

Member Forum

15 January 2018

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

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Tom Brook, Bishopston and Ashley Down ward
Subject: 'Planned Bristol Metro'

1. An underground would be transformative for Bristol. It would bridge socio-economic inequalities and better connect the region.

Why are Bristol's Tory Group already engaged in a point-scoring and misinformation campaign rather than working closely with you, who have been pushing hard for mass transit since taking office, and the Metro Mayor and neighbouring local authority leaders, from the same party as them, who have backed you and funded further feasibility studies through the West of England Combined Authority?

2. Some Tories have shown that they can't work on a cross-party basis here in Bristol, and it now also seems clear that they can't or won't even talk to other Conservative politicians in the region.

The Bristol Labour Group are committed to delivering for Bristol – with anyone who wants to work with us from across our city – does the Mayor share my view that the other parties should make a (somewhat belated) New Year's resolution to follow our lead?

REPLY:

You're right to highlight that this idea has received support from our Conservative neighbours and Metro-Mayor – the benefits are obvious and it is absolutely right to be ambitious and explore the options available to us. I am intending to give an update once the feasibility reports come back.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 1

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Mark Weston, Henbury & Brentry ward

Subject: Bristol's recycling rates

1. Can the Mayor tell me what steps the Authority is taking to encourage, promote or improve the amount of materials recycled by council tenants living in large blocks of flats?
2. Neighbouring North Somerset boasts the highest rates of recycling in the country (over 60%) for a unitary authority. Can the Mayor confirm that the Bristol Waste Company will adopt best practice to boost our own rates and liaise with counterparts in the region to see what they are doing right and identify where we appear to be going wrong?

REPLY

1. Communal facilities in flats are an area we can improve our recycling rates. BWC and BCC will work with planners, developers, landlords, caretakers and residents to improve recycling from flats and will develop a refreshed strategy on this when a new collection methodology is confirmed. This strategy will also apply to student accommodation. There are an increasing number of waste collection authorities now focussing on this specific issue and BCC/BWC will also fully investigate if any of these examples can be applied to and implemented in Bristol. BWC has detailed the steps it plans to take in this regard within its 10 year business plan.

2. North Somerset currently has a published recycling rate of 56.3% compared to 43.4% being recycled in Bristol City Council. As with all its services, BWC will fully investigate examples of best practice from higher performing collection authorities in the UK and implement any example whenever possible. The latest published and approved BWC business plan goes to great lengths to detail the waste minimisation, recycling, reuse and recovery actions it intends to carry out in order to increase the tonnage of recyclables whilst minimising the creation of wastes to increase performance.



GREEN QUESTION 1

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Charlie Bolton, Southville ward Subject: Expansion of Bristol International Airport and climate change

I have submitted the following motion to the last two council meetings, although it hasn't had a cat's chance in hell of being taken:

"Full Council notes:

1. The consultation being run by Bristol Airport over the preparation of a new master plan which could cover the period up to the mid-2040s.
2. The master plan could result in a more-than-doubling of passenger numbers from the current figure of 8 million to 20million.
3. That air travel remains the most climate-damaging form of travel, and significant expansion of air travel will therefore have a significant climate impact.
4. That such an increase will lead to an enormous increase in the number of journeys to get to the airport to meet the increased usage– a fact which in itself will lead to significant issues around congestion, pollution and infrastructure.
5. 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.
6. The Joint Spatial Plan– which includes North Somerset and the geographical area covered by the airport–contains an explicit commitment to making a 50% cut in emissions by 2036.

Full Council believes that:

1. The airport must conform to the commitment contained in the Joint Spatial Plan, and such a commitment should include emissions from the aircraft using it

Full Council resolves to call on the Mayor to:

1. Pass on these views to the airport, North Somerset Council, WECA, the Joint Committee; and
2. Respond directly to the consultation making the points above."

My Questions to the Mayor are:

1. Does the Mayor support the proposed expansion of the airport?
2. If so, how does the Mayor reconcile that with the commitment in his Joint Spatial Plan to cut carbon emissions by 50% by 2036, as well as national and local commitments to reduce carbon emissions?



REPLY:

1. Yes. Expansion of Bristol Airport will provide a significant boost to the local economy, including creating many new jobs accessible from South Bristol. If handled appropriately it should also provide an opportunity to significantly improve surface access to the airport especially by public transport. In overall terms it could reduce the need for people from the West of England to travel further afield, such as to Heathrow or Birmingham, to catch flights.
2. We are fully committed to reducing our CO2 emissions in line with our ambitious targets. While it is true that airline emissions are a major contributor to climate change, the industry is taking the challenge very seriously.

Bristol airport is next week hosting a roundtable session on aviation and sustainability and introducing the new Airbus A320neo which boasts a 15% CO2 emission reduction and fuel efficiency improvement as well as a 50% noise reduction.

Creating additional employment at the airport will also assist with reducing overall journey to work distances by placing employment opportunities close to those that need them. As part of the process we will need to assess how we mitigate the additional trips to and from the airport. That is why we have commissioned work following completion of the Joint Transport Study to assess the feasibility of a mass transit system linking the airport to central Bristol and beyond. A system such as this, if delivered would be a major contributor to delivering our CO2 targets.



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 1

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Anthony Negus, Cotham ward

Subject: Libraries mutualisation study

Consultants are due to start work next week on options for an alternative future for Bristol libraries but their terms of reference are still unclear.

Will the Mayor confirm that their study covers the feasibility for all present libraries to be part of a Mutualised integrated network with no commercial involvement that could provide the flexibility to facilitate a local offer and 'community hubs'?

REPLY:

An independent options appraisal was commissioned in November 2017, following funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, to assess and evaluate alternative models for managing a future 'core' library service for Bristol. What constitutes a core service is still to be determined by a later cabinet decision.

A number of models, including a trust, mutual, industrial provident society or outsourcing to another provider, and remaining in-house will be considered. The work is expected to finish in April 2018.

Bristol City Council is reviewing how the service can be delivered to meet the needs and demands of local residents while operating within a reduced budget.



LABOUR QUESTION 2

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Jo Sergeant, Avonmouth & Lawrence Weston ward
Subject: Road safety on Kings Weston Road

The continued closure of the Iron Bridge at Kings Weston is a source of great concern to many residents. They understand that BCC's resources are limited. However they are worried that the designated temporary pedestrian crossing (no lights, no zebra, no crossing patrol) is assumed to be a safe crossing point, even for the many children travelling to and from Oasis Brightstowe School and this will continue to postpone the repair to the Bridge, as other projects take priority. Can the Mayor and relevant cabinet member(s) please push this project to the top of the pile before we have a fatality? [If they are not convinced that the current arrangements are unsafe, I would urge them to visit the site for themselves.]

REPLY:

The Council is currently investigating the removal, refurbishment and ultimate replacement of this structure. As this bridge is listed (Grade 2) and located in a Conservation Area its treatment will require a planning application and preparation for Listed Building Consent.

The existing temporary pedestrian crossing was inspected and approved by the Council's Traffic Safety Team and the site and all the associated traffic management elements are inspected on a monthly basis by BCC Engineers. There have been no reported road safety incidents at this location since the temporary arrangements have been introduced. The site has been deemed unsuitable for temporary signals on account of the constraints of the crossing site and the proximity of other junctions.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 2

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Richard Eddy, Bishopsworth ward

Subject: Refuse and recycling rota calendars

1. Whilst I am aware of the reasons given by Bristol Waste Company for not furnishing their household waste customers with a calendar for the change of service this Christmas and New Year (primarily to avoid wastage and produce envisaged financial savings), does the Mayor agree with me that the Council should be doing everything possible to promote effective communication with Bristolians?

2. In retrospect, does he think BWC missed an opportunity in not advising Ward Councillors of these changes, especially as they have a good local knowledge of their constituents, and can this omission be remedied next year?

REPLY:

1. Bristol City Council is doing everything possible to communicate effectively with Bristolians.

Based on the learnings of not sending out a hard copy of revised collection dates for Christmas and New Year period (2017/18) to all households, BCC will of course review this decision with BWC for next year and further ensure that all ward councillors are fully aware of any decision made in this regard.

2. BWC made the decision. Cllr Dudd is discussing it with them and you can discuss it further with him.



GREEN QUESTION 2

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Jerome Thomas, Clifton ward

Subject: How can the Mayor best trust KPMG's advice on the right site for the Bristol Arena?

I note from the Bristol Post that the Mayor is set to 'confirm the location and possible design' of the Arena at the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday January 23rd.

The confirmation of the preferred site is being made as a result of the recommendation in KPMG's 'independent' value for money report. This report is evaluating the current proposed site for the Arena at Temple Meads, versus the recently identified alternative site at the Brabazon hangar in Filton. I understand this report was only due to be published on January 15th.

This raises some concerns because KPMG are the auditors for YTL (the owners of the Brabazon hangar and of Wessex Water), and because of reports of KPMG's recent dubious ethical practices in Britain and around the world (see below).

1. Can the Mayor confirm whether he was aware of KPMG's conflict of interest (as auditors engaged by YTL) when he commissioned them as authors of the independent value for money report into the proposed siting of the arena?

2. Is the Mayor able to confirm there will be time to ensure that KPMG's advice on the Arena can be scrutinised (either through a task and finish or relevant scrutiny committee) so that we can be confident in the quality of the advice before any final decisions are made?

KPMG background (source: Financial Times)

- KPMG is currently under investigation by the Financial Reporting Council for its role as auditor in giving Rolls Royce's accounts a clean audit sign off in the period 2010-13, when Rolls Royce paid bribes to win contracts in Indonesia, China, Nigeria, Russia and Brazil.
- KPMG has been effectively undermining democracy in South Africa through its 'independent' but inaccurate 2017 report into the South African Revenue Service. This report led to the sacking of the South African Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan and many of his colleagues in March 2017. In response to international outcry KPMG withdrew the report, but the damage had already been done. KPMG's inaccurate report had wrecked the careers of many honest and decent people.

REPLY:

1. There is no conflict of interest. As you will see from the cabinet papers which are published today, there is not yet a final decision on the location of the arena and KPMG have made no such recommendation.

2. It is for the OSMB to decide on the scrutiny programme. It is entirely up to them to decide their time table.



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 2

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Harriet Clough, Hengrove & Whitchurch Park ward

Subject: Children missing out on free school meals

The Council itself estimates that up to 2,200 children are not registered for 'free' school meals that they are eligible for.

Given that being registered for free school meals is treated as the 'gateway' test for measures, such as additional school funding, what measures are being taken to ensure that these children's parents know they can register and what the potential benefits are?

REPLY:

The School Admissions team publish information regarding Free School Meals (FSM) in both our primary and secondary guides for parents and carers. Information is available on the FSM webpage. Last year we added additional information to encourage applications to be made for key stage 1 pupils to enable pupil premium to be claimed by the school.

The Education Management System (EMS) Team and Early Years developed a bespoke on-line system to enable parents of key stage 1 pupils to register for pupil premium at schools using a system which asks for very limited information taking no more than a minute or 2 to complete.

We write to all schools from May onwards to encourage schools to remind all Year 2 parents to apply for FSM for Year 3 the following September.

School Admissions are not permitted as part of the admissions process to discuss FSM when processing school applications. Schools are aware of the essential nature of this and make their own approaches to parents.

If you have any further suggestions please refer them to Cllr Anna Keen.



LABOUR QUESTION 3

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Don Alexander, Avonmouth & Lawrence Weston ward Subject: Housing

1. Can the Mayor confirm the number of empty council homes sold off at auction by the previous administration, and before him by the Lib Dems?

2. Following his election promise to end this sell-off and bring empty council homes and properties back into use, can the Mayor confirm that his Labour administration has delivered on this for Bristol?

REPLY:

1. There were 277 sales of council homes from 2005 when BCC first started recording sales, up until Dec 2015.

Since the new administration in May 2016, there have been no further sales of council homes by auction (but there have been Right To Buy sales).

91 homes which were purchased largely during the 1960's and 70's and some have been empty for up to 2 years. These are largely terraced houses in need of complete renovation and refurbishment. Half of these properties now have tenants and the remainder are expected to be let by early spring.

- 26 have gone to homelessness charities on a peppercorn rent,
- 24 properties will also have repaired and gone back into the main council housing pool and be available for 'general needs'.
- 41 are refurbished for temporary accommodation for homeless families.

2. This was one of our manifesto commitments during the election, the selloff of empty council properties was a major issue. I promised to stop the sell offs and look at alternatives to bring the housing back into use under council ownership. This we have done.

In addition to this we have driven down the number of empty properties in the council's housing stock.

In summary, in March 2016 there were 538 empty (or 'void') council properties, but this has now reduced to 293 under this administration.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 3

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Graham Morris, Stockwood ward
Subject: Joint Transport Study

1. Can the Mayor explain to me why the JSP and the Joint Transport Study are not better aligned?
2. Can the Mayor state why the JTS is late when many of my residents are keen to know about the new ring road (between Hicks Gate & the A37) and where it will go? Local people are anxious to find out whether the proposed route will cut through or encircle their homes.

REPLY:

1. The JSP and JTS have been carried out concurrently with joint project boards and close liaison between the two projects. They are however different things in that the JSP is a statutory plan and the JTS is a study which will impact upon the existing Joint Local Transport Plan. The two pieces of work have been carried out in full understanding of the contents of each piece of work but the timeframes and work stages differ. The JSP will shortly be examined in public and the JTS schemes are currently undergoing feasibility studies to enable further development.
2. The JTS is now complete and was completed on time as planned. The next phase of work is to undertake feasibility studies which will assess options for the various schemes including the potential alignment of the A4-A37 link road. This work is ongoing and local residents will be consulted at the appropriate time. This is likely to be Spring/Summer 2018 and officers will keep both local residents and councillors informed of developments and when consultation will begin.



GREEN QUESTION 3

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Eleanor Combley, Bishopston & Ashley Down ward
Subject: Cabinet member responsibilities

The Cabinet has roughly doubled in size since the previous administration. This has the benefit of making it easier for each cabinet member to focus on a manageable brief. However, it has also doubled the cost to the city, since the allowance has not reduced, presumably because a cabinet role is still expected to be a full time job.

How many hours are the current cabinet members contracted to work in roles outside the Council?

REPLY:

It is not for me to judge how the previous administration managed its cabinet or its workload. However, I am determined that this administration will deliver for the city, and this means that we need the right resource and the right quality in the cabinet.

I am grateful to them for the time, effort and commitment they all show in working to deliver for Bristol.



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 3

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Gary Hopkins, Knowle ward

Subject: Jubilee pool / new pool at Speedwell

When the Cabinet and Labour Councillors voted to close Jubilee Pool the Mayor said this was an error and there was never an intention to do so.

After a vigorous campaign a new 5 year deal was arranged with Parkwood for the pool to stay open.

1. Can the Mayor please explain why the current council "consultation" on sports provision, which takes some finding, states clearly that the only 2 options for Jubilee Pool are closure or an asset transfer and that there will be no spending at all?
2. The same consultation seems to admit that the previous cross party commitment to the new pool at Speedwell has been abandoned. Why is this?

REPLY:

1. In the draft strategy there is a 2013/14 reference which recommends that no further investment should be made in enhancing older pools that are nearing the end of their lifespan.

In this administration we have resolved the future of Jubilee pool for at least five years.

2. The draft sports facility strategy acknowledges that the pressure on pool water space needs to be addressed. We remain committed to a swimming pool in East Bristol and are considering all options.



LABOUR QUESTION 4

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Ruth Pickersgill, Easton ward

Subject: Education

I would like to welcome your new Cabinet lead for Education and Skills and am sure that she will be able to take a proactive role in improving outcomes in the City and in bringing a Labour Party perspective to some of the key issues facing schools in the City. Many of these result from the Government's austerity measures and deliberate underfunding of local authorities and schools, and their many policy decisions which put Local Authorities in an impossible situation of having additional responsibilities and reduced funding to deliver on them.

1. Since the SEND reforms, we have been responsible for High Needs funding for young people with additional needs up to the age of 25 years. It has been reported that, as an authority, we are now working to reduce an in-year £5m overspend on the High Needs budget in 2017/18, with the cumulative position forecast to be a £7.7m deficit by the year-end, which would rise to £12.9m if no further action were taken. Given that the gaps in outcomes for children with additional needs in the city and their peers are not reducing, and schools and parents are increasingly reporting a lack of 'top up' funding to meet the needs of SEND children in mainstream schools, with some even opting to home educate as a result, what further can the Mayor and Cabinet lead do to try and resolve the situation without disadvantaging some of our most vulnerable children or reversing several decades progress in terms of inclusive education?

2. Similarly, the affordability gap on the two PFI schools contracts is greater than the amount of the PFI Factor in the mainstream schools formula by an amount in the region of £4.5m each year. As the Labour Party nationally is committed to revisiting the issues of PFI and the negative impact it is having on service provision, in this case, potentially diverting resources that should be used for children's education to company shareholders, what can the Mayor and Cabinet lead do to resolve this situation?

REPLY:

1. The Local Governor Association conducted a Peer Review in Bristol last week looking at SEND provision. This included looking at the High Needs Budget spend. We have reduced this spend from £7.7m to £6.1m within the last few months. The LGA team commented on the excellent quality of the recovery plan for continuing to manage the overspend. They also commented on our clear plans for meeting the needs of SEND children and young people which are clearly one of our most vulnerable groups. We will be forming an improvement plan based on the strengths and areas for improvement that resulted from the peer review. We look forward to sharing this with cabinet as we move forward.

2. Cabinet recognises that the affordability gap on the two multi-school PFI contracts must be addressed. These financial pressures are not unique to Bristol. Officers have worked with the participating schools, the PFI contractors, Schools Forum and the Department for Education to consider how best to tackle this issue. These are schools costs and ultimately should be funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Although there are no guarantees, the Department for Education has indicated that it may be possible for the increase in the affordability gap deficit to be addressed in the anticipated National Funding Formula for schools from 2020/21, provided that the full costs are shown in



the Dedicated Schools Grant for the next two years. If successful schools would, in principle, receive an increase in dedicated resources to meet PFI liabilities.

The Council is planning to make a financial contribution to the DSG over the next two years, in order to progress this proposal while mitigating pressure on schools' budgets. The Council and schools will need to work closely over the remaining PFI period (to 2034) and ensure that Bristol's position continues to be advocated to central government.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 4

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Steve Jones, Stockwood ward

Subject: Effectiveness of 20 mph zones

1. Is the Mayor aware of the findings of a report by BANES into the efficacy of their 13 speed zones rolled out twelve months ago at a cost of £871k? This found that rates of those killed or seriously injured actually increased over this period.
2. What are the comparable accident figures/statistics in Bristol for each year since roll-out in 2012?

REPLY:

1. I am aware. I am also aware that this was based on only one year's worth of data.
2. The monitoring report for the Bristol 20mph speed limit rollout is due to be published in February and we will publish the results showing 3 years' worth of data.



GREEN QUESTION 4

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Martin Fodor, Redland ward

Subject: Council property investments

As a Green I'm committed to well-funded public services from progressive taxation, and ethical investments to back these values.

The council has a well-established ethical investment policy applied to its funds that supplement its other revenues. It also has a number of investment properties and benefits from assets which provide vital revenues.

Recent research by The Bristol Cable has identified 29 investment properties, including some high profile buildings, that are owned by the council but leased to companies registered in offshore tax havens, including Guernsey, Jersey, the Cayman and British Virgin Islands. Tax avoidance and evasion cost the UK government many billions of tax revenue each year that could be spent on the NHS, schools, or indeed supporting local government.

Can the Mayor clarify:

1. If the council's ethical investment policy applies to property owned by the Council, and,
2. What he will do to ensure as far as possible that Bristol City Council does not support offshore tax avoidance?

REPLY:

1. Historically the council's ethical investment policy has not applied to property owned by the Council.
2. The Council has 630+ investment properties across the city, and the majority of these (by capital value and rental income) are long leasehold interests. With these types of lease, ownership transfers occur without the Council's consent under the terms of the lease (these lease terms are standard terms in the wider UK property investment market) and the Council is simply notified in writing after the event.

The way a particular tenant company deals with its tax affairs is not a legitimate legal ground for any Landlord (including the Council) to withhold consent to a lease transfer under existing law so a specific Council Policy would be impossible to define and impossible to implement.



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 4

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Tim Kent, Hengrove & Whitchurch Park ward

Subject: South Bristol recycling centre

In 2012 Council passed a budget that included the building of a new Recycling Centre. In May 2016, Mayor Rees told Council how he 'was working towards building a new Recycling Centre in South Bristol' and 'proposals will soon come to Cabinet'.

20 months later, could the Mayor update Members on what progress has been made?

REPLY:

Perhaps you could tell us what you did between 2012 and 2016 to pursue it.

Planning Permission was previously granted for redevelopment of Hartcliffe Way Waste Depot. However this lapsed in Summer 2016. Hartcliffe Way remains a possible location, but we are identifying other suitable locations in the South of the City that could be considered as a prefabricated style building maybe significantly cheaper to build in another location.

Capital Budget for building the Recycling Centre remains in place, and BWC will pick up the running costs.

Cllr Kye Dudd is pursuing this.



LABOUR QUESTION 5

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Mike Langley, Brislington East ward

Subject: Brislington transport / local services

1. Brislington is currently underserved by public transport. A local campaign led by myself, Councillor Bradley, and local MP Kerry McCarthy is calling for St Anne's Park train station to be re-opened. The council still rightly subsidises the 513 and 514 bus routes, but more is needed to help local people get to Avonmeads.

Does the Mayor back our campaign and will he support calls for Brislington to be better-connected?

2. Air quality in Bristol needs improving. More affordable housing is definitely much-needed too. What assessment has been made of moving the Bath Road Park and Ride out to Hicks Gate, and what plans are in place to ensure that new homes are accompanied by more local services?

REPLY:

1. We've pulled the congestion task group together to use the best minds in the city to service a modern city how we expect it to be.

We are working with the department of transport to implement the agreed priority for Bristol to reopen its suburban rail network. As part of this work we will of course be keen to reopen St Anne's Park train station and are working with Network Rail to scope out a high level feasibility study. We'll certainly be talking to Kerry McCarthy about this.

In addition our plans for mass transit would include a route in and through East Bristol.

The four authorities of the West of England recently completed a Joint Transport Study to assess transport needs across the region. Potential transport improvements have been identified along the A4 corridor, which are currently being investigated further as part of a feasibility study.

2. One of the schemes identified in the recently completed Joint Transport Study was relocation of the P&R at Brislington to Hicks Gate roundabout, linked to a new strategic housing development in and around the existing P&R site.

All strategic housing developments go through a master-planning process to ensure that all necessary local facilities are provided. The relocation of the P&R is currently being examined as part of a feasibility study which will be consulted upon in due course. The housing development forms part of the Joint Strategic Plan which will go to examination in Public in Spring/Summer 2018. You can talk to the cabinet member for connectivity about this.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 5

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr John Goulandris, Stoke Bishop ward

Subject: Selective reversal of 20 mph restriction

1. Does the Mayor consider the £2.3m committed to this traffic calming measure to be money well spent?
2. Most people accept there is a role for zones in particularly vulnerable areas like outside schools, hospitals and places where large numbers congregate. Aside from such places, will the Mayor consider reversing this speed limit on major road routes where there is little or no discernible logic for their retention?

REPLY:

We are producing our own report and we will consider its outcome then.



GREEN QUESTION 5

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Clive Stevens, Clifton Down ward

Subject: Spending on KPMG consultants

Given the publicity surrounding KPMG in a number of activities nationally it made me wonder what value we have gotten from them. I appreciate the finance department are busy on the budget so I am asking for some very simple basic information that we can follow up (you might be interested too) following the budget.

1. How much money in total has the council spent on KPMG since say April 2013 (including through Green Capital and any other appropriate bodies please)?
2. What projects were commissioned with KPMG for that amount?

REPLY:

1. Given you acknowledge how busy the finance team are, perhaps you could have delayed your question until after the budget. However below is an extract from our financial records and thus this should be considered an indicative project breakdown.

Since April 2013 Bristol City Council has spent a total of £1.256m with KPMG, the majority of which was work commissioned around devolution commissioned by the previous administration.

2. The following projects have been commissioned, with associated costs:

- Early Payment Programme £47.5k
- Devolution in the West of England £770.8k
- Temple Meads Station Investment £169k
- Bristol Energy Strategy £10.1k
- Income Generation Review £34.8k
- Skills workstream report £16.8k
- West of England Economic Model £207k
- Bristol Arena VFM Consultancy – no invoices paid to date



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 5

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Anthony Negus, Cotham ward

Subject: The Local Plan Working Group

The Local Plan Working Group is developing a policy for mitigation of the effects of high density student accommodation that focuses on new-build on existing campuses and around the city as a means of neutralising the demand for HMOs in the community.

Does the Mayor agree that this well-meaning policy will fail without sufficient resources to provide the necessary data to underpin a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to control the risk of resourced developers, particularly in those parts of the city not yet attracting HMO high-density conversions, overturning this intention at planning application stage and more expensively at appeal?

REPLY:

We are working with the Local Plan Working Group and the Universities to develop a new strategy for managing the growth and impact of student accommodation in the city. The emerging approach seeks to manage the future supply of specialist student accommodation and to reduce future pressure to increase the number of student HMOs.

We have considered evidence and suggested policy approaches provided by the Cross Party Commission through the Local Plan Working Group. In response BCC is seeking to provide a more structured analysis of current data sources on HMOs to support existing Local Plan policy controls. This can be delivered through further policy guidance that does not rely on the production of a SPD. The council also has powers to extend article 4 directions to areas where greater control over HMO development is justified.



LABOUR QUESTION 6

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Estella Tincknell, Lockleaze ward

Subject: Children's centres

I am sure the Mayor will join with me in welcoming the sterling interventions that have been made by Councillor Helen Godwin to ensure that Children's Centres across the city will continue to provide the invaluable support and services they were established to deliver despite the imposition of austerity by the Tory government and the significant and painful cuts the council has therefore had to make across the board.

There has been considerable restructuring of Children's Centres to secure stability and sustainability, and, while every effort has been made to retain staff, this has involved job losses. Is he able to assure me that there will be no further changes to the budget allocation for Children's Centres until 2020 so that they are able to plan effectively for the future?

REPLY:

I agree that Councillor Godwin, the team and partners are doing a fantastic job; in redesigning Children Centre service, improving outcomes for children and families and ensuring services are within easy reach of families in the areas.

This has been possible because other cabinet members delivered savings in their portfolios, collectively, making space for children centres.

The Government needs to provide new funding for councils over the next few years so that we can protect vital local services from further cutbacks. Until we have better funding from this Conservative government no areas can be ring fenced, but we will continue to deliver on our manifesto pledge to protect children centre services.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 6

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Tony Carey, Brislington East ward

Subject: Bringing empty properties back into productive use

1. How many dwellings have been made available using the Empty Dwellings Management Order in Bristol?
2. What alternative strategies are regularly employed to avoid EDMOs?

REPLY:

Question 1

- One EDMO was served in 2012 and revoked in 2013. The owner brought property back into use.
- Action using EDMO's are extremely time consuming and are problematic to enforce. Most Local Authorities rarely use this power.

Question 2

- Bristol City Council's Housing Strategy 2016-20 covers our approach to bringing empty properties back into use.

The overall aim is to provide more accommodation of the type required and Bristol City Council does take action on empty properties within a procedure that could ultimately lead to the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders to bring a property into use. We service up to 5 Compulsory Purchase Orders each year on long term empty properties.

In 2016-17 477 empty properties were brought back into use.

The City Council has a staged approach to tackling long term empty properties:

- Stage 1 - automated mailings and information, website, factsheets sent to owners.
- Stage 2 - visits, contact owner, identify problem and tailor support
- Stage 3 - escalate towards CPO - EDMO, warnings, pre-CPO process undertakings.
- Stage 4 - CPO - 24 since 2012.
- Nuisance and enforced sale is used throughout the process.



GREEN QUESTION 6

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Stephen Clarke, Southville ward

Subject: Avon New Cut

I received the following email from a member of the Friends of Avon New Cut:

“Dear Madam/Sir,

I am a committee member of FrANC-The Friends of the Avon New Cut. This is the stretch of water that runs from the Cumberland Basin to Temple Meads. It is the tidal bypass that was built as part of the 1804-1808 conversion of the tidal City Docks to the non-tidal 'Floating Harbour'.

FrANC helps to raise the awareness of this wonderful wild life corridor by publishing numerous leaflets, a booklet and organising many regular conducted bat, wildlife, herb, insect and botanic walks. We also organise regular clear up events that remove tons of rubbish and litter from its banks. We have even spent huge amounts of time having the New Cut designated as a 'Local Nature Reserve'.

I have noticed a very serious problem building up over the last few years which is the erosion and the collapsing of the banks of the New Cut on both sides. I am very concerned that this process is now accelerating. The Southern side is much higher as this is where most of the material dug out in its construction was dumped and which is where the most serious erosion is happening. Should this continue unhindered the integrity of Coronation Road itself is at risk. Remember, it isn't so many years ago that a bank collapse near Beaufley Road caused a water mains fracture in the road with numerous weeks of traffic chaos.

I am also extremely worried about the state of the collapsing embankment on the so called 'chocolate path' near the Caravan Club site. Very recent reparation work along the path here is already showing alarming signs of subsidence. The state of the chocolate path is not helped either by the cutting back of trees and buddleia bushes but NOT also poisoning the roots. This is equivalent to the pollarding process which only invigorates tree and shrub growth and further deteriorates the embankment.

To date all we see is barriers erected along Coronation Road to prevent public access, and they get longer every now and then, and a diversion on the chocolate path away from original embankment edge route.

I and FrANC members are keen to know if there is any overall plan of repair and maintenance to address these concerns.”

1. Could the Mayor tell us about the current state of work on the New Cut and the 'Chocolate path'?

2. What is the likelihood of it reopening soon, and what are the timescales involved?

REPLY:

1. I share your and FrANC members concerns about the 'Chocolate Path' closure. The Avon New Cut is routinely monitored and the visible deterioration and erosion of the river banks and retaining walls has become more apparent in recent years. The New Cut corridor is now well over 200 years old and this deterioration is therefore not a



surprise. We are currently carrying out a survey of the condition of all existing harbour assets. The results of the study should give us sufficient information to be able to prioritise the most at risk assets.

2. Safety of residents means it needs to stay closed, but we will work to get this open at the nearest possible opportunity. We have separately commissioned a report to determine the nature of subsidence and failure of this section of the Chocolate Path. When this work is completed, a clear prognosis and remedial programme established and funding identified we will be able to update further including more exact timeline.



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 6

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Chris Davies, Knowle ward

Subject: Trading Standards department

Can the Mayor give an assurance that there is no truth in the rumour that our Trading Standards Department, which has historically performed well, is planned to be abolished as an independent service and that it is to be subsumed into the Devon Service?

REPLY:

I am aware that there is a shortage of skills and resources in this important service area.

I have asked the Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services and the Regulatory Services Team to explore the potential of sharing services with the combined Devon, Somerset and Torbay Trading standards team under a formal agreement on the basis that the current level of service enjoyed by Bristol is maintained with the added benefit of us being able to draw on a wider pool of resources to help future proof and build resilience for the service.

Key to any new arrangement will be the maintaining of a dedicated resource in Bristol based on the current service level.

Cllr Kye Dudd will make decisions based on the evidence.



LABOUR QUESTION 7

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Fabian Breckels, St George Troopers Hill ward

Subject: Management restructure

1. The Labour administration had hoped to cut the cost of City Hall senior management by £750,000 per year, subject to consultation. Following the announcement made on 22 December of the new senior management structure, can the Mayor please confirm whether this target has been met, or better still exceeded?
2. How much is the overall senior management saving anticipated to be over the current Medium Term Financial Plan period, and are further restructures planned?

REPLY:

1. This target has been exceeded. The senior management structure will deliver savings of £833,000 per annum.
2. We set a Medium Term Financial Strategy that requires an overall saving of £1.6M in management costs. The senior management restructure has delivered half of those savings. Further savings will be delivered through further organisational redesign and a reduction in management roles.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 7

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Geoff Gollop, Westbury-on-Trym & Henleaze ward
Subject: Bristol Arena

1. Can the Mayor confirm whether or not during his recent promotional tour of Asia he received any expressions of interest to invest in this capital project?
2. Is the Mayor looking to share the risk and rewards of constructing this venue with private partners?

REPLY:

1. Yes.
2. We're considering options and an update paper will come to cabinet on 23rd January.



GREEN QUESTION 7

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Carla Denyer, Clifton Down ward

Subject: Constitutional changes

I welcome the way the Mayor has delayed rushing through big constitutional changes to the Council as this has allowed plenty of time for party groups to feed into the process. These changes will go to the heart of what the Council does and will have a big impact on local democracy in Bristol – they may last for years, even perhaps decades. Bearing the importance of these changes in mind then I ask the Mayor:

Will you consider genuinely seeking consensus and putting these changes through Full Council with cross party support, rather than relying on the vote of a single party to pass them?

REPLY:

As you note, there will be a vote on constitution changes at full council – at which those representatives the city has elected will be able to decide.



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 7

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Harriet Clough, Hengrove & Whitchurch Park ward
Subject: CRB/DBS checks for councillors

Many other Councils require a CRB/DBS check of their Councillors as we work with and regularly have access to vulnerable individuals.

What are the Mayor's thoughts on this?

REPLY:

I understand that the Audit Committee have been looking at how checks are undertaken for Members. A report taken to the Committee in November 2017 recommended that basic DBS checks are carried out for all members of Council, and enhanced checks are carried out for councillors in roles that discharge education and social services functions (these would be Cabinet Member members of Adoption panels). This approach has been approved by the DCS and the DASS.

A draft policy will be taken back to the committee shortly for comment.

It is important that we remember DBS checks are just one element of keeping children and vulnerable adults safe. We need to make sure that our policy includes clear advice for members on their responsibilities, and guidance on how concerns about members are dealt with.



LABOUR QUESTION 8

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Jo Sergeant, Avonmouth & Lawrence Weston ward
Subject: Public transport in Bristol – Henbury loop

Bristol rightly has a commitment to cleaner air. However, in order to deliver this and bring down the number of deaths due to NO2 pollution, we can't solely rely on Clean Air Zones. We need decent public transport and that includes a better train service.

Can the Mayor and the Cabinet Member for Transport reassure us that they are committed to supporting thorough research into the feasibility of the Henbury Loop, including the construction of a dive-under tunnel system at Avonmouth and new stations in the Avonmouth industrial area and that we will not be making decisions based on the CH2M Hill report of 2015?

REPLY:

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. The study will identify what infrastructure would be required in order to deliver the Henbury Loop.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 8

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Peter Abraham, Stoke Bishop ward

Subject: Bristol Arena

1. What is the current estimated value of the Arena Island site?
2. In the event of the Bristol Arena being built at an alternative location – have any plans been prepared for the disposal of the land near to Temple Meads?

REPLY:

Q. 1

The estimated value of the Arena Island site could be anywhere between £14m and £40m depending on the mix of uses proposed.

Q. 2

There are a number of possibilities for the site, should an arena be built at a different location. Some initial work has been done to look at alternatives for a mixed use scheme incorporating possible commercial, housing, retail, leisure, hotel, and cultural offering. Initial modelling shows the site could accommodate anywhere between 400 – 1000 new homes and around 90,000 sq m of commercial floorspace, and could create between 1500 and 3000 jobs depending on the mix of uses, but clearly all options would need to be carefully tested. There are many permutations which could be explored should that position arise.

We know from discussions with agents that, given current market conditions and potential occupier demand, there would be very strong interest from developers in this location and a detailed assessment of the options available to the Council would be undertaken should this scenario arise.



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 8

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Tim Kent, Hengrove & Whitchurch Park ward

Subject: Brexit

As a city, Bristol clearly voted to remain within the European Union. There is growing concern about the effect of a hard Brexit on the UK and the city economy.

Can the Mayor share with us what assessments the Council have done on this and what work is being undertaken to ensure our economy is protected from the threat of a hard Brexit?

REPLY:

In response to the vote I convened a city-wide Brexit Response Group (BRG) to fully understand the challenges and opportunities posed by Brexit. The group includes local organisations in the public, private, business and academic sectors plus voluntary and community groups.

Myself and core city leaders are meeting with Michel Barnier in February to explore possibilities for UK cities post Brexit.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 9

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Liz Radford, Westbury-on-Trym & Henleaze ward

Subject: Bristol Arena

1. Can the Mayor advise me who exactly will be involved in making the final decision on the design and locality?
2. Are the reports of a developer prepared to build the Arena in the Temple Quarter, within existing budgets, accurate and viable?

REPLY:

1. The cabinet and myself, with advice from the relevant council officers.
2. Media reports are not accurate.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 10

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Matt Melias, Avonmouth & Lawrence Weston ward

Subject: Bristol Arena

1. Can the Mayor clarify what factors are being considered as part of the value-for-money criterion?
2. Have any of these elements been weighted or given greater priority over others?

REPLY:

1. This will be clear when the Value for Money report is completed, but the kinds of factors considered include:

- Alternative uses of the site,
- alternative locations
- impact on economic uplifts,
- cost inflation,
- the design of the building,
- Alternative financing models.

2. They will be balanced in the report and obviously affordability is a key consideration for us.



