

# Cabinet

## Supplementary Information



**Date:** Tuesday, 13 April 2021

**Time:** 4.00 pm

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

### 2. Public Forum

(Pages 3 - 8)

**Issued by:** Corrina Haskins, Democratic Services

City Hall, Bristol, BS1 9NE

E-mail: [democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk)

**Date:** Tuesday, 13 April 2021



**CABINET – 13 April 2021**

**PUBLIC FORUM ITEMS**

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Statements and questions have been received as follows (full details are attached):

**Agenda item 8 – Extending current Adult Social Care Framework agreement for Care Homes**

None

**Agenda item 9 – Finance Exception Report**

None

**Agenda item 10 – Procurement Support for Display Suppliers**

None

**Agenda item 11 – Microsoft Azure Licensing Agreement Contract**

None

**Agenda item 12 – Local Covid Outbreak Management Plan (March 2021 refresh)**

None

**Agenda item 13 - Quarterly Performance Progress Report (Q3 - 2020/21)**

Statements:

PS13.01 Jen Smith  
PS13.02 Suzanne Audrey  
PS13.03 Eileen Means

Questions:

PQ13.01 Suzanne Audrey

**Statement: PS13.01**

**Cabinet – 13<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

**Re: Agenda item 13 - Quarterly Performance Progress Report (Q3 - 2020/21)**

**Statement submitted by: Jen Smith**

Bristol City Council's Quarterly Performance Progress Report states under 'Fair and Inclusive' that 'the percentage of Education Health Care Plans that are issued within timescales continues to improve steadily. Early indications are that this will continue to improve into Q4.'

This achievement, highlighted in a heartening green colour, shows that 19.3 per cent of EHCPs were completed on time.

But what this actually shows is a continuing celebration of failure, with more than 80 per cent of EHCPs not completed on time and therefore unlawful.

This somewhat disingenuous presentation of data does not include Quality Control information, nor how many EHCPs will be taken to SENDIST.

None of this can be described as particularly 'fair' nor 'inclusive'. Three years' after it took me a year to get two EHCPs, only now lawfully completing 20 per cent on time is dismal. And, not even making the 20 per cent agreed with Ofsted and the CQC is dismal on dismal.

I'm still trying to get clear facts about Bristol City Council's spend on barristers against parents appealing assessment and finalised plans at SENDIST, something which is predicably difficult.

So far, I've found that a minimum of £3,330 was spent on Local Authority engaged barristers against parents who were trying to navigate the EHCP process last year. How wonderful for the Local Authority to have this time and money available to throw around. Although Appendix A in Agenda Item 9 for this same meeting shows that they don't.

This paper shows a High Needs Block (HNB) in-year overspend of £8.2m, with top-up funding being a 'major area of budget pressure'.

Bristol City Council is failing to get to grips with the High Needs Block overspend. It doesn't get to set weak, unlawful targets because it is SO bad and then colour them in green – even when the full 20 per cent target has not been met.

The now favourite refrain of Education Transformation Programme and Belonging Strategy still shows no accountability or responsibility at the very heart of the Bristol Send Crisis.

This is a mess further obstructed and compounded by education officers withholding important independent findings from People Scrutiny Commission, Bristol Schools Forum and Bristol residents (by delaying the publication of the outcome of the Alternative Learning Provision Review). It is also aided by a political campaign team hiding important questions raised by Send parents and carers to Mayor Marvin Rees on Facebook.

Ofsted and the CQC stated in their inspection that 'The lack of accountability of leaders at all levels' was a significant concern. These concerns are still valid 18 months later.

**Statement: PS13.02**

**Cabinet – 13<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

**Re: Agenda item 13 - Quarterly Performance Progress Report (Q3 - 2020/21)**

**Statement submitted by: Suzanne Audrey**

Freedom of Information

With regard to the prolonged poor performance by Bristol City Council in responding to Freedom of Information requests, I would like to read a short section from the Information Commissioner's Office website.

What is the Freedom of Information Act for?

Public authorities spend money collected from taxpayers, and make decisions that can significantly affect many people's lives. Access to information helps the public make public authorities accountable for their actions and allows public debate to be better informed and more productive.

Access to official information can also improve public confidence and trust if government and public sector bodies are seen as being open.

"Unnecessary secrecy in government leads to arrogance in governance and defective decision-making." - Your Right to Know

[Information Commissioner's Office. <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-freedom-of-information/what-is-the-foi-act/>]

**Statement: PS13.03**

**Cabinet – 13<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

**Re: Agenda item 13 - Quarterly Performance Progress Report (Q3 - 2020/21)**

**Statement submitted by: Eileen Means**

Given that we have all had to isolate to various degrees and times over the past year of Covid19, and with specific reference to the City Council's priorities of Empowering and Caring, Fair and Inclusive and especially Wellbeing, I share the concerns expressed by Public Health about the mental health, loneliness and isolation of the local population emerging from lockdown.

As has been demonstrated over recent years when local libraries were threatened with closure off and on since 2012, Bristol's suburban libraries play a significant role in helping people's mental health through non-stigmatising community groups and activities, bringing people in their neighbourhoods together, reading for escapism from day-to-day pressures and available use of PCs and other essential equipment in this digital age for student, job seekers and others.

Communities have missed our libraries whilst they have been closed (I know I have!) and will welcome them re-opening for all of the facilities they provide easily and swiftly.

**Question: CQ13.01**

**Cabinet – 13<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

**Re: Agenda item 13 - Quarterly Performance Progress Report (Q3 - 2020/21)**

**Question submitted by: Suzanne Audrey**

**Background**

It is really disappointing to read in the Quarterly progress report that the Council's response to Freedom of Information requests continues to perform well below target. I was also concerned to see that this item is not included in the subsequent table so that there are no figures attached to this performance indicator, and no management notes to explain why this continues to be well below target or what actions are being taken to improve the situation.

**Question**

Please can you provide figures for performance rates, and information about management actions, in relation to the Council's poor performance over Freedom of Information requests?