

Member Forum

17 July 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 enclosed.
- 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 supplementary questions will be rotated between the political groups that have submitted questions, taken in priority order.



LABOUR QUESTION 1

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Don Alexander

Subject: Libraries

Members from across the chamber have welcomed the Mayor's decision to keep every library in the city – only possible because of the sound financial management of this Labour administration. Avonmouth, Sea Mills, and Shirehampton libraries in my ward are all safeguarded.

Into the future, modernisation and transformation will be important – particularly for Bristolians living in the outer estates where connectivity is already challenging.

Will the Mayor (and Cabinet) support communities and officers in looking at co-locating library services with other community services, including some of those which CSPs historically provided?

REPLY:

Due to the sound financial management you referred to, we have been able to remove the financial pressure on Bristol's library service.

We are going to modernise libraries, and that means looking at it within the whole citywide network of city assets such as surgeries, dentists, youth clubs and faith organisations. We will work with groups such as VOSCUR on this.

Libraries already provided some advice surgeries from voluntary groups and community organisations. Whilst they cannot replicate the CSP service which is now provided in a central location, the libraries themselves are neighbourhood assets that can be used as venues for other services or organisations.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 1

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr John Goulandris

Subject: Bristol Arena

1. Does the Mayor believe that building the Arena at Filton carries no financial risk to BCC or danger that it will not be delivered at all?
2. Can the Mayor quantify the level of the comparative risks attached to the alternative (Filton) site option for the Arena?

REPLY:

1. The Filton offer is a privately built arena, so there is no financial risk to BCC. But any project has a delivery risk attached to it.
2. No.



GREEN QUESTION 1

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Martin Fodor

Subject: Bristol Arena decision making process

1. What are your proposed timescales and decision making criteria for making your decision on the proposed location of the Bristol arena?
2. What will be the opportunity for public scrutiny of this decision?

REPLY:

1. You're still asking the wrong questions. The process for decision making is at a public cabinet – where everyone will see the criteria I will use.
2. The value for money review has been shared with scrutiny and the public so that they can form views based on evidence. This is a big decision for the city, and one I am determined to get right and this will take on board the various views and interests of the whole city.



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 1

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Gary Hopkins

Subject: Libraries

1. There has been a reference given to a private donation or donations to help keep the libraries open. Can we have the amounts involved and if these are one offs or ongoing commitments are involved?

2. Given that we have no commitment to a sustainable plan can we have a clear assurance that the Mayor will ensure that sufficient funds are in the 2020 -2021 budget to allow a new administration to put in place a long term solution?

REPLY:

1. No. You can't be trusted with sensitive information.

2. You're missing the point. By maintaining the funding to 2020 what we have done is taken the pressure off the libraries.

This is far from a question of just finance. We are working with communities to find a model for each library that makes it sustainable. You'll be a part of that. We would welcome you bringing your 16 years of council experience to bare in this one moment and share your solution.

The 2020 administration will make decisions of its own, and will hopefully be as financially sound as this one.



LABOUR QUESTION 2

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Tom Brook

Subject: Rail plans, including Bishopston and Ashley Down

Given the recent Cabinet approval of MetroWest Phase 1, could the Mayor give Members an update of the latest progress and timescales for our other rail plans for Bristol, namely MetroWest Phase 2 (including Ashley Down station in my ward) and Phase 3, as well as Portway Park & Ride and a mass rapid transit system?

REPLY:

Earlier this month, Cabinet approved our continued support to MetroWest Phase 1. I am keen to work with North Somerset council and the Department for Transport on identifying funding to meet the current shortfall.

The development of MetroWest Phase 2, which includes a new station at Ashley Down, is continuing with completion planned for 2021.

The new station at Portway Park & Ride is planned for completion in 2020, following our successful funding award from the Department for Transport last year. A planning application will be submitted for the station later this year.

A mass transit study is underway, technical work is due to complete in December 2018, with public engagement planned for 2019.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 2

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Geoff Gollop

Subject: Bristol Arena

1. Having watched our proceedings, and then expressed frustration over the direction taken by scrutiny in our inquiries, can the Mayor explain why he did not see fit to advise scrutiny of these concerns during this process?
2. The Mayor is critical of members for taking 'at face value' the apparent 'new' offer to bridge the funding gap at Temple Island. Yet, he knew that we would have no way of evaluating the basis for the various financial forecasts contained in the VfM reports (due to being denied access to such information). Without a way of testing these claims, scrutiny was asked to accept 'at face value' the economic projections in the KPMG reports. Can the Mayor reassure me that this whole investigation was not a charade, with scrutiny essentially set up to fail?

REPLY:

1. I wasn't invited to attend. It is also right that the administration does not interfere with the Scrutiny process.
2. First, I wasn't critical of all members. I had serious questions of the scrutiny process you led.

We want and need scrutiny to work, both as a check on group think and as an evidenced based generator of policy solutions. But we need scrutiny to be accountable to the city, and the interests of the city, not party political interests.

As chair of OSMB, are you suggesting it failed?



GREEN QUESTION 2

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Carla Denyer Subject: Bristol Airport expansion

1. Does the Mayor understand the critical importance of the UK sticking to its carbon emissions targets, to prevent abrupt and irreversible changes that will wreck livelihoods and make the economy the least of our worries, as we face more of the droughts, crop failures, disease and flooding that we are already seeing on all continents?

2. In light of the recent analysis that has shown that airport expansion disproportionately benefits the richest 10% while harming us all through climate change, air pollution and noise pollution; and in light of the recently agreed expansion of Heathrow Airport, which puts the UK on a trajectory to miss its carbon emissions targets unless drastic actions are taken; will the Mayor reconsider his previous position of supporting the expansion of Bristol Airport?

Sources:

- IPCC Climate Change 2014 Synthesis Report Summary for Policymakers: http://ar5-syr.ipcc.ch/topic_summary.php
- News article about the IPCC 2014 reports: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/mar/28/ipcc-report-climate-change-report-human-natural-systems>
- Analysis showing that airport expansion will increase inequalities: <https://theconversation.com/heathrows-third-runway-is-expensive-polluting-and-unequal-why-the-poor-will-lose-out-98781>
- News article about the very high chance of missing the UK climate change targets if Heathrow expansion goes ahead: <https://www.independent.co.uk/infact/heathrow-airport-expansion-vote-third-runway-climate-change-chris-grayling-a8415881.html>

REPLY:

1. Yes, and I am committed to reaching our target of being carbon neutral for the city in 2050, while tackling the challenges of energy injustice today.

2. I have no more say over the Heathrow 3rd runway than you do.

Bristol Airport is an integral part of our local economy and I fully support the expansion of Bristol Airport.

The expansion will bring clear economic benefits to the City and wider region, especially in areas in South Bristol which suffer high levels of deprivation and poor access to economic opportunity. The airport will provide sustainable jobs, particularly as we work to improve the sustainable transport links between the city and the airport.

Can you confirm the Green group is against airport expansion and the reasons why? Can you tell us why you are opposed to the expansion of a large Bristol employer and how would you replace the economic impact on the city?



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 2

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Anthony Negus

Subject: What is a library?

The next few weeks need to be used productively to establish the basis of a sustainable future after 2020 for our promised modernised and fully-networked integrated library service.

Will the Mayor and Cabinet establish and guarantee a minimum standard of provision of library, service delivering information and opportunity in all 'community' as well as 'core' libraries?

REPLY:

There will be no need for distinction between community or core libraries as ALL 27 libraries are being retained. The previous proposal has not been accepted or approved so all 27 libraries will continue to be fully integrated and networked with Libraries West.

You're missing the point. By maintaining the funding to 2020 what we have done is taken the pressure off the libraries.

This is far from a question of just finance. We are working with communities to find a model for each library that makes it sustainable. You'll be a part of that. We would welcome you bringing your 9 years of council experience to bear in this one moment and share your solution.



LABOUR QUESTION 3

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Estella Tincknell

Subject: Parking

There has been an exponential increase in parking problems at the Cheswick Village estate in Lockleaze, caused by various pressures, including an unacceptable number of family homes sold as HMOs, and parking by MOD employees and UWE students. While councillors from both sides of the border are seeking to resolve these problems locally, we are aware that they are likely to worsen without strategic action. We would therefore like to ask the Mayor to support a parking strategy and action on HMOs across the sub-region in the spatial planning process?

REPLY:

The Bristol Local Plan is currently under review. This includes consideration and review of parking standards for new development to ensure parking provision is fully considered in planning and design. Additionally work is being undertaken to allow planning control of HMOs where provision is likely to result in harmful impacts and /or concentrations. This includes a review of potential for application of Article 4 directions.

While cross border working is not part of the local plan review or Joint Spatial Plan, this can be agreed separately as part of joint working on this issue. The issues around Creswicke Village are in part due to student and MOD employee parking as you pointed out; this may well require parking restrictions and enforcement as well as policy changes.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 3

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Steve Smith

Subject: Future of libraries

1. Like many people, I was excited by the Mayor's revelation that 'Banksy' had volunteered to help support Bristol's Library Service. Is the Mayor now in a position to share further details on the form such assistance might take?

2. Can the Mayor confirm at this time that it is his intention to fully fund the Library Service in 2019/20 and 2020/21 – the financial year in which the next Mayoral election falls?

REPLY:

1. The papers hammed this up. All I said was what I said in cabinet, we had an exchange of emails. There isn't really anymore to say.

2. By maintaining the funding to 2020 what we have done is taken the pressure off the libraries.

This is far from a question of just finance. We are working with communities to find a model for each library that makes it sustainable. You'll be a part of that. We would welcome you bringing your ideas and share your solution.

The 2020 administration will make decisions of its own, and will hopefully be as financially sound as this one.



GREEN QUESTION 3

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Paula O'Rourke

Subject: Interim members of staff

We are concerned at the level of costs that the Council is incurring for payment of interim members of staff, particularly at a senior level. As well as representing potentially poor value for money this also results in us being in breach of our 10:1 pay policy. We note the comments of Meg Hillier, Chairwoman of Parliament's public accounts committee earlier in July that, "Departments should only use contractors when absolutely necessary to fill a gap and when they present value for money."

Please could the Mayor confirm which interim roles are being paid more than £1000 per day and what is the proposed timescale for recruiting full time members of staff for these positions?

REPLY:

We continue to apply the 10:1 pay policy. We have continued to fill permanent roles across the council and now have a very effective senior team.

We have reduced the cost of the senior management team by almost £1m a year.



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 3
Question to the Mayor from Cllr Jos Clark
Subject: Libraries

Residents in Brislington have had a really tricky time in the last few years as the Wick Road Library has been under threat several times over the past few years. What residents of Brislington and across the city really crave is certainty of their Council supported Library Service moving forward.

Can the Mayor assure residents that Wick Road Library will benefit from investment and improvement in the upcoming review?

REPLY:

What residents of Brislington, and the whole of Bristol, need is a financially competent local authority which delivers on Adult social care, children's mental health services, carer support, meals on wheels and homelessness services, while building homes and an inclusive economy and a thousand other things we do. Libraries are an important part of this, but as a councillor you have to show how they fit into a bigger context.

Same as I've said to your Lib Dem colleagues: you're missing the point. By maintaining the funding to 2020 what we have done is taken the pressure off the libraries.

This is far from a question of just finance. We are working with communities to find a model for each library that makes it sustainable. You'll be a part of that. We would welcome you bringing your 2 years' experience at the council to bare in this one moment and share your solution.



LABOUR QUESTION 4

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Gill Kirk

Subject: Parking

As local councillors we have set up a working group to bring together councillors, MPs, officers, and executive members from both Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council to address the issues mentioned earlier by Cllr Tincknell. Would the Mayor support a cross border approach by requesting a meeting with both his counterpart the leader of South Gloucestershire Council, the MOD, and UWE, and confirm whether early passenger numbers on the nearby Metrobus route can be expected to have an impact?

REPLY:

I will ask the transport lead for transport to pick this issue up and lead with her opposite number in South Glos.

I'll of course support you I the process and commend your approach bringing partners together. This is the approach we are taking to the city, and working with neighbours and institutions is the only way it will succeed



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 4

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Matt Melias

Subject: Annual Avonmouth fly fest

1. Has the Mayor been following the misery caused to local residents by the latest fly infestation to hit homes in my ward?
2. It has been reported that the Environment Agency has found no breach of its regulations around the storage of organic waste but clearly more needs to be done to resolve this problem. Can you commit to the appropriate resources and officer time in order to identify the cause of this issue?

REPLY:

1. I am aware of the problem, something which Darren Jones MP has highlighted – and I am concerned at what is clearly a serious issue.
2. We do already have resources committed to this, we are continuing to work closely with the Environment Agency and this will continue.

Obviously fly numbers do increase naturally in warm weather, of which we've had a sustained period recently. It is very difficult to pinpoint one cause, and we will continue to work with BWC and would welcome any help, input or ideas about breach of conditions from local councillors.



GREEN QUESTION 4

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Eleanor Combley

Subject: Universal Credit delays and evictions

Households that move onto receiving Universal Credit will have a minimum 6 week delay (though many have reported more) before receiving any income after claiming, meaning that many people are likely to fall into rent arrears, fuel and food poverty.

Will the Mayor publicly give the council's commitment not to evict council tenants who fall into rent arrears when they are moved onto Universal Credit and call on all landlords in Bristol to follow the Council's example in making a similar commitment to their tenants, so that no tenant in Bristol needs to fear eviction because of a move onto Universal Credit?

REPLY:

Local government is facing the challenge not only of austerity, but of working with reduced finances to tackle problems created by bad national policy which hurt our people. Universal Credit and its anticipated impact on debt and homelessness is an example of that.

We are working closely with Council Tenants as they transition to Universal Credit and our ethos firmly remains around sustaining tenancies wherever possible in an effort to keep families and vulnerable people in their homes.

We have implemented a triage programme so we can tailor support and advice accordingly, and we will continue to work alongside partners and support agencies across the City to minimise the impact of Welfare Reform.

We've also taken a lead in protecting people in the private letting sector with the ethical letting charter and the landlord licensing scheme. We continue to lobby government for the powers we need.



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 4

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Anthony Negus

Subject: Unrestrained commercial vandalism to our public realm

We have all seen unsympathetic interventions and repairs that, especially in conservation areas, devalue our streets. This is particularly galling where huge sums of public money have been spent to upgrade our city centre, on the back of the Metrobus works, to a high standard only to be wrecked almost immediately by contractors for utilities companies. Answers from officers on this use terms such as “disappointing” and “frustrating” because they say there is nothing that can be done to regulate such poor quality work by third-party commercial organisations. This affects the safety and well-being of our citizens and requires them to pay for shoddy work by private companies to be restored. This should not be tolerated.

In 2012 a document provisionally titled the Highways Protocol which I had put together with officers was not signed off by Bristol City Council. It focused on eliminating those practices by others that downgraded our city and cost our taxpayers money. Something like it should be in our armoury. There are many other instances where this Council accepts spending taxpayers money rather than confronting the issues and the perpetrators.

Will the Mayor set up a group to identify the range of such insults and examining different ways to address them, such as prevention, tariffs, contracts and protocols, seeking greater powers from Westminster, through WECA, enforcement and penalties?

REPLY:

You are welcome to convene a group and chair it.

By way of background, in 2017/18 3,856 Utility works inspections were carried out by BCC officers. These inspections resulted in 96 defects being identified and resolved, giving a compliance rate of 97.6%.

The Draft Bristol Highways protocol 2011 was aimed primarily at highlighting the importance of protecting and retaining high quality materials during design and construction. It is a useful tool, but would not stop statutory works by Utility companies so we have to rely on effective inspection and building good partnership working with Utilities. I hope that your group can work towards that. I would support your efforts to secure greater powers from Westminster on this issue.



LABOUR QUESTION 5

Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Mark Bradshaw

Subject: Road safety

Can the Mayor outline what action his officers will be taking to improve safety for people using South Liberty Lane; the narrow railway bridge there and also the nearby complicated junction with Winterstoke Road?

REPLY:

We are aware of ongoing concerns regarding safety, parking, access for HGVs, and the condition of the narrow bridge and accompanying footways.

You were of course the cabinet lead for transport for several years, I'd welcome a brief on what you did to address the issues and some suggestions on what needs to happen next and I'll raise it with the cabinet member.

For background, £100k has been included in the 2018/19 Transport Capital Programme to replace the traffic signals on the narrow bridge and resurface.

It has been confirmed that there is S106 funding (£10k) available that could be used to implement further parking restrictions in the area. There are further local S106 contributions that the Area Committee may be asked to apply in this area.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 5

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Mark Weston

Subject: Planned parking charges at Blaise estate

1. What is the total cost to the council of introducing parking charges at Blaise Castle and what is the total expected revenue (including the cost of any traffic mitigation measures in the surround area)?
2. Has a parking impact study been conducted on what the impact could be on neighbouring roads?

REPLY:

1. Total costs cannot be determined until the final scheme is worked up following consultation. We'll give you the information once this takes place.
2. An assessment of on-street parking restrictions has been made. It responds to known parking issues around the Estate. New parking restrictions are incorporated into the proposed Traffic Regulation Order as part of the package. If the consultation identifies other issues that residents feel should be included this can be considered.



GREEN QUESTION 5

Questions to the Mayor / Cllr Dudd from Cllr Charlie Bolton

Subject: Access to recycling centres

I have been contacted by a resident who objects to being unable to get into a recycling centre by walking.

He regards it as an act of discrimination against those who do not own cars. 28.9% of Bristol households have no access to a car or van, according to the 2011 census.

I have been advised that:

“in other council areas such as South Glos they do have some provision see <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/documents/Pedestrian-access-to-SICs.pdf> where a member of the public phones ahead to make sure a member of staff is available to escort people safely on and off site.”

My questions – for either the Mayor or Cllr Dudd – are:

1. What is the policy in Bristol for people walking or cycling into recycling centres?
2. Will you introduce a system similar to that in S. Gloucestershire?

REPLY:

1. Demand for pedestrian access is low.

A defined ‘walking in waste’ policy does not currently exist for Household Waste Recycling Centres.

Like many other local authorities, pedestrian access to Bristol sites is prohibited for Health and Safety reasons. This is not a case of ‘health and safety gone mad’ but currently the waste industry has an accident and fatality rate 16 times greater than any other UK industry. So H&S must be a key consideration when developing any new policy not only on the site itself but safe access to and from the sites.

2. We are carrying out a feasibility study to determine the options available at each HWRC for pedestrian and non-vehicular access in order to determine any future policy.



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 5
Question to the Mayor from Cllr Jos Clark
Subject: Arena

Residents in Brislington welcome the opportunity to have a world class venue close to home and see the benefits to the local economy and improvements of quality to local people's lives.

I would welcome an update on progress with securing the Arena Venue at Temple Meads?

REPLY:

Firstly, that's a big claim. Not everyone does want an arena on their doorstep, drawing thousands of event goers and cars to their area.

But, leaving that aside, I will be taking a document to the next cabinet meeting.



LABOUR QUESTION 6

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Don Alexander

Subject: Bristol Port

Bristol's port provides and supports direct and indirect employment for thousands of Bristolians, and also has a big impact on our city's environment. Please can the Mayor provide an update on the council's work in this area?

REPLY:

I recognise Bristol Port is a really important institution in the city. Along with the airport and train station it is a huge city asset, is a major employer and we want it to succeed.

In March I met with the owners and directors at the Port we talked about a number of topics, their great reputation for employing apprentices, the role they will play in the Hinkley Point development and how they feel Brexit is going to impact on their operations.

We also talked about their environmental impact.

Nicola Beech and I raised concerns about mooted proposals for a tarmac processing plant on the site and other polluting industry. It was a tense conversation but we are trying to protect local residents from the negative impact of this sort of industry through the Local Plan while supporting the port.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 6

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Chris Windows

Subject: Parking charges at Blaise estate

1. Has an assessment been made on the effect of these charges on visitor numbers to the park?
2. Has any calculation been made on the impact of these charges on footfall for the Blaise Castle House Museum?

REPLY:

We'll be using our experience of operating charging at Ashton Court Estate as our model. Which would indicate visitor numbers will be maintained. The experience suggests below a price threshold it is maintaining and improving the quality of the experience is the main factor in driving visitor numbers.

We want to ensure that the parks are accessible for local residents, who can of course walk and cycle.

The Traffic Regulation order is the subject of consultation and residents and others are invited to make comments on any aspect of the scheme, including charging.



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 6
Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Tim Kent
Subject: SEND

1. How many appeals against refusal to assess, to issue a plan, the detail of a plan, a refusal to change a plan following annual review, or a decision to cease the maintenance of a plan for Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) were made to the First-Tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) in 2015, 2016 and 2017?
2. How many of these appeals have the council conceded before the hearing, lost at tribunal and won at tribunal (each result listed separately by year)?

REPLY:

Please see below:

Bristol City Council SEND Tribunal Data				
	01/09/14 – 31/08/15	01/09/15 – 31/08/16	01/09/16 – 31/08/17	01/09/17 – 31/08/18
Number of appeals lodged	21	36	54	25
Numbers of refusal to assess appeals	15	16	32	14
Number of appeals in relation to Sections B (SEN), E (Outcomes) and F (Special Educational provision)	1	16	17	10
Number of appeals in relation to Section I (named educational provision)	4	4	3	1
Number of extended rights of appeal: sections C&G (Health needs and provision) and D&H (Social Care needs and provision)	Extended rights of appeal did not exist at this time and started as of 03/04/2018 – an appeal against the education aspect of an EHCP (Sections B&F) must be active in order for there to be an appeal against Health and or Social Care			0
Number of appeals in relation to the decision not to amend an EHCP following statutory EHCP Annual Review	1	0	1	0
Number of cease to maintain an EHCP appeals	0	0	1	0
Pre Hearing Outcomes:				
Parental withdrawal	12	20	21	1
Local Authority Conceded	6	9	11	15
Parental Agreement – consent order issued	Consent orders did not exist at this time.		11	2
Struck out	0	2	1	0
Post Hearing Outcomes:				
Upheld in favour of parent carer or young person	2	3	4	0
Not upheld (found in favour of the Local Authority)	1	2	5	1
Partly upheld in favour of the parent/carers or young person	0	0	0	0
Number where outcome is not yet known – appeal is still active	0	0	0	6



Bristol has 2,262 Education Health and Care Plans – requests for EHC Needs Assessments have more than doubled since 2016 and this is particularly noticeable at the time of transfer between primary and secondary schooling.

The number of appeals lodged has reduced by approximately 50% over the past 12 months due to the fact that the legal test is applied at every EHC Needs Assessment Panel since June 2017 – this was not the case previously in Bristol, as in other Local Authorities. The legal test is also applied at the EHCP Panel (decision whether or not to proceed to securing an EHCP, based on the outcomes of the EHC Needs Assessment).

Appeals in relation to sections B-I have also decreased as the LA has actively sought the correct specification and quantification in relation to provision in EHCPs from Local Area contributors (Education settings, LA Education teams, Health providers and Social Care practitioners) since August 2017 – this was and is a workforce development issue that continues to be addressed across the Local Area.



LABOUR QUESTION 7

Question to the Mayor from Cllr Mike Davies

Subject: E-petitions

A change has been made to the Bristol City Council e-petitions website, requiring users to set up an account on the website in order to sign a petition, compared to the previous situation where users merely had to fill in a short form (as is the case with other online petition sites).

Making it less straightforward for people to sign these petitions means it is less likely that campaigns can achieve the number of signatures required to trigger a Full Council debate. Why was this change made and can there be consideration for it to be reversed?

REPLY:

The contract for the previous petition service came to an end. Now we brought this in house to make a saving and migrated the petition service to our current committee management system.

It is still straightforward to submit a petition to the democratic services team. This is only one mechanism of many available to councillors and the public. We will still accept names in any forms including hand written or using other websites.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 7

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Richard Eddy

Subject: Parks & open spaces' grounds maintenance

1. Can the Mayor kindly confirm my understanding that the commencement of this year's Parks & Open Spaces' grounds maintenance was delayed from February until Easter allegedly by the earlier 'wet winter'?
2. Bearing in mind large parts of South Bristol in particular still await their regular grounds maintenance, can the Mayor provide me with any reassurance that our contractors are now 'catching-up' with the back-log of work?

REPLY:

1. The Parks Service started its routine grass cutting a little later than normal across a number of sites due to wet grounds conditions. Those sites that could be cut safely were started earliest. Some wet ground creates slippery and boggy conditions and a health and safety hazard for operators.

Routine grass cutting started for many sites during April.

2. Grounds maintenance in south Bristol is operating normally and there is no backlog.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 8

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Peter Abraham

Subject: Enforcement action against unlawful encampments

Q1. Section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 gives the police power to move travellers on without the landowner having to go through costly and time consuming legal action. Once again this summer travellers have illegally occupied part of the Downs, depriving families from being able freely to enjoy this space in good weather. Many local residents rang the police asking them to use the Section 61 provision but the police said it was a Council matter. The Council duly obtained a court order and the travellers were moved but, obviously, there was a time delay and this was achieved at some considerable financial cost to Bristol City Council.

Does the Mayor agree that it would be helpful if the police used their Section 61 powers - which would see travellers move on faster and save the Council money and, if so, will he commit to writing to Sue Mountstevens, PCC, to ask her to encourage her Force to invoke this specific legislation, when so requested by Bristol City Council?

Q2. Clearing up after the travellers leave is expensive and the costs fall on hard working council tax payers. In the case of the recent Downs illegal occupation, the travellers had some very expensive vehicles and clearly were wealthy individuals. Their inventory included a number of vehicles that are traceable via DVLA and/or the police (details of number plates supplied separately).

What steps are being taken by Bristol City Council to recover the costs of the clean-up operation from the owners of these expensive vehicles?

REPLY:

1. The City Council and Avon and Somerset Constabulary have a protocol for Managing Unauthorised Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) encampments which can be found at: <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/33379/Managing+Unauthorised+encampments+protocol>

The protocol mirrors the advice issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government and the National Police Chiefs Council on how the City Council and Police will manage an unauthorised encampment on public land in the City.

When considering what organisation will take action to remove the encampment the City Council and police must consider whether they have responsibilities for the encampment under the Equality Act 2010. This duty covers all racial groups, including Gypsies and Irish Travellers who are recognised ethnic groups. Local authorities and Police must always be able to show that they have properly considered the equalities implications of their policies/protocols and actions in relation to unauthorised encampments. They must be able to demonstrate that their policies/protocols and actions are proportionate bearing in mind all the circumstances of the case. As a result a welfare assessment is always undertaken to determine whether we have any responsibilities to the group, irrespective of whether the police or the City Council will be taking action.



Under the protocol each encampment is assessed to determine whether its presence will cause a high or a low impact. The matters which are considered in determining the encampment classification are:

- The nature, suitability or obtrusiveness of the encampment;
- The size of the group, their behaviour and level of any nuisance.
- The number, validity and seriousness of any complaints.
- The level of damage caused by the occupiers.

Where an encampment is considered to be a high impact the police will use their powers under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

In the case of the most recent encampment on the Downs on the 17th of May 2018 it was considered that the encampment was not a high impact and as a result the City Council took the lead in removing the group from the Downs. The encampment comprised five caravans which were located some distance away from residential properties.

Although the police received numerous calls in respect to encampment, there were few complaints in relation to the group's behaviour or damaged being caused. As a result it was agreed that the City Council would take possession action which resulted in the group leaving at the end of May.

With all GRT encampments in the City there is always close cooperation on the assessment of the group and discussions on the most appropriate organisation will take action police.

2. Unless an officer from the City Council or a Police officer witnesses a person dropping or leaving waste, taking successful legal action against that individual or group action will be unsuccessful as you need the name of the individual to take a successful prosecution.

As a result no action will be taken to recover the clear up costs from the group.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 9

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Steve Jones

Subject: Current review of 20 mph zones

1. The Labour Manifesto implied all of these zones would be reviewed, with a view to making recommendations on how they can be made to work. Does the Mayor believe this survey (which is limited to listed roads) fulfils that commitment?

2. I understand that any changes to speed limits (whether upwards or downwards) will only be considered where supported by evidence. Please explain how such subjective factors as 'public opinion/perception/local experience' are to be objectively weighted, evaluated and calculated?

REPLY:

1. The survey is clear and states that the review is about making local adjustments where needed to improve their effectiveness.

The survey concentrates on 82 roads identified for review from information gathered through Councillors, the public and stakeholders, and through the UWE monitoring report. Whilst the review concentrates on these marginal roads, all roads are in scope and any resident can add any road to the review. The review must be councillor led.

2. Evidence is required as part of the statutory process to justify a change to any speed limit. Evidence for each road will be considered individually and will feed into a recommended outcome.

The review is not just about changes in speed limits there are several possible outcomes that include: Community Speed Watch, pace cars, lines and signs, changing road layouts (e.g. removing centre lines, changing speed limit boundaries, traffic calming measures) as well as changes in speed limits.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 10

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Claire Hiscott

Subject: Bristol Arena

1. At the last Cabinet meeting, in a classic example of diversion, distraction and deflection, the Mayor focussed on the circumstances of his non-attendance in the scrutiny process. Did the Mayor know that he could have attended and contributed to any of these extraordinary meetings?

2. Was the Mayor actually aware of the Scrutiny Management Board's remit in this matter?

REPLY:

1. The point is scrutiny publicly stated and then made a story out of me being invited and not attending. But I hadn't been invited.

Having not been, I think it is right that the administration does not overplay its role in scrutiny.

2. I am struggling to follow the question? What matter? The invitation? The best use of Temple Island? The Value for Money review?



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 11

Questions to the Mayor from Cllr Graham Morris

Subject: Bristol Arena

1. Can the Mayor be more precise on the timescale he envisages for making a final decision on the Arena site?
2. In preferring to frame the debate in terms of 'what is the best use of Temple Island' rather than affordability is the Mayor not in danger of pre-determining the outcome of the VfM study?

REPLY:

1. It will come through the cabinet process. By holding our nerve we've been able to reduce the council's exposure to risk.
2. You misunderstand; we are not running one question at the expense of another. We're running them in the correct sequence.

I don't understand why you think it predetermines a decision. Perhaps you could explain this point further.

