

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Full Council

9 January 2024 at 2.00 pm



Members Present:-

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

1 Welcome and Introductions

The Lord Mayor welcomed all attendees to the meeting and issued the safety information.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were heard from Councillors Lesley Alexander, Bailes, Davies, Francis and Hussain.

3 Declarations of Interest

None received.

4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

On the motion of the Lord Mayor, seconded by Councillor Parsons, it was

RESOLVED:



That the minutes of the meeting of the Full Council held on the 12 December 2023 be confirmed as correct record and signed by the Lord Mayor.

5 Lord Mayor's Business

There was none.

6 Public Petitions, Statements and Questions

Public Petitions and Statements:

Full Council received and noted the following petitions and statements (which were referred to the Mayor for his consideration)

Ref No	Name	Title
PP01	Adam Streames	Stop Bristol City Council from taking a % of your Turnover if you're a mobile park trader

Ref No	Name	Title
PS01	Jenny Ross	Four Fact Statement
PS02	Pam Patterson	Three Asks Statement
PS03	Jen Smith	LGO Decisions
PS04	Hasina Khan	Bristol City Council, swallow your pride and join the call to end the genocide
PS05	Paul Becker	Golden motion on empty homes
PS06	Nigel Varley	Gilton House, Brislington
PS07	Katy Taylor	A call for change: Value the Caring economy
PS08	Mubashar Chaudhry	In support of Gaza Israel conflict petition
PS09	Hilary Rydon	Golden Motion by the Green Party
PS10	Christina Biggs	Funding of rail-bus interchange for MetroWest stations
PS11	David Redgewell and Gordon Richardson	The of City and County of Bristol new committee structure
PS12	Danica Priest	Golden motion
PS13	WITHDRAWN	
PS14	Alderman Mhairi Threlfall	Childcare is infrastructure.
PS15	Mary Page	Item 13 Members' Allowances.
PS16	Sarah Freeman	Bristol city council allotment consultation 11/12/23 – 22/1/24



Within the time available, Petition PP01 and statements PS01, 02, 04, 06, 07, 08, 11, 12 and 14 were presented by individuals at the meeting.

Public Questions

Full Council noted that the following questions had been submitted:

Ref No	Name	Title
PQ01	Mhairi Threlfall	Family Hubs & the Social Care Precept
PQ02	Claire Charras	Money for Care in all Strategies
PQ03	Katy Taylor	Will you value the caring economy
PQ04	Troy Tanska	Time to Care with Dignity
PQ05	Sue Cohen	Social Care Workers
PQ06	Liz Potter	Nursery Provision in Crisis
PQ07	Dahlia von Coralath	Council Accountability for Contractor Performance
PQ08	Sophie Peart	Worker Conditions in Commissioned Contracts
PQ09	Bonny Chung	Coproduction with Carers
PQ10	Josephine Benefield	Gaza Ceasefire
PQ11	Hasina Khan	Gaza Ceasefire
PQ12	Suzanne Audrey	Mayor's TED Talk
PQ13	Suzanne Audrey	Fujitsu Post Office Horizon Scandal
PQ14	Jenny Etches	Uncollected Waste and Recycling
PQ15	Emma Swain	Blenheim Court
PQ16	Sally Kent	Special School Places
PQ17	Caroline Gooch	St Christopher's School
PQ18	Mubashar Chaudhry	City Hall Lights
PQ19	Jack Whittaker	Pitches for Traders in Bristol Docks and Parks
PQ20	Mike Oldreive	Value and Ethics Sub-Committee
PQ21	David Redgewell	Transport Levy
PQ22	Jen Smith	Homechoice / Housing Associations
PQ23	Danica Priest	Development Control
PQ24	Danica Priest	Committee Model
PQ25	Dan Ackroyd	Value and Ethics Sub-Committee
PQ26	Dan Ackroyd	Barton House
PQ27	Leona Dennehy	Pitches for Traders in Bristol Docks and Parks
PQ28	Shaban Ali	Barton House
PQ29	Laura Stone	Barton House
PQ30	Andy Watt	Barton House
PQ31	Cam Hayward	Daventry Road School
PQ32	Cam Hayward	Redcatch Park Tennis Courts
PQ33	Nuh Sharif	Barton House



PQ34	Jez Olpin	Tender Submissions
PQ35	Becky Watkins	Pitches for Traders in Bristol Docks and Parks
PQ36	TRESA CIC	Totterdown Bridge Tower Block

Within the time available, the Mayor responded verbally to questions PQ01, 02, 03, 04 and 05 also responding to supplementary questions.

7 Petitions Notified by Councillors

The Full Council received and noted the following petitions:

Ref No	Name	Title	Number of signatures
CP01	Cllr Hopkins and Davies	Investment in Redcatch Park	477

8 Petition Debate: Israel - Gaza Conflict

The Full Council considered a report of the Director – Legal and Democratic Services setting out details of a petition ‘Israel – Gaza Conflict’. The petition had reached the 3,500 signature threshold to qualify for a Full Council debate.

Councillor Zoe Goodman, the petition organiser, was invited by the Lord Mayor to present the objectives of the petition.

The Full Council debated the petition.

Following the debate it was:

RESOLVED: That the petition and the comments from the debate be noted and referred to the Mayor for response.

9 Youth Council Update Report

This item was deferred.

10 Council Tax Base 2024/25

Full Council considered a report on the Council Tax Base 2024/25.

Councillor Craig Cheney moved the reports for item 10 and item 11.



11 Collection Fund Surplus / Deficit 2023/24

Full Council considered a report on the Collection Fund Surplus / Deficit 2023/24.

Following debate for items 10 and 11, there were two votes, and it was:

RESOLVED (63 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions):

That Full Council agreed:

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Bristol City Council as its Council Tax base for the financial year 2024/25 shall be 134,752.

RESOLVED (61 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions):

That Full Council agreed:

- 1. That an estimated surplus as at 31 March 2024 on the Council Tax element of the Collection Fund of £0.835m be declared for 2023/24 and shared between this Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset and the Avon Fire and Rescue Service in proportion to their 2023/24 precepts on the Collection Fund.**
- 2. That an estimated deficit as at 31 March 2024 on the Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) element of the Collection Fund, net of grants, of £4.545m be declared for 2023/24 and shared between this Council, Avon Fire and Rescue Service and the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) in proportion to the appropriate year demands (Bristol 95%, WECA 4%, Avon Fire and Rescue Service 1%).**

12 Flax Bourton Mortuary Bylaw

Full Council considered a report on the Flax Bourton Mortuary Bylaw.

Councillor Craig Cheney moved the report and Councillor Tim Rippington seconded the report.

There was no debate, and it was:

RESOLVED: That Full Council passed a bylaw enabling the council to commence charging for storing of deceased people at Flax Bourton Mortuary where the funeral director delays collection.

13 Members Allowance Scheme



Full Council considered a report on the Members Allowance Scheme.

The Lord Mayor moved the report and Councillor Paula O'Rourke seconded the report.

There was no debate, and it was:

RESOLVED: That Full Council adopted the Members' Allowances Scheme for publication within the Constitution.

14 Local Government Ombudsman Decisions

Full Council considered a report on Local Government Ombudsmen Decisions.

The Lord Mayor moved the report.

Following debate, it was:

RESOLVED: That Full Council noted the report.

15 Audit Committee Half Year Report

Full Council considered the Audit Committee Half-Year Report.

Councillor Andrew Brown moved the report as Chair of the Audit Committee.

Following debate, it was:

RESOLVED: That Full Council noted the report.

16 Constitution for the Committee Model

Full Council considered a report on the Constitution for the Committee Model.

Councillor David Wilcox moved the report and Councillor Andrew Brown seconded the report.

Following debate there was a vote, and it was:

RESOLVED: (61 For, 0 Against, 1 Abstention) That Full Council adopted the Constitution for the Committee Model of governance which will come into effect on 6 May 2024.

17 Motions



Following a short adjournment, it was then moved by the Lord Mayor that standing order CPR2.1(xi) be suspended to allow the meeting to go past the 30 minutes time limit for motions. Following a vote, it was agreed to proceed up until 6.00pm.

GOLDEN MOTION (GREEN PARTY): MAXIMISING THE SUPPLY OF HOUSING FROM EXISTING BUILDINGS AND COUNCIL LAND

Councillor Tony Dyer moved the following motion:

Full Council notes that:

1. UK Government data released in March 2023 identified 1.2m families on housing waiting lists across England [1] Meanwhile the costs of providing temporary accommodation have increased by 62% in the last five years to £1.7bn. [2]
2. UK Government data released in October 2022 shows that over one million homes were classed as unoccupied in England, with over 300,000 of those reported as being long-term empty - vacant for six months or longer. [3]
3. Savills have identified that there is an oversupply of retail space nationally of approximately 150 million square feet. With the average UK flat being 625 square feet, this is enough floor space to provide up to 240,000 average size flats (including 96,000 in long term empty retail space). They forecast that the level of excess retail space will double by 2030 as the retail economy continues to evolve. While some vacant space may be valuable to diversify local centres and high streets with new uses, much could offer housing opportunities.
4. It is common for commercial letting agents to inflate quoted prices of empty properties beyond the rateable value, and/or gatekeep interested businesses from making offers, resulting in properties being empty for longer periods. This also results in areas not having the retail offering required to support sustainable communities.
5. In Bristol there are around 21,000 families are on the housing waitlist and the cost of providing temporary accommodation remains a significant budget pressure. Shelter have recently estimated that on any given night in Bristol in 2023 there are approximately 3,224 people in some form of homelessness, the overwhelming majority of whom are in temporary accommodation. This is an increase of 639 compared to 2022. [4]
6. In Bristol, between 2022/23, almost 400 council homes were empty at any one time, whilst some 400 private sector homes were brought back into occupation over the same period. [5] Live table 615 on vacant Local Authority dwelling stock- maintained by central government - show that on 3rd October 2023, 5,251 mostly privately owned dwellings in Bristol were shown as vacant, of which 1,881 were classified as long term vacant. [6]



7. In Bristol, Savills have identified some 185,000 square feet of long-term retail voids (over half of which have been vacant for over three years) – equivalent to almost 300 average size flats. Cost pressures to retrofit existing retail space, coupled with increasing use of online retail, may well see additional floorspace become available for residential use. At present over 90% of Bristol City Centre retail stock is EPC rating C or worse – with cost estimates of up to £220m to reach EPC rating A as retail. As a result, many of these retail spaces may no longer be viable. Similarly, there is a general over supply of office space.

8. In Bristol in 2021 there were around 13,500 homes with planning permission – with around 3,000 under construction and some still due to begin construction or subject to s.106. This still leaves thousands of homes that are failing to be delivered, in many cases due to viability issues. [7]

9. Bristol City Council owns or controls considerable assets including buildings, land and property amounting to over one million square metres of floorspace and over 3,600 hectares of land. Within this portfolio, that is essentially held in stewardship by Bristol City Council on behalf of the citizens of Bristol, brownfield sites that could be redeveloped should be subject to the highest levels of social value and social housing delivery.

10. An estimated 278,000 homes nationwide could be delivered via Community Land Trusts, directly involving and empowering local communities in the delivery of housing that meets their needs. 80% of these homes would be additional – they would not be built without Community Land Trusts. [8]

Full Council believes that:

1. The recently submitted Local Plan focuses on sites for the delivery of new homes. But, to reduce pressure on communities and valued green space, there is a clear need to identify the potential to bring existing empty homes into use, to convert and reuse existing buildings, and to ensure homes already with planning permission are being delivered.

2. It needs to develop its understanding, approach and prioritisation of the wider definitions surrounding empty homes, free from the boundaries that council tax definitions currently provide. Second homes for example, may be a crucial area of focus.

3. In Bristol, a combination of potential sources of new homes which is not just reliant on new planning permission is required in order to make the most efficient and effective use of the limited land the city has available.

4. There needs to be a clear understanding of how council assets can be best utilised for the benefit of the city and its residents. This includes ensuring that council owned land and buildings are only developed with the highest levels of social value provision, with a commitment to provide social housing at policy compliant levels and above. Council assets should be used strategically to ensure communities are provided with the resources and facilities required to create sustainable communities.



5. The existing Empty Homes team has already performed well, being identified as an example of best practice by the Local Government Association.
6. Whilst additional enforcement measures will undoubtedly add to the available options for an authority when encouraging empty homeowners to return their properties to use, the vast majority of empty homes brought back into use will be down to the intervention, engagement and encouragement initiated by an Empty Home, or other relevant, officer. By increasing officer capacity within the team or by increasing headcount, greater exposure of the issue locally will also allow for sustained and targeted work, often required to see some of the most challenging cases successfully resolved.

Full Council Resolves to:

1. Request the mayor to consider with officers expanding the remit and responsibilities of the Empty Homes team, including looking to other examples of best practice, and benchmarking to councils where numbers of empty homes across all categories are similar.
2. Request the mayor to establish a Redundant Buildings Task Force alongside the Empty Homes team to work with Bristol retail and commercial offices providers and relevant organisations to bring forward opportunities to convert unviable retail and/or office floorspace into residential use where no longer suitable for their existing use. Long term empty retail units should be advertised in line with their rateable value to ascertain if they are truly unviable. Officers should explore the potential for retailers to part fund this task force and explore how empty units could be utilised for the benefit of the community, such as through use as a different usage classification as grocery retail, small business or creative use.
3. Request that the Mayor sets up a dedicated team to identify stalled sites with planning permission in order to increase the proportion of existing planning permissions being brought forward for delivery. This should include identifying additional sources of grant funding to ensure affordable homes continue to be delivered whilst recognising recent economic pressures in construction. The potential for part funding of this team by the development community should be considered.
4. Protect council owned land and assets as public owned assets, ensuring that when council owned land and assets are made available for redevelopment, this is done with a commitment to retaining council ownership wherever possible, and to provide the highest possible levels of social value and social housing delivery.
5. As and when council owned land and/or property is considered for potential development or disposal, those overseeing the process should consider if there is the potential to increase further the proportion of housing delivered via community led housing schemes – by involving communities in the provision of housing co-designed and/or co-delivered by the community including the potential transfer of long-term leaseholds on suitable council land to local communities.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Carla Denyer

Councillor Tom Renhard then moved the following amendment:



‘That the motion be amended to read as follows:

Full Council notes that:

1. UK Government data released in March 2023 identified 1.2m families on housing waiting lists across England [1] Meanwhile the costs of providing temporary accommodation have increased by 62% in the last five years to £1.7bn. [2]
2. UK Government data released in October 2022 shows that over one million homes were classed as unoccupied in England, with over 300,000 of those reported as being long-term empty - vacant for six months or longer. [3]
3. Savills have identified that there is an oversupply of retail space nationally of approximately 150 million square feet. With the average UK flat being 625 square feet, this is enough floor space to provide up to 240,000 average size flats (including 96,000 in long term empty retail space). They forecast that the level of excess retail space will double by 2030 as the retail economy continues to evolve. While some vacant space may be valuable to diversify local centres and high streets with new uses, much could offer housing opportunities.
4. It is common for commercial letting agents to inflate quoted prices of empty properties beyond the rateable value, and/or gatekeep interested businesses from making offers, resulting in properties being empty for longer periods. This also results in areas not having the retail offering required to support sustainable communities.
5. In Bristol there are around 21,000 households on the housing waitlist and the cost of providing temporary accommodation remains a significant budget pressure. Shelter have recently estimated that on any given night in Bristol in 2023 there are approximately 3,224 people in some form of homelessness, the overwhelming majority of whom are in temporary accommodation. This is an increase of 639 compared to 2022. [4]
6. In Bristol, between 2022/23, approximately 300 - 350 council homes were empty at any one time, with over 800 brought back into use during this period.
7. Some 400 private sector homes were brought back into occupation over the same period by the Council’s Empty Homes Unit. [5] Live table 615 on vacant Local Authority dwelling stock- maintained by central government - show that on 3rd October 2023, 5,251 mostly privately owned dwellings in Bristol were shown as vacant, of which 1,881 were classified as long term vacant. [6]
8. There are currently 2,556 properties in use as AirBnB’s in the city. Of these, 1,722 are wholly rented out. Both Scotland and Northern Ireland have brought in registration schemes to manage the number of AirBnB’s and other short term / holiday lets, whilst England is yet to do so. [7]
9. There are significant challenges brought about through ‘second homes’.



10. In Bristol, Savills have identified some 185,000 square feet of long-term retail voids (over half of which have been vacant for over three years) – equivalent to almost 300 average size flats. Cost pressures to retrofit existing retail space, coupled with increasing use of online retail, may well see additional floorspace become available for residential use. At present over 90% of Bristol City Centre retail stock is EPC rating C or worse – with cost estimates of up to £220m to reach EPC rating A as retail. As a result, many of these retail spaces may no longer be viable. Similarly, there is a general over supply of office space.
11. In Bristol in 2021 there were around 13,500 homes with planning permission – with around 3,000 under construction and some still due to begin construction or subject to s.106. This still leaves thousands of homes that are failing to be delivered, in many cases due to viability issues. [8]
12. Bristol City Council owns or controls considerable assets including buildings, land and property amounting to over one million square metres of floorspace and over 3,600 hectares of land. Many of these assets in areas defined as ‘areas of growth and regeneration’. Within this portfolio, that is essentially held in stewardship by Bristol City Council on behalf of the citizens of Bristol, brownfield sites that could be redeveloped should be subject to the highest levels of social value and social housing delivery. These assets are currently overseen through the Estates Strategy Board.
13. The work of Goram Homes, Bristol’s council-owned housing company, in bringing sites forward that that will see higher levels of social housing delivered with a focus on council homes, with a planned pipeline of over 3,000 homes. On One Lockleaze, over 55% of the homes will be council owned social rented homes and shared ownership.
14. The acceleration of council-owned homes being brought forward in the city. Council-owned homes built or acquired in the city maximise the ability of the Council to address housing pressures and improve the quality of life for residents. This includes the financial benefits through working to reduce temporary accommodation pressures as part of this.
15. That since 2016, the Labour administration has overseen the delivery of over 12,500 new homes, including over 2,000 affordable homes. In 2021-22, this saw 2,563 homes built including 474 affordable homes, the most in over a decade in a single year.
16. The work of the Labour administration to drive forward more innovative community-led housing in the city. This has included a project by We Can Make receiving national coverage through effective use of council-owned land to provide homes for people on the housing waiting list. An estimated 278,000 homes nationwide could be delivered via Community Land Trusts, directly involving and empowering local communities in the delivery of housing that meets their needs. 80% of these homes would be additional – they would not be built without Community Land Trusts. [9]
17. The work of the Labour administration to make more effective use of underutilised car parks in the city to provide homes. The award-winning Hope Rise scheme, supporting young people at risk of



homelessness is one example of this. The recently opened scheme at Derby Street car park will also provide move on accommodation for those at risk of rough sleeping.

Full Council believes that:

1. The recently submitted Local Plan focuses on sites for the delivery of new homes. But, to reduce pressure on communities and valued green space, there is a clear need to identify the potential to bring existing empty homes into use, to convert and reuse existing buildings, and to ensure homes already with planning permission are being delivered.
2. Further powers and resources are needed from central government to develop the approach to addressing empty homes on an increased scale in the private sector. This would have economic benefits with increased numbers of properties brought back into use.
3. Council assets should be used strategically to ensure communities are provided with the resources and facilities required to create sustainable communities. This includes ensuring there is sufficient infrastructure in place or being developed to support increased populations in parts of the city.
4. In Bristol, a combination of potential sources of new homes which is not just reliant on new planning permission is required in order to make the most efficient and effective use of the limited land the city has available.
5. Building new homes will remain the primary driver of addressing the housing crisis. We must remain steadfastly committed to this aim.
6. There needs to be a clear understanding of how council assets can be best utilised for the benefit of the city and its residents. This includes ensuring that council owned land and buildings are only developed with the highest levels of social value provision, with a commitment to provide social housing at policy compliant levels and above. Where a developer partner is unable to achieve policy compliant levels of affordable housing, alternative options should be pursued, including through consideration of Goram Homes.
7. The existing council-owned commercial estate delivers significant revenue that is invested to the provision of council services.
8. Goram Homes is well placed to play a key role in addressing the housing crisis and utilise existing buildings and council land to do so.
9. That the primary way to address the housing crisis is by building more homes, focusing in on maximising council-owned homes and social housing wherever possible. Council housing should be the priority on council owned land, including from schemes being built by the Council's own housing company, Goram Homes.



10. Not all assets will be suitable for conversion into housing, with known issues nationally and locally with some office block conversions that have taken place under permitted development rights.
11. The existing Empty Homes team has already performed well, being identified as an example of best practice by the Local Government Association. [10]
12. Additional enforcement measures will undoubtedly add to the available options for an authority when encouraging empty homeowners to return their properties to use. Increasing the number of empty homes brought back into use will be down to the intervention, engagement and encouragement initiated by an Empty Home, or other relevant, officer. By increasing officer capacity within the team or by increasing headcount, greater exposure of the issue locally will also allow for sustained and targeted work, often required to see some of the most challenging cases successfully resolved.
13. That more powers are needed to be devolved to address the issues brought by the rise of AirBnB's and Second Homes.
14. In the importance of continuing to invest in community led housing in the city.

Full Council Resolves to:

1. Recognise the work being done to tackle empty properties in the city and request the mayor to consider with officers expanding the remit and responsibilities of the Empty Homes team. This should include looking to other examples of best practice, and benchmarking to councils where numbers of empty homes across all categories are similar.
2. Request the mayor to work with the existing Estates Strategy Board alongside the Empty Homes team to work with Bristol retail and commercial offices providers and relevant organisations to bring forward opportunities to convert unviable retail and/or office floorspace into residential use where no longer suitable for their existing use. Long term empty retail units should be advertised in line with their rateable value to ascertain if they are truly unviable. Officers should explore the potential for retailers to part fund this task force and explore how empty units could be utilised for the benefit of the community, such as through use as a different usage classification as grocery retail, small business or creative use.
3. To lobby central government for additional resources to establish a Redundant Buildings Task Force via the Estates Strategy Board, to maximise opportunities in the city for small businesses and where sites are not commercially viable, pursue options for bring forward for housebuilding.
4. Request that the Mayor works with the existing planning team to identify stalled sites with planning permission in order to increase the proportion of existing planning permissions being brought forward for delivery. This should include identifying additional sources of grant funding to ensure affordable homes continue to be delivered whilst recognising recent economic pressures in construction. The potential for part funding of this team by the development community should be considered.



5. Protect council owned land and assets as public owned assets, ensuring that when council owned land and assets are made available for redevelopment, this is done with a commitment to retaining council ownership wherever possible, and to provide the highest possible levels of social value and social housing delivery.
6. To prioritise the council owned housing company, Goram Homes, in bringing forward homes on council owned land in the city. To agree that the existing proposed pipeline of sites for Goram Homes should continue to come forward with our council owned housing company, going through the appropriate planning process as part of this.
7. To withdraw from partnerships with private developers on council-owned land where those developers are failing to deliver / propose policy compliant levels of affordable housing.
8. Prioritise delivery of council housing in the city on council-owned land, through building homes and acquiring additional homes for the HRA to increase stock and help address the waiting list.
9. As and when council owned land and/or property is considered for potential development or disposal, those overseeing the process should consider if there is the potential to increase further the proportion of housing delivered via community led housing schemes – by involving communities in the provision of housing co-designed and/or co-delivered by the community including the potential transfer of long-term leaseholds on suitable council land to local communities.
10. Subject to the appropriate powers being devolved, back further measures to address the issues of second homes and short-term lets in the city, including through registration and/or licensing schemes.
11. Explore bringing forward more car parks for the provision of homes to help address the housing crisis the city faces, building on the examples of Hope Rise and Derby Street.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Katja Hornchen.

Following debate, upon being put to the vote, the amendment was CARRIED (60 For, 0 Against, 4 Abstentions).

The Lord Mayor then invited Councillor Dyer, as mover of the original motion to speak.

Following final remarks, upon being put to the vote, the motion as amended was CARRIED (63 For, 0 against, 1 abstentions) and it was

RESOLVED:

Full Council notes that:



1. UK Government data released in March 2023 identified 1.2m families on housing waiting lists across England [1] Meanwhile the costs of providing temporary accommodation have increased by 62% in the last five years to £1.7bn. [2]
2. UK Government data released in October 2022 shows that over one million homes were classed as unoccupied in England, with over 300,000 of those reported as being long-term empty - vacant for six months or longer. [3]
3. Savills have identified that there is an oversupply of retail space nationally of approximately 150 million square feet. With the average UK flat being 625 square feet, this is enough floor space to provide up to 240,000 average size flats (including 96,000 in long term empty retail space). They forecast that the level of excess retail space will double by 2030 as the retail economy continues to evolve. While some vacant space may be valuable to diversify local centres and high streets with new uses, much could offer housing opportunities.
4. It is common for commercial letting agents to inflate quoted prices of empty properties beyond the rateable value, and/or gatekeep interested businesses from making offers, resulting in properties being empty for longer periods. This also results in areas not having the retail offering required to support sustainable communities.
5. In Bristol there are around 21,000 households on the housing waitlist and the cost of providing temporary accommodation remains a significant budget pressure. Shelter have recently estimated that on any given night in Bristol in 2023 there are approximately 3,224 people in some form of homelessness, the overwhelming majority of whom are in temporary accommodation. This is an increase of 639 compared to 2022. [4]
6. In Bristol, between 2022/23, approximately 300 - 350 council homes were empty at any one time, with over 800 brought back into use during this period.
7. Some 400 private sector homes were brought back into occupation over the same period by the Council's Empty Homes Unit. [5] Live table 615 on vacant Local Authority dwelling stock- maintained by central government - show that on 3rd October 2023, 5,251 mostly privately owned dwellings in Bristol were shown as vacant, of which 1,881 were classified as long term vacant. [6]
8. There are currently 2,556 properties in use as AirBnB's in the city. Of these, 1,722 are wholly rented out. Both Scotland and Northern Ireland have brought in registration schemes to manage the number of AirBnB's and other short term / holiday lets, whilst England is yet to do so. [7]
9. There are significant challenges brought about through 'second homes'.
10. In Bristol, Savills have identified some 185,000 square feet of long-term retail voids (over half of which have been vacant for over three years) – equivalent to almost 300 average size flats. Cost pressures to retrofit existing retail space, coupled with increasing use of online retail, may well see



additional floorspace become available for residential use. At present over 90% of Bristol City Centre retail stock is EPC rating C or worse – with cost estimates of up to £220m to reach EPC rating A as retail. As a result, many of these retail spaces may no longer be viable. Similarly, there is a general over supply of office space.

11. In Bristol in 2021 there were around 13,500 homes with planning permission – with around 3,000 under construction and some still due to begin construction or subject to s.106. This still leaves thousands of homes that are failing to be delivered, in many cases due to viability issues. [8]

12. Bristol City Council owns or controls considerable assets including buildings, land and property amounting to over one million square metres of floorspace and over 3,600 hectares of land. Many of these assets in areas defined as ‘areas of growth and regeneration’. Within this portfolio, that is essentially held in stewardship by Bristol City Council on behalf of the citizens of Bristol, brownfield sites that could be redeveloped should be subject to the highest levels of social value and social housing delivery. These assets are currently overseen through the Estates Strategy Board.

13. The work of Goram Homes, Bristol’s council-owned housing company, in bringing sites forward that that will see higher levels of social housing delivered with a focus on council homes, with a planned pipeline of over 3,000 homes. On One Lockleaze, over 55% of the homes will be council owned social rented homes and shared ownership.

14. The acceleration of council-owned homes being brought forward in the city. Council-owned homes built or acquired in the city maximise the ability of the Council to address housing pressures and improve the quality of life for residents. This includes the financial benefits through working to reduce temporary accommodation pressures as part of this.

15. That since 2016, the Labour administration has overseen the delivery of over 12,500 new homes, including over 2,000 affordable homes. In 2021-22, this saw 2,563 homes built including 474 affordable homes, the most in over a decade in a single year.

16. The work of the Labour administration to drive forward more innovative community-led housing in the city. This has included a project by We Can Make receiving national coverage through effective use of council-owned land to provide homes for people on the housing waiting list. An estimated 278,000 homes nationwide could be delivered via Community Land Trusts, directly involving and empowering local communities in the delivery of housing that meets their needs. 80% of these homes would be additional – they would not be built without Community Land Trusts. [9]

17. The work of the Labour administration to make more effective use of underutilised car parks in the city to provide homes. The award-winning Hope Rise scheme, supporting young people at risk of homelessness is one example of this. The recently opened scheme at Derby Street car park will also provide move on accommodation for those at risk of rough sleeping.

Full Council believes that:



- 1. The recently submitted Local Plan focuses on sites for the delivery of new homes. But, to reduce pressure on communities and valued green space, there is a clear need to identify the potential to bring existing empty homes into use, to convert and reuse existing buildings, and to ensure homes already with planning permission are being delivered.**
- 2. Further powers and resources are needed from central government to develop the approach to addressing empty homes on an increased scale in the private sector. This would have economic benefits with increased numbers of properties brought back into use.**
- 3. Council assets should be used strategically to ensure communities are provided with the resources and facilities required to create sustainable communities. This includes ensuring there is sufficient infrastructure in place or being developed to support increased populations in parts of the city.**
- 4. In Bristol, a combination of potential sources of new homes which is not just reliant on new planning permission is required in order to make the most efficient and effective use of the limited land the city has available.**
- 5. Building new homes will remain the primary driver of addressing the housing crisis. We must remain steadfastly committed to this aim.**
- 6. There needs to be a clear understanding of how council assets can be best utilised for the benefit of the city and its residents. This includes ensuring that council owned land and buildings are only developed with the highest levels of social value provision, with a commitment to provide social housing at policy compliant levels and above. Where a developer partner is unable to achieve policy compliant levels of affordable housing, alternative options should be pursued, including through consideration of Goram Homes.**
- 7. The existing council-owned commercial estate delivers significant revenue that is invested to the provision of council services.**
- 8. Goram Homes is well placed to play a key role in addressing the housing crisis and utilise existing buildings and council land to do so.**
- 9. That the primary way to address the housing crisis is by building more homes, focusing in on maximising council-owned homes and social housing wherever possible. Council housing should be the priority on council owned land, including from schemes being built by the Council's own housing company, Goram Homes.**
- 10. Not all assets will be suitable for conversion into housing, with known issues nationally and locally with some office block conversions that have taken place under permitted development rights.**



11. The existing Empty Homes team has already performed well, being identified as an example of best practice by the Local Government Association. [10]
12. Additional enforcement measures will undoubtedly add to the available options for an authority when encouraging empty homeowners to return their properties to use. Increasing the number of empty homes brought back into use will be down to the intervention, engagement and encouragement initiated by an Empty Home, or other relevant, officer. By increasing officer capacity within the team or by increasing headcount, greater exposure of the issue locally will also allow for sustained and targeted work, often required to see some of the most challenging cases successfully resolved.
13. That more powers are needed to be devolved to address the issues brought by the rise of AirBnB's and Second Homes.
14. In the importance of continuing to invest in community led housing in the city.

Full Council Resolves to:

1. Recognise the work being done to tackle empty properties in the city and request the mayor to consider with officers expanding the remit and responsibilities of the Empty Homes team. This should include looking to other examples of best practice, and benchmarking to councils where numbers of empty homes across all categories are similar.
2. Request the mayor to work with the existing Estates Strategy Board alongside the Empty Homes team to work with Bristol retail and commercial offices providers and relevant organisations to bring forward opportunities to convert unviable retail and/or office floorspace into residential use where no longer suitable for their existing use. Long term empty retail units should be advertised in line with their rateable value to ascertain if they are truly unviable. Officers should explore the potential for retailers to part fund this task force and explore how empty units could be utilised for the benefit of the community, such as through use as a different usage classification as grocery retail, small business or creative use.
3. To lobby central government for additional resources to establish a Redundant Buildings Task Force via the Estates Strategy Board, to maximise opportunities in the city for small businesses and where sites are not commercially viable, pursue options for bring forward for housebuilding.
4. Request that the Mayor works with the existing planning team to identify stalled sites with planning permission in order to increase the proportion of existing planning permissions being brought forward for delivery. This should include identifying additional sources of grant funding to ensure affordable homes continue to be delivered whilst recognising recent economic pressures in construction. The potential for part funding of this team by the development community should be considered.
5. Protect council owned land and assets as public owned assets, ensuring that when council owned land and assets are made available for redevelopment, this is done with a commitment to



retaining council ownership wherever possible, and to provide the highest possible levels of social value and social housing delivery.

6. To prioritise the council owned housing company, Goram Homes, in bringing forward homes on council owned land in the city. To agree that the existing proposed pipeline of sites for Goram Homes should continue to come forward with our council owned housing company, going through the appropriate planning process as part of this.
7. To withdraw from partnerships with private developers on council-owned land where those developers are failing to deliver / propose policy compliant levels of affordable housing.
8. Prioritise delivery of council housing in the city on council-owned land, through building homes and acquiring additional homes for the HRA to increase stock and help address the waiting list.
9. As and when council owned land and/or property is considered for potential development or disposal, those overseeing the process should consider if there is the potential to increase further the proportion of housing delivered via community led housing schemes – by involving communities in the provision of housing co-designed and/or co-delivered by the community including the potential transfer of long-term leaseholds on suitable council land to local communities.
10. Subject to the appropriate powers being devolved, back further measures to address the issues of second homes and short-term lets in the city, including through registration and/or licensing schemes.
11. Explore bringing forward more car parks for the provision of homes to help address the housing crisis the city faces, building on the examples of Hope Rise and Derby Street.

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SILVER MOTION (LIBERAL DEMOCRATS): OPEN OUR LIBRARIES

Councillor Tim Kent moved the following altered motion:

Bristol City Council is proud that it has protected libraries from closure and notes that in many parts of the country many libraries have been lost.

Council is pleased that previous closure plans were scrapped and strongly supports retaining the branch library network as a free, affordable, warm, and safe space where people can access knowledge.

Council notes and supports the previous work on welcome spaces in the city - and notes that for many that is their local branch library.



Council is very concerned that the recruitment freeze, enacted by officers following consultation with Labour Cabinet Members, has created a stealth closure of branch libraries with many now being forced to close once or twice a week.

Council calls on the Mayor's administration to instruct officers to immediately end the recruitment freeze for the library service and ensure they have the staff available to ensure branch libraries remain open.

Councillor Sarah Classick seconded the motion.

Following debate, upon being put to the vote, the motion was CARRIED (62 For, 0 against, 0 abstentions) it was:

RESOLVED:

Bristol City Council is proud that it has protected libraries from closure and notes that in many parts of the country many libraries have been lost.

Council is pleased that previous closure plans were scrapped and strongly supports retaining the branch library network as a free, affordable, warm, and safe space where people can access knowledge.

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Council calls on the Mayor's administration to instruct officers to immediately end the recruitment freeze for the library service and ensure they have the staff available to ensure branch libraries remain open.

Meeting ended at 6.00 pm

CHAIR _____

