

Member Forum

14 January 2020

Statements from Councillors



Procedural note:

STATEMENTS FROM COUNCILLORS:

- A maximum of 1 minute shall be allowed for the presentation of each statement (subject to overall time constraints).
- There shall be no debate on the statements and the Lord Mayor shall refer them to the Mayor for information/consideration.
- Statements will be dealt with in the order of receipt (subject to time).



The following statements have been submitted – full details are attached:

	Name	Title
CS01	Councillor Clive Stevens	Reboot Democracy
CS02	Councillor Jerome Thomas	Closure of Public Right of Way – Church Steps BS8
CS03	Councillor Paula O’Rourke	Changes to Parking Permits

CS01**Members’ Forum statement from Councillor Clive Stevens****Subject – Reboot Democracy**

I do hope you support the motion “reboot democracy” later today.

I will be supporting it because I think that democracy is more than just electing representatives to scrutinise and take decisions. That is old fashioned and needs to be supplemented with new approaches and the two in the motion are examples that have worked elsewhere.

Representative democracy was invented hundreds of years ago when the only voters were property owners and businessmen. In those days they needed someone they could trust to go to Parliament to make sure the King (or Queen) didn’t raise taxes to pay to wage wars for example. So the rest of them could concentrate on making money.

Some things have moved on since then including virtually everyone over 18 having the opportunity to vote and in 1911 MPs finally got to be paid. Western societies also came to the conclusion that legitimacy to rule comes from the people and not from God.

So we should be thinking how we expand that legitimacy from the people.

An example that nearly worked in Bristol, it did for a while, was the early neighbourhood partnerships. I’m talking about 2009 and 2010 when it was just well-being grants without any of the bureaucracy that came in shortly after along with the extra money, that eventually strangled them.

Also the Swiss have a system of direct democracy with regular referendums.

So there are other approaches. We voters are better educated now, our fight in Parliament isn’t vs the King but between different groups with different priorities, there is more technology, higher population densities, for some of us more leisure time, much more knowledge but there is disinformation out there and unfortunately less trust in representatives.

I’m not saying to stop the current forms, I’m saying add to them, make sure we the people know the facts and have a fair say, so the ideas proposed in the motion look good to me.



CS02

Members' Forum statement from Councillor Jerome Thomas

Subject – Closure of Public Right of Way – Church Path Steps BS8

I am concerned at the way in which an important pedestrian public right of way in my ward has been closed with no information about when it is likely to be reopened.

The closure of Church Path Steps is due to the partial collapse of a retaining wall (rear of Mardyke Pub) which supports the public right of way. At this time the council is unsure of the duration of the closure. The Bridges and Highways Structures Team says that ownership of this wall will need to be determined before any remedial works take place.

I would like to voice my concern

- 1) That councillors were not informed of the closure.
- 2) That ownership of the wall has to be determined before repair works take place.

Elsewhere in Bristol it has taken four years to bring the pavement at Redland Hill back into use and the Kingsweston footbridge has been closed for more than four years with no confirmed date for its repair. Residents in Cliftonwood are concerned that they could experience similar delays before this footpath is reopened.

If this were a road used by cars it would be re-opened immediately. I call on the Council to repair the wall straightaway and then charge the owner of the wall (once ownership is ascertained). This would mean that people in Cliftonwood and Clifton can start reusing, as soon as possible, this important public right of way which links them to the shops and public transport on the Hotwell Road. It would also demonstrate that the Council is beginning to treat the walkers in the city with the level of care and respect that they deserve.



CS03

Members' Forum statement from Councillor Paula O'Rourke
Subject – Changes to Parking Permits

I understand that the move to digital permits is inevitable and in general it is a really good idea as it is cost effective, reduces carbon emissions and limits fraud. I also know that, when implementing change, officers try to foresee and mitigate problems prior to implementation.

However, there are two areas in the digitisation of permits where I'd like to draw attention to some lack of oversight.

The first is communication: with the recent changes to parking permits, it has become clear that communicating with the public via newspaper adverts and our website does not reach enough people. I think that social media could be more effective means to let people know about changes. Certainly, the amount of dialogue about parking permits on Next Door is evidence of this!

Also, having had several conversations with officers, it is clear that the anticipation that paper scratch cards could be limited to a very small minority has been disproved. I know that the aim is to limit fraud, so making the application for scratch cards should be relatively rigorous. However, the website did not seem to allow for any way of applying for them and the process of establishing a criteria has not been thought through.

We leave ourselves open to accusations of age discrimination if the elderly population cannot receive paper permits but are forced to use the phone or computers.

I have received verbal assurances that the website will be changed and that those who really need to use scratch cards will be able to do so - even going beyond 2022. I hope that the Mayor recognises and supports this need.

