

EXPERT OPINION: CLLR MOHAMMED ASADUZZAMAN



CLLR MOHAMMED ASADUZZAMAN is a Labour councillor for Hollingdean & Fiveways on Brighton & Hove City Council, where he serves as Cabinet Advisor for Small Business and Innovation. He brings around three decades of experience living and working in Brighton, combining his perspective as a local small business owner with a long-standing commitment to community representation, inclusion and social cohesion.

Before becoming a councillor, Mohammed was actively involved in community and multicultural initiatives across the city, supporting work focused on tolerance, diversity and inclusion. He served as Mayor of Brighton & Hove in 2024–25, becoming the city's first South Asian Muslim councillor to be elected to the role.

BRIGHTON & HOVE'S FUTURE: A CONNECTED COASTAL CITY FOR LOCAL BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY

Brighton & Hove has the opportunity to become one of the UK's leading examples of inclusive coastal regeneration under the proposed devolution programme.

The city already benefits from internationally recognised heritage, strong universities, creative industries, tourism, and a thriving independent business culture. However, future growth must ensure that local communities and small businesses are strengthened rather than displaced by large-scale corporate expansion.

The identity of Brighton & Hove has always been shaped by independent enterprise and cultural diversity. Areas such as North Laine and The Lanes attract visitors because of their independent shops, cafés, markets, galleries, and hospitality venues. These businesses are not only economic assets but part of the city's social and cultural identity.

Under devolution, investment in transport, regeneration, tourism, and infrastructure could bring major opportunities. However, rising rents, increasing business rates, and large corporate developments risk pushing out independent traders and creative SMEs.

A successful strategy must therefore include protections for local businesses through targeted business rate relief, affordable commercial spaces, local procurement policies, and regeneration funding linked to community benefit.

Creating a safer business environment is equally important. Independent retailers and hospitality venues need safe streets, better lighting, stronger neighbourhood policing, improved evening transport, and coordinated support between businesses and local authorities. Economic confidence grows when communities feel secure and connected.

Brighton & Hove should also strengthen its international identity through culture, sport, and trade.

A future Commonwealth Sports and Trade Fair could bring together tourism, youth sport, education, local enterprise, and international partnerships while generating year-round economic activity. Importantly, local SMEs and community organisations must be fully included in these opportunities rather than overshadowed by larger corporations.

A key proposal within this wider vision is the development of Brighton Open Market as a modern civic arena and multicultural exchange hub. The market already serves as one of the city's most important independent trading spaces and community gathering points. Under a wider regeneration strategy, it could evolve into a year-round civic destination supporting:

- ☐ local traders and food entrepreneurs
- ☐ cultural performances and exhibitions
- ☐ youth enterprise programmes
- ☐ small business showcases
- ☐ multilingual community events
- ☐ international trade and cultural fairs
- ☐ community wellbeing and recreation activities

This civic arena could also include a “Linguistic Monument” celebrating the many languages and cultures that contribute to Brighton & Hove's identity.

Through multilingual design, public art, poetry, and storytelling, the space could help multinational communities, international students, migrant families, and visitors feel a stronger sense of belonging and representation within the city.

The city's heritage and cultural economy remain central to this vision. Landmarks such as the Royal Pavilion and events including the Brighton Festival and Brighton Fringe continue to generate international visibility and economic value. Yet their long-term success depends on protecting grassroots creativity, affordable workspaces, and independent cultural venues.

Educational institutions including University of Sussex and University of Brighton can further support inclusive growth through enterprise partnerships, innovation programmes, and local skills development linked directly to community needs.

Brighton & Hove's future success should not be measured solely through investment figures or large developments. It should be measured by whether independent businesses survive, whether communities feel represented, and whether growth creates opportunity across all parts of society.

If managed carefully, Brighton & Hove can become a national model for inclusive coastal regeneration — a city where economic growth strengthens local enterprise, supports safer communities, celebrates multicultural identity, and creates a lasting sense of belonging for everyone who calls city as home.

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