

## **April 2016**

Apologies in advance to those that do not need to be included on this list. It is aimed at residents of Knowle and anyone else that would like to know what is happening in the area, or has an interest in some of the citywide issues reported. You are welcome to stay but please e-mail me if you want to be removed from the list. The E-Focus is an addition to, and not a replacement for, the paper quarterly Knowle focus

### **Welcome to new Readers.**

**"My vision is for a Council that listens, cares, acts"**

Dr Kay Barnard Liberal Democrat Candidate for Elected Mayor of Bristol.

**"I will ensure we have more police on the street to ensure we bring those that commit crime to justice"**

Paul Crossley Liberal Democrat Candidate for Police Commissioner

**Gary and Chris stand on their 13years record. " We quite simply promise to keep working for Knowle."**

Liberal Democrat Councillor candidates for Knowle

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### **Arena planning decision.**

After the farcical situation of the postponement of the planning approval for the arena it, and an outline scheme for the nearby area. were approved on 6<sup>th</sup> April at the second attempt.

At the first meeting there had been no travel plan presented and, whilst this time there remain a large number of detailed issues to be resolved, there was at least a realisation that the subject, which had caused over 90% of the comments and concerns, needed to be addressed.

Gary, supported by Windmill Hill colleague Andrew Brown, raised concern over 3 local issues.

### **1 The local parking problems.**

After applying political pressure over a long period there was finally an admission from the applicant (the mayor) that there was a plan for a residents parking zone to extend through Totterdown up as far as Broad Walk. This had previously been under wraps. This was published in the application papers. Also published was the admission that the scheme would likely be needed because of the arena and that therefore the set up costs of this needed to be met by the Arena. These amount to several hundred thousand pounds. This sort of arrangement is routine and is referred to as planning mitigation. So far so good. There was general reference to “consultation” but given recent history on this subject “consultation” means very different things to different people. We have been very clear that consultation on ALL aspects of any potential scheme should be real.

Unfortunately after this point the majority of the committee seemed to lose the plot. Lib Dem Cllrs Tim Kent and Mark Wright tabled a condition which would have placed a cap on the cost of the scheme for residents. Given that the set up costs have already, quite properly, been covered, the amount that would be needed from residents should be minimal. The proposed condition would be for protection that any charges would have to be agreed by the local Cllrs under the neighbourhood partnership. Peter Mann, transport officer, admitted that the charges applied bore no relation to what was required to run the scheme, and that his department had no intention of reducing the charges just because the costs had been met already. Despite hearing this Labour, Tory and Green Party Cllrs voted down the extra condition leading to Lib Dem Cllr Tim Kent commenting that they had authorised the sending of blank bills to residents in the area.

Whilst most people in the area welcome the arena it is grossly unfair that a scheme needed to protect the area from the associated parking issues will now be used to raise extra taxes from local people.

Lib Dem Mayoral candidate Kay Barnard described this decision as perverse and promised to review this decision which is unfair to local residents.

### **2 and 3 - The 3 Lamps junction. And the narrow pavement from Cattlemarket Rd to 3 lamps.**

Cllrs Kent and Wright also raised these issues and officers admitted that they needed to be addressed as part of the wider enterprise zone plans, but were able to persuade other Cllrs that these were not issues to be addressed yet. This is a foolish position as 1. will add to congestion, and the pavement is extremely dangerous and will require significant spending on stewarding until addressed.

### **“Devolution”**

This is another word that means very different things to different people. Just days after Bath residents had voted overwhelmingly to reject the idea of an elected mayor George Osborne proudly announced that there would be a metro Mayor for the former Avon area with power

over a number of issues like planning and transport. This extra layer of decision making would be on top of the Bristol Mayor. Cllrs are to be invited to a debate at the end of June but form no part of the decision process and there are no plans for the public to have a vote. Liberal Democrat leaders in “Avon” have written to government expressing concern. Relations between the 4 councils had until very recently been positive and progressive but the governments position here is already causing division, with the likelihood that there will be a consequent loss of wide cooperation which is bad for the whole area. Confusion reigns with different stories coming out of each council and senior officers having to rapidly correct information dispersed.

### **ELECTIONS**

There seems also to be a degree of confusion over the running of the elections on 5<sup>th</sup> May. The first thing is to ask people to use their votes.

If you vote in person you should first check that you are on the register and then where you are to vote. Even if you have not moved your polling station might have. You should have your polling card by now which will show where you vote. If you do not have it please contact electoral. [services@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:services@bristol.gov.uk) or ring 922 3400. If you are going to be away on 5<sup>th</sup> May you have until 18<sup>th</sup> April to register for a postal vote on the same contacts. With 3 elections on the same day with different rules confusion is a real danger.

**The election of Cllrs** is fairly simple. In Knowle 2 Cllrs will be elected and you have 2 votes.

**The Mayor vote** uses different rules. You are electing 1 Mayor but you have 2 votes. If the person who gets your first vote does not finish first or second in the count your second vote is counted. It has as much voting power as if it had been your first choice. So you could give your real preference on your first and vote tactically with your second vote. You do not have to vote tactically with your first vote.

**The Police and Crime Commissioner** uses the same system as the Mayor vote.

### **Knowle Leads the Way**

4 years ago, before the mayor, Gary put in place the city wide strategy that protected parks, and also, where local Councillors agreed, to some land sales of under-used green spaces, with funds to come back into parks, and in particular local parks.

In the last Lib Dem budget prior to the mayor £3.5M capital funding was made available to invest in parks to reverse much of the decline, particularly in play space, that had happened in previous years. Over 100 playgrounds had been lost and, as every parent or grandparent knows, a decent local playground within walking distance is important for all children.

The local share of the £3.5M was put to good use, with big improvements in Perrets Park and Redcatch Park in particular, and this was topped up with some local funds. We also had Newquay Rd playground funded from the regeneration pot. Just as well as, after slowing the previously agreed investment, no new funds have arrived from the new council administration.

The local committee of Councillors for Knowle, Windmill Hill and Filwood endorsed the decision to sell part of Salcombe Rd rec ground, and also some land below the 3 lamps in Windmill Hill ward.

Regular Focus readers will know that 1/3 of the Salcombe Rd open space has been transferred to Knowle Park School to provide a desperately needed playing field (“Reversing the national trend” as the then head teacher said). The bottom 1/3 will be used to provide much needed social housing, and the sale to Knightstone Housing finally completed on 21st March. Sale price £895,000 (less a potential retention of £107,550 against some contingencies) has been paid and is available for parks investment especially Salcombe..

Following a letter from Gary the council’s chief officer confirmed that the funding agreement would be honoured. and that 65.8% would be ring-fenced for local parks.

### **Making Progress.**

It was disappointing that council officers, (whose job it is to provide information to help Councillors make decisions to benefit their residents), were unable to find out about the money and our local opportunity. If Gary and Chris had not been chasing we would all still be in the dark. Disappointingly Park officers failed to attend a recent Neighbourhood Partnership meeting to explain the application process. This is the result of the rapid changeover of staff at the council and consequent failure of the departments to act coherently. The Friends of Redcatch Park have, as in the past, done a brilliant job on their submission. Windmill Hill Councillors (1 Green 1 Labour - having been in office for just 1 and 2 years they are not re-standing in May) were completely in the dark, and so of course were parks groups in that area. As chair of the meeting Gary insisted that information was spread rapidly to encourage catch-up from other parks groups and wards.

It is unfortunate that others were not as well organised and we will do everything possible to ensure that this does not hold matters up for too long.

Gary also alerted the partnership to the likelihood of some of the 3 lamps land being appropriated by the present mayor, for work associated with the arena and the enterprise zone, without consultation or local compensation. Gary said ”Some of the land has already been earmarked for a new arena access. We have no problem with that, but there should be fair compensation. I will be writing to all the Mayoral candidates seeking assurances on fair local treatment”.

### **On the Ball**

The Friends of Redcatch Park have been extremely alive to the opportunity, as they have been in obtaining previous grants, and submitted a costed plan to the Neighbourhood Partnership to bid for a list of improvements. These all fall well within the local budget.

### **Buses**

As mentioned in the previous 2 Focuses we had meetings with First group manager James Freeman and we have worked with Lib Dem Councillor Tim Kent (Whitchurch Park and also now standing in the new combined Hengrove ward) as we share some services, and some of our residents contributed to his bus survey. Tim has hundreds of replies and we print here the letter he has received from First. We will be following up as a team.

Dear Tim

Thank you for your letter dated 1st March (which didn't get to us until 11th March, by the way) about services 50 & 51.

We share your concern about the reliability of the 50/51 services which have been a very considerable headache to operate reliably in recent years and indeed particularly in recent weeks and months. A great many of the problems resulting these days from traffic congestion - it is not an unusual event for a bus to be an hour or more late - and the inevitable consequence of this is that journeys disappear because there is no bus to operate them (as it is elsewhere) this despite the fact that we have taken strenuous steps to address our previous staff shortage.

We are so concerned about the way things have been going that we have been working on a new schedule for the route which is designed to address the problems. As a result, we have now registered changes to come into operation on 24th April (we have to give 56 days' notice) to give effect to this. The basic pattern of service and coverage of the day is unchanged but the key change is that the service will now terminate at the South Bristol Community Hospital, instead of going on to Hengrove bus depot. The time saved from this little-used extension will be ploughed back into the schedule to increase running times and improve reliability. I am interested and pleased to know that you and colleagues are carrying out a survey of residents' views. We will look forward to reading residents' views. We are under no misapprehensions that this will be pretty reading, but the more we understand about what people need the better chance we have to do something about this.

We'd be glad to meet you to talk about this at a mutually convenient juncture.

Best wishes

James Freeman Managing Director  
First West of England

The congestion point made by First is a fair one. At last full council meeting Gary put down a motion calling for more effective action to tackle this in Bristol and also to introduce a low emission zone. There has been a total lack of common sense over the last few years, with no new public transport schemes, delays to pre-existing ones and council initiated roadworks taking far longer than they should. An agreement with the utility companies that was introduced, following a council motion from Gary 2 years ago, has been largely honoured by the companies but ignored by the council itself. Until tackled by Councillor Kent council officers were planning to shut Walsh Avenue Hengrove (a key bus route) for 2 months for minor works. The stationary and slow moving vehicles are a major cause of dangerous pollution and, although supported by the Green party, it was disappointing that Conservatives, Labour and the Mayor again voted against the low emission zone and effective action.

The system of bus management locally is a mess and needs to be replaced with the London model which allows the council to specify routes, timetables and fares. This franchise/contract system means that the actual operation is then down to the company. This power is promised from government with the "combined Avon" authority but, staggeringly, the present mayor has said that it would not apply in Bristol, but we would continue to subsidise the country routes. It has taken years to persuade other groups on the council and government of the need for Quality Bus Contracts only to find the present mayor shying away from decisive action.

### **Broad Walk**

A follow up letter from the police and council has been delivered and will also go into nearby

streets. Meanwhile the council officer tasked with clearing up the present damage has received an assurance from Highways that they will do their bit but want the plan for preventing repeat damage.

Unfortunately housing dept who own part of the land are shying away. Chris and Gary are following this up. We have been very glad to hear from the many local residents backing action and even from some offering to contribute.

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