

CITY COUNCIL

18 MARCH 2014

QUESTIONS ASKED BY MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

FOR WRITTEN REPLY (CPR10)

MQ01 COUNCILLOR G HOPKINS TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Q1 Does the Mayor accept that face-to-face service is vital for many elderly and vulnerable residents?

A1 Yes.

We are opening a new Citizen Service Point (CSP) at 100 Temple Street, investing heavily in digital services, and improving processes and systems across customer services and the back offices that support them. As a result, we will be able to free up resources, and then target those customers that need more support more effectively. This may be through a range of means including face to face services, or home visits for example.

We already provide services through a range of access channels – and face to face service delivery is of course vital for some of our customers. Some elderly and vulnerable customers do not want to use face to face services and prefer the telephone, some prefer the internet, so that they do not have to travel. So it is important to provide the right mix of access channels for all customers, including the elderly and vulnerable, and we are making sure we do just that.

Q2 Is the Mayor aware that to make face-to-face service available at sensible cost, arrangements were set up for one to two days a week of customer service cover to be made available at outlets, including local libraries?

A2 “Surgeries” were set up at libraries in Knowle, Filwood and Bedminster when the CSPs at Bedminster and Knowle were closed prior to me taking office.

I understand that these were always intended to be a temporary arrangement while digital and other channels were improved. No funding was provided for these surgeries, and operationally staff

from the other CSPs or the Citizen Service Centres (CSC telephones) provided the services, reducing those other points' effectiveness. It is not cost effective to provide several small scale surgeries, and it is better to provide a more reliable consistent service from the CSPs. In December last year Phoenix Court saw over 70% of customers in 15 minutes, and in January over 83%, Hartcliffe was over 80% and 77% for the same two months, a great improvement than when staff were also endeavouring to provide surgeries. Similarly the phone lines have achieved answering over 70% of calls within service targets offered since November last year – where previously it had been below 70%.

The average cost per transaction for a Library surgery contact was £10.90 per customer, compared to £4.57 at other Customer Service Points and is therefore does not represent best value.

Q3 Can the Mayor confirm that Knowle Library was one of those points and that, as the confluence of many bus routes, this is a very good spot to serve a large number of South Bristol residents?

A3 The number of customers seen at Knowle and other Library surgeries was 1,786 from April 2013 to 4th October 2013, whereas the number of customers seen at the 5 CSPs was 91,311 for the same period. On average between 7 – 8 customers were seen per customer advisor per day at a Library surgery, with between 20 – 25 customers being seen per advisor per day at other Customer Service Points. In addition the customer service centre answered 528,380 telephone enquiries between April 2013 and 4th October 2013.

Despite the confluence of buses it is clear that the surgeries were not well used and therefore each transaction is high cost and represents poor use of tax payers money to provide these small scale part time services. South Bristol residents have the choice of both Hartcliffe or Phoenix Court CSPs, also on good transport routes, and will be able to visit 100 Temple Street in due course.

Q4 Is he aware that service has been haphazard for some while and that, because of this lack of dependability, numbers of users have fallen?

A4 Yes.

Since these surgeries were not funded and were temporary, they could only be staffed by taking staff from the telephone CSC or other CSPs. The service could not be reliable given the constraints. It is better service to provide the right mix of access channels, improve systems and processes to reduce the need to visit us at all – and when customers do, to provide more reliable

face to face services from properly staffed and equipped CSPs than try and staff many smaller surgeries.

Q5 Was it deliberate policy to make the service unreliable so that there would be an excuse to withdraw?

A5 The surgeries were only ever temporary, and are now closed to ensure that the CSPs and CSC are properly staffed and can provide the service they are meant to, to all Bristol residents. The surgeries are not being shut because of “unreliability” but to ensure service delivery is consistent and provides the right level of service to residents across the CSPs and CSC, and optimises the use of existing resources. Since the end of the temporary services, CSP and CSP performance has gone up helping more people more cost effectively.

Q6 The service now seems to have been completely withdrawn, and yet no announcement has been made. Why?

A6 Citizens were notified at each venue that the service would be withdrawn & notices displayed. An information and key contacts guide was provided to assist Library staff to sign post citizens as part of the transition.

Q7 There was clearly no consultation. But, with the frantic pace of press releases coming out of City Hall, why was no time found even to communicate this important information?

A7 Consultation was carried out with local communities when the Knowle and Bedminster CSPs were closed. The library surgeries were always a temporary measure and no further formal consultation was needed therefore when they closed. Citizens were advised of the closures at each location.

Q8 While I fully appreciate the need for protecting our staff in genuine lone-working situations, why would it be necessary to send customer service staff in pairs to a library? There are other staff on hand.

A8 There were a number of reasons for two staff. Library staff are busy and their availability to assist would be negligible, the lack of space meant any queues would impact the use of the library, CSP citizen data is often confidential, and from an audit point of view there is sometimes a need for a second person, CSP work is wide ranging and two staff provided better scope for dealing with the range of queries.

Q9 Will you explain to the elderly deaf lady who contacted me the other day why she should be told by library staff to make

the long and difficult journey to Hartcliffe to conduct necessary arrangements on housing benefit?

A9 If you pass me the details of the citizen concerned I will arrange for a Housing Benefits visiting officer to make contact.

Q10 Should customer service be there to serve the customer or the council?

A10 Last year, CSPs & CSCs dealt with over 1.22m transactions dealing with everything from missed bins to benefit claims to homelessness. The staff work hard to meet the diverse needs of all our customers face to face, on the telephone and over the web, and deserve our thanks for the work they do as part of the front face of the council making sure that residents can access the support and services they are entitled to. Citizen Service does not mean spreading resources so thinly that they are expensive and lack operational capacity, but instead it is about providing excellent services through a range of reliable trusted channels so that all citizens can access and receive good quality service

Q11 Will the Mayor now ensure that this vital and cost-effective service is restored and properly communicated?

A11 Small part time surgeries in libraries are not cost effective and cannot provide an effective reliable service. We are investing in the new CSP at 100 Temple Street, new IT and processes that will enable improved customer service across Bristol. This will improve services far more effectively to customers than small part time library surgeries can ever do

MQ02 COUNCILLOR G HOPKINS TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR

PARKING IN LOWER KNOWLE

Q1 The Mayor attempted last year to impose a 9am-to-5pm 'residents' parking scheme in Lower Knowle and Totterdown. Why were these times chosen when these roads have far more parking in them after 5 pm?

A1 Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm are the minimum operating hours for RPS areas in Bristol. The final proposed operating hours vary between schemes depending on local circumstances and include evenings and/or weekends as appropriate.

Whilst we considered drawing up proposals for RPS areas in Windmill Hill and Totterdown last year, no operating hours were chosen.

Q2 What benefit would the residents have got for the fees being imposed?

A2 The introduction of RPS areas would make it easier for residents and visitors to the local area to find somewhere to park. This in turn would bring other benefits, such as a reduction in the level of traffic circulating in the area searching for a space and associated road safety and air quality benefits.

Q3 It is proposed that roughly £10m of the arena cost will be met by a £700k per year profit from on-site parking. What prices are to be charged to park and how many places will there be?

A3 The figures quoted relate to off-site parking and not on-site parking.

For on-site parking there will be a minimum number of spaces for disabled and essential users only.

Pricing has not been fixed at this stage.

Officers are looking at ways in which we can generate further income for the project so that moving forward it may be that the amount of car park income required for the project reduces.

The number of places has not yet been fixed, mainly because there is already an amount of existing car parking provision available to Arena users, and also because we are looking at other options to supplement the existing capacity.

Q4 How does the Mayor propose to ensure that arena guests pay to park rather than spread out into nearby residential streets and park for free?

A4 Locating a 12,000 capacity Arena in the centre of Bristol provides many challenges, one of which is providing a satisfactory solution in terms of car parking policy and providing a “return-again” experience for users.

The arena is well situated to encourage travel via public transport using the nearby rail services, buses and Metrobus. A variety of parking options are being considered within walking distance of the arena.

In terms of local resident concerns we will take this forward via our Stakeholder Engagement Plan and work out what action may be able to be taken to mitigate those concerns.

- Q5** **What use would the proposed 9-5 scheme have been in controlling this problem?**
- A5 There were no proposed operating hours. If we were to develop a proposal for this area then we would consider the most appropriate operating hours at that time.
- Q6** **Is the Mayor familiar with the concept of S106, where mitigation measures for surrounding areas are paid for by a developer?**
- A6 Yes. Normal planning policy, and therefore S106 will apply to the TQEZ as a whole. Developers will be expected to contribute to mitigation of the impact of their development.
- Q7** **Given that, welcome though the scheme may be, the arena will cause an evening parking threat to neighbouring areas, should the cost of protection be met through S106 or similar?**
- A7 This is one of the areas we are currently looking at- as we have outlined in responding to questions on this theme, there are several pieces of work that need to be complete before we have a clearer idea of what solutions might be required. One is the outcome of Stakeholder engagement, the other is the findings from our work on the car parking strategy for the TQEZ and the first stage of the Transport Assessment for the Arena. When officers have reviewed these pieces of work we can then work out what approach needs to be taken.
- Q8** **Given the complete ineptitude of last year's proposals, will the Mayor now commit to working with local councillors and residents to produce a scheme that produces real relief for residents and places the bill where it should be rather than imposing a tax with no benefit?**
- A8 "There are currently no plans to consult on residents' parking proposals for either area. This would be a matter for consideration by Cabinet before anything could be taken forward."

MQ03 COUNCILLOR G HOPKINS TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR

ROAD SAFETY IN KNOWLE

Q1 The fully funded scheme to install a zebra crossing on Axbridge Road has now been held up since your administration took over. When will construction start?

A1 I understand that officers from the Highways Delivery Team have been in regular contact with you regarding the Axbridge Road pedestrian improvement measures, including several meetings. As you know, the proposed measures (including the zebra crossing) are adjacent to Tesco and our preferred option will have an impact on their existing loading arrangements. We are negotiating with Tesco to identify a solution/design that is mutually beneficial. Until we have a design that meets all local needs, it will be difficult to submit the proposals for internal approval and/or progress the Notice (TRO) for the zebra crossing. Tesco have indicated that they will contact us this week. If they do, and we can get internal approval in April/May, it is anticipated that work on site could commence in July/August, although this would also be subject to informal consultation with local residents and the progress of the Notice for the proposed zebra crossing.

Q2 This has been the subject of several statements and questions over the last year. A previous excuse was “an unexpected problem”. A further meeting with officers produced no such unexpected problem, just an inability to deliver. Do you accept that as Mayor you are responsible for the delivery of services and facilities or for their delay?

A2 See A1 above.

Q3 As the practice of all previous administrations of replying to statements has been abandoned many including myself are having to convert statements to questions.

Can you therefore tell me if you intend to comply with the spirit of the roadworks agreement and do the extension to the Wells rd(near Redcatch) pedestrian crossing island at the same time as the road will be dug up by Bristol water?

A3 The extension of the island on the signal controlled pedestrian crossing in question has not been approved or designed, and there is currently no funding identified for the work. Even if these were in place, the nature of the works would not be compatible.

Q4 What are the accident statistics for the 2 stage crossing on Wells rd (redcatch) since its construction.

A4 The pedestrian crossing was installed and commissioned in March 2012. According to our accident database (up to November 2013) no personal injury accidents have been recorded in the vicinity of the crossing since it was installed.

Q5 What were the accident statistics for the previous nearby 1 stage crossing prior to its replacement.

A5 According to our records, in the three years prior to the installation of the new crossing, there were 4 road accidents reported in the vicinity of the previous pedestrian crossing, all of which were accidents involving pedestrians.

Q6 What are the accident stats for the Wells rd from Oakmeade park to the cricket ground since the completion of the GBBN works.

A6 Since the completion of the GBBN measures along Wells Road, there have been 7 injury accidents recorded over this length (up to November 2013), which equates to 4.09 accidents per annum.

Q7 What were the stats for the same stretch previously?

A7 Prior to the completion of the GBBN measures, there were 21 injury accidents recorded in preceding three years, which equates to 7 accidents per annum.

Q8 I have submitted a petition and statement regarding Airport Rd, where there have been multiple accidents. Will consideration be given to:

A Junction cameras

B Remodelling of the very wide pavement to provide safe access/egress for driveways

C action being taken on traffic travelling at speed and on the wrong side of the road.

A8 Following my joint announcement with the Police and Crime Commissioner before Christmas last year that we intend to switch back on both speed and red light cameras, we are now working through the technical issues to identify which sites are to be activated.

There are currently no plans to remodel the footway in question. There are, however, aspirations to introduce a cycling facility in the area, which may provide the opportunity to consider and address the problems that can be experienced - please can you provide further information for officers to consider.

The speed limits along the A4174, including Airport Road, have recently been investigated and modified at some locations, and it is considered that these are now appropriate for the characteristics of the road. Enforcement of the speed limit is the responsibility of the Police. We are not aware of any specific incidents of vehicles being driven on the wrong side of the road, but if you can provide further information, this will be investigated.

Q9 A pedestrian crossing outside Ilminster avenue school has been identified as a NP priority and funds set aside for it. Why despite assurances has no contact been made from the dept to progress this urgent need.

A9 Site visits have been undertaken by officers from the Highways Delivery Team, and preliminary designs for pedestrian crossing facilities adjacent to the school will be produced shortly for consultation with the local Ward Members.

Due to the number of driveways and vehicle entrances over the length of Ilminster Avenue in question, it will be necessary to undertake a thorough site investigation before any proposals can be designed in detail.

Q10 Does the Mayor remember stating at a “road safety summit” that children’s road safety was a priority.

A10 That is my firm view.

Q11 Why then does your administration deny safety to children in Knowle and many other wards across the city by not delivering already funded schemes.

A11 Officers are working on all of the approved local traffic schemes identified and funded by Community and Neighbourhood Partnerships across the city, and these will be delivered as soon as practicably possible.

Officers are also working on numerous local traffic and highway improvement schemes funded through Section 106, Investing in Bristol’s Future Fund, Active Neighbourhood Transport Grants and the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, and also schemes associated with the schools development programme. The vast majority of these have a road safety element to them and none will have a detrimental effect on safety.

MQ04 COUNCILLOR C MARTIN TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR

RESIDENTS PARKING

Q1 Arena - It has been trailed in the press that the Council expects to fund some of the costs for the Arena from projections of £700,000 per year in car parking fees. Why does it appear as if there is secrecy surrounding the financial models and business plan for the Arena and no published evidence based data to support the projected car park revenues?

A1 There is no secrecy around the financials or business plan. The Outline Business Case sets out the assumptions made on car parking revenues. However, as we now move into project delivery this data is of less relevance as we are seeking to develop these assumptions further. I have been investigating income from other sources in order for there to be less reliance on car park income.

There are a number of work streams underway, which will ultimately inform our approach on car parking. Phase one of the work leading to the Transport Assessment is nearly complete, as is the car parking strategy for the Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone as a whole. The Council is also looking at whether additional temporary or permanent car parking solutions need to be found for the Arena and TQEZ, but you will understand that these remain commercially sensitive for the time being

Q2 It was confirmed (during the RPS Working Group investigations) that data was being collected by a national data collection company on behalf of the council in Montpelier and Clifton. This data has been requested but not published:

- i) Why has it not been released?**
- ii) Why is the council reluctant to share information with the public that has been paid for by Bristol taxpayers?**

A2 We have carried out some coarse surveys of vehicles parked in the proposed scheme areas at different times of day. At this stage, they do not provide sufficient information to enable us to distinguish between resident and commuter parking with a sufficient degree of accuracy. Officers are currently seeking information from the DVLA which will enable a more thorough analysis of the information that has been collected. The information will be made publicly available as soon as it is complete.

In one of the RPS Working Group sessions a finance officer revealed to us that the price of the permit was arrived at by "plucking" a figure out of the air which was less than £1 a week. £48 was settled on as the 1st permit price around which they built a budget and financial plan.

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- Q3** Why was the financial plan set in such an arbitrary way?
- A3 £48 per year is a carefully considered figure, aimed at ensuring balanced accounts, and endorsed by me. It is slightly cheaper than our city centre parking permits and, at less than £1 a week, represents excellent value for money.
- Q4** Why did the council not budget and calculate the financial plan based on the £30 permits as costed for the existing schemes?
- A4 As set out in the Cabinet report, permit pricing is a policy matter. The prices were determined in relation to the value derived from the permit and the cost of the scheme. We are talking a few pence a week difference per permit, but hundreds of thousands over the life of the scheme, over which I am not prepared to take a risk at tax payers' expense.
- Q5** The council has omitted to include in the repayment of the scheme's costs any fines and penalties. Why?
- A5 Penalty charge income cannot and should not be relied upon as a mechanism to repay borrowing. The sole objective of parking enforcement is compliance with the regulations, which we expect to improve.
- Q6** Why will the council not release the revenue figures for the penalties issued in the existing schemes since implementation?
- A6 See answer to Q7 below.
- Q7** What is the total value of the receipts received from penalty fines to date in the existing RPS zones?
- A7 Income from Penalty Charge Notices cannot be broken down by RPS area as our back office software does not record it in this

way. Additionally, the Civil Enforcement teams do not operate exclusively within RPS areas.

Q8 **What was the total cost to the taxpayer of the existing schemes that have already been implemented and are operational (excluding CPZ)? What is the total revenue in from all revenue streams (permit and penalties, pay & display) for the schemes in operation (broken down by zone and totalled preferably)? What is the balance of the cost that has yet to be recouped?**

A8 Kingsdown cost £522,047 to develop and implement, Cotham cost £432,050 and Redcliffe cost £123,317.

Kingsdown cost £522,047 to develop and implement, Cotham cost £432,050 and Redcliffe cost £123,317. – (Figures supplied by RPS Project Manager)

Since January 2011, Kingsdown has received £592,582 in P&D Income, and £115,019 in Permit Income

Since December 2012, Cotham has received £121,616 in P&D Income, and £116,149 in Permit Income

Since November 2012, Redcliffe has received £40,020 in P&D Income, and £11,863 in Permit Income

The above figures do not take into account the on-going running costs of the schemes which include such items as permit issue and administration, on street enforcement, maintenance and cash collection. These costs are included in the overall Parking Services budgets but are not broken down by individual area. The income generated by the RPS schemes as detailed above is used to cover these on-going costs

MQ05 **COUNCILLOR J GOULANDRIS TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR**

STREETWORKS & ROAD WORKS

The Mayor will be aware from my earlier discussions with him of my concerns that utility companies are not properly compensating Bristol City Council for damage done to our highways after they re-lay pipes nor do they provide any compensation to residents for the inconvenience caused by their streetworks.

Government guidance states that 'statutory undertakers (mostly utilities) must reinstate the street after they have finished their works in such a way that minimises any long

term damage to the street and takes into account aesthetic considerations'.

Q1 Is the Mayor fully content that his officers are being robust in ensuring utility companies meet all their obligations, when repairing highways in Bristol?

A1 Bristol's streetworks team has increased in size in the last 12 months to reflect the resource required to ensure we meet our statutory obligations under the New Roads and Streetworks Act. In the last 12 months more inspections have taken place, more defects found and been addressed and works are now coordinated in such a way to minimise disruption to traffic, especially bus services. Utilities are being fined for overrunning works more than ever before and Officers are investigating every request for an extension to Utility works before agreeing to it.

A recent example of a harder line being taken was the closure of Old Market owing to a burst water main. The pipe was repaired within 24 hours but Officers highlighted to Bristol Water that a specific type of reinstatement was required.

This reinstatement took Bristol Water a week to complete at great cost to them but ensured the integrity of the highway was maintained for the long-term. Officers also felt Bristol Water were not working as effectively as they should be and refused to extend the time available meaning Bristol Water now face fines for overrunning.

Q2 What work has been done to show the long term harm to the longevity of a road surface by digging up a road and then patching it and what compensation is sought?

A2 Research carried out by the Transport Research Laboratory in 2009 has estimated that trenches and patches reduce the service life of a road by on average 17% and concluded that there should be some means of recovering these costs from the utilities along the principle that the polluter pays. Using charge rates to recover the additional maintenance costs is considered to be more practicable and equitable (although not currently legally possible) than a requirement for one particular utility to carry out full or half-width surfacing. Subsequent advice is that the requirement to carry out half width reinstatements after works was never enacted as the DfT were concerned that there would be additional costs to businesses.

Q3 Would the Mayor agree that the term 'aesthetic considerations' means that, if the road is left looking a mess of disparate patches, then the utility company responsible should be asked to resurface the whole stretch of the road?

A3 Unfortunately the council's powers are limited by the law and companies are bound only to reinstate the width of trench that has been excavated. Furthermore they must finish the trench with the same material that existed prior to the excavation. On tarmac surfaces this generally looks darker than the existing but does weather and blend in over a period of a few years.

Q4 What provision is there in our recently adopted code of conduct for obtaining payment from companies for the cost of repeated road repairs?

A4 The recently adopted Code of Conduct for Streetworks and Roadworks is concerned with improving coordination of works, communication with affected parties and overall reduction of possible congestion as a result of works. As it is not legally possible for Bristol City Council to obtain such payments it does not form part of the Code

Q5 Bristol City Council does not charge utility companies for permits, which it could legally do. On this basis, as this saves utility companies considerable cost, should we not ask utility companies operating in Bristol for a voluntary contribution to the Highways budget?

A5 It would certainly be possible to ask for a voluntary contribution when Utilities are carrying out major works in an area but whether they offer anything is a different matter. Utilities currently pay thousands of pounds a year in over run charges so they may argue that this is their contribution. They may offer a voluntary contribution but expect us to make concessions in other charges meaning the net contribution is the same.

Q6 Utility companies state that they wish to work together with local communities. Indeed, Wales and West Utilities states in its annual report: - 'Wales and West Utilities recognise the importance of good corporate citizenship, working in and supporting the communities it serves'.

Given this statement and recognising the considerable disruption caused to local communities, when utility companies dig up local roads, should Bristol City Council approach all utility companies operating in Bristol asking them to pre-advise Neighbourhood Partnerships, when planned roadworks are to be undertaken?

A6 There are many sources that could be used by Neighbourhood Partnerships (NP) to gain information about forthcoming works in their area. NP Coordinators could receive a weekly copy of the Road Report that gives information about major works around Bristol.

Alternatively anyone can view www.roadworks.org that gives accurate information about all current and future works up to 3 months in advance. However, Utility Companies generally know their annual programme it may lack the detail that NPs may want.

Q7 Depending on the scale of the works and the disruption caused, do you not think these firms should be required to make a small donation to that Neighbourhood Partnership's Wellbeing Fund?

A7 Please refer to my answer given in Q5. In addition, it is not currently possible to **require** Utilities to make such payments but they may decide to make a voluntary contribution if asked.

MQ06 COUNCILLOR R EDDY TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR

PFI SCHOOL REFURBISHMENT PROGRAMME

Q1 Does the Assistant Mayor recall my questions to her at the Overview & Scrutiny Management Board (Thursday, 21st November 2013) concerning the Authority's financial liabilities under its school PFI agreements?

A1 Yes I do. I understand the information was circulated to members of the Board.

Q2 At that time, you undertook to provide me with information in response to the following:-

- (i) Can the Cabinet Member confirm the total financial liability on the City Council of Labour's PFI funded schools rebuilding programmes?**
- (ii) Will all of these capital assets revert to the ownership of the authority at the end of their contractual terms? In other words, are these repayments a mortgage or effectively merely rent?**

You advised me that answers would be collated and supplied to me shortly. What is the reason for delay?

A2 The value of the PFI contracts is approximately £750m, the majority of the information requested is provided in summary form within the Council's published accounts;

The contracts include elements such as cleaning, grounds maintenance, leisure facilities and the provision of school meals. As a consequence, the contract values cover more than the capital costs of rebuilding the relevant schools.

In relation to the land and buildings, the freehold for these assets will revert to the Council at the end of the contractual periods (there are two PFI contracts in operation for two groups of schools). The analogy of a mortgage is more accurate and the Council receives a funding allocation through the unitary charge to support the costs of the PFI contractual liabilities and income from schools in relation to costs associated with facilities management elements of the contracts.

Q3 Are you now in a position to provide me with a detailed or at least more meaningful response than previously mustered?

A3 I will recirculate my response and if it doesn't meet your requirement please come back to me.

Q4 If not, when can I expect to receive this information?

A4 As above.

Q5 Can the Assistant Mayor give me – and Full Council – an assurance that this financial data will be released (as she promised and is faithfully recorded in the agreed action sheet summary of the OSMB meeting)?

A5 As above.

MQ07 COUNCILLOR DR D WILLINGHAM TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR

Youth Football Provision

Q1 Does the Mayor agree with me that adequate youth sport provision is vital to achieving better outcomes for our city's children?

A1 Yes – this is reflected in our Bristol:Sport4Life Strategy.

Q2 **Could the Mayor or relevant Assistant Mayor please advise what regard has been given to the need for 9-a-side football pitches in the council's sports strategies?**

A2

- The relevant strategy is the Playing Pitch Strategy. It is currently under development and has a target completion date of June 2014. This strategy includes all playing pitches in the city, not just those owned by the city council. It is a strategy for the city that is being developed with, and agreed by, all the relevant National Governing Bodies (The FA, RFU, England Hockey and the ECB).
- The presence of The FA on the steering group for the Playing Pitch Strategy is ensuring that the supply and demand for youth football (9v9) and mini-soccer (7v7 and 5v5) pitches are included in the strategy.
- We have 34 youth football (9v9) pitches and 40 mini-soccer pitches in Bristol.
- Many variables have to be factored in to consider whether this supply meets the current and future demand. This work is currently being undertaken.
- This season (2013-14) the city council have designated Oldbury Court as a 9v9 and 7v7 only site. This is part of the "phasing in" process requested by The FA. The next developments to continue this process will be dictated by the Playing Pitch Strategy

Q3 **Could the Mayor or relevant Assistant Mayor please advise why the council is unwilling to use multiple-marking of pitches to ensure adequate provision?**

A3

The multiple-marking of pitches is where a youth or mini-soccer pitch is marked out "on top" of a current adult pitch. Where this takes place, depending on the orientation of the smaller pitch, there is normally a significant impact on the pitch by the spectators. This affects the overall capacity of the pitch. Where it might normally be able to have two games a week played on it, the extra use by the youth football (and spectators) means the pitch is only able to cope with one match. Adult teams who play on pitches with multiple-markings will generally not be happy with this additional usage as there will be additional wear to areas of the pitch that normally have the best grass coverage.

In the past, demand for youth/mini soccer pitches has been met without the need for multiple-marking of council pitches. The city council will consider multiple-marking on a case by case basis, as the demand changes and the Playing Pitch Strategy action plans are developed.

Q4 Could the Mayor or relevant Assistant Mayor please detail what is being done to ensure that Ashley Down Football Club will have a locally available 9-a-side football pitch for the 2014-15 football season?

A4 There are several options being considered with the community, including multiple marking (with agreement by the adult team) and the availability of other pitches and playing fields.

MQ08 **COUNCILLOR DR D WILLINGHAM TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR**

ARDAGH

Q1 In the cabinet meeting held at the Merchants Academy, the Mayor stated he would “take a direct interest” in the Ardagh. Could the Mayor please detail what he has personally done since that time and when those actions were commenced?

A1 I have ensured that Officers have progressed the planned programme of repair work which is detailed below.

Q2 Could the Mayor please advise what progress has been made to date with securing sufficient funding for the Ardagh to repair the dilapidations and facilitate a Community Asset Transfer?

A2 The already commissioned work to repair the roof, carry out rewiring, install appropriate fire alarm systems and ensure fire exits are adequate is the extent of current, funded work. A community asset transfer is not dependent on further Council funding. However, negotiations between a potential leaseholder and the Council in the context of a relevant and required business plan may include the need for further investment and how this would be funded.

Q3 Could the Mayor please advise what has been done in response the various dilapidations I reported to him and officers following my visit to the Ardagh Toddler group on Monday 10th February 2014? Specifically:

(A) **What will be done to ensure that the roof is watertight?**

A3(A) Roof repair work to a value of 13K has already been approved with BCC Property Services to carry out a long term solution to the roof issue. This will include partial strip of the roof, repair timbers, replace gully strips, new lead flashing, rain guttering and other roof structure repairs. This work should be completed by the end of April 2014.

(B) **What will be done to ensure that damage caused by any leaks in the roof is made good?**

A3(B) Works orders have been placed with BCC Property Services to make good the internal decoration / infrastructure that has been water damaged.

(C) **What will be done to re-instate shower facilities that are currently blocked off?**

A3(C) The shower has been closed since the 1990's. There are no plans to bring these back into use as they are not required to meet current needs on-site and would be an unnecessary maintenance burden. This would need to be the ambition of a new lease or leaseholder and associated business plan.

(D) **What will be done to ensure that all fire doors are secure from the outside but compliant with fire safety regulations?**

A3(D) All doors to the premises will be made secure within the recommendations of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Parks officers will work alongside Ardagh representatives to ensure premises security is paramount.

(E) **What progress has been made towards the provision of an ice-cream / hot-drinks concession in the Ardagh car park?**

A3(E) Parks officer has requested BCC Marketing and Concessions to procure a vendor for this site for summer 2014

(F) **What are the timescales for the above dilapidations to be repaired or actions to be completed?**

A3(F) It is hoped all the roof works, electrical and fire system wiring will be completed by end of April early May 2014. The timetable for roofing work is weather dependent to a degree

MQ09 COUNCILLOR DR D WILLINGHAM TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR

METRO WEST

Q1 Could the Mayor please confirm whether he supports the re-opening of two stations on Filton Bank serving Horfield & Lockleaze and Ashley Down, and if he doesn't support this why not?

A1 I support the principle of re-opening the stations on the Filton Bank. We need a credible position with Network Rail

understanding the constraints, opportunities and potential business case. Officers are progressing work on the feasibility of stations on Filton Bank that will give us the initial view of the construction costs, passenger demand and high level business case. This will feed into the work on Phase 2 of the MetroWest programme that will then take forward the Henbury Line and the new stations

Q2 **Could the Mayor please advise what further discussions have been had with Network Rail, the DfT, the WoEP and other stakeholders about securing the delivery of two reopened stations on Filton Bank?**

A2 West of England partners have been briefed on the studies to identify feasibility of new stations on the Filton Bank. Network Rail have been informed of the studies and have provided technical information to our consultants to inform the studies. Network Rail has also allocated resources to scrutinise the feasibility studies when they are complete. My Assistant Mayor for Transport, Cllr Mark Bradshaw discussed the potential for Filton Bank stations, those on the North Fringe and other rail priorities during the Joint Local Transport Board meeting held last week. Network Rail and First Great Western were also present.

MQ10 **COUNCILLOR DR D WILLINGHAM TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR**

AIR QUALITY

Q1 **With regard to the European Air Quality Directives, could the Mayor please clarify whether planning policy in or adjacent to one of Bristol's Air Quality Management Areas should consider the cumulative air quality impact of any proposed development, or whether they should consider absolute air quality projections, and consequently preclude developments that will increase pollution levels where they are already non-compliant with the European Air Quality Directives?**

A1 The Bristol Local Plan's emerging Development Management Policy DM33 relates to air quality and takes into account cumulative impacts. It requires appropriate mitigation when development is considered desirable for reasons of economic or wider social need. The adopted Core Strategy's paragraph 4.23.5 explains that it is not appropriate to resist all new development in Air Quality Management Areas as such areas are often in the most sustainable locations. However, it explains that regard should be had to opportunities to minimise the contribution of development to airborne pollution and the impact on new development of existing airborne pollution in these areas.

Q2 Could the Mayor please detail his proposals to improve air quality on the A38 Gloucester Road corridor in the Bishopston, Cotham and Redland NP area, and explain how compliance with European Air Quality Directives will be achieved on this route despite approved and proposed developments both in this local authority area and in South Gloucestershire, that will lead to increases in traffic and congestion?

A2 Bristol City Council is continuing to address vitally important air quality issues across the city by investing in measures to reduce pollution from transportation and working actively with partners. Key measures include investment to encourage “zero” emission modes of transport (cycling, walking electric vehicle charging points), working with FIRST bus to implement clean vehicle technology, encouraging modal shift from car to bus, reduce the generation of polluting trips to the city centre by using demand restraint measures (e.g. Resident Parking Scheme) and actively managing the road network to reduce congestion. Officers are in regular and constructive dialogue with South Glos. officers to identify measures to mitigate the negative impacts of South Glos. development across the border in Bristol. Looking forward, the Bristol Air Quality Strategy will be released in summer 2014

MQ11 COUNCILLOR G MORGAN TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH POSITION

Q1 Is the Mayor aware of the Parliamentary Health Committee’s statement in paragraph 12 of its recent report, that “The Committee does not believe that it is possible for Directors of Public Health to drive public health reform if they are subordinate to other officials within local bureaucracies.”?

See

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmhealth/840/84009.htm>

A1 I am aware of the Parliamentary Health Committee’s statement and am reproducing the paragraph in full.

“The Committee is concerned by the reports in written evidence of a capacity problem in the public health workforce. It is also concerned that some Directors of Public Health do not enjoy a direct relationship with the Chief Executive and Cabinet members of their local authority. The Committee does not believe that it is possible for Directors of Public Health to drive public health reform if they are subordinate to other officials within local bureaucracies. (Paragraph 60) “

In Bristol our DPH has a direct relationship with the Assistant Mayor for Health and Social Care through formal briefings and a direct relationship with the City Director through the Responsible Officers Group. This group comprises of officers who have a specific independent statutory role to enable that direct relationship outside of their subordinate line management relationships. These mechanisms should ensure that our current and future DPH should not be impeded in the delivery of public health reform.

Q2 **In the light of the above statement, and the excellent reputation which Bristol's Public Health service has upheld in the past, will the Mayor review our current staffing structure where the Director of Public Health's post is proposed as HAY Grade Q, responsible, alongside three other Service Directors, to the Strategic Director, Neighbourhoods, and above that to the City Director?**

A2 Across the country there are different models within local authorities as to where the DPH reports. In Bristol we wanted to keep the DPH focussed on the vitally important public health challenges that we have in the city rather than dilute that with a bigger strategic portfolio as has happened in some authorities. Bristol is not alone in this model and the Assistant Mayor Barbara Janke and I recently met with with Duncan Selbie the Chief Executive of Public Health England who was most supportive and is keen to help in attracting the right candidate to fill the current DPH vacancy in our current structure.

I am therefore not proposing to review the current structures as I am convinced the mechanisms outlined in Q1 will ensure we are able to deliver our public health functions to a high standard and with increase impact across the council.

MQ12 **COUNCILLOR G MORGAN TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR**

STREET TREES

Q1 **The City budget for the coming 3 years has been approved by Council. Will the mayor now confirm the sum of money that is available for planting, replacement and maintenance of street trees (not vulnerable whips) for the financial year 2013-14. Is any of this budget, or decisions on suitable sites, devolved to Neighbourhood Partnerships?**

A1 I share your concern regarding the maintenance of street trees as I am determined we maintain trees in a proper and safe manner. The revenue budget for the current financial year 2013/14 is not

affected by the budget cuts approved by council in February 2014. For 2013/14, revenue allocations for tree maintenance and tree planting (replacement and new planting) are:

Street trees:
£290k tree maintenance
£ 32k tree planting – replacement

The revenue budget is not devolved to Neighbourhood Partnerships. Replacement tree planting is generally done without consultation. New tree planting is subject to community involvement and support

Q2 What is the budget for the planting, replacement and maintenance of street trees (not whips) in the financial year 2014-15? Will any of this budget, or decisions on suitable sites, be devolved to Neighbourhood Partnerships?

A2 Street trees:
£230k tree maintenance

The revenue budget is not due to be devolved to Neighbourhood Partnerships. The Tree PIPS team will be active in working with communities and the Neighbourhood Partnerships to progress and seek support for tree planting in suitable sites, as well as seeking sponsorship and other sources of funding. S106 payments that relate to the Bristol Tree Replacement Standard are devolved to Neighbourhood Partnerships and technical support is available to progress such tree planting.

MQ13 COUNCILLOR C HISCOTT TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR

FITTING CLIFTON MEMORIAL FOR SIR FABIAN WARE

Q1 Are you familiar with the pioneering and enduring achievements of Fabian Arthur Goulstone Ware?

A1 Yes. Sir Fabian Ware born in Clifton, Bristol is widely regarded as the founder of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, which has brought great comfort to innumerable families who lost loved ones in battle. It has ensured dignity and equality for those who have fallen and keeps alive their memory and actions in the minds of future generations.

Q2 The creation of what is now known as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission was a truly visionary act of recognition that all fallen soldiers – whatever their rank, race or religion – were deserving of an identified, final resting place. Do you not agree that such a man is deserving of his own permanent memorial in the city of his birth?

A2 Sir Fabian Ware's legacy continues to be appreciated and should be recognised as part of the Council's continued work with the armed forces and the city's wider civic responsibilities. With regards to a specific memorial for Sir Fabian Ware the Council must consider the appropriateness of its timing and location.

Q3 I understand Clifton & Hotwells Improvement Society (CHIS), and the local Conservative Councillor for the ward, are keen to explore all options for commissioning a monument. Are you prepared to assist them in investigating any potential funding sources for such a project?

A3 The Council is happy to assist in helping to locate third party funding through support for applications for grant money. However, the Council is not in a position to offer any form of direct funding for such a project.

MQ14 **COUNCILLOR R STONE TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR, COUNCILLOR G HOYT, ASSISTANT MAYOR FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS, ENVIRONMENT AND COUNCIL HOUSING**

Impact of budget cuts to WRAMAS and welfare rights advice services city-wide.

Q1 Do you agree that the current cuts in national benefits and the introduction of the Bedroom Tax, will put extra pressure and demand on all welfare rights and benefit advice centres and their services?

A1 Cuts in national benefits have had an impact on advice centres however social housing providers in Bristol including the in-house Landlords Services and the Revenues and Benefits Service, have provided support, help & advice for households affected by the bedroom tax to mitigate that change impacted on advice services.

Q2 With previous budget cuts to Bristol City Council's in-house service via housing offices, customer service points that reduced staff in this service, and providing less access opportunities, for clients as a result, why was a further £150,000 reduction needed?

A2 Previous cuts have not impacted on WRAMAS although other services in what was Strategic Housing have been subject to budget cuts and savings brought about by both restructuring and re-commissioning. Therefore in order to achieve the level of savings needed it was inevitable that there would have to be a cut to this service. There is increasing on line support which is used by many and increases access - for example the on line benefit checker (at http://www.turn2us.org.uk/benefits_search.aspx) which is an on line link from our own web site. Note that a new CSP will be opening at 100 Temple Street in due course that is envisaged as multi agency hub providing access not just to benefits but also skills and training as well as job opportunities enabling people to come off benefits.

Q3 Any cuts proposed in the draft consultation budget were earmarked for years 2 and 3. Why was this proposal brought forward, and on what initiative?

A3 The proposal forms part of a larger reduction of £700,000 in the former Strategic Housing division. This is in turn part of the larger savings package upon which the public was consulted and was the subject of approval by Council as part of approving the medium term financial strategy. Most savings are having to be made in 2014/15 but some were deferred until 2015/16 to allow time to plan the reduction. This deferral has the support of the Cabinet.

Q4 What posts and services in WRAMAS are still at risk?

A4 A number of people in WRAMAS have asked for voluntary severance and those applications are being processed. This is in addition to the 2015/16 saving approved in the budget.

Q5 Would you agree that quality training and constant update on national changes to benefits regulations is essential for all advisors, if their advice is to be of real value?

A5 Yes.

Q6 If the answer to 5 is `yes,' why are we cutting staff and support workers, who perform quality training citywide, and from within WRAMAS itself?

A6 If the current way of training support staff can be replicated by effective on-line training this should mitigate any adverse effects. Any online training will be compatible with assistive technology and accessible for disabled people where ever possible and can be part of any consultation

Q7 With the fast rising rent arrears to Bristol City Council, would it not make sense to abandon this cut, and restore to WRAMAS the £150,000, keeping current staffing levels and their invaluable skills and expertise?

A7 The best way to avoid arrears and benefits claiming is to ensure that customers have access to skills training and can find work. Therefore it is far better to focus on economic regeneration as we are doing around the city in so many ways – that provide opportunities for citizens to escape benefits and debt problems.

The Landlord Service has a rent management team that tackle rent arrears they have already made additional investment in welfare rights for tenants by employing an additional four housing advisors to deal with Welfare Benefit Reform. An expanded hardship fund was created in the budget this February to help those affected by changes to benefits. We are the only core city to fully fund the council tax reduction scheme, providing significant help to low income citizens.

As responsibility for this area of policy is shared with Cllr Bradshaw, he has been encouraging a dialogue with the voluntary sector and reputable financial services businesses about the scope for further support in raising awareness and providing general advice. Clearly, there is some scope to better target ‘take-up’ campaigns and to bring together provision of more detailed, intensive support and advice required by some residents.

Q8 Are you prepared to consider using an internal departmental virement from unspent budget heads, so clients can receive help in managing their debt issues and ensure maximum benefit support, or alternatively the use of reserves held by the Council.

A8 All budgets will be set in accordance with the number of staff in the new structures, so the possibility of unspent budgets going forward is extremely unlikely.

MQ15 COUNCILLOR A NEGUS TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR

WELFARE RIGHTS AND MONEY ADVICE SERVICE

In the Budget and restructuring process, including the Budget debate, when £1.3million savings identified by the Liberal Democrat Group were ruled out and then re-introduced and spent elsewhere, the Welfare Rights and Money Advice Service has suffered cuts so damaging that they threaten the whole purpose of this vital service.

WRAMAS is experienced in dealing with complex issues benefiting the most vulnerable groups who most need help, providing both direct casework, plus training and support for front line staff. The value it delivers, in well-being and monetary terms, is a many-times multiplier of its cost. The service has suffered from this administration's reversion to cuts from departments which ignores the benefits from a one-council overview that was previously promoted.

Q1. How will the stated mitigations guarantee the capability of WRAMAS to perform its primary role to assist the most disadvantaged of our citizens to successfully claim for the benefits to which they are entitled from central government and other sources?

A1 WRAMAS will be looking at referral criteria and reprioritising its work to ensure the most disadvantaged are targeted for help. We have provided on line support as well <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/financial-help-and-benefits/benefits-and-money-advice>) which links to e.g. an online benefits checker. Whilst this is not suitable for everyone, it allows those that can to self serve, freeing up the specialists within WRAMAS to concentrate on prioritised cases.

Q2. Recovering the benefits and other grants to which they are entitled makes it possible, for example, for the disadvantaged to pay the rent necessary to maintain the accommodation they need. How much is it assessed that this loss of income will impact on the ability of these people to live a decent life and to fulfil their obligations?

A2 The best way to avoid rent arrears and other debt is to assist people to find work and have the skills necessary for work. We are doing this in many ways; economic regeneration, skills training, apprenticeship schemes and the city deal for example.

We are the only core city to maintain a fully funded council tax reduction scheme assisting the lowest income citizens in the city, plus we allocated a £500K hardship fund in the budget to assist people to move to more affordable accommodation.

The most disadvantaged will be prioritised for help & assistance in order to help them sustain accommodation. There will continue to be assistance offered to households at risk of becoming homeless

Q3. What is the anticipated impact on the investment activities where WRAMAS train others, within this council, in outside organisations and the voluntary sector, which greatly extend the range and capacity of this service?

- A3 If the current way of training support staff can be replicated by effective on-line training this should mitigate any adverse effects. Any online training will be compatible with assistive technology and accessible for disabled people where ever possible and can be part of any consultation
- Q4. As the most experienced team in this field in Bristol, let alone this council, why has there not been a clear one-council approach to providing this essential support and core expertise? Why for example are there teams within Landlord Services, Benefits and other departments that are carrying out some overlapping functions but with no investment in WRAMAS work, so that the very successful specialist support model provided in WRAMAS under its Supporting People contract, cannot be extended?**
- A4 There is a proposal to re-commission all welfare rights and advice services, including both other in-house and externally commissioned advice services to provide as comprehensive and coordinated a service as possible. We will share the outline for this exercise with scrutiny for their policy development advice.
- Q5. How is the Governments Discretionary Housing Payments and the mayors Hardship Fund and the additional money that came out of the late budget amendment being used in the most effective way, particularly when some of this has a short life and appears to overlap?**
- A5 I'm sure you will join me in welcoming the extra money to target support at those Bristolians most in need, particularly as a result of the effects of the Bedroom Tax and other welfare 'reforms'. Discretionary Housing Payment has a clear policy about criteria for its use and is government funded. The hardship fund does not duplicate this and will have its own criteria to make sure those most in need are assisted
- Q6 Would it not be a better use of some of the recent £250k hardship fund in the budget amendment to invest in welfare rights and income maximisation work in WRAMAS and to tackle hardship suffered by vulnerable citizens by bringing in central Government benefits worth many times over the cost of funding caseworker staff?**
- A6 The Hardship Fund is to be directed at individual households not for on-going staffing. Also, see A5.
- Q7. Can I be assured that the loss of posts, and particularly the loss of expertise that will result from poor and very hasty decisions around restructuring, will not impact on the capability of this service to provide frontline support and if**

there is any risk of this then the right decisions will be made to mitigate the effects within this team, for example exploring all possible avenues for temporary and carried forward funding, and expertise concentrated here to focus our widespread support across all sectors?

A7 The service, albeit with a reduced number of staff, will focus its work on the most 'at risk' households. Even if there is underspend in some budgets this is not a way in which an on-going service can be appropriately funded. The majority of staff, many with considerable experience, are being retained to provide advice to people.

Q8. Will the mayor acknowledge that in the ferment of the budget process, this essential and value-for-money frontline service has been chopped from one department but that other poorly-focused money has been spread round the council to deal, less effectively, with a number of perceived issues that overlap? Will he agree to meet with me and others to find a more comprehensive and effective use of the expertise within WRAMAS to better deliver this vital service and to put a hold on the damaging changes that are underway until a more comprehensive solution can be found to maximise the clear and enduring benefits from this service?

A8 See answer to Q4 above

MQ16 COUNCILLOR H HOLLAND TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR

PAY DAY LOAN ADVERTISING

Labour Councillors previously welcomed the Mayor's statements that he supported our call to limit the damaging impact of Pay Day Loan Companies on the most vulnerable in our city, but are concerned that since then, we have heard little of progress towards this aim, unlike other local authorities who appear to have taken this more seriously.

Therefore we ask the Mayor:

Q1 Can he detail what progress he has made on reducing the amount of Pay Day Loan advertising in the city, by using the Council's control over advertising in bus shelters.

A1 The draft contract for bus shelters includes a clause that gives the Council an absolute discretion to prohibit certain types of advertisement including those promoting payday lending schemes. Advertisements deemed unsuitable by the Council must

be removed by the contractor within 24 hours of receipt of notification.

This contract is due for renewal and will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 1st April 2014.

Q2 Can he detail what progress he has made on limiting the access to Pay Day Loan companies and their adverts and websites through the Council's computers at libraries and other public facilities.

A2 The filter on the public computers cannot block just Pay Day Loan adverts, but would block all banking services. Other authorities have responded to similar requests in different ways. We will work with other library authorities to consider alternatives eg pointing specifically to credit union services.

Q3 Can he detail what, if any, other measures he is considering, as other Local Authorities have done, to reduce the damaging impact of these companies on our poorest communities.

A3 From 1st April 2014, The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), will regulate payday loan business under the Consumer Credit Act. Payday loan business will have to;

- Limit the number of loan rollovers to two.
- Restrict the number of times they can take money from a borrower's bank account to two.
- Add a 'wealth warning' to payday loan adverts. The warning must be worded "*Warning: Late repayment can cause you serious money problems. For help, go to moneyadviceservice.org.uk.*"
- Make sure borrowers can afford loans.
- Tell customers where they can get free debt advice.

Bristol City Council Trading Standards Service and Bristol Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) joined together to raise consumer awareness about the pitfalls of taking out high interest loans in December 2013.

The campaign was launched by the Mayor in December 2013 and attracted a large amount of local media attention including TV, radio and social media.

This campaign will continue throughout 2014 with plans being made to conduct further targeted awareness campaigns for consumers. With displays, events and talks being given to vulnerable groups in the community.

Bristol City Council Trading Standards will also be working with the FCA to ensure that regulation continues to protect consumers in a balanced way and, whilst working closely with Bristol CAB, and the Consumer Network South West Team, we hope to promote the alternatives to Payday lending, raise awareness of the pitfalls of using a payday loan and increase measures to tackle scrupulous trading practices.

MQ17 COUNCILLOR B CLARK TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR

CHILDREN'S CENTRES

Q1 Can the Mayor say just how exactly the £500,000 will be put back into the funding of the city's Children's Centres after this was secured in Labour's budget amendment in February?

A1 As you know this is just one year funding to enable a smoother transition. The Children's Centres had already received their indicative budgets for 2014 – 2015 and had been planning creatively to maintain a high quality offer of integrated early education, health and family support services within a reduced funding situation.

This protected funding for one year has therefore been welcomed to support them as they review their staffing structures and costs so as to ensure their future sustainability.

They will be able to apply for funding from this source to support them in reshaping their services, tailored to the needs of the communities they serve. They will need a business plan to show how their services will be delivered within budget and improve outcomes for children and families in their community, raise aspiration and reduce disadvantage.

MQ18 JENNY SMITH TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR

WELFARE RIGHTS – CUTS TO STAFF

Councillors are concerned for the future of the Welfare Rights and Money advice Service which is based in the Bristol Housing Department. I am advised that this organisation -through its work in assisting, claimants and other advice agencies - contributes £1.3m a year back into the Bristol Economies.

Q1 Is the Mayor aware of the vital training which this organisation carried out in voluntary Organisations, Advice Agencies and which also include providing training for us

Councillors, so that we can be up to date with Government changes in Welfare Rights and Money advice?

- A1 If the current way of training support staff can be replicated by effective on-line training this should mitigate any adverse effects. Any online training will be compatible with assistive technology and accessible for disabled people where ever possible and can be part of any consultation.
- Q2 This section of our authority provides simple, in-depth benefit magazines which are distributed across the city, to residents and in public places to ensure that as many people as possible have knowledge of any financial or welfare changes. Can I ask what provision is proposed to ensure that this magazine continue to be assured after the cuts in staffing proposed in the last Council's Budget?**
- A2 It is intended to look at the communication objectives and devise a plan that targets the right people, makes the best use of council money and joins up with other council communications . No decision has yet been made about the continuance or cessation of the magazine. That will be undertaken as part of the service re-design in 2015/16. There is increasing on line help so that customers can self serve in many instances – for example <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/financial-help-and-benefits/benefits-and-money-advice> which provides further links to e.g. an on line benefits checker and debt advice services.
- Q3 What effect will the loss of the four posts have on the ability of the team to deal with case work, or the ability of this department to provide 600 hours of training per year?**
- A3 There will undoubtedly be an impact on casework so WRAMAS will be looking at referral criteria and reprioritising its work to ensure the most disadvantaged are targeted for help. If the current way of training support staff can be replicated by effective on-line training this should mitigate any adverse effects. Any online training will be compatible with assistive technology and accessible for disabled people where ever possible and can be part of any consultation.
- Q4 I understand that at least one post could be save if the BCC SLT managers agree. Is it possible to implement this proposal so that the work with the disability changes can be continued?**
- A4 I assume this refers to one-off funding for a temporary post to work on the issue of Personal Independence payments (PIP) transferring from Disability Living Allowance (DLA). This is due to

be considered by the panel that approves recruitment to all vacancies.

Q5 The Welfare Rights and Money Advice Service run by our city is central. How does our Authority propose to continue to monitor the impact of the changes at the Department of Work and Pensions after the cuts in staffing take place in this department?

A5 Staff in ICS and in particular the Housing Benefit Policy Team already liaise closely with DWP so they will be able to monitor the impact of the changes.

Q6 Will the Mayor work with Resources Scrutiny to ensure that Welfare Rights and Money Advice is still available to the most vulnerable residents.

A6 It is for the Resources Scrutiny Commission to decide on its work programme.

MQ19 COUNCILLOR R STONE TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR

PEST CONTROL

Q1 Can the Mayor give a breakdown of just how the £200,000 re-instated to the Pest Control budget at the February meeting will be spent in 2014-15?

A1 The £200k that was re-instated in the Pest Control budget for one year will be focussed on providing an affordable Pest Control Service for the City. (Approximately £160k on rat and mice treatments, £40K on insect treatments).

Resources will be prioritised to those on certain benefits, vulnerable groups and Council Housing Tenants, who would otherwise be unable to access such services.

MQ20 COUNCILLOR T LEAMAN TO ASK GEORGE FERGUSON, THE MAYOR

“AVONMOUTH SEVERNSIDE ENTERPRISE AREA”

Ambition Lawrence Weston, Lawrence Weston planning group and other local stakeholders were interested to read about the intention to *spend £20.85 million to radically transform the transport infrastructure around the Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone.*

We in North Bristol are also going to benefit from an increase in employment places and opportunities within the “Avonmouth Severnside Enterprise Area”.

We and other stakeholders including several large business in Avonmouth have been calling for improved infrastructure and improvements in public transport, to and from the local industrial estates for several years.

Our main concern lies with the poor roads leading from the main residential areas into the heart of the industrial estates including Avonmouth, Severnside, Western Approach , Portbury and the Dockside industrial and employment areas.

With no bus service delivering a service into these sites, combined with narrow roads with no pavements or street lighting, no cycle lanes and heavy use by HGV's.

We applaud other initiatives aimed at easing the transport barriers concerning the Avonmouth Severnside Enterprise Area, such as the “Wheels 2 Work” scheme where residents could benefit from Bicycle loans, Moped Hire schemes and free Bus passes.

Unfortunately with such poor local infrastructure none of the above benefits are suitable as we have no cycle lanes, foot paths, bus service or safe enough roads to encourage uptake of this scheme from local residents.

We have already suffered from several accidents to Cyclists and other road users, including one fatality to a Cyclist commuter this year.

Q1 Bearing in mind the attention and finance being focused on the Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone, may we ask what are the plans, if any, for improving the transport infrastructure in the Avonmouth and surrounding industrial and employment sites as well as the designated Avonmouth Severnside Enterprise Area?

A1 "Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council have a joint aspiration for up to 12,000 jobs to be created in the Avonmouth-Severnside area by 2026, and for these jobs to be fully accessible to their residents.

A transport working group comprising officers from both councils has been set up to identify, shape and deliver initiatives that improve accessibility in the Avonmouth-Severnside area for businesses, their workforces and customers. They will develop a transport plan for the area, which will itself be influenced by the Highways Agency's route based strategy which, it is hoped, will

provide funding for the development of a new junction on the M49."

We are also looking to bid for further Local Sustainable Transport Fund money to help improve connectivity in the Avonmouth Severnside area.