

Member Forum - Questions & Statements from Councillors



Date: Tuesday, 14 March 2023

Time: 3.30 pm

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

Distribution:

Councillors: Kye Dudd, Mayor Marvin Rees, Donald Alexander, Lesley Alexander, Amal Ali, Kerry Bailes, Jenny Bartle, Nicola Beech, Marley Bennett, Mark Bradshaw, Fabian Breckels, Andrew Brown, Craig Cheney, Jos Clark, Asher Craig, Sarah Classick, Amirah Cole, Chris Davies, Carla Denyer, Tony Dyer, Richard Eddy, Emma Edwards, Jude English, Lily Fitzgibbon, Tessa Fitzjohn, Martin Fodor, Lorraine Francis, John Geater, Paul Goggin, Geoff Gollop, Zoe Goodman, John Goulandris, Katy Grant, Fi Hance, Alex Hartley, Tom Hathway, Helen Holland, Gary Hopkins, Katja Hornchen, Jonathan Hucker, Philippa Hulme, Farah Hussain, Chris Jackson, Hibaq Jama, Tim Kent, Ellie King, Heather Mack, Mohamed Makawi, Brenda Massey, Henry Michallat, Yassin Mohamud, Graham Morris, Paula O'Rourke, Barry Parsons, Steve Pearce, Ed Plowden, Guy Poultney, Kevin Quartley, Tom Renhard, Tim Rippington, James Scott, Sharon Scott, Steve Smith, Ani Stafford-Townsend, Lisa Stone, Christine Townsend, Andrew Varney, Mark Weston, David Wilcox, Chris Windows and Tim Wye

Copies to: Nancy Rollason (Head of Legal Service), Kevin Slocombe (Strategic Advisor to the Mayor), Simon Cowley (Mayor's Policy Advisor), Ben Mosley (Executive Office), Lucy Fleming (Head of Democratic Engagement), David Fowler (Members' Office Manager (Conservative)), Paul Shanks, Rachel Abba (DLT Support Manager), Sarah Wilson (DLT Support Manager - Business Change), Louise Baker (DLT Support Manager Place), Sara Manix (DLT Support Manager) and Fiona Gilmour (Mayor's Office Policy Manager)

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Date: 13 March 2023

Agenda

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Member Forum

14 March 2023

Questions and replies



Procedural note:

Councillors are entitled to submit up to 2 written questions each.

- The questions submitted and written replies are enclosed.
- Councillors are also entitled to ask a maximum of 2 supplementary questions at the forum. A supplementary question must arise out of the original question or answer given.
- Via the group leaders / whips, questions have been submitted in priority order.
- At the forum, the asking of supplementary questions will be rotated between the political groups that have submitted questions, taken in priority order.



Questions to the Mayor from Councillor Ani Stafford-Townsend

Subject: Harbour charges & housing issues

1. Will the Mayor commit to publishing the full review that the Harbour Revision is based upon?

Preamble:

Residents in Redcliffe are increasingly concerned and angry about the lack of repairs and poor living conditions in their homes, exasperated by increased heating costs.

- A lady sleeping in her front room as bedroom too damp (Underdown)
- Family of 10 staying in temporary accommodation hotel as the level of water in their home made it uninhabitable (Underdown)
- Man with asthma with mould, damp and cold (Norton)
- Applying for new mattress for single mum with mould on it due to the damp (Plimsoll)
- Family with 7 children with no access to electricity in their kitchen due to water/damp (Waring)
- Mould and no heating in a flat with 2 young children (Proctor)
- Wall paper falling off walls and ruined carpet due to the damp (Redcliffe Hill)
- Families with asthma being exasperated by mould across the estate
- The general state of repair of Waring, Underdown and Francombe Houses.
- Open drug dealing, visitors + tenants bullying other tenants, racism and hate crime, violence
- Antisocial behaviours and harassment of residents

I am aware that BCC is stretched in terms of resources, but residents in Redcliffe have been promised changes, repairs and refurbs for many years and patience has worn thin. Residents want to know the solutions are on offer and the timelines for this work.

2. Which Cabinet member is ultimately overseeing and responsible for this work, and will they agree to visit these homes and see for themselves?

REPLY:

1. We will share the basis of the Harbour Revision Order submission as part of the papers when we consider it and make a decision at cabinet.
2. Thank you for raising these cases, although you didn't need to wait until a Member Forum session to do so. Cllr Renhard has already reached out to discuss this with you urgently so we can get a resolution.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Goggin, Hartcliffe and Withywood Ward**Subject: Net Zero Cities**

We had yet more good news for our decarbonisation projects last week, as Bristol was the only UK city to be awarded funding from Horizon Europe's Net Zero Cities. This comes in addition to the £100 investment into decarbonisation and the £424m secured through City Leap.

The funding will be used to create a Net-zero Investment Co-innovation Lab in Bristol. Please could the mayor or cabinet member provide more details on this project?

REPLY:

This further €1.5 million is a result of Bristol leading the way on net-zero funding and role cities can play.

The Bristol One City Climate Strategy identified the need for innovative finance mechanisms to achieve our climate goals. With this Pilot Cities Programme the partners will create a Net Zero Investment Co-innovation Lab in Bristol. This initiative will test a suite of new climate finance mechanisms to accelerate investment in climate action including the potential for community-based investment. It will build upon the administration's success in establishing Bristol City Leap as a joint venture with Ameresco and Vattenfall which aims to invest £1 billion in decarbonising our city.

Our leadership on Leap, and the UN's SDGs is material to these funding decisions.

The Bristol Net Zero Investment Co-Innovation Lab, will research, pilot, deliver and evaluate several financial mechanisms, including:

- A Citizen Community Climate Investment Scheme enabling citizens, business, and communities to invest in their projects to reduce emissions and to generate a return. This will complement the existing community initiatives and those being developed by Bristol City Leap and will be developed with Abundance Investment.
- A Net Zero Venture Fund to enable outcome driven finance, environmental, social and governance (ESG) funds and philanthropists to invest in projects that address climate challenges and opportunities and generate a financial return and other community benefits and this will be developed with Bristol and Bath Regional Capital.
- A Carbon Multiplier Fund to invest funding from the new development paid by developers when they are unable to achieve the carbon standards for new development on site. This will be developed by Bristol City Council.

The Pilot Cities Programme will bring a further opportunity to share learnings with other cities, building on each other's experiences, replicating and scaling solutions that work in similar contexts.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Cllr Jonathan Hucker (Stockwood)

Subject: FINANCING OF BRISTOL BEACON (COLSTON HALL) REFURBISHMENT COST

A paper presented to Cabinet in January indicated that the cost of the Bristol Beacon (Colston Hall) refurbishment would be financed by a £84.5m loan from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB).

This report suggested that the loan would be repaid over 50 years at a cost to the taxpayer of £2.2 million p.a. The interest rate assumed in this calculation was 1.5%. However, the current interest rate for 50-year PWLB money is 5%, not 1.5%.

The Council's strategic partner EY has recognised this, and stated that financing costs to Bristol City Council may be "significantly higher" than that assumed in the calculation, thereby producing a "highly negative ongoing revenue implication."

Can the Mayor please confirm:

1. Whether the Bristol Beacon refurbishment project will be financed by funds sourced from the PWLB?
2. The annual cost to the taxpayer assuming the funds are obtained at the current interest rate of c.5%?

REPLY:

1. The Council seeks the best solutions in financing its capital programme at the end of each financial year and in the case of Bristol Beacon a blended approach has been adopted:
 - Council related costs incurred to 2021/22 have been financed via internal borrowing (e.g., utilising the Council's own reserves) with the impact being significantly below 1% due to historically low interest rates available on the Councils alternative investments.
 - The 2022/23 expenditure will also be financed via internal borrowing (as outlined in the Treasury Management Strategy no external borrowing is anticipate for the financial year 2022/23) with an average lost opportunity rate for the year currently forecasted at 1.8%.
 - The position for 2023/24 will either be financed via internal or external borrowing dependent on the Council's cash position and prevailing rates.

The analysis of borrowing was based on a 1.5% interest cost, which was reflective of the overall debt picture for the project, not just the potential additional borrowing requirement for the increased cost. This was tested with a range of scenarios and considered a reasonable overall assumption for the project overall.

2. As outlined above, a blended approach has been adopted and therefore to recalculate the rates as suggested would require a breakdown and reprofiling of the costs on an annual basis from inception and applicable and forecasted end of year opportunity or actual rates



for each year. It is not anticipated that this would materially change the outcome of the findings in the report and as such the above approach was considered reasonable.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Kent, Hengrove and Whitchurch Park

Subject: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

1. Sirona changed the criteria for ran Autism Referral on 1st March <https://www.sirona-cic.org.uk/nhsservices/childrens-services/referral-criteria/>, can the Mayor share with us what conversations have been had with the local authority on this change?
2. July last year I wrote to the mayor regarding my concern over online surveillance of some SEND parents by Officers of this Authority, In October the Council supported a motion calling for an independent investigation into this surveillance and whether it was systematic, now it is March – when will the investigation begin?

REPLY:

1. While there have been discussions about moving to needs led approach, we are not aware of any formal conversations between Sirona and the Council's senior leadership team about this aspect of the change.
2. We wanted to wait until the results of the Ofsted inspections, which were published last week. They didn't raise concerns about this although they did say improvements are required with parent groups. We've had the internal review and we've introduced new processes for interacting with parent and carer groups and broadened the range of those involved. Given this, I am satisfied with the investigation to date.

In line with my comments following the motion debate at Full Council in October 2022, I would ask that you estimate the cost of an independent review and identify the budget and officer time you'd like spent on this.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Gary Hopkins**Subject: Redcatch Community Garden**

1 The mayor wants to have an income from the efforts of local people in setting up and running the community garden. Does he not think it would be sensible to accept the offer of rent from the community garden and let the goose, that is producing golden eggs, grow over the next 3 years rather than trying to throttle the life out of it now.

2 The garden have offered to take over the responsibility of opening and closing park gates and the toilets which would save the council money. Does the mayor not accept that saying this is irrelevant because the cost is met from a different budget shows the council in a poor light.

REPLY:

1. Councillor Ellie King and I visited Redcatch Community Garden separately in February. We were both impressed by the work of staff and volunteers, who have created a valuable community asset.

The social value it provides is evident, educating school children, providing free community activities, food and drinks as a Welcoming Space. After seeing the hard work that has been put into the garden, our intention has always been to find a fair rental agreement that ensures Redcatch continues to grow and operate at full capacity, on public land.

However, there are conflicting pressures. As an administration, we have a duty to ensure that all council-owned assets are earning money and benefiting the city. And as you will be aware, our Parks Service, like all other council services, are under increased pressure to ensure their service remains financially viable and benefits the wider community.

We've held a constant dialogue with the Garden, reassuring them that a fair rental agreement will be found. We also rejected Park Officers initial rental recommendations, which we believed were too high and would not have provided their operation room to grow.

We will continue to facilitate discussions between officers and Redcatch Community Garden, and hope that fair conclusion will be found in the coming weeks. The final decision will be taken at the CAT board and all discussion between officers and the community garden will be reported.

2. It represents the silos that the council can operate in. The CAT board will make the final decision with the ability to consider all options.



Questions to the Mayor from Councillor Christine Townsend

Subject: Local Development

1. Can the Mayor confirm that the development currently being built at 66 East Street will be explicitly excluded from the existing RPZ?

Preamble:

The Council owns a middle garage of a row of 3 on Summer street in BS3, a dead end residential street. Residents are asking if this property could be put up for sale, as it's in disrepair and unused. I have been informed by a planning officer that it cannot be put on the market as it may provide 'a development opportunity'.

The property is only 7.5 feet wide and has an asbestos roof – the council could be liable for expensive repairs if it is left to decline. All the surrounding land is privately owned, including the garages on both sides.

2. Given all of this, will the administration reconsider this response?

REPLY:

1. I am confused by your question. Why would a building inside an RPS be excluded from an RPS?

Residents at 66 East St will be able to apply for parking permits, subject to availability. This is a detailed question which would be better discussed with officers and the cabinet member for transport.

2. We are not minded to dispose of the site as it offers a wider development potential that is yet to be explored in detail.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Goggin, Hartcliffe and Withywood Ward

Subject: Rough Sleeping

I was pleased to read that the number of people sleeping rough in Bristol decreased by 15% over the last year.

The 'everyone in' scheme during Covid shows that the Government could end rough sleeping if it had the political will.

What is the administration doing to ensure the number of rough sleepers continues to decrease, and what do we need from Government to assist our efforts?

REPLY:

We've worked with partners to provide resource and funding to tackle rough sleeping and we've seen the results of it.

We receive funding from DLUHC (around £4 million this year) to provide services that either prevent people from rough sleeping or provide accommodation and support for people who are rough sleeping and struggling to move into accommodation and sustain it.

In addition, there are over 850 units of supported accommodation to help people develop the skills to move on from here and live independently. This is a significant level of resources and funding to prevent and relief rough sleeping but does not address the underlying systemic issues that cause people to rough sleep in the first place or for them to sustain accommodation.

Increasing supply of affordable accommodation - both social housing and private sector accommodation - would drastically reduce the number of people that come onto the streets in Bristol.

In addition, having measures that mitigate the national cost of living crisis to help people to sustain accommodation and cover basic household bills and prevent future homelessness would also assist in this.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Steve Smith (Westbury on Trym & Henleaze)**Subject: APPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY**

According to schedule 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, applications to register a Public Right of Way should be dealt with by the authority "as soon as reasonably practicable", with an option of appeal to the Secretary of State after 12 months.

According to papers submitted to PROW, there are currently applications sitting in a backlog which are up to 25 years old, including one in my ward (ref. ID3.654) which was submitted in 2006 and remains unresolved.

1. Does the Mayor consider this delay in processing applications accords with the statutory requirements of "as soon as reasonably practicable"?
2. Can the Mayor confirm what (if anything) is being done to clear this backlog?

REPLY:

1. There are currently 11 outstanding Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs) applications awaiting investigation. Last year two DMMOs were confirmed after having to be passed to the Planning Inspectorate following objections from the landowner: this process is lengthy and time consuming.

Applications are dealt with in order of receipt. However, they are prioritised where DMMOs are affected by planning applications.

Limited resource in the Public Rights of Way team only allows a small number of DMMOs to be investigated each year and of late these have mostly been related to planning consents. This is obviously a challenge, but is a result of austerity hitting our backroom capacity while we prioritise key front line services for citizens. As you note, a DMMO applicant may make an application to the Planning Inspectorate to have their application reviewed if they believe the length of time is unreasonable.

2. The Public Rights of Way and Greens committee have recently reprioritised DMMOs focusing on obstructed paths. Routes that are still have unobstructed access, such as Ridgehill, Henleaze are therefore lower down the list of priorities in favour of those where access has been denied.

DMMOs are being looked at alongside other rights of way statutory work to ensure paths that are already in existence can continue to be enjoyed by the public.

The 2015 Deregulation Act aimed to introduce a streamlined process that will assist with DMMOs and should make them easier and quicker to resolve. However these elements haven't yet been enacted by the government and there is no clear date as to when they will be available for use.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Christopher Davies

Subject: Redcatch Pavilion

1 Whilst we hear the constant repetition of the council having no money, why is the Redcatch Park Pavilion heating on high for 24 hours a day, when its only use is as a lunchtime canteen for parks staff? (We can supply you with a professional report, supplied pro bono, that shows how many thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money are being wasted).

2 Parks department recently proposed to spend significant funds on a "deep clean" of the pavilion which would have left it still useless as sporting changing rooms. Was this expenditure connected to the Mayor's visit and would it not be more sensible to hand this building over to the community who can do a full renovation at no cost to the council so it can be used in particular for girls and disabled teams?

REPLY:

1. Yes of course – please share it. Thank you for raising this, although you didn't need to wait until a Member Forum session to do so.
2. I am not aware of the deep clean and your question implies it didn't happen, so I don't understand the issue. Whatever cleaning did or didn't happen wasn't connected to my visit to the community garden.

Transferring community assets to sports teams at no cost to the council is sensible, which is why this administration created the plan to transfer sports assets to sports clubs and communities.

However, we must go through a process which protects the council's assets and ensures good value for Bristol's tax payers and is fair to all applicants. It has been delayed by covid and then a lack of resource and we're going to make sure it gets completed this year.



Questions to the Mayor from Councillor Lisa Stone
Subject: Bus cuts

There are many community bus services across Bristol being cancelled because Bristol City Council made the decision to not provide the full levy requested by WECA, due to the increased cost to run the supported community bus services that are vital to so many people across Bristol.

My questions are:

1. How did BCC make that decision and why?
2. How did the council decide which community bus services would be cancelled, did they complete an equalities impact assessment, if so, may I please have a copy of that assessment?

REPLY:

1. We transferred the full levy and services as part of the WECA Order 2017.

The money was set by our budget process as it has been each year. If you wanted to increase the levy then you needed to submit an amendment to the budget meeting last month, which you didn't do.

You would have needed to identify where the money was going to come from, rather than a simplistic question today in isolation.

2. As the service was transferred to WECA they did the analysis and you should direct that question to them.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Massey, Southmead Ward

Subject: Health Infrastructure

Labour's work saw record numbers of homes built last year, including the most affordable homes for 12 years. I am also pleased that social infrastructure is being built at pace too - Silverthorne Lane school, an £8m Youth Zone, and Goram's developments in Hengrove providing social infrastructure such as community centres and educational spaces – to name a few examples.

Over a decade of Conservative austerity has left the UK's healthcare system in dire need of investment. We, of course, need homes built but we need the Government to step up and provide the health infrastructure we need too.

Please can the Cabinet Member for Homes and Housing Delivery outline how the administration is pushing central government to build the health infrastructure that Bristol's growing population needs?

REPLY:

As part of work on the new Local Plan we will look to identify the infrastructure required to support planned development across the city.

Officers will work with infrastructure providers to identify requirements as part of an Infrastructure Delivery Plan to support the Local Plan itself.

Local Plan policies will where appropriate make provision for the safeguarding of land or provision of space.

Health infrastructure may be funded through the use of Strategic CIL but of course there are a number of competing funding priorities.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor John Goulandris (Stoke Bishop)**Subject: MODIFYING NEW PARKING CHARGES SCHEME**

Several of my constituents attend a GP medical practice based in Westbury on Trym and use the attached car park, which, although time limited, is free of charge . Many are elderly. Walking or cycling from Stoke Bishop to Westbury on Trym is not an option. There is no direct bus access.

The proposed parking charges will effectively mean that free access to GP medical care will end.

1. Will the Mayor agree that the Council should work with the GP centre to try and find a solution, which would allow patients to visit their GP without having to pay?

The closure of bank branches in North Bristol has resulted in the only remaining banking centre being in Westbury on Trym, where all the main banks still have branches. Younger customers are no doubt switching to online banking, but there are still some customers, mostly elderly ones, which need to visit a bank branch on a regular basis.

2. Could the new car park charging regime allow a short free period, which would allow a quick visit to the bank?

REPLY:

1. We will work with health service providers through the integrated care service and the GP surgeries themselves to work out what can be resourced by all parties. Any changes to the plan would need to be cost neutral.

There will be a period of full public consultation as part of the statutory process to implement the changes and we would encourage people to engage with that consultation when it takes place later in the year. Westbury Hill is one of several car parks where these charges are proposed and officers will be reaching out to GP practices to understand any specific concerns they may have.

Blue Badge holders will be able to park for free and without time restriction so the car park will continue to support this group in their use of the GP practice and the local amenities.

2. We're happy to discuss options further to support all the traders, but recognise the budget impact and any solution needs to be cost neutral.



**Questions to the Mayor from Councillor Ed Plowden
Subject: Buses**

Preamble:

In December Full Council resolved to:

“Instruct the Chief Executive to write to the WECA Mayor requesting that he commissions a comprehensive feasibility study of all aspects of adopting and financing a system of franchising bus services in the region. The commission should also consider how the existing knowledge and experience of each member Authority could also be maximised in the consultation and design of such an approach.”

And,

“Request that the Mayor seeks consensus from the leaders of the other WECA authorities, and the WECA Mayor, in order to facilitate the delivery of a feasibility study as soon as possible.”

Since that time the calls for Bus Franchising have been growing with other Councils and the Bristol Post now supporting a growing campaign

1. What have the Mayor and Chief Executive done as a result of this and will the issue be publicly considered at a forthcoming WECA Committee of the Council leaders and the Metro Mayor?

Preamble:

Over a year has passed since funding was invested in a very extensive consultation on the Number 2 route. Since then, we have seen little or no tangible progress. The grant funding for this scheme is time-limited and we are currently seeing desperate attempts to make sure we claim the full amount of the much smaller Transforming Cities Fund grant, which must be fully utilised this month. There is a growing risk, if we don't start to make tangible progress on the Number 2 route that the proposed funding will not be invested in time to claim the grant.

2. When will we see some progress on this scheme, to give the administration that follows yours a chance to be able to invest the grant funding in time?

REPLY:

1. We are always seeking consensus at the joint committee – that's how WECA works.

While my preferred model is public ownership, franchising should be explored by the city region.

2. We are anticipating that an update on the project, and the overall CRSTS work, will come to the May cabinet meeting. This will include more detail about the Number 2 route work.

I hope the administration which follows with the new committee governance model will be able to reach consensus quickly on citywide transport interventions with a scope like this.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Bennett, Eastville Ward

Subject: Goram Homes

Goram Homes will play a crucial role in tackling the housing crisis and has an ambitious pipeline for affordable homes in Bristol. Thanks to the Labour administration and Goram, thousands of homes in the centre are now powered by low-carbon energy from its energy centre and families will soon be moving into newly-built affordable homes.

Please can the mayor make a statement on Goram Homes, and confirm that there are no intentions to make significant changes to it as a commercial, arms-length company?

REPLY:

Goram Homes work in partnership with the private sector to build sustainable, affordable homes that create communities, respect the environment, and contribute to the local economy. The planned development in Hengrove now brings around 50% social and affordable housing – those types of development are only possible when we use Goram as our developer.

Goram Homes is a subsidiary of Bristol Holding Ltd, which is wholly owned by Bristol City Council. Goram Homes signed up to the Building with Nature Standards to ensure their developments deliver for people and wildlife.

There are no plans in place to change the nature of Goram Homes, it is to remain as it is as the development arm of the council.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Mark Weston (Henbury & Brentry)

Subject: BRISTOL'S PROPOSED UNDERGROUND

1. Can the Mayor please tell me exactly how much money (WECA and BCC) has been spent investigating the possibility of mass transit?
2. What proportion or share of this spending has been spent on exploring an underground system?

REPLY:

1. On 30th October 2017, the West of England Combined Authority Committee approved the allocation of £350,000 to study the feasibility of Mass Transit and Strategic connections.

On the 1st February 2019 development of a Strategic Outline Business Case was agreed by WECA, at a cost of £1.5m.

£13.639m is already earmarked in the WECA investment fund to develop a Full Business Case.

2. There's a slight misunderstanding here: the research narrows down the options. Underground is a potential option in all of the studies.

You can't separate out how much is "mass transit" and how much is "underground" they're the same work to explore the potential routes and possible vehicles.



**Questions to the Mayor from Councillor Martin Fodor
Subject: Council land and buildings**

Background:

The city has a mixture of land and buildings for corporate, commercial, housing, service and community uses.

With reference to surplus land, a recent supreme Court judgement found that a Town Council was wrong to sell a piece of public land without public consultation. We are still seeing Bristol Council land and sites being sold or given incredibly long leases with little or no transparency or obvious consistency

At the same time the council's corporate office estate is being rationalised due to reduced occupancy, working from home, and staff cuts. The council has also agreed to guarantee the leasing of a new office yet to be built on Temple Island for 40 years.

There seems little rationale for such land and property deals.

1. Will the Mayor now commit to sharing the criteria used and ensuring there is a consultation and transparent process for each parcel of land or site to be sold or leased to others, whether designated for commercial, corporate, community or other purposes?
2. Will the Mayor set out in a table the current vacant corporate, commercial and community office space it owns and the business case for committing to a pre-let of new office space?

REPLY:

1. You've put forward an all encompassing question and attempted to pull together lots of areas of council activity – from commercial deals to our corporate estate. As we deliver services, homes and rationalise our commercial estate in a complex world of changing demand, working patterns and a housing crisis, there is no universal rule other than getting the best outcomes for Bristol.

Can you explain more to help us understand what you're trying to get an understanding of?

The processes we go through to make decisions on land, buildings and development in Bristol depend on the context in which they're happening. If you have specific sites in mind you'd like to talk about, we'll share that with you as long as it is not commercially sensitive.

2. We can have an officer brief you on this.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Bennett, Eastville Ward

Subject: Buses

What conversations have the mayor and relevant Cabinet Member had with First Bus and WECA about restoring bus services?

REPLY:

FirstBus are part of our fortnightly city leaders call where they give operational updates. The driver shortage is a regular topic, as is the impact of their reduced service on other partners such as the college and employers.

Doug Claringbold, their Managing Director, addressed the City Gathering last week where he said they were seeing progress in solving the drivers crisis.

We've also had several meetings with FirstBus direct.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Geoff Gollop (Westbury on Trym & Henleaze)

Subject: TRANSPARENCY & BRISTOL UNDERGROUND PROJECT

1. The confidential report published in the Bristol Post put the build figure at £18bn. Can the Mayor please say when he first became aware of this analysis?
2. Can the Mayor explain why this commissioned study has been kept secret?

REPLY:

1. We became aware of the £18bn when details were leaked to the media. However, now that transport officers have assessed a draft of the report, we believe that a full mass transit system will cost around £7bn.

We had initially raised concerns about the brief for the consultants and that report is subject to further analysis by an independent assessment.

I've written to the Metro Mayor to share our own findings and to propose a joint working group of the UA and his own team to look at the best options to take forward as a result of the report.

One thing which is unarguable is the fundamental importance of a segregated mass transit system.

2. That's a question for WECA.



**Questions to the Mayor from Councillor David Wilcox
Subject: Concorde Way & Ashley Down station**

The cabinet member for Transport has spoken in this chamber about how he and the administration support the concept of the Transport Hierarchy, with pedestrians and cyclists with the most priority and private motor vehicles at the bottom.

The recently proposed diversion scheme for pedestrians and cyclists on the Concorde Way for the building of Ashley Down Station only inconveniences people who don't use motorised transport.

1. Will the administration rethink the route of the diversion along Muller Road, which is designed to bring cyclists and pedestrians into conflict?

I note that a paper has not yet come to cabinet in recent memory about Ashley Down station construction.

2. Can the Mayor provide details of the finance agreement pertinent to the construction of Ashley Down Station, such as budget support and additional contingency fund costs?

REPLY:

1. There is no design to bring pedestrians into conflict with cyclists. Everyone in the road user hierarchy must share space in a safe way – nobody is at the “bottom” as everyone is important. Your use of language betrays your attitude towards some road users.

We've considered all the options for the temporary closure and are comfortable there is no better solution.

2. You are incorrect. WECA committee on 30th January 2023 agreed the funding and this is in the public domain. Bristol City Council cabinet had previously endorsed this approach in June 2019.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Breckels, St George Troopers Hill

Subject: Voter ID

As part of the Elections Bill, the Government is introducing mandatory voter ID for all elections. This will disenfranchise millions of voters who do not have a valid form of ID – which is especially troubling considering that very few people have applied for the government issued voter ID.

As well as this, there are clear discrepancies in what is an accepted form of ID, for example, an Older Persons' bus pass is valid ID, yet a younger persons' is not. It is clear to me this is an attempt to reduce turnout among demographics less likely to vote for the Conservative Party.

Will the Mayor join me in condemning this policy?

REPLY:

You're right to highlight that this policy from national government is as inconsistent as it is unnecessary. I am unsure how such apparent age discrimination does not breach the Equality Act.

I share your concerns that this step will disenfranchise voters and undermine, rather than strengthen, our democracy.

Last year the LGA Labour Group led cross-party lobbying through the Local Government Association that saw the government agree to postpone implementation. But, unfortunately, they have since ploughed on. Photo ID will be required at polling stations from later this year – meaning it will be needed for the next round of all-out elections in Bristol next year.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Graham Morris (Stockwood)

Subject: EMBARGOED UNDERGROUND STUDY

1. Will the Mayor agree to release this research so that Members can evaluate for themselves whether it is based on some false premise, narrative, or methodology?
2. Will the Mayor finally accept that escalating construction costs mean that our City is very unlikely to get any underground (in part or whole) Metro any time soon?

REPLY:

1. You need to ask WECA.
2. I do not accept it. The Elizabeth Line cost £19bn for one line in London – our transport officers have assessed the draft report and believe a mass transit can be delivered for £7bn. Whatever the cost, we should be advocating on behalf of Bristol to raise the funds and deliver a transformative, segregated mass transit system. Nothing else is good enough.

I'll never stop being ambitious for Bristol – it clearly needs an improved transport system. It's the fatalistic attitude shown in this question that has prevented us from making progress in the past, and risks holding us back again in the future.



**Questions to the Mayor from Councillor Heather Mack
Subject: Concorde Way**

1. What are the processes for strategic assessment criteria and procedures to ensure sustainable travel is considered in all project decisions?

Concorde way is due to be diverted onto roads in two different sections in Lockleaze. Diversions are scheduled for a total of 18 months. But the first is already extended by more than a year.

2. What analysis has been done about the impact of Concorde way cycle path diversions on active travel from North Bristol, and the other options available?

REPLY:

1. Key decisions are taken in public at cabinet. The rationale for the decisions are fully explained. You, other councillors, and members of the public, were able to raise matters at the time.

Once decisions are delegated to the appropriate officers, they have due regard for public safety duties and responsibilities under the transport duties.

2. It is disappointing you haven't welcomed this huge investment in both public transport and active travel.

Exactly as is the case for drivers when we repair roads, there is disruption for those who use Concorde Way. We are mitigating this disruption with improvements to Boiling Wells Lane.

This includes making the section from the farm up to Muller Road less muddy and more level. Improvements will also feature installation of a new gate to allow bike users through, improvements to the staggered barrier and installation of directional signage. This is yet more investment in active travel.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Richard Eddy (Bishopsworth)

Subject: EXPLORING MASS TRANSIT ALTERNATIVES TO UNDERGROUND

1. Does the Mayor now concede that criticism of his 'ambitious' plan was both justified and warranted?
2. Will the Mayor agree to abandon the wasteful use of resources in pursuit of this madness and focus attention instead on forms of travel – like a greatly improved local rail network – that is much more deliverable?

REPLY:

1. No, I don't.
2. It's not madness – we're focusing our attention on all forms of transport. Including walking, cycling and rail, right now.

At Friday's City Gathering, Francis McGarry from National Rail listed the rail delivery in the region. Including:

- new station at Portway Park and Ride,
- new stations at Ashley Down, Filton North, and Henbury
- Portishead Line being progressed
- £95m for Temple Meads and Temple Quarter.

But even that won't deliver the modal shift required for a growing city region. The fully segregated mass transit system is the most effective, transformative transport system we can deliver to achieve modal shift and reduce congestion in a rapidly growing city. Our transport team believe that mass transit will cost £7bn including a line to Bath. With one new line in London recently costing £19bn we should un-ashamedly be arguing for the investment that gets the best for Bristol.

Your attitude is indicative of the decades of failure in the city.



**Questions to the Mayor from Councillor Patrick McAllister
Subject: Harbour fees**

Background:

Bristol City Council recently published a new schedule of harbour fees, with a three-month notice period. There was only minimal consultation with the harbour community - which is universally felt to have been insufficient - prior to the announcement, local councillors were not involved, and no Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out.

The impact of these fees is likely to be significant and detrimental to the harbour community – residents fear being priced away from their homes, and businesses such as the taxi ferries are likely to go out of business, especially given the additional 20p charge per passenger proposed.

Bristol's Local Plan notes that "The Floating Harbour will be maintained as a location for maritime industries," naming "the protection of maritime industries and the leisure role of the Floating Harbour" as a "key principle". Given this, it seems especially counter-productive to be proposing another financial hammer-blow following the pandemic and cost of living crisis for businesses on the harbour who ply an essential trade.

The harbour community is not wholly opposed to increases in fees, as people understand the financial constraints that the Council is under and the need to improve harbour services. However, people feel insulted by the lack of consultation, and by the disregard of the likely economic and social impacts of the current proposals.

1. Will the Mayor commit to holding a full and meaningful consultation with the harbour community, including residents, businesses, and local councillors, and performing a full Equalities Impact Assessment before the fee increase takes effect?
2. Will the Mayor commit to publishing the full review that the Harbour Revision is based upon?

REPLY:

1. The harbour is a city issue because a) the harbour is a city asset and b) but the way the harbour is currently run has significant financial consequences for the council's general fund. One of our biggest challenges with the Harbour is getting more people in the city to access and enjoy it.

We will ensure our officers engage with those living and working around the harbour. But, as a statutory body, the Harbour Authority does not have to consult on increasing fees and charges – our driver has to be ensuring the harbour can be self-sufficient. This has been made all the more important because of the financial pressures on the council as we deliver for our most vulnerable people.



The Harbour Authority and Bristol City Council have delivered a number of harbour drop-in engagement sessions for people in and around the harbour and have offered one to one meetings for businesses and harbour users.

A full Equality impact assessment was carried out for the Harbour Operational Review [GR052 EQIA - New Budget Proposal - Harbour Review.pdf \(bristol.gov.uk\)](#)

2. We will share the basis of the Harbour Revision Order submission as part of the papers when we consider it and make a decision at cabinet.

However, you seem to have confused the harbour review with the benchmarking of fees and charges. They are not the same. This has commercial information which would damage the council's position if made public, however I have asked officers to summarise the findings or redact sensitive sections.



**Questions to the Mayor from Councillor Tom Hathway
Subject: Electric Vehicle Charging**

We have no public Electric Vehicle charging points in our ward. Almost 8/10 households in our ward are flats, meaning restricted opportunity for off street electric vehicle charging. Analysis was carried out last year on potential locations for lamp post charging points and a pilot project was under development.

1. How will lamp post charging be taken forward in Bristol, and when will councillors be updated about this?
2. Can you please share the analysis of feasible locations?

REPLY:

1. Lamp posts are not a realistic solution to provide EV charging as the capacity of lamp posts is out of step with the growing use of Electric Vehicles. Your example is a perfect identification of the challenge – if 8 out of 10 tenants have electric vehicles, one lamp post is not going to provide a solution. You need charging hubs and high speed charging.

Charging hubs and EV charge points are being planned for roll out by Bristol City Leap together with WECA. These plans are to determine the best way to expand the existing council-owned Revive vehicle charging network in Bristol and across the West of England.

The EV work will be taken forward and co-ordinated in partnership with BCL. This will enable the Council to work in partnership to develop the Bristol, and West of England, approach to EV charging and explore and secure future opportunities to grow the EV charging network.

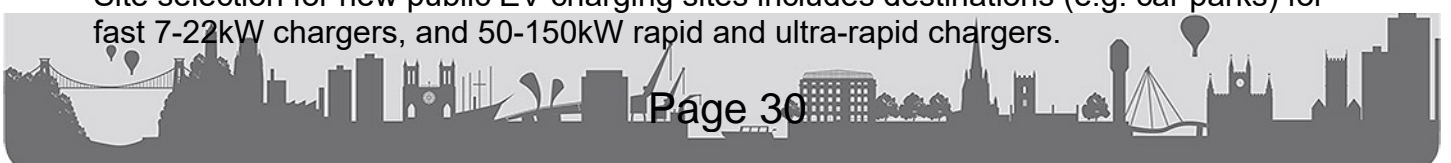
City Leap will be delivering current grant funded projects for new EV charge points in Bristol, and will be delivering future charge points as part of the plans for a West of England bid to the Local EV Infrastructure grant (LEVI) from the Department for Transport (DfT). The next stage is for an expression of interest to DfT, followed by a full funding bid, so at this stage the future delivery programme timescales are not known.

This roll-out will include rapid and fast charge points in appropriate locations. Part of this will include residentially suited public charge points. This will include on-street charge points that may include street lighting columns in some places. The intention is to learn lessons from the paused pilot on-street residential public EV charge points project (which was stopped at the end of 2022) and build these into the LEVI-funded programme.

As and when there is further information on milestones for delivering the new charge points, this information can be shared with Councillors.

2. WECA will publish the data.

Site selection for new public EV charging sites includes destinations (e.g. car parks) for fast 7-22kW chargers, and 50-150kW rapid and ultra-rapid chargers.



Site selection was also carried out for 150 sites as part of the previously planned on-street residential charge points pilot project. Further analysis for on-site feasibility in conjunction with the Highways Electrical Team will be required.

In the meantime, people are encouraged to use the form on Travelwest's website to add site suggestion(s) to help build up a picture of demand for charge points.



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

	Name	Subject
CS01	Cllr Emma Edwards	Concorde Way Diversion
CS02	Cllr Gary Hopkins	Redcatch Community Garden
CS03	Cllr Chris Davies	Redcatch Park

CS01

Members Forum statement from Cllr Emma Edwards

Subject: Concorde Way Diversion

While the news of work starting on Ashley Down Train station is very welcome, there are sadly many concerns about the diversions put in place for cyclists who use Concorde Way. While we appreciate and accept that Concorde Way has to be closed in part for the duration of the project, we don't accept and appreciate the diversions put in place, and pedestrians and cyclists have been so poorly thought of.

The diversions send cyclists onto a section of busy road, a lane prone to flooding, and in some parts make cyclists dismount. Concorde Way sees over 1,000 cycle journeys a day. It is a commuter route for Ashley Down, Lockleaze, Horfield, Southmead, Filton and beyond. It serves Fairfield School and is used by pupils there. Pushing these cyclists, some of whom may be children, or less confident cyclists, onto a busy road puts them at risk. Active Travel England provide guidelines for cycling infrastructure in their LTN/120 document. This diversion is not LTN/120 compliant. This diversion is not for a few weeks or even months, it is for at the least a year, likely more, and therefore should come under the same guidelines as any permanent cycle route would.

This poorly thought-out diversionary route shows the council's current disregard for cyclists and its commitment to active travel. We have asked in meetings if during the closures the cycle lanes could at least be improved, upgraded with lighting and the flooding dealt with, but have been told there is no case to do so.

Please stop treating cyclists and pedestrians like an afterthought. Cycling is as valid and important a form of commuting and travel as cars, buses and trains. With our ambitious plans for the city to be net zero by 2030, you could even say it is more important. Please review and improve the Concorde Way diversion route.

CS02

Members Forum statement from Cllr Gary Hopkins

Subject: Redcatch Community Garden

Some members are already aware of the remarkable work done by the Redcatch Community Garden which started with crowd funding and is not subsidised by this council.

The ground-breaking work that it does in terms of education and health service support is something that this council should be learning from and valuing. Remarkable things have been done on a previously unused bowling green with 200,000 visits a year and 40 volunteers.

Instead after recent visits from the Mayor and the cabinet member for parks they got warm praise and a shocking rent demand increase of over 5,000%. The "profit" from their self-converted caravan that sells tea/coffee, etc. actually pays the minimum wages and costs but parks department saw it as a cash cow. Some backing down has followed but we still have misdirection, ridiculous assertions and confusion from the council side.

We all know that this council's finances are strained and nothing illustrates why better than the Redcatch Pavillion, less than 5 yards from the community garden.

Nearly 3 years ago after the parks dept announced that they could not renovate it, it was to be transferred. An immediate bid went in from the garden in partnership with our national award-winning football organiser Mike Alden and his club. Despite numerous reminders there has been a complete failure to engage. Disabled and female footballers have nowhere to change when using the park pitches.

We have now found from a professional report (pro bono) that the council are spending between 6k and 10k a year heating this derelict shed that's only use is as a lunchtime canteen for some parks staff. The garden have offered to save the cost and environmental pollution but apparently that would not count in calculations as "it's a different council budget". You could not make it up.

Unless an agreement is reached the garden could have to close and the footballers remain without changing rooms and the council and local citizens left with nothing. Incompetence and vandalism of this sort must be stopped.

When previously raising this at full council it was conceded that a meeting was needed. As this has not happened yet we will if stalemate continues have to push this to a special meeting of council with the motion.

This council urges in the strongest possible terms the executive to take action to resolve the redcatch asset transfers. By accepting the reasonable offer from the community garden for the old bowling green which will produce local improvements and funds for the parks service both locally and across the city, and transfer the pavilion on a long lease to the garden/football club consortium at a pepper corn rent to enable use by the community to resume.

CS03

Members Forum statement from Cllr Chris Davies

Subject: Redcatch Park

Gary and myself have been involved for many years with wonderful parks volunteers in Redcatch and other Knowle parks. Thank you to all those who supported our amendment at full council to allow us to recover local parks funding. Campaigning on that issue took several years to come to fruition and we hope to tie down the detailed mechanics on distribution later this week.

Local satisfaction with parks in the ward are, according to the quality of life survey, much higher than the Bristol average.

Improvements have been made using volunteers and locally raised funds including a new MUGA, resurfaced tennis courts, repaired and new paths, the community garden, tree and shrub planting, new car park with disabled spaces, new park entrance and attractive murals.

This has not been matched by parks dept and we now need them to stop frustrating much needed improvements that will actually save this council money.