

The following statements have been submitted – full details are attached:

| | Name | Subject |
|------|---------------------|--|
| CS01 | Cllr Phillipa Hulme | Afghan Refugees |
| CS02 | Cllr Andrew Brown | Threats to the Central Library and broader Library Service |
| CS03 | Cllr Mohamed Makawi | Street Drains |
| CS04 | Cllr Katy Grant | Water Quality |

CS01

Members Forum statement from Cllr Phillipa Hulme

Subject: Afghan Refugees

I want to thank all the volunteers and staff who have been supporting Afghan refugees - and indeed refugees from other parts of the world - in Bristol. As a City of Sanctuary, it's reassuring to see so many people come together to make Bristol a safe haven for those fleeing violence and persecution.

Across the country, Bristol included, refugees are being housed in hotels until long-term accommodation becomes available - due to a lack of government funding to provide proper homes for refugees and for social housing in general. I would appreciate the cabinet member or officers getting back to me in writing about the plans and timeframes to have the refugees who are currently in hotels into permanent homes.

With around 15,000 people on the housing waiting list and a shortage of housing in Bristol, there are a lot of factors that will effect this. But with 2,563 homes being built in Bristol last year alone, far surpassing an ambitious target, I am hopeful that we can find the long-term homes that refugees in Bristol so urgently need in the near future.

CS02

Members Forum statement from Cllr Andrew Brown

Subject: Threats to the Central Library and broader Library Service

Bristol's Central Library is one of the city's most popular public assets. Its lending and reference libraries are used by tens of thousands of people every year. It has been housed in the same building since 1906, a grade one listed architectural gem with national significance. The building was designed for use as a library and, with its later extension, serves that purpose just as well today as a century ago.

The hall of the reference library continues to inspire learning and discovery and The Bristol Room, with fixtures incorporated from the original 17th century library in King Street, houses thousands of documents from the city's history. It is very hard to understand why anyone thinks it would be a good idea to close down the library, with a completely uncertain future for the building or its contents.

Over recent years under both the current and previous Mayor, we have seen repeated threats to the Library Service in the city. On those occasions, after broad-based public campaigns, threatened libraries have been saved, albeit with curtailed hours. Indeed, just a couple of years ago the Mayor's office was trumpeting how he had saved the city's libraries...

I urge the Mayor to abandon any plan to close the library, and review threats to other libraries across the city, such as Whitchurch Library in my ward. The Central Library in its current building should remain the centre of a comprehensive public library service in our city.

If he is unwilling to categorically rule out closing it then he should at least give full disclosure on the cost estimates he has received for the full relocation of all the library's contents and assets. He should disclose which alternative locations have been investigated for any relocation. He should disclose what the annual rental costs of any new location would be, compared to the zero rental costs of the current library. He should disclose the identity of any potential future tenants of the current Central Library and what uses they would make of a listed building designed as a library.

The Central Library is something that works well in our city. It is a centre for life-long learning. It has a bustling Business and IP hub. It is in an accessible location. It is a place where people can meet. In the current cost of living crisis, it is a warm place for people experiencing fuel poverty. It is also one of the few locations of public toilets in this area of the city (and rather more accessible than those in this building). Closing it would be preposterous and damaging.

CS03

Members Forum statement from Cllr Mohamed Makawi

Subject: Street Drains

I am writing this statement regarding drainage in the city, especially in my ward Cotham.

As I have reported so many of them to the fixmystreet for complete or partial blockages, some for more than a year, and none of them have been unblocked so far, and many of these reports are closed and recorded as 'completed' as if the work is done.

But the reality is otherwise.

The most important point is not opening or unblocking the drainage, but is that they cause the streets to be bulldozed & potholes especially in the Autumn & Winter season, we have seen recently heavy rains that lead to local flooding and cause inconvenience to residents, pedestrians, and road users, and the huge expenditure of the council's budget on road repair throughout the year.

CS04

Members Forum statement from Cllr Katy Grant

Subject: Water Quality

We have learnt recently from the Trout in the Trym community group (made up of volunteers from Sustainable Southmead, Sea Mills Climate Action, Sustainable Henbury & Brentry, Sustainable Westbury on Trym and others) that sewage in Bristol is a really significant problem. Recent national media on this - a multi million pound fine for Southern Water, a debate in Parliament, etc - didn't affect Bristol and its waterways, but it could very well have done.

Here are figures for Bristol in 2021 (the data is from water companies, collated and published each year by the Rivers Trust):

Constituency - Number of overflows of raw sewage; Duration of overflows (hours); % of combined sewer outflows actually being monitored

- Bristol East - 448; 302; 75%
- Bristol North West - 2,588; 6,203; 95% <<< mainly in the Trym
- Bristol South - 169; 277; 57%
- Bristol West - 287; 361; 59%
- Bristol Local Authority area - 3,492; 7,144; 80%

These are all spills of raw sewage into the watercourses within the city boundary. Many children swim and paddle in these streams as well as countless dogs. Warning signs from the Council are not in evidence. The One City Plan (Goal 188) says that all Bristol streams will be healthy for wildlife by 2031 - but without oversight of the main polluter how will this be achieved? It is really important that the Council provides regular, robust oversight of what Wessex Water is doing. Data is published annually, the next due April/May 2023 for 2022; if pollution levels are not improving, Wessex Water need to be challenged on this, on their plans (what, where, when, with what impact) and on their progress. The Council needs to be doing this at least annually and keeping the public informed.

Trout in the Trym say that they have sent this data to the Cabinet member for climate and ecology, but have not had a reply. It would be helpful for all of us councillors, and for the residents of Bristol, if the Council could take action on water quality, hold water companies to account – and share more information with the public about this.