

Member Forum - Questions & Statements from Councillors



Date: Tuesday, 12 December 2017

Time: 1.00 pm

Venue: Council Chamber, City Hall

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Date: 12 December 2017



Agenda

1. Questions and replies

Questions received from councillors are set out in the enclosed document, together with the replies from the Mayor, or relevant Cabinet member where appropriate.

(Pages 3 - 38)

2. Statements

Statements received from councillors are set out in the enclosed document.

(Pages 39 - 48)



Member Forum

12 December 2017

Questions and replies



Procedural note:

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS:

- Councillors are entitled to submit up to 2 written questions each.
- The questions submitted and written replies are attached.
- Councillors are also entitled to ask a maximum of 2 supplementary questions at the forum.
- If a councillor has submitted 2 questions on 2 separate topics, they may ask both of their supplementary questions on just one of the topics if they so wish, or may ask one question on each of the 2 separate topics. All supplementary questions must arise directly out of the original question or the reply.
- Via the group leaders / whips, questions have been submitted in priority order.
- At the forum, the asking of questions will be rotated between the political groups that have submitted questions, taken in priority order.



Question to the Mayor from Councillor Don Alexander

Subject: Investment in Bristol

1. After the Lib Dems and Tories voted to get rid of the £110 million Revenue Support Grant, local councils' income is increasingly made up of business rates and council tax receipts. Both of which are higher when the economy is working for everyone and more Bristolians are in jobs which pay a fair wage.

Does the Mayor agree that the local authority has a duty to support the development of a strong and fair local economy and to showcase Bristol's potential to the world?

2. Can the Mayor provide an update on how his administration is doing so, particularly following his recent investment trip to China and Malaysia?

Response:

- 1) You are right to make the connection between our corporate need to replace Revenue Support Grant and Business Rate growth. You are also absolutely right to say we need a strong local economy that is fair and inclusive.
- 2) My visit to China was important in continuing to place our investables portfolio around the world. This is my second business trip to China, and as well as meeting the Mayor and local officials in Guangzhou, I met with Chief Executives of Fortune 500 companies, by definition the largest companies in the world and DIT. I have also been to New York where I met with the UK Department of International Trade US Office and the British American Business Council. We also have, of course, mayors from around the world coming to our city with the Global Parliament of Mayors next October and we will be showcasing our projects at MIPIM in March. All of this work is extremely important and whilst economic uplift is not an immediate outcome, it is essential to recognise the importance of incoming international investment and trade that will provide jobs to the city. It's also worth noting that our universities have huge interests in China as major employers and investors in Bristol.

In Bristol itself we have continued to support business, not least of which through our new Enterprising West of England Project, the highly successful Bottle Yard Film Studios delivering £18.3m of economic benefit to the City, and the Filwood Green Business Park managed workspace exceeding its occupancy targets month after month. Our investment in the Cultural Strategy will also pay dividends in tourism and I continue to work with Business West and Destination Bristol in trade, investment and tourism. A crucial factor of delivering economic growth, as you correctly point out, is fairness and ensuring that all our citizens share in the city's success. We have started work on an Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth Strategy which will consult on in the coming months. We are also working with City partners on the development and implementation of the City Plan.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Geoff Gollop

Subject: REMUNERATION PAID THROUGH PERSONAL SERVICE COMPANY

- 1) You kindly drew my attention to the Council's 2017 Financial Statements which state that Anna Klonowski was paid for almost 75% of her time with the Council through her own personal service company. I acknowledge that I was an Executive Member at the time she was first appointed for the first 5 months of her 22 months with the Council but at no time was I made aware of these arrangements

When did you become aware that that Ms Klonowski had been employed in this way?

- 2) The same Financial Statements also show that Julie Oldale (The S.151 and Chief Financial Officer who confirmed to Mayor Cabinet and Council that the 2016/17 budget was balanced and achievable) was not an employee of the Council, but rather that she was employed by Elka Solutions Ltd, which coincidentally is Ms Klonowski's Private Service Company. Those accounts also tell me that although she was paid by Elka Solutions her employment contract was actually with the City Council.

Can the Mayor tell me when this significant information was drawn to the attention of Cabinet and HR Committee?

Response:

- 1) As you were the Deputy Mayor and the executive member for finance, why were you not aware?

Under this administration, the individual financial arrangements for staff are a matter for the Head of Paid Service. The details are outlined in the related party note within the 2016/17 statement of accounts.

We are putting in place robust financial management to ensure the mistakes of the previous administration are not repeated, as highlighted by the Bundred report, which highlighted failures in financial processes, governance and a culture of hierarchy and bullying, summarised as a collective failure in leadership and unallocated savings of £29m. No questions have been raised by external auditors or HMRC over this matter.

- 2) The appointment of Julie Oldale was made by the previous administration while you were the Deputy Mayor responsible for finance and HR. The appointment was made by Full Council on 19 January 2016, while you were the deputy mayor responsible for finance and HR. Julie Oldale left Bristol City Council in July 2016.



Question to the Mayor from Councillor Cleo Lake

Subject: Drugs policy

As the Mayor and Cabinet may be aware there have been a record number of drug related deaths in Bristol this year – the scale of our City’s drug crisis is well documented in the BBC documentary Drugsland.

1. Given that these issues are unlikely to diminish if the response stays as it is, what is the Council’s strategy for collaboration with partners around formulating a relevant drugs policy to minimise harm arising from drug abuse in Bristol?

Response:

It was great to see our Bristol West Labour MP in the documentary challenging current drugs laws.

Harm from drug use is a global problem, however the council have a number of approaches to minimise the harm arising from drug misuse in Bristol.

Firstly, the council have recently re-commissioned the substance misuse services. These services are designed to reduce the harm associated with substance misuse.

Secondly there is a multi-agency drug related death review group. This group meets to review the cases of drug related death to identify whether anything could have been done to prevent these deaths.

The Safer Bristol partnership has overall oversight of substance misuse within the city. Finally there is a multi-agency drug and alcohol health integration team. This is a partnership between academics and service delivery.

In your supplementary question, could you tell us what you think we should be doing?



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Clare Campion-Smith (Westbury-on-Trym and Henleaze)

Subject: Education

Officers currently forecast a £7m overspend for the overall DSG budget for 2017/18, mostly due to underfunding/increased demand of the high needs block.

1. What proposals are being made to reduce this overspend?
2. With 2,000 new homes a year by 2020, the Mayor's key electoral pledge, where is the school organisation plan to help deliver that pledge? Bristol's School Organisation plan (2013-17) runs out in a few weeks with no sign of a new plan.

Response:

- 1) Nationally the Dedicated Schools Grant is overspent due to the under-resourcing of the High Needs Block (HNB) in each authority area. A current study has found that this equates to the region of £250m across the country. To address the significant overspend officers have worked to create a HNB deficit recovery plan which seeks to address the in- year deficit and have consulted further with the schools forum to address the carry forward pressure.

The HNB deficit recovery plan has identified savings across all 6 areas which total £4.95m annual spend over a 3 year period and work is ongoing across all areas. Progress against the HNB deficit recovery plan is monitored fortnightly by officers and through the Inclusion reference group (IRG). Work will continue on the HNB deficit plan as a strategic priority for 17/18 and 18/19, and nationally there is a considerable pressure on the DFE to correct the funding position.

- 2) The School Organisation Strategy 2013-2017 was replaced by the Integrated Education and Capital Strategy 2016-2019. This was approved, following extensive consultation, by the Learning City Partnership Board in January 2016 and covers the period to 2019.

Projections of the demand for school places are undertaken each year and are submitted to central Government. As forecast within the IECS there has been a requirement for additional secondary school places. This has been acknowledged by government with the allocation of 'Basic Need' capital grant that has enabled a number of secondary school expansion projects together with the approval for 3 new free schools, one to be located in each of the geographical areas of the city. The expected pupil yield from new housing is taken into account when undertaking the pupil projections. Housing must have reached the stage of planning permission being granted in order to be included in the projection. More theoretical work is undertaken to determine the likely impact of major housing schemes when these are initially being considered and in the planning process to determine whether additional school places will be needed.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Celia Phipps

Subject: Ashton Court Mansion

1. Last month I attended the meeting, chaired by the Civic Society, to look at the future of Ashton Court Mansion. It was well attended and positive in general.

As the nearest ward members to this iconic and important asset in Bristol City, Councillor Bradshaw and I are keen to support the requests from local residents that the development plans and the associated timelines are progressed with speed.

Please can we be reassured that these will be made public, where possible, and that there is no delay in the completion and publication of the final report?

Response:

I agree that Ashton Court is an important asset for the city. We have to ensure this and other city assets are sustainable.

We are currently working to complete the report. Please be assured where possible we will make documents public.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Graham Morris

Subject: Housing Allocations Policy

Q.1 In a case I am supporting, housing officers have categorised my constituent band 2 due to domestic violence. As a result of the conditions imposed on her (and a child), if she chooses to stay in the area, close to her support network of family and friends, she will be moved down the waiting list.

Does the Mayor agree with me that the Council's allocations policy on domestic violence still needs improvement as it is capable of producing such unfair results?

Q.2 As it currently stands, the policy is not flexible enough to avoid the kind of anomaly outlined above. Will the Mayor undertake a further review of the banding criteria?

Response:

1. We have given greater priority to people suffering from domestic violence as I promised in my election campaign.
2. A thorough review of the allocation system is currently underway and consultation with local councillors will start in the new year. I would encourage Councillor Morris to get involved in that consultation.



Question to the Mayor from Councillor Martin Fodor

Subject: Local transport projects

A year ago all funds and support for local transport projects were cut from neighbourhoods. Up to this point all requests for projects were managed through neighbourhood partnerships and there were established arrangements for them to be evaluated, investigated, ranked and progressed where possible and appropriate through local working groups with input from council officers.

The Traffic Choices website lists all the outstanding requests for road safety and requested facilities. Since last year projects have all been in limbo and no arrangements or resources have been available since then. Statements in public forum at Full Council show the requests have not gone away so improvements to accident locations, school crossings and other schemes are not being supported.

The funds collected from RPS permits are ring fenced once costs have been paid off. Any surplus has to be spent only on local transport projects.

1. Can the Mayor say:

- What surpluses have been accumulated from the RPS schemes in the city, how this is projected forwards and how have past surpluses been spent, and
- if he is willing to allocate the funds going forwards for local road safety and highway projects requested by residents and are shown to merit implementation?

Response:

- The revenue raised from the RPS is ring-fenced and used to cover the operational costs of running the schemes and to repay the capital loan used to implement the schemes.
- The 15 RPS schemes generate a surplus of c£2.6m per year of which c£692k is used to repay the RPS capital loan each year. The remaining surplus of c£1.9m is used to support the Transport budget in areas such as highways maintenance (filling potholes) and supporting park and ride.
- The surplus funds will be used to fund transport programmes including local road safety and highway projects. These requests will be considered against the other needs of the transport budget.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Harriet Clough (Hengrove and Whitchurch Park)

Subject: A37 Park and Ride proposal

1. What is the time difference for a car and a bus to travel along the A37 corridor from the southern edge of Whitchurch village to Temple Meads railway station at peak time (8am to 9am south to north and 5pm-6pm north to south) Monday - Friday and how many cars travel this corridor during those peak hours according to latest transport modelling data?
2. Why is Bristol City Council not proposing a park and ride near Whitchurch village as the primary transport intervention on this corridor rather than an A4-A37 link?

Response:

1. I do not have the exact statistics you have requested. However, the average journey speed for buses heading inbound on the A37 in the morning peak is around 6-8mph, compared to 5-6mph for cars on the same route.
2. A park and ride on the A37 is very much part of our plans for improving transport options on this corridor. The likely site as identified in the Joint Transport Study is around Whitchurch and associated with the proposed Joint Spatial Plan development in that location. The A4 to A37 link is a necessary route that carries out a different function, providing orbital road options rather than radial routes.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Olly Mead

Subject: Children's centres

1. Horfield Ward residents have access to children's centres in Upper Horfield and Filton Avenue, both of which provide vital services.

Given that some Tory-run councils have closed all of their children's centres, how did Bristol manage to keep ours open, with an almost negligible reduction in service?

Response:

That is a very good question that recognises the incredible achievement led by Helen Godwin and other Cabinet members who have made savings to make it possible.

Bristol recognises the important role that Children's Centres have in giving every child a good start in life, by strengthening communities, bringing services together in a way that is accessible and non-stigmatising for families and, importantly, identifying families and young children in need of support at the earliest possible opportunity to deliver appropriate interventions and prevent the high financial and emotional cost of later escalation of need.

Despite losing significant funding from the austerity policies of the Conservative and Lib Dem coalition, now continued by the Conservatives alone, Bristol has been able to continue to provide a network of Children's Centres across the city by working with key partners, particularly in Health and the Voluntary Sector, to make best use of our reducing resources by aligning services to avoid gaps and duplication. For example, there is a strong commitment to bring together the statutory requirements of the Healthy Child Programme and the Early Years Foundation Stage and to co-locate Health Visitors in Children's Centres wherever possible.

Further economies of scale have been created by bringing together early education and childcare, health and family support services in Children's Centres on school sites – this brings pedagogical leadership and enables seamless transitions for children and their families as they move through the early years and into school.

We will be retaining 22 Children's Centres, but they will be managed in groups across four areas of the city – in North, South, East and Central. There will be a lead Centre in each area that will be accountable for the quality and impact of service delivery. This will achieve a reduction in the number of Senior Managers and will contribute to the savings that are needed to achieve a sustainable Children's Centre model for the future.

There is no doubt that under anything but Labour leadership in Bristol, Children's Centres would have closed.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Steve Jones

Subject: REGIONAL SPATIAL & TRANSPORT PLANS

Q.1 I understand the draft JSP, together with the results of public consultation, will be sent to the Secretary of State and then the Planning Inspectorate for examination early next year. I presume that transport infrastructure must follow or be subservient to the former planning document. Can the Mayor advise how one will still be able to shape the accompanying JTS so that this successfully marries with the final version of the housing regional plan?

Q.2 One really important issue for my ward concerns the agreed route of the South Bristol ring road. Will the Mayor be support the right of Members (representing areas affected by this transport corridor) to be consulted and given the opportunity of providing feedback before any decision has been made?

Response:

1. The transport infrastructure requirements to support the delivery of the housing and employment aspirations of the West of England Joint Spatial Plan, have been considered through the WoE Joint Transport Study. This is only a study but is being used to refresh the Joint Local Transport Plan. All schemes proposed for the Joint Local Transport Plan will be consulted on before the plan is agreed.
2. The options for the alignment of identified routes are currently being worked up and will be subject to consultation as part of this process.

I will of course ensure that Ward Members and local communities are invited to comment on options and safeguarding lines for transport infrastructure.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Paula O'Rourke

Subject: Future of the Library Service

In the letter to Mike Barton, who originated the Save Clifton Library petition, the Mayor said the following:

'thanks to funding from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport the library service has commissioned a consultant to assess whether an alternative delivery model – for example a mutual, trust or commercial provider - could be appropriate for the future service.....The council will wait until the conclusion of this review, before making a final decision.....The savings forecast to be made in the next financial year will be covered by using a reserve fund set up specifically to meet the costs of changes to proposals as a result of consultation.'

1. Could the Mayor describe in more detail what is now planned and the cost implications of having to do a second consultation, specifically:

- a) When is the consultant likely to take up the position and what is the expected timeline for the consultation,
- b) How much will the consultation cost in full and how much of this will come from DCMS and how much from Council reserves?

Response:

- A. The consultancy work will start in December, and run for four months.
- B. Bristol Libraries applied to DCMS and were awarded £17,500 for a consultant from Mutual Ventures to do an internal assessment on options for an alternative delivery model. This will be matched by £3,500 from the library service.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Jos Clark (Brislington West)

Subject: Primary care provision

1. How many GP Posts are currently unfilled in total and as a percentage of posts in Bristol (please give this as a total for the city and by ward/practice) and how many additional posts are planned for the next 10 years?
2. What plans have the council and CCG agreed to attract new GPs to Bristol and fill vacant posts?

Response:

1. These are all issues you should take up with the CCG, as it is their responsibility.
2. You are welcome to bring your questions and ideas to the Health and Wellbeing Board.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Harriet Bradley

Subject: Homelessness and unhealthy accommodation

1. Local charities – including working alongside the City Office – are doing wonderful work setting up arrangements to help the homeless with beds and sustenance over the Christmas period. Please can the Mayor outline current plans for reducing homelessness in Bristol once the festivities are over?
2. Too many Bristolians, including many of my constituents and many women with young children, are living in damp and unhealthy accommodation provided by private landlords or the less reputable housing associations. While we must welcome all the ongoing plans to build affordable housing what update can the Mayor provide on our administration's work to help these people while waiting for this to be delivered?

Response:

1. The City Office cold weather project will run from January until the end of March. More than 100 extra bed spaces will be available for people sleeping rough in the city when the cold weather hits Bristol as part of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol. Twelve churches will host the shelter over the 12 week period, with the project providing 12 beds every night of the week.

There are also other initiatives to both prevent street homelessness and to increase the provision available for people who become homeless, including:

- Caring in Bristol has launched its annual 'Caring at Christmas' appeal to help provide homeless people with warm safe beds, food, and social activities during the Christmas period. Now in its 30th year, the project aims to welcome over 200 guests into their shelter each day, provide 70 beds each night and serve 5000 hot meals.
- A new contactless donation point has been launched to help support the charities that run Bristol's night shelters. The donation station at Bristol Energy by the Watershed, will join the two existing contactless stations on Broadmead Shopping Quarter, which have so far raised nearly £3k over four months.

However, the growth in homelessness is a national problem, directly caused by the austerity policies of the Conservative and Lib Dem coalition, now continued by the Conservatives alone.

2. A formal consultation on extending licensing of private sector properties will be starting in mid-January, with the aim to initiate the expanded service after April. We continue to promote our ethical charter for landlords.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Mark Weston

Subject: HENBURY LOOP

Many of us involved in the myriad of campaigns seeking further rail improvements have repeatedly raised concerns regarding the business case used to dismiss the Henbury Loop as a viable rail option.

Q1. Can I therefore ask if the Mayor is committed to re-instating the full Henbury Loop?

Q2. Will he commit to lobbying both the Government and the West of England Combined Authority to commission a new business case for the Henbury Loop? This review should include a more realistic patronage level, a level playing field as regards future subsidy when compared with the spur model, the new works at Parkway and the Filton Diamond, the new commercial developments in Severnside, the new housing in the CPNN, and the potential options for the Brabazon hangar.

Response:

Q1: The potential for trains to operate on the Henbury Loop was evaluated as part of the development of the MetroWest Phase 2 project in 2015. At that time only options based on a 'Spur' service offered a strong enough business case and were affordable within the funding identified for the project. The project is therefore progressing with a 'spur' service on the Henbury Line, for delivery in 2021, whilst making provision for the potential implementation of a loop service in the future once a business case can be demonstrated and funding identified.

I am keen to investigate opportunities for delivering a loop service once the Spur service is in place. Officers are working with Network Rail to scope out a high level feasibility study to investigate the loop in the context of other potential future rail enhancements. It is hoped that a feasibility study will be undertaken during 2018.

Q2: Just for clarity, we are the West of England Combined Authority. I met with the Secretary of State for Transport two weeks ago regarding the support needed for the development of the rail network in the city, such as the current MetroWest programme. There is support from government, and we are working as part of WECA to make the re-energisation of the suburban rail network at the heart of our transport policy, alongside a mass transit system.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Eleanor Combley

Subject: Chinese Investment

1. I was very interested to see that the Mayor has been visiting China seeking investment into Bristol. We often talk about making sure we are ethical in how we invest our money. Given China's well documented human rights violations, can the Mayor tell us about what ethical safeguards he will be putting in place to ensure we are equally careful about whose money we take?

Response:

- Thank you for your interest. We were in China for an international gathering of business leaders and politicians, including people like Justin Trudeau.
- All foreign companies – Chinese or otherwise – need to comply with UK laws and regulations to operate here.
- We will do our own ethical background checks on any companies which invest in public projects. The Council has established policies on Ethical Investment and Social Value which can be shared with you if you would like.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Anthony Negus (Cotham)

Subject: Waste Enforcement Services

A Councillor briefing recently advised that the currently central area of operation and scope of issues for enforcement by the council's contractors were to be extended.

1. Can the responsible Cabinet member please provide details of the proposed intensity of operations in Cotham ward and when this will include enforcing rubbish and waste in front gardens, regular non-adherence to the collection regime and failure to take in bins and boxes after collection?

Response:

The Council's contractors delivering enhanced enforcement, Kingdom, are not authorised to serve Fixed-Penalty-Notices (FPNs) for breaches of notices that can be served for any of these matters.

The BCC Neighbourhood Enforcement Team, however, does investigate and take appropriate action regarding waste in gardens.

The intensity of enforcement across all 34 wards in Bristol will vary throughout the year. Local intelligence regarding such things as dog fouling and littering, for which Kingdom are authorised to issue FPNs, will be important for prioritising in which locations they work.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Mark Bradshaw

Subject: Subject: New homes in Ashton Vale

It is good to see the proposals for the Alderman Moore's site in Ashton Vale, Bedminster making progress, mostly due to the pressure exerted by the Cabinet Member for Homes. The 133 new homes will be a welcome addition to the local housing supply and the 52 new council homes are especially welcome.

1. Can he say how local Bedminster residents in need of an affordable home could benefit from the proposals?
2. Can he outline the timescale for planning, construction and expected occupation by residents?

Response:

1. At this stage we have not commenced any process of how these homes will be allocated. Once the scheme has progressed and we have the relevant planning consent, we will look at the allocation of the council homes, and will discuss this with relevant stakeholders with a view to establishing whether there is a need for a local lettings plan for the new development. On all new developments of affordable rented housing, 50% will be offered for local lettings.
2. The planning application period will run to March 2018, during this time work will take place to formalise the development in terms of the fixed costs, the sales values, the marketing and sales strategies. As soon as planning has been agreed, we would hope to start on site. The aim is for housing to become available for housing from early 2019.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor John Goulandris

Subject: ROAD PRICING

1. Congestion Charging: Can the Mayor give assurance that he will not be seeking to introduce road pricing as part of any plans he has to tackle congestion?

Response:

- We have to, and want to, comply with the government's air quality targets and we need to improve congestion and its impact on Bristol's economy. However, we must ensure that we integrate our transport policies and deliver a mass transit system and a suburban rail network. Modal shift only takes place when there are genuine alternative sustainable transport options, and that's our priority.
- As a separate exercise, the Government has used its legal powers to direct Bristol City Council (and over 20 other councils) to explore the use of charging vehicles as part of a Clean Air Zone. The City Council is undertaking this work, funded by Government, and results will be available in 2018 to enable us to decide on the best solution for Bristol.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Eleanor Combley

Subject: Opposition to Austerity

1. People have been asking me how the recent cuts agreed at Cabinet square with the Mayor's stated opposition to austerity. Is the Mayor willing to tell us what next for opposition to austerity, in particular, is there anything to report from his recent meeting with Sajid Javid?

Response:

- I am discussing a parliamentary strategy with the Labour party national leadership on the needs of cities.
- I continue to work with Core Cities to lobby for the green paper and increased funding.
- The cuts are squared by the simple fact that the Conservative party and Lib Dems introduced austerity and we continue to deal with its impact.
- The meeting with the Secretary of State was about the housing infrastructure fund bid and inward investment in the city.
- All Core Cities are grappling with the dilemma of opposing government austerity while at the same time needing to develop a positive relationship with government to ensure we get the investment we need for housing, infrastructure and jobs.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Gary Hopkins (Knowle)

Subject: Management of Bristol

1. After the sacking of Conservative and Green Party representatives from his Cabinet can the Mayor give us an update on what manifesto pledges he still thinks are intact and which have been broken?
2. Will the Mayor now agree to give a full listing of all salaries, expenses and costs of travel, accommodation and meals incurred by himself and Labour Councillors in this authority since his taking of office, particularly those associated with the trip to London that cancelled the 12th September Full Council?

Response:

1. All of my manifesto pledges are being progressed.
2. No. However, we will publish travel and accommodation costs incurred by all councillors.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Gill Kirk

Subject: Study space

1. One of the many outcomes of the current affordable housing crisis is that many larger low income families have to live in overcrowded homes. Children often have to share bedrooms and lack a quiet space in the home to study and do homework.

Alongside or as part of the ongoing review of libraries, what work are the Mayor and his Cabinet doing to ensure access to computers and space to study in every community, so that every child in Bristol can get the best from their education and have improved life chances?

Response:

1. We are looking at the asset register, including all public, private and community buildings and services in Bristol to plan for the best use of space. We welcome the participation of all councillors in that project. Let me catch up with you after this meeting to ensure you are included in this piece of work to you which will be significant for the city.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Liz Radford

Subject: Council Tax Rates

1. Has the Mayor and Cllr Cheney definitively ruled out Momentum's wild proposal to treble Council Tax on certain properties?

Response:

1. There are substantial issues with the document you refer to but it will be discussed by the Labour group in due course.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Charlie Bolton

Subject: Clean Air

My understanding from attending a recent Clean Air task and finish group meeting is that Bristol needs to commit to attaining the legal limits for clean air as soon as possible.

1. Is the Mayor committed to achieving this goal?

Response:

I am committed to improving air quality in the city to reduce the harm it is doing to people's health.

We are currently undertaking feasibility work to determine the most effective package of policy and action to achieve this goal, in accordance with strict Government guidelines. This will form our Clean Air Plan and we will be assessing the health benefits of this Plan for the people of Bristol.

We are also assessing the unintended effects of the Clean Air Plan, in particular what effect it has on poor communities in the city, with a particular focus on low income households. From this we will identify what is needed to mitigate these effects, acknowledging that poverty is a bigger killer than poor air quality.

We will then be reliant on government to provide the resources necessary to implement our Clean Air Plan and mitigation measures.

I am committed to improving air quality in the city as quickly as possible but we have to do it with people and in a way which doesn't disproportionately penalise the poorest.



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

Subject: Development in Hengrove and Whitchurch Park ward:

Our ward now has plans proposing 4,000 new dwellings at pre-application stage. We have no plan for a single new school or classroom. Next to us Bath and North East Somerset is proposing 2,500 new houses with two new schools.

1. Why do their children deserve schools when ours do not?

7 years ago a new public plaza was completed at Hengrove Park, creating a pedestrian space at the heart of the development and linking the hospital and the leisure centre.

2. Why are you proposing to run a road through this public space severing these two important buildings and creating an unsafe space and a car dominated development?

Response:

1. We are looking to expand one of the local schools, and to reduce the number of empty spaces projected at other local schools.

The Education Funding Agency has agreed to fund a new secondary school for South Bristol, to be run by Oasis Academy. The location has yet to be agreed. We are committed to building houses and it's a good sign that your questions are about the building of houses.

2. You are referring to the illustrative masterplan for Hengrove Park which is currently out for consultation which will inform the submission of the Outline Planning Application for housing led development at Hengrove Park. The community have until the end of January to comment on the proposals.



Question (s) to the Mayor from Councillor Fabian Breckels

Subject: Student homes

1. Last month I asked about the number of student flats going up in the city centre. The Bristol Development and Investment Hotspots document invited further investment to meet demand from 3,000 to 5,000 students. Have particular sites been identified?

Response:

1. As part of the Bristol Local Plan review we are looking at where new student housing should be directed. No sites have been identified to date.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Richard Eddy

Subject: PROTECTION OF THE CENOTAPH

1. As the Mayor will know, there have been several complaints regarding the possible damage to the Cenotaph from skateboarding. What steps will the Mayor take to protect this important monument in the City from future damage?

Response:

- Since it was opened the initial feedback from the police is that the skateboarders have been very respectful of the Cenotaph.
- Works are due to start on 11 December 2017 to install steel strips into the paving around the Cenotaph and other historic monuments on the new central promenade to prevent potential damage by skateboarders. These should be installed before Christmas. The installation of skate stops to reduce skateboarding on the granite planters will follow.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Charlie Bolton

Subject: Long Ashton Park and Ride

Councillor Clarke and I have been campaigning to get the Long Ashton Park and Ride open to football fans on match days for the best part of 3 years now.

1. Is the Mayor committed to seeing this happen and if so when?

Response:

- As both the local members are aware, although the Council now owns the site following compulsory purchase, the process is not yet complete as the compensation still has to be agreed for the previous owners and occupiers.
- The site will operate as a park and ride in conjunction with the AVTM Metrobus and any other public transport providers as may be agreed by the Council.
- We will work with BCFC to ensure that it is open on match days.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Anthony Negus (Cotham)

Subject: Council tax exemptions:

This year is set to be financially very tough for this council and its citizens with anticipated council tax receipts falling short of expectations in no small part due to a greater proportion of residential accommodation being used for student residences worsened by a delay in advising the councils collection service of which addresses have this year dropped out of paying council tax.

1. Would the responsible Cabinet member clarify for me and the general public the position regarding responsibility for paying, collecting and distributing business rates, for the following accommodation for students:
 - Purpose-built University sponsored campus halls of residence for first-year students
 - Purpose-built privately developed residential units that operate for 8–12 months of each year
 - HMOs (Houses of Multiple Occupation) and flats for students alone converted from previously private houses?

Response:

- Student accommodation, in the above three examples, will all be assessed as domestic dwellings as they are all occupied as the sole or main residence of individual students.
- Therefore there is no responsibility for paying, collecting and distributing business rates on student accommodation.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Ruth Pickersgill**Subject: ESOL support**

Bristol is a City of Sanctuary where it is estimated 14.7% of residents were born outside of the UK, and speak at least 91 languages. 5.1% of households in the last Census (2011) did not have anyone living in them who had English as a main language. Language barriers are often the main issue for newly arrived refugees and migrants getting into work. There are also many skilled migrants and refugees in Bristol who have been employed below their professional level for years, due to the lack of relevant, accessible and affordable ESOL classes or any work based ESOL learning.

The voluntary sector and Community Education in Bristol have developed a range of community based ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes which are free to the student, but most accredited and college courses are now only free to people on employment related benefits as they are funded through the Skills Funding Agency, and asylum seekers are only eligible after they have been in the country for six months. Workplace based ESOL is almost non-existent.

Unlike Wales and Scotland, England has no comprehensive ESOL strategy. In Bristol, ESOL provision has developed in an ad hoc way as a response to increasing demand and decreasing funding. Many of the providers now meet on a regular basis as a network to share information and discuss referral routes etc. This ESOL Providers' Network and the Council are working together to develop a strategy that will help to ensure we are maximising the economic contribution migrants and refugees can make to the City, and to ensuring their skills and experience can be fully utilised by linking them with identified skills gaps or creating clear vocational pathways.

The 2016 Casey Review (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-casey-review-a-review-into-opportunity-and-integration>) identified that 'poor English language skills have been shown to create a number of disadvantages', including:

- a wage gap attributable to ESOL of 26% for men and 22% for women, and a lower employment rate (48.3%) for those who are non-proficient in English than those who are proficient (65.4%);
- inefficiencies and ineffectiveness in public services due to lack of communication;
- a negative impact on children's integration, education and life chances: while gaps are narrow and narrowing, speakers of languages other than English perform less well than the average across all school Key Stages;
- an impact on community cohesion and integration: 95% of people living in this country think that to be considered "truly British" you must be able to speak English (up from 86% in 2003) and 87% of people with English as their main language felt they belonged strongly to Britain compared to 79% of people without;
- a lower likelihood of participation in civic engagement or volunteering;
- a power imbalance which occurs in families where the man speaks English and the woman does not.

Casey recommends that 'the Government should be supporting further targeted English Language provision by making sufficient funding available for community-based English language classes, and through the adult skills budget for local authorities to prioritise English language where there is a need.'

1. As responsibility for the commissioning of Post-16 education and skills transfers to the West of England Combined Authority, please could the Mayor and his new Cabinet lead use their influence to ensure that providing adequate ESOL courses with clear

vocational pathways is a priority in any of WECA's skills strategies and resource allocation?

Response:

Through the first devolution deal with the West of England, Central government have agreed to transfer Adult Education Budget funding and functions by 2019/20. In preparing for these new devolved responsibilities, there are a number of ways that BCC, including Elected Members, can inform the new commissioning process, through representation on the WECA AEB Working Group, the WECA Skills Officer Group and the Skills Advisory Board (attended by the Executive Lead Member for Education and Skills).

Intensive work is underway to develop a draft WECA Skills Strategy and AEB Commissioning Framework. The work that has been carried out by the ESOL Providers' Network and Bristol City Council has been invaluable in helping to inform this process. In line with the Mayor's commitments, and building on local research, we are making a strong case that AEB provision must be used to support more people to benefit from inclusive economic growth. It is critical that AEB includes flexible targeted provision that enables migrants and refugees to extend their language and vocational skills in order to progress to sustainable employment, and in work, to maximise their economic and social contribution. The draft Skills strategy and AEB commissioning framework will be subject to local consultation with providers and wider stakeholders in 2018. The final documents will have to be approved by the WECA Committee, enabling a further opportunity for the Bristol Mayor to ensure that the WECA AEB Commissioning process meets the needs of Bristol learners and employers.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Carla Denyer

Subject: Traffic access problems and conflict

The Mayor and his Cabinet members meet senior figures from various agencies and organisations. The council liaises with the blue light emergency services, bodies like Bristol Waste, and others on a regular basis. Residents also report instances where emergency vehicles are unable to get through streets due to obstructions.

1. Could the Mayor provide a summary of instances and locations where access for emergency vehicles and service providers like waste collections are obstructed by poor parking, unregulated vehicles and lorries unable to travel through local streets?

Response:

- Parking Services does not keep records covering instances of this nature.
- How are you suggesting we resolve this problem?



Question (s) to the Mayor from Councillor Tom Brook

Subject: Severn Beach line

1. The Mayor may be aware that, for a number of months now, the Severn Beach Line has been suffering from delays, cancellations and early turnbacks of services from Clifton Down or Avonmouth. This disruption has had the economic impact of failing to connect employers with employees in Avonmouth and the City Centre, as well as the social one of damaging a key public transport connection. Many are now choosing to drive rather than rely on the train.

Figures collected by Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways show that 322 trains were late last month, 15 were turned back at Avonmouth, 29 at Clifton Down, and 53 were cancelled.

GWR have presented many excuses, namely problems with the new trains (which were supposed to improve the service!). But they have also taken the operational decision to remove services from the Line, for example so they can have more trains to serve the Bath Christmas Market.

Does the Mayor agree that the reliability situation on the Severn Beach Line is unacceptable, and will he commit to impressing upon GWR the economic, social and environmental need for them to prioritise improvements to their service?

Response:

I agree entirely that the Severn Beach Line service has been poor and adversely affected by the introduction of the new rolling stock. I also have reservations about the timetable, which means no trains run between peak hours.

Whilst I welcome the upgrade to the train fleet serving the West of England area, which will provide much needed additional capacity, I am disappointed that GWR has experienced unexpected problems in their operation on the Severn Beach Line.

We have been liaising with GWR to understand what the key issues are and how they can be resolved. I am told that there are a number of factors such as driver training, driver shortages and the tight turn-around time for trains on the Severn Beach Line and we are pressing GWR to resolve these issues. GWR tell us they expect services to improve in the new year.

The line creates an important cross-city rail link which communities rely on so it is crucial that GWR resolve these issues so that passenger confidence in the line can be restored.

We are in discussions with the Secretary of State for Transport on reopening Bristol's suburban rail network and I was delighted to see we were listed in the DfT's new rail strategy. A suburban rail network, along with a mass transit system, would substantially impact on our sustainable transport ability.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Olly Mead

Subject: Planning

1. Bristol City Council's planning department are a great team of people who do a fine job on a tight budget. Other local authorities currently offer a planning plus service – which charges applicants more for a dedicated service. Has the Mayor considered this as an option and resource for ensuring a more effective planning department?

Response:

I agree that our planning colleagues provide a valuable service and will continue to play a key role in delivering the Council's objectives, especially the delivery of 2,000 homes (800 affordable) per year by 2020. In fact, the planning service re-launched its pre-application service at the end of 2016 and this included a Premium service option where developers can pay an additional fee for a dedicated service.

This applies to major developments and requires a Planning Performance Agreement to be entered into, which is an agreed programme of activity relating to that development. Whilst this provides the planning service with additional resource to provide a dedicated service, it is important to note that this is not a guarantee of approval and does not bypass important stages such as community involvement.

I am aware that my colleague Cllr Beech, is already looking at ways of providing additional premium services where developers are willing to cover the cost of doing so.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Tom Brook

Subject: Music Venues

1. The Mayor may be aware of the recent press surrounding threats to music and nightlife venues due to noise complaints from residents of new housing developments nearby, even when the venues pre-date the developments.

Does the Mayor agree that we should be striking a balance between supporting our city's cultural venues and promoting new housing, and does he support the introduction of an agent of change principle, which means that those responsible for change (e.g. new developments) are responsible for managing its impact? If so, will he voice his support to the upcoming backbench bill on the subject in parliament, sponsored by Kerry McCarthy, and make appropriate representations to ministers?

Response:

I am aware of the recent cases involving some of our cultural venues and, whilst I understand that each of the cases had its own specific circumstances, I am keen to see our cultural venues thrive at the same time as providing homes in our city centre. I understand that our existing policies help us to strike that balance when looking at new housing proposals but the thinking on this issue has developed since those policies were adopted and I believe that the 'agent of change' principle is one that we should be adopting. I will be supporting Kerry McCarthy's appeal and acknowledge the work she undertaking to protect our music venues. We shouldn't disregard that the loss of a number of music venues in the UK has been on the basis of venue owners maximising their asset.

Also, my Labour colleague, the Mayor of London, is now consulting on the New London Plan which includes draft policies on both the agent of change principle and also greater protection for cultural facilities and venues. The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning & City Design and the Local Plan Working Group is exploring how similar policies could work for Bristol, so that we can give well-run cultural venues greater security whilst we deliver the homes that the Bristol needs.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Fabian Breckels

Subject: Road safety in St George Troopers Hill

1. Road safety is a crucial issue in my ward of St George Troopers Hill and for all of my constituents. Improvements required include a crossing refuge on Bryant's Hill, traffic calming on Troopers Hill Road, a raised crossing/traffic calming speed table at the start of Conham Road, and dropped kerbs at the junction of Preddy's Lane and Dundridge Lane.

Please can the Mayor ensure that, after delays due to funding and contractor availability, these works proceed as planned in the Spring of next year?

Response:

- The Bryant's Hill crossing and the dropped kerbs at the Preddy's Lane junction have been issued to the contractor.
- The traffic calming on Troopers Hill Road has been subjected to a design review following objections raised during statutory consultation. The revisions have been approved and the works will shortly be issued to the contractor at which point potential start dates will be discussed.
- Whilst these are anticipated to be installed during spring, this is dependent on the usual caveats of the impact of the weather and unforeseen circumstances across the contractors full programme.
- The Conham Road scheme was not considered feasible on road safety grounds and is no longer deliverable within the available budget. Resolving the concerns about the 'Conham Gap' remains a priority and officers are now looking at how appropriate improvements along the whole section from Hanham Lock to Feeder Road could be funded.



Member Forum
12 December 2017
Statements from councillors



Procedural note:

STATEMENTS FROM COUNCILLORS:

- A maximum of 1 minute shall be allowed for the presentation of each statement (subject to overall time constraints). One statement on one subject per member is permitted
- There shall be no debate on the statements and the Lord Mayor shall refer them to the Mayor for information/consideration.
- Statements will be dealt with in the order of receipt (subject to time).



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

- CS 01 - Cllr Harriet Bradley – Adult social care
- CS 02 - Cllr Fabian Breckels – Fund essential road safety improvements on Conham Road.
- CS 03 - Cllr Jo Sergeant – Avonmouth – proposed Incinerator Bottom Ash processing operation
- CS 04 - Cllrs Stephen Clarke and Martin Fodor - We should formally introduce an 'Agent of Change' policy into the Local Plan.
- CS 05 - Cllr Charlie Bolton – Expansion of Bristol International Airport and climate change
- CS 06 - Cllr Jerome Thomas – Let's build Bristol's Arena in Bristol
- CS 07 - Cllr Carla Denyer – Chinese investment in Bristol



STATEMENT CS 01

Councillors may be aware that a recent Which report stated that Bristol had one of the worst care home records in the country: the report stated that of the 2,527 beds available in the area 45% of them were rated as 'requiring improvement' or 'inadequate'. This followed a Joseph Rowntree report of a rise in pensioner poverty and homelessness. All this indicates the problems which constitute an ever increasing crisis in social care, in the context of austerity policies on local government funding which fail to confront the demography of an ageing population

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many old people with disability issues would prefer to stay in their own homes, so I welcome Councillor Holland's policy to shift resources from residential care to home care, to bring us in line with other comparable cities. However, whatever kind of care is offered, it is quality rather than quantity which is important.

Councillor Kirk and myself have been engaging with the Council's lay assessor team which visits care homes which have been judged inadequate in order to survey the quality of the care provided. Many of the problems relate to high levels of staff turnover, lack of activities to engage the residents and bleak environments. The stress of the lay assessors' project is not on the physical and administrative aspects of provision but on the quality of life experienced by the residents, in terms of relationships and activities. A recent visit to the top-rated Deerhurst Care Home was inspirational. It showed what can be achieved by creative and compassionate management which had succeeded in promoting an atmosphere of homeliness marked by the hum of activity and engagement. In such circumstances staff become committed and tend to be long-serving.

Many of our old people have worked and paid taxes all their lives. They deserve better than what many of them are getting. I would like to urge Councillors and Officers to work to develop guidelines for care homes which will steer them to providing a better environment for residents and care staff alike. Recent policies of privatisation have further devalued the already ill-rewarded work of elder care. There is a desperate need for well trained and properly rewarded employment in this area if we are to rise to the challenges posed by the ageing population.

Councillor Harriet Bradley

STATEMENT CS 02

Fund Essential Road Safety Improvements on Conham Road.

Constituents have been approaching me for years to address the dangerous crossing on Conham Road. Where the cycle and footpath ends you literally cannot see where to cross the road to get to the path on the other side. Oncoming vehicles can't see anyone trying to cross the road there either. It's not called Suicide Corner for nothing. I know from using it myself you take your life in your hands as you get across as fast as possible.

There were plans for a new cycle path beside Conham Road, along the land to the north of the road. This would have included raised crossings at Suicide Corner and just before Lower Conham Vale, providing access to Conham River Park. The cycle path was postponed because of our financial situation as a city, which is fair enough, but Suicide Corner is so dangerous it cannot be left on the back burner.

I met with officers last year to discuss our plans to try to identify an affordable solution to the issue of the crossing of Conham Road from the riverside path to the pavement on the west side. The plan I and my constituents wanted was a crossing on a raised speed table, this would act as traffic calming and provide a safer and more visible place to cross. If and when the cycle path was put in then one of the crossings to it would already be in place. However, yet again I'm finding there are certain officers who are finding obstacles to put in the way. The excuse this time is the lack of lighting at this location and the I quote "associated road safety issues". So there are road safety issues preventing us from carrying out essential works required to provide road safety in my ward. Nice. I'm now told the project is no longer deliverable within the budget that had been identified. I don't recall lighting being raised when the crossing was planned as part of the proposed cycle path. Besides, if that is an issue, why fail to implement traffic calming to slow traffic down and make collisions with pedestrians less likely? Speed tables usually have white arrows on them which will show up in your headlights if you are driving, so you'll still know you have to slow down. Has one of my constituents got to be killed or seriously injured before anything is done?

I am told that the 'Conham Gap' remains a priority. However officers now cannot give me a timescale for when anything will be done. I'm told they are looking at funding options but I'm stuck with a desperately needed road safety matter in my ward effectively kicked into the long grass.

Funding needs to be found and found urgently, before someone is killed. Costs will only increase so the sooner this is done the cheaper it will be. Our Mayor has often challenged us to come up with something else to cut if we want something funded or saved. Fair enough. Here is my suggestion. Senior staff posts have cost the Council £6,000,000 a year. The planned restructure will save £750,000 which is to be welcomed but that's dwarfed by proposed cuts to valued services like parks and libraries. So my suggestion is we cut the senior staff budget by at least a third and use some of the money saved on urgent safety improvements instead.

Cllr Fabian Breckels, Labour/Co-operative Party, St George Troopers Hill

STATEMENT CS 03

Avonmouth – proposed Incinerator Bottom Ash processing operation

I would like to express my concern about the possibility of a permit being granted to the Day Group for processing incinerator bottom ash (IBA) in Avonmouth, a very short distance away from people's homes.

I understand that the Environment Agency (EA) is minded to grant a permit, after negotiations (about which the public was unaware) over additional conditions. The Public Inquiry held last week the week before went ahead, despite this last minute agreement between the two parties.

Although the decision still lies with the Inspector, who presided over the Inquiry, it seems less likely that it will go against Day Group.

Whilst we may have to accept the decision, it is important, that Bristol City Council works closely with the EA to ensure that Day Group adheres to these conditions, and acts swiftly over local concerns about safety. I hope that the Mayor will support this and it will not merely be lip service.

Councillor Jo Sergeant

STATEMENT CS 04

Statement by Councillors Stephen Clarke and Martin Fodor:

We should formally introduce an ‘Agent of Change’ Policy into the Local Plan.

We sit on DCA and DCB committees and there have been a number of recent occasions where concerns have been raised about new residential developments impacting on existing leisure outlets and businesses. The two that come to mind are the worries about the continuation of the Thekla as a music venue and the existing shipbuilding activity next to the proposed McArthurs Warehouse apartments adjacent to the SS Great Britain. The earlier development next to the Fleece is still current as it just completed construction.

In all these cases, the concern is that new apartments will be purchased or rented by people who then try to stop the existing potentially noisy operations which are happening next door. This is unacceptable in our view. We live in a City where music and existing industrial uses (often of a heritage nature as in the shipbuilding) are integral to the fabric of our vibrant urban space. We do not want to end up with a monolithic fabric of residential and retail.

To deal with this issue the Mayor of London has proposed a planning principle in the London Plan called ‘The Agent of Change Rule’. It says:

‘Boroughs should ensure that planning decisions reflect the Agent of Change principle and take account of existing noise-generating uses in a sensitive manner when new development, particularly residential is proposed nearby...Boroughs should refuse development proposals that have not clearly demonstrated how noise impacts will be mitigated and managed.’

It continues:

‘Development should be designed to ensure that established noise generating venues remain viable and can continue or grow without unreasonable restrictions being placed on them’

At the moment we have no such principle in our planning policy documents. We therefore propose that we adopt a similar policy to the London one and we would ask that the Mayor promotes it as an important part of our Local Plan.

STATEMENT CS 05

Statement by Councillor Charlie Bolton: Expansion of Bristol International Airport and climate change

I remember submitting two motions regarding airport expansion which were considered by Bristol City Full Council meetings in the years 2006 to 2010.

I note with concern the current proposals by Bristol International Airport – as part of its consultation – to expand its airport from handling a current figure of around 8 million passengers to a possible 20 million.

While I welcome the fact that Bristol International Airport is committed to being carbon-neutral by 2030, I note that this specifically excludes emissions from flights, and therefore totally misses the point.

Air travel remains the most climate-damaging form of travel, and significant expansion of air travel will therefore have a significant climate impact. Not only that, such an increase in the number of flights would lead to an enormous growth in the number of journeys to get to the airport – a fact which in itself would contribute to significant ongoing issues around congestion, pollution and infrastructure.

I struggle to see how this fits in with the commitment – in Bristol – to be carbon-neutral by 2050, and the Climate Change Act which requires an 80% cut in emissions across the UK. Or indeed, the Joint Spatial Plan – which includes North Somerset and the geographical area covered by the airport and contains an explicit commitment to making a 50% cut in emissions by 2036.

I therefore urge the Mayor to take all possible measures to address the issues raised by this potential expansion and to ensure the city and city region meet their environmental commitments.

STATEMENT CS 06

Statement by Bristol Green Councillor Jerome Thomas: Let's Build Bristol's Arena in Bristol

On behalf of Bristol's Greens I'd like to register our concern about the delays getting started on Bristol's proposed arena and now the exploration of a site in South Gloucestershire on Filton airfield as a possible alternative venue.

We appreciate the Mayor's concerns and efforts to get the best possible arena deal for Bristol. However, it seems there is now a fixed price bid of under £120 million from Buckingham Group to build an arena on Arena Island next to Bristol Temple Meads station. As a result the city's exposure to cost overruns will be minimised. Buckingham Group have solid experience of developments on this kind and so we can have a good level of confidence that the city can get the arena it wants at a price that is manageable.

Bristol is the only one of the UK's Core Cities to have no city centre arena. Major arena and sporting venues elsewhere exist in city centres with limited parking. Whether it's the Glasgow Arena, the Manchester Arena or even the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, these are all centre of city locations with good public transport links and minimal parking provision. Detailed discussions about the level of parking provision for the Bristol arena should not distract us from getting the right location for the arena in the first place.

An arena in the centre of our city with great transport links will provide people in Bristol and the surrounding regions with the opportunity to see national acts that currently pass us by. Siting the arena on Arena Island is a wonderful opportunity to regenerate and open up this part of the city, providing employment opportunities for people living in walking distance of the site in Ashley, Easton, Lawrence Hill, Brislington East, Brislington West, Windmill Hill, Central and other neighbouring city wards. It will also strengthen the economic vitality of our city centre retailers and other service businesses and allow us to grow the essential revenue the city receives from its business rates. These are some of the reasons this site was selected in the first place.

A Bristol arena in South Gloucestershire would require a significant amount of parking to service it, in an area that already suffers from severe congestion and traffic jams on a daily basis. Being located some distance from the centre of Bristol it would provide little additional benefit to arena guests nor added value to businesses in the city.

While we recognise that the construction of an arena is expensive, particularly in times of austerity, we have already spent over £10 million on the development of this site and any alternative site could be significantly more expensive. As well as the guaranteed revenue from the arena operator over a ten year period of over £30 million, we also note that good property investment decisions by the city and potential windfall property gains could result in capital gains to the city in excess of £25 million. These capital gains could further offset the cost to the city of the proposed development.

Approving and starting work on the Bristol Arena on Arena Island in January 2018 would be exactly the kind of decisive action that City hopes for from its elected Mayor. By the time the Global Parliament of Mayors comes to Bristol next year, construction of the arena would be in full flow; a practical demonstration that Bristol's elected mayors can deliver for the city.

STATEMENT CS 07

Statement by Bristol Green Councillor Carla Denyer: Chinese investment in Bristol

I note with concern the brochure issued to promote our Mayor's visit to China seeking investment. The Chinese state has a well-documented disregard for human rights, freedom of speech and religious tolerance. Any co-investment with Chinese banks, which are deeply embedded in the state and Communist Party, must be carefully looked at to ensure it doesn't violate the Council's ethical investment policy.

Moreover it is alarming that the Mayor, whose mission is to tackle the City's growing affordability and homelessness crises, is touting Council-owned land for foreign investment into private sector housing. A brochure which boasts of "significant price inflation", with house price growth just behind that of London's, does little to address concerns that any housing built will help ordinary Bristolians (let alone those most in need) by delivering high levels of social or even affordable housing that the city is in need of. I hope the Mayor can address these concerns and recognise that they come from a place of real unease about the future shape of our city and the wellbeing of its residents