

Member Forum

13 December 2022

Questions and replies



Procedural note:

Councillors are entitled to submit up to 2 written questions each.

- The questions submitted and written replies are enclosed.
- Councillors are also entitled to ask a maximum of 2 supplementary questions at the forum. A supplementary question must arise out of the original question or answer given.
- Via the group leaders / whips, questions have been submitted in priority order.
- At the forum, the asking of supplementary questions will be rotated between the political groups that have submitted questions, taken in priority order.



LABOUR QUESTION 1

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Bennett, Eastville Ward

Subject: Rosemary Lane

My view, and the view of many Eastville residents, is that the community would benefit from closing Rosemary Lane to through traffic - making the road safer for children walking and cycling to school, further increasing the uptake in active travel.

Q1) Does the mayor share this view?

REPLY:

We support the development of local traffic schemes that support safe and active travel particularly for school children.

I understand that a scheme for Rosemary Lane is currently being worked on by officers and we'll consider this as part of a package of improvements in 2023. This report will be seeking approval to secure funds from WECA for further development and delivery of a number of schemes including Rosemary Lane.

The details of the scheme will be subject to further public consultation as it progresses. It will be important to make sure that the community shape and own whatever happens, because we know that hasn't always happened with other possibilities which caused a lot of community tension.



GREEN QUESTION 1

Question to the Mayor from Councillor Ed Plowden

Subject: Strategic Transport

- 1) What is the plan, scope, timetable and method of consultation that will be put in place to consult on and come to final decision on the future of the Planning service and the Urban Design and Strategic Transport Teams?
- 2) There will be monitoring of the Clean Air Zone, and we are seeing recent installation of counters on roads, which is presumed to be part of this plan. What is the monitoring plan, its timing and the plan to identify and put in place mitigation for unintended negative consequences, particularly for neighbourhoods on the edges of the zone?

REPLY:

1. The City Design and Planning Service Proposed Changes involve moving the various planning related officers into a single City Planning Service.

Cabinet has taken the view that strategic transport is a matter for WECA. How city design is organised is a management decision and will be taken internally. Changes will be consulted with staff and unions in January in accordance with the Council's management of change policy.

2. The Lord Mayor has set out an aspiration for better debate in the chamber. Your question picks out the negatives. Can you confirm whether you support the Clean Air Zone or not?

The way the CAZ works is to incentivise improvements to Bristol's vehicle fleet, thereby improving air quality across the whole city. No area outside of the zone becomes non-compliant.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 1

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor John Geater (Avonmouth & Lawrence Weston)

Subject: RESTORATION PLANS FOR THE IRON BRIDGE

The Mayor will be aware of the fact that local people continue to press for the reinstatement of this road crossing and are concerned about the length of time being taken to progress this project – the completion of which was also an important part or condition of Conservative Members' support for his last budget.

1. Can the Mayor give an assurance that the £1m earmarked in the Capital programme for this purpose will not be moved, transferred, or reallocated for some other purpose?
2. Assuming the DC Committee is minded to Approve the Iron Bridge planning application when it is determined (on 21st December 2022), what is the expected timescale for the actual restoration work on this project to commence?

REPLY:

1. The Capital funding required to complete this Project remains committed as part of the budget process last year but we expect to bring the cost down to £700k. The bridge will be refurbished and reconstructed (subject to Planning Approval), in its revised evaluated higher position.
2. If planning is approved, it will be allocated as priorities allow.

While we recognise it's a passion project for some local people, it is not a key infrastructure project for Bristol and I would hope councillors would be honest about prioritising in a time of financial pressures.

This will then instigate the required ground/site investigations will need to be procured and undertaken, detailed design, contract compiled, tendered to external markets, and finally awarded before actual commencement on site.

It is expected the above will start in financial year 23/24 to fully execute these works as resources allow with the construction works commencing in 2024.



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 1

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Hartley, Hotwells and Harbourside

Subject: Central Library

- 1) How much income is generated for Bristol City Council by the lease of the lower floors of the Central Library to Bristol Cathedral School Trust per annum?
- 2) What has the annual running cost of the Central Library been over the last 5 years, including staffing, energy and all other associated costs?

REPLY:

1. The lease of the lower two floors generates £81,750 per year, ring fenced as income to the library service.
2. Between £1.6m and £1.35m a year including building and staffing costs.

Central Library					
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Energy	£55,020	£51,850	£57,183	£28,719	£115,229
NNDR	£159,267	£78,880	£80,640	£81,920	£81,920
R&M	£31,522	£30,917	£50,821	£60,648	£153,797
Cleaning	£11,256	£40,275	£2,910	£447	£990
Security	£670	£528	£1,643	£14,104	£190
Other FM	£16,764	£20,859	£17,408	£3,965	£2,442
Non Staffing total	£274,499	£223,309	£210,605	£189,803	£354,568
Staffing	*	*	£1,144,443	£1,189,710	£1,273,470
Grand Total			£1,355,048	£1,379,513	£1,628,038

*We do not have separate staffing figures for the Central Library for 2017/18 and 2018/19, due to different accounting practices.



KNOWLE COMMUNITY PARTY QUESTION 1

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Christopher Davies

Subject: Jubilee Pool

Because of the huge skill and hard work of the friends of jubilee pool the pool is despite the energy bills challenge open and providing a wonderful service to residents of Knowle and neighbouring wards.

1. Will the mayor join with me in congratulating the team and thank them for their wonderful public-spirited effort?

2. The team have a plan to reduce energy use and therefore contribute to the city's energy reduction progress. Because of the cost of energy this plan will be more than self-financing and interest and repayment can be made from energy costs saved.

Earlier this year the mayor stepped in to block a loan for this work that would not have been a cost to this council.

Can I get an assurance that the mayor will not seek to block a similar amendment being debated at next year's budget meeting and that if passed by councillors the mayor will not this time seek to block it?

REPLY:

1. We've said from the start the community are best placed to run and operate this pool. They're able to access funds we can't, encourage footfall that can sustain it and develop the offer that the local community needs. Its positive we've been able to work with the community to transfer the asset to their control.

We'll join with you to recognise their success in taking over this facility and hope it is able to continue as a community managed asset on a sustainable financial footing.

2. We also welcome the aims to reduce emissions through their work on an energy plan.

We will not commit any council tax payer's money to the pool or its operation. If the energy reduction plan is self-financing then there will be other partners available to finance the plans, instead of stretched Council budgets.



LABOUR QUESTION 2

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Bennett, Eastville Ward

Subject: Living Rent Commission

Could the mayor or Cabinet Member for Housing provide an update on the Living Rent Commissions work, and indicate whether they have yet shown a preference for the form of rent controls they wish to propose?

REPLY:

The Living Rent Commission held its penultimate meeting on the 23rd of November to continue their discussion on proposed rent controls, review the questions for the rent controls survey, and consider the proposed structure for the final report.

The rent control survey was released on Monday the 6th of December (to close on Friday the 29th of December) and will explore whether people in Bristol support the idea of introducing rent control across the city. The results from this survey will be incorporated into the final report, along with the data from the initial renter's experience survey and the evidence sessions held by the Commission.

The final report will be written by the University of Bristol team over Christmas period and sent out to Commissioners for their comments to be incorporated at the beginning of January. The preference for any form of rent controls the Commission would like to propose within the report will be indicated by the results of the survey as well as the analysis of the data already collected by the University Research team.



GREEN QUESTION 2

Question to the Mayor from Councillor Emma Edwards

Subject: Drains and Trees

Drain clearing

Last November I asked about issues with surface water flooding of roads and underpasses after heavy rain, and was answered that the new drain clearing contract would be monitored for effectiveness and that older pumps in the underpasses would be replaced as part of the annual work programme. However, this past month has seen heavy rainfall and once has caused a lot of surface water and flooded underpasses across the city, making travel particularly difficult for pedestrians and cyclists. Ward councillors have been doing their best clearing leaves from drains and gullies with poles, but some drains are blocked solid and need professional clearing.

Q1: What more could the Council be doing at the moment to improve this situation?

Loss of trees

Recently there was a lot of upset that two mature willow trees were cut down near Temple Meads. These healthy established trees were not only beautiful but being established, provided environmental benefits for the area. The plans were approved in 2019, but did not discuss the impact of the removal of the trees, they were just marked with two red circles. There was no Tree Officer report or Arboricultural Report of the trees in the planning documents. Last year we formed a Community Scrutiny Tree Working Group which fed in to a tree strategy for Bristol that would reflect Bristol's ecological aims, and the results confirmed how important protecting Bristol's tree canopy is; not only by planting new trees but by protecting established trees wherever possible.

Q2: Clearly, these trees were very important, so why was no Arboricultural Report required from the developer and why was no Tree Report provided by the Council Tree Officer for the 2019 Planning Application?

REPLY:

1. This is a challenge which comes with high numbers of street trees – its exactly the challenged faced on Whiteladies where the street trees have caused a consistent drainage problems which we're looking to put right.

Since starting the new contract, the new drainage contractor has carried out a cleanse of the gullies on the main road network and captured asset information informing us whether drains are free flowing. That information is used to create future work programmes, where physical repair of gullies and pipework is required.

We are doing the same with the subways. We are aware of issues with certain subways and have already carried out substantial repair at the Hartcliffe Way Roundabout. Underpasses are an outdated design and we're trying to replace with at grade crossings where possible. Of course this comes with the challenge of sharing road-space between cyclists and pedestrians with vehicles.



2. Your question contains an inaccuracy. The planning application was in 2015 when it was agreed at a cross party development control committee. It was renewed in 2019 with officers as there were no significant changes. I have no control over the development control committee. You would have to ask the members of the committee about why they didn't request a report.

The delegated report associated with the 2019 renewed planning approval refers to the removal of the two trees as follows: "The plans include the removal of two trees, although it was previously considered [by committee in 2015] that the levels of replacement planting would more than compensate for the loss of the trees. Subject to a condition requiring details of the planting it is considered that the proposal is acceptable on these grounds."

There were no objections and mainly positive responses from groups including:

- Neighbourhood Planning Group, Bristol Walking Alliance
- Totterdown Residents Environmental & Social Group (TRESA)
- Bristol Civic Society
- Living Streets Bristol
- Conservation Advisory Panel
- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Network Rail

In addition the 'big six' national historic amenity societies were consulted but no responses were received:

- The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
- The Ancient Monuments Society
- The Council for British Archaeology
- The Georgian Group,
- The Victorian Society
- The Twentieth Century Society

The Harbour Walkway scheme will complete the following ecology improvements:

- Installation of floating reed bed adjacent to the pontoon walkway and two artificial otter holts
- Planting of shrubs to help promote and manage plant biodiversity within the project area.
- Other trees within the project area will be retained and crown lifted, improving their condition and health (including the prominent oak tree at Totterdown Lock).
- Installation of Kingfisher perches along the edge of the Floating Harbour and adjacent to the Harbour Walkway scheme.
- Removal of invasive plant species such as Himalayan Balsam – this removal will improve plant biodiversity within the project area as well as improve the stability of the bank/edge to the Floating Harbour.

As well as the ecological work, the harbour walk-way is an important active travel corridor which will support the aspirations of the [Bristol Transport Strategy](#) and [One City Plan 2021](#) (Transport – "an attractive walking and cycling network"). The alignment of the access ramps to the Harbour Walkway scheme have been dictated with no alternative other than the removal of the two trees which we agree is undesirable.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 2

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

Subject: STRATEGIC TRANSPORT & CITY DESIGN PROPOSALS

1. Can the Mayor kindly outline his Administration's proposal to transfer large swathes of Strategic Transport's functions and personnel to the West of England Combined Authority (WECA), together with a potentially dangerous reduction in the City Design Team?
2. Whilst understanding 'everything is on the table' (his words) in the current Budget round and WECA has strategic transport responsibilities here, what guarantee can he give that- if the proposal goes ahead- the transport priorities of the inhabitants of Bristol and it's elected Council will be safeguarded by WECA?

REPLY:

1. Functions were taken on by WECA as part of the order in 2017, so this work is only catching up with that fact.

The WECA order was voted on and agreed by full council.

2. We are a constituent member of WECA and vote on the board, so maintaining the control is fundamental to the order.



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 2

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Varney, Brislington West

Subject: Housing

- 1) The Mayor has said on many occasions if we don't want to build on greenfield sites, we need to build tall and build densely on our brownfield sites.

This suggests it's an either/or approach. Unfortunately, in Brislington West we appear to be getting both. There are around six major brownfield developments, which Cllr Clark and I support, but also a large, potential development on our greenbelt, which we do not support.

In view of the climate and ecological emergency and the wish of the council to protect our precious green spaces, including our greenbelt, what is the Mayor's position on developing the greenbelt land in Brislington West?

REPLY:

It's not completely clear from your question but I am assuming you are referring to Brislington meadows.

I am against building on Brislington Meadows and that remains the case.



KNOWLE COMMUNITY PARTY QUESTION 2

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Gary Hopkins

Subject: Redcatch Park football and pavilion.

A few years ago the parks department sought tenders to fix up the Redcatch Park pavilion. They then failed to proceed with the repairs which are needed for the efficient use of the 2 park football pitches. It was announced instead that there would be an asset transfer. The highly successful and inclusive park football club have reduced pitch capacity at the park in Daventry Road and stand ready to take this on with the community garden. They have skilled people standing by and even have a replacement boiler ready to install. They demonstrated at the park in Daventry Road how skilled and motivated they are in property improvement producing good facilities from abandoned classrooms and toilets.

1. We are at last seeing some movement on the asset transfer of the old bowling green to the community garden. Can we get a matching effort on the pavilion as in particular the ladies and girls' teams are effectively stopped from playing there?

2 if the council do not have the capacity to progress an asset transfer at present can there at least be some form of licence agreement to allow them to get in and do the most urgent repairs?

REPLY:

1. The project to invest in sports facilities in parks in the city and to transfer these to local clubs and organisations is proceeding.

We're in the process of recruiting the officers needed to take this forward and to support applicants with governance, business planning and fundraising.

2. Redcatch park, along with all the other parks that have sports pitches have been subject to the sport asset transfer process as agreed at cabinet. There has been delays to that process caused by a resourcing issue which is being resolved. Several parks have multiple expressions of interest and all Eols need to be assessed and tested prior to and transfer of pitches or facilities.

However, the successful applicant for the facilities at Recatch Park will be provided with the asset condition information for the building and be able to apply for money to make upgrades appropriate to sustain the building long-term, to meet users' needs and to grow participation in sport locally.

More upgrades are likely needed than are being currently proposed.



LABOUR QUESTION 3

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Massey, Southmead Ward

Subject: Waking Watches

As Chair of the Avon Fire Authority, I was pleased to see the council act swiftly to address our shared concerns about EPS cladding in council properties. No other councils have implemented 24 hours 'waking watches'.

Has the mayor received a response to his letter to Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling-up, Housing, and Communities regarding the decision to introduce waking watches?

REPLY:

We wrote to the RT Hon Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling-up, Communities and Housing on the 4th November. We also wrote to the LGA and Core Cities colleagues.

We have yet to receive a response from the Secretary of State but we are in contact with departmental officials and met with members of the Building Remediation Team on the 9th November. We also met with the LGA on the 17th November.

We are still liaising with Building Remediation Team to secure further government support to get this matter resolved as quickly as possible.



GREEN QUESTION 3

Question to the Mayor from Councillor Lisa Stone

Subject: City Leap

- 1) I have noticed that there will be a crowd funding opportunity with the City Leap Energy Partnership – a joint venture between Ameresco and Bristol City Leap. Can you please set out the terms of this arrangement?
- 2) Why is the Council itself not delivering an opportunity for locals to invest in municipal green infrastructure, like other councils are doing?

REPLY:

1. The crowdfunding platform will be launched to support the funding of local projects and will be free at the point of use to community groups hoping to undertake their own crowdfunding activities.

The details of the project funding will be a matter for Ameresco as part of the partnership. Once the partnership is formally agreed in the next month we'll be able to begin sharing further details about specific projects so that Bristolians can benefit from project and ownership opportunities.

We've used City Leap as the vehicle to secure funding for energy infrastructure. There is a climate emergency and we must act quickly to secure the billions of pounds needed to decarbonise our city. Crowdfunding will be an option to explore but it doesn't offer the speed and scale that the climate emergency demands.

2. We will work closely with partners to facilitate community investments in zero carbon initiatives, including working together on investments funded through Community Municipal Investments or Retail Bonds. The maximum exposure in such investments is £2m.

All Impact Investments will require a business case providing a clear statement of the costs, measurable positive impacts e.g. environmental, financial, economic and social – of our funded project(s), to be realised and risk; which will be subject to proportionate due diligence.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 3

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Mark Weston (Henbury & Brentry)

Subject: NORTH FILTON RAILWAY STATION

I have previously raised my concerns over the delay in the opening of this crucial part of the rail network to the north of the city. One consequence of this postponement is that if, or when, the station does become operational in 2024, the service frequency on the Henbury spur line will be totally out-of-kilter to the phased new town development. However, I understand the junctions, signalling and track would be able to handle 30-minute passenger trains as opposed to hourly services.

1. Would the Mayor support such an increase in service frequency?
2. If so, can he confirm what steps he has taken to realise this ambition for example, has he held any discussions about an upgrade with WECA and Network Rail?

REPLY:

1. I support increased frequency, accessibility and affordability of all public transport.

So I do support this aspiration, and our commitment to improving rail travel in Bristol is clear – we're building the first new station for almost a century and secured the investment for improvements at Temple Meads to improve capacity.

2. Just to provide background, a 30-minute service frequency option was explored earlier in the development of the MetroWest Phase 2 project. Although technically feasible, the requirement for an additional train and crew to operate this was shown to be unaffordable within the available budget and predicted passenger numbers did not support a strong enough business case.

The project is therefore being developed as an initial hourly service to enable the Henbury line to be reopened to passenger services and two new stations to be delivered.

Once operational, I would expect that future growth in passenger numbers will support the case for increased frequencies and options to deliver this can be explored further.

Bristol officers have been working with the Combined Authority on a 25-year rail vision.

Further work is expected to be undertaken in the New Year on exploring options for longer term rail enhancements, including service frequencies on local services.

Perhaps we could work on a joint approach, including other councillors?



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT QUESTION 3

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Brown, Hengrove and Whitchurch Park

Subject: Libraries

1. A) A table noting how many days Whitchurch Library been closed due to the unavailability of staff each month – please provide this as a number and as a percentage of the overall number of days that the library would normally have been open for, and with a breakdown of the figures for each of the months from April to November.

b) Over the same period, which other libraries have been closed due to staff availability issues, and how many total days have been lost in those libraries. Please provide this as a number of days and as a percentage of the number of days the affected libraries should have been open.

REPLY:

1.

Whitchurch									
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Total
Full days of unplanned closure	0	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	6
Expected days open	20	21	20	22	22	21	22	22	170
%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	4.5%	4.5%	0.0%	9.1%	4.5%	3.5%
Hours of unplanned closure	0	0	4	4	7.25	0	9.5	6.5	31.25
Expected hours open	80	84	80	88	88	84	88	88	680
%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	4.5%	8.2%	0.0%	10.8%	7.4%	4.6%



2.

	Full days of unplanned closure	Usual days open	%
Avonmouth	10	170	5.9%
Bedminster	0	168	0.0%
Bishopston	0	168	0.0%
Bishopsworth	0	135	0.0%
Clifton	6	168	3.6%
Filwood	5	135	3.7%
Fishponds	0	168	0.0%
Hartcliffe	4	133	3.0%
Henbury	2	135	1.5%
Henleaze	0	191	0.0%
Hillfields	1	105	1.0%
Horfield	0	135	0.0%
Junction 3	0	170	0.0%
Knowle	1	168	0.6%
Lockleaze	15	138	10.9%
Marksbury Rd	0	103	0.0%
Redland	2	171	1.2%
St George	0	203	0.0%
St Pauls	4	170	2.4%
Sea Mills	6	203	3.0%
Shirehampton	6	168	3.6%
Southmead	0	130	0.0%
Stockwood	9	203	4.4%
Westbury	1	203	0.5%
Whitchurch	6	170	3.5%
Wick Road	1	138	0.7%
All	79	4149	1.9%



LABOUR QUESTION 4

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Massey, Southmead Ward

Subject: Support for Ukrainian Refugees

As the war in Ukraine continues, this terrible conflict produces more refugees. I am proud that as a City of Sanctuary, Bristol is playing its part in creating a safe haven for the refugees affected by Putin's war.

Please could the mayor provide an update regarding Ukrainian refugees in Bristol, and what support they are receiving to help them settle in?

REPLY:

Bristol's communities have welcomed Ukrainian refugees as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and 328 Ukrainian households have arrived to date which is 622 people of whom 178 are children.

When a family arrives, they are visited by the Bristol City Council's Refugee Resettlement Team and they are given £400 in cash and supermarket vouchers to support them and bus passes for two months.

The Attendance and Belonging Team assist with school places and the Job centre are helping with universal credit claims and finding work. The Employment and Skills team are offering 5 English classes a week and the city of Bristol college are providing classes but have a long waiting list at the moment and we have a task group to address this.

There are currently 15 Welcome Hubs to support our Ukrainian guests and provide a space to meet other people and share experiences and information.



GREEN QUESTION 4

Question to the Mayor from Councillor Martin Fodor

Subject: Accessible Streets

Service and Emergency Access

1) What records are there for locations where refuse vehicles and emergency services have reported access problems, e.g. due to obstructive parking?

Street sweeping priorities

2) Top of the transport priorities for Bristol are walking, cycling, and disabled access. How is this reflected in street sweeping priorities, e.g. clearing autumn leaf fall?

REPLY:

1. To date, when concerns are raised with transport officers, they have been addressed on a case by case basis. We're tasking the parking team with solving parking issues around the city and this will include working with residents to build evidence of those hotspots. Where it's an ongoing problem we would propose double yellow lines and junction protection.

Emergency services have not raised concerns directly and we would expect them to if it is an issue.

2. This is another challenge that comes from being a city with a lot of street trees. Trees bring challenges and cost.

Our street cleansing contractor have a list of known hot spot areas for leaf fall and supervisors and staff monitoring these locations during the autumn to judge when is best to complete a sweep of the area.

Residents can report street issues through the council website if an area needs particular attention.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 4

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Henry Michallat (Stoke Bishop)

Subject: FUTURE OF CENTRAL LIBRARY

The current consultation on potential budget savings proposals suggests that there will be a review into the possible relocation of this key public amenity. The Mayor will be aware that this controversial idea has been floated previously and it provoked an extremely negative response from library users and the wider community.

1. Can the Mayor confirm what other possible alternative sites (in addition to, apparently, the former Debenhams' store) for this Service have been identified?
2. If this change takes place, what are the plans for this building given that the Cathedral Primary School already occupy its basement and lower ground floor?

REPLY:

1. This an initial proposal for consultation and no decisions taken.

City Hall is an obvious suggestion as it is next door and offers benefits of co-location, but as has been mentioned we're in early conversation with city centre developers on sites where we have the freehold. It could be attractive as a way to improve the library offer with a modern, purpose-built facility in a much more accessible location.

Given the funding pressure on Local Government caused by the Conservative government's inept handling of finances we find ourselves in a difficult position, but we must make the best use of the assets we have.

2. This is an early-stage budget proposal for consideration and consultation and we don't yet know the details. There are no plans, but as you state the nearby primary school might be interested.



LABOUR QUESTION 5

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Pearce, St George Central Ward

Subject: Arson

Q1) What is the council's policy on arson attacks against its own property?

REPLY:

Arson is a criminal matter and should be referred to the police for action and prosecution.

The Council considers any damage to its property to be a serious issue and will take further action as necessary depending on the circumstances. The actions taken by BCC in response to an arson incident will vary depending on several factors:

- The perpetrator/s tenure – this dictates the legal remedies open to us
- The level of damage – consideration of likelihood & impact when applying for costs through a legal remedy
- The outcome of a legal prosecution bought by the police – may open up options to consider mandatory possession grounds, if the perpetrator/s is a resident.

Each case will be managed differently based on the particulars of the case, We're unable to take a standard one size approach to each situation.



GREEN QUESTION 5

Question to the Mayor from Councillor Tim Wye

Subject: Residents Parking

The Mayor and Executive Member for transport consistently tell us that Parking restrictions will only be considered if there is 'overwhelming support' in an area. Unfortunately, we are given no idea what constitutes 'overwhelming support' or even what would constitute an area defined by size, number of households or population.

We do appreciate that there will be a minimum size that would make it viable to go through a consultation and develop an RPZ. This makes it very difficult for local councillors to engage with communities over this issue.

Can we therefore have absolute clarity over the following points:

- 1) What is the minimum sized area to constitute a community which would be considered as being of suitable consult on an RPZ?
- 2) Within that area, what % turnout of households or population would be considered to demonstrate 'overwhelming support' and the % in favour that would be required to progress action?

REPLY:

1. The areas need to be self-financing, but tend to use natural barriers (such as major roads, railway lines or other forms of severance) as borders. Ward councillors should consider the knock-on impact of any RPZ area, so as not to simply push the issue to neighbouring areas.

Originally 18 zones were designed but 6 were not adopted.

2. Each case is considered on its own merits but it is now acknowledged that RPZs do not align with our transport approach. RPZs support private car ownership and car use in the most affluent parts of the city centre, when instead our liveable neighbourhood approach encourages active travel and reduces anti-social parking without introducing a charge.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 5

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Jonathan Hucker (Stockwood)

Subject: FINALISING THE AUTHORITY'S FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

I find some of the financial conventions and practices employed by local government quite peculiar. These seem contrary to orthodox or standard accounting principles. For example, I raised at the last Full Council my concerns about an overreliance placed on forecasts in Cabinet decision-making rather than basing this upon records of actual spending. And the Council only produce a Balance Sheet and a Cash Flow Statement once a year. In the private sector it is commonplace for such information to be produced every month.

1. Can the Mayor explain why Bristol City Council, alone of the regional authorities, has still not had its annual statement for 2020/21 signed-off by auditors? I appreciate that an issue regarding accounting for infrastructure assets emerged in March 2022. However, by that time the Council had already missed the statutory deadline for completion by six months. Giant multinational PLC's with financial structures far more complex than that of Bristol City Council can get their accounts signed off within a few months of the financial year-end.
2. Do you not think that the use of taxpayers' money and the way it is accounted for should be made more subject to the same disciplines that operate in the private sector?

REPLY:

1. The Statement of Accounts for 2020/21 have not yet been signed off by the external auditor due to an issue regarding infrastructure assets. This is an issue not just for Bristol City Council but for most highway authorities in the country while there is no clarity for how the historical values for these assets should be accounted. There has now been an update to the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting which comes in to force on 25 December 2022. CIPFA will issue a bulletin to provide guidance on this in January 2023 after which BCC will look to work with Grant Thornton to have 2020/21 accounts signed off. It should be noted that the draft accounts for 2020/21 and 21/22 were published by the statutory deadlines.

Local Authorities must produce their published accounts in line with the code of practice on local authority accounting. The statutory reporting requirements placed on local authorities are numerous and onerous. This is to ensure that there is transparency in how public money is spent. As a result, producing audited accounts is more complex for local authorities than large multinational companies.

2. Regular budget monitoring information is produced and presented to cabinet and council. Daily analysis of the cash flow position takes place by the Treasury team. Monthly cash flow positions are also produced for internal purposes. It is rare that private companies would publish their monthly cashflow forecasts publicly or to shareholders. In addition a mid-year treasury management report is reported to audit committee providing an analysis of the council's cash position.



LABOUR QUESTION 6

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Hornchen, Brislington East Ward

Subject: High Streets Fund

The way that the Community Resilience Fund is being allocated has been exemplary. By involving people as much as possible in the process and co-designing the scheme with them, it helps get the best out of the process.

Would it be possible to replicate some of these processes to decide the Highstreet funding allocation? I appreciate it is a lower amount of money, but as the Community Resilience Fund process has been going to well, it would be a shame not to replicate parts of it in future.

REPLY:

The approach to the allocation of funding was agreed in March/April 2021. Resident, community and business engagement has been at the heart of our approach to developing high street plans. To understand what improvements are needed and what cultural events people would like to see in the priority high streets, the City Centre & High Street team have been working with a range of businesses and community groups, residents, and culture organisations.

Feedback was collected between September 2021 and March 2022 through online surveys, focus groups, creative workshops and on-street engagement. A summary of the feedback and plans have been shared at <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/business/business-support-and-advice/high-streets/city-centre-and-high-streets-recovery/improvements>

The culture and event activities are largely being led by local community and cultural organisations, who are being grant funded to design and deliver them.

In terms of street scene and greening, we are matching priorities identified through engagement with what can be delivered with the current funding. Examples of improvements include trees, planters, pocket parks, seating, bins and recycling facilities. Plans will be shared for consultation.



GREEN QUESTION 6

Question to the Mayor from Councillor Carla Denyer

Subject: Planning Delays

It seems that the Council's Development Control department is currently running a backlog of at least 3-4 months between an application being submitted and it being allocated to an officer. These delays have been impacting residents and councillors for months, but I fear that the delays are also affecting the local economy.

St Peter's Hospice is attempting to open a new charity shop on Whiteladies Road in my ward. They signed a lease that begins in January 2023. They applied for planning permission in August 2022. This should have been a sensible timeframe. However, their planning application has not even been allocated to a planning officer for consideration yet. As of 9th January they will be paying more than £5,000 per month for the rent and associated costs, with zero income, as they are not able to open due to delays created by the Council.

This is just one of what must be dozens if not hundreds of similar situations across the city. The impact will be felt greatest by small businesses and charities, who can least afford the extra costs.

The delays add to a perfect storm for charities in particular, because:

- During this cost of living and energy price crisis their overhead costs are going up while the spending power of their customers goes down.
- The proposed Council budget cut R29 to suspend the Council's discretionary business rate relief for charities adds further to their overhead.
- Several other proposed Council budget cuts suggest signposting to alternative providers – which will often be charities – as a replacement for the Council providing services itself.

1) Has the Council estimated the impact to the local economy of the delays in deciding on planning applications?

2) If it has, please could it share these estimates?

REPLY:

The Council's Development Management service is experiencing a significant backlog of planning applications. I also recognise that every application that is delayed will cause issues for the individual or business involved. No detailed economic assessment of the overall impact of the delays has been carried out but we know that it frustrates growth and development.

Development Management is a self-funded service, so as not to be a burden on Council Tax payers. Regrettably the system of nationally-set fees for such applications have not been reviewed for a number of years and it is flawed in that application fees do not reflect the cost of processing minor applications in particular. As a result, the service is not able to draw on the resource that it needs to deliver the level of service that it would like to. The service is also having to carry a number of vacancies in order to contribute to this year's budget savings.

In the meantime, the applicant in the case mentioned has been contacted and the application will now be progressed as quickly as possible.



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

Subject: ENFORCEMENT OF STREETWORKS PERMIT SCHEME

Wales and West Utilities are currently upgrading gas pipelines in my ward. They have been working on the top part of Stoke Hill BS9 for the past few months, making very slow progress. There are many days when no work is undertaken. The road requires 3-way temporary traffic lights and inevitably this causes long tailbacks of traffic, especially at peak times.

As the works are being undertaken on a busy public highway, presumably BCC Highways have been involved.

1. What planning/monitoring of the works has been undertaken by the Council to ensure that inconvenience to residents and road users is minimised and the works are completed in a timely fashion?
2. I am aware that the Authority can impose financial penalties for failure to comply with the conditions of a permit. Can the Mayor confirm whether any attempt has been made in this case to incentivise this company to expedite this work by the application of such fines?

Reply:

1. Three inspections have been carried out at the site on 1/8/22, 5/10/22 and 25/10/22.

Two of the inspections were Random Sample Inspections that were generated as part of the 10% required for in progress works. The remaining inspection was a Permit Condition Inspection. Highway Authorities are required to inspect 30% of all Streetworks – 10% in progress, 10% within 6 months of completion and 10% at the end of the two-year defect liability period.

2. Two Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) have been issued for this site plus one defect for failing to comply with Signing, Lighting and Guarding (SLG) requirements. These FPNs are at a rate of £120, reduced to £80 if paid within 30 calendar days, whereas the SLG defect cannot attract a charge. Rates for FPNs and defects are set nationally.

In addition, an overrun charge has also been applied for working beyond permitted timescales on Stoke Road



LABOUR QUESTION 7

Question to the Mayor from Councillor Jackson, Filwood Ward

Subject: Onshore wind

Another government u-turn is on the cards, this time on its defacto ban on new onshore wind turbines.

Wind is the cheapest, cleanest energy and maximising it in the UK is critical to our energy independence, bringing down bills, and reaching net zero.

With the ban set to be lifted, has the council made any plans to facilitate new onshore wind turbines in Bristol?

REPLY:

It can be a challenge to keep up with the changes in government personnel and policy, which damages our ability to make the medium and long term plans needed to decarbonise our economy in a just way.

Fortunately, cities are not waiting for the UK government and we're making our own plans to secure the funding for investable propositions, such as the £1billion for City Leap.

In additional, the local plan already has policies which encourage the development of renewable energy schemes and makes specific provision for wind turbines in the Avonmouth area. Wind turbines have been permitted recently under those policies.

The current local plan consultation proposes that those policies are strengthened and brought forward into the new local plan. This will provide a very positive planning framework for any proposals which have community support.



GREEN QUESTION 7

Question to the Mayor from Councillor Heather Mack

Subject: CAZ Grants

£43M has been made available in grants for people to help deal with the CAZ.

- 1) Please can we have an update as to how much has been granted and/or in the pipeline, and the breakdown between the different types of allocation?

REPLY:

At the date of launch at the end of November we received over 8,000 applications for financial support to change or upgrade their vehicles, we had approved over 1,500 applications for temporary exemptions and given out over 10,000 active travel offers such as bus tickets and Voi e-scooter credit.

Around £16m of applications have been approved pending further evidence and/or confirmation of stretch funding from Government, with £2.2m already issued for buses and coaches.

I would recommend you approach the team direct for the specific breakdown and pipeline you're after so as to avoid duplication here. The team can arrange another all member briefing to follow on from the one given in November if there is interest.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 7

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

Subject: ADDITIONAL FIRE SAFETY MEASURES IN THE CITY'S TOWER BLOCKS

1. I noted in the recent Cabinet report on this important issue that £10m was requested for approval of the Wireless Alarm budget. To provide tenants with some further reassurance, what timeframe following approval of this spend are we looking at before installation will begin?
2. What is the status of the sprinkler system programme previously promised for these buildings? This measure seems to have disappeared entirely from consideration.

REPLY:

1. The cabinet report formalised the decision we had taken to introduce waking watch to 38 blocks as an interim mitigation measure while we plan for the removal of Expanded Polystyrene cladding.

The decisions around the remediation programme, alarms and sprinkler programme and consequences for the budget and other planned improvements will be worked through as part of the wider Housing Revenue Account budget setting in January 2023.

2. It has not disappeared from consideration.

Earlier this year we completed a pilot sprinkler installation project at Butler House, St George. An earlier pilot had been planned at Castlegate House but the majority of residents objected to it, resulting in the system being ineffective if progressed with low uptake.

The pilot at Butler House however worked well and we have learnt lessons regarding the process of implementation and how they can be delivered in the most efficient and effective way. We are now prioritising which of our high-rise blocks need them most.



CONSERVATIVE QUESTION 8

Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Chris Windows (Henbury & Brentry)

Subject: THE AUTHORITY'S ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1. Please can the Mayor give me an assurance that the extensive delay in signing-off the 2020/21 Accounts has not resulted in the imposition of any financial penalties, as would have been the case involving private or public companies?
2. Does the Mayor recognise the importance of external audit and the role that this oversight provides in ensuring greater transparency and probity in matters of public spending?

REPLY:

- 1 There are no financial penalties in the delay in signing off the accounts.
- 2 External Audit provides a vital role in scrutiny and transparency in all matters associated with public spending.

Bristol City Council works in a cooperative manner with our external auditors, Grant Thornton, to ensure that they are able to carry out their duties effectively and hold the Council to account.

