

Statement: PS26.01

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Angelo Giambrone

My statement is in the form of an email recently sent to Darren Jones...

Dear Mr Jones,

I have previously written to you and cc'd you on messages regarding caravans and van dwellers, so my topic will not be unfamiliar to you. Following my numerous emails and photographs to BCC during last year, asking that new policies be introduced to deal with van dwellers and caravans pitching where they want, for as long as they want, with no power to move them to the dedicated meanwhile sites, I finally received a disappointing and unacceptably delayed response that the council cannot introduce new policies, but that they provide a 'service' around existing policy (see trail). It took them 8 months to address my messages, only to be shrugged. Very frustrating and unacceptable.

But as I (and others) strive to improve our neighbourhood and our city, they have pointed me in your direction, so may I ask for your help on two counts please:

1) BCC are failing in delivering this service around existing policy, as they are not enforcing the existing parking restrictions on the Downs, which I'm sure you already know (vans park in restricted areas for weeks at a time - example photos attached). This may at very least serve as a deterrent, as vans are still parking up for weeks on end. Given that my complaint was not addressed by BCC for 8 months, I do not intend to waste my time with their complaints process again, as it clearly does not work. Hence, I'm bringing this service failure and the failure of the complaint system to your attention. But parking rules are not the key issue here.

2) According to the BCC response, a policy introduction to prevent people from 'living' on the Downs (and elsewhere in Bristol) falls to you and the Mayor, and not the Council. This means that my future reports and pursuit of change will be directed to you and the Mayor's office. Many Councillors I know already share my feelings, and that of thousands of other residents, so no need for me to convince them. The Councillors are aware that my approach has always been in a diplomatic and considered manner, which will of course continue. But how much longer do I and others have to tolerate this inaction? The problem started 8 years ago and has become a growing issue.

So please receive my update for this week. The caravan graveyard continues to blight the Downs. Many of these caravans and vehicles have flat tires (having been there for years) and I would question whether they have just been dumped. Can I simply leave a dilapidated and potentially unroadworthy caravan anywhere on the streets of Bristol, setting precedent and indicating to other like-minded people that it is absolutely fine to do so? Seemingly so. Can I make it my home and live anywhere indefinitely, unchallenged? If no, then why are rules not being enforced? If yes, then new policies are required. If they are indeed inhabited, this is not a campsite.

Now onto the subject of litter and piles of rubbish. Junk that has been there for weeks still remain, joined by a very significant new pile of rubbish. This new pile (visible from the main A4018 in full view of thousands of people every day) was reported to BCC a week ago...

<https://fixmystreet.bristol.gov.uk/report/5498767>)

...and I have now provided an update showing an increase in the problem. Why does the council let this disrespectful degradation of a public space go unchallenged? This is not an isolated incident and happens time and time again, and will continue while these dwellers are left to live in this way. It portrays a very poor image of our city to thousands of locals and visitors alike, as they pass on this busy artery into the city. We are embarrassed when friends and family visit Bristol, as they question what on earth has happened to the beautiful Downs. There is an element of damage this is causing to the city, which runs much deeper than the visible piles of rubbish and vans. Why are rules not being introduced?

I have also reported the dumping of a generator and other rubbish, left behind in the spot of one transient van when it moved on.

I would kindly ask you the question that I was asking the council all last year. Will you introduce a policy to stop this type of 'street living', which is clearly to the detriment of the area and undermines the choices and investments that Bristol residents like myself have made? Will you introduce a policy to enforce use of the meanwhile sites for anyone wishing to live on Bristol's streets? I do not accept a statement that 'it is difficult', which is something I have heard time and time again. Many things in life are difficult, but this does not mean action cannot be taken. After all this time, years no less, this is procrastination and burying of the problem.

I hope, with your help, 2024 brings positive change and a reverse of the downward spiral we are seeing.

Statement: PS26.02

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: John and Vivien Harding

We are concerned about caravan dwellers on the Downs, Parry's Lane and surrounding roads. There appear to be more and more vans and caravans appearing in this area. Some have rubbish outside making it an eyesore in an area that is supposed to be for the people of Bristol to enjoy.

Do these people pay a fee to park there? Surely you just cannot decide to camp anywhere free of charge, when the residents in the area pay some of the highest Council Taxes in Bristol.

What happens to the human waste from these vehicles, most are old and do not have any drainage facilities. We did come across human faeces with wipes on the corner of the road where these vans are parked near a tree. At the time I wish I had taken a photo, which prompted me to write as it is very concerning for health and safety reasons.

There must be a reason why Bristol has one of the highest number of caravan dwellers in the country. The reason being that the Council is unable to control the problem. The law is you can park for 5 hours around the Downs, you get a fine slapped on the windscreen if you overstay, also with all these vans and caravans the parking spaces are being taken up from the public who wish to use the Downs. One law for the law abiding public and another for those who choose to ignore the law.

Whilst the caravan dwellers are using the highway as their homes, they should be charged a fee, some work, after all they manage to buy these large camping vans and caravans, some have bicycles too. This money could be used towards a permanent site for them. We would all like not to have to pay taxes and Council tax but unfortunately things do not work that way.

I think what annoys a lot of the public is that these people are breaking the law and get away with it, there is no deterrent. I expect some are genuine cases, which need help, the illegal immigrants are put into hotels or on barges, fed and have medical help, so why are these people living in these run down old caravans.

I understand that there are transit sites for travellers ie St Anthony's in Avonmouth, it always looks empty ? Why are these caravans not in there, all tax payers money. Unless all of this is stopped and sorted out it will only increase out of control. Now a third world country.

Statement: PS26.03

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Eileen Newby

I request that Bristol City Council bans overnight sleeping on Highways and By Ways

It is a legitimate request from those of us who live in the city ,pay taxes and conform to normal hygienic and aesthetic ways of living in the city.

The vulnerability and needs of the people who have opted for this lifestyle can be dealt with after a ban has been imposed giving Bristol time to address their needs .

There are countless student accommodation buildings being built daily in Bristol ,the irony of the comparison cannot be lost on anyone with an iota of sense.

Perhaps co-opting these buildings and reclaiming these buildings for the vulnerable might be a solution. ??

i am seeing Bristol deteriorating regarding the way those with itinerant life styles choose to live their lives and ruin the ambience and quality of life for its taxpayers and traditional residents .

i can see a rebellion from Council Tax Payers on the horizon if BC C do not address this effectively. Where ever one travels in rural and tourist areas overnight sleeping on Highways is banned .There is no reason why BCC cannot do it too

Statement: PS26.04

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Mark Leese

It seems we elected a mayor under the misapprehension that it would enable decisions to be made and executed in the city without stalemate. Perhaps in some cases this has happened but the issue of vehicle dwellers on Durdham Downs appears to be politically a hot potato for anyone wanting higher office. As a local resident, business owner and motorhome owner I can offer three perspectives.

Home owner and local resident.

The Downs have always been a special place in Bristol. A unique green space open to everyone. It now resembles a shanty town. There are parking restrictions in place on The Downs but they do not seem to be enforced for some. Many of my friends and family have expressed incidents of feeling uncomfortable or witnessed anti social incidents around the encampments. I've had the misfortune to change a flat tyre in the vicinity of the vans on White Tree cut through and the stench of wee is apparent. Furthermore these vehicles and their associated stuff are beginning to encroach further and further onto The Downs. As a rate payer I believe we make provision that is underused for travellers.

Business Owner.

As a long established agent proximity to The Downs has always had an impact on achievable hose price. Whilst this is not necessarily a prime concern for the council we have found in the past 18 months an increasing number of adverse comments about the encampments from prospective buyers. Particularly those from out of town. I can reasonably say therefore it is having a negative impact on the appeal of our city not just for residents but perhaps for businesses seeking to relocate. Having a traveller encampment adjacent to one of the main and most scenic entrances to the city is not a good look. Homeowners will also feel aggrieved if the value of their home drops as a result which is likely to rebound on their elective representatives who are not taking control of the situation.

Motorhome Owner.

I use campsites and official stopovers. There are a number of forums online that promote free stopovers and places to park. There is a lot of social media chatter about the ability to park up on Durdham Downs without being moved on. As well as the permanent van dwellers there is increasing awareness of a free camping site in a beautiful location. Therefore, if you do not begin to enforce parking restrictions or impose bylaws as a way to enforce the problem is clearly going to escalate beyond its current levels. As an aside you are shutting an amazing campsite that brings revenue to the harbour area on Baltic Wharf to build a few flats. Short-sighted and removes another unique asset from Bristol.

Statement: PS26.05

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Richard Norwood

We are fed up with the vans around the Downs and BS9. The loss of parking spaces, the gradual destruction of a beautiful space, the litter, the smell, the human waste, barbeques, anti-social behaviour and the extra crime around the Downs and BS9.

Either the Council believes in the rule of law, and equality of all people before the law, or it doesn't. Why should vans be able to park there long term whilst others get fined for exceeding the parking restrictions by 20 minutes? If there is no rule of law, no equality before the law and the authorities choose to enforce the law against some people but not others, we are not far away from societal breakdown, vigilantism and anarchy.

This really comes down to whether or not it is right to uphold the rule of law. I sincerely hope that our mayor believes in and now actively upholds the rule of law.

The situation has endured for years and is getting worse due to the lack of any decisive action by the Council. Central areas of Bristol are fast becoming slums with children living in vans. We are going backwards as a society and a City if we allow this situation to continue. Many cities have successfully introduced overnight camping bans in central areas.

There has also been a significant upturn in thefts from cars, garages, and houses in BS9 in the last couple of years as the van dwellers have increased. This is not a pure coincidence.

Statement: PS26.06

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Kathryn Rendell

I have read the above report with interest as I have previously contacted my local councillor regarding the increasing number of kerbside Vehicle Dwellers on The Downs.

The number of vehicle dwellers permanently parked around the Parry's Lane end of The Downs is increasing all the time. The report confirms this. Issues around vehicle dwellers are therefore going to become greater and the sooner they are properly addressed the better. The report is lengthy and full of background information but gives no indication that the issue is a priority and will be addressed soon.

I understand that for many of the dwellers, living in a vehicle is an economic necessity although for some it is still a lifestyle choice. Ideally, of course everyone should be able to live in a 'bricks and mortar' home, but if that is not possible, in a civilised society everyone should have access to running warm water and toilet facilities. My main objection therefore to the presence of a large number of vehicle dwellers around The Downs is the public health danger posed by waste disposal, particularly human excrement, in a green area heavily used by the public, including many children and dog walkers.

In addition, green areas are an essential area of open-ness, green-ness and nature within a city environment and should not become spoiled by increasing numbers of permanent and often dirty and badly maintained large vehicles.

The Report describes how 'meanwhile sites' have been successful and generally appreciated by vehicle dwellers who have been happy to pay a reasonable amount towards the costs. The Executive Summary says 'The most appropriate way of addressing vehicle dweller numbers and working with any potential growth is to provide increasing access to meanwhile sites across the city'.

So this must be the way forward. Stop talking about it and get on with it!!

One final point I would like to make. The report says 'Vehicle dwellers are citizens of our city and need to be respected with equal access to services as would be available to any other resident'. For those also struggling financially and paying a very large amount of council tax each year, this must be very difficult to swallow.

Statement: PS26.07

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Anne Bragg

I am writing on behalf of the Residents of The Grange Saville Road. over the last couple of years the number of Caravans and Campers has increased to such an extent that it now feels like a Gypsy Encampment!!! May I remind the Council that residents in this area are the most highly taxed in Bristol and it's not only disgusting but revolting that we have to put up with men peeing up against our walls and the human excrement in the bushes! Whilst we appreciate the chronic housing situation in Bristol we cannot understand why the Council has allowed the situation to become like it has, marring one of Bristols beauty spots. I would never have moved here had I realised what a blight it has now become. When are you going to do something about it? We are all elderly, we have become nervous of going out after dusk as we have no idea who is skulking around and we have all witnessed the using of our walls as a urinal!!!! I wonder how any of you would feel if it were your home that was being violated and people were camping in your back yard? BCC have allowed Bristol to become a filthy dirty pot holed cesspit. Shame on you all!!!

Statement: PS26.08

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Robert Westlake

The statement is submitted on behalf of the Friends of the Downs & Avon Gorge and on behalf of the Downs Advisory Panel.

The Friends group is a voluntary organisation representing over 300 members.

The Downs Advisory Panel represents Downs Users, visitors and neighbours and advises the Downs committee on a range of topics.

The 51 page report that Cabinet is asked to consider details the history of van dwelling in Bristol but does little by way of offering a solution to this long standing problem. The report spends a disproportionate amount of time highlighting the plight of the homeless in Bristol and of the welfare needs of those who live in roadside encampments, even details support organisations for van dwellers but fails to fully acknowledge the impact of van dwelling communities on their near neighbours and the detrimental impact on the environment.

Where is the support for those long-suffering citizens and ratepayers who feel disappointed and let down by those who should be protecting their rights.

To quote from the report "It is recommended that the creation of a Council officer's Task and Finish group is considered, in order to look into the issues and options around vehicle dwelling in Bristol, with the intention that this work feed into a review of the Bristol City Council's Policy for Vehicle Dwelling Encampments on the Highway to explore the inclusion of roadside parking, encampments, squatted sites and meanwhile sites."

Members of the Cabinet may be aware that the Downs committee who have responsibility for the good governance of the Downs commissioned their own internal Parking Task & Finish Group report. That report has just been published. The findings would go a long way to bringing about a resolution to the problems now facing us. In addition the Downs Advisory Panel has reviewed the Downs committee Parking report and added further recommendations.

Just how long would any new review likely take. The Downs in particular have suffered from roadside encampments for over five years already. This recommendation for a review is simply unnecessary and looks like obfuscation, prevarication and an excuse to do absolutely nothing.

This is a classic case of kicking the can down the road.

I would strongly suggest that the issues have been looked at for long enough, and are well known and well documented. There is no need whatsoever to commission a Task & Finish Group. Our citizens know what is needed and deserve better from those that purport to serve us. The time for debate and review is past, what is needed now is for the Council to take action.

The City Council has a range of options, powers and new legislation available to hand should they choose to use them. Likewise the Police. The evidence is there. It now needs the political will.

Recommendations

- Wellbeing/suitable sites should be identified. I find it hard to believe that after all this time sites are not readily identified and available around a city the size of Bristol.
- Injunctions and new Traffic Regulation Orders including parking restrictions should be investigated and implemented as a matter of urgency.

- Enforcement, clearly current parking restrictions for vehicle dwellers around the Downs are not being enforced. This could be implemented immediately.
- Enforce current bye-laws.
- Introduce and implement a 'No overnight Parking' bye-law.

Robert Westlake
Chair
Friends of the Downs & Avon Gorge
&
Chair
Downs Advisory Panel.

Statement: PS26.09

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Christine Bowles

I wish to add my voice to those who feel that concrete action is urgently required in dealing with the issue of van dwellers on the Downs and elsewhere around the city.

There are now a significant number of people living in vans in Bristol, and the number seems to be constantly increasing. As well as on the Downs, I notice that vans are now permanently parked in roads on the edge of the Redland residential area. To date very little action, if any, has been taken to address the problem, and I am concerned that even with the imminent departure of the Mayor, who has constantly evaded the issue, the situation will not change.

I appreciate that some of the van dwellers are vulnerable for various reasons eg health problems or poverty. Where this is the case, surely they need better and more secure options than living in a vehicle with no utilities or sanitary arrangements? However, many others have adopted van dwelling as a conscious, low cost lifestyle choice. Is it reasonable that they should be allowed to take up permanent residence in an area that was bequeathed as a place of recreation for the people of Bristol? The vans are unsightly, insanitary, and some of the occupants exhibit antisocial behaviour eg being hostile to local residents or keeping large aggressive dogs, so that it can be quite intimidating to go near them.

I am in favour of the suggestions put forward by local councillors:

Increase the number of legal sites available to van dwellers

Introduce a by-law prohibiting overnight camping on highways

Tighten up parking restrictions on the Downs, and enforce them: Ordinary motorists are subject to parking restrictions, but it appears that van dwellers are not!

I also believe it is imperative to source more appropriate social housing accommodation for those who are in genuine need. I am aware that this is a problem in many parts of the country, including Bristol, but a good starting point would be to insist, when granting planning permission, that property developers build genuine social housing as part of their plan, rather than “affordable housing” (a meaningless phrase, affordable to whom?) which is useless to those who cannot afford to buy any kind of property.

It is all very well publishing consultation documents that analyse the problems of van dwellers, but go no way at all towards resolving them. What we need is action, and we need it now.

Statement: PS26.10

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: John Lee

I am a resident of the Stoke Bishop Ward and a Bristol City Council Taxpayer.

I have read the report. It presents vehicle dwelling as a complex problem that requires yet further analysis. But inaction will only increase the problem. It is an issue that is close to becoming unmanageable. At the very least further growth should be prevented by the Council passing a city-wide by-law prohibiting overnight camping on highways.

I am not unsympathetic to the needs of the vehicle dwellers and I agree that their complex issues should be supported effectively. But it must be the case that support will be more effective if vehicle dwellers are provided with sites where they can be given proper services. It must be very difficult for the complex needs of vehicle dwellers to be managed properly if vehicle dwelling is spread across many locations in the city.

There must also be a proper balance between the issues that lead to van dwelling and the legitimate concerns of the residents in the areas in which the dwellers base themselves. The report gives the impression that the needs of van dwellers are paramount. This is not the right approach.

Proper regard must be paid to the rights of Conservation areas. This is particularly true in the case of the Bristol Downs which is an asset which must be protected.

The Council needs to develop an action plan which can be implemented quickly to the benefit of both the van dwellers and the local residents.

John Lee

Statement: PS26.11

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Jon Craton

This statement provides my comments on the document 'Vehicle Dwellers – The Bristol Model'.

During the last 8 years, the van dweller issue in Bristol has developed into a major challenge for the city. It is negatively affecting both the economy of Bristol and the quality of life of all who live here.

BCC is failing its residents (van- and property- dwelling alike) in not taking urgent action to deal with the problem. The lack of appropriate facilities for the volume of van-dwellers residing on Bristol streets is leading to issues for everyone in the city and undoubtedly impacting both the physical and mental health of those who choose to – or are forced to – live in this way.

I strongly support a two-pronged approach be taken to dealing with the Bristol van-dweller issue. Firstly, the urgent establishment of means-tested, BCC managed sites and secondly, a

city wide, blanket ban on overnight streetside camping. This can be funded through:

- Council tax contributions. I for one would be willing to pay higher Council Tax if I knew it was going towards resolving the issue,
- Voluntary donations from Bristol-based companies.
- Contributions through means-tested, daily charges to van dwellers to access the facilities provided in such sites.

The report's recommendations appear to be 'kicking the issue down the road' in proposing that the next administration be left to deal with the problem. BCC leadership need to own the problem now and introduce measures along the lines described above as a matter of urgency.

The following provides background to what has informed my views on this subject.

I have been a resident of Bristol for over 25 years and have spent most of this time living in the Westbury Park and Westbury on Trym areas of the City. During this period, I have been actively involved in generating substantial inward investment into the city via a range of business incubators for early-stage start-up companies. These have created numerous employment opportunities for local people and have contributed to the thriving start-up economy that Bristol now enjoys.

My views on street-side dwelling have been informed from two perspectives – firstly that of an entrepreneur attempting to generate further inward investment into Bristol-based businesses and secondly, that of a resident of the city.

During the last 6 years I have had numerous opportunities to speak with visitors to the city who are contemplating either basing their start-ups in Bristol, or committing significant funds to support the businesses that are already located here. Many have commented on the burgeoning presence of streetside encampments that have sprung up around the city. They have also expressed concern that the local authority is not doing more to actively manage the issue – and many have regarded this as a proxy for BCC's general competence in

the way in which the city is run.

I have no doubt that the alarming growth of street-side encampments has negatively impacted the quantity of financial support that has been provided to the Bristol-based businesses in which I'm involved.

Additionally, I know of several entrepreneurs who run Bristol-based businesses who are actively seeking to re-locate their operations due in no small part to the lack of action on

street side dwelling. Like myself, they feel that their voices are not being heard regarding the need to take urgent action and that there is a marked asymmetry in the way in which street-side dweller demands are being prioritised over those of the businesses and residents

– whose continued contribution to the running costs of the city are of fundamental importance.

This is deeply concerning since, if allowed to continue its current trajectory, will only negatively impact the wider Bristol economy.

As a resident of Bristol, I have witnessed first-hand the substantial growth in street-side dwelling during the last 8 years. The notable lack of resolute action and enforcement from the local authorities has led to the perception that street side dwelling is not only accommodated in Bristol, but that it is actively welcomed by the city. One doesn't need to spend long searching the internet to find numerous traveller- and van-dweller websites that highlight Bristol as a 'go to city' for street side dwelling – and there are even TripAdvisor style websites that actually rank areas for the city in terms of facilities and absence of enforcement activity.

This has fuelled the substantial growth in street-side dwelling – and created a near perfect storm in terms of further propagation of the issue. Lack of urgent action will only serve to increase the numbers of vans and caravans that appear on our streets and around our green spaces.

Statement: PS26.12

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Martin Platt

I wish to express my concerns over the reluctance of the council to enforce traffic measures around the Downs and specifically on Parrys Lane.

Initially I had sympathy with casual van dwellers parking overnight in legally taxed and insured Campervans and conversions, however this has been allowed to progress to the status of a permanent encampment, which now comprises mainly of unhitched touring caravans, with no vehicles to move them. They do not move, in violation of the parking restrictions which the council fails to enforce.

Furthermore, there are now bottled gas canisters and even petrol electrical generators attached to these vans stored on the public highway.

As of today, there is clear evidence of fly tipping next to one of the vans on Parrys lane.

Whilst there is clearly an issue to be resolved with regards to housing in Bristol, the Downs exists for the pleasure and usage by all the residents of the city, and I would like an explanation as to why the council choses to discriminate where and when it enforces parking restrictions.

Statement: PS26.13

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Jules Appleby

I am writing to express my huge concern and disgust for the now seemingly-out-of-control situation on the Downs. Near Whitetree roundabout, on the short length of road, there are around 20 caravans nose to nose. Many are not even inhabited: they've just been dumped. And, of those that are lived in, the inhabitants are treating the land around them as rubbish dumps.

I have seen rats on many occasions and it does not feel safe to walk near there.

This area is supposed to be a beauty hot spot but the situation is not disgraceful. If I were to park my car there, I'm sure I'd be clamped and fined within a day. How is it that people are allowed to live in vans and dump their vehicles with no penalty.

I appreciate people may need a place to live but it should not be in such a historical location in Bristol that is now being ruined. The city paper on this matter is now very out of date and the situation is a lot worse now.

To resolve this, the road needs to be closed, abandoned vehicles removed and disposed, and dwellers moved on with suggestions to other locations outside Bristol.

I understand the matter is being discussed on Tuesday and I urge you to protect our Durdham Downs.

Statement: PS26.14

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Anne Carroll

I have contacted you before as well as my councillors several times about the rubbish, litter and general awful state of the Parry's Lane part of the Downs, which has now been occupied by van dwellers for several years, with nothing done about it by the council.

This eye sore cannot continue. Why aren't overnight parking restrictions put in place? Why do you think it's acceptable for people to live in such primitive conditions? Where are they going to the toilet, apart from the bushes?

For goodness sake, do something about this situation.

Statement: PS26.15

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Sue Ramlugon

The report gives a good background to the situation and explains the position of many of those who are unable or choose not to live in permanent dwellings in a very informative way. However it offers little in the way of proposing a remedy for the situation.

1. Whilst recognising that it is in the interests of every citizen of Bristol to have harmony between all members of the community, one issue that harms this relationship is a lack of accountability on the part of the Vehicle Dwellers. I am sure many behave responsibly, but the issue of fly tipping, human waste, refuse and antisocial behaviour does not help the situation. As an example, where kerbside living is undertaken, parking regulations cannot be enforced if there is no registered address for a vehicle. There are already Byelaws in place for the Downs which prohibit overnight parking, but if the authorities do not enforce them they are useless. Kerbside parking on the Downs has doubtless been exacerbated because of the apparent tolerance by the Council.
2. Surely if the existing laws and regulations were enforced appropriately and any aggravating and criminal behaviour dealt with promptly there would be more harmony for all who wish to be part of the community of the City of Bristol.
3. A further point in the report recognises that a proportion of Vehicle Dwellers are vulnerable, due to various individual circumstances. It would seem that the Council is failing in a duty of care by allowing people to live in inadequate conditions.
4. Whilst a housing crisis in the City is acknowledged by all, commissioning a report simply delays any positive action. Initiatives could be taken to alleviate this, such as Help Bristol's Homeless initiative to provide individual homes as a first step out of homelessness.

I do recognise that the financial resources of the Council have been stretched to the extreme, but the wide-reaching effects of this issue must make it high on the priority list and not just pass it on to the next administration.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my statement.

Statement: PS26.16

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Malcolm Roberts

I read the lengthy and detailed report produced by BCC.

Unfortunately it puts the van Dwellers to the fore and doesn't really get to grips with the impact upon those people who live a more traditional lifestyle and pay council tax.

Much is made of citizens of Bristol but obviously many van dwellers have moved to Bristol out of choice and - if my understanding is correct - have no intention of paying for the services provided. The detailed (and no doubt expensive) report presents Bristol as a positive force rather than an authority who has blatantly ignored a problem and allowed it to fester.

As has so often been the case with the regime overseen by the Mayor the opinions and concerns of the vast majority of council tax paying " citizens" is not accurately represented in this report. The Mayor and his team seem content to allow public areas like the Downs, which are used by a wide range of people, to be adversely impacted by a small number of individuals who want a free parking slot.

I understand and appreciate that it is difficult to find accommodation but that doesn't seem to have impacted upon the student population who are offered " luxury" accommodation. Nor does the report seem to take into account the attitudes of some of those preferring this alternative whilst living a somewhat chaotic and unhealthy lifestyle at the expense of others.

What do the van dwellers live on ? Do they pay tax and NI if working - do they claim benefits and if so how does that work without an address? What happens if they have children?

My concern is that the resources being diverted to this problem - and it is a problem not a minor irritant- are out of all proportion to the numbers involved. BCC faces huge financial challenges some of which are of the council's own making and the majority of residents are fed up with paying up whilst the council deals with a small minority.

I'm no member of the rabid right but BCC need to take action to remove the caravans and vans parked randomly in various areas including the city's best known communal facility and deal with the impact upon the vast majority of tax paying residents. I am amazed that those representing us continue to treat us like idiots.

Introduce a tourist tax and think about the image of the city which has been damaged significantly by these illegal squatters.

I've written before on this topic but things have got much worse.

Statement: PS26.17

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Margaret Wilmot

The Downs

- Although not a central Bristol resident, I have enjoyed walking on the Downs at least twice a week for over 10 years and, like a lot of people, enjoying its natural beauty as part of a health and wellbeing regime.
- Unfortunately, the natural beauty and appeal of the area has increasingly been spoilt over recent years by the ever-growing number of vehicle dwellers parked on the surrounding kerbsides; some even parked on the grass verges.
- A great number of people (not only those who live nearby but also visit from surrounding areas of the city) use the Downs to enjoy family walks, picnics and exercise. For many it is their only access to an outside natural environment where they can enjoy the many benefits of the outdoors.
- The huge, and growing, number of unsightly vehicles using the Downs as a permanent campsite prohibits any benefits the Downs were intended for.
- Parking, for those who come to enjoy the Downs from surrounding areas, is becoming increasingly restrictive due to the number of vehicle dwellers permanently taking up space.
- There are parking restrictions for car drivers – why aren't there parking restrictions for vehicle dwellers?
- Most of the caravans/vans are in a deteriorating state, which indicates there are very likely health and safety issues.
- There does need to be alternative sites to offer vehicle dwellers in appropriate areas where they can enjoy their chosen lifestyle and don't affect areas of beauty and enjoyment for others.
- I'm at a loss to understand why the current Council has been incapable of resolving this long-standing, and ever-growing, problem and as such are passing it on to a future Council to deal with.

Statement: PS26.18

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: O.W. Batley

Mayor Rees and Cabinet,

I write in connection with the report on van dwelling.

Very disappointed to see the lack of tangible solutions offered in the report. It is simply not good enough to suggest that this is something the next administration should review and consider. What a waste of a report and what a waste of officer time.

This problem has arisen on **your** watch due to **your** inaction. It is your responsibility to come up with solutions to resolve this issue.

Local residents don't want van dwelling on the roads of our city. It should not be permitted for many reasons including the welfare of the van dwellers themselves and the environment.

There is a simple solution which other local authorities have adopted. Van dwelling on the highway should be banned by the introduction of a city wide byelaw and this should be robustly enforced. At the same time the city needs to provide sufficient designated van dwelling sites, with suitable facilities, for those van dwellers who can show a close association with Bristol or have jobs in Bristol.

If you don't set in train now the simple solution offered above then your legacy as Mayor will be that of failure - failure to respond to residents' concerns and the appalling failure to allow so many people to live effectively as squatters on the highway with no basic facilities. As a city we don't allow tenants to live in substandard accommodation and we should definitely not allow people to live in vans and caravans in conditions far worse than sub-standard houses.

Action is required TODAY. Acknowledge **your** responsibility and leave behind a decent legacy.

Statement: PS26.19

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Bob Priest

I have read the BCC document entitled Van Dwellers The Bristol Model. I found it to be disappointingly partisan, overly long and void of firm actions that could be taken now to resolve the issue any time soon. Instead, the authors appear to prefer yet more bureaucratic processes which will stifle any actual action being taken.

The report goes to great lengths outlining the background to the van dweller population, their needs and desires, stating that they need to be respected and represented. But what about the general public, who not only have to put up with squalid encampments and anti-social behaviour, but also have the “privilege” of paying for the social support and cleaning services not paid for by the recipients?

One of the founding tenets of the document is a City Wide approach to the issue. Whilst I agree with that in principle, I think the Downs is a special case. It has a special significance to the whole of the City and needs better protection in my view.

With respect to the Downs, little mention is made of why it's acceptable for van dwellers to break the law by out-staying parking restrictions and being allowed to get away with it.

I have raised this question with both the Mayor and my MP, but neither gave a satisfactory answer. The irony of having parking restrictions, that were put in place to stop commuter parking getting in the way of Downs users, being flouted by around 60 vans with no action being taken isn't lost on me!

I don't mean to show a lack of compassion to those van dwellers going through hard times, but as well as not understanding why they should be exempt from the law, I don't understand why they have to live surrounded by such squaller. If they valued the environment and kept their surroundings clean and tidy I'd have more sympathy. As it stands, it is hard not to see them as just taking advantage.

The Council's handling (or not!) of the issue around the Downs, in particular, has been shameful. Due to lack of action, clusters of dwellers have now formed, which will be harder to deal with. The result is that one of the jewels in Bristol's crown has been devalued, which impacts all of us.

As for solutions, mention is made in the report of sharper enforcement. An obvious solution is to ban overnight parking around the Downs. How hard can that be to implement and police?

I agree with the provision of more Meanwhile, Permanent and Service sites and would add that van dwellers should be required to relocate to them once available.

I don't believe that continuing to develop Policy Statements helps anything. Action is needed to address the issue, not more bureaucracy.

Yours sincerely,

R.H.Priest

Statement: PS26.21

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: John Curran

I have read the Council Report (undated) on this subject and offer the following comments which do not relate to the more itinerant groups (GRT, Cultural and New Age).

The Council estimates that the number of permanent or semi-permanent vehicle dwellers has increased over 4 years from 150 to 600. It is tempting to say that this growth has been encouraged by the Council's policies but, with more certainty, it can be said that those policies have not succeeded in preventing that growth.

With more of the same, and this report gives one no reason to expect anything else, it can be assumed that this growth will continue -- another 450 by 2028, or another quadrupling ?

The report refers to the dwellers as "Bristol citizens". I'm not sure what definition of this descriptor has been used by the authors. Clearly, they are "Bristol residents", but among all the statistics presented, there are none to indicate their length of residency in the city. Without that information it is difficult to rebut the suggestion that a number have moved to Bristol from other areas of the country which are less welcoming. As the report acknowledges, Bristol has one of the largest number of vehicle dwellers.

It is regrettable that the report, having analysed the problems so thoroughly, does not suggest specific discouraging measures. Some are surely in the minds of those council employees who are closest to the problem but who, for some reason, fell constrained from including them in this report.

It will be difficult to relocate those who would be forced to move by such measures but, as is the case whenever problems are not dealt with quickly, there will be greater difficulties in the years ahead if steps are not taken now to prevent further growth.

There is much in the report that I agree with. Vehicle dwellers should be given the same decency and fairness as other residents and the same access to Council and other public services -- and the Council can only deal with the issue on a city-wide basis. But I disagree that it is wrong to describe this as a "problem". If the authors consider it is not a problem now, at what point would they change their mind - when the number reaches 1000, 2000, 5000 or when ?

That so many people cannot afford built accommodation is already a problem, and it does not cease to be a problem, indeed it creates other problems, when transferred to our streets.

Any further delay in delivering solutions will bring bigger problems. Council needs to act now.

Statement: PS26.22

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Sharon Smithen

Van Dwelling on the Downs

1 Van dwelling is a particular Bristol centric issue but there is no real explanation why that should be. This creates frustration for residents as it's not seen as much or at all in other cities such as Bath, Cambridge, Manchester or Birmingham etc.

2 As soon as you google 'van dwelling UK' Bristol pops up and in particular, Parrys Lane. Bristol has become UK renown for van dwelling. It impacts mostly Westbury Park, Cote Lane and upper Parrys lane.

3 As it's not nationwide phenomenon, this contradicts evidence that suggest that the scale of the problem is down to housing costs, rent, vulnerabilities etc.

4 Other cities such as Bath, Cambridge, London and Oxford have higher rent and housing costs but fewer or barely any have van dwellers. If they are there, it's more by stealth as opposed to the overt van dwelling as have here that causes issues.

5 Van dwelling only occurs in places that due to their nature encourages this type of life style eg beach towns such as Falmouth or a Brighton although Brighton has clamped down on overnight parking along the coast. Also mountainous areas eg the Peaks or Dartmoor etc

6 In reality, Bristol has offered a benign atmosphere for van dwellers with a highly benign policy. The huge rise in van dwellers can be linked to the previous van policy which acted as a particular incentive. In effect, it was a de facto amnesty to van dwellers as action would only be taken if deemed high impact (a highly subjective BCC test) so in effect, action has rarely been taken enough.

7 Therefore, Bristol acts as a magnet for van dwellers. It also encourages people to more readily leave rented accommodation and for instance, save money for a house deposit or have more monthly sending money etc.

8 People move from places all over the UK to live in vans in Bristol.

9 Bristol has no way of knowing the true identity of the person in the van and their provenance as there are no proper identity checks eg passports or driving licence . A person can pretend to have been born here or lived here many years or be anyone. How does a social worker with a clip board know who they are talking to? Bristol CC cannot say with any certainty or evidence where the van dwellers originated from - the van dwellers can say that they are anybody and come from anywhere and probably do that!

10 The boho festival vibe attracts people who want an alternative life style.

11 Bristol constantly speaks about balancing the rights of van dwellers with the rights of the citizens who pay council tax, are invested in the city via rent or mortgage etc and have a lot to gain or lose. This is just unfair and galling. I could literally arrive in a van tomorrow and have as much say as someone who is invested enough to pay rent, a deposit and has laid down roots here. This is what upsets people. For residents, the impact of any policy is greater because they have invested in the city and hope to be here for years and can't just move around.

12 Bristol policies eg congestion charge and evictions has deliberately displaced van dwellers to the more affluent area of the Downs. Why not extend congestion charges to the Downs - it is the lungs of the city - that cut off point I found to be highly suspect.

13 The financial burden of the van dwellers is not costed. However the van dwellers are really disproportionately expensive. There are endless consultations, social workers assessments, police time and even councillor time. On the Downs, there is the published extra cost of rubbish collection costing tens of thousands. There are other less obvious but significant costs eg loss of Downs hire fees as the area becomes run down, loss of employment as employers choose not to relocate here as areas such as the Downs, frankly look like a dump. Also the Downs committee has and will be continued to be bombarded with complaints. The van dwellers are not a good advertisement for Bristol as a 'go getting' city and will detract investment and also encourage businesses out of the city. Quite frankly, it bewilders visitors who wonder why it is allowed.

So the surveys that BCC have done are one sided and incomplete as they do not even look at the bigger picture of the true cost of van dwelling and therefore the councils meeting is uninformed and based on incomplete data.

14 If it was discovered that van dwelling was costing BCC millions that is different from if it was costing ten thousand. Has anyone, for instance, considered whether it might be cheaper for BCC to rent private houses en bloc at private rent prices and place van dwellers there on a social rent? Even people on full benefits and/ or low income can afford social rent, BCC could just then subsidise the difference between private and social rent. This takes people out of vans and into housing (claiming central government housing benefit) and the cost might not be much more than all these huge incidental costs. Alternatively, build pods and prioritise van dwellers for these.

However by the mere act of doing this exercise and having to do a detailed financial assessment, this will help determine the true situation and whether the person can pay for but won't pay for accommodation. The process also helps properly regulate who they are and what their true identity and situation is.

If we think of the spaces for van on the Downs as a benefit this would be a better approach - to claim a benefit or space you need to be properly identified and finances checked - eg students don't qualify, homeowners don't qualify, those earning about £21,000 etc or not on benefits can't have a place. Those with capital assets of more than 6,000 (DWP cut off) can't have a spot. The people there need to be properly ID and assessed like you would for benefits.
Why treat this differently?

15 In the long run, society cannot function with an increasing number of people coming out of mainstream and living in vans. The policies that Bristol has eg van dwellers policy, encourages people who might otherwise have remained in rental accommodation to give up, buy a van. It also might encourage people to work fewer hours eg less than 16 as they have fewer expenses so it is also detrimental to the labour market. There is a really issue with this in this country.

Moreover If more people lived in vans eg retirees that there would be a society break down. It could be tempting for anyone to rent out their home, live for a year in a caravan alternating between street living and caravan sites etc. if that home was rented to students that would be lost council tax.

16 If people were vulnerable in its usual definition eg due to disabilities, mental illness diagnosed or special needs they should be a high priority for social housing and in the meantime, houses in n and b or hotels. So there are huge gaps or lack of detail in the report. What is the definition of vulnerable?

17 By vulnerable does the report mean to drugs and drink? This is a country wide issue but again other councils including labour led councils do not and won't tolerate van living so why here? Why the emotional black mail onto residents?

18 Moreover. it is not good for vulnerable people to be left in caravans. It can't be good for this health or welfare. As a mother of a vulnerable autistic adult son with complex needs I would be appalled if he was living in a caravan. However I am also perplexed as he would be a priority 1 for housing. So have these vulnerable people been offered housing and refused? Again, is this a matter of choice?

19 The whole van living system is unregulated with people unknown. There are no number plates attached to many of the caravans and anyone could be the owner. How do we know who owns these caravan at that the people living in them are not paying rent to slum landlords? Bristol CC has no idea one way or the other as to who owns the vans and if rent is being paid. There is no registration of ownership of camper vans. Anyone can say to someone with a clipboard 'it's my caravan' but it might not be true. Given the shady dealing of rentals in other councils eg sheds being rented out etc (Slough) I believe that it is highly likely that there is an exchange of money somewhere and someone is making money. Who organises the transfer of the caravans from one site to another? Moreover the whole thing could be tied up to a shadowy underworld and lined to slave labour and /or migrant issues/ unregulated exploited workers. Someone has the ability to source and move caravans around. The whole transportation and organisation seems slick. Are we meant to believe that a highly vulnerable person can source a caravan and arrange for its transportation. That is not something people I know who are vulnerable could do. Also the whole thing could easily be connected to money laundering- caravans paid for in cash etc also identity theft.

Ultimately BCC could find itself caught up in a large scandal because it has allowed the proliferation of unregulated habitats with possible links to criminal organisations. How can BCC have any idea what is happening? Do they survey the caravans 24/7?

Have you noticed the number of ads for cheap old caravan - any bought in any condition! Hmmm why?

20 Impact on local communities: What is missing from any council literature any idea of how many caravans/ van dwellers will be thought of as too many? Where does it end? When there are 500 or 1,000 van dwellers or 2,000 etc. There is no number control and in fact every policy of BCC has encouraged van dwelling? When does BCC think that enough is enough?

Even just removing the ones who have made life choices by doing proper ID checks (passports/ driving licences) and financial assessments (as you would do for housing) (why did they leave their rented accommodation and the address of that etc) is a start to see exactly what you have here. I

have no faith in the report as self made evidence is just not reliable but in fact is just that , 'self made' evidence. It would be a start to actually know through proper ID and financial checks who is living in a van in Bristol - as you know everyone who lives in houses through the electoral roll. They need to produce ID.

21 People need green space. People need somewhere to walk and mentally unwind. Wherever you walk on the Downs you can see camper vans. Originally they were centred on Parrys Lane but now they have spread around Circular road. The vans, camper vans and also parked commuter cars all merge to make the Downs very ugly. Moreover there is also a distinct queezy feeling that they void effluent in the surface water drains and into the bushes - all unsanitary and gross.

22 The Downs-

Having lived away from Bristol for over a decade I fully appreciate and realise how unique the Downs is. It's one of the beautiful tourist areas of Bristol combined with Clifton.

People come to the Downs to see the view of the Suspension Bridge across the gorge.

It seems very odd that Bristol City Council have no desire to protect and preserve the Downs. What other city would allow one of its most scenic touristic parts to be taken over by van dwellers? The impact on Bristol will be detrimental. It will merge in people's minds and add to the impression of a shoddy city and give weight to the impressions that Bristol is a city in decline. Other cities do everything to preserve and make the best of any thing of aesthetic value. This has seen huge improvements in cities like Manchester and Birmingham. In contrast, Bristol seems to take for granted what it has or is dismissive of what it has. It seems to encourage the deterioration of the Downs. Would camper vans be allowed in the jewellery quarter of Birmingham or around the colleges of Oxford - of course not! Are they allowed around Victoria Park Bath - of course not. Taken to the an extreme. Should there be camper vans outside Buckingham Palace? There is poverty and homelessness in London is there not? what about around the Eiffel Tower etc etc. You can apply that argument to every city but common sense dictates that you preserve key beautiful sites.

So why in Bristol do we treat an iconic spot like this - what makes it so different from other cities?

23 When people move to Bristol they need certainty before they invest their £500,000 or more into housing, The planning system exists to give them a level of certainty or at least in other cities it exists for that reason. Nothing can be built unless it agrees with planning development rules and moreover people get a say. Bristol has ignored that.

Bristol Council has illegally (acted ultra vires) enforced a camp site on the inhabitants of upper Parrys Lane and Westbury Park with no planning and allowed them no proper say. It has all been enmeshed into a general van dweller policy but it's people living on Cote Lane/ upper Parry Lane who bear the brunt of it - no one or few people in the Council has it exactly right on their doorstep. What gives you the right to have a view when it does not impact you - it's not exactly a shared burden.

In fact it would be fairer to disperse van dwellers to each and every street of the city especially those who say 'we don't really mind it' its easy to be generous with someone else's discomfort! This policy I would support - we can all take 1 or 2 vans on each and every road and also in South Glos. Better still, streets can vote to invite camper vans to their street - what about that?

The Inhabitants of upper BS9 all complain but they get ignored. It's like a bad marriage. What happens when one party in a marriage complains and the other one refuses to listen, eventually the

one who complains grows tired and wants out. This is what will happen to Bristol. It will start as a trickle but as Bristol insists on following its odd agendas people will give up and leave.

The trickle will become a flood.

People won't want to buy houses near Parrys Lane top when they realise that the van encampment is de facto permanent - which it is. This is what you have as neighbours. Before rejoicing with some peculiar socialist sour grapes (look at them in big houses - incidentally not me I could not afford one by the Downs when I moved here and now certainly have no wish to have one - I think that having that view or being generous to van dwellers is easy if you are not affected by it)

Think this! Bristol has relied upon big business to bring money into the city. Increasingly there is no need to be in Bristol as more and more people work remotely. Do we want to scare big business away? People will realise that despite a planning system in reality a van dweller could move outside your home and you have no protection. As the numbers increase, they will appear outside St Andrews Park, Redland Green Park, Mina Park, Snuff Mills, along Coombe Lane for Blaise etc. why not? They have no licence plates. Suddenly people will have no faith in buying a house in Bristol, it will be a city in decline and people will prefer to live in South Glos, Bath or even Cardiff. Eventually big business will realise this and leave and Bristol will become a slum city.

The police have a policy I believe to direct them to the Downs but what happens when that site is full- what about directing to Redland Green or St Andrews Park or would that be classed as high impact within a week even if just say 5 camper vans:

In reality this is an issue disproportionately carried by a few people who live by the Downs - those around Westbury Park, Parrys Lane etc - they should have a weighted say. As for me, I live some distance away (30 mins walk) so I won't be a hypocrite and say 'it's ok'. We had van dwellers 15 minutes walk nearby just off the Portway - didn't know they were there as not visible - not therefore an issue.

Personally, I think that it creates a negative impact on visitors and would deter inward investment. It makes the city look terrible. I think that jobs will be lost as a consequence that might have come here and the City will be poorer. I also loathe walking on the Downs now and avoid most of it but by the Observatory.

The housing problem is a vast problem but the 200 or so caravans has a disproportionate larger impact on Bristol than the actual issue of the housing problem. I have huge sympathy with the homeless especially ex in care and families and think that needs to be run better and families to have access to kitchens at least. BCC knows that most homeless people (especially with kids) are in hotels, b and b etc and you need to convert that cost from BCC funded costs to housing benefits costs paid by central government cost. This is not what this is all about.

In the meantime, I think that BCC are using the van dwellers as a flag or outward manifestation of failed policies, hitting the wealthy on the Downs (Westbury Park, upper Stoke Bishop) hard but in the process are destroying the city. That is something other cities like say Manchester would not do - yet they have poverty, homelessness etc. they are too business minded and also maybe care about all their residents.

Finally perhaps those who are in favour of van dwellers who live in areas like Redland Bishopston or Cotham on band F or G council tax when their houses have vastly inflated values due being in the catchment of RGS or Cotham schools

(and should be band H) should offer to pay more council tax to help relieve homelessness etc but that is another issue. I'm wondering how a 1.25 million pound house in Cotham can be Band E! In BS9 that value house would be a Band H. I leave that for another day!

Statement: PS26.23

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Rebecca Holdstock

I have strong concerns about the vehicle encampment around the Downs, particularly along the top of Parry's lane.

The litter is unsightly as are the vehicles and caravans themselves. Human waste is being incorrectly disposed of in the bushes nearby. It is believed that someone is renting out a number of these caravans and profiteering from this venture.

I would like to see:

- A significant increase in suitable alternative sites for people living in vehicles.
- A city-wide by-law prohibiting overnight camping on highways
- Changes to parking restrictions around the Downs, together with better enforcement
- Parry's Lane closed off and in time grassed over.

Statement: PS26.24

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: David Clymo

I wish to add my support to the requests of various local councillors who are pushing for:

- A significant increase in suitable alternative sites for people living in vehicles
- A city-wide by-law prohibiting overnight camping on highways
- Changes to parking restrictions around the Downs, together with better enforcement

I would request, however, that any review of parking restrictions on the Downs incorporates the impact of current restrictions on surrounding streets, including Julian Rd, Rockleaze, Ivywell Road, Downleaze etc. These roads have been blighted by commuters and long term student parking since the RPS schemes were put in place in Clifton/Redland and the Downs (even though the Downs restrictions are barely enforced - and having a rule that is not enforced is much worse than having no rule at all).

I consider that the situation on the Downs is currently worse than before the parking restrictions were put in place and commuters have just been moved to adjacent residential roads.

Statement: PS26.25

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Alan Baldwin

As a resident local to the Downs, I'd like to express my disappointment at the way that what should be a beautiful part of the city is now becoming more and more scruffy and littered as van living grows on the roads surrounding the Downs, notably the one way section of Parry's Lane.

I would request that parking restrictions to be implemented (and enforced) around the downs - there is Pay and Display parking all over the rest of the city. There could be a designated period of free parking to ensure users of the Downs are not discouraged.

I would further request that overnight camping on highways is prohibited - other than in designated areas. Such areas would require sanitation. No sanitation is available on the Downs, and the incidence of human waste in the trees and bushes on the Downs is increasing, reducing the attraction of the Downs as an amenity, and raises health concerns. If van dwelling is to be encouraged by the council and supported, then an area (even if it is on the Downs) with suitable facilities for sanitation and rubbish collection must be created.

Statement: PS26.26

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Pete Valance

The inactivity of the city's managing body has allowed a disgraceful situation to develop.

Every year more and more large converted vans, caravans and camper vans are choosing to park on the roads around the Clifton and Durdham Downs. The significant hotspot is the short length at the top of Parry's Lane.

Who tows the old derelict caravans up there, you may ask?

I have recently witnessed what looks like a builder/gangmaster with a large 4x4 with a tow hook collecting a labourer from a caravan in the morning and checking a fault on the caravan before they drove off.

What is to stop more enterprising individuals from towing caravans onto the Downs and renting them out?

Why would anyone park in a dedicated site when they can live, Council Tax free, on Bristol's premier beauty spot?

We need:

- 1. Close off the top of Parry's Lane and in time grass it over.**
- 2. A city-wide by-law prohibiting overnight camping on highways.**
- 3. Changes to parking restrictions around the Downs, together with better enforcement.**

The latter could be self-financing.

Statement: PS26.27

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Roger Lake

I have a number of observations and comments on this report. I will address some general points and then make some remarks about the encampment on the Downs.

General

The report is a welcome analysis of the history of the growth of Van Dwellers in the City. However, it is hard to tell if BCC sees it as significant problem that needs to be dealt with or it is accepting of the current situation with all the associated social, health and welfare consequences. Not to mention the cost.

1. The exponential growth of the number of people living in Vans is a direct result of the permissive nature of the council's policy. It now appears to be in crisis, with more and more people living in the streets. Where and how will it end?
2. According to the report, virtually no other city has seen the level of growth in Van Dwelling, so why has this been allowed to happen in our City?
3. Whilst the report acknowledges the balance between residents wishes and the needs of Van Dwellers, where are the views of local residents and what consultation has there been?
4. The report clearly states that the strategy is to 'support and manage' the situation, not to find a solution. Surely the vulnerability of individuals, families and children is only going to be exacerbated by them living in such poor conditions and therefore there has to be a solution.
5. There is an urgent need to find permanent sites for the Van Dwellers, introduce no overnight parking and enforce parking restrictions, just as BCC does for cars.

The Downs

I live adjacent to the encampment on the Downs and today there are approximately 65 vans in four streets centred around Parry's Lane. For years we have seen the growth of this site leading to significant environmental concerns. The area should be for recreation use for the all Bristol residents but sadly it has now become a caravan site and inaccessible to residents. It is just completely inappropriate to use this area for this purpose.

1. When will something be done or will this site be there indefinitely?
2. Despite representations and communication with the Mayor and others there is a singular lack of understanding of residents concerns and a sense of hopelessness that nothing can be done.
3. We share the high levels of concern for the Van dwellers, in terms of their mental and general health issues. These can only be exacerbated by living in such poor conditions. We have concerns about the level of drug misuse and the potential exploitation of young women. We have seen women being dropped off by vans and going into the caravans and being collected later.
4. We have noticed a high level of rats in the vicinity of the encampment as well as the general detritus. It presents a very bad image of the city.

Statement: PS26.28

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Dr Bob Turvey

1. The following comments refer to vehicles and caravans parked on the stretch of Parrys Lane which crosses the Downs.
2. There is a 5 hour parking restriction on the road. Why are motorhomes allowed to park there without moving for months? They should be ticketed each and every day for this offence. I would like to park on this road to visit the Downs and the shops in nearby streets. I am stopped from doing this because the Council takes no action to enforce a bylaw. My single largest outgoing is the rates I pay on my house. I feel that part of what I pay for is being stolen from me by the people who park on this section of Parrys Road. I also feel that dwellers in these vehicles avail themselves of Council Services without paying for them. This is unfair to those of us who do pay for the services.
3. A number of caravans have been parked there for months without moving. Some have number-plates, many do not. If caravans are not considered as vehicles, then in my opinion they are rubbish which is obstructing the Highway. It is an offence to obstruct the King's Highway. They are also stealing parking places from me. I believe they should be towed away.
4. Several vehicles have neither MoT nor tax. It takes but a moment for a Council employee to check such matters via the DVLA website; the Police can do so instantly via ANPR. Such vehicles should be dealt with according to the Law. I pay money to tax, insure and MoT my car and I don't see why others should be allowed to dispense with such obligations when their vehicles are on the King's Highway.
5. I believe that the Downs Committee should liaise with Bristol City Council and the Police to give back the use of this road to those of us who pay for it; and they should do so as soon as possible.
6. I think a city-wide ban on overnight camping in public roads is an excellent idea. When introduced it should be **enforced every night**.

Statement: PS26.29

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Tania Calabrese

As a local resident who pays significant council tax, please confirm what action is being taken regarding the increasing number of van and caravan dwellers on the roads around the Downs please?

Issues with photo evidence provided where possible. I feel with the volume of caravans on Parry's Lane it is too intimidating to try and take photos.

- Parking and road restrictions are not being enforced for these dwellers when other vehicles are being clamped or fined for extended parking or no road tax.

- Ladies Mile was resurfaced last year with signs informing a towaway scheme was in place. I was shocked to see one of the caravans had been allowed to remain and the council had chosen to resurface around the caravan rather than enforcing the towaway scheme.

- Council allowing a caravan special dispensation by not forcing them to move to complete roadworks. They just put cones around their van.

- Rubbish and dangerous items such as gas bottles are being left around the caravans. They are using the downs as their own private gardens, hanging washing, adding awnings, hanging items from trees (boxing bags and garden lights) and constantly parking on the grass verges. Where is chemical toilet waste being disposed of?

- Safety concerns, particularly with the high volume of young women, children and teenagers who use the downs. Do the council actually know who these van and caravan dwellers are as presumably not registered? As local residents we have a right to know if there are register offenders living locally.

I know a lot of residents have raised these concerns as our local streets are being overrun by these van and caravan dwellers, there will be strength in numbers and the fact that nothing is being done gives them the view this is accepted by the local authority and gives rise to custom and practice.

There are specific sites that have the appropriate facilities where these van and caravan dwellers should be forced to relocate too.

I look forward to hearing the actions to tackle this issue asap.

Statement: PS26.30

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Gary Reader

I have seen the review that has been undertaken and although I do have sympathy for those who, through no fault of their own, have been forced to live in their vans, I do feel that a permanent solution does need to be found to this matter. Many caravans and mobile homes are now parked around the downs and as far as I can ascertain the people living this way have no access to proper sanitation and are thus having to use the downs they are parked on which is very unhygienic for the many that live in and use this area. A permanent solution that provides access to proper washrooms and sanitation has to be a better answer.

More broadly - many of the vehicles parked on the downs are in areas that are supposed to be limited to 5 hour parking. None of the parking restrictions are enforced and again I have some sympathy here because if you try to move these people on where can they go to if no permanent solution is being offered? More broadly, the parking restrictions and their enforcement around the downs does need to be reviewed to come up with something better than there is now. Such a review should also encompass the streets, like the one I live in, that are close to the Downs. We have had some van dwellers in the street together with students who often park their cars for a full term taking up spaces for residents. I think a shift to residents parking would be a useful step.

I hope the meeting is a productive one

Statement: PS26.31

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Angela Reader

I have been lucky enough to live by the Downs for the past 31 years 9 in Henleaze and 22 in Sneyd Park. I feel privileged to live in an area of such beauty and I enjoy the fact that it is enjoyed by so many. In recent years the beauty of the Downs has deteriorated significantly on a weekly basis there is anti social behaviour, drugs, motorcycle racing, cars racing, no policing.

I know that Bristol has a chronic shortage of affordable housing and therefore I feel genuinely very sympathetic to the people living in their vans and caravans. I strongly urge the council to provide a significant increase in suitable alternative sites for people living in vehicles with clean and adequate sanitation.

In recent years the van dwellers numbers have increased significantly. I have a dog and the amount of human faeces and dirty toilet paper in the bushes is both disgusting and unhygienic. There is no enforcement of any parking restriction at all, the 5 hour parking restriction is pointless. Parking on the Downs and adjacent roads need to be reviewed, changed and enforced. I live in a road just off the downs which has regular vans with people sleeping and living in their vehicles. On parts of the Downs there is a shortage of parking space for those wishing to use the open spaces for recreational purposes as the van communities have taken up most of the highway.

I also feel that the council is in danger of discriminating against travellers who are moved on very swiftly when they camp on the Downs yet you freely allow others to live for years without any penalties.

I believe a city-wide by-law prohibiting overnight camping on highways should be introduced.

Please look to protect The Downs for all residents of Bristol. It is such a wonderful resource for everyone.

Statement: PS26.32

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Lee Holdstock

Sir, Madam,

Following my previous correspondence to the Bristol Mayor some two years ago, I note that little has changed regards the van dwelling situation on and around Parry's Lane. The proposal to close the section of Parry's Lane that bisects the Downs has not progressed and in the meantime van numbers have increased.

This ongoing use of a public amenity space is unacceptable. Residents of the city should expect to be able to use and enjoy these spaces without long rows of poorly maintained dwellings ruining the aesthetic of the recreational area. As the result of BCC inactivity, the impact has now progressed beyond aesthetics. Refuse is now building up by a number of the vehicles, the assorted possessions of van dwellers are also now spilling onto the grass areas and I have witnessed vermin under the vans on several occasions. More recently I have encountered human excrement and toilet paper in the wooded areas immediately adjacent to the encampment.

I suggest that Bristol City Council have a duty of care to ensure that van dwellers at this location do not present a direct risk to public or environmental health. With heavy goods vehicles speeding along this section of Parry's Lane, those residing along the road in flimsy caravans should equally not be allowed to continue to expose themselves to risk of collision. To continue to allow them to do so also brings into question BCC's duty of care to the van dwellers themselves.

I call on BCC to action to take action to removal all vehicle used as medium or long-term dwellings from all areas surrounding the Durdham Downs. Further delays are unacceptable.

Statement: PS26.33

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Giles Drewett

You have commissioned a report into the subject of van dwelling across Bristol from the GRT team who have a completely different target and agenda to those who actually have to look to try and manage it – which is NET. Is that a deliberate move or are you just so disconnected that you don't even care to check into what you are doing?

As a resident of Bristol for the past twenty five years – I have seen a visible deterioration in the management of the City, and the appearance of the City to outside visitors. This is manifested in waste, antisocial behaviour and visible deterioration such as graffiti. Whilst BCC may congratulate themselves on this all-inclusive approach – they fail to realise that those who take advantage are not grateful, they don't care.

There is a housing affordability crisis across the country, this is a fact. However nearly every other local authority in the country is managing the issue without a blanket permission for people to set up camp however and wherever they wish. BCC/Mayors office chose the easy route, and now have the hard decisions to make.

If BCC endorse the notion that all people within the City may pick and chose the rules by which they abide, and will relax Parking, planning, ASB and littering rules for everyone within the city without penalty – then that is fair and Bristol will either survive Chaos or it will not – however it is nor fair to selectively apply those rules. If Vehicle Dwellers are residents of Bristol, then the rules apply to them, if they do not – then they should not be permitted. It is neither intolerant nor heavy handed to apply the rules fairly and correctly – that is the responsibility of leadership (lacking for 8 years...)

If, and not incorrectly, BCC determine that they are responsible for everyone within the city limits – then they should take that responsibility and deal with it – not negate it and leave upon residents. Either accept Van Dwelling and provide adequate appropriate space in areas which have been consulted and democratically accept it, or regretfully refuse that it is an option because it is not fair upon the permanent dwelling residents of the city who are massively invested and continue to pay huge sums in council tax.

I personally have been affected by the Council's poor performance on this issue for the past five years. My children cannot leave the house and walk to school safely, there is a continuous smell of drugs and the neighbourhood is heavily littered. Having started from zero twenty five years ago in Bristol to a point where I now proudly employ more than 120 people, it is disappointing to see the City in such a mess with such lacklustre leadership – it is a simple formulae:

1. Keep the City clean
2. Keep the City Safe
3. Encourage enterprise within the City to grow employment, taxes and revenue

I am not a hugely intelligent person, but even I can see that letting the city degenerate into a no-rules free for all does not create long term future. Please start to create boundaries and rules, it might be boring and non-headline generating – but it is required for routine management.

Statement: PS26.34

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Bill Linnell

I refer particularly to the vehicle dwellers on the Downs:

1. The Downs is a facility for all the citizens of Bristol. The enjoyment is grievously impaired by the presence of the vehicle dwellers, especially on Circular Road and Saville Road.
2. Considerable damage is being done to the grass verges of the roads.
3. Domestic litter is spread around the vehicles.
4. Above all, the Council, by ignoring these vehicles, is rewarding the flagrant breaching of the laws and thus encouraging a culture of lawlessness, which will spread into other parts of society.

There are many sites around the city which could easily, conveniently and at minimal cost be adapted to provide a safe home for these vehicle dwellers, with proper facilities - and there is no reason why this cannot be done in time for the people of Bristol to reclaim The Downs this summer.

Statement: PS26.35

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Stephen Small

I wish to add my support to the requests of various local councillors who are pushing for:

- A significant increase in suitable alternative sites for people living in vehicles.
- A city-wide by-law prohibiting overnight camping on highways.

In addition the Report requires reviewing, as an ex Director of a PLC I would return to the producer with the following comments.

- Little to no statistics.
- Vague wording with no substance.
- One sided as no views or comments from Council Tax payers.
- In short go and do it again and include Residents / Council Tax Payers views who also have rights as they pay for the running of the City.
- BCC appear to be doing nothing, which works well for BCC but not so well for residents of Bristol.

Additional comments

- I recently attended a meeting run by Darren Jones, where a lady said she could not sell her home because potential buyers did not want to look out on Vans and Caravans. Check with DJ it was at Stoke Bishop Village hall, minutes must have been taken.
- During COVID vans and caravans were removed. Why have they been allowed back?
- This is not a great advert for the City, certainly will not encourage external investment into business or property building.

Solution

- A significant increase in suitable alternative sites for people living in vehicles, where there would be water, toilets and electric. Surely as a caring Council this is the correct thing to do.
- A city-wide by-law prohibiting overnight camping on highways
- Actually enforce new by-law

Conclusion

The views of residents / Council Tax Payers must be taken into account. They pay for the running of the City. Why are they ignored? Doing nothing is not a solution the three points above are a solution, time to action them.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments and concerns

Statement: PS26.36

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Paul Guest

I am finally writing to express my disappointment and disgust at the situation regarding the illegal encampments on the roads surrounding the Downs. This is a situation which has been seemingly tolerated by the council for several years now and has become a more serious issue because of this lack of response. I write this as a local resident and regular user of the Downs and reference the large and growing encampment on Parrys Lane which is a particular cause for concern. I will list my objections to the encampment on Parrys Lane and am sure that the reasons mentioned will no doubt apply to other camps across the city.

The Downs is a beautiful amenity space for all of north and west Bristol residents to enjoy and the unauthorised campsite that has been set up here is out of control. This is obviously not appropriate and the constant inactivity by Bristol City Council is disappointing. The campsite is clearly unsuitable for permanent living for many reasons -

1. Hygiene - There are no facilities on the Downs to provide suitable toilet facilities or fresh water. As your report identifies, most of the dwellings do not have toilets or showers and so the effluent of the dwellers must be going somewhere? Given that on any day, it is possible to see 20-30 vans/caravans parked on the Parrys Lane encampment, the volume of filth going into the bushes is going to be considerable and must be stopped.
2. Safety for users of the Downs - I have personally experienced an incident where a vehicle drove across the downs with a caravan in tow in order to park in their preferred spot, narrowly missing my daughter. It is simply not acceptable that I should have to consider the safety of my family in an amenity area where children should be able to run freely.
3. Drug use - As your report identifies, there is a higher level of drug use by van dwellers and given the dumping of rubbish around the area, it is highly likely that people and in particular children will find discarded needles in the undergrowth near the caravans. As a father of two young children, I am constantly appalled by the rubbish dumped around the Parrys Lane camp and will not now let my children go into the bushes near this camp for fear of what they may find, be it human waste or drug paraphernalia. It is commonplace to smell marijuana use in the area, which I do not wish my children to see being tolerated in a public space.
4. Lack of enforcement of parking restrictions - many of the vans and caravans are permanently parked around the Downs and clearly face no consequences of breaking the rules on parking. If the rules are not enforced here, why bother having them? Is it acceptable to enforce rules for residents who park illegally and non-enforcement for van dwellers and caravans, as I have had parking fines for illegal parking in Bristol?
5. Rubbish - It is common to see rubbish around the campsite including broken furniture and household waste. This must attract vermin and at the very least makes a once attractive part of the city, now an eyesore and health hazard.

I would like to conclude by stating that the council needs to act on this issue and move these camps to suitable sites where the van and caravan dwellers can have facilities for sanitation and support for their needs. The camps have become a serious health hazard to the thousands of people who regularly use the downs and need to be removed. Bristol council must act to enforce the existing rules on parking and remove vehicles that will not comply with these rules. If the rules are not suitable to allow for this, then I think that new rules on overnight camping on the city's road should be introduced and enforced. Suitable sites for van dwellers must be provided to allow for all residents of the city to feel supported by their council, but these are not being met by the continued encampments on the Downs and other parts of the city.

I hope that this is a situation which will be addressed quickly as it is impacting the use of one of Bristol's most beautiful areas, causing health hazards to the general public and is a more serious issue than just a blot on the landscape.

Statement: PS26.38

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Jacquetta Edmonds

We live on Ivywell Road, adjacent to the Downs, and continue to be very concerned about the the vehicle encampments around the Downs for the following reasons:

- The grass verges where vans are parked are reduced to mud in the winter and never fully recover in the summer.
- The Downs is meant to be a place of natural beauty for everyone in Bristol to enjoy. The parked vans significantly detract from this natural haven with bits of old equipment left outside the vans or shoved underneath. The encampment has also encouraged the abandonment of derelict vans and caravans.
- the vans reduce the parking spaces available for other visitors to the Downs
- Any decisions made to change parking regulations around the Downs should take into consideration the impact on adjacent roads such as ours.

Statement: PS26.39

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Bob Lewis

I am writing to draw attention to issues which relate to unauthorised kerbside parking by Van Dwellers on the Downs; the area of the City which is most familiar to me.

In order to put my comments into context, I should emphasise that I believe that every citizen of the City is entitled to a home, together with ready access to all necessary support services.

However, in my opinion, allowing uncontrolled parking around the edge of the Downs fails both Van Dwellers and equally importantly the Community Tax paying citizens of the City.

Bristol is a City of which we should be rightly proud. One of the jewels of the City is the Downs, with its unrestricted access to all who wish to use them for leisure and enjoyment.

The situation that has developed over recent years, with ever increasing numbers of Van Dwellers has, in my opinion, had a significant negative visual impact on the Downs and has adversely affected the enjoyment of its users.

Clearly the Downs were never intended to accommodate full time residents; consequently there are no facilities such as toilets and rubbish collections for people living there permanently. As a result bushes have been used as toilets and rubbish has been left to pile up on the grass areas surrounding the vans. Waste bags containing food are often attacked by vermin with the contents of the bags being strewn around. I suggest that this represents a potential health hazard, particularly to children. The proliferation of piles of rubbish can also encourage bad behavioural changes in other users of the Downs with increases in litter being left for others to collect.

In my opinion, the answer to this problem is not to try and accept the existing unsatisfactory situation, but to address the causes of the problem; namely by:

- (a) the provision of adequate purpose built facilities in appropriate locations;
- (b) introducing restrictions, which do not allow overnight parking and that such restrictions are enforced. It is a source of huge frustration to car users that whilst they are subject to parking time limits, Van Dwellers are not.

The Paper refers to an increase in numbers of Van Dwellers from an estimated 150 pre Pandemic to around 600 now. Consideration should be given to the fact that the lack of positive action may well be a factor in this increase and be a draw to Van Dwellers from other towns and cities who choose Van Dwelling as a way of life.

It would seem to me to be appropriate to consider the impact of Vans on others whose views of the City might be influenced; for example, potential University students and their parents. Significant numbers of Bristol University students are accommodated in Halls of Residence on the edge of the Downs.

Statement: CS26.01

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Councillors Smith, Scott, Gollop, Goulandris and Michellat

This report is a missed opportunity. While rightly highlighting the risks and vulnerabilities experienced by people living in vehicles, it fails abjectly to address the impact of vehicle dwelling on council tax paying residents and the damage being done to iconic locations such as the Downs.

We are extremely disappointed that our feedback to the Mayor and the views of our residents have been completely ignored.

The report acknowledges that the Council's current lax 'do nothing' policy espoused by the Mayor has resulted in a vehicle dwelling crisis for Bristol :

"Bristol has the highest number of vehicle dwellers of any authority in the UK"

The Mayor has been asleep at the wheel as this crisis on the streets of Bristol has escalated. His lamentable lack of leadership on this issue has seen parts of Bristol come to resemble the world's worst shanty towns with litter, rubbish and human waste dumped on the roadside. This report was an opportunity for the Mayor, belatedly, to tackle the problems he has allowed to develop on his watch. Sadly, he has not had the courage to deal with the challenges and this report simply kicks the can down the road and asks the next administration to deal with the problems he has caused. What an appalling legacy to leave as Mayor.

To be clear, we don't believe that anyone should squat in the streets without access to washing and toilet facilities in 21st Bristol. The Mayor's current policy of so say 'tolerance' is in fact moral and civic cowardice. A policy of 'do nothing' is not helpful either to vehicle dwellers or residents. There is nothing compassionate about leaving people to live in inadequate caravans on the side of the road.

The report fails to examine the approach taken by many other local authorities, which have successfully removed vehicle dwellers from the roadside. The solution to vehicle dwelling is relatively simple : provide designated sites for vehicle dwellers with local links, which have basic facilities such as access to water, toilets and ideally hook up electricity coupled with the introduction of a city wide by law, which prohibits overnight camping on the public highway. Why is this obvious solution not promoted in the report?

Whilst the report complains about the difficulty in identifying sufficient suitable sites for vehicle dwellers, that didn't prove to be a problem during COVID, when vehicle dwelling on the highway was effectively proscribed. It is our view that little real effort has been put into finding sufficient sites, which again is a major failure on the part of the Mayor.

In summary, this is one of the worst reports we have ever seen produced. It says absolutely nothing, accepts no responsibility for the current crisis and fails to offer any tangible solutions, even though these have been successfully implemented by other local authorities. It denigrates complaints from residents as 'hate mail' and has completely ignored the suggestions made by local councillors. Its main recommendation is laughable:

"It is recommended that the creation of a Council officer's Task and Finish group is considered, in order to look into the issues and options around vehicle dwelling in Bristol, with the intention that this work feed into a review of the Bristol City Council's Policy for Vehicle Dwelling Encampments on the Highway to explore the inclusion of roadside parking, encampments, squatted sites and meanwhile sites."

Frankly, Sir Humphrey Appleby himself couldn't have produced any finer vacuous blather!

Question: PQ26.01 & PQ26.02

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Question submitted by: John and Vivien Harding

Question 1: I understand that it is illegal to park a caravan on the highway without a road tax. Why aren't fines issued also you are only allowed to park for 5 hours in most areas around the Downs? The General public have to adhere to the law and byelaws otherwise they get a parking ticket slapped on the windscreen. A law for one and a law for someone who chooses to not to obey.

Questions 2: Why are these caravans not using the Traveller's Sites ie St. Anthony's In Avonmouth or does it not exist anymore?

Question: PQ26.03 & PQ26.04

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Question submitted by: Angelo Giambrone

Question 1: Why are local residents being let down by authorities not introducing new policies to prevent van dwellers on the Downs?

Questions 2: With this problem being in place for many years, why are decisions not being taken to remove the dwellers and is it because the council is happy for them to remain?

Question: CQ26.01 & CQ26.02

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Question submitted by: Councillor Steve Smith

Question 1: Is the Parrys Lane / Downs encampment currently considered to be high or low impact?

Questions 2: When was that last reviewed, by whom and on the basis of what data?