

Public Forum

Committee Model Working Group

Friday 28th April 2023



Questions	
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PQ 01	Dan Ackroyd
PQ02 PQ03 PQ04 PQ05	Clive Stevens
PQ06 PQ07	Suzanne Audrey

Statements	
Number	Name
PS01	Suzanne Audrey
PS02	David Redgewell
PS03	Clive Stevens
PS04	Martin Fodor

QUESTIONS

Dan Ackroyd

Q1 - Meetings in Bristol City Council have a recurring problem with senior council members talking out of turn, to talk over other people, and currently the people chairing meetings seem to take no action against this disruption. What changes are going to be made to how meetings are run to make this less of an issue under the committee system?

A1 – This is a question for the Committee Members to answer.

Clive Stevens

Q2. Agenda item 4 - decisions log:

In the February sessions you decided to constitute an Escalations Panel. This was in response to issues about scrutiny and ensuring decision making is to the best benefit of the public as a whole. I do not see from the Work Programme that you have allocated time for further discussion about this valuable new addition to Bristol City Council's system of governance.

Could you consider including time for further discussion and decisions please to refine the workings of the Escalations Panel?



(I would be very happy to furnish some examples of why it is an important addition to the Committee System).

A2 - In July 23, the CMWG will be agreeing the remainder of their Work Programme for 23/24. Items will include consideration of any areas, such as the Escalation Panel, where more details may be required before redrafting or preparing the relevant parts of the Constitution can commence.

Q3. Agenda item 7 – Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors:

There doesn't appear to be any mention in the current report of councillors' requirements to scrutinise the information provided to them. Given that you have decided to build scrutiny into the job tasks of each committee, could you consider adding this job to committee members please?

A3 - Members of the CMWG are invited to share their views on this suggestion.

Q4. Agenda item 7 - Appendix A part 6 - Chair of a Policy Committee – Generic Chairs' Responsibilities. (Para 2, top of page 8 of 11).

This paragraph requires the chair of a policy committee to be impartial. I don't think this is possible in many cases and could become grounds for challenge. The chair needs to be fair and run a meeting in such a way as to facilitate open discussions etc. Clearly a chair mustn't be pre-determined but I don't think they need to pretend to be impartial, being fair is sufficient. Please consider the use of the word impartial in that specific clause?

A4 – The Nolan Principles state that 'holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.' Therefore use of the term impartial is consistent.

Q5. Agenda item 7 - Appendix A part 6 - Chair of a Policy Committee – Generic Chairs' Responsibilities. (Para 2, top of page 8 of 11).

In the future you may decide you need to add the requirement that a chair allows a minority report (or however you call it) from a few councillors on a Policy Committee to go to the Escalations Panel.

Could you confirm with the Monitoring Officer that an amendment like this could be added in at a later date please?

A5 - Members have not yet finalised the arrangements for the Escalation Panel and will consider this in due course.

Suzanne Audrey

Q6: The paper on the roles and responsibilities of councillors seems to focus on the practicalities of who does what, and that is obviously important. There is some reference to 'high standards of ethical conduct', but there is nothing in the paper to say what those standards are. **Is it possible to include a paragraph referring to the 'Nolan principles' and Bristol City Council's Member Code of Conduct?**

A6 - Members of the CMWG are invited to share their views on this suggestion.

Q7: I see that the current member Code of Conduct states: This code of conduct is to be signed immediately by you upon being sworn office and this will be done by the Monitoring Officer. **What training is provided to councillors about the content and meaning of the member Code of Conduct, and could it be improved under the new committee system?**



A7 - All Councillors are provided with training on the Code of Conduct as part of their induction and we will be working with Members to design the training programme for 2024 in due course.

STATEMENTS

PS01 – Suzanne Audrey

While the working group may not want to dwell on past problems, I do think it is important to consider why the people of Bristol voted to remove the elected mayor model in favour of the committee system of governance. Under the elected mayor and cabinet model some important, and expensive, decisions have been associated with lack of transparency and poor cooperation with scrutiny. That is not just my opinion. It is also the opinion of the external auditors, amongst others. Please can members of the committee model working group be mindful of this in their deliberations. It is important that the new committee model working group ensures a more transparent, inclusive system that is willing and able to respond effectively to scrutiny.

PS02 – David Redgewell

Whilst we welcome the setting up of committee system and leader and Deputy leader for the council for the city and county of Bristol. And the continuation of the Lord Mayor of and Deputy Lord Mayor of the city and county of Bristol in the Governance of the city. The report talks about the One city partnership with community groups. Businesses and other stakeholders in the city region. But the report fails to address the role of the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and the metro mayor Dan Norris. The Transport Authority is now the West of England Mayoral Combined Transport Authority. With functions for Public Transport Network services. Support bus services. The bus service improvement plan. Jointly with North Somerset Council. Who the Departments for Transport and Levelling Up want to see as a full member of the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority along with the local Enterprise Partnership. This provision is going through Parliament in the Levelling Up Bill. West of England Mayoral Combined Transport Authority. Power includes work with Network Rail Western Route. First Group Great Western Railway Company. Cross country trains German State Railway Arriva. Planning of Metro West Railway. The provision and design of bus and coach station and interchanges. And under the city region transport strategy £540 million pounds on investment in transport infrastructure. Ferry service. Transport integration. Strategic Road Network. With these functions with the metro mayor Dan Norris and the combined Authority. The government under the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Act. Set out for the need to transfer Transport staff to the combined transport Authority. The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority. Is also the Regional Planning and Housing Authority. The Mayor has to provide a Regional Plan as present this has been blocked by South Gloucestershire Council. But this is still the duty of the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority. As is the provision of higher education and skills. And West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and Mayor Dan Norris is responsible for Region Tourism. Covering the city and county of Bristol. Bath and North East Somerset Council South Gloucestershire Council and North Somerset Council. With Visit West. Bristol only remains as local Highway Authority and Port Authority. The Report on the committee system appears unclear how the leader Deputy leader of the city and county of Bristol Council. Will sit on the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority committee or the joint committee with North Somerset Council. Will the committee members for Planning and Transport sit on the Transport Board. We need separate Boards of Planning and Housing and Transport at the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority.



The Government has made it clear the role of the city Regions and combined Authorities in levelling up bill and Devolution deals. And the labour party her majesty opposition in the uk parliament. The Region government policy in England will the Taking back control paper. Separate government funding and arrangements exist for Northern Ireland and working with Ireland. Scotland and Wales. The Green party and liberal Democrat party have also supported regional government. The Government does not allow for removal of west of England mayoral combined Authority or its mayoral function without an act of parliament. And the government Departments for levelling up and Transport see city region government as important to Greater Bristol and Bath city region. The committee structure working party is at present through the Transport and equalities group stakeholder is failing to address the role of the city and county of Bristol council in the city region. And also, in Regional Government bodies like the west Gateway Board jointly with the South Wales government, Authorities. Gloucestershire Swindon, Wiltshire and North Somerset council and the west of England mayoral combined Authority in England with mayor Dan Norris. Western gateway transport Board. Covering Wiltshire council Gloucestershire county council West of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council area. City and county of Bristol South Gloucestershire council and Banes. Dorset Bournemouth Poole and Christchurch. The body works with the Peninsula transport Board. Working with the North Somerset council South Gloucestershire council and City of Bristol integrated care Board and again in the city region with the Bath Wiltshire and Swindon integrated care Board.

- Avon and Somerset police and crime commissioner office and police
- Bristol port police.
- British transport police.
- Bristol Airport
- Port of Bristol
- Pennion Bristol water South west water
- YTL Wessex water

Whist we welcome the work on the committee structure of the city and county of Bristol council. It must be noted that Bristol city council needs to be care in it structure and roles with the west of England mayoral combined Authority. Working with the other city region councils of North Somerset council Banes South Gloucestershire council and of course the Government wishes to make North Somerset council a full member of the west of England mayoral combined Authority with the local Enterprise partnership. With the very very importance of the city region we would like to see how the Leader and Deputy leader and committee structure is planning to work with the metro mayor Dan Norris and the west of England mayoral combined Authority and North Somerset council and other Regional governments organisations.

David Redgewell South west transport Network and Railfuture Severnside.
Bristol disability equality forum trustee.
Gordon Richardson Bristol disability equality forum

PS03 – Clive Stevens

Agenda item 6 – Policy Committees

Dear Councillors and Officers

The report's author rightly asks the question (on pages 7 and 10) "should oversight of risk be included in this committee?" I would suggest the answer should be YES, that answer applies to each of the seven committees and here's why...



Audit Committee has responsibility for overseeing governance, yet it rightly doesn't govern – otherwise the Chair of Audit would be the Leader of the Council. Instead it gets its auditors to check the Council's decision making systems (and the systems within the Council's companies).

Equally Audit Committee has responsibility for overseeing the risk management system, checking it is functioning and being used correctly by others to make their decisions. If Audit Committee made the decisions on risk you would be empowering them to overturn Committee decisions.

This reasoning is standard in local government; the Committees must therefore work to the approved risk management system, understand the risks of various options and use the information to make informed decisions. Even better - they consider modifications to the decision to mitigate risk. This should be in their "job spec."

As far as I'm aware this is no different to the current decision-making process used by the Mayor and his Cabinet. The Mayor is informed of the risks, takes decisions accordingly and seeks to mitigate risks where he can. Audit Committee check that this is happening and that risks are being calculated in a systematic and comparable way.

That is what was happening when I was Vice Chair of Audit Committee. Where it went wrong were, for example, when the risk was poorly calculated, mitigating actions weren't taken, or risks increased too rapidly for the system to respond. The consequent loss of money eventually had to be accounted for and in theory the learning was made public to improve the operation of the Council in the future.

So Committees need to have an understanding of risk, include risk in their decision making and seek to mitigate risk. If I was on Audit Committee now that's what I would want to see as it is evidence of a well-used and understood risk management system.

PS04 – Martin Fodor

Governance of Service delivery in wards

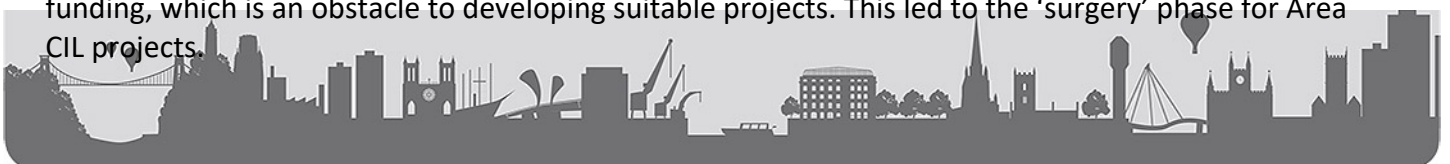
Ward councillors have a key community leadership role in their wards and wider neighbourhood.

They are meant to be informed and have an input into key local decisions – as reiterated and agreed in Full Council recently.

There's clearly a balance between strategic initiatives for the city and parochial issues affecting a local community – which can often be in tension – but the council has affirmed that ward councillors should be consulted and involved.

Since the demise of the 3-ward Neighbourhood Partnerships and the impacts of many years of austerity there's been no local highways budget or any grant funding as seedcorn for community initiatives, at a time when these are relied on more and more. This means there's sometimes no discretionary spending at all in the hands of councillors [some Area CIL funds are negative at the time of writing].

At the same time there's often no clear basis explained for allocation of things like road safety budgets, highway maintenance and renewal, investment of capital in new facilities etc. Currently proposals emerge almost fully formed. Officers have often been unavailable until a project already has funding, which is an obstacle to developing suitable projects. This led to the 'surgery' phase for Area CIL projects.



There's now an opportunity to change this with the advent of the committee model of governance as more representative committees are to be formed.

This can be put in place at the same time as the threshold for decisions is lowered to bring more budget spending into the open. And a delegation to ward or groups of wards would help ensure less congestion in policy committee agendas e.g. sub-£500,000 proposals.

Now is therefore the best time to put in place devolved decision making for various services to allow more transparent, more local priority setting for some service budgets which can be done in conjunction with community partners. This could involve highway safety, active travel, parks, potholes, signage, micro grants and so on – list to be agreed with each service director. Such devolved groups of wards could also be used to help deliver further local proposals to progress both liveable neighbourhoods and community climate action groups which are both policies supported by the current administration.

Area Committees has been a 'pending' item for scrutiny for two years now. Due to the timetable for the CMWG this could come too late to ensure a suitable inquiry and option assessment. Therefore, I urge the working group to schedule this now and invite for evidence and proposals as soon as possible. I'd be happy to see Communities Scrutiny allocate time to support this.

