

Public Forum

Audit Committee

24 July at 3pm



1. Members of the Audit Committee

Petition		
Number	Name	Item
1	S Audrey	8 – Internal Auditors Annual Report on BCC 21/22 & 22/23

Question		
Number	Name	Item
1	S Audrey	8 – Internal Auditors Annual Report on BCC 21/22 & 22/23



We need an inquiry into the costs of refurbishing Bristol Beacon

To: The Mayor and council of Bristol

The cost of refurbishing Bristol Beacon (previously Colston Hall) has escalated to almost three times the original budget of £48.8m, and the latest estimate is £132m. The business plan appears to have been badly set up, managed and implemented, and there is a possibility that the costs could increase further.

We, the undersigned, demand an independent inquiry into the creation, implementation and management of the contract to refurbish Bristol Beacon.

Why is this important?

2016: At its first Cabinet meeting after coming to power, the current administration authorised a £1.6m investment in Colston Hall Phase II to enable the preparation and submission of a detailed planning application.

2017: A Cabinet paper was tabled indicating a refurbishment budget of £48.8m

2018: A Cabinet paper delegated authority to officers to appoint the contractor(s) for the redevelopment work, subject to development of the RIBA work packages ensuring that renovation works remained within the total maximum project envelope of £48.8m. This figure was subsequently revised upwards to £52.4m, with the additional amount being met by an increased contribution from the West of England combined authority.

2021: A revised total capital investment budget was set at £106.9m

2022: A Cabinet paper stated the costs had risen to £131.9m. However, a due diligence report indicated costs may increase further and completion could be delayed.

Grant Thornton, the external auditor, have said that Bristol City Council "underestimated the complexity and difficulty" of the work and failed to have "effective arrangements" in place. Grant Thornton have since identified managing the risks associated with the Bristol Beacon as a significant Value For Money weakness.

An independent review is needed covering the period from 2016, when the current administration authorised funds for the preparation and submission of a detailed planning application, through the various stages at which costs to the Council have escalated, to (hopefully) the completion of the project.

It is important that lessons are learned and recommendations made for drafting, monitoring and implementing future contracts.

Sources:

Appendix A3 - Timeline 2000-2018.pdf (bristol.gov.uk)

05012022 Assurance Report_Rev 01 - Confidential information highlighted (bristol.gov.uk)

Bristol Beacon Jan 23 Decision Pathway Report Final.pdf

Bristol Beacon refurb cost spirals by another £25 million (thebristolcable.org)

Signed by 625 people (616 with a Bristol postcode)

I would like to submit the following question to Audit Committee, 24 July 2023.

Background. The Auditor's Annual Report on Bristol City Council, Interim Report 2021/22 and 2022/23 indicates: The Bristol Beacon is a significant capital project that was expected to take two years to redevelop at a cost of £48.8m. However, the project has taken five years to refurbish at a cost of £131.9m ... A lessons learnt exercise has been designed and will start w/c 26th June 23. It will be led by an independent team from Arcadis, the council's capital strategic partner. The lessons learnt will take place in phases and is designed to provide critical lessons learnt and stimulate important insights. Initial phases will focus on data collection and analysis. The final phase will be Jan 24. Final draft issued Feb 24.

Question. Given that the public are making a considerable financial contribution to the refurbishment of Bristol Beacon, what measures can be put in place to ensure that the lessons learnt report will be made available to the public?

Suzanne Audrey

Response:-

The full lessons learnt report will be submitted to Audit Committee in response to the audit action, with consideration given by the Council's Monitoring Officer of the appropriate treatment for any confidential, personal, or commercially sensitive information.