



# **GREEN PROPOSALS FOR THE BRIGHTON & HOVE BUDGET 2019-20**

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**Green Party**  
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## Foreword



### **Councillor Phélim Mac Cafferty, Convenor of the Green Group of Councillors**

A year ago, Northamptonshire County Council went bankrupt, exposing the rotten failure of cuts. As many as a dozen other councils are now looking in a similar state. Conservative government cuts have halved council funding since 2010. Business as usual has failed as much as Labour's manifesto promise 4 years ago - to 'get the basics right,' when cuts have already strangled key services.

This year's budget cuts funding for services that are used by some of our most marginalised residents. Greens have continued to try and reverse some of the worst elements, challenging cuts to budgets supporting people with learning disabilities, people recovering from substance misuse, vulnerable adults in precarious housing and services for people living with HIV. Our budget is also a clarion call for our precious environment. Just weeks after we pushed the council to declare a climate and biodiversity emergency, we want to boost the resources our council has ready to tackle climate change and protect our natural habitats and species.

We can only make six amendments to the budget but as in previous years, we continue to champion a new approach- guided by principles of prevention and protection for people and planet. Greens have identified funds for vital services without robbing one to pay for another, because as the Tories continue to drive home austerity, more than ever before we need local services that reach our most marginalised residents. Regardless of what Theresa May says, Tory austerity is continuing to hammer our city, and although we have a few amendments, we know we must do all we can to ensure our residents are not at the receiving end of this macabre project.

### **Councillor Ollie Sykes, Green Finance lead**

Green opposition proposals made within the constraints of Budget Council show the direction of travel for a new Green-led council for Brighton and Hove. Without making new cuts we have found resources to protect public health, day services, respite care and assisted travel for the elderly. We have found significant resources to protect our libraries. Importantly, we also have plans to reinvigorate the council's Sustainability Team to allow them to develop urgent actions to respond to climate change and biodiversity loss, following recent unanimous council resolutions of a climate emergency.

Our proposals also act on street homelessness by improving provision for supported accommodation, while reducing cost. These are humane, affordable, forward-looking proposals in pursuit of Green values. The budget put forward by the Labour Council lacks the new ideas, energy or effort our city's residents deserve. Although we only have six amendments, our proposals are good for the city and good for the council – we hope they have your support.

# Our principles

This is the Labour Council's budget and although we can only make six amendments, as in previous years, Greens have led with our principles of fairness and sustainability. Instead of taking from one service to pay for another, Greens have focused on alternative approaches that bring in new funding for the city.

Our proposals address homelessness, cuts to public health and social care, support for our communities and our climate change emergency. Our approach will also boost the council's own financial resilience.

## 1. Our work so far: Green budget success

## 2. A fairer budget – our approach

## 3. The value of prevention: spend to save

## 4. Priority areas:

- i. **Health and social care**
- ii. **Homelessness Action**
- iii. **Environmental Emergency**
- iv. **Community services**

## Appendix A: Green Group amendments

### **Amendment Summary:**

#### **Reverse or significantly reduce cuts to:**

- sexual health services
- substance misuse services
- residential, respite and short breaks for children with special educational needs
- day services for people with learning disabilities
- community and voluntary sector investment programme
- libraries
- community transport for the elderly
- community safety

#### **Boost budgets for:**

- supported accommodation, temporary and emergency accommodation;
- climate change mitigation and sustainability work
- community clean up and anti-graffiti tagging work
- furniture reuse and recycling projects

## Green budget successes: bringing money back into our communities

Consistent with previous years, our budget amendments for 2019/20 focus on the ways in which the council could spend to save money, without robbing from one service to pay for another. Our plans for this year maintain our spend-to-save approach and assert that prevention is better – and more cost effective – than a cure.

Our work on previous budgets shows that investing in services that prevent more complex problems is a smart approach.

While we can only make six amendments to the council's budget, Greens remain committed to protecting essential public services. We have worked tirelessly over the past three years to keep public money public and to bring millions of pounds back into the council, for example:

- Our aim to redistribute council funding more fairly by revising fees for private housing 'land search' charges to be more in line with costs for those who can afford to pay, e.g property developers, helped to reverse cuts in key housing posts. [1]
- Greens identified £0.208m for community and voluntary sector services in 2017, money which has gone towards supporting residents struggling with the cruel effects of Universal Credit. [2]
- In previous years, we have identified extra resources to reverse damaging cuts to youth work and early help, as well as community safety support for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) community. [3]
- Green scrutiny of loss of money through council outsourcing and private contracts means the council now works to better manage contracts with third party suppliers – an approach that will recoup over £1m. [4]
- In recent weeks, work done by the Greens has shown that more money is available for housing. £7m of this underspend will now go towards bringing emergency and temporary accommodation in-house. With the cost of paying private landlords for this service rising each year, the council stands to save money as well as ensure a better, more secure support service is available to vulnerable people at risk of rough sleeping. [5]

Last year, a budget deal between the Labour and Conservative party meant that Green plans to reverse some of the worst cuts in the 2018 budget and invest in renewable energy, housing and social care were rejected.

With more cuts planned for the years ahead, Greens are committed to an approach that ploughs funds into helping our communities become more resilient in the face of challenges still to come.

## A fairer budget

Instead of taking from one service to pay for another, our proposals are based on positive actions that seek to increase the income of the council, without shouldering the burden of a rising cost of living on those who are already vulnerable or on low incomes.

### Raising income without robbing services

Our budget plans generate increased revenue through challenging how much the council can bring in from services such as Highways and through exploring the methods that have been used to allocate money to new projects. The new income can then be spent on public services, without making further cuts the services on which residents rely for support.

For example:

- Money that could be used to protect public services is going unspent. Questions have revealed that Brighton Town Hall and Hove Station are routinely allocated money despite there being no costs associated with these projects or a development plan for the use of resources. At a time of budget cuts, these dormant funds could go towards supporting services that we know need urgent funding.
- The council funds services from two different budget pots – known as ‘capital’ and ‘revenue,’ with restrictions on the way these resources can be used. Greens have identified that transferring the cost of the council’s pilot ‘Field Officer’ project over to the council’s separate ‘capital budget’ would be permitted under existing rules and free up £0.312m from the revenue budget – the pot of money that councils are allowed to spend on public services. This means we can reverse some cuts, but without preventing the Field Officer work from going ahead.
- Currently the council loses in excess of £30,000 a year providing free parking for Brighton and Hove City Councillors in Norton Road Car Park and the Lanes. Removing this perk would free up funds that could be spent on our communities, boosting resources to help keep our streets free from graffiti and grime, and preventing cuts to community safety work.
- A 30-year ‘Private Finance Initiative’ with Veolia has locked the council into a £1bn waste management deal - but reviewing PFI contracts could save the council money. [6]

## Prevention is better than cure – a spend to save approach

Protecting budgets that prevent problems happening further down the line doesn't just have economic benefits, but social benefits too. For example, studies have shown that councils and commissioners stand to save up to four pounds for every one pound they spend on drug and alcohol addiction treatment, and that early intervention work in this area helps to cut crime and improve health outcomes. Alcohol misuse costs the council £107m a year due to the effects on community safety, health and the economy. The case for prevention has never been clearer. [7][8]

***“Much of the evidence was from residents describing how support earlier could have made their lives not only fairer, but, importantly, less dependent on expensive statutory services and costly late interventions.”***

*Brighton and Hove Fairness Commission[9]*

Budget cuts made in previous years have left many local services stretched beyond capacity, with local and national evidence pointing to the importance of boosting prevention work:

- Organisations working with children with disabilities have said 'families are being pushed to the brink of crisis,' and highlighted the rising demand for residential, respite and short breaks for families with caring responsibilities. 45% of family carers in the city have not had a break from their caring role in the past year. [10]
- Adult social care is under increasing national and local strain. In a survey of 47 of the city's GPs, 93% said further cuts to adult social care in the council's budget would make finding appropriate care 'much worse.' [11]
- Brighton and Hove has the second highest number of rough sleepers in England and it can take up to a year before suitable supported accommodation becomes available in the city. Evidence shows that more stable housing reduces broader public sector costs to the police, courts, prisons, probation and health services. [12][13]
- City-wide providers of domestic and sexual violence services have reported a sharp rise in the number of people seeking support, with organisations at times working 140% above the numbers they were contracted to support. Green and campaigner pressure pushed the Labour Council to reverse a £50,000 cut to this funding planned for this year. [14][15]

As in previous years, Greens have taken a 'spend to save' approach to the budget, recognising the wider value of investing in preventative services which help to avert more complex problems arising later down the line.

The sheer scale of cuts cannot be redressed by the six amendments allowed by an opposition group. However our proposals seek to minimise the impact of significant cuts to preventative services such as sexual health, substance misuse, short breaks and respite care and community safety.

## Support for Health and Social Care

In the context of shrinking national government funding, Greens have fought hard to protect public health services in our city, as well as to scrutinise and oppose moves to privatise and cut our local NHS services under the banner of ‘integration.’[16]

While we only have a limited number of budget amendments, Greens have sought to reverse or limit some of the worst effects of public health cuts in this year’s budget:

- **Reverse the planned £0.93m cut to sexual health services and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) services:**

Brighton and Hove has the highest rates of new sexually transmitted infections (STI) diagnoses and HIV prevalence outside of areas of London. Analysis has shown that further cuts in this area will disproportionately affect our young people, LGBT and BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) communities. [17] The council had pledged to become a ‘Fast Track City,’ and achieve higher rates (up to 90%) of diagnosis and treatment for HIV – a target that will be unrealistic without extra funding.[18]

- **Reverse the £0.53m proposed cut to funding for substance misuse services:**

Alcohol and drug misuse are significant issues in the city. Brighton and Hove ranks 4th highest of 152 local councils for the proportion of adults drinking at high-risk levels and a high need for substance misuse assistance. There are concerns that further cuts will lead to increased waiting times for rehab services, coming on top of the cuts made to the substance misuse rehabilitation contract in previous years. [19][20]

Millions will be lost from children and adult social care budgets this year, but protecting these services will save the council money, an approach backed by hard evidence. [21]

Our amendments seek to:

- **Reduce the proposed cut in residential, respite and short breaks for children with special education needs by £0.070m**

Local organisations supporting parent carers say that any further reduction in provision of short breaks could lead to significant inequalities and a breakdown of families, and that family needs for residential overnight stays remain high. [22]

- **Reverse the £0.050m proposed cut in directly-provided day services for people with learning disabilities**

Day services support people with learning disabilities to access activities and opportunities and are highly valued by service users and carers. It is estimated that by 2020 there will be an increase of people with learning disabilities eligible for local social care. [23]

## Homelessness action

More must be done to tackle the housing crisis in our city. Waiting lists for social housing are upwards of 17,000 people and there is a dire shortage of council homes.[24] The Labour Council promised to end rough sleeping by 2020 – yet under their leadership, rough sleeping has almost doubled.[25]

The Greens have fought for extra support to address these issues. We identified £7m of extra resources for housing that is going unspent by the Labour Council and pushed for this to go where it is needed most for some of our most marginalised residents: on lower rents, emergency and temporary accommodation and more council homes. Our proposals last year also led to the development of the new council-run homeless night shelter.[26]

Green amendments in this year's budget take action to prevent homelessness, address short-sighted cuts to supported accommodation and crucially, boost the support available to some of our most vulnerable residents.

### Supported accommodation

Supported accommodation provides a lifeline to individuals seeking to recover from homelessness and maintain greater independence, providing assistance with ill health, mental health and substance misuse.

Recent news has revealed that the Labour Council plans to end the provision of 26 supported bed spaces at the city's West Pier Hostel. [27] While the Labour Council has claimed that there will be no adverse effects, with 215 people currently on the waiting list for supported accommodation, including young people and those with mental health needs, Greens remain concerned that any drop in bed space will lead to poorer outcomes and a rise in rough sleeping. [28]

**If accepted, Green proposals will fund further residential placements for homeless people with high support needs for a further two years.**

### Council-owned emergency accommodation

Since 2013, the cost to the council of using private landlords to provide emergency and temporary accommodation has risen from £0.516m to £2.7m – a shocking increase of almost 400%. [29] As the costs continue to rise, budgets will continue to be stretched. Recent reports on the state of privately owned emergency accommodation also revealed that tenants frequently lack access to the support they need to recover or access help, but the council could provide this from rental income. [30]

**Greens want to see the council bring some of this accommodation 'in-house,' and boost the city's capacity to provide the support** and security that many vulnerable people need. This would be cost-effective for the council but also enable us to provide support and stability to people living in emergency accommodation.



# Environmental Emergency

Scientists from around the world have warned that we have just 11 years to stop global temperatures rising to catastrophic levels and that we must make unprecedented changes in ‘all aspects of society’ in order to avert climate chaos. [31]

This year Greens successfully pushed Labour and Conservative Councillors to recognise the damage being caused to our environment and declare a climate and biodiversity emergency. We need to take action urgently and expand the work the council does to mitigate climate change. In previous years, both the Labour and Conservative councillors slashed the council’s sustainability budget. This work helped us focus on how the council can lead the way on the environment, not cause further harm.

**Green amendments reinstate and increase the sustainability budget**, so that we can urgently deliver on work that will mitigate climate change and boost sustainability. Councils have a key role to play in managing the impact of climate change – but without the resources or capacity to deliver on this work, we will fail to support our communities to manage this challenge.

**In light of our climate emergency, this should be viewed as an essential service, and there are a number of areas this council must urgently explore:**

- Our dependence on fossil fuels is causing global warming – but it’s not just the environment that suffers. Many are left at the mercy of private energy companies and fluctuating bills. Investment in renewable energy offers proven benefits to residents, financial returns for the council and puts the city on a more environmentally sustainable footing.
- Analysis indicates that half of the UK’s existing heat demand could be met by district heat networks – reliable, cheap, locally sourced, low-carbon energy. This approach could also save over £30bn. [32]
- Despite public support for food waste recycling, 30% or more of the refuse we send for incineration in Newhaven is food waste. We should be making the most of this resource. Environmental groups in the city are analysing how we can turn food waste into fuel, to drive down energy bills for the poorest households and reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. [33]
- Solar energy significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions and improves air quality, but also offers a positive community investment for councils, reducing bills for councils and tenants. [34]
- Wildlife populations are plummeting and our city has a unique role to play, sitting between the downs and the sea. We need to increase work that protects species, habitats and biodiversity so we can play our part in preventing irreparable damage.
- Under the Green leadership of the council we became a ‘One Planet’ city, a plan for how we can create a healthier, fairer city that protects our planet – but progress on these objectives will stall without further capacity. [35]

## Our streets and city centre environment

One of the most common complaints from our residents is the state of our city centre and its streets. A Labour council that promised to 'get the basics right' has left the city languishing in litter, graffiti and grime. The CityClean waste collection service has been hit by cuts that went too far, too fast and overflowing bins have become a common and avoidable occurrence. On top of this, there is insufficient capacity to support our communities to manage the impact of grime, dirt and graffiti tagging.

More needs to be done to address our city environment and to make Brighton and Hove a more welcoming, clean and environmentally friendly place to live. Efforts to reduce rubbish ending up in landfill or in our oceans is work that goes hand in hand with our climate change targets.

### Community Clean-Up Fund

We know that many of our residents have grown frustrated at the state of the city and are now working together to help tackle graffiti tagging, dirt and grime. We want our communities to feel supported in this work without ending up out of pocket.

Green amendments create **a specific pot of money that our communities can access to help with clean-up work**. This would enable residents and community groups to access anti-graffiti tagging materials such as paint and removal kits, and could also go towards funding new street cleansing innovations that help to remove gum, grime and weeds without using damaging chemicals such as glyphosate. [36]

***"The anti-tagging task force in North Laine has been one of the most successful drivers in bringing the community together to help rid the area of the blight of tagging. There is a strong feeling [...]that we are fighting a rising tide of vandalism alone - with little or no help from the authorities. We would very much appreciate having a pot of money to draw on for essential supplies - and would immediately put it to good use for the benefit of Brighton & Hove."***

*North Laine Community Association*

### End of term furniture recycling

A number of organisations are already working hard in our city to make sure we reduce, re-use and recycle waste. Initiatives are already in place to support University of Brighton students to sustainably recycle any furniture and white goods no longer needed at the end of term, for example. [37]

More could be done by the council to kick-start similar initiatives for furniture re-use and recycling that would support student volunteers and other groups ensuring the sustainable disposal of household belongings. Similar initiatives take place at the University of Liverpool. [38]

**Green proposals create additional funding so that CityClean can do more** in this area. Given the outstanding recycling efforts made by many city local organisations, Greens also want to see the council communicate and promote initiatives that prevent waste entering the system in the first place.

## Community services: a city for everyone

Surveys of our city's residents routinely show that people living in Brighton and Hove feel that the city offers them a sense of belonging. The city also has a vibrant and active community and voluntary sector, with higher rates of participation in volunteering than the rest of England.[40]

In line with our focus on the value of prevention, Greens want to see a budget that protects the future of services that help our communities to stay healthy, happy and safe.

### Third sector investment programme

The council's own Fairness Commission found that investment in community and voluntary groups helps to address poverty and inequality in the city. Even very small grants result in less demand on public services - as well as improved health outcomes.

***“The role of the community and voluntary sector was frequently referred to as pivotal...able to reach groups, raise awareness of needs, and crucially, find effective ways of meeting those needs.”***

*Brighton and Hove Fairness Commission [41]*

Despite proven returns on investment through working with the voluntary sector, the Labour council are proposing to reduce the budget for the 'Healthy Neighbourhood Fund' – a pot of money designed to improve the health outcomes of communities experiencing multiple levels of deprivation.

### **Green proposals reverse the damaging cut to the Third Sector Investment Programme.**

In response to concerns over the future of community transport for the elderly, we also want to see **funding put back in to Easylink** – a service that reduces isolation, loneliness and poor health among older people by arranging for home transportation to community and shopping activities.

### Libraries

Last year over 26,000 people attended events in our city libraries, proving they are well used and much loved. Studies show that libraries contribute to community cohesion, health, and wellbeing for all.

***“There is still a clear need and demand within communities for modern, safe, non-judgemental flexible spaces, where citizens of all ages can mine the knowledge of the world for free.”***

*Sieghart Review of Libraries [42]*

We remain concerned that plans by the Labour Council to cut the library budget are a smokescreen for the closure of Hove Library. Labour has tried to close the library on several occasions, despite huge public campaigns. As austerity continues to affect our communities, **Greens amendments continue to invest in our libraries.** [43]

## Community first, not parking perks

Currently the council loses around £38,000 a year providing free parking for Brighton and Hove City Councillors in Norton Road Car Park and the Lanes. Removing this perk would free up funds that could be spent on our communities, boosting resources and preventing cuts to community safety work.

Assistance with travel where needed is still provided to councillors. Encouraging alternative forms of transport such as cycling, walking or taking the bus would also help the city meet its own sustainable transport and air quality targets.

If Councillors were prepared to forgo parking perks, they could **prevent a proposed cut in funding to the team that works to improve community safety**, reduce crime, anti-social behaviour, prevent hate crimes and support vulnerable people.

## Green Group Amendment 1

- Reduce one-off financial risk provisions of £1.352m to £1.065m, releasing £0.287m in one-off funding in the General Fund (GF);
- Recognising the expected contribution of the Contracts Management team to 2019/20 contract savings funded from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), transfer £0.058m (one-off) from the HRA Useable Revenue Reserve, increasing available one-off funding in the GF to £0.345m;
- Allocate this one-off funding to cover the short-term income pressures on commercial operations including garden and commercial waste for one year, releasing £0.345m in recurrent revenue funding.

Allocate £0.345m in recurrent funding as follows:

- Delete the £0.020m proposed cut to the Third Sector Improvement Programme Healthy Neighbourhoods fund;
- Delete the £0.053m proposed cut in Public Health funding of substance misuse services;
- Delete the £0.093m proposed cut in Public Health funding of sexual health services;
- Delete the £0.050m proposed cut in directly-provided day services for people with Learning Disabilities;
- Provide £0.129m in new funding to the Sustainability Team to provide staff and other resources required to expand activity in climate change mitigation and biodiversity protection and enhancement, following Council's unanimous declaration of climate and biodiversity emergencies in December 2018. This work may include development of citywide initiatives such as food waste collection, district heat installations, renewable energy development, biodiversity enhancement in the urban and rural estate and green infrastructure work.

## Green Group Amendment 2

- Remove the subsidy to Councillors' parking at car parks at Norton Road, Hove and The Lanes, Brighton, releasing £0.038m in recurrent funding;
- Increase income and savings targets as follows:
  - o Highways Consultancy increase by £0.005m;
  - o Planning Policy and Major Projects increase by £0.007m;
  - o Sports Facilities Client Responsibilities increase by £0.004m;
  - o Architecture and Design income increase by £0.010m;
- These measures together release £0.064m in recurrent funding.

Allocate £0.064m in recurrent funding as follows:

- Delete the £0.031m proposed cut in funding to the Community Safety Team;
- Provide £0.033m to create a recurring fund to help keep the City Centre looking at its best: a Community Clean-up Fund. To be used for anti-graffiti materials available for community groups and residents and towards sustainable street cleansing innovations such as hot foam technology to remove gum, grime and weeds.

## Green Group Amendment 3

- Under the Modernisation Portfolio, capitalise three years of the Field Officer project at a cost of £0.312m per year i.e. £0.936m in total. The £0.936 of capital funding required is to be taken from sums allocated in 2018/19 to Hove Station Footbridge (£0.500m) and Brighton Town Hall Workstyles (£0.436m);
- It is expected that savings resulting from the successful operation of the Field Officer project will allow the service to cover its own costs within 3 years;
- This releases £0.312m in recurrent revenue funding, to be allocated as set out below.

Allocate £0.312m in recurrent funding as follows:

- Reduce the £0.242m proposed cut to the Library service by £0.121m to help safeguard the future of our Libraries;
- Reduce the £0.140m proposed cut in Families Children and Learning residential, respite and short breaks for children with health problems and Special Educational Needs by £0.070m;
- Fund community transport for older people (for example, the Easylink service) with £0.038m;
- Fund Cityclean with £0.022m to provide logistical support to Universities and student volunteers to ensure reuse and sustainable disposal of student household furniture and belongings at end of term and to minimise fly-tipping;
- Provide an additional £0.061m to the Sustainability Team over and above the £0.129m provision in Amendment 1. This will provide additional staff and other resources required to expand activity in climate change mitigation and biodiversity protection and enhancement.

## Green Group Amendment 4

- Increase borrowing by £2.1m to provide additional GF capital funding in 2019/20 at an estimated annual financing cost of £0.091m over 40 years;
- Based on a viable business case, use the £2.1m GF capital funding to purchase accommodation for use for emergency and temporary accommodation, reducing spend with private landlords and thereby a) reducing the financial pressure on the GF Temporary Accommodation budget and b) enabling funding of the financing costs from GF savings.



## Green Group Amendment 5

- Through ongoing reviews of the contract, reduce the projected budgeted end of year balance in the Waste PFI Project Reserve from £4.081m to £3.681m, releasing £0.400m in one-off funding;
- Following the closure of the West Pier Project and St Patrick's, fund provision for two years at £0.200m per year of residential placements for 'high support' homeless people.

# End-notes

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