

# Public Forum

Committee Model Working Group

30 June 2023



Questions	
Number	Name
PQ 01	Clive Stevens
PQ02 PQ03	Sian Ellis-Thomas

Statements	
Number	Name
PS01	Sian Ellis-Thomas
PS02	Clive Stevens
PS03	Suzanne Audrey
PS04	David Redegwell and Gordon Richardson

## Clive Stevens

**Q1.** Time needs to be set aside another day for discussion on the working of the Escalation Panel process which may be triggered in a timely manner by a group of councillors who disagree for good reason with a committee decision (to be made or made). I read in Agenda 6 (item 4) that officers have given an example of needing 10 signatories, some cross party, to bring an issue to the Escalation Panel.

**Are the requirements of 10 signatories and cross party just “random” suggestions or have they been researched and are being put forward as considered proposals?**

A1. The proposals in the report relating to the number of signatories and the need for cross-party support for escalation are only suggestions for the Working Group to consider. There may be alternative views about the criteria to refer decisions to the Escalation Panel

## Sian Ellis-Thomas

**Q2.** Can the committee please explain how the new committee system model will hold Councillors to account when there are serious or multiple accounts of misconduct against them?



A2. Under s.27 of the Localism Act 2011, the Council is required to adopt a Code of Conduct for councillors. This will continue to be the case under the Committee model of governance. The current Code of Conduct will be the subject of review at a future meeting of the Working Group.

The current procedure for the consideration of complaints against councillors sets out the potential sanctions that can be imposed when there is a breach of the Code of Conduct and it is anticipated that similar arrangements will be in place under the Committee model of governance. The current potential sanctions are as follows:

- To Report on findings to Full Council i.e. “naming and shaming”.
- To Recommend to a Group Leader that the member concerned be removed from any committee or sub-committee.
- To recommend, In relation to any members of the executive that the member concerned be removed from the Executive.
- to recommend the Monitoring Officer to arrange appropriate training for the member concerned.
- to recommend removal of any member concerned from any outside body appointments.
- to require the withdrawal of Council facilities e.g. use of computer or internet.
- to exclude a member from the Council’s offices or other premises except for the purpose of attending formal meetings.

**Q3. Given the current rather lame sanctions that are in place, can the committee also explain how improvements to sanctions for misconduct can be such that they result in a significant incentive for better adherence to the Code?**

A3. The Working Group may wish to review the potential sanctions that might be imposed for a breach of the Code of Conduct for councillors when it’s reviewed in due course.

## Statements

### PS01 – Sian Ellis Thomas

Although I see no mention of a Member Code of Conduct in the notes accompanying this meeting, I am nevertheless heartened that the new committee system model presents the council an opportunity to review its Member Code of Conduct and implement significant change to the Code and process, which will ensure the public and indeed officers, can access a better system of accountability and sanctions for offenders and redress for victims.

### PS02 – Clive Stevens

I understand that the purpose of today’s meeting is to set the work plan through to 2024. I am writing to agree with the Report that you allocate time another day to design the “Escalation Panel Procedure Rules” please.



The main report refers to the Escalation Panel at points 4 and 10. The Panel was something you agreed back in February during discussion about scrutiny and according to the minutes it was decided:

“That Full Council establish an Escalation Panel, which would consider matters escalated to it, in line with the principles of decision making set out in Article 14.02 of the Council’s Constitution details as follows: proportionality; due consultation; taking of professional advice from others; respect for human rights; a presumption in favour of openness; clarity of aims and desired outcomes; due regard to public sector equality duty aims and; the highest standards of ethical conduct”.

The purpose of my statement today is to bring to your attention some of the matters you might wish to consider when you get to this topic. For example, issues remain regarding who can escalate an issue to the Panel and the workings of the Panel when it meets (its composition, powers etc). When you get around to discussing this in more detail (hopefully you will) would you consider please.

1) Regarding who can escalate a Committee issue or decision:

Sometimes matters can be resolved via conversations but sometimes a more formal procedure might be required. This needs to be done in a timely manner and for well-argued reasons.

- escalation to the Panel by some Members within the same Committee itself. You decide if it is 2 or 3 Councillors who, with good reason as laid out above (Article 14.02), wish deeper consideration of a specific matter. Examples within the headings of 14.02 might be: due to specific expert knowledge for example, or a missing or incomplete report, or better mitigation of impacts on a particular group (not just covered in the Equalities Act), or wanting to avoid a Judicial Review or for other reasons that you identify.

- escalation to the Panel by another Committee. Reasons, within Article 14.02 of course, perhaps Members of one Committee realise that the impact from another Committee’s decision will impact or cause harm to their policies. Perhaps in this case escalation might require a majority of the Councillors to refer the matter (5, I think that would be?).

- there might be other situations too.

2) Regarding the operation and powers of the Escalation Panel:

- this needs thought, deliberation and agreement too.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**PS03 – Suzanne Audrey**

I was pleased to see the recommendation that the terms of reference for a Policy Committee should “foster relationships with residents, businesses and stakeholders within the city and encourage them to participate in the Council’s democratic processes”.



Under the current mayoral system it can feel uncomfortable for residents who wish to participate in the Council's democratic processes. Being allowed only one minute to make a statement, often interrupted after 50 seconds, is challenging. The late publication of lengthy documents makes it difficult to understand issues and formulate questions.

Public participation in cabinet meetings can seem pointless. As one respected ex-cabinet member said: "the current monthly cabinet meeting is not a committee where items are debated and voted on. It is the place where decisions made in private are publicly ratified... The subversive element of the mayoral system is the lack of any effective democratic checks or balances."

These are some of the reasons why the city voted to scrap the mayoral system. I hope that the decisions made today will correct the problems with the mayoral system, and will encourage and enable residents who wish to participate in the Council's democratic processes.

### **PS04 – David Redgewell**

Whilst we welcome the work of the working group on setting up the committee system. We are concerned whilst it is very important to provide good quality public services such as:

- Park Gardens with Public toilets and cafes.
- Improvement in public toilets and changing places in the city centre Harbour and shopping centres.
- Good social services and social care
- Working in partnership with the NHS
- Good quality service for disabled people and equalities and diversity.
- Affordable housing and housing
- The Bristol local plan
- School and colleges
- City LEP
- Good waste service recycling and graffiti removal from the city building and public transport infrastructure.

There is a need to work in partnership with the West of England mayoral Combined Authority and North Somerset council western gateway partnership and Transport Board and Central Government of investment in Bristol and the city region.

Developer and government need to be reassured that investment in:

- Bristol Temple meads and Temple Quarter S Phillips will move forward.
- Western Harbour Regeneration and new bridges.
- Castle park redevelopment of the bank buildings.
- Work to make the Downs amenities fit for the 21st century public toilet cafe and changing rooms.
- Filton Arena Exhibition centre.
- With railway link to Filton Abbey wood, Ashley Down Bristol Stapleton road and Lawrence hill and Bristol Temple meads.



- Joint with the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and South Gloucestershire council.
- Broadmead Cabot circus and the Haymarket Regeneration.
- Southmead town centre.
- Whitchurch former Airport site and Hengrove park.
- Fishponds.
- Kingswood town centre jointly with South Gloucestershire council.
- Regeneration of port of Bristol.
- Investment in Tourism and leisure
- Harbour revisions order.

We are very concerned that at present the committee system working group is very focused on providing public services but not on continuing to reassure the business community develops the private sector and central government and the Treasury to invest in Bristol city Region.

- Working with the west of England mayor Dan Norris and the combined Authority
- And North Somerset council.
- On the bus service improvement plan
- Metro west railway Network and new stations
- Walking and cycling Network.
- Ferry services.
- Mass transit system.
- Light rail
- Interchanges and bus and coach stations.

At present the working party is very focus on the committees for public service and internal working of Bristol city council and Neighbourhood or parish councils.

But we need to see the committee focus on continuing to provide jobs and economic Development for the city and county of Bristol.

The business community Developers and investors need certain with the government the Bristol city council will focus on good governance of the committee system and leaders and Deputy leader.

The council also need to look at charitable trust to run facilities in parks and Gardens.

- Museum services
- Ashton court and Blaise castle.
- Many Councils use Trust to improve investment in parks arts and cultural.

We look forward on a debate about onward investment with the private sector Regional and central government.

David Redgewell South west transport Network Rail future Severnside.  
Gordon Richardson Bristol Disability Equalities Forum

