

**WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

The following questions have been received from Councillors and will be taken as read along with the written answer detailed below:

**(1) Councillor Yates:**

Can the lead member please provide a breakdown of the 198 EV charging points installed over recent years by ward please? Along with ward car ownership numbers in real terms for comparison.

**Reply from Councillor Heley, Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

Only areas of the city with no off street parking are eligible for central government funding of public charge points. By the end of July 235 lamp post, fast and rapid public chargers will have been installed. Residents with off street parking can apply for government grants towards home charging devices. The average parking zone has 8 chargers capable of charging 100 vehicles per week and 1,350 permit holders. A list of charge points by parking zone and ward together with car ownership will be sent to Cllr Yates.

**(2) Councillor Allcock:**

At budget Council in February it was agreed to allocate £60,000 to establish a post-Covid Family Coaches project within the city Children's Centres. This is intended to improve provide early intervention with families with babies and young children recovering from the impacts of Covid and other forms of disadvantage, to support their development and improve their future educational attainment. Can you please inform me how this this project in progressing including how many Family Coaches have been recruited and when they were appointed, and a brief update on their achievements to date?

**Reply from Councillor Clare, Chair of the Children, Young Persons & Skills Committee**

Two early year family coaches (equivalent to 1.6 full time equivalent) have been recruited and are due to start in late July and early August. The early years family coaches are managed as part of the Integrated Team for Families together with other family coaches and are co-located in children's centres.

The early years family coaches will work with families with children under five who are facing multiple-disadvantage, to enable them to achieve positive outcomes including: education and learning, living standards, safe relationships, health and wellbeing, educational attainment and employment and safer communities. Families are identified by other professionals including health visitors who refer the family to the Front Door for Families. The FDF then consider which families will most benefit from an early years family coach. Family coaches offer a whole family assessment and plan together with

interventions and regular review of the whole family plan to look at distanced travelled.

**(3) Councillor Allcock**

At budget Council in February it was agreed to allocate £168,000 to establish a Community Drug Impact Co-ordinator role for 3 years to address the impact of illegal drug sales, drug use and cuckooing on our communities. Can you please inform me how this work is progressing including when the coordinator will be appointed?

**Reply from Councillor Osborne / Powell, Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee**

The drug impact co-ordinator job description has been written and evaluated. It is currently out to advert. Officers are expecting to interview on 5<sup>th</sup> August. If an appointment is made a start date is likely to be dependent on the successful candidate's notice period.

**(4) Councillor Childs:**

Will the Council provide an assurance that St Luke's Swimming Pool will not be closed and that it will be allocated appropriate funding and investment as part of the proposed City Leisure Plans?

**Reply from Councillor Osborne / Powell, Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee**

Not only do we have a shortage of pools in the city, but we know St Luke's is a widely used and much valued facility. There are no plans to close it, and it's wrong for others to suggest this.

The regular maintenance programme for all our sports facilities is already happening, in order to keep our sites in good condition.

Consultants looking at the future of sports and leisure opportunities for our city have suggested an investment plan, to meet our aims of creating more, enhanced sports provision. This is based on a 'hub and spoke' model, of expanded and enhanced facilities, supported by a network of locally accessible community leisure centres, to meet the needs of residents.

Several of our sports facilities would benefit from investment. Although the consultant's report mentions that "no new investment is identified" for St Luke's, this refers to the proposals coming forward from the investment plan. St Luke's is also in reasonably good condition at this time.

What's more, any proposals for sports investment will first be explored by a cross party members working group, with the key decisions then being made by Policy and Resources committee. It may be that as the plan progresses, it is decided by that group that additional investment will go into St Luke's, and indeed to other facilities, and this is for councillors to discuss in due course.

**(5) Councillor Childs**

What percentage of Local Authority Schools contain blue and brown asbestos?

**Reply from Councillor Clare, Chair of the Children, Young People & Skills Committee**

There are currently 66 maintained schools in Brighton & Hove, 52 primary schools, 10 secondary schools, 3 special schools and 1 pupil referral unit. The council is responsible for the maintenance of 45 of these schools, 35 primary schools, 6 secondary schools, 3 special schools and 1 pupil referral unit. The remainder of the schools are either voluntary aided church schools (16No.) or free schools and academies (5 No.).

The council holds information on the asbestos known or suspected to be in place in community schools within the city but not for academies or free schools. It is considered good practice to assume that any building constructed before the year 2000 can be expected to contain asbestos and only buildings constructed since 2000 do not contain asbestos and this is the approach that the council takes in respect of its buildings.

Consequently owing to the age of our school estate it is deemed that all the schools for which the council is responsible contain asbestos (white, blue and / or brown) with the exception of the five schools in the city that have been constructed since 2000 which are deemed not to contain asbestos. Three of these schools are academies (BACA, Kings School and the Bilingual Primary School) and are not consequently the responsibility of the council. The fourth is a voluntary aided church school (St Andrew's CE Primary School) and the fifth school constructed since 2000 is a community school (West Blatchington Primary and Nursery School) which is the responsibility of the council.

The number of schools with blue and / or brown asbestos is 47 out of a total of 61 community schools in the city, or 77%. This is broken down into 36 primary schools (36/50 = 72%), all 7 community secondary schools (100%), all special schools (100%) and the Pupil Referral Unit (100%).

It is important to note that the council does not undertake an intrusive survey of each school site to determine the presence of asbestos, unless work is planned in that area of the school. Rather its existence is deduced based on an asbestos management survey which is a visual inspection of the buildings and consideration of the records held. The reason for this is that the disturbance of asbestos should be avoided wherever possible. If managed actively and safely, the presence of asbestos should not pose a risk to occupants. Undamaged, sealed materials will not release fibres.

The asbestos register is updated as and when asbestos is removed or if further asbestos is identified as a result of undertaking a refurbishment and demolition survey in areas where work is undertaken. This is a more intrusive type of survey which involves destructive inspection by a trained specialist to identify all asbestos materials. We undertake refurbishment and demolition surveys on all

projects where we are likely to be disturbing the fabric of the building to ensure that we have a complete picture of the building materials we will encounter. These surveys are undertaken in controlled conditions as required by legislation. As a consequence of this there could be, as yet, undiscovered asbestos in the buildings

It is accepted good practice that where asbestos is in good condition it is not required to be removed but rather it will be labelled then left or possibly encapsulated. The HSE provides the following as basic principles to consider when managing asbestos:

- asbestos is only dangerous when disturbed. If it is safely managed and contained, it doesn't present a health hazard
- don't remove asbestos unnecessarily - removing it can be more dangerous than leaving it in place and managing it
- not all asbestos materials present the same risk. The measures that need to be taken for controlling the risks from materials such as pipe insulation are different from those needed in relation to asbestos cement
- if you are unsure about whether certain materials contain asbestos, you should presume they do and treat them as such
- the duty to manage is all about putting in place the practical steps necessary to protect maintenance workers and others from the risk of exposure to asbestos fibres - it is **not** about removing all asbestos

We follow these principles to ensure safe and proper management of asbestos in our school buildings.

#### **(6) Councillor Childs**

Will the administration commit to installing an adult disabled changing place as part of the Black Rock regeneration project?

#### **Reply from Councillor Osborne / Powell, Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee**

If the councillor is referring to the meanwhile uses and site remediation as part of **the first phase** of the Black Rock project, the works to the Black Rock area include one small classroom building of which one full elevation has been used to create 4 fully accessible WC's available for public use. A changing Places toilet here at this late stage in the project could be included if the existing WC's were replaced. However, this would result in a net loss of other WC's in the area at a time when the Council is being asked to create more capacity for public toilets along the eastern seafront.

It may be of interest to note that there is a changing places toilet with RADAR key located at Brighton Marina and also at the Colonnade (west end of Madeira Terrace). We can supply these details on request and we believe the Marina details are available on their website.

**(7) Councillor Childs**

Given that the revenue generated from library reservation and inter library loan charges is less than £1000 a year, will the Council agree to cease the practice of charging children to access books?

**Reply from Councillor Osborne / Powell, Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee**

Charging children and young people a small amount for reservations and interlibrary loans is not intended to raise revenue and the services are run at a very considerable loss to the council. The purpose of charging a small amount is to stop large numbers of spurious reservations which are never collected. When the council used to have free reservations for children and only a very low charge for adults, the library service had to deal with 98,000 reservations a year of which only 33,000 were collected. The costs to the council of the staff time, transport of books between libraries and sending out notices to customers for the 65,000 uncollected reservations was very high and, in addition, each spurious reservation meant that the book involved was unavailable to other customers for approximately two weeks. Hence a small charge for children and young people was introduced. However there are measures in place to ensure that no child is excluded because of this. Children with special needs are given a membership card which exempts them from having to pay and, in addition, library staff have discretion to reduce/waive charges in cases of hardship.

**(8) Councillor O'Quinn**

There have been a large number of anti-social incidents in local parks in Brighton and Hove in the last few weeks. What preventative actions, alongside the police, are the council implementing to deal with this very concerning issue?

**Reply from Councillor Osborne / Powell, Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee**

The public space protection orders relating to alcohol and associated ASB have been agreed to be continued by TECC committee. Officers have been working with police and legal services to develop a process for enforcement. This will go live across the City on 19<sup>th</sup> July.

Home Office funding for the B&H Violence reduction partnership has allowed detached youth workers to be deployed in areas where we become aware of gatherings of young people who may be at risk of committing ASB.

Any noticeable areas of concern can also be discussed at the multi agency partnership tactical tasking and co-ordination group, however without reports being made it is difficult to allocate resources to areas of concern. Environmental Enforcement Officers have recently been deployed across our parks and open spaces not only as a deterrent to anti-social behaviour but to also engage with users about their responsibilities in regard to waste. We have seen an increasing amount of litter being left behind within our parks and open spaces. We will continue to patrol the areas where possible and will liaise with

our colleagues in Parks should we need to recommend the installation of CCTV to identify the those responsible. We will however when advised by the police to look at design changes and generally implement these this is typically simple opening up areas so that people can see into them, which can be carried out within budget. Officers are also trialling the use of police mobile CCTV in one park in the city and evaluating new technology with them to see whether there are longer term benefits for further deployment if budgets allow.

**(9) Councillor Janio**

Can the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board confirm what active measures the council, including the Planning Department, are taking to support the provision of a Health Hub in H&K?

**Reply from Councillor Shanks, Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board**

I am aware that discussions are ongoing between the interested parties with respect to both site selection and the critical mass of any selected development. Working within local plan policy our Planning Department is actively discussing the options but with meetings continuing to try to find a constructive way forward I am unable at the present time to provide any additional update.

**(10) Councillor Janio**

Can the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board confirm if the council supports the provision of a Health Hub in Benfield Valley?

**Reply from Councillor Shanks, Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board**

Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning group is responsible for determining primary care demand and as such, acknowledging wider considerations will also need to be taken into account, the CCG does support the need for additional primary care provision in this area. As Chair of the HWB I recognise the case for additional primary care though I am aware of planning related issues in relation to outline proposals and constraints on the development site initially identified. I support the Council working with all stakeholders to see if we can work toward a project that can be supported by all parties.

**(11) Councillor Janio**

Can the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board would confirm if the CCG supports the provision of a Health Hub in Benfield Valley?

**Reply from Councillor Shanks, Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board**

Yes, the CCG would support this idea whilst recognising that there will be wider considerations to such a development though.

**(12) Councillor Janio**

Private households and organisations have formed over the last few years that seek to reverse the decline in 'the nations favourite 'non-captive' animal' - the Hedgehog. Indeed, the Janio family has 5 regular visitors who welcome the food provided for them by Mrs J. This helps, in a very small way, but there are dangers to the Hedgehog in our modern urban environment. In suburban Brighton and Hove many gaps between the pavement/road/soakaway have widened over the years and are now large enough for Hedgehogs to fall into – if they do, they then become trapped and suffer a horrible lonely miserable death. Can the Chair of the ETS Committee list any ways in which the council could identify these enlarged spaces and any measures they think might be taken to avoid unnecessary deaths and suffering of hedgehogs across Brighton and Hove?

**Reply from Councillor Heley, Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

The council under its move to a risk based approach in managing its Highway Assets will be further developing its detailed knowledge of these assets including gully's and soakaways. This will aid understanding of their impact on the environment, including gaps between adjacent assets that might adversely affect wildlife. This will aid future decision making to ensure the natural world is considered in design and maintenance.

**(13) Councillor Janio**

Will the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board state if they believe there are good bus routes across Benfield Valley?  
If they do, would they confirm that this would be very useful for patients attending a Health Hub in the area?

**Reply from Councillor Shanks, Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board**

There are a couple of options for patients needing to cross the Benfield Valley for medical appointments.

Monday to Friday there is an early morning commercial no. 55 Mile Oak - Hangleton City Centre - Hollingbury. This runs every fifteen minutes with the last bus leaving Fox way/Warrior close at 08:29.

Monday to Saturdays there is the Council supported no. 16/66 running hourly Portslade - Knoll estate - Hangleton until an 18:06 last departure from Portslade Health Centre.

Whilst this link would require some planning by clients to get to their appointments, there is a public transport option available to them. The Council will be reviewing bus services across the city as part of post - Covid bus network planning, but any improvements to services are subject to evidence of demand and/or a commitment to continued financial support by the Council.

**(14) Councillor Simson – Population:**

Please can you provide the following information relating to my ward of Woodingdean.

- a) Number and percentage of families with young children - pre-school or primary
- b) Number and percentage of the population claiming unemployment benefits
- c) Number and percentage of the population claiming health-related benefits

**Reply from Councillor Osborne / Powell, Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee**

Response to follow.

**(15) Councillor Simson – CCTV in the City**

Can the Chair of the TECC Committee advise?

- a) The total number of Council-operated CCTV cameras deployed in the City, including:
  - a. Fixed CCTV cameras
  - b. Mobile CCTV cameras
- b) The location where these cameras are monitored.
- c) How many council staff members are employed to monitor output of these cameras?
- d) The number of offences successfully identified and prosecuted as a result of CCTV evidence during the past municipal year.

**Reply from Councillor Osborne / Powell, Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee**

The total number of Council-operated CCTV cameras deployed in the City, including:

- a) a. 38 Automatic Number plate recognition cameras and 95 public space CCTV cameras
  - b. 0
- b) Hove Town Hall, within The Brighton Centre
- c) 12 however they also carry out other duties

62,815 Penalty Charge Notices Issued



**(16) Councillor Mears - Housing repairs and maintenance service insourcing policy (Industrial action)**

The policy decision made by the Labour/Green Coalition on Housing to insource the City's Housing Repairs service on 1 April 2020 has resulted in a long industrial dispute with GMB Union.

This dispute has included:

- Weeklong strike action in the week commencing 7 September 2020.
- A threat of all-out strike action from GMB Union then followed

In the minutes from the meeting on 17 March 2021, The Co-Chair of the Housing Committee advised that the dispute had been settled.

However, no public statement has been issued by the council as to what the terms and the cost of resolving this industrial dispute has been, and furthermore who is bearing this cost.

Despite a number of questions from myself at the Housing Committee, no information as to the nature of any settlement has been provided.

This is a prime example of the lack of accountability and transparency at Brighton & Hove City Council generated by the Coalition arrangement between Labour and Green Parties on housing.

Can you please advise:

- a) What is the current backlog for Housing Repairs in the City?
- b) What concessions were made by the Council to resolve the industrial dispute with GMB Union over its housing repairs insourcing policy?
- c) What is the cost to the taxpayer of this settlement, including:
  - Cost to tenants through funds paid out of the Housing Revenue Account
  - Other administrative costs including legal fees incurred by the council during this year long industrial dispute

Will the Council put out a press statement to advise tenants and Councillors of the above information (a-c)?

**Reply from Councillor Gibson / Hugh-Jones, Joint Chair of the Housing Committee**

The current backlog for Housing Repairs in the City (as at 14th July) is 6,047 outstanding jobs, of these 4,835 are overdue. The service continues to clear the jobs by priority of the repair. A RAG (red-amber-green) analysis of all live jobs has been adopted to identify the order in which the jobs are attended to. The backlog has arisen because of service implications of pandemic restrictions and is kept under regular review so we can resource and progress as many jobs as possible in the most efficient way in the context of the overall service pressure. To clear the backlog the service is directly engaging additional contractors in key areas and regularly review staffing levels. The service has increased management capacity, retained additional agency staff and is about to commence recruitment to a significant number of permanent roles following completion of the harmonisation process for those staff who transferred into the council from Mears.

- (b) Dispute resolution was subject to a Part 2, confidential discussion at P&R Urgency Sub-Committee 12th March 2021. Staff working in the service were given the option to join council terms and conditions or remain on existing terms and conditions.
- (c) The Housing Revenue Account (HRA), a separate ring-fenced account which includes all landlord costs relating to the provision of Council Housing and is funded primarily by tenants' rents, and service charges. Council tenants along with private and housing association tenants receive welfare support towards rent payments if their income is low enough to qualify. Council tenants along with other residents pay council tax and other taxes. Increased costs can be funded either from annual rent increases (except when frozen), which are constrained by government regulation, or otherwise must be funded from savings and efficiencies from elsewhere within the service. In this context, the additional cost to the Housing Revenue Account for settlement of the harmonisation of terms and conditions for 2020/21 is estimated as £0.600m. For 2021/22 the forecast costs of harmonisation are estimated as £0.760m (allowing for current vacancies to be filled during the latter half of the financial year). The full year impact (from 2022/23) is estimated to be £0.890m. There is no cost to the tax payer for this cost element. These amounts will be funded from existing rents and these costs need to be assessed alongside consideration of the benefits provided to the workforce and the potential service benefits in greater motivation achieved from workers who are better cared for by their employers. Current resource projections indicate that rent income under the govt formula is sufficient to cover these costs

Most administrative costs incurred by the council during this industrial dispute have been met from current resources. However, it is estimated that extra Human Resources time was required at an estimated one-off cost of £0.032m and specialised legal advice was commissioned from outside the council at a cost of £0.005m. It is not anticipated that these relatively small amounts (which equate to less than 1 p a week) necessitate any change in council tax

- d) The dispute was resolved on 26 January 2021 and this was communicated via a joint press release from BHCC and the GMB union.

Housing Repairs & Maintenance dispute update ([brighton-hove.gov.uk](http://brighton-hove.gov.uk))

The terms of this settlement were subject to agreement at P&R urgency sub committee which took place on 12th March 2021. The agreement reached saw staff working in the service being given the option to join council terms and conditions or remain on existing terms and conditions.

This response to Council questions is also in the public domain.

## **(17) Councillor Mears - Green Wall**

The removal of a segment of Brighton & Hove's Green Wall has caused great upset among Brighton and Hove's residents and environmental groups such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Building Green.

The living wall along Madeira Drive was planted by the Victorians in the 1870s and is also a wildlife reserve listed in council planning documents. It has grown and survived intact in this city for a century and a half until April when it was severed.

The damage, relayed in shocking pictures published in The Argus, includes about eight Japanese spindle plants, planted in 1872 and a large fig tree which were cut down by the council.

It is noted that Brighton & Hove City Council has been reported to the police for a wildlife crime.

To date, there have been a number of conflicting explanations from the Green Administration as to why a section of this Green Wall was removed.

These have been published in the Argus Newspaper (Brighton Council apologises for cutting down Green Wall, The Argus 23/04/21):

*On Monday, residents were told the work was conducted during planning for a "possible" cycle lane on Dukes Mound.*

*On Wednesday, the council then said it took place for a cycle lane and a pedestrian crossing.*

*Now it claims it had "nothing to do with the cycle lane in particular".*

The Chair of the Black Rock Task and Finish Group has subsequently provided a new explanation as to why the Green Wall was cut down.

In an email to members of this Task and Finish Group, the Chair stated:

*I thought it was established that the reason the green wall was cut back was because of a traffic safety survey that recommended cutting back to enable pedestrians to see traffic coming up the hill so they can safely cross the road.*

When I asked the Chair of the Task and Finish Group if this was correct, Cllr Druitt said that he stood by what said in this email.

Can you please advise what the reason was for Brighton and Hove City Council cutting down the Green Wall?

### **Reply from Councillor Heley, Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

As the council have previously explained in a press release issued directly after the incident and subsequently to councillors, a full review of this situation is being undertaken and a full report of the circumstances surrounding this incident will be available once the council's internal audit service are able to conclude their review. As Councillors will be aware, the council has previously worked very closely with Building Green both in relation to the whole of the Green Wall which sits behind Madeira Terrace and constitutes over 90% of the

wall, and also the higher sections of Green Wall along Dukes Mound which have been cut back and are now re-growing. What we want to establish is how it came to pass that this specific small section of wall came to be treated outside of these two areas. Auditors are separate to the officers involved in the incident and they will report when they have concluded their investigation. It is anticipated that the audit investigation will be concluded by mid-August of this year.

**(18) Councillor Mears – Protests in the City**

There have been many recent protests in the City involving large numbers of people.

These large gatherings have been a threat to public health during the pandemic.

The Communications Department at the Council has not been providing public information to help residents avoid areas with protest activity on the regular protest days.

Will the Council instruct its communications department to warn the public when such protest activity occurred?

**Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council.**

Keeping people safe during the pandemic has been my number one priority. Making sure the city is following Covid rules and guidelines has been a core aim of the work the council's Communications Team for the last 18 months.

Wherever the city council has known or been told about large demonstrations in the city, we have issued public health advice to people taking part in the demonstrations to help reduce the risk of spreading Covid. This has included the publication of Covid-19 safety advice for residents and people participating in protests for e.g.

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2020/covid-19-safety-advice-people-participating-protests>

There is no public health information and there are no reliable statistics to suggest that socially distanced marches were in any way the cause of a rise in Covid cases throughout the last 18 months.

When known, the city council has also supported and amplified Sussex Police's information and messaging on the routes' demonstrators will be taking to help make people aware of potential travel disruption.

This information is also shared by the Police with B&H buses so any changes to bus routes due to any anticipated disruption can also be communicated the bus company. This again is supported by the council via our communications platforms.

Information on disruption or re-routing is also displayed on e-road signs which are along most main roads in the city.

Sussex Police share all details of all known demonstrations. Where information is limited, or it is felt that by promoting details this might heighten community tensions it is not always possible to share this. Wherever possible we will make residents and visitors aware of any potential travel disruption and remind them of the current good public health practices

Further to the announcements earlier in the week, central government is now proposing to remove all legal Covid guidelines. This has been condemned by over 120 senior scientists, while the move has been described by Dr Mike Ryan, from the World Health Organisation as *“moral emptiness and epidemiological stupidity.”* Alongside the significant spike in cases in the city since the end of lockdown, this will put public health in far greater danger than any protest has.

### **(19) Councillor Barnett - CCTV and Cuckooing**

Action is required from the Council to get on top of this issue of cuckooing occurring on council-run property.

There are many over-50s housing blocks up by the hospital and on the Ditchling Road that have been targeted for cuckooing and we need to protect our elderly residents there. These council-run over 50s blocks have some vulnerable residents in their 80s.

We are aware of cases where council flats have been targeted for cuckooing three or four times but nothing has been done. It is deeply troubling that drug dealers consider the council's over 50's housing blocks as a safe haven for their activities and to target the elderly and the council needs to get on top of this which is happening in its own back yard.

The over 50s blocks need CCTV cameras in the entrance to see who's going in and out because there have been cases of cuckooing in those blocks with the very elderly.

I understand that the Council has been talking about the issue of cuckooing for a while and is now saying it is thinking of holding a drug summit to talk about it more - but our tenants need action now.

Until the Council gets on top of this drug dealing and cuckooing going on at Council-owned property we're not going to get anywhere with tackling drugs in the city.

I understand that the Council has the facilities for monitoring CCTV including a Council CCTV control room which should be being utilised better.

Will the Chair of the Housing Committee commit to installing CCTV cameras at the council-run over-50's blocks to protect our vulnerable residents from cuckooing?

## **Reply from Councillor Gibson / Hugh-Jones, Joint Chair of the Housing Committee**

The majority of Seniors Housing blocks have CCTV, and there is a planned programme of work, which will start shortly with an upgrade and increase the numbers. We have experienced some delay in the project due to Covid 19. Following on from completion at the Seniors Schemes, we will begin the upgrade within other council housing blocks. There are currently 300 CCTV cameras in more than 50 council blocks across the city.

In recent months we have seen an increase in the number of enquires for CCTV systems from either housing managers, residents' associations and/or councillors. As a result, we have increased our CCTV coverage in a further 14 locations. All applications have been supported by the Police and each site has been identified as urgent due to one of many factors such as drug dealing, ASB and criminal activity such as arson attacks.

Over the past 6 months, around 70 cases have been discussed at the Partnership Operation Cuckoo meeting, one of these cases was within a Seniors Housing block. Not all these cases end up being investigated under the multi-agency Cuckooing response but they are all investigated and a proportionate response is provided.

Those properties that are discovered to be cuckooed are often resolved swiftly by people being removed from the property, all suspected cuckooed properties are then monitored through regular police welfare visits in partnership with relevant agencies such as housing officers, social workers or substance misuse workers. These properties are also regularly reviewed by a police sergeant or inspector. Properties where the associated anti-social behaviour continues despite visits and monitoring, will be referred for a multi-agency meeting to agree the best way of resolving the situation, possibly by use of a closure order.

Whilst cuckooing' continues to be a problem in Brighton and Hove, putting vulnerable people at risk of harm, the partnership Operation Cuckoo procedures that we have implemented are very successful, and partner feedback positive.

If you would like further detail in relation to the CCTV upgrade, have an enquiry about CCTV at a particular block or would like to know more about the council's response to cuckooing this can be provided.

### **(20) Councillor Barnett - Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs)**

Brighton and Hove City Council previously had PSPOs in place to deal with antisocial behaviour in parks and green spaces. Certain parks that were trouble spots were named and had these PSPOs attached to them. They were described as 'having a positive deterrent effect on antisocial behaviour' by Council Officers. They were initially brought in to help tackle unauthorised encampments in City Parks.

Inexplicably, in December 2019, the then Labour Council allowed these Antisocial behaviour Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) for our parks to expire.

Despite calls from our Conservative Councillors to reinstate the Public Space Protection Orders, Labour and the Greens have never brought forward a measure to do so.

In its opposition to PSPOs the Labour/Green Council has put our City out of step with neighbouring authorities, such as Conservative Worthing which has PSPOs dealing with begging and overnight camping.

Given the recent spate of antisocial behaviour in the City, including unauthorised encampments of travellers (such as those that set up in the middle of Portslade Cricket Club) and the ongoing problem of begging throughout the pandemic, will the Green Administration reconsider its opposition PSPOs?

Will the Green Administration reintroduce PSPOs for parks and begging to bring us back into line with our neighbouring authority Worthing?

### **Reply from Councillor Gibson / Hugh-Jones, Joint Chair of the Housing Committee**

PSPOs are intended to be used to deal with a particular nuisance or problem in an area that is detrimental to the local community's quality of life by imposing conditions on the use of that area that apply to everyone. They are designed to ensure people can use and enjoy public spaces safe from anti-social behaviour (ASB).

In December 2017 the Home Office issued revised guidance to accompany the Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 and it included the following. 'Public Spaces Protection Orders should not be used to target people based solely on the fact that someone is homeless or rough sleeping, as this in itself is unlikely to mean that such behaviour is having an unreasonably detrimental effect on the community's quality of life which justifies the restrictions imposed. Councils may wish to consider whether the use of a Public Spaces Protection Order is the appropriate response. These orders should be used only to address any specific behaviour that is causing a detrimental effect on the community's quality of life which is beyond the control of the person concerned. Councils should therefore consider carefully the nature of any potential Public Spaces Protection Order that may impact on homeless people and rough sleepers.

### **(21) Councillor Theobald – Patcham Roundabout Precinct**

I would like to draw your attention to several council issues that are providing a poor first impression to visitors arriving to the city via the Patcham Roundabout precinct.

- a) The 'London Road' road sign at the top of London Road, next to the roundabout, is in a state of damage.
- b) The area behind the 'London Road' sign, including the stunning brick wall, is overrun with weeds. This is an area that should be planted and maintained during the summer.
- c) The Cricket Pavilion at Patcham Place Recreation Ground is covered in graffiti on 3 sides. This was reported by myself to the Council on 16 April but has not been actioned yet.

- d) Patcham Roundabout remains unplanted and in a terrible state. In response to my question to Cllr Heley on 17 December 2020 I was told that: 'Negotiations and due diligence are progressing and we hope this will be finalised shortly so that works can start in the New Year'. It is now July and works have still not started.
- e) There is a recurrent problem with unlawful encampments of travellers on Patcham Place due to insufficient boundaries to prevent vehicles entering the park.

Please can you advise what work will be undertaken to resolve the above issues (a-e)?

It is noted that in this year's City Budget (25 February 2021), the Conservative Group secured funding for a gateway entry signage for the Patcham Roundabout precinct as follows:

£0.005m revenue to fund:

- a. £0.050m borrowing from £0.004m revenue, to support capital investment into a gateway welcome to Brighton and Hove on and adjacent to Patcham A27/A23 Roundabout to include a piece of iconic public artwork.
- b. £0.001m revenue to maintain this gateway welcome

Please can you advise the progress and timeframe for the implementation of this initiative?

**Reply from Councillor Heley, Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

- a) A new street name plate will be installed for "London Road"

This will be done within 14 days.

- b) The borders along the A23 have been left to naturalise for decades I will arrange for officers to meet ward members and decide the best approach to them but they will not be returned to the high maintenance borders they once were as there are no longer the resources to look after them as they once were. Meeting date to be offered to ward members within 1 month.
- c) This will be cleaned within the next month.
- d) The Council continues to chase Highways England for an agreement to proceed with the outline planting design. Last year we had been led to believe we could progress with our proposal but this ambition was stopped at the last moment by Highways England. This is not within the councils' control so no date can be given.
- e) Unauthorised encampments occur across the city, some parks have barriers and some have none for example Hove Park or Preston Park have none. Patcham Place has wooden bollards which are not difficult to breach. It would cost around £20k to replace these with a sub soil bund [assuming that the material was being excavated in the City and therefore supplied at no cost]. Building such a bund would make access harder. Bunds are dug through and gates are cut but it could be sufficient deterrent to move the



unauthorised encampment elsewhere in the City. For a number of years now the council has not installed new barriers to prevent unauthorised encampments as it has not proved to be a successful approach and if we were to start doing this we would need to look at all parks and open spaces not just Patcham Place. There are no plans currently to put new barriers on this site or any other park site.

A series of permanent art commissions as Welcome signage will be positioned at key entry points to the city during 2022. This will include the area adjacent to Patcham Roundabout. These commissions will play a part in welcoming tourists to Brighton and Hove, as well as residents, reflecting the diverse and eclectic reputation of the city. The public art commissions, which will enhance the city's welcome at key entry points (road and rail) are a portfolio of projects that be developed over the course of the next ten years as part of the aspirations laid out in the council's public art strategy. The signage plans and the public art strategy are subject to approval at the TECC Committee in September 2021 after which a timeline can be put in place to ensure delivery takes place during 2022.

## **(22) Councillor Theobald – City in Bloom**

Brighton and Hove City in Bloom folded on 24 February 2020 after running competitions in the City for many years.

When the committee decided to cease operation, the final Facebook post noted the challenges of having to leap the hurdles of council directions. They had to exclude less sustainable categories and embrace more ecologically sound practices for the competition.

Their post said: "As volunteers, we have found the running of City in Bloom to be complex and unsustainable.

"While we are saddened that we can't continue, we are very pleased with our achievements over the seven years that we have been running as a voluntary organisation.

"Our sponsors have supported us and allowed us to award many community groups for their outstanding work and achievements.

"It was the decision of the committee (five members in total) to cease operation due to the extreme amount of time and energy that was needed and, having worked to update the process in which the competitions were run to exclude less sustainable categories and embrace more ecologically sound practices, the operation was deemed to have become unsustainable for the volunteers involved."

This was noted in the Special General Meeting of Dissolution Minutes of Monday 24 February 2020.

The council's lack of support is a key factor. While sustainability is important, a more proactive council would have worked with City in Bloom to find a way to bring in sustainable displays alongside traditional colourful flowers for a time in the summer.

The annual competition did much instil civic pride and showcase the city.

This is so important to Brighton & Hove which is a tourist town that relies on visitors and the contrast with other tourist towns in our county right is striking – a look at the presentation of Eastbourne and Worthing right now puts Brighton and Hove to shame.

Many of the City's flowerbeds are in a poor state, overgrown with weeds and some filled with rubbish.

Examples include Viaduct Road and even outside Hove Town Hall.

What efforts will be taken to improve the current state of Communal flowerbeds and tubs, such as those on Viaduct Road and outside Hove Town Hall?

Will the Administration commission a report on the merits of bringing back City-wide City in Bloom Competition for 2022?

### **Reply from Councillor Heley, Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

The emerging planting plan for the city's parks and open spaces including flower beds, recognises the limited resources Cityparks currently has to maintain all of its areas to a good standard. In response to this, an option is being developed by the department to select 'high horticulture' areas in each park and to reduce the remaining beds, and borders, to limited maintenance only. This will enable us to improve the best bits and whilst minimising time maintaining the remaining areas. This change of focus is still being rolled out by the department.

Tubs have not been maintained by Cityparks for a long time and any tubs around the city are normally maintained by volunteers and occasionally by other council departments. The principle reason for this is watering as with the exception of a particularly hardy plant called Phormium the plants in them do not thrive without regular watering. Tub and basket watering rounds stopped in 2012 when 'In Bloom' was originally cut. Work is underway to tidy up shrub beds such as those at Hove Town Hall however there are no plans to reintroduce Cityparks maintained tubs. With the exception of tubs being used for traffic calming tubs on council land that are no longer cared for by volunteers are usually moved to another area where volunteers have requested them.

We do appreciate that there are tubs and planters in the city which are not being looked after by anyone and are scruffy. Without resources available for planting and watering the best option is to remove them. One of the projects that city parks will be taking forward is an audit of all of the planters in the city and to identify who looks after them, if they are not looked after whether a volunteer group or individual would like to do so and if not to remove them or in the case of traffic planting container cover them over so that they are tidy and cannot be used for rubbish bins. This is on our list of projects and we aim to progress this as soon as capacity allows.

The In Bloom competition was originally run by a council officer with volunteer support and a budget to cover events and additional floral displays. This was prior to the budget being taken to deliver budget savings. If members feel that it is not realistic to expect volunteers to run such a competition this would mean

reintroducing a budget to do it, detailed workings have not been done on this but it is likely to require in the region of 100k.

The volunteering pattern in the city has changed with very significant and volunteers are having a greater impact on our parks and open spaces than they ever have had. It is important to remember that it is not only this administration that is keen on sustainable horticulture, South East in Bloom changed the judging criteria in the 'IN Bloom' competition to encourage more sustainable displays.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the In Bloom Committee for what they have done and all of the other volunteers who do so much to improve our parks and open spaces.

Officers can prepare a more accurate costings with a break- down should members wish to consider proposing this at budget council.

### **(23) Councillor Theobald - Contractors**

Residents on Stoneleigh Court Patcham have reported their street being left in poor condition following recent contractual work by a telecommunications provider.

Residents have found it difficult to have the work remediated.

Does the Council have a system in place for monitoring the standard of work undertaken by contractors on City streets and responding to residents when it fall short of expectations?

#### **Reply from Councillor Heley, Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

The council receives many requests for access to the Highway under the councils permit scheme, looking at recent Stoneleigh Close Open reach works the original reinstatements were defected and remedial have been carried out by the utility. Inspectors will following up to check the site shortly to ensure it has indeed been finished properly.

### **(24) Councillor Theobald – Cycling on the Promenade**

Cycling on the promenade continues despite the display of notices indicating that cycling is not allowed. The continued cycling creates a danger for pedestrians.

Council employees make no attempt to impose the rules.

I have seen several letters on this subject in the Argus.

What efforts will be taken to enforce these bylaws in future?

## **Reply from Councillor Heley, Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

Since the start of Covid-19 lockdown, Seafront Officers have been undertaking daily quad bike patrols along the Brighton & Hove promenades. While the team are out they engage with the public with regards to safety messaging, and also enforce the byelaws with regard to dogs on leads and no cycling on the prom. During this time Seafront Officers have engaged with hundreds cyclists, and instructed them either to dismount or divert onto the cycle lane.

The Seafront Team operates an engage and educate policy rather than fines or notices. Seafront Officers are unable to issue a fine for a breach of the byelaw unless the Police are present to take the name and address of the perpetrator. The Seafront Officers undertake joint patrols with the Police wherever possible. However, the priority for the Police during the pandemic has been to engage with the public regarding Covid restrictions, and respond to incidents of crime and disorder. The Police do not regard cycling byelaw offences as a priority at this time.

It is also important to consider the fact that many people cycle on pavements and the promenade because the roads are not safe enough, which emphasises the desperate need for safe infrastructure for cycling on our roads.

### **(25) Councillor Brown – King George VI Avenue (River of Tulips)**

In April the Council accidentally cut down a display of tulips along King George VI Avenue, upsetting many residents.

This river of tulips was planted at public expense. One resident has said that although not native wildflowers, residents were assured at the time of planting by David Larkin that they would provide a corridor of habitat up the road as well.

Can you reassure the public that the administration supports the residents' river of tulips along King George VI Avenue?

What efforts will be made to make sure this mistake is not made again next year?

## **Reply from Councillor Heley, Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

As the spend on conventional flower beds decreased Cityparks carried out extensive bulb planting in verges and similar areas across the City to provide spring colour. To vary the displays from the daffodils and crocuses usually used species tulips were planted on King George VI Avenue these have not done as well as other bulbs and the display has deteriorated year on year. This spring this resulted in a mower operator not realising it was a bulb display and mowing over it which will have further damaged the struggling tulips. It is rare that bulb areas are unintentionally cut but unfortunately with staff turnover staff are not always aware of where bulbs were planted. The team leader for the area has been asked to make sure that staff are briefed not to cut the area next spring. Even if the tulip are dying out bulb areas are also useful for spring flowering

wildflowers and the insects that depend on them so we will be leaving the grass to grow long in this area in the spring.

**(26) Councillor McNair – Birch Grove Crescent (Poorly designed bins)**

The Council's General Waste Bins on Birch Grove Crescent leak litter due to a design flaw.

The cages inside the bins are too small for the shell. As a result, much rubbish slips down the space between the cage and the shell and returns to the street, creating a health hazard for local residents.

I have reported this issue to the Council and asked for the design problem to be fixed.

Can the Council advise the progress in rectifying this issue?

**Reply from Councillor Heley, Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

Housing are working closely with City Environment colleagues to resolve issues arising for residents with the bins at Birch Grove Crescent. This has been due to the number of bins and the design of the bin store, which had a lift up lid. This meant some of the rubbish was missing the bins when it was put in. In response we have removed the bin store and reverted to on street bins at this time.

We are reviewing design and funding options to resolve this issue and will engage with ward councillors and residents to agree a longer term more satisfactory solution.

**(27) Councillor McNair – 5G Mast Camouflaging**

Extra funding for camouflaging 5G masts was achieved at budget council by the Conservative Group.

It is good news that the new 5G mast in London Road by the Brangwyn estate will be camouflaged by trees. However, when will this take place, and what will it look like?

Can we have a guarantee that other 5G masts not requiring planning approval that may be erected in Patcham & Hollingbury in future will also be camouflaged?

**Reply from Councillor Heley, Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

The planting to camouflage the mast will take place this winter, it will consist of low growing woodland edge species such as hazel and field maple set back from the mast so that the control cabinets can still be accessed. We cannot say that future masts will be camouflaged as often there will not be suitable ground to plant on. We are keen to increase the tree cover in the city and where there is a suitable space to allow screening planting we will prioritise this. As

landowner, the Council has little control over masts erected on highway land but ward members will always be involved in any decisions on new masts on other council land such as parks.

In terms of Planning rules, all new masts and equipment over a certain size normally needs prior approval which means they don't need planning permission. This limits officer considerations to siting and appearance and camouflage can help address this issue.

**(28) Councillor McNair – Peace Gardens**

The work in the Peace Gardens to replace two benches and repair the paving has been going on for many months, and residents are frustrated with the progress.

When is it going to be completed?

**Reply from Councillor Heley, Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

Two benches will be installed on existing bench bases which will be repaired by the end of August.

**(29) Councillor Peltzer Dunn**

I would like to draw your attention to the following Platinum Jubilee event that would be ideally suited to Brighton & Hove City Council:

**Civic Honours competition** - Local authorities have the chance to showcase their civic pride, interesting heritage and record of innovation - putting their hometowns on the map and bringing greater prosperity and opportunity.

This would be an ideal opportunity for our City of Brighton & Hove, which embodies all these attributes.

Rare awards will grant winning towns and cities with 'city status' and 'Lord Mayor or Provost status' for the first time in 10 years.

Further information on how to participate can be found here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prestigious-civic-honours-to-be-awarded-by-her-majesty-the-queen-for-first-time-in-10-years?fbclid=IwAR3cs6vEN-WZGjyje\\_zNdaprH3S70zLHGmGUqiFzl-uvardrJURgCrPLY-8](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prestigious-civic-honours-to-be-awarded-by-her-majesty-the-queen-for-first-time-in-10-years?fbclid=IwAR3cs6vEN-WZGjyje_zNdaprH3S70zLHGmGUqiFzl-uvardrJURgCrPLY-8)

Please can you advise:

1. Whether Brighton and Hove City Council will participate in the Civic Honours competition for Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee?

If yes, when will planning commence for our participation in this Civic Honours competition?

**Reply from Councillor Mac Cafferty, Leader of the Council**

Further to a letter I received from Lord True on 8<sup>th</sup> June, I have asked officers to consider the guidance that has been published about the Civic Honours competition. There are three areas we can apply for: investment, the granting of

existing cities such as Brighton & Hove with Lord Mayoralty and Tree Planting initiatives. Planning is in any case already underway to commemorate key events in the coming year including the other initiatives that mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. Further to your query, this will include whether the city should make an application for Lord Mayor, which should be submitted before the 8<sup>th</sup> December.

**(30) Councillor Wilkinson**

Labour was pleased to work cross party with the Green Party in January 2021 in successfully asking for update our city's road safety strategy to include road danger reduction measures such as:

- creating an environment that supports the use of active travel methods, as they pose a lower level of threat to other road users.
- expanding interventions designed to cut drivers' speed.
- working on ways to encourage a reduction in journeys by motorised vehicles.
- measuring danger on our roads through metrics other than a reduction in casualty numbers.

Safe mobility around our city is central to the quality of life of all who live and work in Brighton and Hove. An updated road safety strategy will set out our vision for road safety and inform policies to achieve that goal. The citizens of Brighton and Hove should be able to go about their daily lives without being placed under undue risk of injury from traffic. Our city should be a place where it is safe for every child to walk independently to school.

Can you please provide details on the progress of this strategy?

Low traffic neighbourhoods are being successfully introduced both across the UK and abroad as a means of tackling traffic issues in communities.

As you know I have long supported my residents in championing the feasibility of creating a low traffic neighbourhood in my Central Hove Ward, something you said you support.

Labour also gained committee approval in March 2021 for officers to explore options for other Low Traffic Neighbourhood schemes and suitable complimentary measures across the city and begin work with member oversight on a wider Low Traffic Neighbourhood delivery strategy for the city.

Can I further ask that you provide details on the progress of this strategy?

**Reply from Councillor Heley, Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

Officers have begun work on the initial research phase of developing the new strategy which will also involve engaging with stakeholders such as Sussex Police over the coming months with the aim of publishing the new Road Safety strategy in the new year.

The development of a citywide Low Traffic Neighbourhood Strategy (and Policy) Framework will be informed by other work undertaken internationally and in the UK, as well as the work being taken forward now on the options for the Hanover

& Tarner area pilot project. It will enable us to assess requests from local communities against consistent criteria for a local area based on available demographic and transport data and evidence. This will enable the initial prioritisation of locations to ensure that we can maximise the potential benefits and outcomes, before embarking on a more detailed assessment of prioritised areas. Local community support and engagement will be a key part of this.

We have procured and will be appointing a consultant to assist with this significant work programme work very soon and officers will report on the draft strategy framework to ETS Committee later this year.

**(31) Councillor Barnett - Weeds on the pavement in Hangleton & Knoll**

The state of the pavements in Hangleton & Knoll has deteriorated and many are now overgrown with weeds.

Some weeds have become so large that they are growing into people's front gardens.

Something must be done before someone slips and falls and hurts themselves.

Can the Council confirm:

1. Is it the responsibility of Brighton & Hove City Council to ensure the pavements are free of weeds?
2. What is the council's current policy on removing weeds from the pavement?
3. Will the council arrange for weeds to be removed from all pavements in Hangleton & Knoll ward before Autumn?

**Reply from Councillor Heley, Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee**

A report went to ETS committee in 26 November 2019. The decision was made to end the use of glyphosate by the council for weed removal and that manual labour would be used to remove weeds as an alternative. It was made clear at committee that this would mean that there would be more weeds on hard surfaces but that this would be a benefit in terms of increasing biodiversity and habitats for insects. The budget for weed removal was increased by £33k and this enabled Cityclean to employ 6 additional temporary staff during the growing season to assist with weed removal. This approach was endorsed and confirmed again when the approach to weed removal was reviewed at ETSC in March 2021.

However since the new approach our ability to operate the service has been impeded by a difficult in recruiting and additional service pressures as a result of the pandemic and Brexit. There is a national labour shortage for manual labour roles. We are therefore behind in our programme of weed removal and we are having to prioritise weed removal where there are trip hazards, potential restrictions to mobility or risk of damage. Weed removal in Hangleton is on our list and the crews are about to start in this area very shortly.



Many residents are doing a fantastic job of removing weeds on public roads outside of their homes and in the roads and other places and we are grateful to those residents who have done this.

It should also be noted that we have many people contacting us who are delighted about the weeds and seeing the habitats increasing for insects and wild flowers growing in unexpected places. In fact we also receive complaints when we remove weeds.

