

CABINET - 31 October 2013

Public forum questions / replies

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B.11.1 Cllr Rob Telford

QUESTION A.1

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Tim Leaman

My constituents in Lawrence Weston are desperate to see the former City of Bristol College site redeveloped. An overwhelming majority of residents have told us they want a major superstore chain to open here. Will you give your word that you will throw your weight as elected Mayor behind efforts to secure a supermarket on this site?

Note: Cllr Leaman has withdrawn this question on the basis that it was answered by the Mayor as part of questions asked at the 22 October Overview & Scrutiny Management Board meeting.

QUESTION A.2

Question to the Mayor from Even Clarke

May I please ask the Mayor Mr Ferguson if he and his cabinet, and indeed all councillors, are now understanding of the new city deal as authorized by HM Treasury, whereby the council is now entitled to hold all business rates collected and simply pay HM Treasury 14% of total annually allowing the council to use collected business rates as capital to fund loans that will enable all capital programmes to be controlled directly by council, ensuring that business rates paid by Bristol businesses are indeed spent in Bristol thus simplifying the entire process?

REPLY:

I can assure you that Cabinet members and I are fully briefed on the City Deal and its implications for Bristol. Cllr Gollop holds portfolio responsibility for this area and receives regular briefings from officers on the continuing development of this important programme.

QUESTION A.3

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Campion-Smith

Less than a year ago the Mayor gave full support to a Green Party proposal to axe the Adult Learning Service, with annual savings of £200,000. Thanks to the efforts of former council leader Councillor Janke and others, changes are under way to give this service a long-term future. In a climate where he thought £200,000 too much for a service which is vital for the health and well-being many people across the city, how does he justify spending £195,000 on his Make Sundays Special scheme, which has operated for five days only?

REPLY:

This is a puzzling comparison.

Make Sundays Special was delivered for little more than half of the £195k original budget, coming in at around £105k. It delivered great benefit to thousands of people, with exit polls showing month on month approval ratings of 98% - 100% from people visiting the events. They've attracted widespread interest in Bristol and beyond and businesses in the area have reported real boosts in trading – many requesting that streets are freed of traffic every Sunday. In addition it has received positive national and international attention for Bristol, was the BBC News website's top hit of the day and played a vital role in our bid for European Green Capital.

My approach to the Adult Learning Service is an entirely separate issue. Any spend needs clear justification and I was convinced that the ALS delivered poor value for money. Changes were clearly needed and I thank Cllr Janke for her diligent work as Assistant Mayor in helping develop and deliver those to a point where I am far more content that the service provides the right outcomes for the right price.

QUESTION A.4

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Glenise Morgan

1. We are told nothing of what is in the budget, even at the level of party group leaders. However, many of us know from experience of being in administration here that, year after year at this stage in the budget process, the job of politicians has very often been to go through the officers' suggestions for savings with a fine toothcomb, removing items that would have had a disastrous effect on our services to the public had they gone through. One vulnerable area has been public toilets. Can the Mayor rule out any closures of public loos over the next three years?

REPLY:

Officers have prepared an initial budget construct which is currently being reviewed with me and the Assistant Mayors before being published for full consultation with the people of Bristol, including all councillors, who will have ample time to examine the proposals. Nothing can be ruled out at this stage and no decisions have been made. I would welcome your support throughout the consultation period in identifying savings opportunities to address the £90m budget gap.

The draft budget is to be released on 18 November and, after listening carefully to the public's views expressed through the consultation process, together with the challenges raised through Scrutiny Committees and Party Groups, changes may be incorporated in the final proposed budget for Cabinet to consider on 16 January 2014. The budget proposal will be submitted to Full Council to be debated and perhaps subjected to further change at the meeting on 18 February 2014.

2. Likewise, another vulnerable area has been community transport grant. Can the Mayor rule out any cuts in the budget for community transport grant over the next three years?

REPLY:

Please see my answer to question 1. Nothing can be ruled in or out at this stage.

QUESTION A.5

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Christian Martin

After your photo-opportunity with David Cameron last week, the Evening Post reported that you had spoken about a Bristol energy company “which would generate power from various green sources”. This was described as part of something called “the vision”, presumably, yours, George. It said the idea of such an energy company had been, I quote, “floated in the past”.

In fact, George – I assume you briefed the Post – you know as well as I do that the process of setting this company up was well under way when you took office and that it was the Liberal Democrats, led at that time by Councillor Barbara Janke that secured the funding to get the project started. In fact, the council’s own communications team put out a press release on January 19, 2012 to this effect.

You spoke at the Question Time session at OSM last week about giving credit where it’s due. Since you raised this subject with the Prime Minister, I imagine you think it very important. It is important, which is exactly why the Liberal Democrat administration worked hard over a number of years to get it started. Will you now give Barbara Janke’s Lib Dem administration the credit for having done this and will you ensure that the facts about the energy company are properly reported by the media?

REPLY:

Firstly you demean Bristol by describing a serious meeting with the Prime Minister as a photo opportunity. We should all celebrate that Bristol is receiving such a high level of attention.

Plans to establish a citywide energy services company to spearhead renewable energy and energy efficiency projects were indeed launched on 19 January 2012 by the then Bristol City Council Leader Barbara Janke.

I have repeatedly given credit to the efforts of all those involved in supporting Bristol’s bid to secure Green Capital status including both administrations. In the same vein, I completely acknowledge this achievement by the previous Liberal Democrat administration, which sets Bristol very positively on the road to becoming a more sustainable and resilient city and was, incidentally, pleased to be part of the discussions with officers at the time.

I should point out that I took office 10 months after this announcement was made, and so it very much falls to me and my administration to continue to champion and drive this work forward, which is exactly what I was doing by raising the topic with David Cameron when we met.

QUESTION A.6

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Christian Martin

Earlier this month I had to write to the City Director to complain about poor communications between officers and the public, in this case the many months it took to get a manhole cover restored. The issue may sound trivial, but the frustrating lack of effective communication with members of the public should be a matter of grave concern. Now I hear that we are not responding quickly to complaints about people's bins not being emptied. And when a pensioner goes to Phoenix House to hand in an application for a bus pass, he or she is obliged to queue for long periods – and put up with a lack of courtesy from staff – simply because there are too few staff on duty. What impression does this give of the council's attitude to customer care and what will you do improve it?

REPLY:

Customer care is clearly extremely important and the communication we have with citizens is obviously at the heart of that. As well as the citizen service points, the telephone service and the web, we also now use Twitter to report missed bins, fly tipping and graffiti – and we have 15,000 followers on that service.

We're expanding the use of the web and social media. Using Twitter or the web site is quick for the customer, cheaper for us, and it frees up the walk in customer service points and telephones for those who don't want to use the web or social media, improving customer service all round.

The Councillor's question isn't specific about what he's heard regarding delays to people's bins not being collected, but our contractor Kier/May Gurney is currently collecting well within the Service Level Agreement. They missed a reported 140 black bins last month and then went back and collected 138, which is within the SLA target (98.5%) and missed 289 recycling collections and went back and collected 287, so also within the SLA (99%).

The SLA is that Kier MG will collect on the same day if the issue is reported before 12pm, any issues reported after 12pm are collected by 2pm the next day.

The average time for our team to phone to pick up the telephone when this is reported is 75 seconds or of course much less if reported on Twitter or the web.

If the contractor decides not to collect waste/recycling, then they take a picture and state why they didn't collect (e.g. the recycling box was contaminated with non-recyclable waste or the black bin was not presented by 7am), which our telephone staff can report to the customer.

The second point raised is about wait times at Phoenix Court. The standard we have is that we will see customers within 15 minutes, and last month that was achieved across all service points. In fact, at Phoenix Court there was an

average wait time of 13 minutes and 7 seconds. We're always trying ways of reducing wait times, at the moment we're using appointments for some services that typically take longer than others such as Housing Benefit work. We're looking at ways to reduce wait times for people handing in documents, but we need to make sure that people hand in the right documents and they're not fraudulent, as well as making sure documents get back to the customer safely.

There are busy times in the CSPs where queues are longer of course – Monday mornings being a typically busy time.

We're designing a new Citizen Service Point as part of 100 Temple Street offices to ensure we have capacity to deal with face to face customer service.

The comment from the Councillor about discourteous staff is rather general. We get very good feedback from customers about staff in customer service points and the contact centre with satisfaction levels of 95% - complaints about discourteous staff are rare. When that happens, appropriate action is taken.

QUESTION A.7

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Christian Martin

1. The Mayor has been to France and the United States recently. He is shortly off to China. All of these visits take him away from his main job - running Bristol. Could he tell us who is running Bristol while he is away? Is he letting it being run by the very faceless bureaucrats he railed against when he was campaigning to become Mayor last year? And what tangible economic benefits will he be bringing home from his foreign travels?

REPLY:

When I stood as a Mayoral candidate I made it absolutely clear I would be totally committed to banging the drum for Bristol locally, nationally and internationally. It is politically naïve and particularly parochial for Cllr Martin to imply that my 'main job' is 'running Bristol' when 8,000 or so people are employed to work alongside me in delivering the 700+ services the City Council provides. Each invitation I accept is carefully researched and evaluated to ensure it will add maximum benefit to Bristol – both tangible and intangible.

When I am fulfilling Mayoral duties away from Bristol I remain contactable at all times, and I leave in situ my highly respected Deputy Mayor, Cllr Geoff Gollop, and highly competent City Director, Nicola Yates.

It is too soon to report back on the tangible economic benefits as a result of my recent trips to France and the United States, but in the same way that I have been completely transparent about what I am doing when overseas.

<http://www.bristol.gov.uk/press/bristol-global-spotlight-mayor-prepares-busy-international-and-domestic-diary-dates>

<http://www.bristol.gov.uk/press/bristol%E2%80%99s-mayor-takes-world-stage-remaking-cities-congress-pittsburgh>

Cllr Martin can rest assured that I shall share a detailed update on progress before the year's end. But my main thrust is to get on with promoting Bristol and not to spend too much time and money justifying it.

2. On the BBC's Daily Politics Show last week (October 21), the Mayor said that Britain's other cities – which voted against having a Mayor in referenda last year – would in 10 years' time be "crying out for having mayors because you get a much more direct and quicker and probably more informed decision-making process as a result of it". Direct? Quicker? More informed? Could the Mayor give one example of each of these alleged benefits of having a Mayor – examples in each case of improved outcomes?

REPLY:

I really don't think I should spend too much time justifying this either but...

In response to very real concerns about the effect of the original proposed route of the Bus Rapid Transit system and its potential effect on the historic harbour I made a firm decision in the face of a political outcry to secure significant changes to the route, whilst protecting Government funding – an example of direct decision-making unhampered by party politics and annual elections under a Mayor with a four year term.

On taking office I made an immediate decision to revoke the recently imposed Sunday street parking charges without having to take the measure through a party group or Council meeting, which together with Make Sundays Special have proved so popular.

There are many other examples ranging from the decision to pursue the much needed Arena project with a level of determination that has not been seen in the past, to the decision to press ahead with Residents Parking Zones that have been considered in the past but required political courage unhindered by annual elections. I will also risk saying that I do know that the jury for European Green Capital was particularly impressed that I was able to make commitments that no city leader in Bristol would have been able to make in the past – although I give full credit to all those who did fine work in putting us into that pole position.

Apart from all this it is clear that when in London, Brussels or the rest of the world, a mayor elected by the whole city carries much more weight than those leaders who emerge via a political process.

QUESTION A.8

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Christian Martin

Can the Mayor confirm that Bristol City Council does not employ anyone under Zero Hour Contracts and that no outside contractors or companies hired to undertake work on behalf of BCC have Zero Hour Contracts with their employees undertaking work on behalf of BCC? Can he confirm that BCC has a policy banning Zero Contract Hour contracts?

REPLY:

I received a similar question from Cllr Pearce regarding the use of zero hours contracts at the Cabinet meeting of 25 July 2013. Set out below is a copy of the questions and the responses to Cllr Pearce:

Question – Zero Hours Contracts

From: Cllr Steve Pearce (St George East Ward)

Reply from the Mayor:

1. *Does BCC have any employees on zero-hours or minimum hours contracts?*

REPLY:

BCC does not have any employees on zero hours contracts.

We have tutors in the Adult Learning Service who have annualised hours contracts, an example of a minimum hours contract. The sum of these annualised hours amounts to no less than 18.75 hours per week. The arrangement we operate is that we guarantee to provide the tutors with at least the equivalent of 18.75 hours per week, on average over the year, to account for peaks and troughs of work, e.g. some weeks they may only do 5 hours, others they may do 40.

In our experience, in this instance, these arrangements work effectively and fairly for both employee and the council and are based on a year-on-year assessment. In practice the amount of work we've actually been able to provide tutors with has never fallen below 18.75 hours.

2. *Does BCC employ contractors that service BCC contracts using employees on zero-hours or minimum hours contracts?*

REPLY:

As a council we do not routinely monitor individual providers contract arrangements. Zero hour contracts are currently used by some home care providers. Rather than focussing on exactly how providers recruit, contract or pay staff, BCC uses Quality Assurance and feedback to establish an overall picture of the quality of the provider, the quality of services and the impact they have on vulnerable people's lives.

We do not currently monitor suppliers for their use of minimum hours contracts.

3. *Does BCC employ contractors that have any employees on zero-hours or minimum hours contracts?*

REPLY:

See response to Q2. In addition, we do not routinely monitor the types of employment contracts our suppliers use generally with their wider workforce.

4. *Does BCC use suppliers that service BCC contracts using employees on zero-hours or minimum hours contracts?*

REPLY:

See response to Q2.

5. *Does BCC use suppliers that have any employees on zero-hours or minimum hours contracts?*

REPLY:

We do not routinely monitor the types of employment contracts our suppliers use generally outside of servicing BCC contracts directly.

6. *When commissioning suppliers of goods or services, does BCC vet for employees on zero-hours or minimum hours contracts?*

REPLY:

As stated in the response to Q2, we absolutely recognise the negative impact on staff of zero hour contracts and other contractual arrangements that offer little structure or security to low paid staff. As an example in future letting of contracts the quality of staff terms and conditions a provider will offer will be a key part of the assessment criteria in awarding a contract.

We do not currently monitor suppliers for their use of minimum hours contracts.

7. *What is the Mayor's view on employers who use zero-hours contracts as a way of cutting staff costs?*

REPLY:

Of course I think zero hours contracts are less desirable than those that afford greater job security to employees.

These responses address your central question. In respect of whether the Council has a policy on banning zero hours contracts, the answer is "no".

QUESTION A.9

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Christian Martin

We are told nothing of what is in the budget even at the level of party group leaders. However, many of us know from experience of being in administration here that, year after year at this stage in the budget process, the job of politicians has very often been to go through the officers' suggestions for savings with a fine toothcomb, removing items that would have had a disastrous effect on our services to the public had they gone through. One vulnerable area has been local bus service subsidies. Can the Mayor rule out wholesale cuts in locally supported bus routes over the next three years?

REPLY:

Officers have prepared an initial budget construct which is currently being reviewed with me and the Assistant Mayors before being published for full consultation with the people of Bristol, including all councillors, who will have ample time to examine the proposals. Nothing can be ruled out at this stage and no decisions have been made. I would welcome your support throughout the consultation period in identifying savings opportunities to address the £90m budget gap.

The draft budget is to be released on 18 November and, after listening carefully to the public's views expressed through the consultation process, together with the challenges raised through Scrutiny Committees and Party Groups, changes may be incorporated in the final proposed budget for Cabinet to consider on 16 January 2014. The budget proposal will be submitted to Full Council to be debated and perhaps subjected to further change at the meeting on 18 February 2014.

QUESTION A.10

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Gary Hopkins

1. We are told nothing of what is in the budget, even at the level of party group leaders. However, many of us know from experience of being in administration here that, year after year at this stage in the budget process, the job of politicians has very often been to go through the officers' suggestions for savings with a fine toothcomb, removing items that would have had a disastrous effect on our services to the public had they gone through. One vulnerable area has been libraries. Can the Mayor rule out any library closures over the next three years?

REPLY:

Officers have prepared an initial budget construct which is currently being reviewed with me and the Assistant Mayors before being published for full consultation with the people of Bristol, including all councillors, who will have ample time to examine the proposals. Nothing can be ruled out at this stage and no decisions have been made. I would welcome your support throughout the consultation period in identifying savings opportunities to address the £90m budget gap.

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2. The last administration, as part of its major capital injection to support Bristol's recovery from recession, invested substantial sums for parks improvements across the city. The Mayor has slowed down this spending stream, despite pledges to continue with the parks investment when he took office. Why? Capital investment in parks has been vital to redress the previous long-term neglect and it is vital it continues. How much is the Mayor adding to the 2012 package?

REPLY:

Officers have prepared a draft summary of all capital projects for review with myself and Assistant Mayors before being published for consultation with the people of Bristol. Nothing can be ruled out at this stage and no decisions have been made. I would welcome your support in identifying important areas of investment which require consideration.

The draft capital programme is to be released on 18 November and, after listening carefully to the public's views expressed through the consultation process, together with the challenges raised through Scrutiny Committees and Party Groups, changes may be incorporated in the final proposed budget for Cabinet to consider on 16 January 2014. The budget proposal will be submitted to Full Council to be debated and perhaps subjected to further change at the meeting on 18 February 2014.

QUESTION A.11

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Tim Kent

1. It is the end of October and still no word of what is in the budget, but for a press release announcing that the cuts requirement for the next three years had gone up from £80 million to £90m. The Mayor promised an open process and instead has presided over a secret one. We note that the likely costs of an arena have also risen from £80m to £90m. Will the Mayor now tell us why the extra £10m of revenue budget savings are actually needed?

REPLY:

The draft budget is to be released on 18 November and, after listening carefully to the public's views expressed through the consultation process, together with the challenges raised through Scrutiny Committees and Party Groups, changes may be incorporated in the final proposed budget for Cabinet to consider on 16 January 2014. The budget proposal will be submitted to Full Council to be debated and perhaps subjected to further change at the meeting on 18 February 2014.

The Arena Project continues to be developed and is being regularly reviewed by the Resources Scrutiny Committee to provide an effective challenge to this vitally important project for Bristol and the region.

The revenue budget reflects the potential increase in financing the total capital programme and will be refined during the consultation process alongside finalised funding decisions in line with constructing a prudent and deliverable budget.

2. We are told nothing of what is in the budget, even at the level of party group leaders. However, many of us know from experience of being in administration here that, year after year at this stage in the budget process, the job of politicians has very often been to go through the officers' suggestions for savings with a fine toothcomb, removing items that would have had a disastrous effect on our services to the public had they gone through. One vulnerable area has been museums. Can the Mayor rule out any museum closures over the next three years?

REPLY:

Officers have prepared an initial budget construct which is currently being reviewed with Assistant Mayors before being published for full consultation with the people of Bristol, including all councillors, who will have ample time to examine the proposals. Nothing can be ruled out at this stage and no decisions have been made. I would welcome your support throughout the consultation period in identifying savings opportunities to address the £90m budget gap.

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to consider on 16 January 2014. The budget proposal will be submitted to Full Council to be debated and perhaps subjected to further change at the meeting on 18 February 2014.

QUESTION A.12

Questions to the Mayor re: Filwood Green Business Park from Cllr Chris Jackson

1. Deciding to defer the Council's investment on the face of looks as if the Mayor is less than enthusiastic about Filwood Green Business Park. Is that the case?

REPLY:

I am strongly supportive of the Filwood Green Business Park project which clearly links with European Green Capital and local Knowle West Regeneration Framework objectives. I have recently spoken with the Prime Minister about regeneration opportunities for South Bristol, and this is an example of the type of development I would like to see.

I am pleased to note that the project design has recently been awarded 'BREEAM Outstanding' for its environmental credentials – which will make it the best performing non-residential development in the West of England.

I am keen to review the design and costs, and a funding decision can be expected very soon. I am discussing these matters with my Assistant Mayor for Regeneration and we are working together on progressing the scheme. We share a strong wish to see the development proceed.

2. In deferring investment has the Mayor other priorities for the money? If so what?

REPLY:

The Filwood Green Business Park is being mainly funded from external sources (£5.37m from the European Regional Development Fund and £5.34m from the Local Enterprise Partnership).

This funding is not able to be diverted to other Council projects.

3. Is there any danger in deferring investment: will other partners change their priorities concerning Filwood Green Business Park?

REPLY:

Our main delivery partner is the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA): the Filwood Green Business Park forms part of a wider development to benefit the area, including new homes and improvements to Filwood Park. The HCA have already committed substantial investment to project and are unlikely to withdraw their support.

I am aware that there are very tight timescales for spending the European funding available for this project. I will ensure that this funding is fully drawn down to benefit local communities and to make sure that the Green Business Park can be a strong catalyst for further investment and regeneration.

4. Given the cuts agenda that is in place concerning local government just now – has this investment been pulled to save money?

REPLY:

The investment has not been pulled! I am determined to see it go ahead within the project timescales and available funding, in accordance with the Planning Consent granted, whilst meeting regeneration objectives.

At the same time, the Council must review all expenditure to ensure that public money is used to maximum benefit – that is what you and residents would expect.

QUESTION A.13

Question from Cllr Glenise Morgan (for Cllr Bradshaw):

I put a question to the Mayor at the recent OSM meeting on how to address the failings we are currently experiencing with community engagement at the planning pre-application stage, both in Henleaze and the wider NP area. Councillors, our NP and community groups are hearing much too late about these pre-application proposals with insufficient time to engage with developers. As with enforcement, residents are becoming increasingly frustrated and bitter that their expectations and trust in council processes are not being met.

The Mayor noted my point that this was too often very wasteful in resources, created a loss of good will and missed the opportunity to use local knowledge and negotiation in order to produce a formal application that is generally accepted. He agreed that more needs to be done. I am therefore seeking your assistance to take some practical steps towards turning this aspiration into action.

Will you therefore agree to hold a meeting in the very near future with a senior planning officer, the Henleaze councillors and one or two interested residents to discuss setting a protocol or procedure that can help address the shortcomings in the present system?

REPLY:

I agree that community engagement needs to take place at the earliest stage of the planning process as this improves the ability of local people to shape development proposals and to buy into the development that the city needs. I understand that the process of notifying the Bristol Neighbourhood Planning Network (NPN) of pre-application proposals and then involving the local group is working well and that a representative of the NPN spoke at the recent meeting of the Sustainable Development and Transport Scrutiny Commission to confirm this. I also understand that all pre-application responses from the planning service to prospective developers strongly encourage community involvement via the NPN. I will look at how we might further strengthen this encouragement.

However, I agree that there is greater scope for local members to be “champions” of their communities by engaging better with the planning process and key to this is that they are routinely provided with information on pre-application proposals within their areas. As part of the enhanced pre-application service that I have recently agreed, local members will now receive notification of all pre-application proposals in their area.

NP Area Coordinators will be also be aware of the pre-application proposals in their areas, but it is important to note that they will not have capacity to facilitate the NP’s involvement in planning matters. I believe that this engagement would more effectively take place through established local planning groups.

Together, I believe that this will improve the ability of elected members and NPs to engage at the crucial early stage of the planning process. This can only help to enhance the planning process.

I will ask a senior planning officer to contact you to discuss how these proposed measures should improve the process with regard to influencing developments in your area.

QUESTION A.14

Question from Cllr Glenise Morgan (for Cllr Hoyt):

Would Cllr Hoyt please respond to an, as yet, unanswered question from our Neighbourhood Tree Champion, Stephanie French, raised with him and Tree Bristol:

"In the light of the budget required for the Mayor's Schoolchildren's tree planting scheme (£600,000 has been stated - £400,000 from TreeBristol and £200,000 from an underspend last year) what will be done with the already existing tree planting schemes organised by TreeBristol? One of these was a re-vamp of some streets in Henleaze because Henleaze was identified as a priority ward for Street Tree planting in the 2013/2014 season (= now) and a lot of work was done by representatives, societies and residents in choosing streets. (The figures for the budget are obtained from Cllr. Hoyt's talk at the last Tree Forum meeting.) Is street tree planting now included in the schoolchildren planting programme? Will the schoolchildren be planting trees in the streets in Henleaze, or is there other money still available for the "normal" activity of TreeBristol."

This was raised with the Mayor at the recent OSM meeting. He said that some tree planting by children on grass verges along streets might take place, but that he believed the two schemes are essentially separate. As we are now well into the tree-planting season, could we urgently have a response that provides clarity on this?

REPLY:

As Cllr Morgan will be well aware, I have answered Stephanie's question. To reiterate the answer though:

The Tree Pips project, as outlined to Cabinet on the 27th June, will see trees planted in streets, school grounds, parks, green spaces and private gardens. The new project subsumes the existing 'TreeBristol 'Streets' project, which seeks to plant new trees in grass verges and other low cost locations next to roads. The 'streets' element of the new project will look to plant trees along children's routes to schools. The educational benefits of such schemes will be promoted in schools. However, it is not expected that children will be physically involved in planting trees in streets.

TreeBristol will honour previous schemes subject to the usual checks and agreements. However, the scheme referenced in Henleaze does need to be clarified.

The replacement of street trees via the year-on-year highway tree maintenance programme is not part of the new Tree Pips project.

The initiation of the three-year Tree Pips project has been awaiting the appointment of three officers due to run the programme. I am pleased to say these officers have now been recruited and they are due to start work within the next two months.

QUESTION A.15

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Ron Stone:
East Bristol pool and swimming facilities in Bristol East

1. I understand that a new capital programme is being constructed by yourself and officers for the next Budget round for 2014. Is the replacement pool for Speedwell and Bristol East included in the draft budget?

REPLY:

The Capital Programme is being prepared on the basis of project templates being provided by officers. Templates for the Pool and Recycling Centre were submitted to the Capital Board. All capital projects will be considered as part of the budget consultation process. No decisions have been made about either scheme at this stage.

2. If yes, how much potential Capital monies have been suggested for the Pools replacement?

REPLY:

No decision has been made, but industry benchmarking information suggests that a pool of this nature could be built for circa £4m- £4.5m. However this would need to be soft market tested.

3. How much money has been set aside for the on-going Revenue costs for staffing and every day running?

REPLY:

It is understood that an operator could run the facility between a zero subsidy and approximately £100k per annum. However, consideration would be needed to the cost of borrowing circa £4.5m which would equate to annual repayments of circa £280k pa to which up to £100k revenue cost of would need to be added projecting an overall cost of the subsidy to be between £280k- £380k per annum.

4. Do you as City Mayor support the provision of a replacement Pool in Bristol East?

REPLY:

I don't wish to become embroiled in what was a political issue before I was elected. There are many competing projects being considered for the Capital Programme, and my support or otherwise would depend on whether there is sufficient capacity within the revenue budget to support what would be an expensive project, in borrowing and revenue terms – and work on the budget is still on-going.

I have also asked the Sports Commission to discuss and make recommendations about the number of facilities we have, including consideration of facilities in neighbouring authorities. They will be submitting their report in the New Year.

5. If YES, at what location do you favour as a site for building?

REPLY:

There is no obvious site available within the catchment area for new build or extension to an existing site. Current research suggests that the most cost effective option is to link the pool to the existing fitness facility on the Bristol Brunel Academy.

6. If NO, what are your reasons for rejection?

REPLY:

See answer to 4 above.

7. What is the proposed consultation dates for input by residents who support the provision of a new Pool and when is a final decision on the total Capital Programme be made?

REPLY:

No dates have been set for consultation about the pool specifically, but of course people can make their views known on all budget issues when the draft revenue budget and Capital Programme are published for consultation on 18 November.

8. What influence can Councillors and Residents have on this process of Budget Setting / Priorities when you insist on overriding public opinion on issues you do not support personally?

REPLY:

I have no idea to what you are referring, but we have set out a clear Budget process and timetable, and we will go out to public consultation on 18 November.

9. Bristol East was robbed of its local Pool when closed earlier than the agreed position of NO CLOSURE WITHOUT REPLACEMENT IN PLACE! Will you now rectify this injustice by supporting campaigners for a replacement?

REPLY:

See answer to 4 above.

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Chris Jackson
Jobs in South Bristol

1. Has the mayor been involved in any initiatives in the deprived areas of south Bristol that might result in jobs?

REPLY:

Yes. Filwood Green Business Park, Knowle West Media Centre, where I was only yesterday, and The Park projects as well as the Greater Bedminster Portas Pilot are some examples that come to mind. I am in discussion with major retailers with the hope of attracting one or more to the area.

2. While I can see money being invested elsewhere in Bristol the south of the city seems to sliding into an area where there are few jobs for local people. Is the Mayor concerned about this and is there a plan to rescue the situation before it is too late?

REPLY:

I share your concern about this and at my recent meeting with the Prime Minister I expressed my view that South Bristol should be considered as an Enterprise Area, benefitting from a similar government deal offered in the regeneration of the Temple Quarter, which is rightly held up as a national example of a successful Enterprise Zone project. I have asked Cities Minister Greg Clark MP to accompany me on a visit in December to consider this as well as other employment initiatives, and he has kindly agreed..

In the meantime I am open to all options for regeneration and providing jobs in South Bristol, and there is much work being done.

A significant level of capital investment in economic and energy infrastructure and wider economic development has been continuing in 2013 and/or is programmed for the near future across South Bristol with a specific focus on Greater Bedminster, Knowle West, Hengrove Park and Hartcliffe and Withywood:

1. Economic Infrastructure Projects

Filwood Green Business Park (Knowle West)

- **approx £11 m will be invested by BCC with European and LEP funding support over the next two years in the construction of the Filwood Green Business Park, a 'state-of-the-art' energy efficient development of 4,459 sq m to provide workspace and enterprise support services for over 100 local and inward investing businesses, which will create around 350 jobs, with recruitment and business support to be targeted on South Bristol residents and disadvantaged areas.**

The Bottle Yard (Whitchurch Lane)

- BCC and the Homes and Communities Agency have funded the refurbishment of the former Matthew Clark warehouse to create 300,000 sq ft of production space for film and television programme production. The BBC, Sky and independent producers have already been attracted to the space, and the Council has recently commissioned an economic impact study to inform a business case for the facility's future development.

Knowle West Media Centre

- BCC continues to provide significant grant funding support for KWMC (£150k per year via a Service Level Agreement) in support of its recognised role as a centre of excellence in Bristol and the wider UK for creative and digital innovation, economy and inclusion projects, and as a 'beacon' for entrepreneurs in the communities of South Bristol.

Studio 9 (Hartcliffe)

- £100,000 investment by BCC / ERDF under the Bristol Urban Enterprise programme to redevelop part of The Gatehouse building at Hartcliffe Withywood Ventures to create a workspace and incubator for 12 businesses and a new community facility.

South Bristol Link Road

- The South Bristol Link, love it or hate it, is projected to support the creation of over 2,000 new jobs in South Bristol by 2030. It is envisaged that it will improve investor perceptions of South Bristol, spurring jobs and business growth, and provide improved access for South Bristol residents to opportunities in the city centre and North Fringe.

2. Business Start-up and Growth Support

In addition to the above capital projects, the Bristol Urban Enterprise programme is supporting two other 'flagship' projects in South Bristol over 2013-15:

Outset Bristol

- £489k for on-going extension (until April 2014) of the highly successful city-wide business start-up coaching and support scheme run by YTK0 with outreach to 120 new entrepreneurs resident in disadvantaged areas or social groups and with a substantial focus on South Bristol.

Green Digital Enterprises

- £814k for a Knowle West Media Centre project to assist up to 30 new entrepreneurs to start up 12 new businesses and social enterprises in this sector with a target to create 50 new jobs by 2015.

3. Local Retail Centres and Place-Making

Greater Bedminster – Portas Pilot

- **Bedminster was one of the initial twelve Portas Pilot Town Teams granted £100,000 following the Government's review of high streets in December 2011. The Bedminster Portas Pilot bid, led by the Greater Bedminster Community Partnership was aimed at using culture/arts to boost the high street - arts trail and installations, street markets, Christmas lights, theatre performances within shops, improved promotion and street art. The focus was on creating a Business Improvement District (BID).**
- **The Council, whilst unable to provide funding, supported the pilot throughout with a significant amount of officer time. The Town Team successfully bid for £25,000 from Bristol City Council's Local Sustainable Transport Fund to provide pocket parks on East Street.**
- **In March 2013, the Town Team became a BID providing financial sustainability and business collaboration over the next 5 years. In terms of funding, the BID will attract around £400,000 of business investment over 5 years through an additional 1.5% levy paid on business rates. See www.bedminstertownteam.org**

4. Energy Investment Programmes

ELENA Programmes for BCC Social Housing and Private Housing Sectors

- **Green construction jobs and training opportunities will be created for local people from 3 major programmes for energy efficient 'retrofit' of social housing stock and installation of solar pv in Knowle West and other areas.**
- **The programmes will also contribute significantly to reducing fuel poverty amongst tenants in both social and private housing sectors.**
 - **£30 m (including £4 m ECO subsidy attracted) already approved by Cabinet for external wall insulation to 20 tower blocks across the city;**
 - **£22 m (including £4.5 m ECO subsidy) pending approval for Phase 1 of external wall insulation for 3,000 'solid wall' properties commencing in 2014 (programme in 3 phases over 10 years);**

- £45 m large-scale solar PV installation programme for Council housing stock and public/community buildings is currently being procured.

Many of these properties are located in South Bristol. ECO subsidies are targeted on low income householders in social and private sectors.

- Additionally, a circa £5 m private sector pilot is proposed, subject to a DECC funding bid, to undertake area-based initiatives (i.e. house by house engagement) in Windmill Hill (one of 3 target areas in the city). These will be targeted at private homeowners but may also include social housing

5. Access to Employment and Skills

Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone

- engagement programme to ensure that all residents are aware of potential opportunities in Temple Quarter is initially focusing on disadvantaged areas of the city, including Filwood, Hartcliffe & Withywood. Any support and training programmes to assist people to access future jobs in Temple Quarter in construction, creative, digital and other sectors will be open to people in South Bristol and actively promoted there.
- Temple Quarter employability plan includes work with all secondary schools around work-related advice and training, and Merchants Academy, Brislington Enterprise College and New Fosseway School were pilot schools for the Chartermark launched in September 2013.

On Site Bristol

- undertakes outreach across all schools in South Bristol and offers a number of apprenticeships each year to young people from these schools.

ELEBCIS

- Entry-Level Employment in Bristol's Creative Industry Sector is a city-wide initiative but has significant outreach focus in South Bristol. Knowle West Media Centre is a key partner.

Ways2Work

- works closely with a range of South-Bristol-based training and support organisations, including South Bristol Skills Academy, Hartcliffe & Withywood Ventures, Second Chance, N-Gage and Knowle West Media Centre.
- there have been 2 major engagement events in the area to date this year and the annual South Bristol Jobs Fair in partnership with SBSA and Job Centre Plus will be in February 2014.

QUESTION A.17

Questions for next Cabinet meeting, 31/10/2013 from Susan Flint

1. Can a proportion of Southmead Hospital Community Infrastructure Levy money be used to fund development of a new rail station at Horfield/Lockleaze?

REPLY:

Unfortunately there is no Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money from Southmead Hospital as the planning consent for the hospital was granted before the Council implemented its CIL charges.

I think you may mean the £1.5 million (plus indexation) of Section 106 money secured from the hospital to provide “additional public transport services to serve the Hospital”. The Public Transport Working Group set up to agree how this contribution should be spent (comprising representation from Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council and Hospital trust), considered that this funding was best spent on improving and supplementing orbital bus routes that would directly serve the hospital. These include regular bus services to the public transport interchange at Bristol Parkway. We are looking at some improvements to passenger facilities at Parkway.

The new Southmead Hospital buildings open early in 2014 and it is important for public transport services to be in place when the hospital opens. Therefore, it is considered most appropriate for the Section 106 funding from the hospital to be applied to additional and enhanced bus services that can serve it from the time that the new building opens.

However I have considerable sympathy for the idea of a new Horfield Station which will no doubt be the subject of further discussion with Network Rail and the West of England Partnership

2. Can a proportion of Lockleaze regeneration money be used to fund development of a new rail station at Horfield/Lockleaze?

REPLY:

Cabinet in April 2012 allocated resources for the regeneration of Gainsborough Square. The funding is for public realm improvements and to facilitate development of key housing sites around the square. It is not envisaged there will be monies within the allocation to fund additional projects.

QUESTION A.18

Questions to the Mayor concerning Pay Day Loan Advertising Ban in Bristol
From Cllr Helen Holland

1. What action have you taken since my question to you at OSM on 22nd October on banning pay day loan advertising, as has been done successfully by Labour-led Plymouth?

REPLY:

I am supportive of such a ban but we have to carry out any ban within the law and I do not want to promise such a ban without ensuring it is deliverable. Work has been progressing on this issue well before last week's OSM. Officers have been looking at all the contracts that feature media advertising.

2. Are you making any efforts to get agreement from the advertising agencies to get such an advertising ban across street hoardings in Bristol?

REPLY:

Pay day lending is now an issue for councils across the country with many of them asking the same questions. I understand that the major companies are currently considering their position nationally.

3. Where we own the advertising space - e.g. at bus stops - have you asked officers to implement a pay day loan advertising ban immediately?

REPLY:

The council has three main types of contracts regarding media advertising – billboards, bus shelters and advertising associated with the Legible City contract. This is a fairly small percentage of the total advertising space across the city, the rest of which are largely commercial concerns.

The contracts for both the Legible City and bus shelters advertising spaces are currently up for renewal, and a new clause will be added specifically banning this type of advertising. I have asked that such a clause is added to any advertising which is under our control and for which there is no contractual bar to us doing so.

With regard to the 41 billboard sites that the council manage, operators have been asked informally not to allow pay day loan advertising, and when the contracts come up for renewal, a new clause will be added specifically banning this type of advertising.

The council also has complete control over adverts on the back of pay and display and pay-on-foot parking tickets. Any requests with an obvious reference to payday loan companies are refused.

4. Plymouth also blocked access to pay day loan websites from their computers at public libraries and community centres – have you asked for this to be done? When will this happen?

REPLY:

The Peoples Network computers in libraries do not carry any advertising on the log in screens.

We are currently looking into the feasibility of blocking access to pay day loan companies, but this requires further research and careful consideration before we remove access from public access computers.

QUESTION A.19

Questions to the Assistant Mayor for Strategic Housing
From Cllr Steve Pearce - Stalled Building on Housing Sites

1. Can the Assistant Mayor for Strategic Housing provide a list of all stalled housing sites over 10 units in Bristol?

REPLY:

Like you, I am also concerned about the number of stalled housing sites in the city. The City Council is playing a leading role in a West of England initiative to establish the reasons for sites not coming forward and to explore what measures could be taken to accelerate delivery. As part of this work I have been provided with a schedule of all major (>10 units) stalled sites in the city and I will ask officers to make this available to you.

2. Can he explain why developers aren't moving ahead to get these sites built?

REPLY:

The West of England initiative referred to above seeks to establish a targeted approach to unlocking these sites. The most significant sites are currently the subject of a piece of work commissioned by the West of England and being undertaken by ATLAS (Advisory Team for Large Applications – part of the Homes & Communities Agency) and consultants. The commissioned work includes discussions with developers and landowners to investigate reasons for the delay in the sites coming forward. The findings from this work are being reported to a project board meeting in early November, after which I will consider the findings and potential next steps at one of my executive briefings later in November. I will be happy to share this with you afterwards. It is important that developers participate in this work so we can better understand and hopefully help to address the site specific issues. Otherwise one might conclude that 'landbanking' was the primary obstacle to building.

3. What can be done about this failure to start building homes.

REPLY:

As set out above, once we have a better idea about the precise barriers to delivery, we will then be better placed to scope out some options for accelerating provision of housing on these sites. Within Bristol there are 5,000 homes on sites with planning consent, but yet to be built. Around 800 of these are affordable units. I want to see these built – the work outlined in A2. should help.

QUESTION A.20

Questions to the Assistant Mayor for Transport
Portway Park and Ride - From Cllr Steve Pearce

1. Can the Assistant Mayor for Transport provide an update about progress on the Portway park and ride railway platform.

REPLY:

The Portway Park & Ride Platform project is progressing. BCC are meeting with Network Rail and First Great Western in early November for an options selection meeting which is part of the Guidelines for Rail Infrastructure Projects (GRIP) process. I have discussed with Network Rail a new approach to making progress with this relatively simple scheme. They are supportive and I'm pleased that we can move ahead despite the setback prior to my taking office.

2. Can he outline why the earlier bid for this platform failed?

REPLY:

The previous bid to the Department for Transport for new station funding was unsuccessful due to it not being compliant with GRIP 3. GRIP 3 was a criteria that all successful applications had to align with and the BCC application was not in GRIP 3 compliance in late 2012 when the bids were submitted. GRIP 3 would require a project to be shovel ready for work to begin. I am determined to see any new proposal or bid compliant with GRIP 3.

3. Can you inform us what discussions you're having with Network Rail & First Great Western on the Portway Park and Ride?

REPLY:

BCC are involved in GRIP 1-3 discussions with Network Rail and First Great Western. All three parties are involved in the next step which will be the options selection meeting in early November. They are directly involved, which is important to making progress on this scheme, which will complement an expanded park and ride and dedicated bus lane.

QUESTION A.21

Questions to the Mayor
Affordable Housing - from Cllr Steve Pearce

At the West of England TravelWest stakeholder event on 23rd October Network Rail representatives shared a presentation bearing the phrase "Bristol Temple Meads via Bristol Parkway to London" with regard to high speed train services.

1. Has any assessment been made regarding comparative journey frequencies (NUMBER OF TRAINS PER HOUR) between Bristol and London , Bath and London, Chippenham and London?

REPLY:

Network Rail have carried out detailed comparative journey assessments for all train services in the West of England to London. This information was used to create the business case for route electrification and Filton Bank four tracking.

2. Given the new frequencies has an assessment been made on the impact on land values property prices (commercial and residential) and affordability?

REPLY:

BCC has not carried out any assessment on the impact that train frequency will have on land values or property prices and affordability.

3. Is the increase in land values likely to impact on Bristol's ability to produce affordable housing in the future?

REPLY:

The information on land values is not currently quantified. On a wider and more general note, improved connectivity can only help to support regeneration efforts around housing, jobs and infrastructure. That is my rationale for seeking technical advice from Network Rail on the potential for an additional station (to Ashley Down) in the Horfield / Lockleaze area.

QUESTION A.22

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Tim Leaman:

The Mayor has to save considerable sums of money over the next few years and will soon be announcing his budget. With this in mind does he fully support and commit continuing financial support to the smaller providers as they are more vulnerable to changes within the council's finances. The valuable benefits they provide for the residents of Bristol are an established fact. Can he offer a reassurance that areas such as Lawrence Weston will be keeping their provider with his continuing financial support?

REPLY:

I thank you for raising this and share your concern about smaller providers.

Officers have prepared an initial budget construct which is currently being reviewed by myself and the Assistant Mayors before being published for full consultation with the people of Bristol, including all councillors, who will have ample time to examine the proposals. Nothing can be ruled out at this stage and no decisions have been made. I would welcome your support throughout the consultation period in identifying savings opportunities to address the £90m budget gap.

During the budget consultation process, which will start on 18 November and conclude at the end of December, I will be seeking as wide as possible input to the budget proposals to ensure your concerns are considered.

QUESTION A.23

Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FOSBR)
Question to Bristol City Council Cabinet 31 Oct 2013.

Question:

Given that in the March 2013 meeting of the West of England Partnership the plans for Phase Two of the Greater Bristol Metro clearly indicated in three places in the document that Horfield was to be reopened on a par with Ashley Down,

What was the sequence of democratically accountable and publicly decided decisions that led to Horfield being dropped from the WEP MetroWest plans (via being downgraded to “Horfield/Ashley Hill” ie alternatives to each other) in subsequent WEP rail documents) and then in Bristol City Council rail plans?

Christina Biggs

Extract from WEP papers for March 2013 JTEC meeting:

Appendix 4

<i>1. Schemes Proposed to Form Priority Programme for Devolved Major Schemes Funding Rank</i>	Scheme Number	Scheme	Description	Cost (2011 Prices)
1	1	Greater Bristol Metro Phase 1	Half hourly train services for the Severn Beach Line, local stations between Bristol Temple Meads, Bath Spa and Weston-super-Mare and the reopened Portishead line.	£35m
2	2	Greater Bristol Metro Phase 2	Half hourly train services to Yate and hourly services on a reopened Henbury Line with additional stations at Horfield and Ashley Down.	£34m

REPLY:

At present both Ashley Down and Horfield stations are in MetroWest plans. Passive provision has been agreed with Network Rail for Ashley Down station. The on-going work to study feasibility and location is due to report in January 2014.

QUESTION A.24

Question to the Mayor from Cllr David Willingham

Henbury loop services:

1. Will the Mayor ensure that potentially easy wins like reopening passenger services to the former North Filton Station on the Henbury loop, which it can be seen from the A38 still has its platforms in situ, are discussed with our JTEC partners and with Network Rail as a precursor to fully reopening full Henbury loop service?

REPLY:

I am sure you know that 'easy wins' are not necessarily easy, and certainly not cheap, when dealing with rail infrastructure. We are working with partners to make the technical case for new rail interventions. All proposals need to be compliant with GRIP (Guidelines for Rail Infrastructure Projects) and have a full business case. We have learnt from previous examples where this approach has not been followed.

BCC and the West of England Partnership will explore all operational options while working with Network Rail and First Great Western on the development of services on the Henbury Line.

2. Will the Mayor ensure that we work with our JTEC partners and with Network Rail to establish the costing for the renovation and re-opening of these platforms, so that bids to fund these schemes can be progressed at the earliest opportunity?

REPLY:

As part of the work on the GRIP for the Henbury Line, phase 2-3 includes the options selection process. During this work all station opening and renovation costs will be evaluated.

Question to the Mayor from Cllr David Willingham

Forensic Spit kits to all frontline staff:

1. Does the Mayor agree with me that it is unacceptable for anyone to spit at Council Officers whilst they are performing their duties?

REPLY:

Clearly it is unacceptable for Council staff to be spat at.

2. Could the Mayor please explain why the Council does not appear to supply forensic spit kits to frontline council officers to allow those who abuse council staff in this disgusting fashion to be identified and prosecuted?

REPLY:

We don't supply forensic spit kits to staff as the incidences are extremely low and it is a matter of proportionality. Aggressive and bad language is far more of an issue. The Violence and Aggression policy is being reviewed early in 2014, and if spitting is seen as a significant issue at that point, consideration will be given to forensic kits. Where customers behave badly they can be prosecuted but are also banned on occasions from our premises, such as customer service points.

3. Will the Mayor take urgent action to ensure that appropriate frontline staff are supplied with forensic spit kits as soon as possible?

REPLY:

As above, this will be reviewed in early 2014 but it is not an issue at present being flagged by either front line staff or Health & Safety officers. As with all staff welfare issues this will be kept under review.

QUESTION A.26

Question to the Mayor from Cllr David Willingham

Community cohesion:

1. Does the Mayor believe that community cohesion between sports venues in this city and the residents living in the vicinity of these venues is important?

REPLY:

Of course. Any issues of anti-social behaviour or nuisance behaviour relate to major sports events are of concern to local residents and need to be tackled by the council and the police working together. This can include dealing with parking offences, littering and noise nuisance. Neighbourhood Delivery Teams need to be made aware of these issues and will task the agencies to resolve them.

2. Does the Mayor believe that the disinformation being spread by the Member of Parliament for Bristol North West about the Judicial Review of this council's planning decision in respect of Sainsbury's Horfield is helpful for community cohesion in Bishopston?

REPLY:

The decision to allow the development of a Sainsbury's supermarket on the site of the Memorial Stadium in Horfield was made by the Development Control North Planning Committee which is rightly not under my influence. I believe due process was followed in terms of the planning process including the required public consultation. I know nothing of the spread of misinformation.

3. Could the Mayor please confirm what he intends to do to reduce the tensions between Sainsbury's supporters and local residents, or whether he intends to wait for a serious incident before action is taken to improve community cohesion in this area?

REPLY:

The police have not identified risk of a serious incident related to the Sainsbury's development. However Safer Bristol works closely with the police at neighbourhood level and through the Tension Monitoring Group to identify tensions and risks and take mitigating action. Any concerns or issues should be fed through to the Neighbourhood Policing Team or Safer Bristol.

QUESTION B.5.1

Questions from Cllr Rob Telford regarding agenda item 5 (school organisation strategy):

1. I spent two years working in a mainstream state secondary school in South Gloucestershire as a teaching assistant for students on the autism spectrum. Does the Mayor/Cllr Massey feel that we can learn from the practice of surrounding authorities when it comes to the inclusion agenda and will we be seeing more mainstream provision for SEN students in Central and East Bristol, rather than just special schools?

REPLY:

Yes, we can learn from other authorities. The most important consideration is that provision meets the needs of young people. In some cases, this will require special school provision. However, wherever possible, young people should be appropriately supported in mainstream provision. The School Organisation Strategy to be considered by Cabinet recognises the need to review our current SEN provision across the City to ensure that we have the right types of provision in the right areas.

2. I support the need to increase primary school places, but feel that many questions remain unanswered when it comes to the annexation of Bristol Central Library for a free primary school.

Is it adequate for the Cathedral Primary School to have such little play space for the children and very cramped conditions for indoor play, should this move go ahead?

REPLY:

No decision has been made about this proposal. However, many city centre school sites are confined and will be unable to provide on-site play space to levels which might be expected in more outlying areas. In many respects, the Cathedral Primary School is no different to other city centre sites. However, it does have the benefit of enclosed play space and access to areas such as College Square and College Green within the immediate vicinity.

3. What are the alternatives to taking public property (Bristol Central Library) away from the public and giving it to a privately-run organisation (Bristol Cathedral School)?

REPLY:

Bristol Cathedral School is a publicly funded institution. For the sake of clarity I should add that the question could be misunderstood as the proposal being for the majority or even the entire library. It only affects the area below Deanery Road level which is not open to the public and is only used for administration and book storage. My decision will be informed by a thorough consideration of all issues of which the principal one must be the best way of securing the future of the Central Library and its remarkable listed building.

4. There seem to be many empty buildings in the city centre. Have alternative options for city centre sites for a primary school been completely exhausted?

REPLY:

Consideration has been given to other sites within the locality. These include, but have not been limited to, commercial premises, office buildings and retail units on the harbour side. Proximity to the secondary school is a significant consideration as this allows the primary provision to be created in a way that it can access facilities in the secondary school, which would otherwise have to be recreated.

5. Can the Mayor ensure that next time he meets the Prime Minister (or the Education Secretary), he impresses upon him how socially divisive free schools really are – for communities across the whole of the UK?

REPLY:

No. I come dogma free as far as type of school is concerned. There are good and bad and indifferent schools of all types. My overriding concern is that we continue to improve education standards across the city for all children and avoid being distracted by issues beyond our control. The Cathedral School has a great history and reputation and appears to be well governed and run and aspires to excellence, as should all our schools.

QUESTION B.11.1

Question from Cllr Rob Telford regarding agenda item 11 (preventing homelessness strategy):

1. In my ward and others in the inner city, there is a clearer picture emerging of how we as a community can tackle street drinking and anti-social behaviour. There is a multi-agency street drinking working group that looks at these issues and is making progress on improving life chances for individuals and improving community cohesion. However, the difficulties we have, particularly in the Stokes Croft area, are to do with resourcing and the unfortunate loss of a dedicated worker from St Mungo's who was instrumental in helping people off the streets and to access the necessary services. Currently, we have Streetwise, Safer Bristol and the police, as well as some resource from the Council. Will there be opportunity in the coming years for the Council to provide more dedicated workers to help people off the streets?

REPLY:

St Mungo's were successful in securing temporary funding from the Home Office's Community Action Against Crime Innovation Fund, which funded the dedicated worker. The application was supported by the Council to complement the existing activities and resources in this area, but there was never an intention that the role would be mainstreamed after the funding ended in May 2013.

Homelessness and street drinking are separate, but connected issues. Streetwise is a joint project between the Council and the police to tackle street based anti-social behaviour. The St Mungo's Outreach team assertively work with rough sleepers to help them leave the streets and find sustainable accommodation. Both teams liaise closely where homelessness is an issue for people engaged in street based anti-social behaviour, including drinking.

There are regular 'wet' sessions at the Compass Centre, staffed by representatives from the Compass Centre, Streetwise and the Wellbeing Service. St Mungo's and Streetwise are both involved in the Bear-pit Improvement Group. The Bear-pit Improvement Group continue to bid for charitable (e.g. Lottery) and central Government funding.

The rough sleeping service currently being provided by St Mungo's will be retendered, and a new contract will operate from October 2014 (subject to Cabinet approval on the 5th December 2013). The proposal does not involve any funding reduction (against a backdrop of a need to make significant budget savings), but the amount of funding from the Council for dedicated workers in this area of work will not increase.

One of the outcomes for the service will be about helping people who are rough sleeping to access drug and alcohol services as part of the process in helping them to move away from the streets towards independent living. The service will continue to work closely with Streetwise with those clients who are involved in street-based anti-social behaviour and street drinking.

It would be useful for the Service Manager with responsibility for commissioning outreach and an officer from Safer Bristol to meet with you to discuss particular issues to see if those resources that are currently available are being targeted in the right places.

As I discussed with you earlier in the week, I am particularly interested in adopting a similar scheme as to that adopted in Ipswich where they have come to a voluntary agreement to ban the sale of high strength ciders and other 'tanking up' drinks in all outlets. This has become all the more necessary since the Government decided to shy away from minimum price legislation, which is probably not practical on a single city scale. I hope we might work on this together.