

Full Council

Supplementary Information



Date: Tuesday, 25 May 2021

Time: 2.00 pm

Venue: Conference Hall - City Hall, College Green,
Bristol, BS1 5TR

7. Public Statements

(Pages 3 - 8)



Public Forum

received for Annual Council
Tuesday 25th May 2021



1. Written Statements Received

Under the Council's constitution, there is no provision for public forum at the Annual Council meeting. However, in consultation with the Mayor and Party Group Leaders, the Lord Mayor determined that written statements from members of the public would be accepted for this meeting on the following basis:

(Pages 2 - 6)

1. The wording of all written statements must be submitted by the deadline of midday the day before the meeting, Monday 24th May 2021.

- Please note that public questions were not permitted on this occasion.
- One written statement per member of the public or member of Council was permitted.

2. Statements for this meeting must be about the reports included on the agenda.

Details of all statements submitted will be sent to the Lord Mayor, Mayor and all Councillors as soon as possible after the above deadline.

STATEMENT PS 01

Submitted by Suzanne Audrey

Congratulations to the 70 councillors who have been elected by the people of Bristol to represent the 34 wards and sit on the various important committees to be confirmed at this Annual Council, Full Council meeting.

LGA guidance for new councillors explains that, as well as representing and responding to people in their wards, the responsibilities of councillors include developing and reviewing council policy, holding the executive/cabinet to account, and a range of regulatory, quasi-judicial and statutory duties undertaken in the various committees.

Unfortunately, after resigning as a Labour councillor and cabinet member for housing in 2020, Paul Smith indicated “there is a real problem” and suggested we need to look at how backbench and opposition councillors “can have more of a say”.

Despondency about the role of backbench and opposition councillors was eloquently expressed before the election by the then Labour backbencher, Mike Davies. He said: “There has been such a disparity between my hopes before I got elected and the reality of being a councillor under the mayoral system – it’s been a demoralising experience, and I know that’s true not just for me but for many others.” He argued “so much enthusiasm, talent and expertise has gone wasted” and suggested many good councillors were stepping down because “our role is hollow, and our communities are let down”. Sadly, some outgoing councillors described a culture of bullying and suppression of dissent.

Meanwhile, unelected ‘city partners’ sit on various boards and commissions to discuss ‘one city’ priorities. Before the election, councillors of all parties expressed concerns about feeling disempowered by this process since they are not permitted to sit on these boards and commissions, even where the interests of their wards are directly affected.

Now that we have a new council, I sincerely hope the Mayor and Cabinet will work in an open and inclusive way with backbench and opposition councillors as they endeavour to represent their wards and undertake the important tasks of the committees to which they are assigned.

STATEMENT PS 02

Submitted by David Redgewell

Role of the cabinet member for transport and planning. Annual council.

With the west of England combined authority and North Somerset council being in charge of public transport From April 2021 and responsible for the Government bus back better White Paper and run the city region bus network that a full partnership arrangement is made with North Somerset council and weca mayoral transport authority to manage Bristol and Bath city region bus network and the apprate office are loaned or Transferred to carry out these parliamentary orders functions.

On railway s following the government White paper command paper that the new cabinet member for Transport in the city and county of Bristol work on the railway Devolution issues with the west of England mayoral combined authority North Somerset council and west Gateway sub Region Transport board.

With the Government moving Transport and Regional Planning functions to Dan Norris the Metro mayor it is very very important that we have cabinet members that work very closely with weca mayoral combined Transport authority. and North Somerset council who need to join weca mayoral combined authority in a Governance review.

Again we want to make sure the cabinet member for planning is working in partnership with the west of England combined authority and North Somerset on Regional planning. and the metro mayor regional Development plan .

With Bane and south Gloucestershire council and North Somerset council.

The city and county of Bristol is major south west city but it the Bristol and Bath city region weca mayoral combined authority where government will allocate funds for business planning transport financial support from the Department for Transport soon to be Great Britain railways.

We hope that job descriptions for the cabinet member s and officer s .

acknowledge the Roles of the metro mayor Dan Norris and the west of England combined mayoral Authority and North Somerset council.

And the importance of the sub region Transport board western gateway.

And The western gateway partnership.

Making the city and county of Bristol major regional authority in south west England.

David Redgewell south west transport network and Railfuture Severnside.

STATEMENT PS 03

Submitted by Jo Sergeant

Firstly, I'd like to congratulate all the newly elected councillors, as well as those who have managed to hold onto their seats. I am disappointed to not be with you. Good luck for the next three years. You are certainly going to need it, because, whilst it's a privilege to be a councillor and it can be amazing and rewarding experience, it is hard work if you're doing it properly and takes up a lot of your time . You are certainly going to earn the £14,330 annual ward councillor's allowance.

To all councillors, who are caring for loved ones, please do not be afraid to ensure that you get all the support you're entitled to. It's very easy to think that all committee meetings times are set in stone and that you have to attend a meeting at a difficult time just because it suits longer serving members or senior staff. Make sure you find out about any extra financial support and push for meetings to remain virtual (wherever possible) if that works better for you.

Marvin, there is no doubt about your mandate to lead the city. However, many Bristolians chose not to vote for your party, to represent them in their wards . You need to listen to all councillors and recognise that they have as much legitimacy as you. You will find it easier to do your job if you work with them, rather than sneer at them. You are going to have a lot to do and you should take advantage of the knowledge and expertise amongst the new cohort, particularly with regard to education, transport and waste. Do not limit your cabinet to the Labour Group. It's not fair on the city.

Finally, Bristol needs to prepare for a referendum on its governance system. It will soon become apparent that a lot of the new councillors are not big fans of the Mayoral system. Bearing this in mind, I would urge the Mayor and Council to consider setting up a Democracy Commission to consider the alternatives and how they can best be adapted to work for the city. Particular attention needs to be paid to transparency and accountability. We need better records of decision-making, as many recent examples demonstrate. [Executive pay-offs, large over-budget projects and lack of attention to the activities of arms-length companies etc]

Finally, finally: Remember what you are here to do. It's about working for a better Bristol for everyone and not for personal ambition. However you also need to take care of yourselves and not let stress get the better of you.

Good luck everyone!

Jo Sergeant

Former councillor for Avonmouth & Lawrence Weston

STATEMENT PS 04

Submitted by Joanna Booth

I have noted some changes proposed to the constitution at Full Council tomorrow and I would like to express my concerns.

1. I think that reports and agendas for meetings should be available 10 clear working days beforehand and not six as proposed. The council teams have a consistent practice of providing reports in a delayed fashion already so limiting the time the public has to read them would only weaken scrutiny, transparency and accountability.

2. I am worried to see that group leaders will have their speeches removed from the annual meeting. As a city, we quite clearly did not vote even in the majority for a Labour representation. We should be able to hear what the group leaders of all parties have to say.

3. The new constraints about who can put in a statement, petition or question to public forum are also worrying. In the hostile environment that the government has created, I am concerned that someone would be checking the resident status of people scrutinising or engaging with the council. Temporary residents, say in a hostel, refugee centre or unable to find accommodation, may not be able to engage with public forum.

STATEMENT PS 05

Submitted by Harriet Bradley

As a former councillor, I would like to congratulate all newly elected councillors to BCC as well as those retaining their seats. Being a councillor is an important, often rewarding, but also challenging and often frustrating role. The coronavirus pandemic will have exacerbated those difficulties, although I would congratulate the council and its officers for steering Bristol through this difficult period more successfully than elsewhere. However, dealing with the aftermath in a context of cuts to council funding will be tough.

In today's polarised society, the councillor's experience can also be conflictual and personally upsetting. I would urge all the current crop, whatever their political affiliation, to treat their colleagues with kindness and respect. Jeremy Corbyn notably called for 'a kinder type of politics' ; sadly we have not achieved it.

So that the councillors can play their role fully and with confidence I believe there is now an urgent need for a commission to explore how democracy can be better achieved in local government to ensure that decisions are made in a participatory, transparent and inclusive fashion, to benefit all the city's communities.

Harriet Bradley (prof)

Former Councillor for Brislington West