

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

The following questions have been received from Councillors and will be taken as read along with the written answer which will be included in an addendum that will be circulated at the meeting:

(1) Councillor Gibson - Home Conversions:

Please can you provide:

- a) The total number of home conversions over the last 3 years
- b) The number expected to be completed by May 2019
- c) The Number of housing units that will be achieved by the conversion of 43 Manor Hill

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

For the answer to this question, an assumption has been made that ‘conversion’ means the conversion of sheltered scheme studios to one bedroom flats and the conversion of redundant spaces in buildings and empty commercial space under the hidden homes programme only .

- a) The total number of home conversions over the last 3 years is 70 Units
- b) The number expected to be completed by May 2019 - by May 2019 we expect to complete an addition 7 units, bringing the total completed to 77 units
- c) The Number of housing units that will be achieved by the conversion of 43 Manor Hill – The conversion of 43 Manor Hill will achieve 3 units

(2) Councillor Gibson - Net costs of spot purchase and short term emergency accommodation:

Please can you provide a table setting out for the each years 2013/14 to 2017/8 net costs reported to housing and New Homes committee on 13th of June, a breakdown of each net cost of by each provider (i.e. Helgor, Baron, Colgate and Gray, spot purchase + any others used over these years) along with the number of places for households/individual placements offered by each provider?

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

Net costs of spot purchase and short term emergency accommodation:

Please can you provide a table setting out for the each years 2013/14 to 2017/8 net costs reported to housing and New Homes committee on 13th of June, a breakdown of each net cost of by each provider (ie Helgor, Baron, Colgate and Gray, spot purchase + any others used over these years) along with the number of places for households/individual placements offered by each provider?

<u>Net costs of spot purchase and short term emergency accommodation</u>	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18
Rent and Management fees					
Spot Purchase	345,687	1,002,115	1,321,921	1,793,228	890,966
Baron Homes	1,174,988	1,222,815	2,128,700	3,099,132	3,340,576
Brighton Housing Trust	29,343	0	0	0	0
Cinderella Hotel	22,860	0	0	0	0
Colgate & Gray	0	0	17,880	284,319	302,332
Helgor	566,205	708,239	912,574	875,522	936,685
Nigel Lindsay Kennedy	0	0	0	44,917	70,667
Smile2Live	331,376	347,821	281,781	0	0
Sussex Property LLP	0	0	0	21,600	64,800
Total Rent and Management Fees	2,470,459	3,280,991	4,662,855	6,118,718	5,606,026
Other Costs (such as security cost and removals & storage)	130,577	126,733	198,476	101,382	14,217
Income Collected	-	-	-	-	-
	1,739,056	2,002,605	2,938,846	3,824,354	2,806,522
Net Costs	861,979	1,405,119	1,922,485	2,395,746	2,813,721
Net Income from other Departments for use of units*	-345,535	-365,263	-450,261	-456,994	-45,395
Allocation of New Flexible Homelessness Support Grant **					-
					1,231,791
Net Costs*	516,444	1,039,856	1,472,224	1,938,752	1,536,535

The figures in these tables do not include the council staff time in managing and operating this service.

*In 17/18 £0.570m budget was transferred from Families, Children & Learning (FC&L) and Health & Adult Social Care (HASC) Directorates. This replaces the recharge for these areas.

** In 2017/18, the Government reduced the amount of HB payable by taking out £60 per week per property management fee replacing it with a grant. The allocation of the grant across the different accommodation types has been estimated based on the loss of housing benefits for each form of accommodation. The figure given at Housing Committee on 13th June excluded this grant figure.

(3) Councillor Gibson

For each of the years 2013/4, 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 please can you provide a breakdown of the net costs/surplus (i.e. net HB income) along with the average number of placement properties provide by each category over each of the years for:

- a) Properties private sector leased for temporary accommodation (on leases of 10 years or less)

- b) Properties leased to Brighton and Hove Seaside Homes as temporary accommodation
- c) Bed and Breakfast

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

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- c) Bed and Breakfast

a) Private Sector Leased

	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18
Lease payments	11,093,952	11,478,170	11,583,950	11,139,348	11,006,360
Other costs such as maintenance and repairs	214,154	433,671	427,549	621,745	826,785
Income (100% Rents less bad debt provision & loss of benefit subsidy)	-	-	-	-	-
	12,521,921	12,302,707	12,594,854	11,740,994	-8,399,323
Net Costs	-1,213,816	-390,866	-583,355	20,100	3,433,822
Net Income from other Departments for use of units*	-56,363	-145,402	-125,434	-23,886	0
Allocation of New Flexible Homelessness Support Grant **					-2,968,209
Private Sector Leased Net Costs*	-1,270,179	-536,268	-708,789	-3,786	465,613

b) Properties Leased to BHSCH

	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18
Rents (Agreed 91% payment to BHSCH)	2,590,905	3,378,065	3,630,292	3,950,127	4,241,933
Other Costs (Staff time, repairs, leaseholder charges & Insurance)	357,488	668,155	754,033	894,098	1,066,702
Income (Tenant rents and service charges)	-2,512,838	-3,378,072	-3,628,963	-4,048,478	-4,364,094
Income (Management Fees)	-533,073	-704,476	-768,876	-859,478	-947,390
Net Revenue Costs	-97,517	-36,327	-13,514	-63,730	-2,850

The value of the long term debt as at 31/3/2018, which is repayable when BHSCH has available monies, is £2,053,874

c) Bed & Breakfast and Short Term Accommodation

	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18
Total Rent and Management Fees	2,470,459	3,280,991	4,662,855	6,118,718	5,606,026
Other Costs (such as security cost and removals & storage)	130,577	126,733	198,476	101,382	14,217
Income Collected	-1,739,056	-2,002,605	-2,938,846	-3,824,354	-2,806,522
Net Costs	861,979	1,405,119	1,922,485	2,395,746	2,813,721

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Net Costs*	516,444	1,039,856	1,472,224	1,938,752	1,536,535

d) No of households by type of TA as at 31st March in each given year

Number of households accommodated on 31st March from P1e return to Government	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Private sector leased	601	662	776	845	878
Bed and breakfast and other short term accommodation	294	363	386	331	313
Seaside Community Homes as at 31st March	394	416	456	479	499
Total	1289	1441	1618	1655	1690

The figures in these tables do not include the council staff time in managing and operating this service.

*In 17/18 £0.570m budget was transferred from Families, Children & Learning (FC&L) and Health & Adult Social Care (HASC) Directorates. This replaces the recharge for these areas.

** In 2017/18, the Government reduced the amount of HB payable by taking out £60 per week per property management fee replacing it with a grant. The allocation of the grant across the different accommodation types has been estimated based on the loss of housing benefits for each form of accommodation. The figure given at Housing Committee on 13th June excluded this grant figure.

(4) Councillor Wares

On 11th October 2016, ETS Committee approved item 30, Pedestrian Crossing Assessment Priority List. Table 1 identified 10 top locations (an 11th location was added) and in particular crossing 9, Mackie Avenue. The proposed actions stated “implement”, the funding source was identified as from the 2016/17 Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the project was noted as requiring no additional funding.

On 29th June 2018, 18 months after the crossing list was approved, the Chair of ETS Committee advised that only 4 of the 11 crossings had been completed and “work is ongoing to..... identify additional sources of funding”.

Please could the Chair of ETS confirm the following:-

1. What has happened to the funds allocated in the 2016/17 LTP budget not spent on crossing 3 and 4 on Table 1 and Marine Drive on Table 1A. Crossing 5 was to be funded from s106 monies.
2. Which position is correct, the financial data confirming the available LTP funds for crossing 9 not requiring additional funds upon which the Committee decision to accept the recommendations was made or the Chair of ETS’ advice that additional funding to undertake crossing 9 had yet to be found.
3. The timetable to implement crossing 9, Mackie Avenue.

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

Thank you for your question in relation to pedestrian crossings. I will respond to your points above as follows:

1. The budget allocated within 16/17 for freestanding pedestrian crossings was £115,000, a proportion of this was utilised (£40,700) with the remaining balance allocated to future years. Since this report crossings 3 and 4 (Hangleton Link and Cromwell Road) have been delivered.
2. The budget allocated within 16/17 for freestanding pedestrian crossings was £115,000, a proportion of this was utilised (£40,700) with the remaining balance allocated to 18/19 budget which was £193,000. Of this budget £98,000 was utilised on scheme development and implementation. The budget for 18/19 is currently £151,000 which is intended to cover those schemes identified as priorities including Number 9, Mackie Avenue.
3. We are committed to delivering the Pedestrian Crossing Programme as agreed at ETS Committee within the available and profiled funding, including Mackie Avenue.

The design work for the pedestrian crossing facilities in Mackie Avenue near Ladies Mile Public House is currently underway and it is anticipated that the pedestrian crossing facilities in Mackie Avenue near Ladies Mile Public House will be implemented during the 2019/2020 financial year.

(5) Councillor Deane

Current work by Exeter University shows that effective action being taken against predatory species such as the Asian hornet, which presents a significant threat to our bee population, relies heavily on them being spotted and reported by members of the public. In view of Brighton & Hove's position on the south coast and proximity to Europe where they have become a major problem, what measures are being taken by BHCC along with partner agencies to enable residents to identify such species and to know where to report them..

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

Given the location of Brighton & Hove, this is a potential landing point for the arrival of new colonising species from the continent, which is an increasingly significant phenomenon with climate change.

Some of these new species could have potentially negative impacts in terms of the environment, people and/or economy hence there is a need for vigilance to report species sightings and take possible action both by professionals and potentially the public too. All species records are actively encouraged from people, for example through The Living Coast Unesco Biosphere programme's website and other communications, to be collected by the council's service

partner, the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre – ideally through records submitted using the ‘iRecord’ app for smartphones.

With regard to potentially problematic invasive species, there is a national ‘GB non-native species secretariat’ that oversees activity on ‘alert species’ of which there are 5 currently listed including 3 marine species as well as the Asian hornet. People are asked to submit records through a smartphone app like iRecord or there are other specific apps too such as ‘Asian Hornet Watch’ for example.

As the main impact from Asian Hornets would be on the resident bee population, and hence our own fruit crops, response is led by Defra. If we have sightings in Brighton & Hove (here is the relevant page to help with ID <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/alerts/index.cfm?id=4>) . Defra would dispatch bee inspectors from APHA National Bee Unit. The bee inspectors would set up a monitoring zone with traps to trace the focus of the activity and destroy the nest when found.

Yes, our pest control officers are trained to identify but we wouldn’t destroy as it’s important that the response is nationally coordinated rather than dealt with on a local level.

(6) Councillor Mac Cafferty - Council Tax Protocol

In areas where UC has been rolled out, demand for food banks has increased by 52%; while of the 498 Households on Universal Credit in the city 68% are in rent arrears.

Universal Credit (UC) is now live in Brighton and Hove. A person on UC can also claim Council tax reduction separately, and CTR entitlement is based on their UC award. However the nature of some of the language used in council tax collection letters can leave some of our residents afraid of engagement with the Council.

Council tax arrears is now the most common debt issue Citizens Advice help people with. Citizens Advice is calling on councils to commit to fair and effective debt collection around Council Tax and has set up a council tax protocol with the Local Government Association.

The protocol is already signed by 56 councils around the country and asks that Councils implement a range of proposals, including that they:

- do not use enforcement agents where a resident receives council tax support;
- publish their policy on residents in vulnerable circumstances;

Would the Administration please consider signing up to the protocol also?

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/campaigns/Council%20Tax/Citizens%20Advice%20Council%20Tax%20Protocol%202017.pdf>

Reply from Councillor Hamilton – Deputy Chair (Finance) of the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee

We had previously considered signing the protocol as our Council Tax collection principles and processes closely aligned to the protocol's standard. However we held back pending the introduction of Universal Credit and a softening of some of the definitions around vulnerability which we could inhibit our approach to providing a full welfare support service. The recently updated protocol appears to go a considerable way towards addressing these concerns. It is being considered by the Corporate Debt Board, an officer group that covers all areas of debt collection in the Council, as part of the work to update the council's debt policies.

The protocol actually states that councils should 'consider matters carefully and determine whether to pass to Enforcement Agents, based on individual circumstances of case'. This is in keeping with the current approach of the council tax service where Enforcement Action is very much a last resort, but ultimately it does on occasion take place.

