

Strategy and Resources Policy Committee

16 September 2024

Public Forum – Questions



Public forum questions have been received as listed below (full details are set out on the subsequent pages):

Q1. Joanna Booth: The future of the Bottle Yard studios

Q2. Joanna Booth: The future of the Bottle Yard studios

Q3. Dan Ackroyd: Data retention policy

Q4. Dan Ackroyd: ICO enforcement notice

Q5. Joanna Booth: Our Families Transformation Programme

Q6. Jen Smith: Our Families Transformation Programme

Note: there are no public forum statements for this meeting.



1. QUESTION FROM JOANNA BOOTH

You have published a report on selling the Bottleyard without mentioning how much we pay for it each year and how much we profit from it. Can you please publish the costs and revenue from the Bottleyard?

Response:

The costs and revenue information is commercially sensitive and publication at this stage would prejudice discussions with potential investors should the recommendations be accepted by the committee.

2. QUESTION FROM JOANNA BOOTH

Why is the public consultation on the Bottleyard hidden? I don't see how there can be any justification in asking people for their views and then hiding them from the public.

Response:

The Access to Information Procedure Rules reflect the legal grounds on which information may be considered as confidential or exempt. In this case, the exempt information is considered to be commercially sensitive as it would prejudice discussions with potential investors should the recommendations be accepted by the committee. The information will therefore only be shared with the committee members to enable them to consider the report proposals and take a decision.

3. QUESTION FROM DAN ACKROYD

In a response to a recent FOI request, BCC denied the request with the following explanation:

"I am writing to advise you that, following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that the information you requested is not held by Bristol City Council.

The Mayor's inbox and communications were shut down upon him leaving office.

Please quote the reference number 50116375 in any future communications."

If the email and other communications of the ex-Mayor been deleted, how is that compatible with the council's data retention policy, and the relevant record keeping laws?

Response:

Information that is required to be kept has been done so in line with relevant retention requirements.

4. QUESTION FROM DAN ACKROYD

Earlier this year BCC received an enforcement notice from the ICO, after the ICO found that BCC was in breach of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

It appears that BCC has chosen to appeal this enforcement notice.

I have two questions on this matter:

- i. Who is responsible for choosing to appeal the enforcement notice?
- ii. What are the grounds that the appeal is based on?

Response:

This question relates to an ongoing appeal, therefore it is not appropriate to comment.

5. QUESTION FROM JOANNA BOOTH

In the Transformation paper, it says that 'Our Families Programme is reporting in exception against the commitment to deliver Home to School Travel (HTST) savings to rapidly increasing demand and pressure on the service'.

Note that this should state **increasing 'need'** not demand, and that the service was obviously not planned well enough to account for rising need. The council paid PeopleToo in 2019 for a report on HSTS. This has clearly failed.

In 2023, the council paid another external consultant -- PWC -- £440k to deliver another report on HSTS. It has clearly failed if the council can't pay for the needs of its children.

The council keeps spending millions with consultants like PWC (who were also paid £700k for work on EHCPs) while children's services keep seeing cuts, and we can't even see what they recommend. My question is: When will the report be made publicly available?

Response:

There is currently no intention to publish the report as the decision on HTST has been taken and implemented.

6. QUESTION FROM JEN SMITH

Our Families Programme Agenda Item 7

The report says: 'As such, the Our Families Programme is reporting in exception against the commitment to delivery Home to School Travel (HTST) savings due to rapidly increasing demand and pressure on the service. It is proposed to re-profile HTST savings over coming years and identify alternative mitigations in order to bridge the savings gap for 24/25.'

PWC were paid £444,000.00 by Bristol City Council in August 2023 under a contract for Home To School Travel Service Redesign.

Bristol residents are frequently given the message from the council that Send is expensive and will make the council go bankrupt. But what mitigations is the committee taking to avoid ongoing reliance on expensive external consultants?

Can this report be made available?

Response:

There is currently no intention to publish the report as the decision on HTST has been taken and implemented.