

Resources Scrutiny Commission

8 December 2023

Public Forum



Public forum questions have been received from the following individuals (full details are set out on the subsequent pages):

1. David Redgewell
2. Dan Ackroyd

Public forum statements have been received from the following individuals (full details are set out on the subsequent pages):

1. David Redgewell & Gordon Richardson
2. Dan Ackroyd

Please note that the views and information contained within these public statements are those of the individuals concerned and not of the Council.



PUBLIC FORUM - QUESTIONS:

1. Questions from David Redgewell and Gordon Richardson: budget and transport matters

a. What progress is being made?

On public consultation on the Transport levy paid by Bristol city council, South Gloucestershire county council, Banes and North Somerset council?

As the cuts to bus service have effect on the city region bus network in Ashton Vale, Stapleton, Broomhill, Fishponds, Oldbury Court, Downend, Bromley Heath, Southmead hospital bus station, UWE, Bristol Parkway, Bradley Stoke Aztec west, Easton and the Dings.

South Bristol Bishopsworth, Hengrove, Brislington, St Anne's park.

Some the poorest members in society are left without public bus services.

On payment of the levy under the West of England Act this lays out a duty on Bristol city council, Banes, South Gloucestershire county council and North Somerset council to fund jointly public bus services,

So what public discussions are happening between the Bristol city council budget scrutiny Commission's the west of England scrutiny commission of the vital public bus services network.

Officer reply:

The delivery and management of bus service operations is managed by the West of England Combined Authority. Bristol City Council funds the operation of bus services through the levy that it pays to the combined authority. The majority of expenditure under the levy is for concessionary fares which are a statutory duty, funding is also provided for RTI, staffing and supported bus services. Council funding is very limited so there is very little scope for increases to the levy amount paid to the combined authority. The amount of levy paid will be considered at the appropriate time in discussion with the Combined Authority and other West of England UAs.

b. With Bristol City Council having to making saving in all public services and Directorates, what progress is being made in this budget to transfer the Public Transport and Transport Department staff to the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority?

And what discussion is Bristol city council about the removal of interim Directors and consultants at the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority to replace they with local government officers from Bristol city council South Gloucestershire county council and North Banes to save a large amount of Taxpayer money.

Officer reply:

The Combined Authority has indicated that given workloads and its focus on reviewing project delivery within the Combined Authority, it will not be able to progress with bilateral discussions in relation to any potential transfer of transport functions from Bristol City Council at this time.

2. Questions from Dan Ackroyd: Clean air zone fines

My understanding is a gentleman named Mr Lyon from Saltford has successfully challenged multiple penalty charge notices.

According to a report in the Bristol Post:

'Mr Lyon said that each time he challenges his own or other drivers' PCNs, the council initially opposes the

representation made by the person appealing against the PCN, and insists the fine should stand.

“Then, when we go to the Traffic Penalty Tribunal to appeal again, the council waits until the penultimate day of the fortnight they have to respond, and on the penultimate day they make an offer which waives the fine but asks the driver to pay the initial £9 charge,” said Mr Lyon.

“They do this to make it so the stats show that they’ve technically ‘won’ that challenge, as they did get the CAZ charge paid. But if that offer is declined, the next day they will withdraw the entire penalty and the charge, with about ten hours to go. That means the Traffic Penalty Tribunal never gets to actually assess the points made in the challenges. The council is shying away from having that assessment done and a judgement made,” he added.”

This seems like quite a risk.

To avoid future loss of revenue, what steps are being taken to fix the issues that Mr Lyon believes he has identified with the CAZ and the PCNs?

What risk is there that BCC would need to 'cancel' a large number of CAZ charges or PCNs?

Officer reply:

The Clean Air Zone was introduced as a public health measure to improve air quality and health outcomes for residents of Bristol. The Council conducted a lengthy publicity campaign ahead of the launch and has provided a range of loans, grants and free trials, as well as a variety of short and long term local exemptions to help people adjust. The intention of the Clean Air Zone is not to be unduly punitive, but it is right that we enforce the regulations for those whose vehicles don't comply with the emissions standards and who have not paid the relevant daily charge.

We do welcome representations from anyone who has received a PCN and believes that they have grounds to appeal. The grounds on which an appeal can be made are set out in legislation and are listed in the PCN. The Traffic Penalty Tribunal (our independent adjudicator) has lots of independent advice on parking, bus lane and clean air zone PCNs on their website, which we would encourage people to use. (www.trafficpenaltytribunal.gov.uk).

It wouldn't be appropriate for the Council to comment on the specifics of individual cases, however we can say that each case is assessed on its own merits and the cases in question have been cancelled for a variety of different reasons.

When an appeal is received, either an initial representation or a formal appeal to the Traffic Penalty Tribunal, it is placed in the appropriate work queue and cases are then dealt with in date order by appropriately trained staff. The volume and complexity of cases and capacity at any given point in time will determine how quickly we respond to individual cases. We endeavour to process all appeals within statutory deadlines but sometimes cases do approach, or even exceed, our deadlines.

The Council is constantly reviewing its processes under a cycle of continuous improvement to provide the best and most cost-effective service possible and is comfortable with the processes it has in place. The Council will continue to take a public health driven approach to the Clean Air Zone and will take enforcement action on a case by case basis for vehicles who do not pay the relevant daily charge. The Council is confident in its position and processes.

PUBLIC FORUM - STATEMENTS:

1. Statement from David Redgewell, South West Transport Network and Gordon Richardson, Bristol Disability Equalities Forum

With Bristol City Council budget setting for 2023, 2024, we are very concerned about the Transport levy to the West of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council.

To pay for public transport services.

And bus services under the joint power under the West of England mayoral combined Authority Act with Bristol city council city and county of Bristol, South Gloucestershire county council, Banes council and North Somerset council because of joint transport Authority powers on bus services improvement plan and metro west Railway Network.

The powers in including all public transport Railway services, buses, coaches and ferry services. Sustainable transport Networks.

As the Bristol city Region has had major bus service cuts, and many estates in the city Region are unable to access schools, colleges, universities, work, Food, shopping, shopping centres, health care, hospital and leisure facilities.

Especially Ashton Vale estate, Stapleton, Broomhill, Fishponds, Oldbury court, Downend, Bromley Heath, The Dings, parts of Brislington and St Anne's park, Westbury on Trym, links to UWE bus station, Bristol parkway station, Bradley Stoke, Aztec West, Hortham, Alveston, Thornbury, Evening services, Sunday services.

We would like a proper negotiation over the Transport levy between Bristol city council, South Gloucestershire county council, Banes and North Somerset council over the level of Transport levy required to run the public transport Network.

Scrutiny commission discuss and joint committee and West of England mayoral combined Authority committee and joint committee oversight.

We also welcome the transferring the clean air zone money to the West of England mayoral combined transport Authority for spending on public transport including Bus services and railway ferry service, walking and cycling facilities.

But with priority toward bus services to excluded communities.

In Greater Bristol as a priority, such as 505 Bristol, Southmead hospital, bus station, Horfield, Downs, Clifton village, Hotwells, Ashton Gate, Long Ashton park and ride site 505 to Ashton vale.

Services 1 1a from Cribbs Causeway bus and coach station, Bristol city centre, Broadmead shopping centre, Bristol Temple Meads station, Arnos Vale, Brislington, Sandy Park Road, St Anne's park, Guilford Road, Brislington, Hungerford Road, Brislington.

1a 1 b splitting at Sandy Park Road.

Services 5 25 restore between Bristol city centre, St Paul's, St Werburghs, Eastville park, Stapleton, Broomhill, Fishponds, Oldbury court, Downend, Bromley Heath

Services 52 Bishopsworth to Bristol city centre via Hengrove restore for Chew valley services 672.

Services 10 11 Shirehampton, Avonmouth to Lawrence Weston, Westbury on Trym, Southmead hospital bus station, UWE bus station, Bristol Parkway railway station, Aztec West roundabout, Hortham, Alveston, Thornbury

The Dings- these are some of service need restored and need discussion with the West of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council Mayor Dan Norris.

On budget its in Growth and Regeneration Directorate,

The council cabinet and mayor Marvin Rees took decision to transfer the staff to the West of England mayoral combined transport Authority.

To carry out public transport Network function and Transportation function of the combined Authority. Bristol city council being now only a Port Authority and Highway Authority.

We do understand why the bus shelters and infrastructure have not been transferred to the combined Authority.

With Banes, South Gloucestershire county council and jointly with North Somerset council

At present the service is confusing to the travelling public that bus and coach shelter are the responsibility of the Highway Authority but timetable real-time information is the responsibility of the West of England mayoral combined transport Authority

So these function in all other combined Authority's control of bus and coach station interchange, Bus and coach stops and shelters are with the, mayor of the Greater Manchester combined Authority, mayor Andy Burnham, Liverpool City Region mayor Steve Rotherham, mayor Andy Street west Midlands combined Authority.

West Yorkshire combined transport Authority,

South Yorkshire combined transport Authority,

Mayor Rees and cabinet decision to transfer the service but the Transport Trade union then refused to agree the transfer.

We need to make progress as Bristol city council, South Gloucestershire county council and Bath and North East Somerset council are not transport Authorities.

We need to make progress on transferring staff and duties under the West of England mayoral combined Authority act.

On revenue we agree to bring in car parking charges on charges in Town centre car parks, this has not happened in Westbury on Trym, Brislington village, Sandy Park Road and progress should be made to generate income for the city council to maintain the car parks. 48% of people have no access to a private car so the revenue passport to the West of England mayoral combined transport Authority will help provide bus service across the city Region and the poorest communities without bus services Ashton Vale, Brislington part of St Anne's, Easton, the Dings, Stapleton, Broomhill, Fishponds, Oldbury court, Downend, Bromley,

Bishopsworth, Hengrove hospital, Bedminster city centre Broadmead.

Southmead hospital bus station to uwe bus station, Bristol parkway station, Filton shopping centre, Bradley Stoke, Aztec west, Hortham, Alveston Thornbury.

Service to shops and universities work and colleges.

As a lot of the staff duplicate west of England mayoral combined transport Authority officers this not best value for the Taxpayer and need to look at as part of budget process.

On the planning service its financially unsustainable to pay item manager and Directors to run the service and council must look recruitment of planner and officers the same rates as Bath and North East Somerset council ,North Somerset council and South Gloucestershire county council.

On one of biggest costs to the Taxpayer is the level of interim Directors and consultants running services public services in the including public transport services to the poorest communities in society should be run by local authorities officers employed by the west of England mayoral combined Authority, Local Enterprise partnership and North Somerset council and western Gateway Transport Board, all of which run from the West of England combined Authority headquarters in Bristol.

We also need to work with the Bristol waste company on removal of graffiti from Buildings and especially Public transport Network infrastructure.

Welcome investment in local railway station with the West of England mayoral combined transport Authority on metro west Railway Network

Bristol Temple Meads station to Ashton Gate, Pill and Portishead.

Bristol Temple Meads station to Lawrence Hill Station, Bristol, Stapleton Road, Ashley Down, Filton Abbey wood Filton North, Henbury for Cribbs Causeway on the Bristol Temple Meads station, Filton Abbey wood station, Bristol parkway station, Yate, Charfield, Cam and the Dursley Gloucester central Cheltenham spa, Ashchurch for Tewkesbury, Worcester, Shrub Hill and Worcester Forgate Street. With a new station at Charfield.

Progress with the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council on a mass transit light rail system for the Greater Bristol and Bath Region.

Walk and cycling

Investment in city Harbour and New cuts Bridges.

Work to make ferries and ferry services full accessible.

Improvement for passengers waiting for coach services and Bond Street shelter etc and Tourist coaches. On income generation as Bristol and Bath are major Tourist destinations and part of the Tourist economy.

We would welcome the bring in of a Tourist Tax like Greater Manchester combined Authority and the city of Manchester.

Especially to fund service in the city Region including public transport Network service, public realm, And the Arts.

We also want to see the built Environment and public transport Network

David Redgewell, South West Transport Network and Bristol Disability Equalities Forum Trustee
Gordon Richardson, Bristol Disability Equalities Forum .

2. Statement from Dan Ackroyd

Chair,

It is almost a month since the emergency evacuation of Barton House.

Since then, this council has released very little information about the nature of the emergency, details of any building inspections done or planned, or even any guesses about whether the building will be legally habitable again.

People have submitted Freedom of Information requests to try to get this information. I also asked at the Cabinet meeting on the 5th:

'Please will you commit to providing responses to those FOI requests before the "Budget scrutiny" meeting on Friday?'

The answer given by Cllr Dudd seemed to indicate that the council was planning to take the maximum time allowed by law to respond to those FOI requests, as if the Administration planning to slow walk the release of that information.

At the same cabinet meeting, an amount of £2.6 million was approved for emergency spending. My understanding is that money is adequate to cover the situation at Barton House until the end of January 2024.

Recently, Cllr Gollop seemed quite agitated about not being able to scrutinise the proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme in a timely manner, which involved an "estimated net saving from any change, ranges from £1.9m to £3.9m per annum."

That seems to be a smaller amount of money than is likely needed to be spent on handling the Barton House situation in the coming year.

I realise I submitted this too late to be a question, but I hope you can provide some assurance that this committee has enough information to properly set a budget. Because from where I'm sitting it seems that some information is being withheld from this committee.

Sincerely
Dan Ackroyd