

January 2017

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.**

- **Bristol - Simply the Best**
- **Our Bus Service**
- **Local Road Safety Schemes**
- **The Mayor's Budget - Spending Freeze - Council in further crisis!**
- **Mayor Rips up Local Parks Plans!**
- **Budget Chaos**
- **A New School for Knowle?**
- **Anyone for Tennis?**
- **School Funding**
- **Broad Walk Verges and Pavement Parking**
- **St Martin's Surgery**
- **Knowle Celebrates**
- **Last Neighbourhood Partnership Meetings**
- **Same Look - Different Content**
- **Bristol Corporate Strategy Consultation**

BRISTOL - SIMPLY THE BEST!

During 2016 Bristol has been voted one of the best 10 cities to live anywhere in the world alongside Melbourne and New York, and now has been placed 4th in 'Inspiring Cities' based on innovation and creativity after Miami, Bruges and San Francisco and beating London, Paris and Amsterdam.

Our Bus Service

We have had huge feedback on the new 51 bus service. The fact it exists at all was acknowledged by council transport officers as a major miracle. They had accepted that it was going, because First told them so. They just sat on this information so that we were left with very little time to do the rescue. We also had little hard information on passenger numbers to give to Wessex, apart from concessionary-fare users. This led to them planning a stunningly good daytime frequency but leaving the peak times a little thin. This together with the terrible Bristol congestion has led to some gaps at peak times, but following a meeting between local councillors and Wessex

management they are submitting a new timetable to the traffic commissioner with extra peak time buses. Until this comes into force they are slipping in extra buses as required to cover gaps. The off-peak will not change.

A secondary problem has been caused by some link up problems which has meant that some of the 51 buses do not show up on the RTI electronic boards at the stops. We now have council officers and Wessex talking to sort this out.

Meanwhile First have been putting effort into making the 50 more reliable. They are still cancelling buses on other routes, but not on this one where they face competition. They have even put on extra 2s travelling the Wells Road. How quickly do you think this would all disappear if the Wessex 51 disappeared?

Local Road Safety Schemes

Road safety schemes in Axbridge Rd and outside Ilminster Ave School have been installed, but with some finishing flaws. Chris and Gary have again met on site with transport officers and agreed some changes that we are assured will be completed quickly. We will not be releasing payment to the contractors until we have the detailed written assurances agreed. The Axbridge/Tesco scheme was in any event difficult because of Tesco's rights to have delivery vehicles on the frontage, but a further spanner has been thrown in by vandals who have sabotaged the drop bollards which were put in to help stop the irresponsible parking. A tree pit has been installed and a tree with protection will be planted soon with a yellow no-parking box.

The scheme at Redcatch/ Woodbridge Rd when it goes ahead looks like it may be the last for some time as the Mayor is proposing to cut all funding for local traffic schemes. (see below).

THE MAYOR'S BUDGET - SPENDING FREEZE - COUNCIL BUDGET IN FURTHER CRISIS

In response to a failure to get the books to balance the temporary chief executive of the council has implemented a complete Spending Freeze across all council operations and services and issued an emergency order banning all maintenance work unless it is specifically approved by him. This will lead to further problems as postponing some jobs will make them a lot dearer later. This latest measure follows on from what appears to be a serious failure to deliver promised savings over the last couple of years and the failure of the recent voluntary redundancy scheme to deliver expected savings, and an omission by previous finance assistant mayor that he had been given the wrong figures! How can the mayor base his spending freeze on incorrect budget forecasts? But it looks like we are going to be paying wages to maintenance staff and not giving them the materials to do the work. More and more people are reminding us that, when Lib Dems ran the council prior to us getting a mayor, council tax was frozen, services worked and savings were still being delivered as government grants shrunk. The government's remedy is to add to the confusion by forcing local councils in the West of England to have an elected metro mayor to add to the elected Bristol mayor and the historic role of Lord Mayor. BRILLIANT!!

Mayor rips up local parks plans in money grab

Most will be aware that several years ago, prior to the first mayor, Councillors around the city were given the right to authorise land sales of some open space in

their areas and for the money to be used 100% for parks improvements. 2/3 of this was for spending in the local area. This agreement was honoured by the previous mayor and Salcombe Road Recreation Ground, which had stopped being used for sport, was split into 3, with 1/3 becoming a new playing field for Knowle Park School and 1/3 sold to Knightstone Housing, who are building 35 shared ownership properties, and the remaining 1/3 to be invested in, with a play area and some landscaping and planting.

Many people from Knowle and Windmill Hill wards were involved in the process to design and select the winning schemes, with Salcombe Rd as the top priority. As well as Salcombe Rd there were, amongst others, schemes in Redcatch Park, Perrett Park and Victoria Park.

With no justification at all the mayor has grabbed the previously ring fenced cash and completely ignored the many local protests. This is a disgraceful betrayal of local people who took a responsible approach and backed a great scheme. This high handed smash and grab is no way to build cooperation and trust and has already lost him many previous supporters.

Attack on Bristol's Parks

As well as the specific grab from our local parks' pot the mayor has shown complete disregard for the importance of parks to Bristol.

- i. The long promised Hengrove park is now to be built over.
- ii. Important land in Brislington is being sacrificed unnecessarily .
- iii. Victoria Park area, and responsible concerns raised by Knowle residents about the cycle superhighway have been attacked. It is not the provision of the new cycle way that is a problem it is the arrogant way that it was being imposed. We are glad to see a temporary climbdown.
- iv. Most worrying of all though is the proposed complete abolition over 3 years of a parks budget in the mayor's budget. The proposals are accompanied by meaningless platitudes about volunteers and raising more money through events. Needless to say the Labour politicians involved in this proposed vandalism have no experience of running or managing parks. We have started a petition to try to save Bristols parks [HERE](http://www.bristolldems.org/parkcrisis)
<http://www.bristolldems.org/parkcrisis>

Libraries to close

Apparently learning nothing from the last mayor's failure in this area, the mayor is proposing mass closures of libraries. His original plan to close all except the central libraries seems to have been modified but as yet details are hazy.

Jubilee Pool in danger

5 years ago the much loved Jubilee Pool was saved from the previously planned closure approved by Labour and Tory Councillors with an investment into a mini Gym and a new contract with a new operator at a much lower annual subsidy (62,000). Without any warning or discussion with local Councillors, residents or the operators, the complete cancellation of this grant was put into the budget. The pool has been successful over the last 5 years but this sudden shock creates the danger of closure. We would urge local people to rally round and support our local pool to give confidence to the operators.

Chris will be putting the following questions to the Cabinet on 30th January - After a previous strong campaign by both residents and local councillors to ensure the survival of Jubilee Swimming Pool, it is a great pity, following huge local demand for this pool, that its continuation could be threatened at the end of September when the council subsidy is to be removed. Can the mayor tell me - 1) How many school visits have there been over the last year; how many membership cards are currently in use and what is the level of attendance for all groups and public users? 2) Given that the first notification to the pool management was 18th January that the subsidy would be removed, can the mayor tell me what clear assurances he has obtained regarding the continued provision of this much valued local facility?

Gary raised the pool at budget scrutiny as an example of what is wrong with the budget process. Many cuts have been included with no idea what the consequences will be. The last mayor was just as guilty and this top down arrogant approach is one of the reasons why they failed to deliver the promised budget savings.

Schools In the budget is the proposed cutting of all school crossing patrols - it seems the safety of our children is no longer a priority!

Neighbourhood Partnerships.

Before the last mayor the city had been split into groups of 2-3 wards, and budgets for local road schemes, local grants and spending of planning-gain money were put under the control of local Councillors working with residents. Better and cheaper outcomes were achieved. The last mayor made the mistake of trying to get them to all run the same way but they still, in the main worked. The new mayor has just abolished them. He has grabbed all the money to try to balance his budget, but has failed in that. There will now be no local opportunity for people to influence or decide ward or police priorities in their area. The last ward forums will be held within the next few weeks. Chris and Gary will continue to be aware of local priorities and will communicate but there will be no money to deliver these.

Budget Chaos.

Because of a failure from the previous and current mayor to deliver efficiency savings, needed because of the current government's squeeze on grants, we face massive cuts in real services. We have listed a few of them above. There has been general chaos with proposals being ripped up and changed on a daily basis and the cabinet budget meeting having to be postponed after Lib Dems pointed out that the legally required equalities impact assessments had not been done.

Nobody is pretending that the budget situation is easy but the present list of unchecked proposals are a mixture of the unacceptable and the undeliverable. Meanwhile the council tax is proposed to increase by 5% from next April.

A New school for Knowle?

Gary and Chris have been lobbying for a new secondary school for Knowle for some years. They have been supported by the Lib Dem party and we led a debate in council to highlight the need for a new secondary school in south Bristol. The government does not allow councils to open new schools themselves, so when senior council officers heard of plans for Bristol Grammar School to sponsor a new school they pointed them at Knowle. There was unfortunately a failure to

communicate properly, which led to alarm as a media report made it look like there was a plan to take over the site of The Park (ex Merrywood School site which was closed by the then Labour council). There has also been concern expressed in some areas about the bid to government containing plans for the school to be all-through and include primary places. There is a difficult balance on that issue, as parents want as much choice as possible but we do not want primary schools having difficulties because of over capacity. The bid does not specify a site and we would, if the government approve the bid, ensure that the secondary school and the valuable community facilities at The Park are protected.

Anyone for Tennis?

Thank you to the many Knowle residents who backed up our campaign to keep tennis in Redcatch Park free to use. With some Bristol parks' courts in a poor shape as Redcatch used to be (until local effort secured a grant to improve them; at no cost to the council) the council is proceeding, in partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association, down a route of getting people to pre-pay and pre-book before they can play on park tennis courts. We seem to have won the day with Redcatch being excluded from the charging regime. Redcatch courts will of course need ongoing minor routine maintenance, but with some money from the tennis club hiring for league matches on a few Summer nights, and other small fees for commercial use, we will have that well covered. From next Summer we will also be looking at a small voluntary donation scheme for those who can afford it. The courts are a great local facility with people of all ages keeping them well used and of course they encourage many people to try the sport for the first time. For those that move on to the next level we have the excellent Knowle Tennis Club just 200 yards away.

School Funding

One of the things that Lib Dems were most proud of in the last government was the pupil premium. Every state school (local authority run or academy) is funded from government by an annual payment for each pupil attending. The pupil premium tops up the amount for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds with an additional annual payment. Some of the qualifiers are a poor financial household (free school meals) or forces' children. Schools monitor the attainment of children when they enter the school, and qualifiers are on average found to be around a year behind their non-disadvantaged classmates. The school have the task of helping the qualifiers to catch up, for example by extra coaching. For instance Knowle Park has a significant number of qualifying children who are a distance behind when they enter the school, but almost all have caught up by the time they pass on to secondary schools. This is a massive achievement, as in any case the non-disadvantaged children progress at this school by more than the national average.

There is now a significant threat to all Bristol schools which have made so much positive progress over the last 10 years. The present government have moved to a policy of freezing schools grants. That made life a little tougher, but now there is a funding crisis of a hugely more damaging scale. The government is redistributing the national grant formula so that city children will get less and country children more. Whatever the arguments for this, it will have a very serious affect on Bristol schools. For example Knowle Park will lose over £600 every year for every pupil. Knowle Park is not even the worst affected but these cuts will undo a huge amount of the good work achieved over recent years, including that derived from the pupil

premium.

Broad Walk Verges and Pavement Parking

Very few issues have caused as much controversy not only locally but across the city. There are many places where there are angry disputes, between on the one side drivers who say they have nowhere to park, and pedestrians pushing buggies or disabled pedestrians forced to walk in the middle of the road. The position with Broad Walk verges was pretty clear cut with over 90% demanding action against the small minority who churn up the grass, but the enforcement powers of the council and the police are messy and complicated. We are pressing as hard as we can to stop people parking on the grass. A bye-law was clearly needed. However, providing a bespoke traffic regulation order for every street would cost a fortune. After some research we feel we have the answer, to not only our local problem but for the complicated issues across the city. In Milton Keynes they passed one simple Traffic Regulation Order that banned all verge and pavement parking. Enforcing that across the whole of Milton Keynes, and even more so to all of Bristol, would lead to many problems. They came up with the very clever policy of only enforcing the rule when a majority of local people actively called for it to be enforced. Where there is a call for enforcement, traffic wardens hand out tickets and this covers their costs. Where the community do not demand enforcement in extreme cases they fall back on the police powers relating to causing an obstruction. We are asking for this idea to be examined in detail but so far it seems to tick a huge number of boxes.

St Martin's Surgery

Over 6000 patients used to be registered at St Martin's surgery. Since the scare a couple of years ago, when two part-time doctors found themselves running the surgery alone after long serving doctors retired, the NHS stepped in to bring in new managers. But a third of the patients voted with their feet and the decision now is to close down the site. Other practices in the area have increased capacity so there should be no barrier to people getting registered locally, but obviously some will be annoyed about having to change. If anyone has problems with transferring get in touch.

KNOWLE CELEBRATES!

The Park Centre Daventry Road voted Community Venue Of The Year in Bristol, and Andy's Haven at the centre was awarded 'Outstanding' In Bristol in Bloom 'In Your Neighbourhood'. Friends of Redcatch Park also achieved 'Outstanding'. The Community of Knowle (joint entry of local green spaces groups) achieved the top 'Gold' (apologies this was wrongly reported in Focus as Silver Gilt) in the 'Pennant' category. Knowle Tennis Club teams came top in the Winter and Summer Leagues - (it has full disabled access and is keen to develop wheelchair tennis. www.knowlelawntennis.net)

Same look - Different content!

Last month saw a leaflet from Karin SMYTH, the labour MP for Bristol South, being delivered across Knowle. Many people commented that, because it looked a lot more like Focus than their previous glossy colour leaflets, they picked it up and looked at it. Whilst it is amusing that she copied our presentation style the content is very different. Whilst we would agree with a lot of the complaints about central government actions the local content is very weak. We agree that there needs to be

a new focus on clean streets and better recycling, but the improvement targets from the mayor would only get us back to where we were, when the previous mayor took over from Gary, and the plans seem rather woolly. We welcome the resurrection of our plans for the Hartcliffe Way Recycling Centre (cancelled by mayor Ferguson) but to claim it is already built, when in fact it is planned to take years, is not good. Please take a look.

What is ludicrous though is to repeat the dodgy spin about the 51 bus, put out by Councillor Bradshaw and slavishly repeated by labour Councillors. The labour administration agreed to First withdrawing the 51, and helped it along with public subsidy, and kept it secret. Lib Dem Councillors found a new operator and with massive local backing kept the service going. If Karin had come along to the demo at Broadwalk she would have been much better informed and hopefully would not have written this nonsense!

The claims on tackling the housing crisis are not all based in reality, but there are some Improvements since the last mayor, but the claims on the council budget crisis are bluntly wrong and should have been checked.

Casual inaccuracy and spin undermine what should be a serious attempt by a public servant to communicate.

LAST NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP FORUM MEETING - KNOWLE PARK CENTRE, Crossways Road, TUESDAY 28TH FEBRUARY 7 pm Everyone welcome. Police priorities - Enforcement of the No Drinking Zone - Speed Watch on Redcatch Road

NOW CANCELLED - All current Well-Being Fund applications even those previously submitted!

LAST NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP MEETING VICTORIA PARK BAPTIST COMMUNITY CENTRE, Sylvia Avenue WEDNESDAY 8TH FEBRUARY 7PM All welcome to discuss green spaces and parks improvements

The Bristol Corporate Strategy consultation can be found at www.bristol.gov.uk/corpstrategy. **NB Have your say on proposals for the future of services by using the online survey**