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## **September 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 quarterly paper Knowle Focus

**Welcome to new Readers.**

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## **New South Bristol School**

Many will have seen the article in The Post or heard some of the rumours about a new school in the area. There is a proposal from the fee paying Bristol Grammar School to set up a comprehensive state school in the Knowle area.

We and other Liberal democrats have been lobbying for a secondary school in our area for many years, in fact almost since we fought the Labour administration's closure of Merrywood. We had, as an administration a few years back, been involved in providing more primary places and of course children grow older. We initiated a recent debate in council to highlight the

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upcoming shortage of places, especially in South Bristol, and the motion demanded the plan that is emerging. We also explained the local context to senior council officers.

There has been a blip in the process. Senior council officers became aware some while ago of the BGS ambition. and partly as a result of our lobbying, pointed them to Knowle. What did not happen was any contact from BGS or the Council to local Councillors or to The Park management, although discussions have happened since. The park is the extremely successful campus where so many organizations work together on the old site of Merrywood school. As Gary was involved with its start and have watched progress closely, he has a high regard for what has been achieved over the years. The Post story quoted BGS saying that the new school would be sited at The Park causing much local consternation.

A bid is to be put into government for funding and support for the new school. Rather than a secondary, the bid at the moment is planned to be all through 4-16. We also need to have some better discussions on location before the bid is approved or rejected by government next March.

At a public meeting on Friday BGS Chair of Governors, the Head ( who was state educated and taught only in state schools prior to BGS) and the Deputy Head ( from the Novers Hill area and locally educated) explained the process and proposal to the large audience. BGS has been working on their submission to the Dept of Education for the last year, which will be submitted next Tuesday, but they will not hear any decision until March. Prior to any recent proposed government changes BGS had seen the Free School system as an opportunity to fulfil their charitable aims and develop partnership working with a State School, which would also enhance BGS school life. The lack of a school in Knowle had already been identified and statistics proved the case. If HM Dept of Education approve the bid there will follow a long process and the Government will choose the area and the site of any new school, and the phased opening process, which will be government funded, all through 4-16, non-selective comprehensive, taking from a catchment area, and run by a Board of Trustees with some BGS Staff and Governors on the governing body.

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They are looking at 2019/2020 time scale.  
Any support from the community will aid their application.  
[newschoolforknowle@bgs.bristol.sch.uk](mailto:newschoolforknowle@bgs.bristol.sch.uk)

### **Budget Cuts and Job Losses**

Following a cabinet report which claimed that Bristol city finances were on track to produce savings to balance the books, a report a few weeks afterwards said that there was a £29m black hole. This led to the mayor's decision to get rid of 1000 staff on a redundancy scheme being run at breakneck speed.

Some of the explanations of this £29M figure have been somewhat vague, so when a figure of £9M was put against failure to provide revenue savings in property Gary tabled a question, and followed up with a verbal question at Scrutiny Committee to the new interim chief executive.

Gary found the figure and the written explanation very alarming and shared it with a Councillor from another party who also has a financial background. His comment - "They don't know what they are doing". The answers suggest that the previous mayor, instead of building up the savings using careful analysis, assumed a certain % saving could be made and put it in the budget. Whilst it is absolutely true that a certain amount of savings must be made, detailed work is needed to make these a reality.

The follow up question asked how, when there is clearly a considerable gap in understanding, firm decisions can be made on the scale and nature of the job cuts. No reassuring answer came.

The irony is that the Conservative councillor, who was the deputy mayor in charge of finance and budgeting, is now chairing the scrutiny commission that is looking into these matters.

### **QUESTION**

To Cabinet – 6 September 2016  
report - submitted by Councillor Gary Hopkins

Question re: Quarter 1 finance

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The budget report makes very sorry reading and it will make, no doubt, a large number of the public think that voting to get a mayor in Bristol was not a good idea after all. I specifically wish to have more details with regard to the property shortfall: some very basic references are made to non-delivery savings but can I have the specific properties; how much each has cost; what has been the length of delay; what has been the cause of delay; and can we know when the problems will be rectified?

Can we also know what effect on the Budget the rectification of the delays and problems will have?

**REPLY:**

- The property savings set ahead of and included in the current 3 year budget framework (i.e. 2014/15 to 2016/17) were based on risk assumptions of what might be achievable, but were not allocated to particular properties. Therefore while the target has not been achieved, this cannot be aligned to particular properties.
- Unfortunately due to the limitations of availability of data and systems it is not possible to provide further analysis by individual properties. Analysis at property level has been a contributing factor to the delays in delivery and also led to savings being accounted for in other areas of the Change programme which is being reviewed as part of the lessons learnt.
- Extended delivery timelines have meant that although some of the savings will not be delivered for 2016/17, they can still deliver savings in futures years. The service is also proactively delivering alternative options to recover as much of the shortfall as possible. Further details in relation to these alternatives will be provided in future monitoring reports.

**Street Cleaning**

Chris has been chasing the need for more frequent street cleaning in Knowle, especially around the shopping centre and nearby roads. BCC have responded to individual requests for a particular area to be cleaned but Chris has repeatedly requested the schedule of cleaning to what should be expected

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under the contract. At the last Full Council he tabled a question :-

**QUESTION** from Councillor Christopher Davies - Street Cleaning.

Since Bristol Waste has recently taken over the cleaning of our roads, I have seen a failure to ensure many of the roads of Knowle are kept clean. Many residents complain to me of continuing litter on the pavements and roads around the main shopping centre at Broad Walk. I have reported this on six separate occasions now and there have been only minor improvements in the service. I have repeatedly asked for a copy of the cleaning schedules but to date nothing has been provided. I have requested for all road cleaning in Knowle to be scheduled to follow after the bin collection, but again this has not been undertaken. Can I request that the Mayor ensures that the above failures are addressed as soon as possible?

**REPLY:** • The Council is aware that certain areas of Knowle, are heavily used and consequently litter can build up on a daily basis.

- The Council understands that Bristol Waste Company (BWC) has responded to reports in relation to this by changing the frequency of cleansing activities to take place daily on certain streets. BWC has also employed the use of mechanical pavement sweepers to help tackle the problem.
  - BWC do try to sequence street cleansing to take place after bin collections, however this is not always possible due to the services starting at different times and taking place at different frequencies. This is something the Council will ask the Bristol Waste Company to continue to look at.
  - BWC will respond to ad hoc reports and are happy for any further concerns about particular streets and areas of concern to be reported to them for further investigation.
  - BWC is able to provide a list of the local streets which have moved to the daily frequency.
  - In the future, BWC aims to be able to produce maps which are able to show the frequency of collections in certain areas, this is dependent on a refresh of its ICT systems which it hopes to be able to deliver as part of its 10 year business plan.
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An inadequate schedule has now been received and Chris has raised this matter at a recent Neighbourhood Partnership Meeting to demand a proper response from the Head of Bristol Waste.

### **51 Bus - update**

As a result of the local campaign overcoming resistance from the council administration, Wessex took over the running of the 51 service on the 4 September. Over 1000 people a day are using the service and rising. If they were charging the fares that First used it would be producing significant profit. The fares though are cheaper - for some journeys (£1 instead of £2.50) - so we want more people still to use the service. This is important for several reasons. Even if the saving is not vital to you it will be to some others and supporting a company that has a business model of increasing usage rather than squeezing a smaller number of users is in all our interests. Franchising is the way forward for bus services, but while we do not have that power, preventing an oppressive private monopoly is helpful. Our shopping centre needs the 51 bus, and many elderly people would be completely isolated without it. The collusion between the council administration and First was not good for our community and the traffic commissioner has said they will be writing about the lack of openness. Many were outraged when we uncovered and exposed the fact that the council had agreed to transfer a subsidy on late evening buses from the 51 to a double subsidy on the First 50 service. Given that the mayor repeatedly responded to questions on this as if he had absolutely no knowledge you have to wonder if his assistant mayor councillor Bradshaw was keeping him in the dark as well. We need this service, with its lower fares, to be a commercial success so it can be maintained and provide a real choice, and so that our community benefits from the profit sharing deal we agreed. The most commonly asked question - "Can they take over a few more routes from First?"

A big thank you to all those who supported the campaign. You helped to make a real difference.

There has been one concerning issue and that is targeted vandalism. On 4 occasions in the late evening missiles have been thrown at the 51 service as it went through Knowle. Nobody has been hurt but some damage has been done to bus windows. Wessex have been very clear that this will not affect their long term commitment to the service and in fact so pleased are they with public

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response overall that they have discussed with us investment into expansion of services in our area. Local police are now very much alerted to this issue. If you see this, or know anything about this, please ring the police on 101. We have not heard of any other buses being targeted.

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