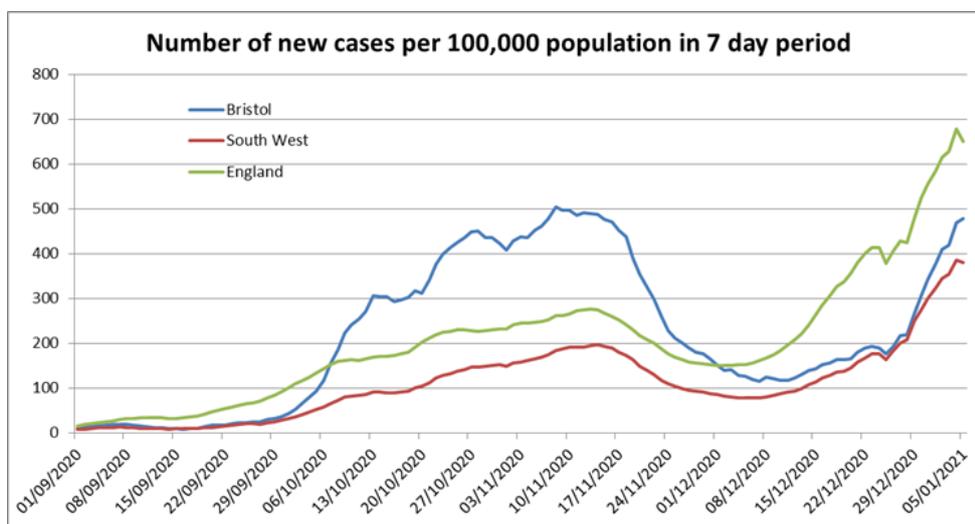


Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Marg Hickman**Subject: Covid rates in Bristol**

1. Could the Mayor provide a further update on the coronavirus pandemic and the response of both the council and city partners?

Reply:

Bristol's infection rate is 478 new cases per 100,000 people, 275 people were in local hospitals with COVID-19 symptoms on 6 January.



Information on the current restrictions and on support available for residents and businesses can be found at www.bristol.gov.uk/coronavirus.

If residents need help getting food or essential medicines, they can call the We Are Bristol helpline on 0800 694 0184 (Monday-Friday 8:30am-5pm; Saturday-Sunday 10am-2pm). A 24/7 helpline is available for people in Bristol to get immediate emotional and practical mental health support on 0800 012 6549.

We continue to support school leaders' decision making in their efforts to maintain access to education, and continue to press the government to make equipment available to families so that children can access remote learning.

One-off top-ups grants are available businesses that have closed. We are awaiting further details on how we can share further discretionary grants out, but the discretionary grants provided to councils by government so far have not been nearly sufficient to fill in gaps in support.

We are moving towards a programme of enhanced community testing, following the introduction of lateral flow (rapid) COVID-19 tests at Bristol Port, and with our universities.

Vaccinations began in early December, with Southmead Hospital one of the first to receive the vaccine. We continue to support the NHS with the rollout of the vaccine across Bristol, and we welcome that Ashton Gate has been confirmed as one of seven “super vaccination centres” across England. We encourage residents *not* to contact the NHS to enquire about the vaccine – you will be contacted when it is your turn to receive it.

Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Weston

Subject: Local Democracy

Q1. In light of the continuing health crisis, can the Mayor confirm whether or not he has received any indication that tier restrictions could result in a further delay to already overdue local elections?

Q2. What contingency planning is taking place for holding the May polls even if normal political campaigning remains severely Covid curbed, curtailed or circumscribed?

Reply:

Q1. We have had no communication from government regarding any possible plans to postpone the May elections. We are planning for the May elections to take place.

Q2. The Council will be administering 4 elections in May: Bristol Mayor, Bristol Councillors, Police and Crime Commissioner and WECA Mayor. The Council's elections service has been progressing plans to deliver elections in May and regular planning meetings are chaired by the Council's Returning Officer.

In addition the Elections Service are working closely with elections teams in other councils to ensure a joined-up approach to the delivery of the PCC and WECA Mayor elections. The planning for the elections is being done in accordance with the latest and most up to date guidance from the Electoral Commission to deliver these elections in a transparent and efficient manner whilst also ensuring a Covid-secure compliant environment for electors, candidates and staff.

There will be widespread communication from both Bristol Council and the Electoral Commission that focus on the safe voting message, namely that there are 3 ways to vote (in person, by post and by proxy), you can vote in whatever manner best suits you and that regardless as to how you vote, all approaches are safe.

We want to encourage voter participation and are planning to engage with a broad range of community groups and the voluntary sector to ensure that the safe voting message reaches the whole city and that the effect and perception of Covid does not alter engagement and participation in the election.

The elections service will be providing resources for councillors to support voter engagement and participation and there will be a Member briefing on supporting voter engagement and participation in early February. We are trying to build in resilience in the voting process, naming by registering people to vote. We are working with our community development team. It would be great if all parties in the chamber would help reaching those who would normally fall off the electoral register.

Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Combley

Subject: History Commission

Q1. I note that in addition to the initial list of members we have seen back in September, a first part of the process was to complete the membership. Who are the 12 members of the History Commission (if they have now been appointed)?

Q2. What are its terms of reference (if they have now been agreed/written)?

Reply:

Q1. To date the following are members of the History Commission are:

- Prof Tim Cole (Chair) - Professor of Social History at the University of Bristol
- Dr Madge Dresser – Honorary Professor of History, University of Bristol
- Dr Shawn Sobers – Associate Professor of Cultural Interdisciplinary Practice, University of West of England
- Prof David Olusoga – Professor of Public History, University of Manchester
- Nigel Costley – Regional Secretary, Trades Union Congress
- Prof Alan Bogg – Professor in Law, University of Bristol
- Dr Joanna Burch-Brown – Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Bristol
- Estella Tincknell – Associate Professor in Film and Culture, University of West of England
- Helen Godwin – Cabinet Member for Women, Families & Homes, Bristol City Council

The current members of the History Commission are working on a number of different topics which includes establishing a process for recruiting more members to the group as the group must be more representative of the city's inhabitants. This includes a process for invitations on a temporary basis for each theme.

More information will be available on this process once it is concluded.

Q2. The Terms of Reference will be finalised at the next meeting at the end of this month and will be published.

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Gary Hopkins (Knowle Ward)

Subject: Jubilee Pool

1. The reopening of jubilee pool has been delayed by the mayor partly because of his fatally flawed “consultation” This was extended to early November but despite several requests the working group ,which gave such clear recommendations that appear now to be eventually being followed , has been refused the results to include in their public report.

Will the mayor now correct that absurdity and publish the full results in response to this question.

2. Operators Parkwood showed commendable commitment to the public health need and confidence in the local campaigners by agreeing to reopen the pool with minimal contribution from the council towards the extra costs imposed due to COVID and informed us in December of their agreement with the administration and they started work.

Why then was the council press department significantly later than this putting out a response saying that agreement had not been reached which later changed as a message to the working group that agreement had been reached but papers were unsigned?

Will the mayor now explain this and acknowledge that the misleading comms were potentially damaging. Will he also commit to sending to the working group all the relevant comms?

Reply:

Q1. There were over 1800 responses to the consultation, which takes time to collate and analyse.

The consultation report will be available as soon as it has been completed.

Q2. It was by holding our nerve in negotiations with Parkwood, and ignoring your personal calls to increase the council’s subsidy, that we reached an agreement with Parkwood that means Jubilee Pool will open until the end of its current contract in March 2022.

By taking seriously our responsibility for council tax payers money, I am delighted that we have reached an agreement to reopen the pool that is also cost effective for Bristol citizens.

I have received the report from the working group. Although it does not contain clear recommendations I am grateful to the group for its content.

In terms of our public relations, when you are the administration and not in opposition, we have a responsibility to communicate effectively and honestly. We issued a press release with details surrounding the pool and the agreement to open it for the duration of the current contract until March 2022 as soon as the agreement was finalised.

I am sure all members will be delighted that we have reached an agreement. A report on the future investment for a sustainable leisure offer will come to cabinet in the next two months.

Sadly, due to the national lockdown, Jubilee Pool is unable to reopen at the present time.

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Breckels, St George Troopers Hill ward

Subject: Government support for businesses

Does the Mayor have an estimate of the shortfall between the financial support needed by Bristol's businesses from the Government, compared to what they have actually received?

Reply:

While we welcome the Chancellor's announcement of additional business support for the lockdown, it is insufficient and unfair on the businesses closed but not eligible for the Retail Hospitality & Leisure (RH&L) grant, or those businesses open that could close by default, if not by law.

We think the shortfall for Bristol business, between the amount so far committed and estimated need, is £21.4 million. How we arrived at the estimate is set out below.

During the first lockdown 8,848 businesses were supported by business support grants worth £99m. This included 1,191 awards via the £4.7m discretionary fund. The support package did not include large businesses and many sectors were not eligible for either the national or local scheme due to the limitations on discretion.

Early indication is that the additional £4bn top up support grant for RH&L announced by the government is estimated to be c.£30.5m for Bristol (for the 6 weeks period), based on the approx. 6,200 eligible businesses designated as RH&L within our business rate system, at a rate of £4,000 - £9,000 per property.

Another c. £15m will be provided over the same period under the existing scheme for RH&L businesses, bringing the indicative funding to £45m (£6,000 - £13,500 per property) for these businesses. Feedback from businesses suggest that this is sufficient in relation to meeting fixed costs, abortive stock and income losses for what would be a busy trading period for many viable businesses.

In contrast, the new announcement of a residual £594m discretionary funding to support other impacted businesses, including those in the supply chain, would be roughly £4.6m for Bristol (15% of main grant). Added to the remaining discretionary fund from the November lockdown of £8m would result in an indicative discretionary fund of £12.6m for this period.

Early analysis indicates with the increase eligibility the number of businesses would be approx. 5,000. To provide parity of support for businesses not eligible for Retail Hospitality & Leisure grant or not business rate payers would cost in the region of £34.8m. That equates to a £21.4m shortfall in Bristol's need against the funding committed.

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor John Goulandris (Stoke Bishop)

Subject: AVON MUTUAL BANK

Q1. The Mayor has given £300,000 of Bristol taxpayers' money to Avon Mutual Bank, which has thus far spent £1m on set up expenses and does not yet have any customers. Would this money not have been better spent on additional support for the Bristol Credit Union, which has an established and impressive track record in assisting low income families with credit?

Q2. The business plan for this new enterprise shows the need to raise many millions of pounds in capital in order to be viable. This would be capital at risk. The Mayor has previously indicated that he does not intend to risk any additional taxpayer money on this speculative venture. Will he give a categorical public assurance that Bristol City Council will not, directly or indirectly, risk any further public money beyond the £300,000 already committed?

Reply:

Q1 – The support for Avon Community Bank and BCU are not mutually exclusive. Avon Mutual's key added value for vulnerable individuals and those excluded from holding bank accounts, is the provision of a full-service current account, saving people without a bank account up to 63% on the Poverty Premium. Approximately 12,500 adults in Bristol do not have a current account, including 13% of Bristol Credit Union's (BCU) loan customers.

Avon Mutual will also provide larger loans to more people at larger scale including mortgage provision. This will represent a significant opportunity to further improve financial inclusion and resilience within the region.

There is demand for both models in Bristol and credit unions and community banks actively collaborate around the world in the mutual interests of their members.

We also support the Bristol Credit Union. We invested £500,000 for a term of ten years following a cabinet decision in April 2019:

<https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/s31017/BCU%20investment%20110319%20v4.pdf>

This helps the BCU to continue their excellent work to help people across the city get access to credit at a fair level of interest. The investment allowed the credit union to expand and grow providing an increased number of low cost loans for people in Bristol, as well as creating extra jobs. Their vital work includes loans to help people to remain in their own homes and avoid the threat of homelessness, something that remains a top priority for this council.

Q2 - The set-up of a new community bank is an iterative regulatory process and Avon Mutual is making good progress in its development and has been cleared by

the regulators (Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)) to pass into stage two of the three stage regulatory process.

The Council investment to date has been phased, with due diligence undertaken and planned which will review progress on the key milestones of the bank's development and delivery of the Council's social and economic objectives.

The funding has been generated from recycling the returns from previous loan investments where the interest rates are uplifted or repaid earlier than planned. Of course all capital investments are risk.

Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Stephen Clarke

Subject: Bristol Airport Motion

I was very pleased to hear the unequivocal statement that members (including the Labour Group) made at Full Council on Dec 8th 2020 on Bristol Airport's expansion plans. The relevant part of the agreed motion reads: 'Full Council acknowledges that the airport expansion is incompatible with the region's carbon reduction targets and therefore must not go ahead'.

However, the Mayor will know that the current stated position of WECA (as outlined in a letter from them to the North Somerset Planning Portal sent in 2019) is that WECA supports the expansion.

As two out of the three constituent authorities of WECA (BANES and Bristol City Council) are now against the planned expansion, can the Mayor please urgently raise this issue with Mayor Bowles and ensure that a letter is written to the planning inspectorate updating them on the current position (which must be that WECA object to the expansion plans)?

Reply:

You keep bringing the airport suggesting as a Bristol issue. It's called Bristol airport but it's in North Somerset.

The decision is between North Somerset, the Minister and the Planning Inspectorate and planning law.

North Somerset is not a member of the West of England Combined Authority.

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

Subject: Chandos Road: how is this road to become a better place for people?

I hope Mayor Rees will be pleased to learn that local people around Chandos Road are consulting with all residents in the wider area to identify what they would like to keep, or enhance, or change in this heart of our local community to make it healthier, more life-enhancing and better used. I gave notice to the BCC Highways team in June of this wish to be early in the queue for any potential funding or other support to implement the preferences of local people.

Q1: With the announcement of a number of shopping streets moving into a formal consultation about funded closures or enhancements, will the mayor please set out as clearly as possible the position, including likely timescales, funding and required procedures for other places such as Chandos Road where a high degree of local drive is emerging to create a 'living neighbourhood' to improve well-being and lasting viability?

Reply:

We have already identified our first tranche of liveable neighbourhoods. We will be consulting in residents in those areas, looking at what a liveable neighbourhood means, trialling it and measuring its impact. This is before we consider rolling out more of the first tranche.

We are developing a strategy on liveable neighbourhoods which will outline the vision for a citywide roll out of liveable neighbourhoods and include commentary on engagement and delivery processes, as well as how we would prioritise investment.

Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Kirk

Subject: Vaccination programme

Does the Mayor have a timeline for when the Government expects the vaccine will be rolled out en masse in Bristol?

Reply:

The NHS is responsible for the roll out of the vaccination programme and this detail has been supplied by them. We are working with them to support the delivery of the programme.

- The AstraZeneca / Oxford vaccine coming onstream is great news, and means that we will soon be able to ramp up our efforts and move through the Joint Council for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) prioritisation categories at pace.
- The Government anticipates that, all being well, systems across the country will have completed first dose vaccinations for the first 4 categories of JCVI prioritisation (older care home residents and staff, everyone over 70, those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and all frontline NHS and care staff) by mid-February.
- Last week, the BNSSG hospital hub capacity has doubled with the launch of a vaccination site at UHBW. Large-scale vaccination sites are expected to be up and running across the country this month - with Ashton Gate stadium confirmed as the first 'super vaccination centre' in the South West (operational from today). We have already made great progress in terms of care home resident vaccinations and at GP practice sites across the area, and the partnership with Ashton Gate is another development which will allow us to move through the JCVI prioritisation at pace.
- The BNSSG programme will provide regular progress updates as we move through the JCVI prioritisation guidance, and as vaccine supply becomes more freely available. We ask the public to bear with us - we will get to you, but this is a marathon not a sprint, and a huge logistical challenge.
- Please continue to observe the national guidance to protect yourselves, your loved ones and your communities. The NHS will be in contact with you direct when it is your turn to be vaccinated.

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

Subject: OASIS ACADEMY TEMPLE QUARTER SCHOOL

Q1. Following the call-in of the planning consent for this urgently needed new secondary, is the Mayor able to advise when a decision by the Secretary of State is likely to be made?

Q2. Should permission be denied, what alternative sites have council officers identified for this school?

Reply:

Q1. No. The decision of the Secretary of State will be taken following a Local Inquiry held by a Government appointed Planning Inspector. According to the current timetable, the Inspector is due to hold the Inquiry and issue their recommendation to the Secretary of State on or before 5th July 2021. When the recommendation letter is issued the Planning Inspector will provide an indication of when we can expect a decision, although this may take some weeks/months following the recommendation, so at this stage we cannot provide any clear indication as to when the decision is likely to be issued.

Q2. As part of the Free Schools Programme the responsibility of the site selection, procurement and construction of the school sits with the Department for Education (DfE), not the local authority or council officers.

The Council supported the DfE and their partners to identify possible sites for the school over the previous 3 years. The DfE concluded no other viable sites were identified as part of that process. Should the planning application be denied the DfE would notify the Council immediately if they intend to withdraw from the scheme and not open the new school. The Council would continue our work with existing schools to meet the need for places and will be working in the coming period to identify contingency plans for that scenario.

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Charlie Bolton

Subject: Gaol Ferry Bridge

Will the council consider adding Gaol Ferry bridge to its list of routes to be gritted please?

Reply:

With limited resources gritting has always focused on key arterial routes for public transport and emergency services. We are unable to expand the service to include most roads, footpaths, cycle routes and footbridges because of our challenging financial situation.

We'll request the service take a look at this route because we know how important the bridges across the river are. But this is another challenge in which we need communities to come together. It would be great if you as a local councillor could organise and lead some community action to make sure they are gritted.

Grit-bins are located at strategic locations, including each side of footbridges. Grit-bins are periodically inspected to ensure they hold sufficient grit and there is a web form on our website where residents can request refills.

Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Wright

Subject: Proposed plans for 'Waterfront place'

The following question has been submitted to the two previous Full Council meetings, but the Mayor has refused to answer it both times. It will be asked at every Full Council meeting until he does so.

1. Will the Mayor release the other 21 entrants so that the Bristol public can see if any are better than the current "winner"?

Reply:

In line with procurement rules the bids are confidential and I will not be publishing them.

**Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Don Alexander, Avonmouth ward
Subject: Public sector pay freeze**

How many public sector workers in Bristol are affected by the Government's public sector pay freeze?

Reply:

There are 122,500 public sector workers in the primary urban area of which around 80,000 are in Bristol.

Median annual pay for full-time employees was £31,461 for the tax year ending 5 April 2020, up 3.6% on the previous year; annual pay estimates are largely unaffected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. *Source ONS*

MEMBER FORUM – 12/01/2021

CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 4

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Richard Eddy (Bishopsworth)

Subject: FUTURE OF COUNCIL'S IN-HOUSE SECURITY AND CLEANING STAFF

1. Can the Mayor tell me what is the projected financial saving to be achieved by getting this small number of low-paid employees off-payroll and transferring them over to Bristol Waste?
2. Now that their trade union representative has informed all Members about this controversial move, shockingly sprung on them just before Christmas 2020, will the Mayor reverse or scrap this proposal?

Reply:

Q1. The proposed net savings in the first year are up to £0.14m, achieved by reducing subcontract costs due to supply chain efficiencies, when managed by Bristol Waste.

Bristol Waste plan to gradually increase the savings year-on year over the medium term to up to £0.9m p.a. by year 5 (2025/26), while maintaining all staff terms and conditions.

Q2. Consultation with affected staff and trade unions commenced in early November. This proposal is a co-sourcing arrangement with Bristol Waste which is a fully Council owned company.

All transferring staff affected by the proposal would have their terms and conditions of employment protected. Bristol Waste do not plan to make any redundancies and plan to increase capacity by 37 new full time equivalents made up of front line and supervisory positions. It also give us the opportunity to deliver an apprenticeship programme creating opportunities for younger people across the city at a time when youth unemployment is at its highest for many years.

Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Tim Kent

Subject: Children's Play Areas

The lockdown has been hard on everyone but especially children. We have come to understand some of the real value of children's play areas.

1. What is the budget for investing in children's play areas for 2020/21 and what play areas will be invested in over the coming year?
2. The Hengrove Park Play Area is a strategic play area that the council has invested over £2 million into. Are you aware that a private developer intends to turn the Hengrove Leisure Complex into housing and has suggested a scheme with no parking provision for our primary play park? Will you support residents in their fight for a radical change to the developers proposals?

Reply:

Q1. In 2020/21 financial year the budget the amount allocated was £221K, which was higher than other years.

It is used for repair and maintenance of play areas and play equipment and to replace common items when they are at end of life.

Examples of sites that have had repairs or equipment replaced include Horfield Common, Victoria Park, Ashley Down Green, St Anne's Park, Falloden Way play area, Springfield Ave play area, Filwood Broadway play area, Mowbray Rd play area and Redland Green.

In 21/22 the predicted budget will be c£110,000 – similar to previous years – priorities for spend will be determined by health and safety inspections.

In addition to revenue a residual capital budget was used to refurbish the play towers at Blaise Estate at a cost of £51K. This budget is now exhausted. Planning contributions allocated by Area Committees together with grants raised by community groups will result in investment of £783K in 2020-2021 and £ 757K 2021-2022.

Q2. I am aware that the new owners of Hengrove Leisure Park have plans for their site and have submitted a pre-application planning enquiry that has received a lot of comments. I expect the developer to take these on board.

I encourage local people to engage with this process and to let the developers and the Council know what is important to them as part of a redevelopment of the site. Ultimately this will be a planning decision.

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Kevin Quartley (Bishopsworth)

Subject: ONE CITY ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY STRATEGY

1. Along with most people, I welcomed the recently announced commitment to protect eco-systems and wildlife habitats in Bristol. This mirrors Government plans to give continued protection of the Green Belt in any future reform of the planning system.
In what ways will these pronouncements alter or shape the Mayor's house-building and other infrastructure plans?
2. As you are aware, there is an important, threatened, organic farm in my ward, Yew Tree Farm, which has been lauded for its management, productivity and biodiversity. In order to match action to the words of the 10-year ecological plan, will the Mayor join local campaigners in opposing the proposed de-registration of Green Belt designation to this part of south Bristol?

Reply:

Q1. The ecological emergency and the environmental emergency sit alongside the housing emergency and jobs and economic emergency. It just shows how complicated it is running a city. We have to take an integrated approach to them all and deliver on all at the same time. This is one of the reasons we've put the UN sustainable development goals at the heart of what we do.

For example our Bonnington walk delivers around 188 homes, with 50% affordable housing provision and improves biodiversity and habitat improvements. A large public open space has also been included for both new and existing residents to use within the site. The community orchard has also been retained and existing hedgerows have been kept where possible and will be maintained long term.

Our plans for regeneration and the much needed delivery of new homes will be managed consistently, taking into account the other emergencies.

Your question gives an incorrect impression of Green Belt policy and the Government's position. Green Belt is not a nature conservation policy – it's about constraining cities and maintaining rural identity. Government planning policy specifically allows Green Belts to be altered in 'exceptional circumstances'. The scale of new homes that the Government says and to which we agree and are delivering against, means it is inevitable that some green field sites will need to be repurposed for homes, particularly in and around suburbs of cities.

Q2. I visited Yew Tree Farm in 2019 and agree it is a very successful organic farm. However, the owners of the site have recommended the site as a potential location for new homes.

Land at Yew Tree Farm is one of 4 places currently in the Green Belt which the draft Local Plan is proposing for new homes – the others are Elsbert Drive, Bishopsworth; Land at Ashton (east of park and ride site), and; Bath Road, Brislington.

However I know the tenants of the farm are opposed to this and local residents have raised objections via the Local Plan consultation. As we come to review the Local Plan following the consultation, this will give us an opportunity to review the future of the farm and whether this is the right piece of land for homes.

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

Subject: Innovation in the delivery of Social Housing.

LibDems have called on the government to cut away restrictions, and to support and facilitate local authorities to build 200,000 social houses each year, which is virtually the only way to deliver truly affordable housing in our high-cost imbalanced region.

In the absence of an encouraging response we continue to explore innovative ways of providing social housing as the LibDem administration did in 2011 when it found the funds for building the first new council houses after 30 years of Labour control of the Council.

Q2: With this in mind, has the mayor considered the Avon Pension Fund as a means of taking advantage of insurance funds now allowed to be invested in a wider range of activities including public house-building (substituting this progressive endeavour for at least some of its present unhealthy and environmentally unfriendly investments) that has come out of the otherwise regrettable deal to separate us from our fellow-Europeans?

Reply:

Lib Dems in Bristol have campaigned against council housing and housing in general – including the largest council house-building project in a generation in Hengrove.

I am proud that our administration is delivering so many new homes – including new affordable and council housing – for Bristolians despite such obstructionism. The innovation of the Bristol Housing Festival and the establishment of Goram Homes both help this progress continue, amidst the uncertainties of Brexit and the pandemic.

Changes made by George Osborne, who was Chancellor in coalition with the Lib Dems, saw market interest in similar previous products disappear. It is welcome to see recent renewed interest from the industry since then.

In Bristol, the benefits of investing in housing delivery have been recognised by a number of key players in the pension industry. I am sure that Councillor Steve Pearce, who represents Bristol City Council and the interests of on Avon Pension Fund, would be happy to have a further discussion with you on this subject.

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Steve Smith (Westbury on Trym & Henleaze)

Subject: Bristol Energy

Q1. Along with many Members I was pleased to read that our auditors are to produce a 'public interest' report into this failed business. Please can the Mayor advise when this is likely to be completed and published?

Reply:

I think you may have misunderstood. I have invited our external auditor to consider producing a Public Interest Report relating to Bristol Energy with a review of the company from beginning to end. Contrary to your question they have not confirmed whether they will undertake such a review.

Whether or not to produce a Public Interest Report is a matter for our external auditor.

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Chris Davies (Knowle Ward)

Subject: Jubilee Pool

1. The excellent local campaign has produced the result of a planned reopening of 1st February ,at minimal cost to the taxpayer , for jubilee pool .Will the mayor please confirm that possible entry into tier 4 or national lockdown will keep the pool closed no longer than is legally necessary and that further interruption will not be caused by this council.
2. Jubilee pool is a vital local facility with great positive benefits for physical and mental health needed even more after the year we have just endured. Will the mayor commit to listening to and following the advice of local campaigners and councillors with regard to the long term ownership and management of jubilee pool?

Reply:

Q1. I am pleased that we have negotiated an agreement with Parkwood Leisure so that, when Covid-19 restrictions allow, it can re-open until the end of the current contract in March 2022 while protecting council taxpayers' money.

Sadly, due to the national lockdown, Jubilee Pool is unable to reopen at the present time.

Q2. I have met with some councillors and local campaigners from the Friends of Jubilee Pool group and offered officer support with them developing a business plan for a potential Community Asset Transfer if that is what the community want to take forward after the contract ends/

We will be bring to cabinet a report on future investment in leisure to set out a long term sustainable plan for our leisure offer.

Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Morris

Subject: High streets

Q1. The health pandemic has clearly accentuated and accelerated longer-term trends of a decline in bricks-and-mortar retailing. What steps is the Mayor taking to support small businesses during this crisis and ensuring the survival of our major shopping destinations?

Q2. Does the Mayor support simplification of the planning system to make it easier to change 'use' classes from business to residential – especially in the context of creating flats over shops and converting empty premises?

Reply:

Q1 We are focused on the distribution of grants to support the survival of businesses. As I mentioned in answers above, almost £99m of support and grants has been issued to businesses. Where businesses are able to open, we are delivering a Reopening High Streets Safely programme to support high street businesses in the safe operation of their business. We have been providing information and guidance on a range of support measures, including adaption of business models, advice on being COVID secure, licensing and planning.

Longer term we are currently carrying out a Retail & Leisure Study and will be commissioning a Development & Delivery Plan. These will inform future support interventions and the delivery of the City Centre Framework (adopted in July 2020), aimed at securing regeneration and development.

Support highstreets with the work we have done on pedestrianisation and the social distancing provision, and the emerging work on Liveable neighbourhoods will help support our local high streets, making them more accessible, while plans for mass transit and expanded bus deal will breathe life into the city centre.

Lobbying Government, WECA and others, highlighting the gaps in the financial support to businesses and we have been doing our best to identify these and lobby to ensure everyone receives the help they need.

Q2 . We should be cautious about some of the proposals – we don't want shops flipped to flats. This is not just about empty premises or flats over shops. The Government is proposing to allow all uses like shops, cafes, offices, light industrial premises and surgeries anywhere to change to residential use without needing planning permission. We've seen just recently about local campaigns to protect community pubs from conversion to residential in the city and this could further increase the trend.

It is also a concern that poor quality homes may be created, so that our centres may be harmed both by removing commercial uses and creating living environments built to low standards. We want to encourage mixed communities with different tenures and a mix of uses. Rather than relaxing control and losing democratic voice, it would be better to give local authorities more resource so we can move quicker and support developers who want to build quality places, homes and communities which will sustain local shopping offer.

We are looking at that consultation and will respond.

Question(s) to the Mayor from Cllr Lesley Alexander

Subject: Vertical Farming

Q1. Food production is sure to become even more important in the years ahead in terms of self-sufficiency and sustainability. Can the Mayor confirm how these objectives will be delivered in the One-City Plan?

Q2. Is the Authority going to be involved in trialling of vertical farms or any other agricultural innovations which has led the Netherlands to become the world's second largest food exporter?

Reply:

Q1. Ensuring that all citizens of Bristol have access to healthy, nutritious and sustainably sourced food continues to be a key priority for the One City Approach, The One City food plan is engaging with a range of local growers, producers and suppliers to create ambitious but achievable targets of increasing local food production and purchasing.

Public Health Bristol is working with partners like Feeding Bristol on a Food Equality Strategy and Action Plan. The council continues to work together with organisations like Avon Wildlife Trust, Bristol Food Producers and Bristol Food Network to find innovative ways of increasing local food production through making more land available for growing and agriculture, encouraging projects like the Farm Start initiatives and helping provide new routes to markets for local producers.

There is national work being trialled on a dynamic procurement system that will enable local producers to sell in to the public sector more easily and efficiently, and Bristol will have the opportunity to be involved in the initial work in the South West.

Citywide work on individual and organisational action towards food sustainability is being lead under the Bristol Bites Back Better campaign which is empowering Bristolians and Bristol based organisations to create a resilient and sustainable food system as well as Going for Gold measure. It remains our ambition to be able to grow sustainable food in each ward as a step to tackling food poverty.

Q2. Research and innovation by academics and businesses on vertical and rooftop farming and other novel technologies is most welcome as part of our One City Approach. Whilst the council isn't currently involved in actual trialling of vertical farms or other agricultural innovations itself it would give consideration to partnership projects or funding bids of this nature.