

# Member Forum

## 20 March 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.



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Don Alexander (Avonmouth & Lawrence Weston)**

**Subject: Energy**

1. The council's plans to invest in renewable energy make both economic and environmental sense and demonstrate this Labour administration's clear commitment to tackling climate change.

Can the Mayor provide an update on the £14.5 million of renewable energy investment which all of the opposition parties, including the so-called Greens, last month voted to axe?

2. The recent cold snap further highlighted the difficulties faced by the tens of thousands of Bristolians who live in fuel poverty, struggling to heat their homes.

Can the Mayor detail the efforts of this administration to support people living in fuel poverty and outline what more he would like national government to be doing on this front?

**REPLY:**

1. The £14.5m of additional capital approved by Full Council in February will be invested in energy-related projects that will help keep Bristol on track to be run entirely on clean energy by 2050 whilst generating a financial return for the council.

The council's Energy Service is working on a number of investable energy-related opportunities and will be bringing the first of these, which relates to the further build out of the council's low carbon heat networks, for Cabinet's consideration in the near future.

2. The latest available figures show that the proportion of Bristol households in fuel poverty is 12.9%, higher than the national average. Figures from 2010 indicate that this figure is down from 15% but it's important to note that the definition of what constitutes fuel poverty changed in 2013, which caused the number of people (somewhere between 800k and 2m nationally) officially classified as being in fuel poverty to drop significantly.

Each year in Bristol around 108 million pounds is spent on heating homes, a third of which could be saved if all houses were insulated in line with current building standards. That's the equivalent of the UK average annual heating bill of 140,000 houses.

- 1 in every 8 households is in fuel poverty in Bristol.
- Fuel poverty is widespread, and it is estimated that cold homes and fuel poverty cost the NHS a £3.6m per day.
- There's a known causal link between cold, damp homes and a number of health problems like respiratory illness and effects on an occupants mental health.



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Geoff Gollop**

**Subject: BRISTOL ARENA**

1. Does the Mayor agree that given the importance of this capital project to the city, it is essential that elected representatives have an adequate opportunity to shape determination of the most appropriate site before any decision is made?

2. Now that the Mayor has confirmed the date for this decision – Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> May – can you confirm how you intend to address the concerns of Members from all four political parties (recently expressed through OSM) about meaningful engagement in the value-for-money review and selection process as well as providing the date when information pertaining to this issue will be shared with scrutiny?

**REPLY:**

- We're undertaking the value for money review and we'll share more about that in the debate. I'll say now, and will say again later, this should have been done years ago.
- I will make the decision in May based on the evidence, and we'll make sure there is engagement in the process.



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Cleo Lake**

**Subject:** Safer Bristol Drug Consumption Room and Heroin Assisted Treatment

I am happy to understand that the Safer Bristol Executive and our Council's Substance Misuse Team will be beginning a feasibility study to assess whether there would be net social and economic benefits for Bristol from delivering Heroin Assisted Treatment and/or a Safer Drug Consumption Room. I urge that the study draws on existing research to assess the likely impacts on: drug related deaths, street drug use, discarded drug litter, anti-social behaviour, health, crime etc. It should also indicate which budgets, both within the council and beyond, would make cost-savings - e.g. policing, emergency services, hospital admissions etc. This is to identify stakeholders who could be asked to contribute financially, to ensure fair, sustainable, long term funding that benefits all those involved, and Bristol as a whole. Can the Mayor confirm that he will be committed to fully implementing the findings and recommendations of the feasibility study so that the people of Bristol benefit as soon as possible - especially our most vulnerable citizens?

**REPLY:**

Reducing the harm caused by substance misuse remains a Public Health priority.

The recommendations from the study will be considered by the city's Safer Bristol Executive and the Health and Wellbeing Board in September 2018.



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

**Subject: Special Needs Provision**

The leaflet sent out with the Council Tax bills states that there is funding for ‘increasing our Special Educational Needs (SEN) school provision’

Please will the Mayor supply details of this?

**REPLY:**

In March 2017 the DfE announced capital funding for all Local Authorities to support children and young people with special educational needs. Capital funding is money that can be used to provide more places, better spaces and buy equipment that will support curriculum access. Bristol has an allocation of just over £2.5m over 3 years.

Further information about how Bristol wants to use the additional funding is available through our Local Offer Website, [Findabilitybristol.org.uk](http://findabilitybristol.org.uk):

[http://www.findabilitybristol.org.uk/blog\\_articles/1728-send-capital-grant?term=SEND+Capital+Grant](http://www.findabilitybristol.org.uk/blog_articles/1728-send-capital-grant?term=SEND+Capital+Grant)



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Steve Pearce (St George Central)**

1. Much has been made in the press, including by Jeremy Corbyn, of the progress made and prosperity unlocked by Preston Council over the last few years. At the start of their journey, just 14% of Preston's procurement spend was with organisations based in the city. What is the current figure for Bristol City Council?
2. 'Anchor' organisations are crucial to the success of community wealth-building models like those practised in Preston and around the world. What conversations have the Mayor and cabinet members had with City Office partners to contribute to building a more inclusive economy which benefits Bristol?

**REPLY:**

- 1- The latest figures on localising procurement spend within Preston indicates that since 2013 they have increased the percentage of procurement spend within the Preston Local Authority District (LAD) from 14% to 29.4%

In comparison, a high level assessment for Bristol indicates that in 2013 we spent 31% and in 2017 37% on suppliers based within the BS1-16 postcodes.

That equates to £262m and represents an increase of 17.5% which needs to be viewed in the context of reducing budgets. Please note we do not record if a supplier is SME

- 2- We have an overarching aim of delivering inclusive economic growth. That goes from making Bristol a living wage city, so that the economy isn't just one for higher qualifications and we drive opportunities into local businesses.

It will be in the One City Plan where we have brought together the collective power of Bristol's key organisations to make a bigger impact in solving the key challenges.

Through the city fund we are working to ensure the wider city procures in Bristol and also secure corporate social spending in Bristol along with attracting wider investment to promote an inclusive growth economy. One of the city fund's priorities will be stimulating entrepreneurship and employment in more deprived areas.

I raised this at the Local Enterprise Partnership yesterday, referencing the big infrastructure projects coming through. I said it needs to be a part of the regional industrial strategy and I also made the point about how the west of England growth hub should have clear targets to support businesses coming out of some of our poorest communities.



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Graham Morris**

**Subject: TACKLING MODERN SLAVERY**

1. The Modern Slavery Act 2015 announced a requirement for all businesses with a turnover in excess of £36m to provide a Transparency in Supply Chain (TISC) report. Can the Mayor confirm whether Bristol City Council have a legal duty to provide such annual statements?

2. In the event that a local authority is not deemed a commercial organisation for the purposes of this legislation, will the Mayor consider voluntarily taking part in this registration scheme?

**REPLY:**

- Local Authorities do not have a legal duty to provide a statement. So there is no legal duty of Bristol City Council.
- We are willing to voluntarily produce an annual statement.
- Measures are already in place. Procurement currently use the standard selection questionnaire from the Crown Commercial Service which asks:
  1. Are you a relevant commercial organisation as defined by section 54 ("Transparency in supply chains etc.") of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 ("the Act")?
  2. If you have answered yes to question 1 are you compliant with the annual reporting requirements contained within Section 54 of the Act 2015? If Yes, Please provide the relevant url. If No, Please provide an explanation. If N/A, Please also state N/A in the comments box.



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Charlie Bolton**

**Subject: Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

During the budget meeting in February 2018 the Mayor said in response to the Tory amendment that “the time isn’t right” to cut Bristol’s Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Greens are committed to protecting the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, not just this year, but also in the years to come. Does the Mayor agree, and if not when, in the Mayor’s view, is the right time to disproportionately increase taxes on the poorest people in this city?

**REPLY:**

- I find it hard to accept that you are committed to protecting the CTR. You had one opportunity to vote for the council tax reduction scheme by voting for the budget that contained it. You, the Green party, voted against it along with the Tories and the Lib Dems.
- So, while the Greens talk about it, the Labour party is doing it. We are the party that is actually delivering the CTR scheme.
- The CTR scheme is subject to annual public consultation. We’ll continue to look at better ways of managing the budget while protecting the poorest and most vulnerable from government cuts. In the absence of a better solution we will continue to protect the Council Tax Reduction scheme.



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

**Subject: Digital Inclusivity/Accessibility**

Almost two years after first being elected, personal access requirements (related to the readability of documents supplied to me, the majority of which are publicly accessible) still require significant personal investment effort to ensure compliance.

1. Does the Mayor think this is a reasonable situation, and what measures are being taken to ensure those with disabilities are not left behind in the council's race to 'digital first' / 'digital as default'?
2. When was [Bristol.gov.uk](http://Bristol.gov.uk) last tested, and does it currently meet industry standards for accessibility?

**REPLY:**

1. I expect that all reasonable efforts are made to support your requested access requirements. If you have specific requirements I would ask you to speak to Democratic Services who can liaise with IT to review.

ICT are currently doing work that includes a review of Accessibility.

The 'digital first' approach is not a zero sum game. It is intended to free up staff and resources to spend more time dealing with people who are less able to access digital services.

2. When the current website was built the Shaw Trust was asked to audit the site for accessibility.

The Trust reported in February 2016 with a list of suggested improvements. We adopted these recommendations where possible immediately, while some are to be carried out.

As we re-build digital services on the website they are tested to meet accessibility standards.



**Question(s) to the Mayor from** Councillor Fabian Breckels

**Subject:** Waste

**Q1** Can the Mayor also confirm the amount raised from collecting bulky waste as well as from fines for littering and other offences, which enforcement was stepped up for late last year?

**Q2** Figures show that the council spends almost as much on disposing of fly-tipping as it does on administering enforcement action. Analysis suggests that this environmental scourge is mostly due to commercial, not residential, dumpers. Can the Mayor outline plans in this area, including on how we change behaviour and increase income from enforcement fines for fly-tipping?

**REPLY:**

**Q1** Income from the collection of bulky wastes in 2016/17 was £285,000 (this is the gross figure and does not include the cost of collection and disposal).

Income from enforcement actions for littering and other offences was £152,705 for 2017/18 (this is the gross figure and does not include the cost of collection).

**Q2** We have a Clean Streets campaign focused on behaviour change, developing the collections methodology and clean-up of Bristol Waste, volunteer clean ups, and fines.

BCC are already working with partners and companies on this and BWC always investigate all reported flytips and search all waste to determine its place of origin. All such information is then passed to BCC enforcement teams to investigate further.



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Claire Hiscott**

**Subject: LOCAL TRIAL OF RECYCLED PLASTICS FOR ROAD RESURFACING**

1. Can the Mayor confirm the latest available annual figure for the amount of plastic waste generated in our city?
2. In light of successful projects which have been conducted in this country by Cumbria County Council and the London Borough of Enfield, into using plastics as a road repair material, is the Mayor prepared to task officers with looking into the possibility of holding a similar trial in Bristol?

**REPLY:**

1. The quantity of plastics collected by Kerbside recycling, on-street recycling bins and activities at our HWRCs amounts to around 3,000 tonnes each year. This figure is the total tonnage for the amount of household tonnage collected and recycled by BCC and therefore 'under our control' but does not constitute the total amount generated in the City.
2. We are aware of a number of current projects that seek to use plastics as a road repair solution, as well as generally increasing the amount of recycled materials in road construction. We are working with our industry partners to develop new technologies and keep abreast of any developments. We are awaiting evidence of the longer term benefits of using recycle plastics.



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Jude English**

**Subject: St Agnes Park and environs safeguarding issues - why are we failing in our duty of care?**

I am very concerned about the dreadful situation in St Agnes Park and the surrounding adventure playground, church and currently squatted park keeper's cottage. Every day volunteers and staff clear masses of drugs litter and human excrement and worry for the safety of children (and everyone else).

St. Agnes lodge, a BCC property due to be sold, has been trashed and is currently being squatted. In St. Agnes Park and environs vulnerable people are dealing and injecting in view of families, children and bereaved funeral goers attending the church. A child has received a needle injury.

People who live and work in this area are in despair. Emails don't get answered, the police are under resourced, and the problem is getting much worse.

**Question:**

Can the Mayor explain why Bristol City Council is not fulfilling our duty of care to park goers, our tenants at the playground, the purchasers of the Lodge and most importantly the vulnerable people sleeping rough and injecting in the park?

I urgently request that we find the resources for this before a serious incident occurs

**REPLY:**

Bristol City Council Property Services has sold St Agnes Lodge. This premise has been squatted by illegal occupiers for the past year. Possession proceedings were brought in the County Court and an eviction warrant was executed on 15 March 2018. The property has been re-secured and the asset transferred to Green Room with immediate effect.

We are aware of the impact austerity measures is having across public services in the city and are consulting with citizens for a plan for the future of our parks and green spaces. We continue to work closely with the Police to ensure citizens of Bristol remain safe and continue to feel safe in their neighbourhoods.



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

**Subject: Bristol Libraries**

It is clear from the briefing information that members have been allowed to hear this, and from that which they have not been allowed to see, that the study into the future of Bristol libraries is limited to the model previously set out in the rejected consultation and against the recommendations from the task and finish group endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and approved by Council.

1. Is the Mayor prepared to confirm that all the work carried out by the consultants in preparing their report and findings, including submissions by officers, executive member and the staff and their unions, will be made available for scrutiny in sufficient time for their consideration?

The Music Lending Service which loans musical score and music sets to the public in Bristol from a collection built up from donations and revenue from Bristol taxpayers was set to be given away to North Somerset on 1st April. The nett annual cost of this service to Bristol City Council is £4200 which equates to 28p for each of the 15,000 users. It appears that no-one had thought to approach the Bristol Music Trust -not only a major music champion in the city but also an arms-length associate of the Council - until I asked if they could help, to which they responded positively.

2. Will the Mayor unequivocally refute the claims that North Somerset has already taken their pick of this collection that takes up approximately 100 m of shelf space and confirm that this and that those responsible for future cost-saving measures will adopt a standard approach of reaching out to those most affected and to any Bristol organisations (commercial, not-for-profit or voluntary) who may be in a position to provide advice or practical solutions.

**REPLY:**

1. No decision has been made on the future of the library service; the consultation has not been rejected and will be taken into account when a decision is taken.

We would welcome input by Scrutiny and will make available the parts of the report which we are able to disclose legally, once the final report is received.

2. I confirm North Somerset have not taken any sets.

The Performing Arts Library (PAL) based in Yeovil does provide an equivalent service which our users could access, and some of the music that are users currently borrow from us is sourced from PAL.

We are discussing with PAL whether it takes our existing Music Sets as it is an existing specialist music lending library based in the Libraries West Area and therefore available to all Bristol citizens.



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We are also discussing the collection with Bristol Plays Music, which is part of Bristol Music Trust. Bristol Plays Music is not a lending library, but is located in Bristol.

No decision has been reached but we will inform all music groups in 1 April 2018.



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Chris Jackson**

**Subject: RPZ Parking**

1. This Labour administration is busy delivering across the board on our election-winning 2016 Bristol manifesto.

Can the Mayor provide an update on our progress in removing the charge for permits used by health and social care and other essential workers in RPZs?

**REPLY:**

- We provide residents who have short term and long term care needs with the most appropriate combination of essential visitors' permits (which can be used in any vehicle) and additional visitors' permits according to their individual care plan. These permits are provided free of charge and can be used by friends/family as well as professionals, giving maximum flexibility to residents.
- All re-ablement workers who work in RPZ areas have been issued with permits.
- It was a mayoral pledge to freeze RPZ charges until 2020, and we won't increase them.



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Chris Windows**

**Subject: ANIMAL WELFARE IN HIGH RISE BLOCKS**

1. Does the Mayor support his Party's plan to give all tenants a 'default' right to keep pets?
2. What impact would such a policy have on this Authority's ostensible rules and regulations against the keeping of dogs in high rise housing?

**REPLY:**

1. Yes, I do support Labour's plan. The considerable issues in the housing market leave many people no choice but to rent. I am pleased that nationally Labour is championing the interests of renters to have pets.
2. Council tenants currently have a right to keep pets, unless they live in blocks where a vote has been taken to ban them.



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Martin Fodor**

**Subject: Terms of reference for the Arena study**

At the 23rd January cabinet members forum I asked the question of the Mayor, “Can the Mayor say what are the terms of reference for the Arena study to be carried out by KPMG?” I was told I would receive these but to date neither I nor any of my councillor colleagues have received a reply to this question. It is unfortunate that no answer to this question has been forthcoming given the level of public interest. While we believe that we should be getting on with the building of the arena as soon as possible, we also believe that any decision to rethink the location of the arena should be an informed, democratic and transparent, not a decision taken behind closed doors and potentially unduly influenced by big business and shaped by inappropriate criteria.

At the OSMB meeting of 8 March some of the terms of reference of the KPMG study were revealed but these are far from comprehensive. All that councillors have been told to date is that KPMG is undertaking a technical value for money study on the Temple Meads arena as shared in the OSMB papers for 8 March.

However we also understand from the discussion during and after the OSMB meeting that what KPMG are also doing is undertaking a direct comparison on the respective strengths and weaknesses of the Temple Meads site versus the Filton site. We believe that KPMG are also revisiting the spatial plan for the Temple Quarter area if the arena is not to be built there. We do not know who KPMG are talking to, nor what the brief is for these additional pieces of work.

In addition we do not believe that the various studies will look at whether the current proposed site at Temple Meads is affordable for the Council, nor how it might be paid for if the costs of the build have risen.

It is quite possible that this KPMG study has been completed before anybody in the city apart from the Mayor and a handful of his colleagues have been told what is being studied. I would like to ask again for the terms of reference for the KPMG study on the location of the arena, as I have not received this information since I asked for it at the January Cabinet meeting.

Can the Mayor also please clarify:

- 1) What opportunities there will be for councillors and Bristol’s citizens to comment on the terms of reference of the KPMG study (in order to be of any use the answer on this will need to be provided before the study is completed).
- 2) What opportunities will there be for councillors and Bristol’s citizens to input to any study?

**REPLY:**

1. You’ve answered your own question – the terms of reference were circulated to OSMB
2. We’re having a debate on the arena later and will clarify the engagement process for Councillors.



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

**Subject: Grit Bins**

1. Can the Mayor tell me what the arrangements are to refill the roadside grit bins, as bins in crucial locations were left unfilled even though the city had plenty of notice of the cold snap?

I understand that parts of the city had grit delivered and left on the pavement in anticipation of bad weather, but to my knowledge none was delivered to Brislington.

2. Can the Mayor tell me why we did not get any extra grit delivered and can he assure me that in future we will get some delivered so that roads can be kept open and traffic kept moving?

**REPLY:**

1. Grit bins are regularly inspected as part of the highway inspection regime and bins that are less than half full are topped up. We request that if councillors or the public notice any bins that are empty or low they report them to the council via the website.
2. Grit bags were delivered to 41 locations that have identified volunteer Snow Wardens. On receipt of a severe weather warning, the Civil Contingency Team may contact snow wardens and deliver a quantity of grit to an agreed location.

We need more volunteer snow wardens and request that residents consider volunteering.

Can I suggest that Cllr Clarke volunteers and I also encourage her constituents to sign up. Further detail can be found at: [https://www.bristol.gov.uk/en\\_US/crime-emergencies/volunteer-to-be-a-snow-warden](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/en_US/crime-emergencies/volunteer-to-be-a-snow-warden) or by emailing [emergency.planning@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:emergency.planning@bristol.gov.uk)



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Mark Bradshaw (Bedminster)**

**Subject: GDPR**

1. Please can the Mayor provide an update on the Council's preparedness for the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), coming into force on 25th May 2018?
2. Will the Council and its various commercial entities be fully compliant with GDPR from 25th May?

**REPLY:**

1. GDPR is the biggest change to data protection rules in 20 years and the changes are wide ranging. My Deputy Mayor has raised our compliance as an issue that we must address.

A project has been set up and, as from Feb 2018, the Executive Sponsor is Service Director Legal and Democratic Services Shahzia Daya who is also the Council's Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO).

2. We will be in a stronger position on the 25<sup>th</sup> May. The key building blocks required will be in place, including:
- a. New ways to report data breaches
  - b. All staff will be trained in the new rules
  - c. Key documentation will have been reviewed/produced

There is a programme of work to make the required changes in each service area.

The companies are Data Controllers in their own right and compliance is a matter for their boards. However, as a shareholder, the project team is checking on their progress. We do not yet know the likely position and we will support and advise where appropriate to do so.



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor John Goulandris**

**Subject: STALLED NEW TRAFFIC REGULATIONS FOR DURDHAM DOWNS**

As the Mayor will know, the Downs is one of the city's greatest leisure assets, regularly used by residents from all over Bristol. There are important parking/ Highway issues outstanding from the parking restrictions introduced some time ago. Even though further TRO consultations were concluded last year, officers advise that they cannot implement the recommendations considered as the Mayor has told them to focus exclusively on Metrobus.

1. Can the Mayor confirm whether or not this explanation for delay is this true? If so, when will some resource be allocated to enable implementation?
2. If this assertion isn't true, when will the long awaited recommendations be brought into effect?

**REPLY:**

1. No, it is not true.
2. The original Downs Order was put in place some time ago, but there was a need to make some changes to deal with a few unintended consequences from the original parking restrictions. When these proposed changes were advertised last year a number of objections were received and officers have been reviewing these responses to determine a way forward. An update will be issued in the autumn.



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Jude English**

**Subject: Digital and data infrastructure**

The recently adopted corporate strategy had little to say about BCC's vital and valuable digital and data 'estate'. As we become a leaner, more agile authority in a twenty-first century business and trading environment it is imperative we manage this asset base with care. I have concerns that we are failing to do this as a corporate body.

It is important we keep up to date on the status of the Council's digital and data infrastructure and associated data asset register, and make explicit that what we are doing is both safe and legal.

**Question:**

What oversight and scrutiny of this register is available to councillors?

**REPLY:**

It is up to Scrutiny to pick this up as an issue if it wants to.



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

**Subject:** Orbital Bus Routes

1. First Bus has recently reduced services in my ward again (under the guise of increasing service on the in town portion of the route); while Metrobus will be a welcome addition to routes into the City Centre for my residents, those who are the most vulnerable will require orbital services to reach where the Metrobus service is proposed to start. One kilometre doesn't sound very far, but when you need a break every 20-50m, I assure you it is a very long way indeed; will the Cabinet Member for Transport undertake to monitor the situation in South Bristol to ensure that when Metrobus comes online, appropriate pressure is applied to First to retain the orbital bus routes rather than remove them to drive (the able-bodied) onto Metrobus at the cost of the elderly and disabled, in an area with minimal dial-a-ride provision?

**REPLY:**

- Our Cabinet Member for Transport is of course always monitoring the bus services in the city, with the aim of increasing connectivity and eliminating transport poverty. The Cabinet Member is exploring all the powers and resources we have through the Combined Authority to get us a top class bus network.
- It is worth remembering that the bus services were deregulated in 1986 and we don't have control of them.
- It is anticipated that the background bus network will be affected by the introduction of MetroBus services, particularly where there is any overlap with current provision. However, the full impact will not be known until after the launch of MetroBus. The Council has already spoken to First and will continue to monitor the network provision with all bus operators to try to ensure continuity of the existing services.



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Jo Sergeant (Avonmouth & Lawrence Weston)**

**Subject:** Libraries

1. Does the Mayor agree that, bearing in mind the roles that branch libraries can play, as outlined below, in a by no means exhaustive list, Bristol City Council needs to adopt a more strategic approach to the future of Bristol's Library Service?

Reading

There is an assumption that libraries now have less purpose because fewer books are being borrowed, are cheaper to buy and other entertainment is available. However:

- Reading is a vital skill that improves everyone's life chances.
- Young children enjoy the tactile nature of books.
- Some children have very little access to reading material outside of school.
- Being read to gives young children access to ideas before they are able to read to themselves.
- Reading improves the quality of life for older people, especially those with/at risk of dementia.
- Reading groups have therapeutic value and allow people to share ideas.

Digital inclusion

In addition, for some residents, a branch library provides their only means of internet access, in order to receive vital services such as:

- Council services, e.g. Homechoice
- Job seeking
- Benefits applications, particularly the forthcoming Universal Credit
- Other help, such as debt advice

Social inclusion

Some parts of the city boast few community spaces and residents rely on their local library (during opening hours) for a cost-free way to socialise or get support, such as:

- Community meetings
- Informal gatherings/having someone to chat to
- Hobby groups
- Support groups
- Councillor/advice surgeries
- Tutor sessions

Without free and public spaces, these events and activities might not be able to take place, leading to greater social isolation, which has serious physical and mental health implications.

Library campaigns

Recent anti-closure campaigns (including the establishment of Friends groups) have raised the profile of various branches across the city. Wick Road Library, users of which have mounted a strong campaign, recently hosted an event for families that attracted around 70 people. This suggests that greater promotion of libraries will increase usage across the city.



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Conversely, it suggests that decline in use may be in part due to poor promotion of the service by the Council.

**REPLY:**

- I do believe in delivering the outcomes libraries contribute to.
- We have taken a strategic approach to Bristol Libraries and the whole budget.
- The service has grown over time without a strategic plan of operation and continues to operate an out of date structure from several decades ago.
- I guarantee you the future decision on the shape of the library service will be strategic as it takes into account consistent opening hours, geographic spread throughout the City and areas of need and how it fits within the wider network of community assets.



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Tony Carey**

**Subject: UPDATE ON BUSINESS/COMMUNITY TOILET SCHEME**

1. I recall that the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Communities previously expressed confidence in her ability to secure more than enough businesses to sign up to this scheme to compensate for the closure of 18 public conveniences at the end of January 2018. Please can you confirm how many private commercial premises have to date joined this new network of accessible loos?

2. What consideration was given to engaging with the business community to jointly 'sponsor' the maintaining of a council-owned, on-street public toilet block?

**REPLY:**

1. As of 31 January 2018 BCC closed 18 public toilets. 14 of these toilets actually closed with four being taken on or are in the process of being taken on by other organisations.

Since January we have recruited 28 toilets to the Community Toilet Scheme which is double the number of toilets that closed. The Community Toilet Scheme includes businesses, medical centres, voluntary organisations, arts venues and council buildings. Examples are the Arnolfini, SS Great Britain, Broadwalk Shopping Centre, Windmill Hill City Farm, Waitrose (Henleaze), Asda (Hengrove), and Sea Mills Surgery.

These organisations are happy to make their facilities available to the city.

2. We have been open to all proposals for how to invest in our publicly accessible toilets.

The Downs Committee and Suspension Bridge Trust have taken on the management of some community toilets closed at the end of January. We are in active discussion with other organisations about exploring further opportunities.



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Matt Melias**

**Subject: MANDATORY TRAINING FOR TAXI DRIVERS**

1. In light of the recent suspension of three Hackney Carriage drivers for refusing to convey a disabled child, can the Mayor explain why completion of 'gold standard' training is only required of new licensed operators?

2. Does the Mayor think that this latest incident of discrimination indicates that there is a case for all taxi drivers licensed by BCC to pass this higher level of customer care?

**REPLY:**

- 1) This is a Licensing issue rather than an Executive issue. But we do want the best standard in transport.

The Gold Standard Training Programme is an extensive four day programme specifically designed for new drivers coming into the taxi trade. To apply this requirement to all existing taxi drivers might be considered disproportionate.

- 2) It's worth noting that we are proactively working with taxi drivers and this year we will host our second Taxi Conference at City Hall. At the first we had around 150 drivers discussing and planning how we get a taxi service that is good for the public and the drivers. At that event, the issue of disabled people not getting picked up was raised and drivers agreed it was not acceptable. We will revisit it at this year's conference.

Besides that, the Public Safety and Protection Committee has agreed that a targeted shorter duration training programme will be developed over the next twelve months that all taxi drivers will be required to attend.

The content of this programme will focus on refreshing the skills required to make our taxi drivers ambassadors for the City and will include training on the conveying of persons with access needs.



**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Steve Jones**

**Subject: DANGEROUS WALL IN NEED OF URGENT REPAIR**

In 2016, my colleague Cllr Morris and I reported a wall in Stockwood that the council deemed to be very dangerous. It has been fenced off ever since (apart from regular vandalism) thereby costing the council additional expense and continuing to endanger the lives of local residents and visitors. The council will not fix the wall due to estimated costs of £50,000 - £80,000.

1. Does the Mayor think this apparent tolerance of a clear and present danger to the public is an acceptable state of affairs?

2. Is the Mayor aware of any Council budget, or external source of funding, that could be used to urgently resolve this issue?

**Reply:**

1. The wall being referred to is on Hollway Road and is part of planter walls configuration outside the shopping precinct. These walls have been repaired and rebuilt on a number of occasions, but due to vandalism are consistently being damaged and pulled down.

These walls have been fenced off to secure this site and to prevent further vandalism. This site is visited on a monthly basis and any damage to the secure fencing compound is repaired or replaced. The area is therefore constantly monitored and the appropriate action taken.

2. There is no allocated budget to undertake full reconstruction of these walls, but we will continue to look for resource. I invite you to work with us to look for resource from within and outside the organisation.

