

Committee Model Review Group Public Forum



Date: Thursday, 28 November 2024

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Council Chamber, City Hall, College Green, BS1 5TR

Members of the public attending or taking part in Public forum are advised that Full Council meetings are filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the council's [webcasting pages](#).

The whole of the meeting would be filmed (except where there are confidential or exempt items) and the footage will be available for two years. If you ask a question or make a representation, then you are likely to be filmed and will be deemed to have given your consent to this. If you do not wish to be filmed you need to make yourself known to the webcasting staff. However, the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 now means that persons attending meetings may take photographs, film and audio record the proceedings and report on the meeting (Oral commentary is not permitted during the meeting as it would be disruptive). Members of the public should therefore be aware that they may be filmed by others attending and that is not within the council's control.

Please note that the views and information contained within these public statements are those of the individuals concerned and not of the Council.

By participating in public forum business, we will assume that you have consented to your name and the details of your submission being recorded, published online and within the minutes.

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

Date: 28/11/2024



Public Forum

4. Public Forum

Up to 30 minutes is allowed for this item.

(Pages 4 - 10)

Any member of the public or councillor may participate in Public Forum. Public Forum items must relate to the remit of the Review Group and should be addressed to the Chair of the committee.

Members of the public who plan to attend a public meeting at City Hall are advised that you will be required to sign in when you arrive. Please note that you will be issued with a visitor pass which you will need to display at all times.

Please also note:

Questions

1. Written public questions must be received by 5.00 pm, at least 3 clear working days prior to the meeting. For this meeting, this means that questions must be received at the latest by 5.00 pm on Friday 22nd November. Please email questions to democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk
2. Any individual can submit up to 3 written questions.
3. Written replies to questions will be available on the Council's website at least one hour before the meeting.
4. At the meeting, questioners will be permitted to ask up to 2 oral supplementary questions.

Statements

1. Written statements must be received at latest by 12.00 noon, at least 2 working days prior to the meeting. For this meeting, this means that statements must be received at the latest by 12.00 noon on Monday 25th November. Please email statements to democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk
2. Statements, provided they are no more than 1,000 words in length, will be circulated to all group members and will be published on the Council's website at least one hour before the meeting.



Petitions

1. Details of the wording of any petitions, and the number of signatories to petitions must be received at latest by 12.00 noon, at least 2 working days prior to the meeting. For this meeting, this means that petition details must be received at the latest by 12.00 noon on Monday 25th November. Please email petition details to democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk
2. At the meeting, individuals presenting petitions may be required to read out the objectives of the petition.

When submitting a question or statement please indicate whether you are planning to attend the meeting to present your statement and/or ask your question.



Committee Model Review Group Thursday 28th November 2024 Agenda item - Public Forum



Procedural note:

Up to 30 minutes is allowed for this item. Any member of the public or councillor may participate in Public Forum. Public Forum items must relate to the remit of the Review Group and should be addressed to the Chair of the committee.

Members of the public who plan to attend a public meeting at City Hall are advised that you will be required to sign in when you arrive. Please note that you will be issued with a visitor pass which you will need to display at all times.

Questions

Written public questions must be received by 5.00 pm, at least 3 clear working days prior to the meeting. For this meeting, this means that questions must be received at the latest by 5.00 pm on Friday 22nd November. Please email questions to democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk

Statements

Written statements must be received at latest by 12.00 noon, at least 2 working days prior to the meeting. For this meeting, this means that statements must be received at the latest by 12.00 noon on Tuesday 26th November. Please email statements to democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk



Questions

Ref No	Name	Title
PQ01	Dan Ackroyd	Scrutiny
PQ02	Dan Ackroyd	Consultations

Statements

Ref No	Name	Title
PS01	Dan Ackroyd	No title



QUESTION PQ 01

Subject: Scrutiny

Question submitted by: Dan Ackroyd

I realise that the topic is months down the schedule for this meeting, but I would like to understand now what Councillors think 'good scrutiny' looks like.

Some of the agenda items at Scrutiny meetings were informative, which was useful under the mayoral system, as they provided insight into the inner workings of the Council.

Chair, I would very much appreciate it if you or any other Councillor could provide me with an example of an agenda item at a Scrutiny meeting in recent years, that showed an example of scrutiny working well.

The reason I ask is that although I attended quite a few scrutiny meetings, I am not sure that any of them actually resulted in any change.

Response

The Chair has advised he will respond to this during the meeting.



QUESTION PQ 02

Subject: Consultations

Question submitted by: Dan Ackroyd

Chair, I would very much appreciate it if you or any other Councillor, could provide me with an example of a 'public consultation' working well at Bristol City Council.

The reason I ask is that I have seen multiple consultations *that have developed not necessarily to Bristol's advantage*.

A consultation done for the Licensing committee, on the subject of whether to remove the 'Cumulative Impact Assessment' for the city centre, was done in a way that a lawyer at BCC said provided 'no evidence', and so was discarded entirely.

For another Consultation regarding the Allotments, I believe that many thousands of submissions were received, each of which was quite long.

The single funniest moment I've had from witnessing goings on at Bristol City Council is an Allotmenteer proudly boasting that they have "just made their 10th consultation submission".

However, I'm not sure the amusement was shared by the Officers in Democratic Services who had to read the consultation submissions.

Response

The Chair has advised he will respond to this during the meeting.



Statements

STATEMENT PS01

Subject – No title

Statement submitted by: Dan Ackroyd

Incremental improvements

I hope this committee will recommending changes on an ongoing basis, rather than waiting until May 2025.

Although some changes will need proper consideration and debate, there are also some smaller changes which are either 'practice directions' for officers or small changes that could hopefully be unanimously agreed that would produce immediate benefits:

1. No more papers that can't be searched or copy-pasted. The Savills report and multiple Audit documents can't be searched or easily copy-pasted. This is not acceptable.
2. When a member asks a question and no officer present is able to answer it, this should automatically get a written response, rather than the member having to request that explicitly.
3. Senior, but below executive level, officers need to be present at meetings if it is likely that they will be asked questions. Multiple committees are having their work frustrated by the relevant officer not being present.
4. Although the form for submitting Full Council questions and statements is probably saving officers quite a bit of time, that all formatting is lost from these submissions is not acceptable. At the very least, new lines needs to be preserved, but bold, italic and underlining are quite fundamental to making some items be easy to read.
5. Unless there is a strong reason not to, I would very much like to see the deadline for public forum questions to be changed from 5pm to midnight. Currently, there is very little time between the papers being published and the deadline for the public to submit questions. Changing the deadline would give the public almost 50% more time to submit questions.
6. All supplementary questions that need a written response should be done in at most five days. Currently some of them are responded to in the 'action item' of the next meeting, which prevents people from being able to submit questions based on the answer.
7. Corporate risk reports are not functioning particularly well. These are meant to be forward looking documents that allow councillors to monitor risks (and law breaking) at BCC and ask questions about how things can be prevented or mitigated, but they are not being presented in a timely manner.

The Quarter 2 Risk report was written on the 28th August 2024. This report is being presented at the Homes and Housing Cmmt on the 13th December, by which time it is completely out of date. Possibly they should be aligned with the performance reports?



Actually this might not be a trivial change, but as it will take months to implement, Sso I still hope the change can be started before May 2025.

I have also passed on some thoughts about formatting, which hopefully be actioned. Details in S&R public forum -

<https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/b35825/Public%20Forum%20items%2014th-Oct-2024%2014.00%20Strategy%20and%20Resources%20Policy%20Committee.pdf?T=9>

Democratic engagement improvement

I am very concerned with the amount of propaganda and manipulation surrounding political debate online. With the availability of AI (well, 'Large language models') the cost of disrupting other people's conversations has become close to zero.

I have a very strong belief that one of the fundamental requirements necessary for a functioning democracy will be the ability for people to be able to authenticate themselves as belonging to the place where they live. Or as my school song goes; *sit primus nobis hic decor, sumus Bristolenses*.

Given how 'not great' public engagement is with the Democratic process in Bristol, I would like to start a conversation about BCC providing an API to allow websites to authenticate people as living in Bristol or not, so that discussions can be held amongst Bristolians more easily.

Endemic problems

I think this committee needs to discuss not only the current problems that the Committee system is suffering, but also the problems that seem endemic in BCC, and were seen under the Mayoral system also.

1. The violations of people's right to Freedom of Expression from Article 10 European Convention on Human Rights needs to stop. People have the right to say things such as "the complaints process has not been run lawfully".

This suppression of speech impeded the work of the Audit committee on the 25th of November. Members of the public had been trying to raise matters in public, but because they were blocked, the auditors were unable to refer to them.

2. Officers need to give honest, accurate and complete answers. It is unacceptable that the chair of the Strategy & Resources committee has to "go away and try to get a proper answer" for a member of the public when the answer given to a public forum question evades the question.

3. The handling of FOI complaints has been found to be in the breach of the law according to the ICO, and FOI requests for matters of importance, such as the inept evacuation of Barton House, are still being blocked. Some of the slow processing seems to be deliberate.



4. Lawyers in BCC do not seem to understand the concept of a conflict of interest, and do not properly recuse themselves from decisions where they have an interest.

5. Breaches of the law need to be acknowledged openly, rather than being covered up.

End of statement

