

Member Forum

8 November 2016

Statements from councillors



Procedural note:

STATEMENTS FROM COUNCILLORS:

- A maximum of 1 minute shall be allowed for the presentation of each statement (subject to overall time constraints).
- There shall be no debate on the statements and the Lord Mayor shall refer them to the Mayor for consideration.
- Statements will be dealt with in the order of receipt (subject to time).



STATEMENTS

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

- CS 01 - Cllr Clive Stevens – Air pollution
- CS 02 - Cllr Gary Hopkins – Tennis in Redcatch Park
- CS 03 - Cllr Martin Fodor – Local road safety schemes



STATEMENT CS 01

Statement from Councillor Clive Stevens

Subject: Air pollution

Pollution has been an equalities issue for centuries, the rich lived up on high and in the west of our city to avoid the stench and the smog, the pollution of Victorian times was a killer, in the 1950s we had the smog primarily from coal burning and in the 1970s lead in the air. The toxic mixture this time is particulates and NO₂. Perhaps for the first time in two centuries we have a chance tonight to take the first tentative steps towards making history, at least in Bristol, and so perhaps people in the centre, lowlands and the east can escape pollution one day. I ask Councillors to be bold tonight and people will write about you. Well Made in Bristol, the Bristol Post and Bristol 24/7 will!

There will be valid objections from those whose businesses or lifestyles may be affected. If these are lawful we should do our best to cushion the effects of any Clean Air Zone on those affected - tradespeople, those with no other transport options, taxi drivers, car dealers, organisations with diesel generators.

With appropriate timing and incentives we should be able to clean up the air and support those who will need help adapting to the changes of a Clean Air Zone, whether it's with bus subsidies, help changing vehicles and generators, charging points and the right timing so that technology is cheap enough for people to switch their diesel vehicles to cleaner technology. They are not to blame, some like I bought a diesel car as it causes less CO₂ not knowing the other effects. Cleaning up the air will help the deprived areas, those already with breathing difficulties and save the NHS a fortune. If we vote for this tonight we can both clean up our air and help our city have a smooth transition to a Clean Air Zone, we should ensure our approach is empathetic, reasonable and communicative.

The management of change is always difficult, but is no reason not to take a momentous step.

STATEMENT CS 02

Statement from Councillor Gary Hopkins

Subject: Tennis in Redcatch Park

For many years Bristol Parks Department employed a clerk to collect charges for people wanting to use the tennis courts in Redcatch Park. Unfortunately the courts were in very poor shape and positively dangerous due to tree roots. There were not even enough fees collected to cover the clerks wages, so the fees were abolished and a few people started using the dodgy courts. A few years back a team made up of local Councillors, the friends of the park and the youth club, that meets in the pavilion, successfully bid for money for a series of major improvements (MUGA youth shelter) culminating in a large grant to replace the offending trees and resurface the tennis courts. We were helped by our then contractor Quadron and so efficiently was the work done that money was left over to do up some of the parks paths. All this at no cost to the Council and from local effort.

The new courts have proved very popular with people of all ages using the courts as an entry to the sport and some going on to join the nearby club which of course has top facilities and a membership fee.

Some months ago a counter appeared on the entrance gate to the courts. We were assured by Council Officers that this was nothing to do with charging to play . We reminded them that the grant was obtained on the understanding that there would be no charges. A posting then appeared on the Bristol City Council website which claimed to be a consultation about charging for tennis in the parks in return for courts to be improved. No consultation had happened with local Councillors or groups that had raised the improvement money. Officers refused to exclude Redcatch Park from the scheme. Cllr Davies and I tried to alert local people and encouraged them to pass comments on the skewed, little noticed consultation. Many complained to us that as soon as a number of locals started to input the consultation was closed.

Whatever happens elsewhere in the city this scheme is not wanted in Knowle and will be resisted. We were though quite happy when the nearby Knowle Tennis Club agreed to pay a rental to use the courts for 10 Friday evenings during the summer for league matches. Council Officers did not of course consult us or local groups on this but the rental £400 would be a help and cover any small ongoing costs. The Council to date has failed to issue an invoice.

This whole sorry saga has been an object lesson in how not to behave and the council is now doing its best to drive people away from active sport and insult those who have assisted the positive local development whilst failing to collect agreed rent. We call for an immediate statement removing the threat to our local free to use facility.

STATEMENT CS 03

Statement from Councillor Martin Fodor

Subject: Local road safety schemes

Many months ago residents in my ward raised their concerns about the lack of a safe crossing for their children to get to school, from one side of Cranbrook Rd (the B 4054) to another near Cairns Road to Harcourt Hill. Every day they worried about children crossing this fast road [in the 20mph limit area] that cuts through the area. It has no crossing for a long length and divides a route to school at a fast downhill location used by commuters.

I explained how we have a clear process for everything that needs to be done to try and tackle such issues:

- Traffic choices website, so we can check for related project requests and register their issue;
- Work with the Police, to encourage Community Speed Watch;
- Accident stats, so see if there's a known problem;
- Liaison with Highways to get ideas for the area using their expertise and knowledge of traffic issues;
- A monthly working group that reviews and assesses proposals from residents, advised by Highways;
- An annual highways project budget for the Neighbourhood to focus resources on the most important project in the area
- A process to develop and prioritise from all the requests so we choose a series of local projects (one per year per NP)
- Forums where residents can raise concerns and talk to others, including our volunteers
- I also pointed out that there are also many other ways to campaign for a solution.

Only weeks later one of the residents' children was on their way to school and a car collided with the pupil exactly as feared. This immediately focused attention on the risks and a more urgent need to address the lack of a safe crossing.

Of course the group has mobilised many more parents and residents now and created a petition calling for a safe crossing, which they will present to the Full Council shortly. They've done everything imaginable to develop their case and publicise why it should be considered a priority in the neighbourhood. They've been in local papers and magazines, spoken at our Neighbourhood Forum, created their petition, got training in Community Speed Watch, had the mobile radar van out to monitor speed violations, and with our Neighbourhood Partnership's budget and agreement got a traffic monitoring box out for two weeks to gather evidence of speed and volume of traffic, which is being analysed right now, to draw up data which can affect the appropriate and valid ways to

create a crossing. [If speeds are proven to be too high then a signal controlled crossing is required].

It's hard to imagine what else a group of concerned residents with a strong case for consideration can do to make their case against the many other requests and project proposals we (councilors and volunteers) have to sift through.

It also shows how the local partnership has worked with them to guide them through the process.

But now we see the Corporate Plan proposes no more devolved Highways budget for Neighbourhoods. We've also been told there will be no team with local projects, no budget, and no facility known for anyone to prioritise and develop local projects or get officer time to work on something which could save lives.

I'd therefore like to know what the thinking is behind the proposed removal of what are almost always resident led and locally developed road safety projects and how we can progress this safety scheme?