

JULY 2015

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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THE ARENA

The Conservatives had the first turn for motions at this month's full council. They chose a rather rambling one about car parking and the Arena which, whilst in accord with most Councillors' concerns regarding the woolliness of the Mayor's transport plan for the Arena, did not address local concerns or seek to look at a range of solutions. Chris had put a motion down and, finding that the Labour party were thinking along similar lines, cooperated to produce a balanced motion, that as well as highlighting problems provided a way forward. The Conservatives then fell in behind us and the Greens could not agree amongst themselves on the issue.

Chris's clear and succinct motion -

"Council notes the significant concerns that have been raised by Councillors and members of the public regarding the lack of any clear plans for mitigating the transport and parking problems that the Arena will inevitably create. Council urges the Mayor to fully engage with Councillors and members of the public and provide satisfactory explanations of mitigation BEFORE the formal planning application is submitted."

Unfortunately we know that the Mayor is planning to bulldoze through plans which could lead to local chaos. Gary and Chris together with colleagues from neighbouring wards have launched a double petition which we hope that the planning committee will heed even if the mayor does not.

ARENA - the local challenges

1. Parking

Some months ago the Mayor sought to impose a 9-5 residents parking zone in Totterdown, Windmill Hill and Lower Knowle. Although there was some support for the scheme, the majority rejected it on the grounds of cost and poor design. This, and other "outer ring" schemes, were withdrawn. But the Arena will create parking problems over quite a wide area and particularly in the evening, when space is already short. There are also plans for up to 3 shows on a Saturday. Although public transport will take many of the concert goers, it is now admitted that up to 3000 cars will come to big shows and the mayor has categorically ruled out any Arena parking.

There are various car parks around the city but some of them are distant and of course they are not free. There are also many other competing calls on these car spaces and the council does not control many of the spaces. Unless action is taken our streets will become a major problem in the evening as many residents return from work. We have been raising this issue for well over a year with the mayor, without any clear or helpful answers or assurances. The arena comes before Planning later

this Summer.

WE CALL FOR THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS TO BE PUT ON THE ARENA, OR EQUIVALENT CLEAR ASSURANCES, WITH FUNDING FROM THE MAYOR.

A A residents parking scheme to be funded by the Arena for all residential areas within 1.5 Miles if that area wants it. (free to residents)

B Consultation to be conducted with every house, and a decision to be made on a road by road majority.

C If they want a scheme, residents to choose whether to add on day time hours.

(Please sign below if you support these conditions and wish to join our campaign,)

Signed

Name

Address.....

e-mail

To test opinion on options we would ask that you give your view on the following (all individual responses are completely confidential)

- Would you be in favour of RPZ in the evenings in this area? Y/N (only if free or nominal cost)
- Would you be in favour of this being in place on a Saturday? Y/N
- Would you be in favour of this being in place during weekday daytimes? Y/N

2. Three lamps junction

At present the configuration of the 3 Lamps junction does not allow for the flow of traffic from Wells to Bath Rd. This already causes more traffic to travel through side roads and Talbot Rd than is sensible. The only other alternative of travelling to Temple Meads and looping around will be made impractical by the arena.

WE THEREFORE CALL FOR A REMODELLING OF THE 3 LAMPS JUNCTION TO BE PAID FOR BY THE ARENA TO ALLOW WELLS RD TO BATH RD MOVEMENT. THIS IS A RECOGNISED MITIGATION MEASURE.

(Please sign below if you support this petition and wish to join our campaign)

Signed

Name

Address.....

e-mail

If you want more details or to discuss the issues please contact

Gary Hopkins tel: 0117 9851491 or Chris Davies tel: 0117 3773528

gary.hopkins@bristol.gov.uk

christopher.davies@bristol.gov.uk

If you wish to sign the petition(s) Just copy and paste and email to above.

Or just print and send back to Freepost RSKZ-STLK-BUYA Bristol BS7

Local Road Safety

One of the most frustrating battles that Gary and Chris have been fighting ever since the mayor took over, and to a lesser extent before that, has been to get prompt delivery of local traffic schemes. The natural assumption from residents is that it is a shortage of money that causes the delay. In fact, as we were told by a traffic officer at a neighbourhood partnership meeting, it is that officers are diverted to work on residents parking zones, and so there is not the qualified manpower. Particularly frustrating when, in the case of Axbridge Rd crossing (last promised October 2014), and Ilminster Ave school crossing (last promised Dec 2014) we have found funding locally with the assistance of neighbouring Filwood Councillors, and in both cases children have already suffered in accidents. We have constantly harried on this issue and even

encouraged public statements from parents and children. The much overdue minor scheme at Knowle Park school has finally been installed. In the last council budget, due to the pressure, some one-off money was put in the council budget to try to address the backlog, but it has had limited success and the queue remains unacceptably long. (Redcatch Rd, Woodbridge Rd, Wells Rd crossing etc etc.)

The situation gives a clear warning for the national devolution debate. In Bristol all the control has now been centralised, which means that a Neighbourhood Partnership makes the right decision and finds the money but a brake is applied. What REAL power would central government give to Bristol and its neighbours?

Local Primary Schools

One of the most anxious times for parents is when they are trying to ensure that their child gets a place at a good local primary school. This can involve lots of spending on buying an expensive property in the right catchment area, which tend to get smaller and smaller. But of course that option is not available to everyone. The more affluent tend to be more mobile and their children very often start school better prepared and with more help as years progress. That is why the pupil premium being brought in 5 years ago was so vital. It gives a substantial extra payment to the school every year for each child from a disadvantaged background. The school are required to demonstrate how they are using the money to help those children catch up and keep up. An extra £200,000 a year or so going in to a primary school can make all the difference to many children's life chances. The early years are THE most important. As a governor at Knowle Park school for 14 years Gary knows that this funding, used effectively by a great teaching staff and back up team, has been a factor in moving the school way up the rankings in terms of "value added". Years ago it was attracting enough pupils to pay the bills. Now there is a waiting list for entry.

It is also instructive to remember that it was only 7 years ago that the then Labour run, council, under pressure from the then Labour government, were proposing closure of Ilminster Avenue school to remove "surplus" places. Backed up by the Filwood Labour Councillors we fought that off, and it is just as well. Places are very tight in the area now, and if we had not stepped in a few years back to get an emergency increase at West Town Lane we would by now have a major crisis. The new school at Marksbury Rd, held up for a year by the Mayor, will ease the pressure, but we do not have the sites available for any further expansion. Fortunately the previous awful state of Bristol schools was addressed a few years back, and more Bristol children are now taught in more good or outstanding schools than the average across the country. Apart from a temporary blip on inspection at Hillcrest, who still get good sats, all our schools are at least good and making progress. Constant effort is required to keep things moving in the right direction, and the influence of committed parent governors is a vital factor in a school's success.

Knowle Park Primary were very pleased they were now able to hold their very successful annual fair on their new sports field this year (previously part of Salcombe Rd grounds). Chris and Gary enjoyed a great afternoon running a coconut shy, meeting local parents and children, and raising good funds for the PTA. Well done to everyone involved.

Our Libraries

The £1.1M cut to the library budget was one of the reasons Lib Dems voted against the council budget in 2014. Labour and Conservative Councillors voted for it. As expected it led to costly trouble, with the mayor proposing to shut 7 Libraries including Wick Rd. in Brislington. Chris and Gary joined Brislington protestors as they demonstrated the problems with the long walk through Brislington and up Talbot (hill) Rd. There appears to now be a climb down by the mayor BUT we remain very concerned that the problem will be spread more widely, with big reductions in opening hours. Despite a report due at scrutiny there has been a failure to plan or communicate properly, and in a woolly and rambling response to library protestors, the Green party assistant mayor responsible for the "plans" gave no clear plan for a sustainable way forward. The Mayor clearly does not value our libraries highly and instead of looking to deliver more council services through them, which can save money, he and his Green party assistant seem set on dangerous cutting.

The Weeds Grow

One worrying sign of the management failure at the council has been the springing up of weeds in gutters. A basic failure caused by not doing the spraying at the right time. As well as giving a run-down look this can lead to long term damage. Complaints from Gary and Chris have led to a promise of a second round of spraying. Better than nothing but we hope that next year they will learn to do it properly. The much improved road scene at Broad Walk/Wells Road was being marred by

weeds and grass growing around the base of the new trees. Chris urged for this to be rectified and happily the tree pits (well almost all of them!) have been cleared and filled with bark. He is chasing this.

Dust Clouds

Surface dressing of roads, where chippings are put onto a thin tar layer, is a massively cheaper way of protecting a road than a full resurface. It must though be done carefully and properly. The recent treatment on a number of our roads seemed to contain too much dust, which should have been removed prior to spreading. Given that, and the dry weather, remedial action should have been taken to dampen down. There then needs to be effective sweeping and finally the road markings need to be restored rapidly for safety purposes. Gary and Chris have backed up residents complaints about roads in Knowle and are looking for lessons to be learned.

Redcatch Park Events

The Friends of Redcatch Park Fun Day (funded by Neighbourhood Partnership Wellbeing Fund) in June was again a great success - with hundreds of families joining the fun. With new food offers from Sausagenius and Gopal's Curry Shack, and with more rides and Bristol Pipers and ATC band performing for the first time it was an even bigger and better event. The Dog Show was as always very popular and was run by local Avonlodge Vets who stepped in when the usual organiser was not available. A great community event bringing local people together. This month the park was judged once again for the In Your Neighbourhood award (it has achieved Outstanding for 4 years) and also joined with Springfield Allotments, Northern Slopes and other local green spaces as a group within the Neighbourhood Partnership to be judged by Bristol in Bloom for the prestigious Pennant Award. The judge was very impressed by the wealth of activities, sports and public use of the open spaces in the area and the events organised. The award will be announced later in the year.

More improvements will soon be seen in the park with an additional bench at the bottom of the gravel path (as requested by park users) 2 pieces of outdoor gym equipment, and a picnic table by the pavilion,. These were funded by a grant secured by FORP from Lloyds Bank plus Community Infrastructure Levy from St Peter's Hospice development and other fund raising by FORP.

Planning Applications

15/03550/H 2 storey side extension at Wootten Park

15/03540H single storey rear extension and front porch Queensdale Cres

15/02760/F 2 bedroom bungalow at rear of homes of Somerset and Hampden Road. (Petition submitted)

15/03013/H lower ground floor front extension and raised patio St Martins Gardens

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH WASTE AGAIN

After failing to manage the waste services for the last 2 years the mayor and his green party assistant have decided to part company with the contractors . This was made possible by the excellent contract negotiated some 4 years ago which placed all the cards in the council's hands. The trouble is the mayor and his assistant seem to have no idea what to do to get back to the previous performance levels.

A motion put down by Gary at full council for debate on 21st July showed the way, with the vast majority of Councillors accepting all the key elements of the motion.

"Council notes with considerable concern the deterioration in this authorities performance on waste over the last couple of years. Total waste and residual waste have risen sharply after years of improvement and last year's financial outturn caused our auditors to comment on the £7.5M overspend in 2014/15. Council also notes the apparent contradiction of established council policy of avoiding incineration and a commitment to the proximity principle involved with our shipping of waste to a Swedish incinerator."

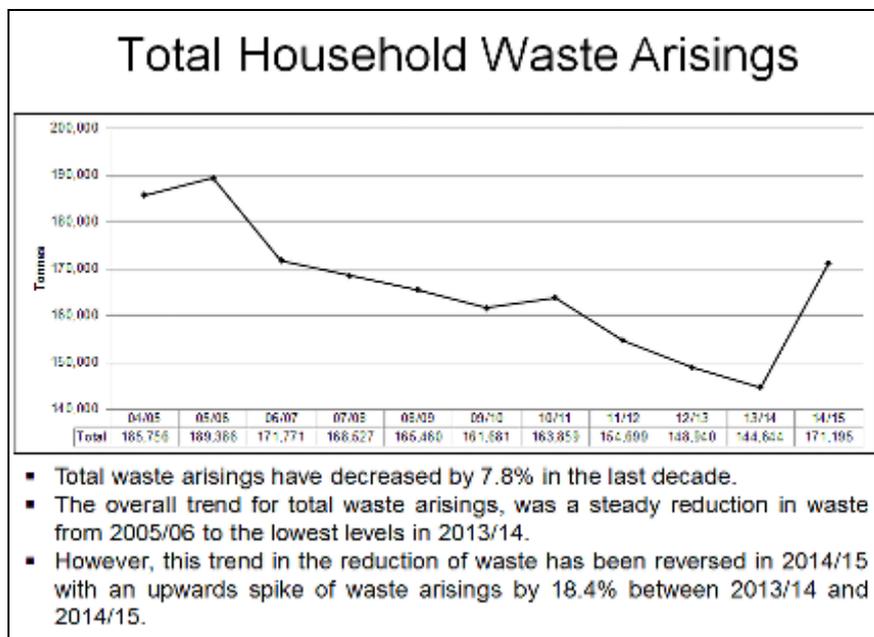
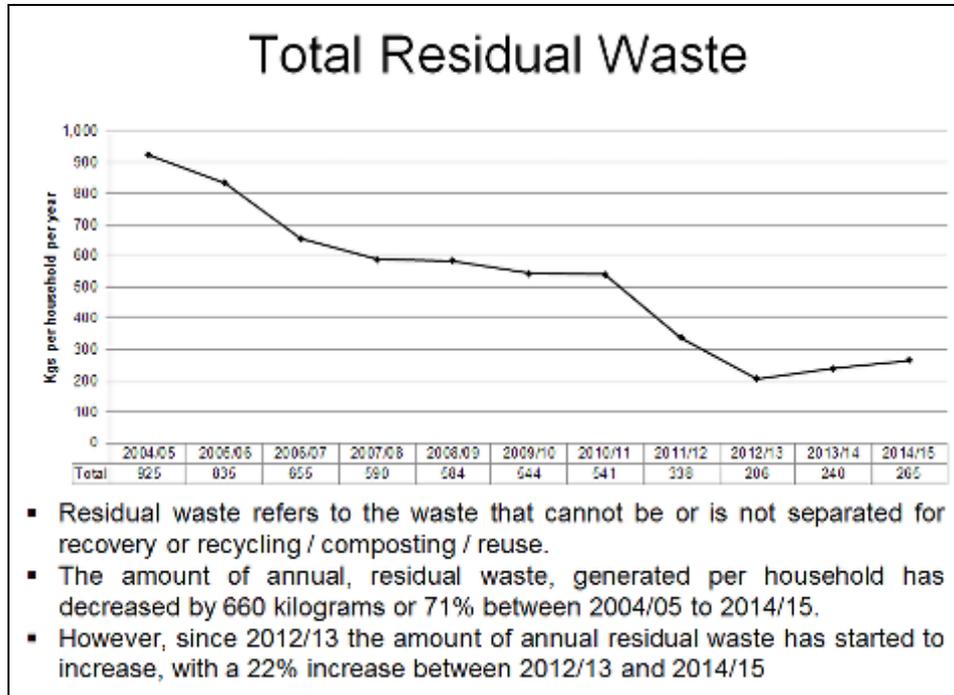
"A comprehensive recommended action sheet has been submitted through neighbourhoods scrutiny which if effectively implemented will save this authority money and return our environmental performance to that of a national leader."

"This council calls for the adoption of a clear plan to remedy the under performance to be brought to full council via neighbourhoods scrutiny in this financial year."

The following action sheet was submitted to scrutiny by Gary .

Statement for use by Neighbourhoods Scrutiny.

Getting to grips with waste again. After years of rapid improvements in waste reduction and recycling the present administration of BCC has managed to take us backwards over the last couple of years. The previous excellent performance was one of the reasons for our Green Capital win and the environment Mayor of Copenhagen said that even though they beat us the year before our policy and performance on waste was better than theirs. "You reduced and recycled we burned too much"



We need to get back to doing it right and here is a checklist for scrutiny. Some things have stopped, some have reduced and some just need to be monitored, but they are all proven practices that need to be happening.

General

A principle of explaining the environmental and financial cost of bad practice and where appropriate an individual benefit.

Specifics

1 A campaign to re-invigorate home composting with offers on composters and information on their use.

- 2 Ensuring that green waste sacks are available in small bulk in all libraries, and that everyone knows.
- 3 Sell food waste bags in Libraries. (we can buy in bulk at staggering discount)
- 4 Use council communications for information on services rather than political propaganda, and dedicate one of the large communications team to waste.
- 5 Ensure that residents are able to get an answer from customer services. Have a call back for queries.
- 6 Offer a discount on appropriate bulky waste calls for reference to reuse.
- 7 Provide active links on BCC website to reuse sites.
- 8 Monitor repeated failure to use recycling service and offer active assistance.
- 9 Publish local stats to encourage local pride.
- 10 Provide active help for the lid-up residents.
- 11 Open the Hartcliffe way recycling centre.
- 12 Actively treat black bag waste rather than burning.
- 13 Publish the street cleaning standard and encourage reporting of failures.
- 14 Ensure that recently revived action against commercial waste entering stream is properly resourced and publicised.
- 15 Ensure fly tipping is thoroughly investigated and public prosecutions follow.
- 16 Restart local police involvement in enforcement.
- 17 Ensure a waste officer is available to all NPs.
- 18 Adopt bespoke solutions for geographically challenged areas.
- 19 Use ability to collect commercial waste to better coordinate and ensure income stream.
- 20 Ensure all landlords comply with their obligations and that they ensure every tenant has proper information on service.

Meeting farce.

Many have commented on the Mayor's attempts to keep Councillors and the public in the dark but the last full council took this to new heights. Having previously promised to keep the Council House available for major meetings during its refurbishment, the mayor gave up on that, and the council has been forced to meet elsewhere. There were many angry protests when a month ago a special council meeting was held in "the passenger shed" at Temple Meads. A big barn totally unsuitable, with poor facilities and acoustics which made life almost impossible for the public. Instead of realising the mistake, and choosing somewhere else, we were all back there this month, with a large public turnout protesting about the libraries and other issues. The right for the public to speak has been restored after our protests. This full length meeting exposed the full idiocy of the venue choice as it got darker and darker. People were struggling to read papers in front of them and some were using torches. A councillor protest produced the classic response that because of the electrics we could have sound or more light but not both.

I am afraid this says a lot about the present management of the city council and will chime with many of those phoning in to

get service.

YOU COULD NOT MAKE IT UP.

Restoring Democracy to Bristol

Many of you signed our petition to demand the right for Bristolians to review the decision to have an elected mayor. This was debated in full council last December and all parties fell in behind us and agreed to lobby parliament. Former Lib Dem council group leader Barbara Janke (now in the House of Lords) struck a huge blow when she got support for an amendment to a government bill which would grant that basic right, which at present is uniquely denied to Bristol. With a Conservative majority in the commons there is a danger of a reversal but Gary has written to all the local MPs to stress the importance of this issue, not only within Bristol, but to good relations with all our neighbours, which needs to be restored before government will devolve power.

The National Picture.

By a very clear majority Liberal Democrats have voted for Tim Farron as our new party leader. He will have a difficult job with the number of MPs much reduced, but the party has faced hard times before and will rebuild from the bottom up, and with over 20,000 new members there is a confidence and energy that many would find surprising.

It was certainly the case that many hard and difficult decisions were made over the last 5 years, but the country had been in a hole of Greek proportions, and has made a recovery. It is already becoming clear how different the new Conservative government will be from that of the coalition.