aspiration of this administration is to be on a course towards more affordable fares for children and young people. However, the Council does not operate bus services as bus services are not regulated so 97% of them are provided commercially. It also does not have the legal power to set bus fares or routes. The Council were recently awarded £28m over three years to support its Bus Service Improvement Plan for measures to get people back on buses following the pandemic. It is working in partnership with all the local bus operators on agreed priorities such as new and extended bus lanes and bus priority at junctions Also included are measures to provide simpler and lower fares with priorities identified as follows, Free bus travel for accompanied children and young people. A 50p fare for unaccompanied children off peak. Although it is true that it costs £40 for children who have Bus ID and are travelling alone to school and paying monthly for SAVER tickets, 90 Day and 12-month SAVER tickets offer further savings; these concessions are proving very successful. For instance, Brighton and Hove Buses report that half a million accompanied children have travelled for free since the start of 2023; and half a million £5 day fare caps since May. In addition, The Wave Community Bank offers members 10% off the cost of the £410 12-month ticket – and can provide a low-interest loan to the parent or carer to spread the cost: As part of the BSIP (Bus Service Improvement Plan) bid the Council did request £30m funding for free school travel for three years but the Department for Transport did not approve this since the BSIP

objective was focused on increasing bus ridership rather than cost of living mitigations and there were also concerns about what will happen at the end of the funding period where the government support is withdrawn. Even were the DfT to fund such measures, the impact on future Council budgets of sustaining them when the government support is withdrawn also needs to be considered. A scheme such as free fares for all young people would not be commercially viable and would therefore require a substantial annual subsidy from the Council were it to continue. It has previously been estimated that this would cost at least £6 million per year, although this would be subject to further modelling and the costs of extra buses to service the additional demand. Although the recently announced extension to the £2 fare is very welcome, the lack of longer-term commitment by central government to bus service improvement funding risks a cliff-edge for our service. The sooner we have a general election and a government prepared to commit to a longer term plan the better for all bus passengers in our city. Thank you for coming today.

41.4 Councillor Davis moved an amendment on behalf of the Green Group which was formally seconded by Councillor Hill.

41.5 Councillor Hogan spoke on the matter.

41.6 The Mayor congratulated Councillor Hogan on her maiden speech.

41.7 Councillor Muten responded to the debate and did not accept the Green Group amendment.

41.9 **RESOLVED:**

41.10 That the petition was noted and referred to the Transport & Sustainability Committee for consideration.

## **42 CALL OVER FOR REPORTS OF COMMITTEES.**

### **(a) Callover**

The following items on the agenda were reserved for discussion:

Item 45 CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

### **(b) Receipt and/or Approval of Reports**

The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that Item 45 had been reserved for discussion.

### **(c) Oral Questions from Members**

The Mayor noted that there were 9 oral questions.

## **43 WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS.**

43.1 The Mayor noted that written questions from Members and the replies from the appropriate Councillor were taken as read by reference to the list included in the addendum which had been circulated prior to the meeting as detailed below:

**1. Councillor McNair**

**Tennis Courts**

It has been good to see some tennis courts renovated by Lawn Tennis Association and the UK Government. We understand the importance of a centralised booking system to help with collecting fees to maintain the courts. But with the new pricing structure, it could cost £15.40 for a parent and their child to play tennis for an hour. If it's before 5 on a weekday it would cost £12.70. This is very expensive, and unlikely to help enable children to become future tennis players. Will the council consider providing free slots for juniors across the city, for example Monday to Friday 3- 4.30pm and Saturday-Sunday 9-10.30 and 1-2.30, and during school holidays: 9am to 11am and 1-3pm?

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

Currently the council run courts are free before 10am so there are opportunities for free play early in the morning. The charges for tennis are set as part of the council fees and charges report and will be reviewed for April 24 when members will have the opportunity to input on what next year's charges should be.

**2. Councillor McNair**

**Flooding Scape project**

The Scape project in Carden Avenue has been working for a number of months. Some residents report less flooding; others report problems with the dangerous height of the grass on exiting their drives onto Carden Avenue. The amount of grass in the basins appears to stop water falling into the basins. Has there been a review of the Scape Project, and what improvements will be made?

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

The SCAPE project is a pilot and is under continual review. Early indications are that it has had a positive impact on flood risk in the area but, as with any pilot, you would expect some improvements to the design to become apparent.

We have found that the original inlets were not appropriate for maintenance activities and so they were redesigned. This included the addition of silt traps, which are easier to clear of detritus.

The planting was selected to provide a filtration system to remove heavy metals and other associated run off from the highway, and so is an integral part of the design. However, we have found maintenance issues with the cutting of the growth in the basins, and the cutting regime has been amended accordingly.

We will be returning to the design with improvements moving forward.

**3. Councillor Meadows**

**Peace Gardens**

The Peace Gardens have had benches damaged recently, graffiti and a fallen column. The paving is broken in many places. The paving around the edge of the sunken garden has been broken for years and is a trip hazard. Benches have not been replaced. This is a war memorial. When will improvements be made to the gardens to ensure they look well-kept.

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

Unfortunately, much of the park's infrastructure is in poor repair. The Council has set aside some money to address some of the worst of the dilapidation and I will ask officers to assess what can be done at the Peace Garden.

**4. Councillor Bagaeen**

**Housing**

The council gave on 4 October the developer of the Dairy site on the Droveaway in Westdene & Hove Park a get out clause from delivering what was then the only affordable homes being delivered in the ward. No Registered Provider could be found for these and the council did not want to take them on. What is the council doing to facilitate the delivery of affordable and social housing in our ward? And what is the council doing to support Registered Providers to enable them to take over the small number of properties coming through s106 obligations? After all, an obligation is not an obligation if this council will always allow developers to take the easy way out. This council should be on the side of residents, not developers.

**Reply from Councillor Williams, Chair of Housing & New Homes Committee**

The council is committed to increasing affordable housing across the city but does not set targets for specific wards. Hyde Housing have delivered The Goldstone Lane, Hove scheme which was in the Hove Park ward (prior to the boundary changes to the wards earlier this year) and delivered 26 units of affordable housing (8 rented and 18 shared ownership).

In addition a number of neighbouring wards in Goldsmid, Wish and Hangleton & Knoll have had affordable new build schemes coming through and the council has an active programme of 'buy backs' in these wards. The Hove Park & Westdene ward has 17 council owned dwellings of which 7 are leasehold so there will be limited opportunities to buy back homes in this ward.

In future the provision of affordable housing in this ward will be dependent on the number of new applications coming through and these will be assessed to determine the level of affordable housing that should be provided.

On new major planning applications the council engages with developers at an early opportunity to advise them to engage with Registered Providers. Whilst we have partnership arrangements with a number of larger Registered Providers who are developing within the city, we also encourage developers to approach smaller providers to widen the options available. If a small number of homes are available, this is often not viable for providers to take on due to management and viability issues. In these circumstances some Registered Providers are interested in buying more homes in order to make it viable and we have seen this successfully work on schemes such as Kings House, Grand Avenue and The Former Texaco Garage, The Kingsway. This option would depend upon developers being open to selling more homes to a Registered Provider and would form part of their negotiations.

If no Registered Provider can be identified a commuted sum is sought and these have been used to support the council's own affordable homes programme and this approach is supported by policies in the development plan.

**5. Councillor McNair**

**Carden Hill**

Carden Hill is a major artery, and bus route. When will it be resurfaced?

**Reply from Councillor Muten, Chair of Transport & Sustainability Committee**

Thank you Cllr McNair for your question.

The Council carries out annual condition surveys of the carriageway across the network. This data is then prioritised against a set of criteria to ensure that the limited funds available are used in the most needed locations. The most recent condition survey took place in May 2023. During this survey, Carden Hill was identified as a suitable site for machine lay patching; however it is currently 770 on the priority list of schemes to be completed. We are in the process of updating our forward works programme for the next two years based on this data. However, we inspect all roads within the City on a regular basis and should the condition of a road alter significantly then this will be reflected in the programme as necessary. Carden Hill is inspected every 6 months via walked inspection.

**6. Councillor Meadows**

**Brangwyn Estate**

The Brangwyn Estate has not been cleared of weeds. The lanterns at the entrance to Brangwyn Way are in a poor state. And the newly planted trees



planted to camouflage the 5G mast are all dead. When will the area be de-weeded? And when will the trees be replaced?

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

The lights at the entrance to the Brangwyn Estate are part of the Brighton and Hove street lighting inventory and were installed when the estate was built. They are unique and specific to this location. They are beyond repair and need to be replaced with new lanterns, and unfortunately that requires a specialist manufacturer and significant investment.

I am assured that the Brangwyn Estate has adequate street lighting to provide safe passage for motorists and pedestrians. The lights on the pillars are classed as decorative or amenity lighting, and currently there is no funding specifically available to replace them. Any opportunities for funding will be sought, but a date for replacement cannot be provided at this time. In the meantime, I have asked for options for some cosmetic work to improve them aesthetically.

Street Cleansing Operatives were at the Brangwyn Estate last week clearing weeds and work is also taking place this week to complete the job.

It is very sad that the tree whips have not survived. They will be removed and replaced this winter. The Arboriculture Team do not normally water whips, and the dry periods during recent summers have made it difficult for them to become established. The five additional standard Yew trees that were provided are alive and have been watered.

**7. Councillor Lyons**

**Beach huts**

On what basis does the council claim to be able to require beach hut owners to enter into a new licence? The licence on which they hold hut 96 dates from the 1980's and does not, it is believed, contain any right of the council to simply require a new form of licence to be entered into, nor a right to terminate the licence save in the event of a breach of its terms. If this is correct the council cannot demand that beach hut owners enter a new Licence. If this is considered incorrect, could we receive a copy of the Licence that governs the hut and refer to the relevant clauses?

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

If the proposed changes are agreed by the Council following the ongoing consultation period, the current licences will all be terminated in accordance with notice provisions set out within the original licence or, in some cases, subsequent renewal licences and new licences will be granted. From 1 April 2024, any beach huts without a new licence in place would be unlicensed huts and would need to be removed by the owner.

The Council has published a Q&A document answering some of the common questions raised during the initial stages of the consultation process. This document has been sent to the Secretary of the Hove Beach Huts Association to share with members at the forthcoming AGM and the consultation period has been extended to allow further consideration by members after that meeting. The new deadline for further responses to the seafront office is 9am on Monday 23 October 2023

## 8. Councillor Theobald

### Affordable housing units

Can the Council please advise me on the number and location of affordable housing units that the Council has provided since 2018 with section 106 commuted financial sums from developers who have been unable to provide on site affordable housing.

### Reply from Councillor Williams, Chair of Housing & New Homes Committee

Number of affordable housing units since 2018 are detailed, along with section 106 commuted financial sums. We are happy to provide further details in writing of the wards in which we have buybacks

	2018/19 £'000	2019/20 £'000	2020/21 £'000	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	Total
Commuted sums utilised	0	821	1,072	264	2,510	4,667
Number of units supported by commuted sums	0	34	16	4	67	121

**9. Councillor Theobald****Buildings with flammable cladding**

Councils have a duty to investigate suspected category 1 hazards under the Housing Act that may include all buildings with flammable cladding. The LGA is continuing to encourage its members to consider whether any private buildings might benefit from a Joint Inspection Team inspection. Has Brighton & Hove City Council inspected all such buildings in the City and if not, how many remain to be inspected and where are they located?

**Reply from Councillor Williams, Chair of Housing & New Homes Committee**

Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy council officers worked with Government (DLUHC) to review the exterior of high-rise private sector purpose built residential buildings in the city to support Government collation of information about potentially unsafe cladding.

The Council's current approach and response to any issues arising with high-rise private sector residential buildings reflects LGA advice arising from their 2022 publication 'Principles for effective regulation of fire safety in flats'.

In line with this LGA advice we have advised Government (DLUHC) officials of our approach, which is to take forward strategic level consultation with East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service (ESFRS) to make sure that we coordinate required actions and resources with regard to purpose built high rise residential blocks to meet our respective demands and responsibilities under the Housing Act / Building Safety Act (BHCC) and updated Fire Safety Regulations (ESFRS).

This is in order to ensure that we effectively target our resources and provide strategic direction enabling both BHCC and ESFRS services to build operational plans to deliver our respective duties and avoid duplication of effort.

Senior council officers regularly meet with Government (DLUHC) officials to discuss fire safety in private sector purpose built residential buildings, including updating on our engagement with ESFRS. We also share information that we may have on private sector blocks in Brighton & Hove may be brought to our attention by Government officials.

We have advised Government (DLUHC) officials that ESFRS operating under fire safety legislation have recently issued letters to various 'Responsible Persons' for all high rise residential blocks within their area asking for specific information on compliance with their fire safety duties and steps to achieve compliance with timescales.

Government officials have advised the Council on the availability of the Joint Inspection Team.

The Council will keep this option under review while also continuing to engage with the fire service on the outcome of their actions following to their recent letter, which may include ESFRS enforcement action.

**10. Councillor Goldsmith**

With falling Pupil Admission Numbers across the city, is it likely that the council will have to close schools, and what is the council doing to try and avoid this?

**Reply from Councillor Taylor / Helliwell, Joint Chairs of Children, Families & Schools**

It is a priority for this administration to address the very real impact on schools of the falling pupil numbers in the city. This is an urgent issue for our primary schools and will soon be affecting our secondary schools. We have been approaching this issue with care and attention and want to make sure all options are properly explored. However, we want to assure you that we will be taking early action on this point – and understand that this will have long term impacts beyond the term of this council. Any proposals to address this issue will be centered around the wider longer-term interests of children, young people, and families.

This issue has been kicked down the road for too long, and the city now needs Leadership from the council.

We've been meeting with Heads and Chairs of Governors at some individual settings to discuss specific proposals and have now met them as a group. Our initial proposals on addressing this issue will be set out in a report to our next Children, Families and Schools Committee early in November.

**11. Councillor Goldsmith**

What work is the council doing to assess the potential impact of the Department from Education's miscalculation on school funding?

**Reply from Councillor Taylor / Helliwell, Joint Chairs of Children, Families & Schools**

The updated position on Schools funding in 2024/25 after the DfE miscalculation was reported to Schools Forum on 9th October.

We know that the DfE funding error equates to a loss of funding to the Schools Block in Brighton and Hove of approximately £1.5m across all maintained mainstream schools and academies. In per pupil terms this is equivalent to approximately £50 per pupil.

**12. Councillor McLeay**

Theobald House is in serious need of repair and residents were assured that major capital investment works were to be undertaken within the 2022/23 financial year. Residents have since been updated that the planned works are

being pushed into the next financial year. Could the Chair of the Housing and New Homes Committee share an update as to the reason for this delay and when these residents can expect the works to begin?

**Reply from Councillor Williams, Chair of Housing & New Homes Committee**

The works are scheduled for commencement in April 2024. The delay has been caused by the requirement to engage structural engineers. This is to enable us to review and provide confirmation of the loadings on the concourse in relation to the scaffold. We have now engaged a specialist who will provide the required survey.

We will engage with residents as soon as we have the full details of the reports and are able to confirm works and timelines.

**13. Councillor Hill**

Has there been any change to the schedule of major works on Sylvan Hall? Hollybank and Rowan House blocks were scheduled for autumn repairs.

**Reply from Councillor Williams, Chair of Housing & New Homes Committee**

We are undertaking the works to Hollybank and Rowan House as part of our planned works programme this financial year and works start late October, this will entail the replacement of windows and external repairs and decorations. Elm Lodge / Maple House / The Willows are in the 2024/25 programme for planned works to undertake the replacement of windows and external repairs and decorations. For the remainder of Sylvan Hall Estate we are in the process of surveying the remaining blocks for a future major capital works programme.

**14. Councillor Hill**

Labour's 2024-2025 budget process has promised to take a 'more fundamental look at the council's cost base and the affordability of services and capital investments'. What does this more fundamental look mean in practice? For example, how does this affect our procurement processes?

**Reply from Councillor Taylor / Helliwell, Joint Chairs of Children, Families & Schools**

The cost of both in-house and externally commissioned services has risen significantly over the last two years due to inflationary pressures while demands across many services have been increasing significantly for many years, particularly across social care and homelessness. Government funding and restricted local tax increases have not kept pace with the cost of services. This council, in common with many others across the country, is now facing severe financial challenges and, as our in-year monitoring shows, is spending beyond its available resources.

We will therefore look at the current capital programme, particularly where borrowing is required, to explore where schemes could be curtailed or delayed to reduce capital financing costs. We have similarly asked all services to look at the cost of providing services and explore options to make further efficiencies and economies through redesigning service delivery, using technology and digital improvements, or reviewing the extent of non-statutory provision. This extends to procured goods and services where we are asking services to tighten up tender specifications to meet only minimum requirements unless there is a good financial case for specifying higher quality.

We are working through all of these issues as part of developing budget proposals for 2024/25 and will be bringing a full set of proposals to February Budget Council as normal. However, we are keen to engage our experienced and knowledgeable staff, unions and partners in helping to identify other ideas for saving money or delivering services differently and have recently launched a communication campaign and on-line forms to enable people to put forward their suggestions.

**15. Councillor Hill**

How does the council's recruitment freeze affect jobs that are necessary for the provision of statutory services?

**Reply from Councillor Sankey, Leader of the Council**

The management of recruitment controls has been devolved to each Service Directorate to ensure that impacts on services are properly understood and managed. Directorates are able to over-ride vacancy controls where recruitment is necessary to maintain critical and statutory services, for example, care home staffing levels. Even for non-statutory services or support service functions, controls can be over-ridden, for example, where a service already has a number of vacancies, and a further vacancy would severely impact delivery.

**16. Councillor Hill**

What is the amount of gas oil that has been used per annum to maintain the temperature in the Newhaven incinerator boiler plant and mobile plant for the past 5 years?

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

Combustion at the Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) in Newhaven is self-sustaining and uses waste as the sole fuel.

There are rare occasions on which diesel will be used to increase the temperature in the boiler to maintain it above 850 degrees C, and I have requested information on how often that happens in an average year and what quantities are involved.

**17. Councillor Hill**

British Glass have written to Brighton and Hove Council asking them to support the UK circular economy and decarbonisation efforts and sell the glass they collect for recycling to a company which processes the glass for remelt in the UK. Currently the glass is sold to the Days Group who export it and use it for aggregate. British Glass provided Brighton and Hove City Council with a list of UK companies who process glass in the UK. Do the council intend to continue selling to Days Group OR will they support the UK circular economy and keep the glass in the UK by selling to a different company, e.g. Beatson Clark, Enva, Glass Recycling UK, Recresco, Sibelco, URM Group.

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

We have been in touch with British Glass, who are keen to assist us in our efforts to increase recycling and reduce the amount of waste we produce. We want to do everything we can to move towards a circular economy and to reduce our carbon emissions.

It is the case that the glass collected in the city currently goes to Days and is exported to Belgium for remelt. The majority of the remelt capacity in the UK is in the north and transporting it to Belgium means substantially shorter journeys. The proximity of Brighton & Hove to mainland Europe means that exporting can sometimes be the more sustainable option.

Some of our glass has previously gone to Recresco, which is on the list suggested by British Glass.

We will of course continue to review options and assess where we send materials for recycling and are committed to recycling material in the most responsible manner. I am happy to liaise with Veolia and assess the domestic options available.

**18. Councillor Pickett**

The critical environmental concerns around the dumping of raw sewage in our rivers and seas by water companies continues. Despite being continually fined for illegally discharging sewage into our waters, Southern Water continues to do so. Brighton & Hove residents pay to ensure water is effectively managed and considers Southern Water is not fulfilling its duty to update drainage systems to cope with rainfall that occurs more often, due to global warming. What is the council's plan to ensure that Southern Water fulfils the obligations of a water company to provide clean and safe water, and to remove sewage and road run off in a way that does not cause environmental damage?

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

We are all horrified by the dumping of sewage into the UK's seas and rivers. It has been a national scandal, and rightly so. I'm pleased that you mention surface water in your question, as this is discussed much more scarcely and yet happens far more often. Surface water run off contains hydrocarbons, plastics and other pollutants and this problem needs to be addressed.

As you will no doubt be aware, one of the first things our administration did was to agree with Southern Water that they would fund independent, year-round testing of our bathing waters, as well as reactive testing when a suspected outflow takes place.

BHCC is producing a Surface Water Management Plan, delivered through funding from Southern Water and the Environment Agency. We are also working with Southern Water to inform a mapping exercise of the city to identify potential sites for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). This assessment will help to inform priority areas for targeting SuDS schemes across the city and will help minimise surface water outflows. The SuDS at Norton Road has been part funded by Southern Water, and we will continue to seek contributions from them for other projects.

In terms of the provision of clean and safe water, the council is working with Southern Water through [The Aquifer Partnership](#), looking at the health and management of the chalk aquifer to protect the city's drinking water.

On a national level, we will continue to push for tighter regulation of water companies to prevent outflows and bring about the required investment in infrastructure. Locally, we will continue to work with Southern Water to make interventions in the city that alleviate pressure on the drainage and sewer systems and will seek funding from them at every opportunity.

**19. Councillor Pickett**

With regard to Enterprise Point, Melbourne Street, the current property guardians have been told that despite the owners being refused planning permission, they intend to demolish the building and evict the huge number of guardians within 30 days. What actions is the council taking to support residents and can we be advised what steps can be taken to ask the property owners to delay the timeframe for this eviction? Has the council made any direct representations to Kosy Homes?

**Reply from Councillor Williams, Chair of Housing & New Homes Committee**

People employed by live-in guardian companies will tend to have their accommodation provided as part of a commercial contract. Guardians are not usually tenants within that contract are usually provisions to provide access to alternative accommodation when the contract expires. These are private organisations, and Enterprise Point is privately owned, however we could request a delay.



The council has already engaged with the occupants living at Enterprise Point, providing advice about housing options. Should any of the occupants believe there is still a risk of homelessness upon the expiration of the contract, individuals can approach the council. Although alternative accommodation is unlikely to be offered, we will agree a 'Personalised Housing Plan' setting out the 'reasonable steps' both they and the council will undertake. If these 'reasonable steps' are engaged, it will reduce the risk of homelessness.

**20. Councillor Earthey**

Some Labour councillors have claimed that BHCC has disengaged from ESCC's A259 Corridor Study to the extent that major congestion points to the east of the city have been under-represented and poorly evidenced in the analysis conducted to date, including the Rottingdean traffic lights. What steps is BHCC taking to re-engage with the Study to ensure that there is a fully co-ordinated approach with ESCC to identify A259 improvements, and to ensure that important funding opportunities to improve our critical pinch-points are not missed?

**Reply from Councillor Muten, Chair of Transport & Sustainability Committee**

Thank you for your question Councillor Earthey. I am not sure of the source of the comments on the council's involvement in this study, which is being led by East Sussex County Council. However, I can confirm that representatives of our council have been invited to, and do participated in, a number of workshops that have been arranged to engage a range of stakeholders and seek their input at this early stage. I attended the most recent workshop in July and was the only member present from our city's Labour Group and can provide strong assurance that we are very engaged with the A259 Corridor Study.

The work that is currently being carried out involves the development of an initial, high level Strategic Outline Business Case, to put forward as strong a case as possible for further funding from central Government. As the business case moves through various stages, there will be continued opportunities for discussion and debate as the process continues. I am sure that this will provide the opportunity to further explore measures that are consistent with the study objectives, including those that were raised by stakeholders when various options were being discussed. These would be developed by officers and evaluated and appraised as part of the next business case stage for consideration for inclusion in the final A259 Corridor Package.

The city council would be responsible for the development and delivery of any specific measures within its boundary and this would involve appropriate levels of local consultation and engagement, so that we can hear everybody's views. Where necessary, the process would also involve continued, close working with colleagues within the county and district councils.

The city council has looked at locations within the study area on a number of occasions, and the study team is aware of this work. Some have been identified in the Bus Network Review document, and others are in our Bus Service

Improvement Plan which identifies key locations where public transport infrastructure is needed to improve journey times and reliability. Locations were identified on the basis that they met the Department for Transport's funding criteria at the time. We also have our Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan. This is the strategic plan to develop and deliver high quality infrastructure which makes active travel accessible, easy, welcoming, enjoyable and safe. It includes priority networks and neighbourhoods, including those in the 'Deans area.

**21. Councillor Earthey**

What new locations have been identified for a park and ride?

**Reply from Councillor Muten, Chair of Transport & Sustainability Committee**

Thank you for asking this question, Councillor Earthey.

Labour has long called for a park and ride scheme in the city; it was in our manifesto at the local elections this year and was one of the recommendations made by the Climate Assembly in 2020. So it is definitely something we would like to see happen. Officers have been exploring possible options and I am expecting a briefing on the outcomes to discuss the conclusions and possible next steps.

I therefore can't announce any specific potential locations at this time. Historically, potential sites have been limited without finding a clear suitable option and, more recently, there has not been political will to pursue potential options. We recognise that finding a suitable location is not without its challenges. The city sits between the sea and the South Downs, and has a lot of competing needs for the limited areas of land that could be used. There is also a need for complementary measures to make a service attractive and reliable. Nonetheless, I am encouraged that our City Plan has policies that could enable Park + Ride, and that the principle of it is also identified as part of the regional transport strategy and strategic infrastructure plan prepared by Transport for the South East. We now have the political will and with due diligence we are pursuing Park and Ride options as a matter of priority to help alleviate city centre congestion, to reduce carbon emissions, to improve air quality and in response to the climate emergency.

**22. Councillor Earthey**

Based on the engagement promises made by BHCC Labour Leadership at the recent launch of the Brighton Climate:Change Think Tank, what specific, practical steps is the Leadership taking to engage with local resident expertise to create novel designs for local carbon sinks, and insetting and offsetting schemes, which are so vital to the city's Carbon Neutral 2030 strategy?

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

You are quite right to highlight the importance of collaboration in achieving carbon neutrality, and I was very pleased to speak at the Climate: Change event, along with Transport & Sustainability chair, Cllr Trevor Muten and Leader of the Council, Cllr Bella Sankey.

I was shocked to discover after more than 3 years of a Green-led administration that there was no practical plan in place for achieving Carbon Neutrality across the city by our target date of 2030. Consequently, we are now playing catch up and urgently identifying the steps required. We intend to make use of expertise wherever we find it and would of course welcome your views.

To reach carbon neutrality as a whole city, we need to act as a whole city. We are in the process of assembling the key stakeholders, including our academic and research community, and again are shocked that this has not already been done.

In broad terms, we are reviewing the way we involve and consult with the public to enable a more meaningful, strategic and coordinated approach across council services.

#### 44 ORAL QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 44.1 The mayor noted that oral questions had been submitted and that 30 minutes was set aside for the duration of the item. She asked that both the questioner and responder endeavour to keep their questions and answers as short as possible, in order to enable the questions listed to be taken.

Question 1 Councillor Davis

Councillor Davis asked; The King's Council report makes a clear link between the toxic culture and a poor bin collection service. Openness and transparency around events is key to resolving these issues. Will the Leader of the Council agree to change the position of the Labour Group that previously rejected a call to publish the 2019 report into issues at the depot and now publish it, warts and all, along with the full minutes and webcast of the Policy & Resources Committee held in private session on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019?

Councillor Sankey replied; The interim report, which was obviously published last week, this report reveals a toxic workplace culture in our cityclean depot where racism, sexism, homophobia, bullying, and intimidation have become routine. I want to put on record in the chamber this evening my profound apology on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council to all staff who have been affected past and present, directly and indirectly by this inexcusable workplace culture. I also want to apologise to the residents of Brighton and Hove for the way in which this disfunction has affected service delivery over very many years. As was made clear in the interim report, there are several disciplinary cases being commenced and we will be publishing the final reports and recommendations as soon as the maximalisation process allows. To Cllr Davis' question, I think it's very important to note that, while the question implies that the Green Party were trying to make public the 2019 report that he refers to, when they assumed office in 2020, no effort was made to publish that report though it would have been

perfectly open to them to make necessary redactions to confidential information and to publish the report. I find it quite strange and odd that they're now seeking to politicise this issue with this request and I don't really understand why it wasn't something that they did when they had the ability to do so. I also want to highlight a number of initiatives that are already underway to try and improve the reliability of our rubbish and recycling service: over the last few months we have purchased four new electric vehicles which are now in service, we have ordered four new side-lifting vehicles for the collection of communal refuse with the first vehicle being due for delivery by the first week of December, we've ordered a new top-loader vehicle for the collection of communal glass due for delivery before the end of December, we've hired four additional RCV's and seven more are on order, we've purchased a small-twin pack to support collections from locations that are difficult to access, work is already being undertaken to address missed collections through improved performance management which has already led to a reduction in missed collections in September and an afternoon crew has been recruited with the ability to use a range of vehicles available in the afternoon so that if collections have been missed due to vehicle availability this crew can step in with service improvement plans for specific rounds or locations where there are ongoing issues with missed collections. As the KC report highlights, there are many challenges at cityclean that have been there for decades, and it will take time to address. There is progress which has been encouraging, but there is so much more to do. We are committed to supporting the service to achieve long lasting and sustainable improvements and turn around the culture at this department.

Councillor Davis asked a supplementary question; I think, given the interim report reference to the detrimental impacts of the involvement of elected members in HR matters particularly in 2019, can the Leader of the Council reassure the public there is no current conflict of interest and commit to an independent route and branch review of how they manage industrial relations locally?

Councillor Sankey replied; I don't think I will give a substantive answer to that because I think much of that answer is contained in the final report which will be published in the coming weeks.

Question 2 Councillor McNair

Councillor McNair asked a question; Birchgrove Crescent has some of the most vulnerable residents in my ward of Patcham & Hollingbury. My ward colleagues and I are contacted more about missed rubbish collections in this area than any other – the lack of collections leads to huge amounts of litter which takes weeks to clear. Residents deserve better. When will rubbish collections take place on a consistently weekly basis?

Councillor Rowkins replied; I know that area is very narrow and that there's been some access issues which I'm aware of. I have written to managers about whether or not that can be moved on to, Councillor Sankey mentioned earlier we've got some small twin-pack vehicles which are much more manoeuvrable. As far as I'm aware that round isn't on the small calls round at the moment, but I'm looking into whether it is and if it is what more can be done and if it's not whether or not it should be, because clearly missed collections will lead to more litter around. I am awaiting some further information on that and I will come back to you on that in due course.

Councillor McNair asked a supplementary question; Birchgrove Crescent in the small road that you're aware of has only had one glass collection this year, can we be reassured that this will happen regularly going forward?

Councillor Rowkins replied; I'm aware of some issues with the glass collections. As I understand it, the situation there is that in the central part of that narrow street there are two 360 litre glass bins and, again, the vehicle access is difficult to get to those and empty them properly. I believe that the plan at the moment is that those are going to be taken out and there's two 1100 litre glass bins, one at either end, which would mean that no matter what the access issues are on that street they would be accessible. I believe that's the plan, if there are any concerns about accessibility for people within the central part of that street, we can look at assisted collections or any other forms of assistance. I'm more than happy to liaise with you as I know more.

Question 3 Councillor Fishleigh

Councillor Fishleigh asked a question; How much money does the Council save on diesel and people power by reducing its verge cutting programme this year, and can this please be diverted to unblocking drains that are now congested with really long grass cuttings?

Councillor Rowkins replied; I take it that you're inferring that we've cut fewer verges in order to deliberately save money on diesel? That's not the case. The issue of verges being cut, that's a pretty straightforward problem it's really just a matter of resources – parks has been disproportionately cut year on year and we see the effect of that. The service has also been carrying quite a lot of staff absence early in year and there's quite a few places that have missed at least one of their cuts. I'm waiting for a further update, but there has been quite a lot of progress in getting those up to date. In terms of unblocking drains, I don't see that there's any link between the grass cutting regime and drains being blocked or unblocked. If there are specific areas or roads where there are problems with the drains then obviously we need to look at that, I would say that at this time of year the highways team do focus on clearing the drains in high flood risk areas as a priority so it could be that they just haven't got to it yet. Again, if there are specific roads, I'm happy to look into that.

Councillor Fishleigh asked a supplementary question; Yes, this isn't any kind of dig. There are people who manage the grass verge cutting teams, they know how much diesel they saved, they've told me, they know how much money they've saved in people power and I'm simply asking if this money can be diverted to solve another problem.

Councillor Rowkins replied; I take the point but if the Council has saved money on use of diesel because of things like staff absence and not being able to get around the full range of the mowing regime, that doesn't mean that you can plan with such precision that you can hire more people to go and unblock the drains. I think that's an oversimplification, but I do take your point that there are obviously some drains in the area that need looking at.

Question 4 Councillor Hill

Councillor Hill asked a question; I'd like to ask something that's personally relevant to myself regarding the standards of public office in relation to tweets shared by Councillor Thomson prior to her election which I feel disappointed by the Labour Group's response

to. Does the Council agree that comments which compare a minority group to dogs is dehumanising that group and that in dehumanising that group it makes it easier for people to view them as sub-human, which in turn, as seen recently in a report by the Home Office, is directly linked to an increase in hate crimes towards that group?

Councillor Sankey replied; I apologise for the hurt and distress that the retweets by Councillor Thomson has caused to you and to members of the trans community. You raised standards in public life and so I think it makes sense to refer to the precious Nolan Principles, which include selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership. Those principles, while in increasingly short supply in our national government, are principles that I pledge we will stick to rigorously as your Labour administration. I joined the Labour Party because it is the party of equality, the vast majority of legislative reforms to advance equality in this country come from the Labour Party. From the Race Relations Act to the Equal Pay Act, the last Labour government broke new ground when it passed the Gender Recognition Act in 2004 and the Equalities Act in 2010. Labour's Gender Recognition Act enabled trans people to legally change their gender for the first time, and our Equalities Act protected those who have undergone gender reassignments and discrimination and harassment. We in the Labour Group are proud that it was the Labour Party to bring in these changes. Now we're in 2023 we have a much better understanding of the barriers that trans people face, and this is why Labour is committed to modernising the Gender Recognition Act when in government, this will modernise, simplify, and reform gender recognition law. In relation to Councillor Thomsons tweets, I'll say this: We all make mistakes. In my view there has been some toxic public discourse on this subject which has had the effect of driving people to the extremes and has undermined the culture of respect and dignity that we must hold on to when discussing fundamental rights and perceived tensions. I believe that Councillor Thomson is genuinely remorseful and committed to learning a better understanding the lived experience of trans people. I believe in second chances. I believe in discussion, sharing perspectives, and education leading to a better mutual understand and respect between people, and I believe that we will reach a better place as a society on this issue to increase respectful dialogue rather than cancelling and throwing people away.

Councillor Hill asked a supplementary question; I don't believe in cancelling and throwing people away, but I think there's a difference when you're in public office, there's a different standard that you should be held to under the Nolan Principles, it's about respect and leadership and that's not been achieved here, I believe. I do agree we all make mistakes, but whether or not you have the ability to continue to learn from those mistakes whilst in public office I think is different, particularly considering the extremity of comparing people to dogs. Do you agree that, whilst she has apologised, that it's inappropriate that she remains a part of the Labour Group and do you understand why so many people such as myself feel that her rights as a Councillor, let alone part of the administration of this Council, goes far beyond the standards of public office that her comments should normally be treated with in terms of how harmful they are?

Councillor Sankey replied; In response to the publicity around Councillor Thomson's retweets she said: "I apologise unreservedly for retweeting these posts which contained anti trans sentiment. I'm deeply sorry for the offence caused to the transgender community and to others, I have removed them. I have agreed to undergo training so

that I can better understand the lived experiences of transgender people and to help me become a good trans ally.”

As I've said already publicly, we've removed Councillor Thomson's lead role while an investigation was conducted and she will be undertaking training as I've previously set out. Once this training is completed, we will be ensuring that Councillor Thomson demonstrates her commitment to trans equality, and if that is achieved then no, I don't think she should be dismissed from the Labour Group.

#### Question 5 Councillor Bagaeen

Councillor Bagaeen asked a question; We heard from a resident earlier about the cost of bus travel in the city, the resident called for renegotiated contracts with bus companies operating in the city and there was a little murmur in the background that said 'we don't do that'. Councillor Muten confirmed he agreed with the principals laid out by the residents, so the question is: If there is a cliff edge for a bus service in the city, as noted earlier this evening, would the Council consider taking in-house a bus service following the example of Labour run Liverpool and Greater Manchester?

Councillor Muten replied; Thank you, Councillor Bagaeen, for a very interesting question. I think that's one of the questions we may have to take away from this meeting rather than give a policy statement on the hoof, but we do want to see bus service improvements and that's why we are fully committed to the bus service improvement plan which, as I indicated previously, we just applied for the transit funding and have been successful and so we're able to implement the next phase of the bus service improvement plan. So we do recognise ways to improve our service and we do particularly want to focus on making sure our school children to get affordable bus services to our schools, and one thing we did put in our manifesto and we need to find a way to deliver if at all possible is free bus travel for school children under the age of 19 in full term education, and that's something we are aspiring to – we need to find a way to deliver that and it would be very good to have some central government fund commitment to consider that option. In terms of the future of the bus service, I'll decline to comment in detail on that at this point.

Councillor Bagaeen asked a supplementary question; Does Councillor Muten not believe that the Council controlling bus routes and bus fairs is better for our families and young people?

Councillor Muten replied; The Council subsidise certain routes and one thing we've had to do as we came out of lockdown as a Council is to make sure that bus services were viable we've essentially funded a subsidy for certain routes where a route is important and a community requires that and they may not be a profitable route, there is perhaps a case for funding or subsidy to the bus service. One thing we do in partnership with the bus companies that operate in our city, we would meet them regularly and we look to press them on improvements to their bus service across our city and we are committed to making sure that they are building a better service. One thing for example in that is that since the beginning of July, we've pressed Brighton & Hove Buses to improve their service particularly for the secondary school runs across the city to make sure every child can get to school, and in that process they've employed 89 drivers recruited in September and a further 26 drivers recruited in October meaning they've got 115 new drivers since the start of July and so we are pressing them to improve, we're asking further improvements to make which they've made commitments to. So while that

doesn't fully answer your question, we know we've got to work hard with them to get a better service.

#### Question 6 Councillor Earthey

Councillor Earthey asked a question; Given the increasingly cold outlook for this winter brought about by El Niño, repeated breaches of the polar vortex, and multiple reoccurrences of the 'beast from the east', what active practical steps is the Council taking to look after the welfare of vulnerable residents through the adequate provision of public warm spaces, help with home insulation, and other ways to keep warm?

Councillor Sankey replied; We're acutely aware that, now we're into the colder months, the Tory cost of living crisis means residents are struggling to heat their homes. We'll be updating our warm welcome directory as it provides a list of locations of a wide range of free indoor places and activities open to residents in the city. We will be providing accommodation also under the SWEP initiative triggered for 23/24 where it feels like 0 degrees or where there are amber weather warnings. Accommodation will be provided mainly on a private bedroom in shared facilities model with some small amount of provision for communal spaces depending on the demand we face on any particular night. On site security and food is provided as part of the SWEP offer, the Council's SWEP coordinator based with the street outreach service will be coordinating referrals for the accommodation with partner agencies and confirming placements. Ward members will be briefed prior to opening and full information about the service will be on the website. Rough sleepers brought into SWEP accommodation continue to work with street outreach and other services to achieve a move on where possible.

Councillor Earthey asked a supplementary question; In our ward, we are setting up a state of the art warning system using state of the art weather and other financial data used by the energy industry, so my question is: Given that many wards have access to weather and climate change expertise as at least as great if not greater than that available to the Council, will you, Councillor Sankey, reaffirm your recent commitment to the Brighton climate change thinktank that the Labour administration will engage with this local expertise?

Councillor Sankey replied; Thank you Councillor Earthey, that sounds like a very worthy initiative, and we'll be keen to hear much more about it.

#### Question 7 Councillor Goldsmith

Councillor Goldsmith asked a question; Just to be clear, I would rather not be using time in Full Council to speak about this, but as the administration has been so unresponsive to at least the local LGBT+ groups that I've spoken with, I do feel the need to ask this on their behalf. Can Councillor Sankey commit that the training which has been given to Councillor Thomson, and ideally to all members of this Council, will be provided by a local trans-led organisation as has been requested by these groups and, in light of what Councillor Hill asked earlier, can Councillor Sankey please explain exactly what training she feels would be necessary for a politician to know it's entirely wrong and dehumanising to compare minority groups to dogs?

Councillor Sankey replied; Our chief whip has been speaking to a number of providers of LGBT training and we'll be making the necessary arrangements, but we won't be taking any lessons from the Green Party on trans rights and equality. As I outlined to



Councillor Hill, the last Labour government broke new ground when it passed the Gender Recognition Act and the Equality Act. Since taking office, we have robustly defended trans rights publicly, as I demonstrated earlier on in this chamber and indeed at our last Full Council meeting in July and behind the scenes as we develop policy we will be judged on the outcomes we've delivered to trans people and I'm committed to increasing their visibility, safety, and life outcomes. I'd also like to take issue with misleading comments that Councillor Goldsmith made at the last Equalities Committee last week, implying that we are refusing to speak with trans groups in the city which is completely inaccurate, and we actually received an apology from the voluntary community sector today for those comments, and they didn't know how they'd come about. While we're on the subject of Councillor training, Madame Mayor, could I suggest that our Green Group colleagues undergo training on disability rights, their last administration left a disabled woman effectively housebound following a completely wrongful TRO amendment that they brought through and implemented in January, yet even when we consulted with residents and traders to put forward a sensible set of reforms, which would actually increase pedestrianisation at the times that suited traders but allow this vulnerable resident to enter and leave her home, rather than apologising to her or to our community of disabled people in the city, the Green Party doubled down, attacked us, and whipped up opposition to these plans. I really take issue with them now masquerading as a party that cares about equal dignity and worth. Far from it. Harming residents, not only through their words, but through their actions.

Councillor Goldsmith asked a supplementary question; I do feel like that was largely unrelated to my question, but thank you for the extra information, I suppose. You say that you will be judged on your outcomes; you've been protested by a large group of trans people today for your inaction on this, you are being judged on the outcomes of what you are doing and they're not making people happy. I've had trans residents in mine and Councillor Thomsons ward get in touch with me saying that they no longer feel safe or comfortable getting in contact their other Councillor. I don't see how you feel that's acceptable to them, so what will you actually be doing to listen to trans residents after you have undergone whatever training you say you're going to carry out to make sure that they actually feel reassured by the actions that you have taken. Right now, it's clearly not working.

Councillor Sankey replied; As Councillor Goldsmith knows, we're already setting up a roundtable with our trans community which is going to take place next month. We have been building our relationships with the trans community since we came into office, but I'd like to reiterate that I think Councillor Goldsmiths approach to this issue has been incredibly unhelpful, and I think it's actually been responsible for whipping up fear and mistrust and alarm, which serves absolutely nobody in this city.

Question 8 Councillor Hogan

Councillor Hogan asked a question; What is the plan to deal with decline in pupil numbers at schools across the city?

Councillor Helliwell replied; As you know, in Brighton & Hove we have seen a 22% decline in the birthrate as compared to 5% in the national, so we do have a roughly 20% excess places in primary schools and that will soon be feeding into secondary schools. Councillor Taylor and I have worked all summer on a plan, we have been visiting

schools and when we have our committee in November then we shall reveal our plan on how we plan to deal with those excess places.

Councillor Hogan asked a supplementary question; Are we going to have to close schools?

Councillor Helliwell replied; We are looking at all options and we have not made any firm decisions at the moment as everything that comes to committee will be a consultation.

Question 9 Councillor West

Councillor West asked a question; In the first few months of the Labour administration, Labour have chosen to pause, rethink, and rework a number of major projects; The A259 sea front cycle lanes, Madeira Terraces, Valley Gardens 3, and Kingsway to the Sea, this is despite the fact that, in the case of the A259 Cycle Lanes, the scheme had already passed through a number of committee decisions with Labour support and contracts had already been let. Contracts have now been cancelled, unprogrammed work for officers created and funding put at risk. What is the total cost of this hasty unnecessary meddling?

Councillor Sankey replied; The cost to our very sensible to plans to reevaluate and improve our active travel schemes in the city and our major projects is far less than the black whole that the Greens left in our budget last year.

Councillor West asked a supplementary question; I'm disappointed, Madame Mayor, that the Leader of the Council didn't answer the question straight and just decided to make another political attack. Given the scale of the budget pressures that you face now, how do you justify the additional expenditure that you have heaped on in the first few months of your administration?

Councillor Sankey replied; With respect, I think Councillor West might be confused; the Kingsway to the Sea project was paused while we could find savings in the project, so that project is now going to be delivered at a lesser price than the original price tag for it, so I'm not really sure where he's going with his question. There's no additional cost to all of the projects that we've decided to reevaluate and review, it just doesn't exist, it's a fantasy. To the more serious point, we are an administration that is absolutely committed and serious to regenerating this city in a way that our residents want to see. The fact that we voted for things in the last administration when there was no overall control doesn't mean that we thought projects that were being pursued were absolutely ideal, it was in an effort to reach compromise with the then Green administration, but now that we have overall control we of course are going to look at projects that have been initiated to make sure that they work for everybody in our city and I'm really pleased and proud that so as well as redesigning the A259 to make it a much higher quality active travel scheme rather than the dogs dinner that the Greens came up with, we're also going to be kickstarting our consultation on redevelopment and refurbishment of the King Alfred; we believe that the people of this city deserve and need a really high quality leisure centre, we're very committed to Madeira Terraces and we're going to be moving ahead with that at pace, and as I say, Kingsway to the Sea is now back on thanks to some brilliant work by officers to find the savings that we can while also delivering as much of that project as we can as well.

**45 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION**

- 45.1 Councillor Sankey introduced, and formally moved the report.
- 45.2 The Mayor noted that there was a joint amendment from the Green Group and the Conservative Group in relation to this report as set out in the addendum papers.
- 45.3 Councillor Shanks moved the joint amendment which was formally seconded by Councillor McNair.
- 45.4 Councillors West, Fishleigh, Burden, Meadows, Miller and Robins spoke on the matter.
- 45.5 The Mayor congratulated Councillor Miller on their maiden speech on behalf of the council.
- 45.6 Councillor Sankey confirmed that they would not accept the amendments.
- 45.7 The Mayor then put the amendment to the vote which was not carried.
- 45.8 The Mayor then put the recommendations as detailed in the report listed in the agenda to the vote which was carried.
- 45.9 **RESOLVED:**

That the council:

- (1) Approved the proposed changes set out in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the report and reflected in Appendices 1, 1A & 2 to come into effect immediately following their approval by Council, and
- (2) Authorised the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer to take all steps necessary or incidental for the implementation of the changes and authorises the Monitoring Officer to amend and re-publish the Council's constitutional documents to incorporate the changes.

**46 PRINTED PARKING VOUCHERS**

- 46.1 The Notice of Motion as listed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Earthey on behalf of the Brighton and Hove Independents Group and formally seconded by Councillor Fishleigh.
- 46.2 Councillors Muten, Davis, Theobald, Lyons and Sankey spoke on the matter.
- 46.3 The Mayor congratulated Councillor Lyons on their maiden speech on behalf of the council.
- 46.4 The Mayor then put the notice of motion to the vote which was not carried.

**47 NET ZERO**

- 47.1 The Notice of Motion as listed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Bagaeen on behalf of the Conservative Group and formally seconded by Councillor Meadows.
- 47.2 Councillors Muten, Pickett, Earthey, and Rowkins, spoke on the matter.
- 47.3 The Mayor congratulated Councillor Pickett on their maiden speech on behalf of the council.
- 47.4 The Mayor then put the notice of motion to the vote which was not carried.

#### **48 BETTER CUSTOMER SERVICE**

- 48.1 The Notice of Motion as listed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Theobald on behalf of the Conservative Group and formally seconded by Councillor Hogan.
- 48.2 The Mayor noted that there were two amendments from the Green Group and the Labour Group in relation to this motion as set out in the addendum papers.
- 48.3 Councillor Shanks moved the amendment on behalf of the Green Group which was formally seconded by Councillor Goldsmith.
- 48.4 Councillor Stevens moved the amendment on behalf of the Labour Group which was formally seconded by Councillor Robinson.
- 48.5 The Mayor congratulated Councillor Robinson on their maiden speech on behalf of the council.
- 48.6 The Mayor, then put the Labour amendment to the vote which was carried.
- 48.7 The Mayor then put the following motion to the vote which was carried:

“This Council:

- 1) Notes the public dissatisfaction and high volume of complaints Councillors receive from residents about basic council services from missed refuse and recycling to overgrown weeds; to graffiti and litter on our streets, beaches and in our parks; to the general maintenance, upkeep and cleanliness of our city;
- 2) Notes that in the 2022-23 Annual Customer Insights Report, the overall customer service satisfaction rate was 59%, compared to a national benchmark of 60%; that only 51% of customers found the service easy to access; that stage 1 complaints increased by 25% since 2021/22; that face-to-face service accounted for less than 5% of all contact; that contact with customers is was down 22% overall since 2018;
- 3) Notes that a 28% increase in the Brighton & Hove 65+ population is expected in 2030 – from 38,300 to 50,100
- 4) Notes that a new Customer Experience Strategy, which outlines the continuing work to improve customer service, including improving accessibility by establishing new access points in libraries and family hubs, will be presented to the Strategy, Finance & City Regeneration Committee in December;
- 5) Notes that a new mystery shopping exercise reveals current overall satisfaction with council services at 85%.

This council therefore resolves to:

- Continue to progress its ongoing radical modernisation and renewal programme of Customer Service & Housing Support provided to Brighton and Hove residents from Hove Town Hall and Brighton Town Hall and other access points across the wider city
- Publicise and promote any future changes to the provision widely;
- Continue to improve the digital offer, including an ongoing end-to-end review of council web pages, to make it easier for customers to access all services online, in order to free resources to provide more face-to-face or telephone contact for those who genuinely need it
- Continue to encourage residents and members to use the online Councillor Enquiry Case Management System which enables residents to contact members 24/7 and streamlines members' contact with relevant officers
- Request officers to review the operation of these arrangements in 6 months and bring a report outlining the outcome of the review to a future S,F&CR Committee meeting

#### **49 OPPOSE ACADEMISATION OF OUR SCHOOLS**

\*

There was a combined debate on item 49 & 51

Cllr Sankey left the room at the commencement of this item and did not take part in the debate.

- 49.1 The Notice of Motion as listed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Shanks on behalf of the Green Group and formally seconded by Councillor Goldsmith.
- 49.2 Councillors McNair, Fishleigh & Hogan spoke on the matter.
- 49.3 The notice of motion was not carried

#### **50 WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IN THE CITY**

\*

Cllr Sankey rejoined the meeting at the commencement of this item.

- 50.1 The Notice of Motion as listed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Hewitt on behalf of the Labour Group and formally seconded by Councillor Miller.
- 50.2 The Mayor congratulated Councillor Hewitt on their maiden speech on behalf of the council.
- 50.3 The Mayor noted that there were two amendments from the Green Group and the Conservative Group in relation to this motion as set out in the addendum papers.
- 50.4 Councillor Hill moved the amendment on behalf of the Green Group which was formally seconded by Councillor Pickett.
- 50.5 Councillor Bagaeen moved the amendment on behalf of the Conservative Group which was formally seconded by Councillor Lyons.
- 50.6 Councillor Fishleigh spoke on the matter.

- 50.7 Councillor Hewitt confirmed that he would not accept the amendments.
- 50.8 The Mayor then put the Green Group amendment to the vote which was lost.
- 50.9 The Mayor then put the Conservative Group amendment to the vote which was lost.
- 50.10 The Mayor then put the following motion to the vote:

“This council notes:

1. That the City’s top-flight women’s football team- Brighton & Hove Albion-currently play their home matches in Crawley, some 22 miles from the City.
2. That this has a detrimental impact on attendances and hinders development and participation.
3. That the team having a purpose-built stadium in Brighton & Hove will benefit both the club and the City.

Therefore, resolves to:

4. To support in principle the return of the Brighton & Hove Albion women’s team to the City.
5. Request a report to Culture, Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Economic Development Committee on how the Council can support the club in establishing a women’s stadium in the city, including through identification of possible sites.

- 50.11 The Mayor confirmed that the motion had been carried.

## **51 OPPOSING ACADEMISATION OF BENFIELD AND HANGLETON SCHOOLS**

\*

There was a combined debate on item 49 & 51

Cllr Sankey left the room at the commencement of this item and did not take part in the debate.

- 51.1 The second Notice of Motion as listed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Taylor on behalf of the Labour Group and formally seconded by Councillor Baghoth.
- 51.2 The Mayor congratulated Councillor Taylor on their maiden speech on behalf of the council.
- 51.3 The Mayor congratulated Councillor Baghoth on their maiden speech on behalf of the council.
- 51.4 Councillors McNair, Fishleigh & Hogan spoke on the matter.
- 51.5 The Mayor, then put the notice of motion to the vote which was carried.

“The council:

- (1) Request officers to ask the Governing Body for Benfield and Hangleton schools to pause the academisation proposal to enable more time to engage with the local authority and the community, including parents and carers

- (2) Request officers to work with the Hangleton and Benfield school communities and Governing Board to encourage them to remain in the Local Authority school's family
- (3) Request a report to a future Children, Families and Schools Committee addressing SEND and SEMH provision in the city
- (4) Request a report to a future Children, Families and Schools Committee which considers options for strengthening the partnerships that make up our family of schools, and boosts the support given to local authority school leadership."

## 52 SOLIDARITY WITH UCU STRIKERS

\*

Cllr Willams left the room at the commencement of this item and did not take part in the debate.

- 52.1 The Notice of Motion as listed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Goldsmith on behalf of the Green Group and formally seconded by Councillor Pickett.
- 52.2 The Mayor noted that there was an amendment from the Labour Group in relation to this motion as set out in the addendum papers.
- 52.3 Councillor Grimshaw moved the amendment on behalf of the Labour Group which was seconded by Councillor Sheard.
- 52.4 Councillor Goldsmith confirmed that they would accept the amendment.
- 52.5 The Mayor then put the notice of motion as amended to the vote:
 

"This council notes:

  - 1) The industrial action taken by the University and College Union members against redundancies being made at the University of Brighton
  - 2) Concerns that there will be a significant impact on the university's offer in certain subjects as a result of the planned reduction in lecturers teaching students in education, engineering, humanities, art, media and sports science
  - 3) Recognises the significant impact on staff and students in our city of the decision to make 82 staff redundant
  - 4) Concerns for staff who have already had their pay deducted as a result of taking industrial action
  - 5) Recognises the challenges that universities are facing as a result of funding pressures, the impact of the hard-Brexit, and of the Covid-19 pandemic Therefore, resolves to:
  - 6) Express our support for all workers and unions who strive for fairness and better conditions including the workers who are involved in the current industrial action
  - 7) Encourage and urge a satisfactory outcome to save as many jobs as possible
  - 8) Request that officers work in partnership with the city's universities, staff and students to understand the challenges faced by the sector and explore opportunities for further lobbying of government on Higher education funding and support."
- 52.6 The Mayor confirmed the motion had been carried.

**53 CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting concluded at 10.27pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2023