

**CABINET - 4 MARCH 2014**  
**Public forum questions & replies**

**A. WRITTEN QUESTIONS RELATING TO AGENDA ITEMS:**

None received.

**B. WRITTEN QUESTIONS NOT RELATING TO AGENDA ITEMS:**

B.1 Cllr Sean Emmett - subject: Ashley Hill & Horfield/Lockleaze railway stations

B.2 Christine Townsend - subject: school related issues

B.3 Christine Townsend & Stella Perrett - subject: allocation of wellbeing funds to neighbourhood partnerships

B.4 Cllr Christian Martin - subject: Council web site going off-line on 25 February

B.5 Cllr Christian Martin - subject: Vision for Bristol publication

## QUESTION B.1

Cllr Sean Emmett - Questions to the Mayor at Cabinet 4 March 2014

### **Ashley Hill and Horfield/Lockleaze Railway Stations**

**Q1.** Has the Council's viability report into Ashley Hill and Horfield Stations, which was due to be ready by the end of January 2014, been completed?

**REPLY:** I regret that due to major engineering issues coinciding with study development there has been a delay in completion. Whilst it is anticipated the technical work will be completed by the end of March, we need to liaise with Network Rail to ensure finds and conclusions are robust. At this stage, we cannot be specific about the publication date. I trust that you understand the need to get the work right rather than rush out incomplete work that could ultimately damage the case for these stations.

**Q2.** If yes, will you ensure a copy is sent to me and the relevant ward Councillors forthwith, and other members of Council on request?

**REPLY:** As soon as we are in a position to share information we will ensure it is made available to you and other relevant Councillors.

**Q3.** If no, when will it be published?

**REPLY:** As stated above, we are expecting the draft reports to be available in late March 2014. Following this we will need to work through the study findings with Network Rail prior to wider release.

**Q4.** Despite many previous requests from myself and other Ward Councillors, why have we not been kept fully informed of developments?

**REPLY:** I understand that regular updates have been provided.

**Q5.** Will the Mayor now agree to ward Councillors' requests to meet with the Council's consultants?

**REPLY:** Arranging a further meeting with the consultant will add further cost and delay to the work. I am assured that the team are fully aware of the technical issues and the local views and these are being fed into the process. The important thing is that we reach a conclusion in a timely and efficient manner.

Q6. If not, why not?

**REPLY: See response to question 5.**

Q7. What, precisely, are the difficulties faced in re-opening Ashley Hill and Horfield stations on their original sites, and in the case of the latter an alternative site such as Constable Road, with reference Railway Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) standards?

**REPLY: Whilst not insurmountable, there are technical difficulties relating to the location, curvature and gradient of the track that prevents a straight-forward re-opening of Ashley Hill Station. As for the original Horfield location, technical difficulties relate to the complex weave of points required for the four tracks planned for the location in advance of Filton Abbey Wood improvement. The alternative site at Constable Road also requires engineering intervention to mitigate the gradient issue at the location. This does not mean that the stations cannot be delivered. Through the commissioned studies we are aiming to identify the options and costs to address these issues.**

Q8. Is the Mayor aware that stations have been opened or re-opened at many difficult sites across the country which did not in the first instance meet RSSB standards but which have nevertheless been delivered through the persistence of the promoters?

**REPLY: I and Cllr Bradshaw are aware of such projects and clearly there will be the need for negotiation and compromise with these sites. We will continue to take a pragmatic approach where possible to enable improved rail provision in Bristol.**

Q9. Will the Mayor now show the same determination to achieve the re-opening of both Ashley Hill and Horfield Stations on their original sites, or nearby alternatives?

**REPLY: I and Cllr Bradshaw remain committed to the MetroWest Rail programme which can only be delivered working with our City Region Partners, Network Rail, DfT and others.**

Q10. What action does the Council, the West of England Partnership and Government need to take to ensure the re-opening of both of these two stations by the rail industry?

**REPLY: There is a need to negotiate and agree the required engineering interventions with Network Rail and, more importantly, to have a robust business case and the funding in place required to deliver these stations. We all share the commitment to open these stations and a new platform at Portway Park & Ride, plus a station at Ashton Gate; but nothing will get done without rigorous safety and financial criteria being met.**

**Q11.** To thrash these issues out, will the Mayor now agree to convene an urgent summit to consider the position regarding rail stations on Filton Bank, invitees to include the Members of Parliament for Bristol West and Bristol North West, ward Councillors for Lockleaze and Bishopston, also Horfield and Ashley, representatives from the relevant Neighbourhood Partnerships and the LVNDF, who are producing the Lockleaze local plan?

**REPLY:** It is vital to get this initial work done to better understand the opportunities and constraints. When the consultant's report has been published, we would support a meeting with those you have mentioned, and others, such as FOSBR, under the auspices of the Local Transport Board (known at present as JTEC). As you know, decisions on major transport funding are being devolved by the current government to this body from 2015.

## QUESTION B.2

### Questions for Cabinet Meeting March 4<sup>th</sup> 2014 – Christine Townsend

- 1) In light of Bristol Cathedral Choir School and Cathedral Primary School being subject to an external investigation by the School Adjudicator - what actions have/will the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, the Mayor and senior officers in the education department take given their collective view that such an investigation was unnecessary?

**REPLY: It is important that any actions reflect the views of the Adjudicator. It would, therefore, be inappropriate to take action in advance of understanding the Adjudicator's conclusions.**

- 2) Does the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the Mayor agree that if the investigation finds that inaction and/or knowledge gaps within the education department of the council contributed to a situation where Bristol schools were exercising admission's policies that were in breach of education law there is a need for ALL non-LA schools in Bristol to have an external audit of their admission's policies to ensure public confidence in local arrangements and equality of opportunity of entry for all children in the city? If not, why not?

**REPLY: It would be inappropriate to comment before the conclusions of the Adjudicator are known.**

- 3) Can the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the Mayor explain what action has been taken to challenge admission's policies in the city's schools that result for example in Colston's Girl's School rejecting 374 Bristol families places for their daughter at the school in the academic year 2013/14 whilst 21 places were reserved and allocated to families who do not live within the responsibility of Bristol City Council?

**REPLY: CGS received 533 applications however these were not all first preferences and many of the children who were not offered a place at CGS were offered places at higher preference schools.**

**The admissions policy for Colston's Girls' School is considered to be legal and under the 'Greenwich Judgement', an admission authority may not legally give priority to children for the sole reason that they live within the LA's administrative boundaries.**

- 4) What action does the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, the Mayor and the education department intend to take to ensure that Bristol families secure places in Bristol schools as apposed to places being reserved and allocated to families outside of the responsibility area of the council?

**REPLY: The School Organisation Strategy is the document that sets out how the demand for school places in the short to medium term will be met and as there is currently a large surplus of places there is no immediate pressure to increase places or change the system of allocation. Parents have many different reasons for making choices with regard to their child's school. CGS is unique in the Greater Bristol area in being a girl's only school and so is likely to appeal to some parents living outside the city boundary. The school already ensures that the majority of places are for children living in the city.**

**There are also of course many Bristol families whose children attend schools in our neighbouring authorities.**

**Questions for Cabinet Meeting – March 4<sup>th</sup> - Christine Townsend & Stella Perrett**

- 1) Can the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and the Mayor explain the rationale behind all wards in Bristol being awarded a blanket £10K well-being grant via the Neighbourhood Partnerships given the known population and social-economic differentials?

**REPLY:**

**The purpose of this funding is to promote community engagement, seed funding community focused events and supporting local people working towards sustainable small scale improvements in their neighbourhoods. It has always been designed as a universal fund, not targeted specifically at particular issues or particular populations. Hence the population and social economic differentials have not been a driver, however it is not unreasonable to ask that this policy is reconsidered in the light of the disparity of sizes and types of wards across the city.**

- 2) For what reasons are these well-being grants not subject to a formula that reflects the population known statistical differences and deprivation indicators between wards in the city?

**REPLY:**

**There are no current plans to re-shape this fund along these lines. However, following on the 2013 NP review and the current work of the Boundary commission there will be opportunities to consider new approaches to implementing the work of NPs and the views expressed will be taken into account.**

## QUESTION B.4

Question from Cllr Christian Martin

It was reported briefly in the Bristol Evening Post on 25th February that the Bristol City Council website had gone off line. Why did it go off line? Is the website not hosted on mirror servers to ensure that it is available at all times?

### **REPLY:**

**The council's web site was out of service for a period on the morning of Tuesday 25 February. The problem was first identified by BCC ICT staff at 0750 and the web site was returned to service by 0950 the same morning.**

**The web site was upgraded with new hardware and software in 2011 and since that time has had a very high level of availability. It does have duplicated infrastructure in place to improve the resilience of the web site.**

**The council is currently making a substantial investment in technology to enable many more of our services to be provided digitally. Consequently we have to make a number of changes and upgrades to our web site in preparation for this work.**

**The problem on Tuesday morning was associated with an upgrade of the system software that caused the system to fail. These software changes had been through the council's standard test procedures prior to release onto the operational web site.**

**Early indications are that there has been an error in the way the software was implemented on the web site by our support contractor. We are now reviewing our procedures and working with our contractor to identify any lessons from this incident to minimise the chances of this happening again in the future.**



## QUESTION B.5

Questions from Cllr Christian Martin

The recent publication A Vision for Bristol which accompanied the budget consultation was branded in identical colours and layout to the Bristol 1st Party's electoral literature.

**REPLY:**

**This document was produced as a summary for attendees of the Festival of Economics event held on 18 November 2013 when I shared my vision for the city ('The State of the City – Bristol 2013: The Mayor's Annual Address and Debate'). It was not produced explicitly as part of the budget consultation documentation that was issued to the public.**

**On the same day, a Members' briefing took place on the budget consultation, and remaining copies of the Vision summary document were inserted in to the packs provided. It was judged to be helpful information and context for Members who might not have attended the Annual Lecture.**

**As Cllr Martin is well aware, Bristol 1<sup>st</sup> was registered as a political party for the sole purpose of being able to use the Bristol 1<sup>st</sup> logo on the ballot paper. It has never operated as a political party and, apart from the logo, has no formal brand colours or layout guidelines.**

**The design for 'A Vision for Bristol' was created around the simple idea of using photographs of people and places around the city, to reflect the sentiment and content of the document. The colour scheme was selected to reflect Bristol's status as European Green Capital for 2015, as being a 'green city' is one of the underpinning elements of the Vision.**

Who signed off on the design for this booklet?

**REPLY:**

**Joint sign off came from the Mayor's Office, Executive Office and the Communications team.**

At what point was the draft and design of the booklet discussed and shown to the Mayor?

**REPLY:**

**I was involved in early drafts of the copy which I worked on and amended. I was later shown a selection of photographs that would be included. I reviewed a final draft and made one design change (the choice of main photograph on the cover).**

Can you provide the detail of how this publication was created and designed. Who wrote the copy, who chose the font/typeface, who chose the layout and who chose the colours?

**REPLY:**

The copy was drafted by the Executive Office and Mayor's Office with direct input from me.

As previously stated, the brief regarding the design for 'A Vision for Bristol' was to focus on use of photographs of people and places around the city (using existing images from Bristol City Council's image archive), to reflect the sentiment and content of the document.

The design elements were chosen and produced by the Communications team.

The colour scheme was selected to reflect Bristol's status as European Green Capital for 2015, as being a 'green city' is one of the underpinning elements of the Vision.

What was the cost to the Council for this publication?

**REPLY:**

The cost was £426.