

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

The following questions listed on pages 45 – 48 of the agenda have been received from Councillors and will be taken as read along with the written answer detailed below. The Councillor asking the question may then ask one relevant supplementary question which shall be put and answered without discussion. A second supplementary question may be asked by any other Member of the Council which shall also be put and answered without discussion:

(a) Councillor Davey

"Could the Cabinet Member for the Environment please tell me how many petitions, letters or other requests for speed limit cuts have been submitted to the council by residents and councillors since they formed the administration in May 2007?"

Reply from Councillor G Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

"Records show that officers receive an average of approximately three a month."

(b) Councillor Kitcat

"Can Councillor G Theobald explain to the meeting his priorities for the seafront area and how he intends to implement them?"

Reply from Councillor G Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

"Thank you for your question and I welcome the opportunity to highlight the importance of the Seafrotnt.

Priorities are already being met on the Seafrotnt including a safe and clean environment for all to enjoy by the day to day work of the Seafrotnt and City Clean staff. The addition of the summer Seafrotnt Office in Hove has been a much welcomed development to the service.

The restoration of the Western Bandstand has been a hugely popular project, especially with the general public, and there has been tremendous interest from bands who want to play in next year's programme of concerts.

Madeira Drive is a focal point for current work being undertaken and the development of a vision for the area. Lighting in the colonnades has been improved and the second phase of restoration works has started on the Madeira Lift in order that it can be completed for next season. In addition, plans are currently being developed for the replacement of the Volk's railway siding sheds to utilise the funding allocated in the capital programme.

A further priority will be to seek expressions of interest in the area of land near to the Yellowwave Beach Sports Centre to replicate the success of that facility.

Planned maintenance resources are also being prioritised with work currently being undertaken on shelters along Marine Parade. Further work will also take place on other shelters and railings before next season.

(c) Councillor Kitcat

"Councillor G Theobald will be aware of the rust on the seafront bandstand which recently had to be repainted. Can the Councillor explain why rust is already visible? I understand recent touching up was done at no cost to the Council but what will be the cost of ongoing maintenance of the bandstand and how will that cost be met?"

Reply from Councillor G Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

"With the complex restoration of such an intricate historical structure, it is not unusual for some areas to need further attention. These are resolved as part of the year long rectification period and the contractor does meet the cost of the work during this period.

There will be an annual maintenance plan to undertake maintenance works as required. These works will be procured as part of the planned maintenance budget for the seafront. We will therefore ensure that the impressive, and popular, restoration will be retained."

(d) Councillor Kitcat

"Would Councillor G Theobald be so kind as to provide the meeting with the cost per tonne this year to the Council to recycle paper and the average price per tonne received by our contractors for the sale of that paper on the open market?"

Reply from Councillor G Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

"The cost associated with the collection and processing of recycling this year is projected to be £160 per tonne. This is a saving to council taxpayers as if we landfill too much biodegradable waste - which includes paper - we face fines of £150 per tonne, this is in addition to disposal costs of £144 per tonne.

The average income per tonne of paper recycled is approximately £28 of which the council receives half, £14."

(e) Councillor Steedman

"Through a process of public workshops and expert research and analysis, leading sustainability consultants BioRegional, working with council officers, prepared a first draft of a One Planet Living Plan for Brighton and Hove. The draft Plan, funded by thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money, matched by a generous equivalent donation of time from BioRegional, began to set out how the Council, its partners and the residents of the city could work to create a sustainable Brighton and Hove, with a high quality of life, living within its ecological means. Could the Leader of the Council confirm that her Administration has now abandoned this work and has no intention of adopting a revised final draft of the Plan, or of achieving One Planet Living status for the city?"

Reply from Councillor Mears, Leader of the City Council.

"The draft plan has been helpful, and has provided us with valuable data on the potential avenues that will lead to a sustainable future. But we must choose these paths with care. While the draft plan has already proved its value in shaping the City Sustainability Partnership's responses to various strategies, it is overambitious to the point of being unrealistic and we simply cannot sign up to everything in it. The Partnership can continue to work with the plan and the council will pick the very best elements from it, so the work put in is far from wasted."

(f) Councillor Turton

"Can the Cabinet Member for Environment please state what is the total amount of money that has been received between 20th August and 24th September 2009 from Penalty Charge Notices and towed away vehicle recovery fees specifically related to the Conservative Administration's voluntary decision to start the issuing of fines and to tow-away vehicles parked more than 50cms from the kerb, as decided at Environment CMM on 30th July 2009?"

Reply from Councillor G Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

"Between 20 August and 24 September 228 Penalty Charge Notices were issued to vehicles for being parked more than 50cm away from the pavement, ie double parking. So far £3,850 has been paid towards these PCNs.

All PCNs for this offence of double parking were issued after a five minutes observation period.

Eight vehicles have been removed for being double parked during this period and £735 has been paid towards the release of these vehicles."

(g) Councillor Turton

“To ask the Cabinet Member for Housing to confirm when kitchen and/or bathroom refurbishment will commence on the Bristol Estate and why this did not happen in the current financial year despite the assurances of council officers that this would be the case?”

Reply from Councillor Caulfield, Cabinet Member for Housing.

“Brighton & Hove is projecting a 9.4% increase in the number of homes that meet the decent homes standard during 2009/10, which will result in 61.5% homes meeting the standard. During 2009/10, over 400 kitchens and 400 bathrooms are being installed across the city as part of an increased £20million capital investment programme

To avoid raising tenant's expectations in terms of the proposed kitchens and bathroom installations, the council has always stated that it is the council's objective to bring its housing stock up to the government's decent homes standard by 2014.

To achieve this target we are prioritising properties that are outside of the decent homes standard on an annual year by year priority basis.

An indicative programme of homes that need to be prioritised for decent homes work is produced from our asset data. Homes on this indicative programme are individually surveyed and subsequently the decent homes criteria is applied to decide whether a property requires a kitchen and or a bathroom installed. It is not our intention to renew every kitchen and bathroom but only those that do not meet the overall decent homes replacement criteria.

I can confirm that the decent homes programme of kitchen and bathroom works will begin on the Bristol Estate at the start of financial year 2010/11 and will if needed continue on an incremental year by year basis through to the 31 March 2013.

Surveying work will commence in February and March 2010, to ensure that we start some of the work in early April.”

(h) Councillor Turton

“To ask the Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Tourism what public and staff consultation has taken place over the future of temporary exhibitions and craft related activity at Hove Museum & Art Gallery from September 2010?”

Reply from Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation & Tourism.

“Questions about temporary and permanent exhibitions are included in the visitor surveys these show craft, toys and local history displays are rated

important by visitors and that temporary exhibitions, a desire to see the whole museum, and somewhere to bring children are key motivators for visits.

Funding for the current craft programme lasts till March 2010. We are looking at how we deliver craft activity for the city in different ways as funders have always been keen to see craft activity take place across the division. Two very positive plans are:

- Houses during Brighton Festival. Building on the craft shows held in Preston Manor in 2007 and 2008, this project has received a grant of £30k
- We have successfully attracted a national award museumaker for a commission for the Royal Pavilion for 2010-11.

At Hove we are developing plans for programming post September 2010 which can be achieved within current resources and in particular looking at how in line with council priorities and national directives for museums we can grow and broaden the family and local community audience and draw on our own collections. There will be consultation on these when they are developed. These programmes may be based on any of our collections including craft and could include exhibitions, events and other activities.

Staff are involved in decision making processes through representation via line management structures at meetings and discussions.”

(i) Councillor Davis

“Prior publicity for the White Air Festival suggested that 20,000 tickets would be on sale for each of the three days and ‘tens of thousands’ more were expected to watch from outside the festival grounds. Would Councillor Smith share with us his estimate of how many people attended this event and how much it is likely to have contributed to the local economy?”

Reply from Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation & Tourism.

“Thank you Councillor Davis for your question on the White Air Extreme Sports Festival.

The estimate is that 15,000 people actually enjoyed the Festival itself and many more did enjoy the Red Arrows display over the city.

As this was the first time the event was held in the city the organisers were pleased with attendance, even though the numbers were lower than their optimistic forecast. There were 38 different sports available many involving local clubs which would give the event a good base to develop in future years.

The current economic climate has certainly adversely affected Festival attendances and therefore to move such a large scale event to the city at this time was always going to be a challenge. The benefit to the local economy would have been significant, but without a full economic impact assessment being undertaken it is not possible to identify an actual contribution to the local economy.”

(j) Councillor Fallon-Khan

“Now that Councillor Duncan is the Council’s sole representative on the Sussex Police Authority, will he give a commitment to report back to Cabinet on a regular basis on how his work is benefiting the residents of Brighton & Hove?”

Reply from Councillor Duncan.

“Firstly, I thank Councillor Fallon-Khan for this opportunity to highlight some of the work I have been doing on behalf of the city’s residents as a member of Sussex Police Authority, on which I hold ‘lead member’ status on reducing alcohol-related harm, environmentally sustainable policing, and the independent custody visiting scheme, which seeks to maintain high standards in police detention. As well as promoting work in these three areas, I have successfully introduced budgetary amendments that have seen more police officers and PCSOs on our streets and in our communities, I have worked to strengthen the way neighbourhood policing is delivered across Brighton and Hove, championed community engagement and overseen the move towards more police engagement with community groups, and the strengthening of the city’s Local Action Teams, and I have sought to improve facilities for victims of crime, particularly domestic violence and sexual offences.

With the permission of the Mayor and Chief Executive, I’d be delighted to provide regular updates at future Full Council meetings, as this council’s sole representative on the Sussex Police Authority – but I represent the whole council and all residents of the city rather than the Administration so I don’t think reports to Cabinet would be appropriate.

Meanwhile, I’ll be delighted to keep all Members informed of my work at the SPA through the existing channels of the Community Safety Forum and, where appropriate, the Environment and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee.”

(k) Councillor Caulfield

“Could Councillor Mitchell please explain to Council why the Commission which she chairs did not feel that it was in the best interests of the residents of East Brighton to scrutinise the financial arrangements and public accountability of EB4U and the East Brighton Trust, organisations which have been funded solely from taxpayers’ money?”

Reply from Councillor Mitchell, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission.

"As Councillor Caulfield will be aware decisions regarding topics for scrutiny are made by Committees as a whole and not by Committee Chairs.

Following her letter requesting a scrutiny review of EB4U and the East Brighton Trust the Overview and Scrutiny Commission conducted a thorough and full debate as to whether this was an appropriate use of Member and officer time and resources.

It is the role of scrutiny committees to prioritise in-depth scrutiny panel work to ensure that the topics with clear and worthwhile outcomes are the ones that are taken forward and reviewed.

In the case of EB4U there were a number of factors that meant the Commission did not feel able to support Councillor Caulfield's request.

- There has already been scrutiny of the EB4U programme, Chaired by Councillor Young and reporting in 2005;
- EB4U was a Government funded initiative and therefore the Council has had limited influence over its management;
- The Commission felt that there was not enough factual evidence presented to it by Councillor Caulfield to support her request.

Additionally I would say the door was left open to Councillor Caulfield to provide further evidence regarding local residents' dissatisfaction with the project and the Commission would then consider again looking at the issue. I am not aware however that this further information has been forthcoming."

(I) Councillor West

"Following the lively and poignant events of car-free day, Councillor Theobald remarked in the Argus that his administration's transport policy is "all about offering choice of forms of transport to make it as easy as possible for people to get around the city." What exactly does he mean by this: to make it easier for people to choose to drive into the city centre?

Reply from Councillor G Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

"In the quote in The Argus I used the phrase 'choice of forms of transport' and my statement was quite self-explanatory. I did not mention any specific form of transport because I meant what I said: it's about choices and opportunities for all our residents, workers and visitors, using all forms of transport."

(m) Councillor West

"For residents living around Preston Circus, Lewes Road and elsewhere, where air pollution from vehicle exhaust is at dangerous levels, what choice does Councillor Theobald offer them to breathe more easily?"

Reply from Councillor G Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

"Our Air Quality Action Plan which is an integral part of the Local Transport Plan and is a statutory requirement of the Environment Act, that sets out measures that will assist in overcoming such problems."

(n) Councillor West

"The Lewes Road for Clean Air Campaign have measured that nearly 75% of vehicles using Lewes Road are private cars and of those 60% are carrying just one driver. What will Councillor Theobald do to promote car sharing or to persuade people travelling alone to make their journey by sustainable alternatives? Will he seek to introduce a comprehensive rapid transit network around the city?"

Reply from Councillor G Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

"Thank you for this and the previous question connected to the Lewes Road Clean Air Campaign's survey of cars, specifically in the Lewes Road.

Car sharing is one of many options that the council promotes in its work with businesses and schools to encourage different ways of travelling for certain journeys. Car sharing may not be convenient for everybody, but if people are aware of it then they may try it.

And it does work - by working together with the council, 25% of the Lloyds TSB workforce at City Park have signed up to Liftshare.com - a popular car sharing scheme. The council's own Staff Travel Plan also includes car sharing and there is a car share section on the JourneyOn website.

We also work with schools to encourage car sharing – it can work regularly for staff or be arranged more informally by parents helping one another out, provided of course that child seats are fitted and secured correctly.

And over the past year, car use has decreased slightly for journeys to Brighton and Hove's schools.

Turning to public transport, you will know that we have an excellent network of buses in the city which currently carries around 40 million passengers per year, and some routes operate at very high frequencies. I use them whenever I can.

There are no plans for a rapid transport network around the city unless you mean the Rapid Transport System (known as RTS but now referred to as the Coastal Transport System [CTS]). This will initially provide an additional east-west public transport link between the Marina, Brighton Station, Shoreham and Worthing.”

(o) Councillor Duncan

“Is the Cabinet Member responsible for public lavatories aware that the closure of the public lavatory adjacent to St Mary’s Church on Upper St James’s Street has left many vulnerable and older residents of the Queen’s Park Ward unable to visit the businesses, services and leisure facilities offered in the St James’s Street area?”

Reply from Councillor G Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

“The site at Upper Rock Gardens previously contained automatic public toilets which were supplied and maintained by a private company (Healthmatic Limited). The contract for this unit came to an end in September 2008 and the company therefore removed their property in November last year.

The unit was prone to misuse and anti social behaviour on a regular basis which often resulted in the units being shut down for maintenance. Since its removal only one enquiry regarding its closure has been received.

We are currently investigating the feasibility of offering this site for commercial use with the aim of the incoming tenant taking over operation and maintenance of a single disabled accessible unit, to be available to the general public during business hours.

We also run a community toilet scheme called “You’re Welcome” which encourages local businesses to let the public use their facilities without making a purchase. We are actively seeking participation in the Kemp Town area however there are alternative public toilets available at Queens Park or on Madeira Drive.”

(p) Councillor Duncan

“Does the Cabinet Member share my gratitude for the work of the seafront staff and lifeguards, and desire to see sea swimming promoted as a healthy and free sporting and leisure opportunity?”

Reply from Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation & Tourism.

“Thank you Councillor Duncan for your question. I also do appreciate the valuable work undertaken by the Seafront Staff including the lifeguards.

Our extremely busy seafront, particularly over the summer period leads to the team dealing with an array of incidents as they work hard to keep the seafront safe for residents and visitors. In the last financial year the team dealt with 3168 incidents from minor first aid to sea rescues.

I agree that swimming is a very positive activity, but the provision of the free swimming programme (over 10,000: 16 and unders, over 3000: 60+ registered) encourages the development of swimming skills in the safer indoor environment than the sea. This complements the learn to swim programmes available at the city's pools. Therefore, the promotion of swimming development is targeted at giving people the opportunity to develop their skills in indoor pools, so that they can use their skills to swim in the sea safely as they wish.”