

Brighton & Hove City Council – Chief Executive



Blessed with a sun-kissed coastal location, rich history and vibrancy to match any city in the world, Brighton and Hove now also has an ambitious new administration dedicated to harnessing those assets to benefit all residents.

Council leader, Cllr Bella Sankey, reckons the South Coast Sussex resort is the best place in the country to live and it's easy to see why.

Nestled between the sea and South Downs National Park, it has an abundance of green spaces and architectural heritage as well as a buzzing cultural scene – including England's largest arts festival, the UK's premier pride festival and one of the biggest fringe festivals in the world.

The city attracts millions of visitors every year and is increasingly drawing people from all over the globe as a place to live and work with its 280,000-strong population becoming ever more diverse.

Brighton is a welcoming and unusual place and that's part of why it has attracted so many people from different backgrounds,' explains Cllr Sankey. 'We have everything in this city and it's also a beacon. For example, our very large LGBTQ+ community is central to our identity.'

The city's diversity is matched by the sheer variety seen across the local economy with a range of firms attracted



Cllr Bella Sankey – Leader, Brighton & Hove City Council

to the quality of life on offer to employees and the excellent connectivity to London and Gatwick. But like other major urban areas it is also a place of inequality with some wards among the most deprived in the country.

After 20 years of minority administrations, May's local elections saw Labour swept to power with a sizeable majority.

Cllr Sankey believes this change

'There's a big adjustment going on already and we want to accelerate that with someone who will bring a fresh approach and provide that internal leadership'

– combined with the opportunity to recruit a new chief executive – gives the city a huge opportunity to tackle those challenges.

Previous chief executive, Geoff Raw, recently left to become managing director a new homes and jobs development company at Barking and Dagenham Council and the council is currently being overseen by former Tower Hamlets chief, Will Tuckley, on an interim basis.

From improving basic services across all parts of the city to bringing forward a number of major regeneration schemes, the new administration is striving to deliver 'a better Brighton and Hove for all'.

An ambitious housing programme aims to help young families and others stay in the city by creating new high quality affordable homes and ushering in tougher policies to improve the quality of private rented properties.

'This is a very exciting, historic moment,' says Cllr Sankey. 'We've not only got a majority Labour administration but one that won emphatically. We've been handed a huge mandate to take action to deliver on the promise and unfulfilled potential of our city.'

'After years of no overall control we now have the strategic, ambitious leadership that a city like ours deserves. We have some of the same complex challenges that large cities have with really entrenched economic disadvantage and we want a chief executive who will help us get to grips with that.'

One of their key tasks will be to drive forward a transformational change programme that is now under way within the council. In many respects it's about unleashing the potential of an organisation that has been stifled for so

many years, Cllr Sankey explains.

'Being in no overall control does something to the culture of an organisation and its workforce. It's all about being cautious and constantly trying to find political consensus and for the officers that saps so much energy and resource. Now we can be bolder and therefore we need to change the culture internally.'

'There's a big adjustment going on already and we want to accelerate that with someone who will bring a fresh approach and provide that internal leadership.'

'It will be somebody who is exceptionally talented and experienced and is a real people person who can "read" people and know how to get the best from them. We have incredibly talented people here and we need to communicate our values to them and inspire our workforce.'

Cllr Sankey is proud that her administration reflects the city's diversity in every respect and hopes to attract a wide range of applicants for the chief executive role.

Having grown up in Brighton in the 1980s and 90s, Cllr Sankey wants the city to reignite its reputation as an innovator.

'We saw back then that we can be quite trailblazing when we are at our best. I think we're reaching a time when we'll have the opportunity to do genuinely transformative things that can be rolled out more widely across the country.'

She adds: 'People in Brighton always have a story to tell. They're either those like me who were born and brought up here and love the place obsessively or who've come here and fallen in love with the city. Once the new chief executive arrives they'll be hooked.' ■



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Known as an iconic coastal city and outstanding place to live, we also grapple with inner city challenges and complex social issues. As a new administration with a strong political majority for the first time in two decades, we are poised to grip and tackle the issues our residents are facing. Everybody matters in Brighton & Hove and our new Chief Executive will share our love and excitement for the city. You will inspire our passionate workforce, empower our residents and harness the city's powerful community and voluntary sector.

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