

Overview & Scrutiny Management Board

6 June 2023

Public Forum



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PUBLIC FORUM - QUESTIONS

Question 1 - Suzanne Audrey

Background: I had thought the Annual Scrutiny Work Programme might relate to the Mayor's Forward Plan but, when I looked online, all of the items in the Mayor's Forward Plan were due to be rubber-stamped at Cabinet 6 June, except the Harbour Revision Order which is due to be rubber-stamped at Cabinet 4 July.

Question: Please can you explain how (if at all) the Mayor's Forward Plan is linked to the Scrutiny Work Programme?

Response from the Chair of OSMB:

Members of OSMB and all the other Council scrutiny members will be participating in a workshop on the morning of 6 June 2023 where they will agree the Scrutiny work programme for 2023/2024. The 6 June public meeting of OSMB will ratify the outcome of the workshop. The setting of the work programme is scrutiny member-led, with each commission identifying their areas of priority focus for the year ahead. The Council's Executive Directors will be participating in the workshop and will assist members in the process of setting priorities, informed by their detailed knowledge of key areas of service and policy activity planned for the year ahead. The Mayor's Forward Plan is updated and published each month – OSMB will keep the content of the Forward Plan under ongoing review and will retain the flexibility to adjust the scrutiny work programme as necessary as 'key decision' items are added to the Mayor's Forward Plan as the year progresses. It is recognised that to an extent, the Council is faced on an ongoing basis with adapting to national political, economic and other circumstances which will be reflected through the content of the Forward Plan as the year progresses.

Question 2 – Nicola Round

Given that the Bristol Advisory Committee on Climate Change has recently said that much more needs to be done for the council to reach its aim to be carbon neutral by 2030, will the OSMB confirm that this will be a priority for scrutiny this year? And, will the council re-consider introducing a Low Carbon Advertising Policy to meet its climate goals, now that other UK councils have done so? This could build on the council's advertising policy introduced in 2021, and could restrict advertising which is promoting the most climate-damaging products and industries such as fossil fuels, air travel, SUVs and meat.

Officer Response:

We are currently continuing our initial evaluation of the council's Advertising and Sponsorship Policy in partnership with the University of Bristol. Once this is complete and when our internal resourcing levels allow, we plan to review and refresh the policy. At this point, we will consider any further restrictions including the potential for those suggested relating to low carbon.

PUBLIC FORUM - STATEMENTS

Statement 1 - Cllr Carla Denyer

Public statement to OSMB 6th June – Please review Advertising & Sponsorship Policy this year

In November 2020, OSMB [provided](#) pre-decision scrutiny on [Bristol City Council's Advertising and Sponsorship Policy](#). It is a credit to officers that they brought the policy to scrutiny at an early stage and with an open mind so that OSMB could make a meaningful contribution.

I addressed this OSMB meeting from the public forum to highlight the opportunity to further the Council's public health, equality and climate policies by drafting a more robust policy that includes prohibition of advertising of high carbon products and services [hereafter 'High Carbon Advertising'], junk food, alcohol, gambling and payday loans on all council-owned advertising sites. OSMB members and officers were receptive to these suggestions – thank you.

The final policy, [adopted by Cabinet in March 2021](#), included all of these prohibitions **except High Carbon Advertising**. The council stopped short of including these on the basis that **at the time** there were no nationally agreed standards or local authority precedent. But the Cabinet report was clear that the door was not closed to considering such prohibitions in future. [It says](#):

"Consideration has been given as to whether the Council should introduce additional advertising restrictions in support of its environmental aims. In the absence of any suitable national standards or local authority precedents, the Council would need to identify and restrict particular industries, goods or services. Because it would be the first authority to do so, formal public consultation would be necessary. Any such consultation would not be possible until after local elections due to national restrictions during pre-election period. The consequence of doing this would be to delay implementing any policy until much later in 2021, by which time the Council would have missed the opportunity to put the policy in to action on at least one of its larger advertising concession contracts, with no further practical chance to do so for several years

"Taking this context in to account, the Council will continue to work with city partners to explore practical options for environmentally friendly advertising standards and how this could be applied more broadly in the city. In the meantime, alternative methods of making a positive difference will be explored during advertising-related procurement exercises; for example, the possibility of requiring digital advertising spaces to be powered by renewable energy sources..

"The potential for further advertising restrictions or standards will be revisited at this Policy's next review date, and would include public consultation as required."

Since March 2021, two very important developments have occurred in the area of controlling high carbon advertising:

1. A [legal examination](#) has found restriction of High Carbon Advertising by councils to be not only lawful, but proportionate and necessary given the scale of the climate crisis. This legal advice also found that despite the lack of a national standard for 'high carbon advertising', councils have broad scope to define a policy according to their discretion.

2. **Other councils have now adopted policies restricting High Carbon Advertising**, so Bristol would no longer be the first Council to do so. These include [Cambridgeshire County Council](#), [Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council](#) and [Coventry City Council](#).

Further, [Bristol's One City climate strategy](#), adopted in February 2020, includes an objective to “*Creating advertising standards and restrictions to support responsible consumption.*”

So reviewing the policy with a view to including such a prohibition is in line with existing policies.

Therefore, just over 2 years on from the policy's initial adoption, **I ask OSMB to put a review of this policy on your agenda for this civic year**, to assess the policy's performance thus far and consider extending its reach to include High Carbon Advertising. In doing so I suggest liaising closely with the councils that have already adopted such policies.

Statement 2 - Veronica Wignall

My statement relates to my personal view, although it may be noted that I am also a member of Adblock Bristol.

Like many in the city I am deeply concerned about the worsening impacts of climate breakdown on my future and that of my family, as well as on nature, and communities across the world. The climate crisis is an existential threat that presses on me every day. I will not talk more about this as I'm sure this feeling is shared by many.

I have been proud to live in Bristol, a city known for being green and progressive. But while I am sure the council is working on their climate action plan, I cannot feel any change as a resident. The public transport in Bristol is notoriously bad, and as a cyclist I feel the effects of increasing traffic, larger cars and pollution alongside no improvements in cycling infrastructure. I do not feel an upswell in flight-free travel, repair culture, or home improvements to improve insulation. Moreover, I see advertising around the city that encourages me to buy a car, take a flight and eat red meat, things I know increase carbon emissions and harm biodiversity. This is confusing and contradictory.

I appreciate the difficulties of implementing action on the scale required by the climate crisis. But much more can surely be done, not least removing the influence of advertising that promotes the most high-emitting products and behaviours, something that has been done by other UK councils.[1] Given this, I am asking that:

- **the OSMB makes climate action an urgent priority for scrutiny this year.**

- **the council introduces a Low Carbon Advertising Policy** that aligns with Bristol's climate commitments, and supports, rather than contradicts, the council's efforts and financial input into climate action. This should restrict advertising that promotes private cars, fossil fuel companies, meat and dairy products and air travel as a matter of urgency.[1]

Thank you for taking the time to consider my statement.

[1] Background, evidence, precedents and legal advice for councils introducing a Low Carbon Advertising Policy can be found here for reference: <https://www.badverts.org/policymakers-toolkit>

Statement 3 - Adblock Bristol

To the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board,
I am submitting this statement on behalf of Adblock Bristol:

Statement for Public Forum, 6th June 2023 1:30pm, Henry from Adblock Bristol

Summary: The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board must support greater climate ambition by Bristol City Council, and the introduction of a Low Carbon Advertising Policy to meet climate goals.

Adblock Bristol asks that the OSMB makes Bristol City Council's commitments to reducing emissions and encouraging sustainable behaviour change, as laid out in the One City Climate Strategy, a priority for scrutiny committees this year.

Climate breakdown is clearly worsening and it is something that matters deeply to Bristol's residents. Adblock fully supports Bristol City Council's commitment to becoming carbon neutral and climate resilient by 2030, but we are concerned that the Bristol Advisory Committee on Climate Change has said in May 2023 that much more needs to be done to meet this goal.

Bristol's One City Climate Strategy says that *"As a city we need to act now to reduce direct and indirect carbon emissions to net zero"*. We ask that the OSMB commits to ensuring the continued scrutiny of the council's climate strategy, ambition and actual action. And that as part of this, scrutiny committees place high carbon advertising on the agenda for the coming year.

The OSMB previously [provided](#) pre-decision scrutiny on [Bristol City Council's Advertising and Sponsorship Policy](#) in 2020/2021, helping to shape it into a more robust policy that includes prohibition of advertising of junk food, alcohol, gambling and payday loans on all council-owned advertising sites. At the time the council stopped short of including restrictions on High Carbon Advertising, on the [basis](#) that at the time there was a lack of national standards or local authority precedents. However, a Low Carbon Advertising Policy that restricts advertising for highly-polluting companies and products across council-owned advertising sites is mandated in Bristol's climate strategy, which explicitly commits the council to *"Creating advertising standards and restrictions to support responsible consumption."*

Bristol City Council has already taken the leading step of restricting advertising for products that harm our health, including ads for gambling, alcohol and 'junk food'. Now, the council must also restrict advertising for the most climate-harming products, those we know must be phased out immediately to reduce emissions and cut local air pollution, including adverts for air travel, SUVs and fossil fuels.

Continuing to allow high carbon advertising across Bristol amounts to promoting climate breakdown by increasing demand for carbon-intensive activities. It also acts as a barrier to behaviour change - for example, showing adverts for air travel or SUVs undermines scientific warnings and council efforts to encourage active travel and live in a sustainable way.

Since Bristol adopted its Advertising and Sponsorship Policy two years ago, the evidence base and precedent for banning High Carbon Advertising has changed.

Restricting high carbon advertising at a local level has recently been found by [legal examination](#) to be not only lawful, but proportionate and necessary given the scale of the climate crisis. This legal advice also found that despite the lack of a national standard for 'high carbon advertising', councils have broad scope to define a policy according to their discretion. Other councils such as [Cambridgeshire County](#)

[Council](#), [Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council](#) and [Coventry City Council](#) have already adopted policies restricting advertising for fossil fuels and other environmentally-damaging goods and services.

UK ad agency Purpose Disruptors has calculated that [32% of the average carbon footprint](#) of UK residents in 2022 was due to ads causing extra consumption, particularly of high carbon goods such as cars and flights. Research by the Badvertising campaign has shown that SUV ads can make people [250% more likely to own an SUV](#) than no vehicle at all.

So I think it is time that the Council reviews this policy.

When the OSMB meets on the 6th of June to decide the annual programme for all the council scrutiny commissions for the year, we ask that the Board:

- Commits to prioritising greater climate ambition through the council's scrutiny process.
- Places the introduction of a Low Carbon Advertising Policy on the agenda for scrutiny committees this year, as a pathway to meet the council's climate commitments.

I will also be reading this statement at the meeting on Tuesday.

Statement 4 - David Redgewell, Gordon Richardson, Brendon Taylor

Public statement.

We would ask that overview and scrutiny commission working with the Growth and Regeneration scrutiny commission:

To carry out more scrutiny of the West of England mayoral combined authority and North Somerset council for which public transport network service operators jointly between the 2 Transport Authorities.

As the West of England mayoral combined transport authority and North Somerset council are responsible for the bus service improvement plan money.

And with mayor Dan Norris responsible for the city region bus network with Councillor Hannah Young at North Somerset council.

With new railway station at Portway parkway and Ashley Down and Filton North for the Exhibition centre Henbury for Cribbs Causeway on Henbury loop line.

The funding of metro west railway network.

From Bristol Temple Meads station to Keynsham, Oldfield Park, Bath spa, Freshford, Avoncliff, Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge, Westbury every 30 mins and every hour to Dilton Marsh, Warminster, Salisbury with some service to Southampton or Frome.

Bristol Temple Meads station to Filton Abbeywood, Bristol parkway station, Yate, Charfield new station, Cam and Dursley stonehouse, Bristol road new station.

Gloucester central, Cheltenham spa, Ashchurch for Tewkesbury, Worcester shrub hill and Worcester Forgate Street

Joint local transport plan.

Bus shelters, bus and coach station and interchanges.

Bristol Temple Meads station, Bristol Lawrence Hill, Bristol Stapleton Road, Montpellier, Redland, Clifton Down station, Sea Mills, Shirehampton, Portway parkway station, Avonmouth Dock and Severn Beach.

With all these train services funded by the West of England mayoral combined transport authority.

And the opening of the Bristol Temple Meads station, Bedminster, Parson Street, Pill and Portishead line

New proposed station at Ashton Gate.

Mass transit system light rail proposals.

Cycling and walking straight.

City region transport projects.

On main bus routes out of Bristol to Bath

Bristol to Stockwood and Whitchurch.

Bristol city centre to Cribbs Causeway bus station via Clifton Down, Henleaze, Southmead and Henbury.

Bristol to Yate.

Bristol to Thornbury.

Bristol to Portishead.

Bristol to Clevedon via Nailsea .

Bristol to Weston super Mare.

Bristol to Bath via Paulton, Midsomer Norton, Westfield, Radstock, Peasedown St John / Wells bus and coach station, Glastonbury and Street.

Harbour infrastructure. And Bridges over the new cut .

Ferry service infrastructure in Bristol Harbour.

Regional housing and planning

Education and skills.

Regional tourism.

Equalities and access to public services.

With staff being transferred from Bristol city council to the West of England mayoral combined transport authority.

And part of the levelling up bill, the transfer of the Local Enterprise partnership and North Somerset council into the West of England mayoral combined authority.

A proposed Regional Devolution deal.

And western gateway partnership and transport board.

Require more scrutiny by Bristol city council scrutiny commission councillors.

Working with the scrutiny commission of the West of England mayoral combined authority and North Somerset council committee.

David Redgewell, South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside

Gordon Richardson, Bristol Disability equalities forum.

Brendon Taylor Bristol Disabled equalities forum.

Gloucestershire catch the bus campaign.

Somerset catch the bus campaign.

Statement 5 - Councillor Katy Grant

This statement comes from the Chair of the cross-party Climate Change Working Group. The working group was constituted as a sub-group by OSMB in October last year, and has since met six times. The group has focused on identifying any gaps and areas for acceleration in the council's work towards the city goal of Net Zero carbon emissions by 2030. We have hoped to add value to (rather than duplicate) the considerable work already being done, while ensuring the transition is as just as possible. Acknowledging the non-political nature of the climate emergency, the group's aim was to identify some of the blockers to policy change that might be non-technical in nature, and achieve

consensus on how to address these. The group has also provided an opportunity to prepare for the post-May 2024 committee governance model, where it will be necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the proposed Environment and Sustainability Committee in relation to climate policy and delivery.

Three of the working group sessions involved examining areas of the Council's work that had been identified as priority areas by members. These topics were 1) data/partnerships, 2) decarbonisation of the domestic/civic space (including retrofitting), and 3) communication/engagement.

The result of this work is a report agreed by members, with findings and recommendations, which will be formally submitted for consideration to OSMB for its July 2023 meeting. The recommendations were mostly unanimously agreed, but one which had majority support rather than unanimous was the suggestion to extend the work of the group during the second half of 2023, to examine three more key areas of carbon emission – for example sustainable food and procurement, transport, consumption and waste, the built environment. The group feels that tackling the city's carbon emissions is a vital area for scrutiny, and more needs to be done as the 2025 deadline for the council's own emissions approaches, and the wider city deadline of 2030. We hope to avoid overburdening council officers' time by asking for inputs from City partners and from external experts. I am submitting this statement in this somewhat unusual way from the public gallery today in order to ensure that the continuation of this work can be considered by OSMB on 6th June as the agenda is set for the months to come, even though the final report will only be considered next month.

In particular, we feel that as we prepare ourselves for the May 2024 committee system, identifying areas for stronger climate policy affecting all areas of the city's life – building on the council's existing carbon-related projects – will become essential.

Cllr. Katy Grant, Chair of the CCWG
Green Councillor for Clifton