

Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Commission Agenda



Date: Monday, 14 September 2020

Time: 5.30 pm

Venue: Virtual Meeting - Zoom Committee Meeting with
Public Access via YouTube

Distribution:

Councillors: Paula O'Rourke (Chair), Fabian Breckels (Vice-Chair), Mark Bradshaw, Tom Brook, Martin Fodor, Carole Johnson, Kevin Quartley, Jon Wellington, Mark Weston, Mark Wright and Tim Rippington

Issued by: Johanna Holmes, Democratic Services

City Hall, PO Box 3167, Bristol, BS3 9FS

Tel: 0117 90 36898

E-mail: democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk

Date: Monday, 14 September 2020



Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Commission 14 September 2020 Public Forum



Questions

Ref	Name	Agenda item
Q1	Suzanne Audrey (Attending)	10 – Mayor’s Climate Emergency Plan
Q2	Suzanne Audrey	11 – Housing Delivery update
Q3	Suzanne Audrey	11 – Housing Delivery update
Q4	Suzanne Audrey	11 – Housing Delivery update
Q5	Councillor Clive Stevens (Attending)	11 – Housing Delivery update

Statements and Petitions

Ref	Name	Agenda item
S1	David Redgewell (Attending)	N/A
S2	Councillor Clive Stevens	12 - Planning for the Future - Government White Paper



Questions

Q1: Suzanne Audrey

Item 10. Mayor's climate emergency action plan

The One City Plan states for 2020 one of the three key priorities for Economy is: Continue to improve the way Bristol tackles challenges, seizes opportunities and raises its global profile by taking part in knowledge exchanges with major world cities, focused on digital connections to limit non-essential air travel.

On 4 February 2020 Bristol City Council declared an ecological emergency.

But, for example, the Mayor's diary indicates: February 12th 2020 Travel to New York; February 13th 2020 Travel back to the UK.

Question

What policies are in place for limiting non-essential air travel by the Mayor, Cabinet members and senior officers of Bristol City Council?

Answer – International Affairs

In line with our International Travel policy and ongoing steps to address the climate emergency, the Mayor does seek to limit travel wherever possible and only attend in person where there is a valid and essential reason for doing so.

As part of our actions aligned to the Council's Climate Emergency Action plan, the Council has committed to reviewing all of its plans and strategies to consider how they can contribute to our overall goal of becoming carbon neutral as part of the Climate programme referred to in the Scrutiny meeting paper (Item 10).

As a result, we are currently reviewing our international travel policy (for Members and Officers), but for your information, Bristol City Council's international travel policy (last updated in June 2020) currently states:

Challenging goals have been set for both the council and the city to be carbon neutral by 2030. Bristol City Council is already recognised as an environmental leader. To show leadership in this context means achieving our goals in an integrated way so that delivering one piece of work enhances and does not undermine our climate goals. We can do this by using alternatives to travel and making good choices about how we travel.

Alternatives to travel should be considered first. Greater availability and widespread use of high-quality live streaming and video and teleconferencing options have made avoiding travel much more viable. These solutions avoid the financial, carbon, and time costs of travel and accommodation.

Where travel is necessary, travel by rail or coach is recommended wherever it is possible. Air travel is associated with substantial carbon emissions and should be avoided where the journey time by rail is:

- Less than six hours or
- Less than the total door-to-door journey time of flying (journeys to central Europe can be quicker by train, where airports can be significant distances from the starting point and destination).

In the case of the Mayor's travel to New York in February, this was to speak at an Open Society Foundation conference and hold other side meetings as part of the Mayor's role on the leadership board of the Mayors' Migration Council, one of our priority international networks we are a member of, and to explore funding opportunities for the city.

The Mayors Migration Council empowers and enables city leaders with access, capacity, resources (technical and financial), knowledge, and connections to engage in migration diplomacy and policymaking at the international, regional, and national levels. The goal is to ensure that global responses to migrant and refugee issues both reflect and address realities on the ground for the benefit of newcomers and the communities that receive them.

This travel was seen as essential travel to build partnerships with key partners, explore funding and other collaboration opportunities that are important to Bristol, and it was not an option to call in to these meetings.

Q2: Suzanne Audrey

Item 11. Housing Delivery update

The report and presentation seem to imply that Covid-19 is the main reason why the affordable housing target of 800 a year by 2020 has not been met. However, other information (e.g. FOI requests) suggests the target was not going to be met irrespective of Covid-19. It would be helpful to know the full range of reasons why the affordable housing target was not met. It seems, for example, developers such as L&G have resisted requirements for affordable housing in some of their developments (<https://www.bristol247.com/news-and-features/news/wrangle-over-lack-of-affordable-homes-in-central-bristol-development/>). The term 'optimism bias' is included in the officer report "whereby the entities delivering affordable housing have good reason to believe that these numbers will be delivered but are not always aware of risks or other factors that might cause slippages or delays to their development programmes." It would be helpful to have a proper analysis of the risks and other factors that led to slippages in the housing targets between 2016 and 2020 so that we can learn from them.

Question

Please can you give details of the factors, prior to the Covid-19 lock-down in March 2020, that led to slippages in the housing targets between May 2016 and March 2020?

Answer – Housing Delivery

The reasons for the affordable housing target not being met in 3 out of the 4 years between 2016/17 – 2019/20 are complex and due to a range of systemic issues and factors. This includes delays in establishing some of the internal interventions needed to accelerate housing delivery, delays related to specific conditions on different development sites and the need to work with our external partners to build their capacity to deliver at the scale and pace required.

We're also working hard to improve our data collection, management and reporting practices so that we are better able to analyse, monitor and forecast the delivery of affordable housing, and target our interventions to those schemes which may be stalling for a variety of factors.

However both local and national planning policies address the issue of scheme specific development viability. Policies are clear that if applicants are able to demonstrate to our satisfaction that their

schemes would not be viable when delivering the levels of affordable housing required, a reduced level of affordable housing may be acceptable. All viability claims are rigorously scrutinised by viability consultants acting for the Council prior to officers recommending any reduction in affordable housing levels.

As the report states, the Council has been working through a range of interventions and is now on track to meet or exceed its targets for this year and the next two years and will be using every tool available to maintain this pace in the future.

Q3: Suzanne Audrey

Item 11. Housing Delivery update

There seems to be a fine line between stating targets for the housing delivery team and electioneering. For example, in the leaflet explaining council tax spending ('Your council and local information' printed by Bristol Design, Bristol City Council, March 2019) delivered to every household in Bristol, the Mayor stated: "we are exceeding our housing targets". This does not seem to have been true.

Question

What safeguards are in place to ensure that impartial and accurate information about housing targets is reported to the general public by Bristol City Council?

Answer

All Council communications go through an approvals process to ensure we are reflecting both factual accuracy of our statements and also the priorities and focus the political administration is working towards.

Progress against any target is evaluated against different influencing factors, combined to predict whether that target is within reach of being met. In this case, forthcoming developments, economic conditions and the status of individual planning applications were considered, and each of these factors have changed considerably month by month.

Q3: Suzanne Audrey

Item 11. Housing Delivery update

It was reported at a recent meeting of the Audit committee that Bristol City Council had commissioned Colin Molton to undertake work for Bristol City Council. Please can you give details of the current projects Mr Molton is working on for Bristol City Council?

Answer – Executive Director, Growth and Regeneration

Following handover of responsibilities to the new Executive Director, Growth and Regeneration, Colin Molton has been retained to work with key partners in Bristol on plans for the regeneration of Temple Quarter.

Q4: Councillor Clive Stevens**Item 11. Housing Delivery Update**

Dear Scrutiny - I was interested to read the report on affordable housing and presume this means affordable rents (housing benefit levels or less) rather than discounted rents and discounted purchases. If so it is good to see supply ramping up to potentially 1,200 a year.

My question is whether you know how many homes at affordable rents will be required to meet demand? What with a net 11,000 on the waiting list and it going up nearly 1,000 a year?

Answer – Housing Delivery

The numbers reported under the definition of affordable housing include the following:

- Social Rent: the rent is set in accordance with the UK Government's rent policy for Social Rent.
- Affordable Rent: there can be a range but typically rents are 80% below market rent.
- Shared Ownership: again, a range here but typically purchasers buy between 25 and 75% of a property and then pay rent on the remaining percentage. Purchasers may also have the ability to purchase additional equity in the home, a process known as staircasing.

The most recent evidence of the need for affordable housing was provided through the process to agree a new Joint Spatial Plan (JSP) in the West of England (now withdrawn). This showed a high level of need for affordable housing across the region with an estimated requirement of 30,600 new affordable homes between 2016 and 2036, with a target to meet 80% under the JSP. Through this process, it was agreed that Bristol would set a target of 7,180 social and affordable rented homes over the period 2016 – 2036, which equates to approximately 450 homes per year over the period 2020 – 2036. This target took into account that affordable housing would be delivered in other local authority areas in the West of England facilitated by the Duty to Cooperate.

Statements

S1: David Redgewell, South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside.

With the need for economic development in the Bristol-Bath city region and North Somerset council to join WECA Mayoral Transport Authority and Planning Authority, we need a public transport plan to fit in with the city region economy plan.

Top priority is to support the city region bus network and to carry out future reviews of the bus network. North Bristol has put in place a good network of local buses in the wider area of North Bristol from Severn Beach and Avonmouth to Southmead Hospital and Bristol parkway to the city centre.

These services are provided by Stagecoach West for the West of England Mayoral Transport Authority.

We now need the WECA Mayoral Transport Authority to carry out a review of bus services in south Bristol including Keynsham and Whitchurch in BANES.

- Services 513 /514 Brislington – Knowle – Hengrove - town service.
- 515 Stockwood to Whitchurch, Hengrove hospital and imperial park shopping Centre.
- 511 Stockwood to Bedminster shopping centre.
- 510 Bedminster local service.
- 52 Bristol city centre to south Bristol hospital
- 672 Bristol city centre to the chew valley.
- 636 Whitchurch to keynsham
- Keynsham town service.
- 96 Brislington Knowle Hengrove hospital.
- Bristol city centre to Witchurch and Knowle bus service. 91/ 92 services.

A review of bus services in South Bristol and North East Somerset will improve economic development.

This will allow WECA Mayoral Transport Authority to develop better bus service in South Bristol and North East Somerset and part of North Somerset.

The 3rd review of bus service is; East Bristol on routes 18 and 19 - Bath Spa bus station to Salford, Keynsham, Willsbridge, North Common, Warmley, Kingswood, Hillfields Staple Hill and UWE Bristol Parkway Station and Cribbs Causeway bus station.

Service 19 - Bath Spa bus station, Weston, RUH, Kelson Bitton, Cadbury Heath, Warmley, Kingswood, Hillfields, Staple Hill, Downend, UWE, Bristol Parkway Station and Cribbs Causeway bus station.

684 Kingswood Emerson Green to Yate bus station.

37 Bath spa bus Station, Weston, RUH, Kelson, Bitton, Longwell Green, Hanham, St George, Lawrence Hill station, and Bristol bus station.

A bus link from Mangotsfield, Downend, Bristol Parkway station, Patchway and Southmead hospital.

We need more bus shelters in East Bristol in the Staple Hill, Downend, Fishponds and Mangotsfield area .

We need a bus service network review in a modern city region with First Group, Stagecoach West and HCT group.

On regeneration, employment is important to be provided in south Bristol around Whitchurch, Knowle and Hengrove.

That regeneration of Bristol Temple Meads Station is a regional priority for the Western gateway transport board and south west transport board.

Network rail western routes and department for transport need to make more progress on this project.

The old railway hotel needs addressing, and the passengers shopping facilities.

The interchange with bus rail and light rail especially to the south of the station

The Electrification of the railway line needs to be addressed between Chippenham, Bristol Temple meads and Filton Abbey wood. Plus Weston-super-Mare.

The programme of Metro West railway network investment must go ahead with the Bristol Temple Meads to Bedminster, Parson Street, Ashton Gate, Pill and Portishead.

Bristol Temple Meads, Lawrence Hill, Stapleton road, Ashley down, Horfield Filton Abbey wood, Filton North station and Henbury, and loop to Avonmouth.

Improve the Severn beach, St Andrew road, Avonmouth dock, Shirehampton Sea Mills, Clifton down, Redland Montpellier station, Stapleton road, Lawrence Hill station, Bristol Temple meads station.

Improvements to Bristol temple meads to Westbury train service onward to Frome or Warminster.

Calling at St Anne's park, Keynsham, Saltford, Bath Spa, Freshford, Avoncliffe, Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge and Westbury.

Bristol Temple Meads, Lawrence Hill, Stapleton Road, Ashley Down, Horfield Filton Abbey Wood, Bristol Parkway, Yate, Charfield, Cam and Dursey, Stonehouse, Bristol Road, Gloucester central and Cheltenham spa.

Also improvements to the Bristol to Weston super mare and Taunton railway line with a half hourly service to Taunton.

Calling at Bedminster, Parson Street, Nailsea and Backwell, Yatton for Clevedon bus link, Worle parkway, Weston, Milton and Weston super mare.

Highbridge and Burnham on sea Bridgwater and Taunton.

Disabled access is required at stations at Lawrence Hill, Stapleton Road, Pilning station, Parson Street and Nailsea and Backwell and lifts at Weston super mare and Cheltenham spa.

In Bath the top priority is to work with Wiltshire council and Mendip District council with a council merger.

To improve local bus and railway links into Bath city centre with its clean air zone.

To put in place a social distance and cleaning standards system in Bath Spa bus and rail station with cleaning and social distancing and reopening travel centre facilities.

The top priority is for WECA Mayoral Transport Authority to build Portway Park and Ride station. Bus based parking and ride site built at Yate with the T1 bus service to Bristol city centre with bus lanes along the ring road and M32.

These measures and bus service improvements on the 2a-2 corridor, Cribb bus station to Clifton down station, Bristol City Centre and Stockwood, will help with alternative to closing the city centre to the private car in Bristol Bridge area and the clean air zone In the city centre.

The other issue is to provide a light rail system from Bristol City Centre and Bristol Temple Meads to East Bristol and Bath.

- City Centre to Whitchurch and South Bristol and the Airport.
- Bristol to North Bristol and Cribbs Causeway bus station.
- Bristol to Keynsham, Bath and Bathford.
- Bath to Peasdown St John, Radstock, Midsomer Norton, Shepton Mallet.

David Redgewell South West transport network and Railfuture Severnside.

S2: Councillor Clive Stevens:

Dear G&R Scrutiny,

I wish to spell out what I think about this white paper.

It is clear that the market for affordable homes in our city is broken¹. The market is not satisfying needs (which is something economists have assured us that markets are supposed to do). The subsidies necessary are costing society a fortune due to the level of rents² and number of people on housing benefit plus the subsidies³ via Homes England (funded by the tax payer) to get them built.

This is also costing people a fortune in terms of anxiety and their mental health⁴.

So something has to be done and the Government to their credit have done something.

Unfortunately that is the only good thing I can say about them. Their logic is wrong (e.g. delayed applications) and their economics is wrong too.

Their thinking appears totally flawed until you realise who these changes are meant to benefit. Then it all becomes clear⁵.

These changes are freeing up a broken market, so a city can self-destruct⁶.

Councils will either have more on the homeless register or with all those office conversions⁷ the rents will be manageable for a few more years but provide poor living conditions. And some on low pay will need to move out the city altogether⁸ leaving us short of key workers. Remember these are the people we clapped for on Thursdays during April and May. They were important then, some will become homeless and thus have to leave our city.

My analysis of specific points...

What is the point of diverting much needed money for affordable rented homes to starter homes? Answer; to create more Tory voters and to leave others without a home and thus without a vote⁹.

The duty for Local Authorities to cooperate¹⁰ didn't work. So it is proposed to abandon it altogether instead of fix it. This shows they believe competition between Local Authorities is the way forward. Bristol will suffer and South Glos will gain.

And the insistence on beauty: Fine if everyone has had their needs catered for but where we have a market that enables some to have three homes (therefore two are wants and only one fulfils a need) leaving others to have no home (an unsatisfied need) then beauty should play second fiddle until needs¹¹ are satisfied. Tell someone on the housing list, "sorry not enough affordable homes because we insisted on beauty".

And what about the Climate and Ecological Emergency? This white paper is profoundly undemocratic¹² having people give outline planning permission in 2025 when the detailed application might only come forward ten years later and thereby ignore the will of the people in 2035 and get permission by default (just as long as it is beautiful enough).

If it wasn't obvious already I will close this statement by saying this Planning for no Future white paper is repugnant to me. I hope BCC feels the same way.

¹ P270 & P310 of After The Revolution by Clive Stevens, Tangent Books 2020

² P404 ibid

³ P271 ibid

⁴ P274 – 279 ibid

⁵ P45 – 57 ibid (The Mathematics of Power)

⁶ P425 & 426 ibid

⁷ P308 ibid

⁸ P191 ibid

⁹ P45 – 57 ibid

¹⁰ P209 – 212 ibid

¹¹ P188 – 189 ibid

¹² Section B (p45 – 88) ibid Why is democracy important?