

Question: CS2.1

Cabinet – 2nd June 2020

Re: Agenda item 2 – Public Forum

Statement submitted by: Councillor Martin Fodor

This meeting follows recent Licensing, Development Control, and the Extraordinary Full Council.

All have allowed live, virtual, public forum statements and questions or petitions.

Yet the papers state this [emphasis added]:

“Public Forum

Please note: written submissions can be considered at this meeting. The

meeting will be live streamed for members of the public to view via YouTube, **but there will not be an opportunity to participate in the meeting.**

Up to one hour is allowed for this item

Any member of the public or Councillor may submit Public Forum. Petitions, statements and questions received by the deadlines below will be taken at the start of the agenda item to which they relate.”

As the main decision making meeting of the council it was worrying that the papers made it appear it would have the least public participation of all when all the facilities exist and have been demonstrated to work for virtual participation. It turns out this was an error and people can be heard. But surely the papers should have been amended to make clear public participation was welcomed?

On a separate note, again and again at the recent Extraordinary Full Council the Mayor started that it was not the time or place for questions about matters of public concern [regarding Bristol Energy] as the subject was on the Cabinet Agenda and everything could and would be dealt with there. He referred countless questioners to this meeting as the right one for discussion about the future of the company and how it has been managed. He said the papers will cover this matter.

We now find there are no published documents - the entire item on the subject is exempt - and no possibility of presented statements or getting meaningful answers to questions as participation is not allowed and there is nothing to have sight of to refer to, anyway.

What does this say about transparency, democracy and a commitment to open meetings?

Why should the main decision making meeting of the city be subject of the lower standards of participation and opaque decision making - and given the Mayor would have known he was shielded from scrutiny on this matter will he be explaining and apologising for misleading members of the public and councillors before excluding us from the item during the meeting?