

QS3

Background

There have been a number of 'advertorial' articles about the elected Mayor in newspapers, and there are concerns that some may have been paid for using Bristol City Council funds. This does not seem good value for money for council tax payers. These advertorials are not free articles written by journalists after being sent a press release, but unedited pieces promoting the elected Mayor, his manifesto and/or his political party. I can understand that politicians want to promote themselves and their party, but it was my understanding that such promotion should be paid for from party funds. I appreciate this may seem a relatively small amount of money when compared to the expenditure on Bristol Energy, but relatively small amounts of money can make a big difference at local level.

Question

Please can you clarify Bristol City Council's legal and financial procedures relating to the content and publication of advertorials about the elected Mayor and his manifesto?

A:

The Council regularly pays for advertising space in local publications and follows national regulations for local authority advertising campaigns.

The only advertorial about the elected Mayor which has been paid for using Bristol City Council funds was the Mayor's non-political Christmas and New Year message of thanks to everyone in Bristol who has done their part during the pandemic, including hidden heroes in the NHS, charities and community groups – found here: <https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/special-features/mayor-marvins-christmas-new-year-4823354>.

The contract for this specific advertorial (value £5,250) was awarded in accordance with the council's procurement rules and the Monitoring Officer was made aware of the expenditure.