

Member Forum

16 March 2021

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	Subject
CS01	Cllr Graham Morris	Mixed Tenure Estate
CS02	Cllr Olly Mead	Local Government
CS03	Cllrs Estella Tincknell and Gill Kirk	Lockleaze
CS04	Cllr Jerome Thomas	Bristol airport expansion and failure to represent the policy of Bristol City Council by Bristol's mayor
CS05	Cllr Lesley Alexander	State of Bristol's Streets
CS06	Cllr Don Alexander	Bristol Music



CS01

Members Forum statement from Councillor Graham Morris

Subject: Mixed Tenure Estate

I have been speaking to several residents recently regarding their concerns of living in their mixed tenure estate. They are upset by the significant deterioration in their quality of life and have provided me with a few examples of what they are experiencing.

For some this was too much and they were unable to commit pen to paper for fear of reprisals. This statement is to provide a voice for these residents and to enable them to know that the council are clearly aware of their issues.

At this point I would like to add that this is not a reflection on the Housing Officer but on the process which existing residents are impacted.

Amongst the behaviour which is making longer term residents concerned includes:

- A lady being confronted on her door step by a man calling her a ‘crackhead’ and saying that she needs to hand over her money otherwise he will ‘*****-slap her’. For anyone this would be intimidatory but worse when you are living alone. When other neighbours came out to see if the resident was OK the man tried to attack them and threatened them.
- A new resident in the area is dropping bags of rubbish in a local bin - sometimes this includes needles.
- A new tenant, who is a recovering drug addict, is placed into a property between two known drug users. How do residents know they are drug addicts? Well the same resident above also had this drug addict exposing himself and rubbing himself up against her door. How would you feel if this happened to you?
- A resident has previously had his house forcibly entered and the property was destroyed by a machete. He was the partner of a new tenant’s boyfriend. He is imprisoned. The tenant, whilst within her probationary period, has been allowed to stay. The existing resident is now concerned that when the culprit is released he will be allowed to return - who knows what damage he could do when he returns?

Other tenants have said ‘There’s always been tenants here that have had issues but over the last few years the council has moved in tenants who are just anti-social and have ruined this little community.’

A few months ago I worked with residents to instill a sense of pride in their area. We cleaned and tidied and cut back bushes and the area looked lovely. I even got Western Power to paint the substation. Roll forward a few months and the same residents are terrified - some are considering leaving. This is not acceptable and I am calling upon Bristol City Council to support and help the residents who are in fear of their safety.



CS02

Members' Forum statement from Councillor Olly Mead
Subject: Local Government

Lord Mayor, fellow Councillors,

Today is my last ever Full Council as a Councillor. It has been an honour and a privilege to serve alongside all of you for the past seven years, and seeing how much hard work is put in by so many of you for the people you serve in office. It is a tough gig, with meetings at all kinds of odd times, community and weekend events to attend, and casework to work on. But, when you achieve success on some issue or piece of casework, it can also be incredibly rewarding. In early 2019, I concluded that running for re-election and being re-elected would probably kill me before I reached the age of 50, so I decided to stand down and let hardier souls take my place. Horfield ward deserves nothing less than the best, and I can honestly say that my health precludes me from giving the level of service I used to be capable of providing.

Tonight, there will be a debate about having a referendum regarding the system of governance in place in Bristol. In 2012, with no idea what the Mayoral system would be like, a narrow majority in a low turnout referendum voted to try the new system. I feel that the Mayoral system was doomed from the outset. Instead of working out how to have a well-functioning system with checks and balances, and an emphasis on cooperation between Mayor and Council, we instead were lumbered with an existing constitution with the Mayor's role plonked on top, or randomly shoved in like an ill-fitting piece of a jigsaw. I have participated in at least three cross-party attempts to revise the constitution and make it work, but we are still in much the same position as we were seven years ago, and quite frankly it has been a total waste of my time.

The main problem in Bristol has been a long history of fighting between and within parties. I was genuinely shocked by the hardcore partisanship when I attended a Full Council some time before the Mayoral system was adopted. This same partisanship writ large is why our country is dogged with poor governance nationally, and there are times when it can be just as bad locally in Bristol. That is not to overlook the many times when we do work across party lines, especially at committee meetings. Those have been among the most rewarding and positive experiences of my time in office, but Full Council meetings in particular have tended toward being party political bun fights.

Since we have added elected Mayors into the mix, it was quite clear that from 2012-16 it became a case of George Ferguson doing battle with 70 opponents/enemies, and from 2016- present of a successor wary of the crucifixion his predecessor experienced and trying to find ways of avoiding working with the Council wherever possible. What has suffered most as a result of this is scrutiny.

When projects and ventures are kept away from scrutiny they can end up costing large sums of money to the taxpayer (Bristol Energy circa £50 million, Bristol Beacon cost overrun £60 million, Arena Island already £12 million and a projected additional £32 million to make it ready for use by a private developer), and I hate wasting money when I can think of the difference just a few thousand pounds could make to issues in my ward.

I doubt that many people outside the Council chamber are all that interested in comparing different systems of governance – they just want the job to be done well by whoever holds office. However, the final decision as to what system we have should be made by them.



I would urge whoever is elected Mayor, and whoever is elected to the Council later this year to lay aside your party differences and work together for the ensuing few years. In Horfield, Claire Hiscott and I have worked well together as a team, with my being able to cover when she was on holiday or working in her day job, and her lightening my load when I have been ill or studying. We have worked as one on hospital parking issues, children's play equipment in parks, and establishing a Community Hub in Manor Farm. Then, for about six weeks every few years we enter silly season, slug it out for re-election, and after the results are in we start playing nicely again. We do not have to agree about everything, but from a starting point of mutual respect and a desire to serve the community effectively, we have not done too badly.

I was impressed by a similar attitude within the Youth Council. They identify things they want to achieve and work together. Perhaps we should get them to give the new Council and Mayor a masterclass after the May election.

Whatever system of governance we have, the constant grind of squabbling and carrying on election battles at every meeting for years on end only serves to let down the people we are elected to serve. The City deserves better. Yes, we should have principled battles where there are legitimate concerns about things like SEND provision, money being poured into the energy company, the port land sale, etc, but it might also be that a spirit of routinely working together would make it unnecessary to be confrontational, as people might think: 'Yes. What a reasonable point. Let us work together to find a solution.' Instead of always being ready for another fight.

We also need to make the best use possible of the talents people have. Instead of treating Councillors like a nuisance to be barely tolerated and left in a corner to do colouring in like primary school children, there should be meaningful opportunities for us to make a difference on issues that we care about. It could lead to better policies in some areas of Council work, or more financial support/resources for parts of the Council's operations that need them. But, that will require a relationship of mutual trust, rather than one of Councillors sniping at the Mayor and the Mayor sniping at Councillors. You know, the kind of relationship grown ups have in the big wide world outside of politics.

For my part, my political journey is coming to an end. Armed only with a red nose and some paint brushes I am heading off into the sunlit uplands of obscurity to bring more laughter, colour and joy into our drab and unhappy world. I wish all of you well, whether you are running for re-election, or not. It takes a lot of guts and energy to put yourself forward to serve in local government, and as rewarding as it can be, there also comes a point when it is time to step away.

Olly Mead, MFA, Councillor for Horfield ward



CS03

Members' Forum statement from Councillors Estella Tincknell and Gill Kirk Subject – Building for the Future in Lockleaze

We have been proud to have served Lockleaze as its Councillors. Over the past five years much has been achieved in the ward thanks to the commitment by the Mayor and cabinet to economic and social inclusivity across the city of Bristol. Lockleaze has great community spirit and pride. We believe these achievements will build on that spirit and help to ensure it thrives. Despite challenging times, we have seen:

- Badly needed new homes coming onstream on many sites across the ward.
- A brand-new secondary school on Romney Avenue, which is offering Lockleaze children access to a great education.
- Investment in the future of Stoke Park, which provides a wonderful open space on our doorstep. This will restore the landscape and allow access for all.
- A strong network of Children's Centres co-ordinated from Filton Avenue Nursery School, which support families across our communities.
- Community facilities which offer space for a wide range of activities and which are supported by wonderful volunteers, including the Hub on Gainsborough Square and the Old Library on Muller Road.
- The ongoing success of the Vench adventure playground, which is now the location for the excellent National Food Service, which has provided hot meals for all who need them throughout the COVID crisis.
- And excellent local organisations such as Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust and North Bristol Advice Centre, whose staff have done so much to support and sustain Lockleaze.

Of course, there is still much to do. We want to see improvements to public transport links including bus routes and a local station, housing developments that reflect local people's needs as much as possible, and finally, getting that derelict pub site on Gainsborough Square cleared and replaced!



CS04

Members' Forum statement from Councillor Jerome Thomas

Subject – Bristol airport expansion and failure to represent the policy of Bristol City Council by Bristol's mayor

In December Full Council passed a motion stating that 'airport expansion is incompatible with Bristol, the West of England and the region's carbon reduction targets and therefore must not go ahead'. This was a formal commitment by this Council to oppose Bristol Airport expansion.

On 3 March Mayor Marvin Rees responded to my emails of 3 February and 17 February. In that response he confirmed and implied that at the WECA meeting of 5 February he voted with the Conservatives representatives in WECA to continue to support the proposed expansion of Bristol Airport, consistent with the views represented in his mayoral blog, 'Up, Up and Away'*.

In doing so, he represented his own views, and not the views of Bristol Labour Party or this council.

I ask the mayor to confirm or correct this interpretation, by sharing the minutes of the WECA meeting that took place on 5 February.

CS05

Members' Forum statement from Councillor Lesley Alexander

Subject - State Of Bristol's Streets

Bristol is getting dirtier and dirtier every day, and the streets are not swept on a regular basis. Residents (if they minded to do so) are left to pick up the rubbish dropped by the bin men who seem to be under the impression that there is a team that follows them to clear up after them. Has anyone ever seen this auxiliary team?

We cannot rely on the residents "Big Tidy" Campaign to clean up as a supplementary or alternative service to Bristol Waste. People have a right to expect that their bins are emptied and the streets swept frequently as they pay for this in their Council Tax which, by the way, is much higher than that levied by many other local authorities.

When visitors come to Bristol, the first thing they see is how shabby it has become. This is not a good advert for our beautiful, vibrant city.

The Council must take responsibility for this basic and essential function as so many of our streets are being swamped by rubbish and fly-tipping.

CS06

Members' Forum statement from Councillor Don Alexander

Subject – Bristol Music

I would like to put on record that I acknowledge and appreciate the good work being done by Bristol Music Trust, and, particularly, the Bristol Plays Music Hub. Bristol is renowned for its cultural and music scene and it is appreciated by all our citizens – we need to be grateful for the fact that we're in such a good financial position that we're able to invest in cultural and entertainment venues like the Bristol Beacon. We're able to make this valuable investment due to all the money we've saved from not spending it on the arena on Temple Island – and opposition parties should acknowledge that fact.

