

# Member Forum

## 17 January 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.



## **LABOUR QUESTION 1**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Gill Kirk, Lockleaze ward**

**Subject: New apprenticeship levy**

This month the LGA have raised concerns that small council-run schools will be expected to pay new apprenticeship levy whereas similar non-local authority schools will be exempt.

This levy is being introduced by the government in April this year and will require all businesses, including schools with a wage bill over 3 million a year, to contribute 0.5% of their wage bill to fund new apprenticeships. This relates to a technicality whereby academy or faith schools who employ their own staff and have a wage bill under 3m, will be exempt from the levy, whilst small schools with similar wage bills run by local authorities will be penalized because their staff are employed by the local authority and therefore contribute to the overall Council wage bill, exceeding the threshold of 3 million. This creates an unfair situation, in which council run schools would in effect be forced to use scarce resources to pay the levy, whilst academies and faith schools of similar size avoid it and can keep their resources to invest in their children's education.

At a time when school funding has been drastically reduced, the new apprenticeship levy could push some school budgets beyond breaking point.

1. Could the Mayor tell us how many Bristol schools will be affected by this ruling?
2. Will the Mayor support the LGA in making the case to the Secretary for Education that all schools with a wage bill of less than 3 million should be exempt from paying the levy, to avoid this disparity with academies and faith schools, and to ensure children do not lose out on essential educational resources that would affect standards in the long run?

## **REPLY:**

1. 97 Local Authority maintained schools will be part of this process. 13 Voluntary Aided schools will not meet the threshold as they employ their own staff.

Other schools, such as academies or trust schools will be liable to pay the apprenticeship levy directly if their pay bill is over £3m. 39 schools are part of Multi-Academy Trusts and 8 single Secondary academies and 1 secondary trust school will incur this levy. We estimate around 23 Primary single academies would not meet the £3m threshold

2. Yes, I am happy to support the LGA and encourage the other core cities to do the same.



**CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 1**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Mark Weston, Henbury & Brentry ward**

**Subject: Bristol Arena**

1. What contingency planning is there in place to protect local taxpayers from exposure to such a serious financial risk?
2. At what point will the 12,000-seat indoor arena break-even or make a profit?

**REPLY:**

1. I think we have shown in our approach with the previous contractor that we are extremely serious about controlling costs on the project. We are setting in place a number of measures to ensure we do not find ourselves in the same position in the future. It is worth noting that the building contract and target cost need to be approved by cabinet before any work can start on site.
2. Current projections are that it will be near the end of the 25 year lease. The break-even date does vary according to the cost of borrowing.



## GREEN QUESTION 1

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Martin Fodor, Redland ward**  
**Subject: Making Avon Pension Fund fossil free**

In December 2015 Bristol City Council passed a motion to make Avon Pension Fund fossil fuel free [https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/Data/Full%20Council/201512151800/Agenda/1215\\_mins.pdf](https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/Data/Full%20Council/201512151800/Agenda/1215_mins.pdf) and to report on the implications for the pensions. This was supported by Bristol Unison, whose current and retired members are primary beneficiaries of the pensions. The motion called for both divestment from fossil fuels and diversification into useful energy technologies, including renewable energy, energy efficiency, and storage which are well represented in the skills that are active in the Bristol Environmental Technology sector.

Billions of funds worldwide are now being divested from fossil fuels (around **700 institutions in 76 countries, worth more than \$5 trillion** have made commitments to divest, which has doubled in size in around 15 months since this motion was first submitted), and increasingly local authorities, such as LBs of Waltham Forest and Southwark, who have combined funds of around £2bn. A quarter of universities are now committed to moving their assets into other sectors, too.

Progress with divestment is advocated by many global authorities concerned about climate change and the likelihood of 'stranded assets' which will lose value. Many capital cities have already acted: eg Paris, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Berlin and Oslo.

Increasingly divestment and diversification are seen as part of long term modern, progressive investment strategies that are in the interests of both investors and communities like ours. This is consistent with your call for "Good Growth." A five year timetable to reinvest funds, as called for in the motion, is common. While the APF is undergoing changes the same principles and priorities apply to the investments our employees have.

The resolution passed says:

*This Council therefore resolves to ask the Mayor to write to the Avon Pension Fund calling for it to:*

- 1. Request a position statement on the potential impact divesting from fossil fuel assets will have on the Avon Pension Fund and to asked the Avon Pension Fund to report on the scale of its investments in fossil fuels, giving reference to level and scale of the such investments and the impact divesting will have on the future liability profile of the fund.*
- 2. Work with the Council's representative on the Avon Pension Fund to maintain a strong position against further investment in fossil fuels and to provide an annual report evaluating of the viability and risk of investing in any extractive industry, including metal and mineral mining, as well as fossil fuels.*
- 3. Work with Trade Union representatives and the workforce to involve them in divestment and diversification plans and to provide them with a full comprehensive assessment of the impact of divesting from fossil fuel assets could have on their pensions.*

Can the Mayor therefore report back on progress with the report and work with the unions and explain what steps can be taken next to implement a divestment and diversification strategy by the fund during his term?



**REPLY:**

- In March 2016 former Mayor Ferguson wrote to the Avon Pension Fund outlining the motion passed by the City Council in December 2015. The funds response pointed out that the Pension Fund has had a Responsible Investing Policy since 2012.
- I understand this was fully reviewed and updated during 2016. In the updated Policy the Fund has identified climate change as a potential financial risk, and intends to actively examine measures for reducing carbon exposure without negatively impacting on its financial objectives.
- I must emphasise that governance of the pension fund is outside the powers of the Mayor. However I will work with the Council's nominated representative and the unions to ensure all efforts are made to ensure the impact assessment is undertaken, and, subject to the outcome of that evaluation, we are able to move forward on ensuring diversification is key to future investment strategies.



## **LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 1**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Anthony Negus, Cotham ward**

**Subject: Scrutiny support and access to documentation**

When the mayoral system was first proposed the overriding recommendation was that Overview and Scrutiny functions would need to be reinforced as a crucial check to the system and to ensure new thinking. Under the previous Mayor these functions were reduced and I started a process with all Commission Chairs to seek improvements and efficiencies. We now learn that the support team is to be much reduced and that the essential work of the Commissions will be considerably reduced and probably lost.

1. What assurances will the Mayor give for a continuing democratic scrutiny and informed contribution from councillors for the improvement of our City?

As a result of a number of cases where the public were denied any information on the content of exempt documentation I have maintained a campaign to ensure maximum comprehension of what is being done in the public's name while maintaining confidentiality of essential information. This has been accepted by the previous Mayor and yourself and I have had meetings with a Senior Officer to establish a revised protocol and methodology to ensure this is delivered.

2. Does the Mayor support the ejection of press, public and Councillors to agree an exempt report at Cabinet not a word of which, nor even a summary, was available to Bristol citizens on whose behalf he acts, acting in contradiction to his own words and those of Senior Officers?

## **REPLY:**

- I have previously stated that I am fully committed to scrutiny and this has not changed. I have launched my new decision pathway. This places scrutiny engagement as early as possible in the development of policy. I have also put a new criteria within the process to engage with ward councillors when developing policy or projects within specific areas of the city.
- I am equally committed to transparency and trying to increase public engagement in the democratic process. In rare circumstances however; for example when dealing with multi-million pound contracts; we must ensure we do not jeopardise council tax payer's money and we carefully consider our legal position balancing the need for transparency with achieving the best outcome for the city. Following advice from the monitoring officer it was concluded that last week the risk was such that it did warrant the need to hold this in exempt session.



## **LABOUR QUESTION 2**

### **Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Tom Brook, Bishopston & Ashley Down ward Subject: Public Rights of Way and Greens Committee**

Last month the Public Rights of Way and Greens Committee saw a decision made regarding a Town and Village Green application. In this meeting a Councillor was allowed to not only vote on the application but to chair the meeting despite the application being about his ward, and despite alleged links to the applicant, as reported in the local press.

The decision has deprived a school of its playing field, having a significant impact on the students' health and wellbeing, and flying in the face of our aspiration to increase the sport and exercise participation of Bristol's young people.

This obvious conflict of interest has brought elected members, and the Council as a whole, into disrepute.

1. I understand that this situation is apparently allowable within the current rules. Does the Cabinet Member for Place agree with me that this is an unacceptable state of affairs?
2. If so, will the Cabinet member commit to adding this issue to the Constitutional Working Group's remit to avoid this unfortunate occurrence from happening again?

## **REPLY:**

- The public rights of way is a non-executive matter, and it is not appropriate to direct these questions to the cabinet.
- This particular issue also relate to the Code of Conduct for Councillors.
- Please note that the constitutional working group is already due to specifically review the code of conduct for councillors so this matter can be picked up as part of that review.



## **CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 2**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr John Goulandris, Stoke Bishop ward**

**Subject: Prince Street bridge**

1. Full Council's support of the re-opening of the Prince Street Bridge to cars is very welcome, especially to local residents and the business community. Can the Mayor tell me the latest date of its re-opening?
2. This project has - like many others undertaken by Bristol City Council - not gone according to schedule. Will a review be undertaken, when the repairs are completed, to see what lessons senior officers can learn so that future project management is better executed?

## **REPLY:**

1. The refurbishment and strengthening programme of works to the bridge is anticipated to be substantially completed in April 2017 when the bridge will be reopened for use.
2. The extent of refurbishment works to Prince Street Bridge increased significantly as the project progressed and the bridge was fully taken apart. This is unfortunately the nature of working on old historic listed structures, rather than a matter of project management. Cllr Mark Bradshaw visited the site and met contractors last week and has confirmed the extent of the repair works required. As with all projects of this type and complexity officers will undertake a review to understand what lessons can be learned.





## GREEN QUESTION 2

Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Martin Fodor, Redland ward

Subject: European Green Capital report

In the recently published report the Mayor commissioned from Steven Bundred and the LGA, the conclusion (first para) says:

*“It was clear to me at an early stage that these controversies caused some damage to relationships which now needs to be repaired if this this has not already been done. It has become increasingly less clear to me why such damage should have occurred in the first place. “*

In light of his comment, can you confirm what steps you are taking to repair damage to relationships that may be important in the ongoing benefits and legacy he confirms are coming to the city from Bristol's year as European Green Capital?

### REPLY:

- My commitment was to commission and publish an independent report. I have done so.
- The relationships at the heart of the Bristol Green Capital are of course important to the City, and need to be continued and reinforced through close partnership working.
- Dr Bundred said that a scaling up for the need for money “had significant consequences. Most notably it meant that the contents of the programme were mainly driven by the willingness of others to fund specific projects from within the menu of possibilities offered to them, rather than an objective assessment of the needs of the city.”
- Dr Bundred went on to say in his conclusion that: “The differences of view that gave rise to controversy were no more than that. They did not represent opposing values or conflicting motivations but differences of emphasis and perspective.”
- It is therefore my belief that a broader collection of perspectives need to be included in the decision making and governance of the city, so that the Legacy of the Green Capital Year can be of one for all of Bristol to benefit from.



## **LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 2**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Gary Hopkins, Knowle ward**

**Subject: Budget – parks improvements**

We are all now aware that the claimed in year shortfall on budget has been hugely reduced by the "surprise" discovery of extra collections in both Council Tax and Business Rates that Lib Dems predicted a year ago.

1. Given the above can the Mayor give a moral justification for the appropriation of funds generated by the sale of open land in Knowle and clearly promised for local parks improvements?

2. Can the Mayor please explain how it actually saves money to have Parks and Neighbourhoods staff being paid salaries but being prevented from getting on with useful needed work?

### **REPLY:**

1. The council has frozen all non-essential work that requires council funding, including works requiring capital funding that was not contractually committed prior to the spending freeze. Unless actual expenditure was contractually committed prior to the freeze works will not go ahead. Funding that is entirely external such as s106 and funding from external bodies can still go ahead as long as it does not affect the general fund in any way. The capital receipt generated from Salcombe Road does not fit these criteria for being released for spend and therefore is part of the spending freeze.
2. The parks and neighbourhoods staff have a large suite of work to deliver, funded by s106, CIL as well as community capacity building work. They are working hard delivering work that does not require expenditure from the general fund.



### **LABOUR QUESTION 3**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Harriet Bradley, Brislington West ward**

**Subject: Homelessness in Bristol**

The problem of increasing homelessness in Bristol must be a concern for all councillors. It was revealed that in 2016 the city had the highest rent rises after London. While it is gratifying that developers seem to be responding better to the requirement for affordable housing on new sites, there are concerns about how 'affordable' such properties are when they are tied in to market values and whether they cater for the needs of people struggling on low incomes. Many people in my generation experienced the security and stability of growing up on council-owned estates and remember their homes with fondness. Is there any hope of expanding Bristol's stock of social housing so that that experience can be replicated for some of our less affluent families?

### **REPLY:**

- As you know from our manifesto commitment I fully plan to increase the number of new homes – both market and affordable – over my term as Mayor. The intention is that by 2020 the city as a whole will be building 2000 homes each year, of which 800 will be affordable.
- There has been a 'root and branch' review of how housing delivery is working in the city, and I am initiating the development of a new housing delivery team in the council and will bring forward a housing delivery plan for approval by Cabinet in March.
- The new plan has been costed and I intend including funding within the budget to be set by Council in February. In addition work on a business case for a local housing company is nearing completion, which will enable the council to be a developer of new homes, outside the housing revenue account, both market and affordable.
- We've identified sites for 200 new council homes including the development at Ashton and housing associations are developing social housing on our land as well as affordable housing on private developments.



### **CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 3**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Lesley Alexander, Frome Vale ward**

**Subject: St Paul's carnival**

1. Can the Mayor confirm whether or not the Authority will be funding this festival in 2017 or 2018?
2. If so, can you explain why this event and organisation is not being treated in exactly the same way as most other key arts bodies which are seeing their grant funding withdrawn?

### **REPLY:**

- Cabinet agreed in December to reallocate the Key Arts Provider funding which was awarded to St Pauls Carnival Ltd in 2014 for 2015-18 to the new organisation set up to take Carnival forward St Pauls Carnival (Bristol) CIC.
- This funding was ring-fenced for the delivery of carnival when the funding was withheld in Nov 2015. We have agreed that the new organisation will receive the remaining KAP funding ring-fenced which is £50,000 in 2016/17 and £50,000 in 2017/18
- We are hopeful of seeing some form of carnival activity in 2017 but the funding is more focused on the development of a sustainable organisation who can deliver carnival for many years to come.
- St Pauls Carnival (Bristol) CIC, like all of our KAPs, would have to apply for funding from 2018 onwards as part of our normal KAP process.
- We are not proposing any cuts to any of the KAP before this point but have proposed that the KAP pot will be 20% smaller in 2018.
- This will be a competitive process in which St Pauls Carnival (Bristol) CIC will be treated the same as all other arts organisation applying.



### GREEN QUESTION 3

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Charlie Bolton, Southville ward**  
**Subject: West of England Transport Plan**

I have submitted the following statement to the West of England transport board:

*"The 'West of England Joint Transport Study Emerging Transport Vision' states in table 4.1 (page 35) that:*

*In 2011*

- *529,000 trips*
- *60% of journeys by car/van driver (317,400 trips)*
- *5% of journeys by car/van passenger (26,450 trips)*
- *Total trips 343,850 8,33%*

*In 2036*

- *673,000 trips*
- *46% of journeys by car/van driver (309,580 trips)*
- *5% of journeys by car/van passenger (33,650 trips)*
- *Total trips 343,230 10.87%*

1. *Can you confirm these figures are accurate ie in a 20 year period there will be just 620 fewer trips by car/van either as a driver or passenger?*
2. *Is the West of England partnership committed to making climate change reductions for vehicle emissions?*
3. *If so, what targets is it committed to, in particular what target should it be achieving by 2036?*
4. *If it is not committed to any targets, why not?*
5. *Do you think these figures come close to meeting any targets?*
6. *Is there a plan to meet climate change targets, or has the West of England effectively just given up on climate mitigation?"*

The thrust of the question is that the ambition of the transport plan in terms of meeting climate targets is woefully unambitious.

Do you agree and if so, how would you make it sufficiently ambitious?

### REPLY:

- I agree that we need to be more ambitious and the Joint Transport Study.
- The figures are study forecasts as set out in the 'Emerging Transport Vision' topic paper which supported the recent consultation on the Joint Transport Study.
- The four West of England councils are clearly committed to achieving significant reductions in carbon emissions from the transport sector as indicated by the existing target up to 2020 set out in the Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP).



- The final report to the Joint Transport Study, to be produced from Spring 2017, is expected to include a forecast of the further reduction in carbon emissions by 2036, as a result of the schemes and packages in the transport vision as well as expected further improvements to vehicle emissions and fuel economy.
- The recommendations in the final report including such forecasts will then be considered for inclusion in an updated JLTP for completion by the end of 2017, and will help inform updated targets in the JLTP including a carbon emissions target.



### **LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 3**

#### **Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Mark Wright, Hotwells & Harbourside ward**

#### **Subject: Plans for power boat racing in the harbour**

The Mayor has indicated he wants to see power-boat racing back in Bristol Harbour, as it was in the 1980s. The harbour has changed dramatically since back then, as dozens of residents live in houseboats and dozens of businesses work on the water; all of who would have to be removed from the racing course for about a week.

1. What planning has been done on the feasibility of this event; who has done it; and when will they be speaking to the residents of houseboats, and the business based on the water, who will be turfed out of their homes for a week if it happens?

2. If the Mayor is intent on bringing this event to Bristol, has he considered holding it in the Avon Gorge (at high tide), where no house-boats would need to be evicted, no business would be disrupted, and any crashes into the mud would be unlikely to be fatal?

#### **REPLY:**

- The company proposing to bring this event to Bristol is BRM Europe which was established in 2015 by two former F1 Powerboat Racing Champions both of whom have experience in Inshore Powerboat Racing. Their aim is to promote the sport of Powerboat Racing in the UK and establish new race venues for the future of the sport.
- In September, October and November 2016 BRM held various meetings with the Mayor and officers from his team and the Harbourmaster to discuss the feasibility of a powerboat racing event in Bristol.
- BCC events team carried out an initial feasibility report and that cleared the way for organisers to do more detailed feasibility study. BRM would appoint a local event management company to deliver the event under the direction of BRM's management committee which would be subject to all normal council process. The event would need to apply for site permissions and get permission from the Safety Advisor group as well as securing all relevant licenses.
- In terms of safety, the craft used for powerboat racing are very different now to those used in the 1980s – powerboats now have safety cells to protect the drivers. An equivalent comparison would be to Formula 1 racing's health and safety improvements since the 1980s.
- Avon Gorge is not a suitable alternative venue to view the event. The layout of the Harbour would give a far better viewing experience and on a practical level, there is on site power and fencing over much of the site. It is important to note this is a water based event in a harbour that has a surfeit of land based events. It will bring economic benefit to the city without some of the barriers that come with other major events i.e. significant road closures.



## **LABOUR QUESTION 4**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Mike Davies, Ashley ward**

**Subject: Voter identification scheme**

Can the Mayor confirm that Bristol City Council has no intention of taking up the Government's invitation to trial a voter identification scheme in local elections?

### **REPLY:**

- There is a review taking place of the 2016 elections in Bristol along with the electoral procedure.
- I believe it is important to get the right systems in place before the 2020 election of Mayor, PCC, Councillors and MPs we won't make any decisions ahead of the review.
- However the review needs to consider how to maximise inclusion and participation, and the Government's ID scheme may well be a barrier.





#### **CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 4**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Graham Morris, Stockwood ward**

**Subject: Scotland Lane**

1. In light of the continuing flooding problems on this important road route, can the Mayor confirm how the Authority goes about identifying and applying for external funding/central government grants for road repairs?
2. Can the Mayor advise me of the criteria used by officers to determine which projects should be given priority over others?

#### **REPLY:**

1. I suggest you arrange a meeting with the director of transport to discuss.

However, the Transport department has made enquires to the Environment Agency and Department for Transport to enquire whether there are any appropriate funding streams which could be applied to this particular problem. Unfortunately there appear to be no sources of funding at this time which would be available to resolve the issue at this time, but we continue to look for an affordable and deliverable solution.

2. All priorities are considered annually. Priority is given to works that enable the authority to meet its statutory duties under the Highways Act as well as preventative maintenance and schemes that will reduce potential accidents and claims against the authority.



## GREEN QUESTION 4

Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Charlie Bolton, Southville ward

Subject: Portishead line

The West of England strategic leaders board includes an item on MetroWest phase 1. It includes the statement:

*“13. Going forward, an updated scheme capital cost estimate will be reported to the Joint Transport Board at the 17 March 2017 meeting. Given the extent of the additional works needed, the cost estimated is expected to be considerably more than the previous £58m estimate. Discussions are already underway with the Network Rail and the Department for Transport on how additional funding can be identified.”*

Given that MetroWest phase 1 includes the Portishead line, can the Mayor affirm his commitment to the completion of this project?

## REPLY:

- I am committed to MetroWest. As well as the reopening of the Portishead Line to passenger rail services, MetroWest Phase 1 also includes an enhanced half-hourly frequency on the Severn Beach Line and more trains serving Bedminster, Parson Street, Oldfield Park and Keynsham.
- Although the project was estimated to cost around £58m, it is likely that this cost will increase, following consideration of a number of engineering challenges which have been identified through the detailed development of the project. Revised scheme costs will be available in March.
- The City Council has contributed funding to develop this project but it is intended that the costs of delivering the infrastructure for the project will be met by funding allocated through the Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Deal. Opportunities within the rail industry and the Department for Transport will be explored for identifying any additional funding required.
- The Joint Transport Board, on which Cllr Mark Bradshaw represents the Council, received a full detailed briefing last week on the challenges being identified in the Network Rail GRIP process.
- I am committed to working with partners to support the reopening of the Portishead line and the enhanced frequencies that the MetroWest Phase 1 project will deliver. I will support efforts to secure any additional funding required to complete this project. Cllr Bradshaw has been discussing local rail investment with DfT including the need to fund the remodelling of East Bristol Junction which would have a positive impact on MetroWest Phase 1.



#### **LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 4**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Tim Kent, Hengrove & Whitchurch Park ward**

**Subject: Neighbourhood partnerships**

I am sure the Mayor is aware that Neighbourhood Partnerships have had a great deal of success at delivering small local improvements with Councillors and residents working together but there is growing concern that in an attempt to save money all of the good work that has been achieved will be lost. In the Mayor's manifesto it was promised that Neighbourhood Partnerships would be 'reformed and strengthened' 'supporting local decision making'.

1. Can the Mayor assure councillors that Neighbourhood Partnerships will be strengthened and not scrapped?

The freezing of funding for Neighbourhood Partnerships has stopped all the good work that we were planning for our community for the next 4 years: drop curbs, safer roads, investment in local food growing, alley gating, park improvements, new bus stops, support to local charities and improved waste bins. Small things that make a big difference in our community.

2. Can the Mayor now lift the freeze in budgets for Neighbourhood Partnerships and guarantee that the funding they have to deliver projects will remain in the future?

#### **REPLY:**

1. The budget proposals published on 12<sup>th</sup> January contain proposals to reduce the amount of council funding used to support Neighbourhood Partnerships. The funding that remains within the Neighbourhood Management service will be focussed on ensuring that councillors and communities are working together on the things that are most important to their neighbourhoods, but in a way that does not require council funding and is therefore sustainable within the neighbourhoods. This does mean a change from the way things currently operate, and a detailed consultation will take place. The first event for this will be a conference hosted by Locality on 4<sup>th</sup> February which will showcase innovative practice and new ideas.
2. At present, the spending freeze remains in place. The budget proposals that were published on 12<sup>th</sup> January include proposals to remove £450k in total of the devolved budget from the general fund, our financial position does not allow us to guarantee protection of any non-statutory spending.



**LABOUR QUESTION 5****Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Steve Pearce, St George Central ward****Subject: Debt collection**

Can the Cabinet member for finance tell me what assessment has been made of our rent for our commercial properties for the last financial year?

**REPLY:****Rent from BCC's Commercial Investment Portfolio**

| Property type       | Income to date     | Previous Year's Outturn (2015) to P12 |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Retail              | -£2,168,093        | -£2,691,907                           |
| Office              | -£1,467,430        | -£1,335,089                           |
| Industrial          | -£2,687,896        | -£3,752,398                           |
| Misc                | -£1,173,860        | -£1,558,463                           |
| Hotels & Leisure    | -£839,926          | -£1,077,098                           |
| <b>Total income</b> | <b>-£8,337,205</b> | <b>-£10,414,956</b>                   |

- The above table shows the rental income outturn for 2015 at £10.4m.
- Based on the net income received for Period 9 of 2016 at £8.3m, it is anticipated that that the full year income will exceed the total received for 2015.
- The Council's Commercial Investment Portfolio produces a net income to the Council of c. £10.5m per annum, which is a return of slightly under 6% per annum on the total value of the estate. The level of return has recently been assessed by Jones Lang LaSalle and is regarded as strong, particularly in relation to the highly secure, and long-term income that the Council receives from the estate.
- A new strategic plan to drive increased income is being considered.



## **CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 5**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Geoff Gollop, Westbury-on-Trym & Henleaze ward**  
**Subject: Bristol Arena**

1. Taken in conjunction with the controversial overspends on the Arena & Metrobus, does the Mayor agree with me this does nothing to enhance the authority's reputation for poor management of major infrastructure projects?
2. Is the Mayor aware of any other large capital schemes in the pipeline which may be a cause of concern?

## **REPLY:**

1. Both the Arena and MetroBus have created concerns that at the very least have generated poor perception. There is also no doubt that the arena has taken significant period of time before we have reached the construction phase but I am determined that we will now progress. Our reputation has been enhanced by taking the bold decision not to progress with BYUK.

But it's worth noting We have successfully delivered a number of big projects in the city- for example, four secondary schools via PFI, four more via Building Schools for the Future, Colston Hall phase 1, and the Hengrove Leisure Centre.

2. Delivering large capital projects can present difficulties as they are complex and significant developments. I am not aware of any further concerns and I will be working closely with the infrastructure teams to make sure I am fully aware of any developments in each case.



## **LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 5**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Chris Davies, Knowle ward**

**Subject: Plundering our parks**

A decision was taken by local Councillors in Knowle, Filwood and Windmill Hill Neighbourhood Partnership, in line with the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy (PGSS), to sell 1/3 of Salcombe Road site to a Knightstone, to build 35 shared equity properties, pass 1/3 to Knowle Park Primary School for a desperately needed playing field and to retain 1/3 as a children's playpark and landscaped area.

The sale produced over £700,000 of which 1/3 went to central parks funds and 2/3 was to be used for local parks improvements. A list of costed agreed projects across Knowle and Windmill Hill have been agreed but have now been frozen.

1. Given that the Mayor had to abandon the original plans to freeze and grab local CIL money, would it not be better for him to acknowledge that his position on the Salcombe Road money is untenable and allow the money to be unfrozen and the local schemes to proceed?

2. Does the Mayor not see that his current position not only undermines the PGSS (as have other recent decisions) but undermines local leaders who have taken the right and responsible decisions for their community?

### **REPLY:**

- The council has frozen all non-essential work. Unless actual expenditure was contractually committed prior to the freeze, works will not go ahead. External Funding such as s106 and funding from external bodies can still go ahead as long as it does not affect the general fund in any way.
- The Salcombe Road sale was a capital receipt and as such does not fit these criteria for being released for spend and therefore is part of the spending freeze.
- The parks and neighbourhoods staff are currently working on analysing the progress against the targets of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy (PGSS) in preparation for refreshing it at its 10 year point in order to ensure it is fit for purpose to support new models of delivering parks.
- The intention of the spending freeze is not to undermine local leaders but to deliver a balanced budget. Councillors will have a full role to play in developing future models for community engagement.



**LABOUR QUESTION 6**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Chris Jackson, Filwood ward**

**Subject: Parking for care workers**

What progress has the council made to ensure care workers can have parking passes for Resident Parking Zones?

**REPLY:**

- I completely agree, we need to find a better way to find parking assurances for carers. I understand it inconveniences people not to have the permits. Looking at the budget process in March we will build this manifesto commitment in.



**CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 6**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Tony Carey, Brislington East ward**

**Subject: Congestion**

How many convictions have there been for vehicles obstructing road junctions by stopping on box junctions?

**REPLY:**

1. Bristol City Council does not currently have the legal powers to enforce box junctions so I am unable to answer this question. Only the Police have the legal powers to enforce and convict for these offences. Any questions regarding this subject matter should therefore be directed to the local Police & Crime Commissioner.





## **LABOUR QUESTION 7**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Mike Langley, Brislington East ward**

**Subject: Brislington New Bridge**

Will the Cabinet Member for Transport agree to meet with me to discuss changes to Brislington New Bridge? In particular I would like the council to consider introducing temporary double lines down one side of the road and on the right turning lane at Kim's cafe and some lane markings for the 3 lanes of traffic on the roundabout outside the M & S at Avonmeads.

### **REPLY:**

1. The works to New Brislington Bridge are essential waterproofing works to reduce the rate of decline of the condition of the structural fabric of the bridge.
2. The transport team are confident that removing the lengths of parking on Whitby Road will have little positive impact upon the overall traffic flow during the peak period as this is already constrained by the pedestrian crossing and roundabout at the junction with St Phillips Causeway.
3. The Cabinet Member will be in touch to discuss further.



## **CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 7**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Tony Carey, Brislington East ward**

**Subject: Litter**

How does the Mayor envisage the plan or new zero waste strategy working to make Bristol cleaner by 2020?

### **REPLY:**

- Bristol's Waste Strategy "Towards Zero Waste" was refreshed in 2016. It contains a vision statement saying: "We want a city where there is a clean, green, safe and sustainable street scene for residents and for visitors to Bristol".
- Through the Clean Streets Campaign I have committed to making Bristol's streets measurably cleaner by 2020. The Campaign is underpinned by recycling, waste to landfill and residual waste per household performance targets that mirror the direction of travel to achieve the 50% waste reduction 2020 target and sit within the BWC contract.
- The campaign is focused on behaviour change and the residents of the city taking more responsibility for how the city works, encouraging residents to do more to make the city clean, tidy and sustainable. We will also use policy and enforcement levers to promote behaviour change.
- Over the coming year we will work with councillors, schools, business and communities to support practical projects to improve the cleanliness of the city. Examples include graffiti removal, doubling the number of eco-schools, monthly enforcement campaigns, and supporting community clean ups across the city.
- A Member briefing on the campaign will be held on 31 January 2016.



## LABOUR QUESTION 8

Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Kye Dudd, Central ward

Subject: Ambulance station development – affordable housing

At a briefing arranged for the Development Control A committee and interested parties on the issue of the Ambulance Station development on Wednesday 11th January it came to the light that the developer would be unable to deliver on the affordable housing target of 40%. The developer insisted that a figure of between 10-15% affordable would be achievable which is down from 20% as previously indicated. This came as a shock to me as the land is publicly owned 80% by the Homes and Communities Agency and 20% by Bristol City Council. I find it quite astonishing that a developer can get away with submitting plans with such a low figure of affordable housing on publicly held land. If we can't enforce council policy on publicly held land then what hope have we got on private developments.

In light of this can the Mayor tell me:

1. What action is being taken to ensure the 40% target is met and what action has been taken to use the council and HCA land ownership as leverage to achieve the policy of at least 40% affordable housing?
2. Why has the council agreed to allow the continual dilution in the commitment of affordable housing from 20% downward. Is this not poor negotiation?

## REPLY:

- I too am surprised by the apparent reduction in the proportion of affordable housing being proposed by this development, especially as I note that the number of residential units being proposed is increasing. I appreciate that a careful balance has to be struck here between achieving best land value for the public purse whilst using public assets to deliver to our key objectives, but achieving less than half of what our own policies ask for is very concerning.
- National policy on affordable housing does not help us as it allows landowners to achieve what is described as a “competitive return”. However, both ourselves and the HCA have a broader role to deliver much needed affordable housing and this must be factored into the land deal with any development partner.
- I understand that there are real challenges on this site (such as archaeology, a culvert and ground conditions) that will affect the financial viability of any development, but I will be expecting all parties to re-examine their position and work together to achieve a greater level of affordable housing than is currently proposed.
- Cabinet member for homes has requested a meeting with the developer and the HCA to identify how a greater proportion of affordable housing can be delivered on the scheme. As the local ward councillor you will be invited to this meeting.



**CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 8**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Liz Radford, Westbury-on-Trym & Henleaze ward**  
**Subject: Bristol Arena**

1. Does the Mayor accept that if this venue had continued to make provision for a reasonable amount of patron parking (as originally envisaged), the revenue this would have generated would have greatly offset the now anticipated £20million overspend on its building costs?
2. Can the Mayor confirm the latest estimated opening date for the Arena?

**REPLY:**

1. At the outset of the project large scale parking provision as a way of part funding the project was considered, as some arenas have done previously. This funding model doesn't work for every venue. Given that we are working towards a new constructor I will look at the parking provision again.
2. As I stated recently in public we are targeting the autumn of 2020 as an indicative date for the opening of the Arena. As we have stated previously though, until we sit down with the selected building contractor and they confirm their programme this date remains indicative.



**CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 9**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Chris Windows, Henbury & Brentry ward**

**Subject: Bristol Arena**

1. Can the Mayor explain how and why any delay in this project has reported associated costs of £80k per week?
2. Who negotiated these procurement contracts?

**REPLY:**

1. The former Mayor used this figure internally to ensure that focus remained on the need to make decisions quickly on this project. In reality such a figure is indicative only and made up of a number of different elements, which are variable. One element which does not change is the need to retain our internal and external project teams for longer if the programme extends and naturally there is a cost to this.
2. If you are referring to the Preconstruction Services Agreement with BYUK, it was negotiated by our project team including the Senior Responsible Officer, Project Director, and legal services. The Project Board, Chaired by the Strategic Director for Place approved the council entering into the agreement.



**CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 10**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Steve Jones, Stockwood ward**

**Subject: Bristol Arena**

1. What effort has there been made to agree fixed pricing for the construction of this important venue?
2. If these costs continue to escalate, can the Mayor state at what stage does this project become no longer financially viable?

**REPLY:**

1. We agree the target cost with the contractor before we enter into the building contract, which will need cabinet approval. The council and contractor share a pain/gain approach to the contract to incentivise delivery. When the building is complete the council pays the actual cost of the project.
2. As I have stated previously, we will deliver an Arena, but it has to be at the right price.



**CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 11**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Richard Eddy, Bishopsworth ward**

**Subject: Council House lighting**

1. The Mayor may be aware that recently - following the expensive £17 million refurbishment of 'City Hall' (commonly known as the Council House to Bristolians) - the night-time lighting of large extensive parts of the building, primarily the former Cash Hall, has occurred. (Indeed, I viewed the wasteful use of its night-time illumination before Christmas 2016 during a concert-visit). Does the Mayor agree with me that this use of lighting is unnecessary, particularly when we are rightly trying to save public money and energy?

2. Can the Mayor assure me that the reasons for this flagrant squandering of public resources have now been identified and that these unfortunate examples of wasteful excess will not be repeated?

**REPLY:**

- Most lights in the building are on a timer. These timers can be and have been set to dim and then switch off when any area of the building is not being used throughout the day. There are a series of lights that run through the core of the building that can't be adjusted due to the way they have been wired in and this has been given back to the builders to resolve.
- As far as the Cash Hall is concerned the lights in that area are on standard on/off switches and the security team turn them off as a last job before going home.
- All lights in the building are low energy.



## **CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 12**

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Kevin Quartley, Bishopsworth ward**

**Subject: Full Council – agenda item 8 – Collection Fund – estimated council tax and business rates surplus 2016-17**

The report to Full Council refers to the provision in respect of appeals against business rate, and that this figure was set at a high figure in last year's collection fund report that went to full council, but was reversed for the year end accounts.

1. On what date did officers decide that the reduction in provision was justified and amend the year-end figures?
2. On what date was the executive member briefed of this change?

### **REPLY:**

- The Collection Fund report, included in the Budget report to Full Council in February 2016 included an increase to the Business Rates Appeals Provision of £10m. This was to cover the estimated effect of applications for charitable relief made by a number of local NHS Trusts. This is a national issue, and at the end of the last financial year further guidance was provided resulting in a different accounting treatment being applied to this potential liability. The transfer to the provision was subsequently reversed back into the Collection Fund, significantly contributing to the reported surplus. All applications for charitable reliefs from NHS Trusts have been rejected and the Trusts are continuing to pay their Business Rates.
- Appeals to the Valuation Office significantly increase volatility in business rates income. Officers regularly monitor reports from the Valuation Office and assess the effect on business rates income.
- There is a statutory requirement for Councils to calculate the estimated surplus or deficit on its Collection Fund by 15 January. In December officers will prepare the relevant calculations which will take into account amounts brought forward in the Collection Fund from the previous financial year, as well as an outturn position for the current year. The two cannot be looked at in isolation. At this point a revised calculation will be made as to the likely level of the appeals provision at year end. This enables the overall surplus/deficit calculation to be made and reported to Members. The Executive Member was briefed in late December prior to papers dispatch for Cabinet Agenda.

