

Member Forum

18 July 2017

Statements from councillors



Procedural note:

STATEMENTS FROM COUNCILLORS:

- A maximum of 1 minute shall be allowed for the presentation of each statement (subject to overall time constraints).
- There shall be no debate on the statements and the Lord Mayor shall refer them to the Mayor for information/consideration.
- Statements will be dealt with in the order of receipt (subject to time).



The following member statements have been submitted – full details are attached:

- CS 01 - Cllr Anthony Negus – Neighbourhoods consultation
- CS 02 - Cllr Gill Kirk - Democratic Accountability of STPs through the council's Health and Wellbeing Board
- CS 03 - Cllr Jo Sergeant –
 - a. Kings Weston iron bridge
 - b. Consultation on libraries



STATEMENT CS 01

Statement by Cllr. Anthony Negus

(LibDem, Cotham)

Neighbourhoods Consultation.

The consultation document and this exercise is flawed. I have been barred from seeking to call it in because it is not a decision from this Administration. Instead this is a request to our citizens to comment upon options of such poor quality and limited range that their endorsement or rejection will tell us little. But the resulting decisions will be validated by this consultation process and then unlikely to pass the test for challenge by calling-in. So I must raise my concerns here.

Proposals to address the budget cuts to libraries, neighbourhood partnerships, school crossings and public conveniences have not been presented to Neighbourhoods Scrutiny commission despite regular requests for updates.

The proposals to implement the cuts are justified in the accompanying documents but reflect little attempt at mitigation.

Apart from the context of savings, there is no explanation for each of the single proposals with 3 minor variations. I understand why wiping out the Neighbourhood Partnerships rather than leaving the legally recognised structure across the city unfunded was considered necessary to secure central control of all of the city's CIL funding. But, politics aside, I can see no other reason why successful innovative models of libraries reorganisation, such as Public Service Mutualisation, were not suggested instead of the fully-staffed municipal model rejected in the last two consultations but now with even more devastation around the whole city. Let's be clear, the Evening Post caption "Bristol City Council is currently consulting on whether to close 17 of the city's libraries" is not accurate. The consultation is only about which 17- and even then there is little choice.

It is not acceptable for the Administration to cite the accompanying comments box in the consultation papers as an exemplar of free choice. People should be presented with the most meaningful, sustainable choice and not be faced with responding to a single solution which does not reflect their hopes. If the administration is genuine about wanting to see alternatives why have all their preferred solutions been more negative than necessary? This will sap any remaining hope. For there are other viable and sustainable options within the budget envelope which simply don't fit with the ideology of this administration. In the case of libraries, many of them are explained in the DCMS roadshow that went to only 4 UK venues, one of which was M-shed in Bristol, attended by senior BCC officers.

Hindsight may show that Brexit came out of blinkered ideology driving better judgement. If questions are to be asked of our citizens upon which a decision is to be

based we should be setting a higher standard of reasonableness and trust. I would personally wish to include imagination and research but that might be too much. This consultation has failed that test and should be withdrawn. It does not serve its purpose – or the people who have the right to expect better consideration from its civic leaders.

Cllr. Anthony Negus

(LibDem, Cotham)

STATEMENT CS 02

Democratic Accountability of STPs through the council's Health and Wellbeing Board

The Local Government Association (LGA) which represents more than 370 councils in England and Wales, has found that the majority of councillors responding to its poll do not feel they have been involved with shaping, commenting on or approving the NHS's 44 Sustainability and Transformation Plans.

STPs are place based plans introduced by the government to redesign and overhaul local health and care services, to cope with increased patient demand by focusing on better integration of health and social care, and treating more patients in the community and away from hospitals. The STP for our area covers Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset.

But all STPs also include huge efficiency savings and many councillors and residents have raised concerns that these financial constraints mean that STPs cannot deliver on their objectives or bring benefits to their local communities. There has been a lack of information provided to the public and lack of involvement of local councillors (who represent their communities) in the STP process.

Many citizens are still confused by the Government's rapidly changing health policy, which includes movement towards Accountable Care Systems and the introduction in some areas of the Capped Expenditure Process (CPE) which could involve closing or downgrading wards and services, extending waiting times, restricting NHS funding for some treatments and limiting the number of operations carried out by non-NHS providers, in order to meet so-called "control total" budgets in 2017/18.

This uncertainty has been exacerbated following the General Election. Now that we have a hung parliament, and the government is likely to be preoccupied with Brexit negotiations, it may not be able to deliver the legislation it had previously intended to give STPs a statutory underpinning.

The LGA are calling for the NHS to act now to involve councillors in a meaningful way as equal partners in STPs, making the STPs more democratically accountable through local health and Wellbeing boards. Health and Wellbeing boards sit within the council and bring together political, clinical and community leaders to plan how best to meet health and wellbeing challenges of their local areas. They are able to take a holistic view of health care and argue for allocation of resources where they create most long term benefit, including prevention of ill health, and creating a healthier city through considering health in all policies of local government, including social care and housing.

I would like to see Bristol's Health and Wellbeing Board being given a chance to review local STP plans and involving local politicians as equal partners with the NHS in planning the future of our health services.

We need to have broad and open discussion on the Governments plans for Accountable care Systems and Capped Expenditure Process and how these policies will affect residents in Bristol, South Glos and North Somerset. This will enable

councillors and residents to feel they are being included and actively involved in health plans for their area.

Gill Kirk, Councillor for Lockleaze

STATEMENT CS 03

a. Kings Weston Iron Bridge

In the light of information received from the Transport Directorate that "as the bridge is not strategic to the transport network, it is not currently a priority for funding from within the capital programme" and that its repair is "certainly not possible within this financial year", I am very concerned that the people of Sea Mills, Coombe Dingle and Kings Weston, as well as visitors to the Kings Weston estate are going to be left indefinitely without a safe pedestrian crossing.

I am also concerned about the several reports I have received about people accessing the Bridge in its current state (I have received several reports of it being accessed in its current state).

If we are to give up on the idea of the Bridge being a pedestrian crossing, we need to know that a decent alternative will be offered to local people, including the many children travelling to and from local schools, and local residents feel that the current temporary crossing arrangement is not safe, despite officers' claims to the contrary.

I would also add that the ongoing preservation of the Bridge, as a listed structure, whether in use or not, is a concern to many, within the local community and outside of it. To that end I would hope that applications are made to all the relevant heritage bodies outside of the Council in order to identify (and apply for) any alternative sources of funding.

This should be in addition to working with neighbouring local authorities (and possibly WECA) to ensure that local businesses are discouraged from using routes that involve their large vehicles travelling under the Bridge, as well as ensuring that relevant signage is placed in appropriate locations and that satellite navigation systems are updated with alternative routes.

b. Consultation on Libraries

The current government's austerity programme has resulted in BCC having a drastically reduced budget. This is led to a £1.4million proposed cut to the Library Service's annual budget. I understand that this is **currently** unavoidable.

However I am disappointed in the wording of the consultation that was launched last month, in that it is not sufficiently explicit about the alternatives to closures. People do not understand that no funding does not necessarily mean closure. They may feel that in order to respond they have to choose one of the three options, rather than coming up with an 'option 4'. They may also feel that they simply have to fight to keep their own library open at the expense of another library. For example, the idea of Sea Mills Library remaining 'open' at the expense of Henleaze and/or Bishopston.

My concern about the three options offered is that they will lead to the death of the the culture of libraries as places of learning for many people in areas where they could be of most benefit, as well as the loss of a free and social place to go for isolated older people and parents at home with young children.

The assumption that the accessibility of Central Library and the other proposed 'area libraries' by bus will make them alternatives to a local library is in my view very flawed. It is unlikely in my view that more people will travel because many people cannot afford the time or the costs of the travel.

Whilst I understand that, in the short term it is not viable to look at ways of using the Holden Building to fund other libraries in the city and alternative models for running local libraries, I am very worried that by going down the route of one of the three options, we will be throwing the baby out with the bath water.

Councillor Jo Sergeant

Avonmouth & Lawrence Weston ward