

Green plans to invest more than £27 million into climate action in Brighton & Hove



25 February 2021

The Green-led council in Brighton and Hove has put forward plans to commit to investing more than £27 million into climate action in the city to help improve the lives of residents and tackle climate change. [1]

In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic and despite swingeing government cuts, which have seen Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) lose £100 million over ten years of Conservative austerity, Brighton and Hove Green Party councillors have put forward their plans for a Green recovery in the city which will be decided at the authority's budget meeting on Thursday [25 February].

The plans include:

- £5.2m on the Brighton & Hove Warmer Homes Investment Fund which will make grants available to all residents in the city particularly low-income households. This will allow residents to update the insulation and heating systems in their homes, lowering both their fuel bills and their carbon footprint.
- A total of £7m on Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Investment Funds, which will provide funding to departments for projects that meet council sustainability priorities
- £1.7m combined to invest in parks and open spaces, creating new school streets, low traffic neighbourhoods and the expansion of the Brighton BikeShare scheme.

Green Party Councillor Phelim Mac Cafferty, leader of Brighton and Hove City Council, said:

"One year into the coronavirus pandemic, and with the climate crisis looming ever larger, it has become increasingly clear that it is down to local councils and communities to step up and deliver the kind of support and transformational change that the government is simply not prepared to do.

"Despite years of budget cuts we have prepared a budget which will not only keep local services on their feet and get people through this immediate health crisis, it will actually help improve all of our lives in ways that will tackle the spiralling climate emergency.

"This budget offers a Green recovery for Brighton and Hove, offering protection for the most vulnerable in the city, creating jobs and helping to build a cleaner, healthier and Greener future for us all."

The budget proposal would also see the creation of a £4m reserve fund to kickstart a huge retrofitting scheme for all council homes in the city by 2030.

The investment plans put forward would be paid for by a rise in council tax, with those on low incomes protected from any increase in payments, a responsible and necessary use of the council's reserves and sustainable borrowing at the current historic low rates.

Green Party Councillor David Gibson, joint finance lead on BHCC, said:

"Our priority is for a fair budget; where charges go up, we increase support for people struggling with council tax; and exempt low-income households from Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) increases.

"It's a budget for recovery – instead of slashing services and jobs in a recession, we have used a modest amount of reserves to cover some of the extra costs of the pandemic, leaving enough resources to invest in public services and recovery right now, when it is certainly most needed. Crucially, as we head towards recovery, these reserves are repaid.

"This budget also fights to protect residents from another huge emergency: our climate crisis. We've worked to create green jobs, promote community wealth, and aid recovery in public projects. Projects such as building much needed additional council homes, warmer homes, easier to heat and climate friendly, will make a huge difference.

"Planting trees, investing in sustainable, active travel options and supporting our cultural and tourism recovery will also be key to getting our city back on its feet, able to rise to future challenges and thrive again."

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Notes

1

Here is a full breakdown of climate action investment in Brighton and Hove City Council's budget:

- Solar panels for corporate buildings – £500,000
- Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Investment Fund (SCRIF) – £3.1m
- Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Investment Fund – Transport – £3.9m
- Brighton Bikeshare Replacement Programme – £467,000
- Pocket Parks – Parks and Open Spaces – £350,000
- School Streets – Transport – £50,000
- Low Traffic Neighbourhoods – Transport – £300,000
- Brighton & Hove Warmer Homes Investment Fund – £5.2m
- Climate Assembly Actions – £1.3m
- Domestic and communal heating improvements in council houses – £2.24m
- Funding over two years to replace inefficient heating systems across all council housing stock and to consider opportunities to improve the energy rating and identify projects that will help to contribute to the

target of being carbon neutral by 2030 – £4.8m

- Installation of a district heating network – £1.1m
- Home energy efficiency, insulation improvements and renewables – £300,000
- New Solar PV panels across council housing stock – £1.750m

Total – £27.057 million

- In addition to this investment, the council would put aside an extra £4m into reserves to go towards a retrofit scheme for all council houses. The authority aims to have a fully-costed report by November which will set out how the council's housing stock can be retrofitted over the next nine years and how much it will cost. In the meantime, consultation work will begin with residents.

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