

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

The following questions listed on pages 33-36 of the agenda have been received from Councillors and will be taken as read along with the written answers listed below:

(a) Councillor Sykes

“With reference to the £102,000 approved “for parks and playgrounds including *inter alia* paving, seating, general environment e.g. planting, play equipment etc.” from underspend, can the Lead Member please provide a ward by ward breakdown of the planned spend.”

Reply from Councillor Mitchell – Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**“Play Additional funding 2017/18**

The state of play report 2016, which accompanied the Parks strategy, adopted by committee in 2017, highlighted concerns over the number of play areas with equipment rapidly heading towards the end of its economic life. It encouraged the injection of funding to help offset concerns over safety and general access of sites. Additional funding of £82,000 has been allocated to play facilities from the £102,000 for the current financial year.

This has been allocated to assist with issues which have not been addressed within the normal budget allocation over previous years. It targets some general problems across the city and a small number of sites with specific problems.

The extra funding will cover:

Works	Ward(s)	Approximate value £
Replacement gates where they have become uneconomic to repair. We are moving to standardising a gate system which conforms to current safety standards and adds a level of security to a play area. (self-closing and has a raised latch mechanism)	Various	14,000
Replacement of play units where they have been rendered safe but unusable at: Victoria Recreation ground, replacement swings with additional basket swing. Farm Green, replacement swings Hangleton Park, replacement climber unit	South Portslade,	15,000
	Moulsecoomb and Bevendean,	12,000
	Hangleton and Knoll	20,000

Dyke Road Park, repairs to slide feature	Hove Park	9,000
General safer surfacing replacement or repair at a number of play areas.	Various	12,000
Total Funding		82,000

The above figures are estimates, the intention is to let the play unit replacement works as one contract, a contract to cover safer surfacing and a separate one for gate replacement.

There will be a minimal amount of consultation for each main replacement with user groups as we will be aiming to replace with very similar play equipment to that which is being replaced.

The following work has been identified for Green Flag management plan works, in addition work on Easthill War Memorial Garden, which is complete.”

Planting	Easthill Memorial Garden	1,172.52
Rose Replacement	Preston Park	1,600.00
Planting	The Level	1,414.80
Planting	Stoneham	215.00
Planting	Kipling	1,050.00
Signage		1,500.00
Planting	Hove Park	1,200.00
St Anns	Planting	1,800.00
Improvement of Bin Systems	City Centre	3,000.00
Improvement of Bin Systems	The Level	7,000.00
Total		19,952.32

(b) Councillor Sykes

“Can the Lead Member please provide the latest data on (a) delays to planning applications i.e. what percentage are dealt with on time and (b) on how many planning applications a month does the council ask applicants for a time extension?”

Reply from Councillor Cattell – Chair of the Planning Committee

“The latest planning application performance for this year so far, from April to September 2017, shows a further improvement in performance. The performance by main type of application is:

- majors – 80 per cent within time (where the target is 60%);
- minor applications 74 per cent in time (where the target is 65%); and

- for other applications 72 per cent in time (where the target is 80%)

These performances are based on decisions in time or with an agreed extension of time (which is allowed by government legislation). The percentage of decisions with an extension of time (EoT) by type is;

Majors – 70 per cent;
 Minors – 40 per cent; and
 Other applications – 26 per cent

Although this shows that the proportion of decisions with an extension of time is still higher than we would like there has been a reduction for non-major applications when compared to the performance in 2016/17 (minors – 59% EoT and Others 45% EoT). These improvements may have arisen from the introduction of formal pre-application advice, amongst other factors, as planning applications are more likely to be submitted right the first time.”

(c) Councillor Sykes

“Following consultation, communal refuse and recycling collection in the garden squares in Brunswick and Adelaide ward was passed for implementation by Environment Transport and Sustainability Committee on 29th Nov 2016. Residents of all opinions on this matter have been wondering what has happened to this decision and whether it will in fact be implemented. Please can Councillor Mitchell provide an up to date programme for implementation of this scheme.”

Reply from Councillor Mitchell – Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

“Whilst this project has progressed there has been delay which City Environmental Management appreciates has been extremely frustrating for residents and resident groups. However we would like to thank them for their participation to date.

The rollout of communal bins was agreed for the following areas at committee.

- Palmeira Square and Adelaide Crescent
- Brunswick Square and Brunswick Terrace

Palmeira Square and Adelaide Crescent

Consultation, meetings, drop-in session and onsite visits have been held with resident groups who have now agreed final locations.

Leaflet content is to be agreed with resident groups prior to distribution by mid-November (17th November 2017). Leaflets will be distributed to households at the end of November 2017 (27th November 2017). This allows for a two week notice period prior to commencement of collection for both refuse and recycling from the newly installed communal bins. We are therefore proposing an

implementation date for collection week commencing mid-December (12th December 2017).

Brunswick Square and Brunswick Terrace

Location of refuse and recycling communal bins at Brunswick Square and Brunswick Terrace, have been agreed in principal with resident groups. However one further meeting is required to finalise these sites. Siting plans will be drawn up and this meeting is to be arranged for late November.

We are therefore proposing that these bins are rolled out in early 2018 (late January) following the same process as used for Palmeira Square and Adelaide Crescent.”

(d) Councillor Barnett

“After the recent fatality and serious accident in Old Shoreham Road, can an assurance be given that this road, which runs through both Hangleton & Knoll Ward and Hove Park Ward, is given very serious and urgent consideration for extra safety measures, including a speed camera and extra pedestrian crossing points.”

Reply from Councillor Mitchell – Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

“We work closely with the Police whenever there is a fatality or serious injury on the Highway. This includes sharing information on the investigations and site meetings to discuss road layouts if issues are identified as part of the investigation. At this stage there is nothing to suggest that the road condition was a factor in either of these very sad collisions. As such no further physical action is planned at this time however we will continue to liaise closely with the Police until the investigations are complete.

However, in light of concerns we are planning to carry out speed monitoring along the route. If an issue is identified as part of this process then further action may be considered at this time.”

(e) Councillor Gibson - Housing Benefit Payments

“Please can you supply the actual costs for each of the last five years of housing benefit payments made to fund landlord charges:

- a) Private rented housing
- b) Council housing
- c) Temporary accommodation
- d) Emergency accommodation
- e) Housing association

And please indicate the number of claims for each accommodation type.”

Reply from Councillor Meadows – Chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee

“The table below sets out the annual amount of Housing Benefit awarded and the caseload as at 25 March in each year:”

		2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Private rented housing	Caseload	12936	12545	11868	10928	10114
	Cost	£87.840m	£87.635m	£85.625m	£82.659m	£77.562m
Council housing	Caseload	8452	8166	7965	7749	7560
	Cost	£32.260m	£32.685m	£33.734m	£33.719m	£32.777m
Temporary accommodation	Caseload	1324	1386	1382	1421	1417
	Cost	£15.444m	£16.586m	£16.215m	£17.018m	£16.666m
Emergency accommodation	Caseload	9	34	56	75	76
	Cost	£0.062m	£0.115m	£0.318m	£0.447m	£0.571m
Housing Association	Caseload	5068	5068	5088	5025	4983
	Cost	£26.188m	£27.313m	£30.124m	£31.586m	£31.880m

(f) Councillor Gibson - Additional rental income from new council housing

“Please can you indicate the expected total number of new council homes arising from the new homes for neighbourhoods programme as of April 2018? And for these homes estimate the annual rental income that is due to the council for the financial year 2018/19.”

Reply from Councillor Meadows – Chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee

Completed Projects	Number of homes	Annual rental income from New Builds 2018/19
Aldwick Mews	4	46,590
Brooke Mead	45	274,274
Darwell Court	5	41,452
Flint Close	4	42,765
Hobby Place	29	270,146
Kite Place	57	546,950
Pierre Close	4	46,133
Preston Road	2	22,836
Robert Lodge (N)	6	48,710
Robert Lodge (S)	9	65,422
Grand Total	165	1,405,278

“These rents are being used to pay for the financing costs, management and maintenance of these new homes.”

(g) Councillor Mac Cafferty

“Further to a written question to Cllr Mitchell in January on energy efficiency, I was informed that the Administration is preparing an energy plan. Can I ask where that plan is and when it will be coming for full scrutiny from Councillors?”

Reply from Councillor Mitchell – Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

“A Greater Brighton Energy Plan will be developed and completed by the end of 2018. The plan is being delivered through the Greater Brighton Economic Board and will be brought before Councillors on completion.

The scope of the plan is dependent on securing additional funding to that being secured from the Greater Brighton Economic Board. A bid has been submitted to Interreg and a decision is expected at the end of November. If unsuccessful, finance will be sought from other sources.”

(h) Councillor Mac Cafferty

“In April in response to a written question to Councillor Daniel on anti-social behaviour, I was informed that Designated Public Places Orders enable the police to remove alcohol from people who are drinking and being anti-social. After yet another summer where my residents have suffered yet more anti-social behaviour, they report that these orders are never used. Can I ask how many Designated Public Places Orders were authorised? In the absence of these orders being effectively used, what other mechanisms will the administration pursue to prevent anti-social behaviour in the public squares?”

Reply from Councillor Daniel – Chair of the Neighbourhoods, Inclusion, Communities & Equalities Committee

“The Designated Public Places Order (DPPO) has been absorbed under the Anti-social Behaviour, Police and Crime Act 2014 and is now described as a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO). The order enables police to require people to surrender alcohol where there is ASB or ASB is anticipated. The police use a combination of the DPPO and Dispersal Powers under the same Act to require people to disperse and hand over alcohol when an area is designated by a police Inspector.

The police can’t easily provide the information relating to where these powers were used but report that on most occasions a warning is sufficient to resolve the problem and people move on.

Further under the same Act the Open Spaces PSPO will be reviewed over the winter and consideration will be given to whether it should be extended from its existing 12 locations to other areas where it might be effective.

All of the above powers are reliant on incidents being reported and there being sufficient resource available to attend and enforce where appropriate.

The Community Safety Team, Cityparks, Cityclean, the police and commissioned support services meet regularly to consider which areas of the city to prioritise based on risk, harm and vulnerability for ASB action and concerted and co-ordinated activity is undertaken in these areas.”

(i) Councillor Mac Cafferty

“Figures published from the LGA earlier this year tell us that dissatisfaction is increasing with the quality of new homes. Can I ask what steps the administration is taking to ensure new build homes are being built to the highest standards?”

Reply from Councillor Meadows – Chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee

“The New Homes for Neighbourhoods Programme is the council’s programme for building much needed council homes on land in our ownership, as well as bringing about the wider regeneration of council estates in Brighton and Hove. Achieving high quality new homes is a key driver behind the New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme. The principles that guide the New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme are:

- Homes that are great to live in and enhance the built environment
- Well built homes that last a lifetime
- Accessible homes that meet housing need
- Homes that will be easy and cost effective for the council to maintain
- Sustainable homes that encourage sustainable lifestyles.

In order to achieve these objectives, the Estate Regeneration team have developed a New Homes Design Specification to ensure that we deliver high quality, inclusive and sustainable design in all of our new housing developments. Part 1 of the document establishes clear parameters on:

- Space standards to be achieved (i.e. those prescribed in the council’s Affordable Housing Brief 2015). These space standards are much more generous than the nationally prescribed space standards.
- Fire safety standards to be achieved – these have been updated in the light of recommendations following the Grenfell Tower disaster.
- Secured by Design – all development to be compliant with latest SBD guidance and Part Q of the Building Regulations.
- Building for Life standard – all development to be measured against the 12 BfL criteria.
- Wheelchair accessible housing standards - all Mobility 1 units to comply with Part M(4) Category 3 of the optional requirements in the Building Regulations 2015 and the principles contained within the Habinteg Wheelchair Housing Design Guide.

- Sustainable homes standards – all development to be designed to a minimum of the energy and water efficiency performance requirements equivalent to the former Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4.

Part 2 of the New Homes Design Specification focuses on the detailed design specifications for the building elements and mechanical and electrical requirements. These set the bar for the achievement of a high quality build, in terms of design, external finishes, internal finishes etc.

The New Homes Design Specification is updated annually following feedback from the council's in-house architects team, housing officers, contractors and tenants/ residents on the quality being achieved. As part of the Estate Regeneration Team's Handover and Close Out procedures, we carry out regular quality audits by asking all tenants to complete a Resident Satisfaction Survey 3 months after occupation and again, 12 months after occupation. The findings from these surveys are reported to:

- The council's Housing Stock Review Manager
- The council's Architecture & Design Manager and/ or relevant architect
- The council's corporate strategic construction partner (formerly Westridge, now Morgan Sindall)

Resident satisfaction levels for all aspects of those housing schemes which have been completed under the NHFN is generally very high. Nevertheless, there is always opportunity for improvements in our build quality. Our procedures actively encourage quality control and learning. That is why four months after completion project managers hold a 'lessons learnt' internal review meeting with Housing colleagues and other key parties to capture learning from the quality audits and amend internal processes and procedures where appropriate. Councillors on our Estate Regeneration Board, Housing and Planning Committees are regularly invited to view/ inspect our schemes before Handover, as part of this process.

Twelve months after Handover, the project managers organise an inspection at the end of the defects liability period. These inspections are attended by the architect, Housing Stock Review Manager and appropriate Housing staff. Any minor defects i.e. small cracks in plaster are recorded and then a programme of remediation works is agreed between the project manager and building contractor. These checks and balances are an intrinsic part of our procedures for the delivery of the New Homes for Neighbourhoods Programme.

The Estate Regeneration team has recently held a workshop with Councillors to explain our Design Specification and our New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme in more detail. We have also combined the results of our residents satisfaction surveys for all our new housing developments into a single spreadsheet and would be happy to run through these results with Councillor Mac Cafferty at a mutually convenient time, if this would be helpful."

(j) Councillor Druitt – Party Houses

At Council in April I asked a question on party houses and six months later I still have not had a straight answer to the question. The question was:

35. Can the administration tell me what it is doing to work with party house owners as soon as they are identified to ensure that change of use planning permission is sought if required, permission is sought for any licensable activities and the legitimate concerns of neighbouring residents are addressed before party houses become operational?"

The party house in question (90 North Street) has since been put on the market due to a successful resident-led campaign against its use as a party house, but there are many others in the city that continue to be a nuisance to their neighbours. Can the Administration tell me whether it is doing anything at all to work with party house owners as soon as they are identified, to ensure that change of use planning permission is sought if required, permission is sought for any licensable activities and the legitimate concerns of neighbouring residents are addressed before party houses become operational? And further to that can the council tell me whether the recommendations from the scrutiny on Party Houses undertaken during the previous Green administration have been implemented, who is the council's link person with the Brighton & Hove Holiday Rental Association, and what steps the council takes to make sure party houses are assessed for business rates in line with current legislation?

Reply from Councillor Cattell – Chair of the Planning Committee

"Party houses, known as short term holiday lets, do not require planning permission. Therefore when a property owner wishes to let their property as a holiday let, there are no planning restrictions to stop them doing so as short term holiday lets are considered by the government as a residential use. Any change to planning legislation, including change of use would have to come from central government. Different powers exist for London authorities, where there is a limit of 90 days per annum on short term letting has been introduced.

Party Houses became an issue in 2014 and the Scrutiny Panel Report on Short term holiday lets was set up to research complaints concerning party houses and the lack of regulatory controls. The final recommendations, agreed at Committee in October 2014, were principally advisory, good practice matters for Brighton and Hove Holiday Rental Association (BHRA) so that the rental businesses themselves should mitigate residents' concerns. The recommendations were therefore passed to BHRA for implementation. It was acknowledged in the report that Local authority officers would have no legal authority to intervene. As a consequence - no formal enforcement action was being requested of any department as part of the recommendations.

In relation to recent impacts on the amenity of residents from Party Houses, the Environmental Health Team has advised that there has been only one direct complaint about noise from a party house in the last year.

In terms of next steps for Planning, short term lets was raised as an issue of concern by residents and hoteliers during the consultation on the City Plan Part 2 in 2016. It is an issue that the officers are investigating further as part of

preparing the City Plan Part 2. Consultants have been appointed to assess the issue as part of a wider visitor accommodation study and will look to see how short term holidays could be better managed and regulated with reference to case studies and within the restrictions of the existing legislation.”

(k) Councillor Druitt - Food delivery mopeds

Despite a meeting with Deliveroo representatives following my question to Council in April, a dedicated email address for resident concerns and numerous reports to Operation Crackdown the antisocial behaviour caused by food delivery mopeds gets worse by the day. What is the council doing to ensure that delivery riders do not ride where they are not permitted to, do not pose a noise nuisance to residents, and do not represent a hazard to pedestrians; and will the Administration meet with me to explore the specific concerns that residents in my ward have highlighted, and possible solutions.

Reply from Councillor O’Quinn – Chair of the Licensing Committee

“Thank you for your question. I understand the issues you are raising, however there is little the Administration can do as Deliveroo are not licenced by the council. We can look at noise nuisance issues; however traffic offences are the responsibility of the police. I am happy to arrange a meeting with Councillor Druitt and officers from the council and the police to look at the issues and try and find a resolution.”

(l) Councillor Druitt

Unauthorised encampments

In correspondence with Sussex Police on unauthorised encampments in the city I have been told, in relation to City Clean/City Parks’ involvement in multi-agency meetings and weekly action days: “Unfortunately City Clean who are supposed to attend have stopped attending and we are unable to contact them on the day as they simply do not answer the phone. Perhaps you can apply some pressure to them to ensure they engage with police and partners as without them clearing these encampments they are simply taken over by another person.” Can the Administration tell me why City Clean/City Parks no longer attend the meetings, how many calls to City Clean and City Parks go unanswered (in actual and percentage terms), and what the Administration is doing to sort the situation out and get these basics right?”

Reply from Councillor Mitchell – Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

“Cityclean and City Parks have worked successfully in the past with various partners including the Police and St. Mungo’s, tackling a variety of issues and challenges.

In respect of Cityclean these multi agency days were originally every month and then reduced to bi-weekly. However more recently the volume of work has led

to these action days reverting to a weekly basis meaning that staff and resources were fully engaged but unavailable to carry out other duties.

It was agreed that Cityclean would not attend the days automatically but instead would wait to be contacted should assistance be required. Unfortunately it appears that there has been a communication breakdown in that rather than all requests being directly received by Cityclean many have gone through the contact centre which deals with a diverse range of calls which has led to delays in crews receiving the request to attend a site.

Direct calls to Cityclean and City Parks are not monitored so the number of missed requests is not recorded. However looking forward Cityclean and City Parks are happy to provide a list direct numbers to ensure better response times.

Further meetings are already planned to discuss future collaborative working.”

