

# Member Forum - Questions & Statements from Councillors



**Date:** Tuesday, 12 September 2023

**Time:** 4.30 pm

**Venue:** The Council Chamber - City Hall, College Green, Bristol, BS1 5TR

## Distribution:

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**Date:** Date Not Specified



# Agenda

## 2. Member Forum Statements Received

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# Agenda Item 2

The following statements have been submitted – full details are attached:

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Subject</b>
CS01	Councillor Gary Hopkins	Redcatch Park Tennis Courts
CS02	Councillor Ed Plowden	DCA Committee
CS03	Councillor Christine Townsend	Venturers and Bristol University
CS04	Councillor Patrick McAllister	Chocolate Path

**CS01**

**Members Forum statement from Cllr Gary Hopkins**

**Subject: Redcatch Park Tennis Courts**

I hope that due regard will be paid to statements on two issues in knowle being raised in public forum in the main meeting. Although very different there is a common theme with the administration showing a casual disregard for the needs of youth and local efforts at solution to problems.

I will draw your attention to the 4 tennis courts in redcatch park which were until 10 years ago in a desperately bad state until rescued by a local consortium under the leadership of our local youth worker Dave Wherrett. A grant independent of the council not only put the courts into pristine condition but provided a muga and other facilities. Free access since has benefitted the physical and mental health of not only youngsters but families and the retired. A happy,busy and harmonious community. Officers at the time wanted a pay to play system but this was ruled out by the grant. The legal power of that condition has expired but the moral case has just been ripped apart by one of the most appalling examples of maladministration and poor decision making that i have seen in over 20 years on this council.

With days to go before launch we as local cllrs got to see the proposed "consultation" which was in fact designed to drag the public down the route of agreeing to charging that officers wanted to go. Requests to make the consultation balanced and more informative were refused.

The public emphatically rejected the railroading and did so with a huge % of additional and pertinent freehand comments. The data and report were hidden until after the decision was taken and there was a refusal to discuss the consultation results and options before the decision. The top reason pointed to by officers that the small minority gave for supporting charging was available without charging but this was disguised by the consultation.

This matter is likely to finish up with the ombudsman and i urge the mayor to sit down with us and seriously consider this matter before enactment. We will in the meantime be working to try to reduce the damage and this work will continue after the mayors term of office expires.

**CS02**

**Members Forum statement from Cllr Ed Plowden**

**Subject: DCA Committee**

I have been proud to serve on the DCA committee over the past two years and contribute to thoroughly debated and properly made decisions. There have been some with which I disagreed, but nevertheless I was careful to uphold the authority and legitimacy of the committee and its processes.

I would therefore like to make it clear that I have resigned from DCA because the people I live amongst, and am proud to represent, have severe concerns about the committee, following what is now known locally as the "Broadwalk Scandal". As I can no longer defend the committee's actions, I cannot continue to be a part of it.

I am pleased to say that my successor on the committee will be Councillor O'Rourke. She will be a superb replacement.

I urge everyone involved in the planning system to demonstrate the transparent and high standards of leadership and objectivity that the people of our great city expect, and for us as individuals, and collectively as political parties, to exercise the required discipline to ensure that trust is maintained and where necessary rebuilt.

**CS03**

**Members Forum statement from Cllr Christine Townsend**

**Subject: Venturers and Bristol University**

The following statement is my personal opinion.

So – Bristol University and the Society of Merchant Venturers have finally accepted that neither institution has the membership, understanding, interest or necessary respect needed to work with the 93% of children and young people who attend state education establishments.

The years it has taken these people to get out of state schools has seen generations of our city's children subjected to inadequate education, safeguarding risks, being made to engage in ritual worship of slave traders in Bristol Cathedral, their staff being subject to institutional racism, Venturers on a school governing body writing supportive character references for a senior staff member later found guilty of sexual crimes against a child, continuous unlawful admissions practices designed to filter year 7 intakes – and that's just some of the stuff that has appeared in the press. Only the children and families that attended these schools and were on the receiving end of these people's attitudes and approaches can truly understand the contempt with which the Merchant Venturers treat the working classes and the levels of entitlement and arrogance within which they live their lives.

Getting out of our state school sector is only the beginning, these people must get out of our democracy entirely. The individuals who make an active choice to be members of this medieval institution, built on the exploitation and extortion of fellow human beings and the environment, are surely the most contemptuous and damaging 'community' in this city. The only avenue available to them, if they wish to have any path to redemption, is to sign over all land, property and trust funds obtained and hoarded over the centuries from the said exploitation and extraction to public bodies, and disband themselves such that their legacy is finally consigned to the past.

A question remains though as to what will happen to the planned South Bristol Youth Zone. Because surprise, surprise – the Society of Merchant Venturers are involved in that too! Is this Administration going to thrust these 'benefactors' on the young people of south Bristol after the events of last week?

It seems as if any activity where public money can be turned into private profit ends up having the dirty fingerprints of Merchant Venturers all over it, their noses well and truly troughing in the public purse.

To use a well-worn phrase - 'in the name of God, go'.

**CS04**

**Members Forum statement from Cllr Patrick McAllister  
Subject: Chocolate Path**

I am very happy that the Chocolate Path is now reopened. It is a much-loved amenity to Spike Island and was greatly missed during the time that it was closed. It forms an integral part of Bristol's segregated active infrastructure, provides some of the best views and walks in the city, and has an important role to play in connecting Spike Island up given the recent implementation of the Cumberland Road bus gate and future plans for Western Harbour.

Happiness at the reopening was unfortunately tempered by the unsatisfactory nature of the works. On a cursory walk down the path I encountered broken paving, cracked brickwork, sections of unpainted fencing – particularly ironic given the final delay to the reopening was supposedly to finish the paintwork – and areas where the new paint had been allowed to stain the concrete. Most worryingly, the temporary fence and gate structure blocking access between Vauxhall Bridge and the path was still in place at the time of submitting this statement, inconveniencing travellers and prompting some people to attempt to climb around it – this is a clear and severe health and safety risk that may present a legal risk to the Council given the absence of signage.

Given the vast amount of money that was spent on bringing the Chocolate Path back into public use, it is an awful shame that this asset has not been restored to the quality that earned it the city's love in the first place. I call upon the administration to undertake a full inspection of the path and investigate where in the organisational chain of command things went wrong.