

Member Forum

12 March 2024

Questions and replies



Procedural note:

Councillors are entitled to submit up to 2 written questions each.

- The questions submitted and written replies are enclosed.
- Councillors are also entitled to ask a maximum of 2 supplementary questions at the forum. A supplementary question must arise out of the original question or answer given.
- Via the group leaders / whips, questions have been submitted in priority order.
- At the forum, the asking of supplementary questions will be rotated between the political groups that have submitted questions, taken in priority order.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Mohamed Makawi**Subject: Knife Crime**

As we continue to prioritize efforts to address knife crime and serious violence in Bristol, I believe that keeping track of the progress on these crucial actions will help ensure that we are effectively addressing the root causes of knife crime and working towards creating a safer environment for all residents.

I wanted to inquire about the progress made on the action points outlined in our recent discussions and budget planning process. Specifically, I have two questions regarding the implementation of these initiatives:

1. Can you provide an update on the allocation of funding towards early intervention and preventative measures, as well as any progress made in securing government grants to complement these strategies in the interim?

2. What steps have been taken to implement the improvement plans for Castle Park following their finalization and consultation, and how are we working towards producing a joint strategic needs assessment to define serious violence in Bristol?

REPLY

We are investing in prevention with our contribution to the Safer options team is £109,000 on top of a Home Office contribution of £464,000.

We take a Public Health approach to knife crime, which means we deal with the wider determinants, the point being sometimes it is hard to make definite boundaries on what is an intervention. For example our total children's centres budget is £4.2m in addition to a grant for family hubs which is £2.8m in 24/25. Other interventions include:

- our community development team making communities
- working with partners to tackle hunger
- Building affordable homes to give people a stable home
- Reducing Educational inequalities by investing in schools
- Ensuring quality work experience through Bristol Works

It is important to understand that this is more than just Bristol City Council. This needs multi agency co-ordination, using One City to mobilise the city's resource, not just the council.

2. The detailed design and any required planning applications for the redesign of Castle Park will start in Spring 2024, with a likely 18 month programme. This is being paid for by Strategic CIL, with an allocated budget of £1.2m. During this time we will engage with key stakeholders for the park to ensure that safety and inclusivity are at the heart of the proposals.

During the project, we will be seeking and identifying options for regional and national funding to pay for the improvements to the park.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Breckels, St George Troopers Hill**Subject: Cumulative Impact Area / City Leap**

I'm disappointed that the licensing committee chose not to revoke the city centre's Cumulative Impact Area, a policy which means the police automatically object to any new night time economy businesses opening in the centre. With hospitality across the UK struggling, I do not believe councils should be putting up additional barriers to businesses looking to add to Bristol's nightlife.

Does the Mayor agree with me that the council should be looking to support our city's night time economy, rather than put up more barriers to it thriving?

It's fantastic to see the City Leap business case revised up to £771m. This is transformative for Bristol's decarbonisation plans, and will see 1,000 well paid jobs for Bristolians created as part of it. Please could the Mayor share some details on City Leap's plans for the next municipal year?

REPLY

1. Yes absolutely – hospitality has had a really tough few years and we should be supporting its recovery as a key part of our economy.

The nighttime economy is a significant employer in our city and we cannot take it for granted.

2. Thanks for your question, as you have repeatedly pointed out it's not just declarations of principles and slogans that matter – it's doing the hard yards and everyday actions that prove those principles that matter. For Bristol's leadership on Climate Change, it's not just saying you're against fossil fuels, it's about getting the billions of investment required. We're getting that done.

This is great investment in Bristol, which will mean thousands of jobs and a real impact on our carbon emissions. Projects in the next year will include:

- Energy Efficiency Measures on social housing:
 - £3.2m for 112 Easiform properties
 - £16m for 9 blocks of flats
 - £7.8m window replacement programme
- Energy Efficiency Measures on the Corporate Estate:
 - Installation of energy efficient chillers at 100 Temple Street
 - LED lighting installation across multiple buildings
 - New building management systems at City Hall and 100 Temple Street
- EV Charging Infrastructure:
 - Delivery of charging infrastructure under Green Recovery Fund and LEVI
- Development of Large Scale Renewable opportunities on Council land and other land owners commercial sector
- Continued build out and connections to the heat network
- Continued focus on building out local supply chain



- Establishing £500,00 Innovation Fund and awarding grants under £1.5m Community Energy Fund

It takes far more than political will alone.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Richard Eddy (Bishopsworth)**Subject: YEW TREE FARM, BEDMINSTER DOWN**

As the Mayor may be aware, there have recently been claims of dormice (a protected species) activity on land planned for phase 1 of the expansion of South Bristol Crematorium. As Bristol City Council has clear wildlife, environmental, and planning obligations, I am pleased to welcome the intention to mount a dormice survey and undertake further precautionary measures.

Q1. Can the Mayor kindly confirm details of the dormice survey and detail the other measures which are being pursued by Officers?

The Mayor will be aware of the substantial damage caused to the privately-owned meadow to the immediate east of Yew Tree Farm by the current grazier in February 2024 (and which forms part of the Site of Nature Conservation Interest). I understand that both the Police and Planning Enforcement have instructed the grazier to desist from further destruction.

Q2. Can the Mayor ensure that this instruction is robustly repeated and - bearing in mind the meadow forms part of the SNCI - will an audit/survey of the damage be carried out and by whom?

REPLY

1. The Project Ecologist has been asked to review the newly available information and prepare a dormouse survey scope to determine the presence of dormice in the area where the works will be carried out. This scope will meet statutory requirements and will also reflect the Council's precautionary approach to ensuring the protection of wildlife.

Surveys will be undertaken by suitably qualified and licensed ecologists. Specific licences will be acquired as necessary.

The Council will only commence scrub encroachment clearance once it has been confirmed that the risk of harm to protected species in the areas being cleared is acceptably low and that statutory requirements have been met.

2. Reports of works to hedgerows enclosing private land adjacent to the council owned land were received in February and they are being actively considered by the planning department; Council ecology and tree officers are supporting these investigations.

Neither the land in question nor the reported works are in any way linked to the approved works for the expansion of the existing cemetery on Council owned land.

Any concerns about protected species being harmed will be referred by officers to the Police. Enforcement powers to maintain favourable SNCI status rest with Natural England.

Officers will remind the landowners to ensure that all licencing and consent processes under Natural England provisions are followed.





Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Kent**Subject: Health**

1. Can the Mayor update members on what progress has been made, with the Integrated Care Board, on delivering a new GP practice in South Bristol?
2. Can the Mayor update members on what plans there are to ensure every resident in south Bristol will have the right to access an NHS dentist?

REPLY

1. We have requested an update from the lead for Primary Care at the Integrated Care Board on progress on delivering a new GP practice in South Bristol.

The Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) Integrated Care Board (ICB) is responsible for developing a plan for meeting the health needs of the population, managing the NHS budget and arranging for the provision of health services in the BNSSG sub-region of the Southwest. As a founding member, Bristol City Council (BCC) has a longstanding positive working relationship across the BNSSG Integrated Care System. BCC Chief Executive Stephen Peacock represents the council at the Integrated Care Board and BNSSG System group meetings, whilst Councillor Helen Holland (Cabinet Member with responsibility for Adult Social Care and the ICS) is the chair of the [Integrated Care Partnership](#) (ICP) and the [Health and Wellbeing Board](#), working closely with three locality partnerships operating within Bristol.

In November 2023, the Councillor Ellie King (Cabinet Member with responsibility for Public Health and Communities) put forward a [Golden Motion](#) to the Full Council meeting. The motion called for a strategic capacity health needs assessment to be carried out across Bristol to reflect the growing population of the city and the challenges this will place on health services in Bristol and across the West of England.

Since then, we have been working with the ICB to develop a proposal for a 2040 Service Plan. We will be working in partnership with North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Councils, and the ICB to develop a plan which describes which services will be needed and where based upon population change, community-based proactive interventions and how care is delivered. The development of the plan will be data-led to identify priority areas, services or population groups to ensure a sustainable health and care system for Bristol into the future.

The Council will continue to exert its influence within the Integrated Care System to push for the appropriate health and care provisions to be put in place across the whole of Bristol based on the outcome of the strategic needs assessment, in particular in areas such as South Bristol which are experiencing significant population growth. We will continue to update Councillors and the public on the strategic needs assessment outcomes and proposals for improving health and care facilities across Bristol.



There is an opportunity to work with the developer of Broadwalk Shopping Centre who has allocated space for a new GP surgery.

2. This is a significant challenge across the country and we know the sector needs a plan to grip the immediate crisis and reforming the service in the long-term. Dentistry provision is the responsibility of the NHS and we are working with NHS and other partners on the development of a Dental Strategy for Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

Recently, the University of Bristol's new £36m dental school doubled the number of free emergency dental appointments each day in our city. We have been working with a developer to bring an NHS dentist to Bristol South, but more details remain commercially confidential.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Patrick McAllister

Subject: Western Harbour and Traffic Restrictions

At December Member Forum, my supplementary questions were as follows:

1. can the Council ensure that public service vehicles, such as Royal Mail vans would not be impeded by the Spike Island traffic restrictions; and
2. given that the M2 bus is often diverted along Coronation Road, which is no longer easily accessible from parts of Spike Island given the closure of Vauxhall Bridge, can the Council investigate better public transport provision for Spike Island residents when this diversion occurs?

I was grateful to the Mayor for committing to look into these questions.

- 1. Please could I have an update on any progress made on these issues?**

REPLY

1. Only buses, taxis and cycles are exempt from access through the bus gate on Cumberland Road; other public service vehicles like ambulances, fire engines and the police are exempt if they are responding to an emergency.

Royal Mail is a private company and their vehicles will be expected to adhere to any other traffic restrictions such as road works in the same way as all other vehicles.

2. It is difficult for buses to serve Spike Island in the event of a closure as is often the case with other parts of the city when roads are closed.

While the closure of Vauxhall Bridge is in place we will seek to limit the number of planned closures where possible, however urgent utility or maintenance works may prevent this.

Our records shown there have only been four-day closures over the last year.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Ali, Frome Vale Ward

Subject: Barton House

Please could the Mayor provide an update on Barton House?

REPLY

The hotel where residents were temporarily housed, The Holiday Inn, is now empty and the contract came to an end on the 8th March.

We have two residents currently in Serviced accommodation by agreement, due to come to an end on the 11th March. We've also had nine households make homeless applications, three of which have received a not homeless decision and six have been provided with temporary accommodation across the city pending decisions.

We did the right thing in moving people out, did the right thing in putting people up with meals, travel and mental health support services. We did the right thing in repairing the building. We did the right thing in moving people back in when it was safe to do so.

It has not been easy: When our engineers first tried to enter the block to undertake the deeper investigation, they were blocked from entering the stairwell - delaying their start date.

We needed access to every flat to install the fire safety measures. Every flat had to be treated for the whole block to be deemed safe. One resident refused to cooperate.

Fire alarms we were installing as required by the engineers and Avon Fire & Rescue Service were stolen. The thief was subsequently caught with the fire alarms and arrested.

Along with this we have been concerned at the significant undue alarm caused for residents, some of whom are vulnerable, by circulating misinformation about the evacuation and the work we have undertaken on the building.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Mark Weston (Henbury & Brentry)**Subject: NEW BRABAZON NEIGHBOURHOOD**

Q1. When the Cribbs Patchway New Neighbourhood was agreed, S.106 funding was to be provided to mitigate the impact of this large development on the road network in this part of north Bristol. Can the Mayor confirm the amount of additional developer contributions that is tied to this new planning permission?

Q2. What proportion of this mitigation money will be allocated to Bristol for improving or upgrading secondary junctions, as these roads are certain to be overwhelmed by even more displaced traffic and in the light of promises currently being made to pause construction/expansion should the local highways need further mitigation measures?

REPLY

1. First of all, I want to welcome the permission for 6,500 new homes on the site, and investment it will bring to the city region. We would have encouraged greater density to deliver more units if it had been in our jurisdiction.

We are not a signatory to the Section 106 Agreement for CPNN. The Agreement contains a “roof tax” approach which is intended to secure in the region of £60m to fund a whole range of infrastructure projects, from highways and public transport improvements to schools and community facilities. South Gloucestershire Council have currently collected £3.1m of the £60m.

2. The sum identified for the A4018 corridor is £4.74m. Provision of measures to enhance pedestrian cycle and public transport provision on the A4018 Corridor and adjoining roads between the M5 and Henleaze; including the following:

- Modifications to and signalisation of the Crow Lane Roundabout
- Modifications to the Brentry Lane Junction
- Modifications to the Charlton Road Junction
- Modifications to the Greystoke Avenue Junction
- Bus priority measures at locations to be determined
- Traffic Management in Henbury and Brentry



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Hornchen, Brislington East**Subject: Park Row / Empty Homes**

I'm very pleased to see that the council is investing in significant active travel and public transport upgrades to Park Row. When is the work set to start?

Please could the Mayor provide an update on progress on tackling empty homes (voids) in Bristol?

REPLY

1. The works are due to commence in late March; please see the Council web page (which will be kept updated throughout) for further info: [Park Row improvements \(bristol.gov.uk\)](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/park-row-improvements).

This project is part of the Department for Transport's Active Travel programme and will allow us to upgrade:

- cycle lanes and other cycle infrastructure
- crossings and other pedestrian infrastructure
- traffic signals
- create loading and disabled bays

2. The HRA currently holds 336 void properties as of the 04/03/24. The breakdown of these are as follows.

- Lettings pre repairs 12
- Repairs 209
- Accessible homes 4
- Lettings post repairs 111

This Year To Date, we have put 924 voids back into use.

The backlog of properties not worked on has reduced significantly in recent months from 114 to only 19. Further work continues on implementing action plans to tackle the backlog of lettable properties caused by diverting all available resource to the Barton House response which included the temporary suspension of lettings. As we return to normal working practices we estimate to tackle the lettings backlog by the end of the fiscal year.

By doing so will reduce our empty properties to a level of less than 1% of the total retain social housing stock.

Privately owned empty residential units:

Outcomes in 2023/2024:

- 561 brought back into use.
- 361 Empty property enquiries received with 36 nuisance cases investigated.



- 16 informal and 46 formal notices issued as part of Empty Property Unit work.
- Threat of CPO brought a long-term empty into use for BCC Asylum Team clients.
- Working with the Refugee Resettlement Team developed a 0% loan, empty property project management product and nomination rights.
- Empty House in Multiple Occupation used for four refugees.
- Amendments agreed for empty property, Council Tax charges (2024) and Second Homes (2025).
- Deceased Estate Project increased chargeable base, traced liable parties and brought properties into use.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor John Goulandris (Stoke Bishop)**Subject: CONTINUING RECYCLING & WASTE COLLECTION ISSUES**

At January's Member Forum, I highlighted - as did other members - the problems being experienced by my residents with missed/delayed recycling and waste collections, this being particularly acute in the case of recycling collections with residents losing patience and placing their recycling in the black general waste bins.

You suggested meeting with Bristol Waste officers, and I (no doubt along with other councillors) took up this advice. In my case, I had a meeting with Dave Knight, interim MD, who assured me that the 'teething problems' caused by the introduction of a revised routing system in November 2023, would be all sorted by mid-February 2024, at the very latest.

Sadly, this has proved optimistic and delayed/missed recycling collections are still being reported by my residents right across my ward. This indicates to me that the problem is far from sorted. Indeed, given that the new routes were introduced in November, and there are still so many missed collections, it does appear that there are more systemic problems at Bristol Waste.

Q1. When does the Mayor believe Bristolians will receive a 'normal' collection service from Bristol Waste?

Q2. Has there been a decrease in the number of employees or recycling collection vehicles since the third quarter of 2023?

REPLY

1. The current situation is not satisfactory. Bristol Waste have not been able to meet the timeline they shared with you due to the challenges they are experiencing.

Bristol Waste are working on solutions to address the ongoing issues currently being experienced from their reroute. I have asked them for an update to share with you as soon as possible.

2. The re-route aimed to rebalance the existing resources and help performance across all collection days and give more consistent, improved service.

However, the Bristol Waste have shared that there are still issues with balancing the yield and capacity, travelling distances and number of properties serviced by crews each day on the revised routes.

Bristol Waste haven't got this right on Thursdays at present and we'll continue to explore their proposed solutions urgently.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Pearce, St George Central**Subject: Sport / Living Wage City**

Please can the Mayor outline the steps the Labour administration has undertaken to promote sport in Bristol?

Please could the Mayor provide details of the number of Living Wage jobs in Bristol in 2024, when compared to 2016?

REPLY

Q1 Over the course of this, the most pro-sport administration Bristol has had in decades, we have brought together a wide group of partners with the shared objectives of creating, promoting, and enhancing opportunities for sport and physical activity as a key means to help create a healthier, resilient and more prosperous city.

One of the challenges Bristol faces is reducing the stark health inequalities which exist between different parts of the city and improving the life chances for all. Sport and physical activity can contribute significantly towards this as it contributes towards our own physical and mental wellbeing, individual development, and social and community development.

There are stubborn inequalities which exist and we can see lower physical activity levels compared to the Bristol average amongst certain groups including, children and young people, disabled people, older adults, women, and girls and those living in the most deprived area.

Our approach to promoting sport, in its broadest sense, has therefore been to work collaboratively and focus our limited resources on those areas and demographic groups where inequalities are the greatest.

There's several other sports activities we've been involved with to promote sport in Bristol:

- The incredibly successful city-wide Tennis model with the LTA – growing reach and engagement, now expanding to Redcatch and Dingle Close.
- Leisure centre contract has leveraged millions of pounds of investment in our facilities
- Adopted a Playing Pitch Strategy protecting sports pitches
- Secured Sport England funding for energy efficiency projects
- Promoted the Bristol Girls Can campaign and supported women sport
- Supported the South Stand at the Memorial Stadium
- Got behind the Ashton Gate expansion plans, which also include affordable homes
- We helped to enable Boxing under the galleries, and hosted the England V Wales Amateur boxing inside City Hall
- Worked with Outward Bound to develop the “Marvin’s 100” programme, getting young people out into nature.
- Women’s Rugby World Cup fixtures are coming to Ashton Gate in 2025



- We worked with Gloucestershire Country Cricket – I spoke at the ECB to advocate for international matches to come to Bristol.
- I've been on my bike to celebrate the Tour of England in Bristol, Sky Ride and the Family Cycling Centre investment project
- We've worked with Saeed Esmaeli from Wrestle for Humanity and Mario from free fighters and their outreach programmes with children – and Empire Fighting Chance are using boxing as a way to get young people away from gangs
- Organised the Harbour Swimming pilot
- I've taken part in lawn bowls while meeting with clubs to discuss asset transfers. Our wider programme of Sport Asset Transfers gathers pace.
- Encouraged the amazing Park runs across the city, and I ran the London marathon for Southmead Hospital
- I was delighted to welcome the Bristol Bears to train on College Green and come in to City Hall
- Ellis Genge is a Bristol international ambassador and we hosted his project the City Gathering last week
- (finally, Chess isn't a sport per se, but we had the school championships in city hall too)

A lot of this was made possible by working with sports organisations in the city. We convened the first city sports conference, mass participation, talent pathways and world class and we've seen a lot of results. Delivering on this really has been a team sport.

2. In 2016 Bristol had 24 real Living Wage accredited employers headquartered in Bristol, whose accreditation resulted in an additional 397 employees receiving an uplift in salary. The Council was not one of them, when I was elected. (The data for the number of jobs in these organisations in 2016 is not available.)

As of January 2024 there are real Living Wage accredited employers headquartered in Bristol employing a total of 44,833 people. This has resulted in 5,599 employees receiving an uplift in salary.

It is estimated that 7.2% of jobs (roughly 22,000) still pay below the real Living Wage in Bristol (data is taken from the latest Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings).



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Graham Morris (Stockwood)**Subject: INSTALLATION OF FIXED SAFETY CAMERAS**

Stockwood Ward Councillors are being contacted by concerned residents about speeding on Stockwood Lane, Stockwood Road, Sturminster Road and West Town Lane. We have therefore asked Avon and Somerset police to carry out mobile speed enforcement.

In 2022, we enquired about the installation of new safety cameras in Stockwood Ward. As a result, we were advised at the time that Bristol City Council was not considering any new safety camera locations but were just working on the maintenance of existing sites.

Q1. Can the Mayor please confirm if this is still the case, or if any new sites are now being considered?

REPLY

- Yes, the safety camera programme remains focussed on keeping the current cameras operating so that they continue to provide the safety benefits at key locations.
- Speed enforcement is a key pillar in our Safe Systems Approach to Road Safety and our target of zero people killed or seriously injured by 2040.
- However, a fixed safety camera is a very expensive option both in terms of the initial set up costs and annual running costs – they are usually more than £100k.
- Therefore these should only be considered when all other options to reduce the risk of speeding related collisions have been discounted. A fixed safety camera would not be a recommended solution to resolving these collisions despite the local concerns.
- The roads mentioned have a relatively low number of injury collisions reported in the last 3 years with 14 collisions in total. Two collisions were speeding related. These were on different roads.
- A redesign of the West Town Lane junction with Sturminster Road is included in the A37/A4018 Strategic Corridors (South) plans.
- These plans also include a zebra crossing by Manston Close on Sturminster as well as the segregated cycle way from West Town Lane/Sturminster roundabout to Manston close.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Massey, Southmead Ward**Subject: Government Budget / Housing Crisis**

What did Bristol City Council need from the Government's Budget, compared to what was delivered?

Please could the Mayor provide an update on the number of homes built in Bristol, and please outline some of the challenges hindering Bristol's ability to tackle the housing crisis?

REPLY

1. It was a frustrating budget that didn't grapple with the scale of the crisis in Local Government funding. The LGA said *"It is disappointing that the Government has not announced measures to adequately fund the local services people rely on every day. Councils continue to transform services but, given that core spending power in 2024/25 has been cut by 23.3% in real terms compared to 2010/11, it is unsustainable to expect them to keep doing more for less in the face of unprecedented cost and demand pressures."*

The LGiU's report states that 90% of residents nationwide will pay more in council tax and fees and nearly 70% will see reduced services. More than half (51%) of senior council figures warn their councils are likely to go bust in the next parliament unless local government funding is reformed.

In Bristol we welcome that the vital Household Support Fund has been extended for another 6 months. This came following calls from a range of stakeholders, including ourselves through the LGA. It was a huge relief but the decision to only extend the fund by 6 months does not allow us to plan for the long term.

It highlights how some fundamental issues need to be resolved about the nature of the financial relationship with central government. We are the most centralised country in Europe. Funding is not only inadequate, but it is also short term, unpredictable, competitive and too often costs us time and money to access.

We weren't surprised that the Spring Budget provided no solution to the crisis of local government finance.

Separate to the budget, we welcome the opportunity to be considered for the safety valve to help us with our Dedicated Schools Grant deficit.

2. Bristol has built 12,500 new homes between 2016 and 2023. We're close to announcing updated figures soon, but the 2022/23 period saw 2,563 new homes. 474 of these new homes were affordable – the most in the 12 years since Labour were last in national government.

90% of these new homes were built on previously developed land which takes pressure off of greenfield and designs out vehicle dependency when built in the city centre.



And now for the challenges: We have had to transform the council into a housing delivery organisation, which meant reallocating resources and culture change critical to securing the confidence of Homes England and private investors.

This has been achieved despite opposition to housing from the Green Party in particular, anti-housing campaigns and the failure of the Combined Authority to agree a Spatial development strategy for the region.

We know our planning service has faced challenges. Austerity and the hollowing out of backroom capacity to maintain frontline services will have a huge impact on how we are able to deliver as a partner in the city. We have seen good recovery from our team as, well as the wider work on Temple Quarter, Frome Gateway, Bedminster Green development frameworks, City Centre Delivery Plan and now Western Harbour master planning appointment.

This is what we've been able to do within the existing framework of austerity and a centralised Conservative government with no plan to build homes, or interest in social housing. A change in government which will invest in places and especially cities, reform planning and get Britain building social housing again will make a difference in tackling the entrenched housing crisis in this country.

Longer term, the draft Local Plan is a huge opportunity to continue this momentum and deliver homes in the face of a climate and ecological emergency. However, don't underestimate the ability of small politics to stop big things.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Jonathan Hucker (Stockwood)

Subject: BRISTOL HEAT NETWORKS LIMITED

I understand that Bristol City Council set up a subsidiary company, Bristol Heat Networks Limited (BHNL), and used the company to undertake a 50% joint venture with Ameresco Limited to operate the City Leap Energy Partnership.

In December 2023, the Council decided to sell its one share in Bristol Heat Networks Limited (BHNL) to Vattenfall Heat UK Limited, conditional upon Vattenfall repaying the loan facility utilised by BHNL, and also to the creation of "one special share" in BHNL.

Please provide clarity on the following matters regarding this arrangement:

- Q1. Did Ameresco Limited assent to the subsequent sale of one share in BHNL?
- Q2. Who held the shares in BHNL besides the one owned by Bristol City Council?

REPLY

1. Ameresco were not required to consent to the transfer of BHNL to Vattenfall, as they were not a shareholder in the company. They were aware of the sale as acquiring BHNL was a requirement of the procurement exercise.

2. The one ordinary share in BHNL was held by Bristol Holding Limited, the Council's wholly owned subsidiary company. That ordinary share was transferred to Vattenfall Heat UK Limited. At the point of transfer, the Council took one special share in BHNL.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Steve Smith (Westbury on Trym & Henleaze)**Subject: HIGHWAYS SCHEMES UPDATE**

In response to a previous Member Forum question about delayed highway schemes, I was sent a list in December of 41 schemes which were delayed due to pricing issues with the Council's framework contract for highways works. At the time the aim was to complete the re-pricing of the framework contract by the end of February 2024, and being re-issuing work to contractors in March and April.

Since then, we have had the very welcome announcement in early February that 14 resurfacing schemes which were on that list will be completed by the end of this month, including the Eastfield/Henleaze Rd roundabout in my ward.

1. Can the Mayor provide an update on the work to re-price the framework, and any estimate of when the remaining delayed projects, particularly the Canford Lane crossing, will be issued to contractors and completed?
2. Are the 14 resurfacing schemes announced in February being contracted through the framework contract that is being re-priced, and if so, how have these contracts been called off ahead of the completion of that re-pricing exercise?

REPLY

1. The work to re-price Lot 5 of the Highways Framework contract (schemes under £150k) has been completed. Alun Griffiths Ltd have been appointed as the primary contractor for these works. Officers are now working to reprice the local transport schemes that are ready to be re-issued to the contractor, so that these can be reviewed by the contractor's management team and a programme to deliver these put together. This includes the Canford Lane crossing.

The officers leading each individual project will be in contact with the appropriate Councillors for each scheme once this programme has been agreed and they have an estimated start date.

2. The repricing exercise shared in December has been completed, and the tender awarded.

All outstanding works are in the process of being sent to the successful contractor for programming and delivery. When the contractor has set a programme the project manager for the Canford Lane Crossing project will be able to inform local ward members.

The 14 resurfacing schemes announced in February are being contracted through the framework. The framework is made up of 12 different lots delivering a range of works (surfacing, surface dressing, structures work etc). Lot 1 is Carriageway Resurfacing which following the previous indices increases we were successful in gaining the fourth contractor on Lot 1 to accept the programme of works at their tendered rates.

This was not possible with the general works Lot 5, and so we are having to reprice the rates.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Geoff Gollop (Westbury on Trym & Henleaze)**Subject: VEHICLE DWELLERS – THE BRISTOL MODEL**

Many residents continue to be appalled by the lack of tangible solutions suggested in your latest report on vehicle dwelling (Cabinet, 5th March). The problem has arisen on your watch as Mayor, and it is your responsibility to come up with workable solutions. Your main recommendation is to kick the can down the road and ask the next Administration to resolve it. This is disgraceful buck passing.

Q1. Why do you think, as the report acknowledges:- *“Bristol has the highest number of vehicle dwellers of any authority in the UK”*, that the City has such a problem?

Q2. Is the Mayor aware of Pembrokeshire County Council’s success in removing vehicle dwelling from the County?

REPLY

1. It is worth noting that our approach is being recognised. The report “Kicking the can down the road: The planning and provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites in England 1960-2023” by Dr Simon Ruston for Friends, Families and Travellers cites Bristol positively several times:

“In Bristol and Leeds, it is clear that significant council resources of both officer time, finance and land have been put into providing accommodation on meanwhile sites and the development of a new site... In Leeds, Bristol, Brighton, Cheshire West and Chester, provision has been made without taking potential sites through a local plan allocation process. This is a sensible and pragmatic approach to the provision of sites that has been shown to deliver.”

“Comments of Mayor Marvin Rees have shown that positive political leadership on this issue helps rather than hinders.”

Bristol counts our vehicle dweller numbers whereas most other Local Authorities do not and do not know how many they have. However, looking at vehicle dweller numbers as a percentage of an area’s total population where numbers are known, the percentage in Bristol is lower than many Local Authorities in the South West.

As the cabinet report stated, most people living in vehicles in Bristol are doing so through financial necessity, not through choice. It has shifted to being a product of poverty and homelessness. A lack of housing, especially affordable housing has meant that many residents are unable to find suitable, affordable homes to live in. Bristol has some of the most expensive housing, relative to income, of anywhere in the UK so you would expect a correlation.

2. Officers have contacted Pembrokeshire County Council on 7th March 2024. Their Housing Links Officer for the Gypsy Roma Traveller Community has never seen or heard of any unauthorised vehicle dweller encampments in the Authority, and they are not aware that the County Council has done any work to remove vehicle dwellers.



Pembrokeshire are considering opening up all car parks in their Authority to free campervan parking for up to 48 hours at a time. This would be available to members of the Travelling community.

Pembrokeshire do have one New Traveller on one of their permanent Traveller sites. They believe that they may have other New Travellers on private sites, but they do not present any issues to the Authority.

Pembrokeshire are looking into funding from the Welsh Government to facilitate high quality affordable housing.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Lesley Alexander (Frome Vale)

Subject: VEHICLE DWELLING

Q1. What does the Mayor think should happen to landlords who let out properties, which have no toilet facilities, no running water, no electricity supply and poor insulation?

Q2. Does the Mayor feel that it is acceptable for people to abuse the public highway for sanitary purposes and, if not, why hasn't something been done about this situation during his two terms in Office?

REPLY

1. Under the Housing Act, 2004, there are minimum housing standards that must be provided for rented homes in England. Breach of these legal requirements may lead to enforcement action.

Ethical Lettings policy and licensing schemes improve properties across the city.

2. It is not acceptable to use the highway for sanitary purposes. This is an offence under the 1986 Public Order Act, enforceable by the Police.

We have worked to improve the sanitation of encampments including:

- Carrying out welfare assessments of all new encampments in the city.
- Conducting impact assessment of encampments
- Moving on those which are assessed as “high impact” with legal powers available to us.
- Setting up of a total of eight meanwhile sites for vehicle dwellers providing access to water, toilets, waste disposal and recycling facilities.
- Undertaking a Health Needs Analysis of people living in vehicles.
- Providing bins for all encampments on BCC land.
- The recently approved Cabinet report in March 2024 contains recommendations for setting up service sites to further support vehicle dwellers in safer sanitary practices.

Five meanwhile sites (65 pitches) are currently open with a further two in the pipeline to open subject to planning permission.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Sharon Scott (Westbury on Trym & Henleaze)

Subject: VAN DWELLING

Q1. Bristol now has more vehicle dwellers squatting on the highway than any other local authority. Is this shambolic result – the creation, encouragement, or tolerance of improvised, proto, shanty towns, the product of Mayoral incompetence or design?

Q2. Presumably, the Mayor will feel a sense of shame, when he sees so many people living without fundamental amenities, when he could, if so minded, identify additional sites for vehicle dwellers, which would provide basic facilities. Why hasn't the Mayor banned living on the highway through a robustly enforced citywide byelaw, insisting that vehicle dwellers use designated sites or leave Bristol?

REPLY

1. This is the product of a housing crisis and national cost of living crisis in an economy that has been run into the ground, combined with the chronic under funding of local government.

This administration is recognised by national charities for having done more to support and manage vehicle dwellers (VDws) than many other Local Authorities in the Country.

Bristol has:

- Set up of meanwhile sites
- Employing a Partnership Manager for Vehicle Dwellers.
- Assisted Public Health to complete a Health Needs Analysis of people living in vehicles (first one of these in the country).
- Hold six-weekly professionals' meetings incl. statutory and voluntary sector organisations to coordinate next step response.
- Facilitating a twice-yearly professionals meeting with Local Authorities across the UK to discuss VDw trends.
- Recognised nationally as a model of good practice in relation to VDws.

2. We are neither able nor willing to require VDws to use designated sites which would infringe their human rights. Sites are set up and will continue to be established as and when land is available for use.

We will not insist that Bristolians leave the place that they call home just because they cannot afford to live in bricks and mortar accommodation within their own city.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Kevin Quartley (Bishopsworth)

Subject: REINSTATING OR RESTORING WHITE LINE ROAD MARKINGS

Q1. Many residents are concerned that white lines and other road markings are often not reinstated on roads after resurfacing works. Whilst the removal of road markings may be acceptable or appropriate in certain areas – such as quiet cul-de-sacs – residents feel that this should not be the case on busy residential or access roads. Is the Mayor prepared to support the idea that Highways and Traffic Management service should review its current policy on reinstatement of white lines and consider the views of local residents in these matters?

Q2. As part of any new engagement process on this issue, does the Mayor accept that Ward Councillors should also be consulted and given a determining role (utilising their local knowledge) on whether replacement of white lines and road safety markings are necessary?

REPLY

They are reinstated. When we resurface roads, including preventive maintenance such as surface dressing and micro asphalt, we reinstate lines on a like for like basis.

If there are places that they have not been reinstated, please give us more information so we can follow up.

2. Of course officers should be in contact with councillors. However, it's not for councillors to have the final say on technical traffic management - Compliance with TROs and highway standards are the correct approach.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Chris Windows (Henbury & Brentry)

Subject: NEW BRABAZON NEIGHBOURHOOD

The Mayor will be aware that South Glos has now approved the building of 6500 new homes on the old airfield site. This represents a 243% increase on the original planning application.

Q1. What input (if any) has Bristol had in respect of the latest plan?

Q2. Can the Mayor arrange for me to have a copy of any representations made by our officers?

REPLY

1. There are no formal role for Bristol, it is for South Gloucestershire Council and YTL. We welcome the increased density, and would push for a lot more if it had been in our boundary.

2. There were no representations specific to the recent planning application.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor James Scott (Avonmouth)

Subject: LITTER & STREET CLEANING

In April 2019, the Mayor, along with members of the Environment Agency and other officers met the Avonmouth community to discuss a number of issues. One of the items discussed was around litter and street cleanliness in the village.

In the meeting, the community asked for a 'deep clean' to get on top of things as HMOs seem a particular issue. To date, this deep clean has not happened.

1. Can the Mayor please confirm when this will be carried out?
2. In addition to this, can the Mayor confirm what additional measures have been discussed within the Council and Bristol Waste Company with regards to introducing more or bigger waste bins?

REPLY

1. Big Tidy visited Avonmouth in January 2020, focused on the main road, footpaths, and cycle paths. This work has included cleansing Severnside. Big Tidy is now focused on street cleansing the housing estate including gardens across the city so it will not be possible for them to cleanse all of Avonmouth as it did previously.

If there are areas that need cleaning, we can report this online so it can be picked up by BWC here [Street that needs cleaning \(bristol.gov.uk\)](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/street-that-needs-cleaning)



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor John Geater (Avonmouth)

Subject: BRISTOL HEAT NETWORKS LIMITED

Finally, some additional replies are required for the following questions on this matter:-

Q1. What “rights” does the “one special share” confer upon Bristol City Council?

Q2. Given the rather complex arrangements that have emerged with the operation of the City Leap Energy Partnership, and the associated potential contingencies which might arise, was a full risk analysis undertaken?

REPLY

1. The special share gives the Council a veto over certain corporate actions, such as a future sale, unless, for example, any future owner of the heat network agrees to abide by the contractual commitments given by Vattenfall in relation to the heat network.

The intention of the special share is to ensure the council can continue to protect the interests of customers of the heat network prior to national regulation of heat networks being introduced that will provide customers with equivalent protections.

The rights are set out in the company’s articles of association which are available on Companies House.

2. The procurement of the partnership took place over four years, during which time there were multiple decision making points where risk was assessed.

A risk register was maintained by the project team and a risk register was prepared as part of the Cabinet submissions at each cabinet decision making stage of the process.

As part of the final decision to enter into the arrangements with City Leap both a detailed legal and financial review of the risks involved took place. Due to these containing commercially confidential information the full legal and financial analysis could not be disclosed as part of the cabinet decision making papers.

Ongoing decisions relating to the project were taken by the City Leap Project Board which had representation from executive officers, s151 Officer and cabinet members.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Henry Michallat (Stoke Bishop)

Subject: INCORRECT REGISTRATION OF COUNCIL PROPERTY
Council property at Stoke Lodge, Shirehampton Road, BS9, has been incorrectly registered at HM Land Registry

Within Cotham School's lease of Stoke Lodge Playing Fields, an area is designated to be surrendered out of the lease for the construction of a children's play park. That play park (much used and much loved) has been in use since summer 2014. However, a decade later, this area remains incorrectly registered at HM Land Registry as being subject to a lease to Cotham School. This of course gives rise to potential liability and insurance issues in the event of any accident. On 1st February 2022, the Council's Legal Services team confirmed that:

“Legal Services have undertaken a review of its records and following enquiries with the Council's Property Services, the Estates Information Team, and the school, we can confirm that the surrender of the purple land on the attached plan has not taken place. It is acknowledged that a surrender of the purple land is required, and the relevant council officers are progressing this.”

Despite repeated emails asking for updates on progress no response has ever been forthcoming.

Q1. Does the Mayor agree that action should be taken to safeguard the Council's interest as landowner of this children's play park, and can he explain why no action has been taken to rectify the position?

REPLY

Please share the correspondence with my office and we can escalate.



Question(s) to the Mayor from Councillor Henry Michallat (Stoke Bishop)**Subject: STOKE LODGE LAND LITIGATION COSTS**

Despite a failure to ensure that the Council's landowner interest is safeguarded in relation to the aforementioned land comprising of the children's play area, it appears that Officers in the Legal and Property teams have taken a significant interest in 'safeguarding' the Council's residual freehold interest in the remainder of the land after Cotham School's lease ends in 2136. This is land that will not fall within the Council's control for more than a century, and which presently attracts no rent only a maintenance liability.

Substantial time and effort - not to mention tens of thousands of pounds in legal costs - have been expended on attempts to participate in litigation to undermine the decision of the Public Rights of Way and Greens Committee to register the land as a Village Green.

Q1. Does the Mayor consider that Council resources - both in terms of money and officer time - have been expended appropriately in relation to Stoke Lodge, and are you able to provide any explanation for the recent actions of Council officials in this regard?

REPLY

The only substantial costs that is likely to be incurred will be the costs of defending the decision of the PROWG committee.

In relation to recent court applications, Cotham school, joined both the CRA and BCC as landowner to the proceedings when they made the application under section 14 of the Commons Registration Act 1965 to have the register amended.

Cotham also issued an application for a judicial review of the June decision and joined both the CRA as the registration authority and BCC as landowner. This application was put on hold pending the resolution of the first application.

In respect of the S14 application by Cotham School, there was a hearing to determine whether both could remain parties to the proceedings. The court held that BCC could only be joined once.

The cost of instructing Counsel for that application for the CRA was £2400 (written submissions only as Mr Douglas Edwards KC was unavailable on the date chosen by HHJ Matthews), and for the Landowner was £12,700 including all preparation up to and including the hearing.

Following the Judgment of the court, the administration decided it would take a neutral position as landowner in the application and therefore the only active defendant to the claim apart from Ms Welham, is the CRA.

Ms Welham applied for a costs order against both the school (£25,000) and the council (£5000) arising out of that hearing. The Council defended that claim and were ordered to pay a reduced sum of £1500.



The legal department continues to fund the defence of the claim by the CRA.

This is where the costs defending the PROWG decision will kick in. This could be at least £100K for counsel fees related to a fully contested hearing. If the Applicant is successful the council is likely to be ordered to pay a proportion of their costs, which would be sought in the region of £300K. These estimates do not factor in the costs of inhouse legal services, nor do they factor in the costs of CRA defending the JR.

