

FOCUS



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THE TRUTH EXPOSED



After a month's delay with no progress after Labour Councillors voted down the motion calling for a reopening of Jubilee Pool we have now had 3 cross party meetings of Councillors in the surrounding area.

Under questioning, officers confirmed that Jubilee was not losing money and it was not a wreck as the "consultation" had suggested and that reopening quickly would be as cheap as keeping it closed, and reopening could be achieved in 2 weeks. The operators were confident. We knew this a long time ago and the whole sorry saga could have been avoided if our offer of discussions early on had not been rejected.

The whole "consultation" was exposed as a lie as the only reason that the mayor wants to close Jubilee is because he wants to force users to go to Hengrove where the financial results have disappointed him. Officers confirmed our assertion that the anti competition clause on the Hengrove PFI deal was a red herring and it was purely about boosting takings at Hengrove.

This of course exposes the Mayor's offer of the community taking over the pool as a sham as well. It could be done, but not quickly, and he wants to kill the pool instead. Ridiculously he, in a separate meeting, demanded to see the Friend's group plan for takeover now.

Mary Page Lib Dem Mayoral candidate said -"This is no way to approach an important local public facility that's only crime is that it is too popular and it is obvious that once again the decision making process has failed miserably."

The cross party working group have now written to the Mayor recommending a reopening within 2 weeks and rejecting the long grass option of thinking about it in January. We will continue to take evidence about the longer term options. We have also asked for a rapid response from the Mayor and will hold him to account. It would clearly expose him as dishonest if having set up the cross party working group he rejects their recommendation. Thank you to all those that have supported the joint campaign from the Friends of Jubilee Pool and us. Without it we would have already lost our pool. Please keep going because we must maximise pressure on the Mayor.

- Sign the petition http://savejubileepool-ldbristol.nationbuilder.com/sign_the_petition
- Reply to the council's "consultation" telling them what you think <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/jubileepool>
- Ask for and display a 'Save Jubilee' poster. · Go to the Friends' Website or Facebook and add your views @Savejubileepool on Facebook or <https://e-voice.org.uk/savejubileepool/>
- Help distribute leaflets. · Write to the media.
- Be prepared at the next full council meeting on Tuesday 10 November at 6pm to ask questions and make a statement. You must register your interest at least two clear working days before the meeting, to participate remotely. Email democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk.

ROAD SAFETY

After 4 years of excuses and delays from the Bristol mayor the scheme to make Woodbridge Rd one way, remodel the junction with Redcatch Rd and Bayham to make it safer for pedestrians and to put in a speed table on Redcatch Rd to slow traffic, is finally getting constructed.

Meanwhile the pedestrian crossing on Wells Rd, that Chris has been campaigning for ever since before he became a Councillor, is now moving in to the design stage. The money was won from a pot of planning-levy funds by Chris and Gary a year or so back. There are a couple of crossing points being considered between Beaconsfield Rd and Woodbridge Rd and detailed work is now being done to evaluate the best one, taking into account things like visibility and the bus lane.



Heavy and Dangerous Traffic on the Wells Rd - a Crossing Urgently Needed!

Gary and Chris have met with Highways officers on site and made clear that just putting in a pedestrian island would not do the job. There is huge suppressed demand for a safe crossing for a variety of destinations and when you see the large lorries thundering along it is easy to see why the number of people actually crossing here is below the formula number that would normally trigger a puffin crossing. We rejected spending thousands on more counting exercises, especially as traffic is currently reduced due to COVID, or putting in an expensive temporary light system, and are pushing hard for this funded scheme to get delivered rapidly. Advising them there will eventually be an essential crossing route for pupils at the new school in Daventry Road emphasised the urgent need. One potential bonus from the meeting is that instead of wasting thousands on surveys a few thousand may be used to make the central island just below Beaconsfield a bit more substantial.

MOTION TO COUNCIL ON NEW SCHOOL

Readers will recognise the progress that has been made towards reinstating local secondary education in Knowle. Chris and Gary have met with education officers and are now putting a motion as below to council to speed progress. Problem is that Labour are hogging all the debate time so it might not get debated quickly.

Secondary school places in South Bristol are in short supply and the situation will get worse over the next couple of years. The problem becomes even more challenging as the public transport is woeful, and travelling from Knowle to Brislington or Bedminster Down is very challenging for pupils. After a gap of 20 years with no secondary provision in the area, we now have a solution with the new school coming on part of the old Merrywood site. The other part of the site will be given over to a great new community facility costing around 6M pounds. This council thanks the trustees of "The Park" Local Opportunity Centre for doing such a great job of providing community facilities over the last 20 years on the old school site and working so hard on the imaginative new plan.

Government, Oasis, funders and the community are to be thanked also and we must recognise that officers and cabinet members gave full backing to this scheme (despite a couple of frankly silly objections). This council, though, asks for one further contribution as, on present timetables, a couple of the most critical years, with rising numbers, will not benefit from the new school. We ask that the school is set up earlier in temporary accommodation from Sept 2021. Council notes that the site is, unlike the Temple Meads new school site, large and open and that the failure of the plans for early opening at Temple Meads will put even more pressure on numbers over the next 2 years in East and South Bristol.

BRISTOL ENERGY COMPANY

After failing to persuade people that the failure of Bristol Energy Company was everyone else's fault the Mayor has now set about a strategy of putting out misleading information and claiming that everything that contradicts him is confidential. Council lawyers have been deployed to warn councillors. He has put about that it was all the previous mayor's fault. Well, about 4 million could be, but the other 40 million is down to the present mayor. He is saying that the total loss was around 21 million but this is just not true.

So how is he getting away with misleading claims?

When it was put to council all Labour Councillors voted against an independent enquiry. The better news is that all 3 opposition parties have written to the council's independent auditor to ask him to investigate. He is interrogating the council's value for money and we look forward to an authoritative report. In addition the mayor's spending of extra millions to delay the closure until after the 2020 elections, which were postponed until 2021, has failed, as most of the data will now have to be published before the election. We will keep you posted.

This is over £40,000,000 of Bristol taxpayers' money which is way more than COVID cost the council and it is leading to cuts in services like Jubilee Pool.



WASTE AND RECYCLING SERVICES

Every service has things that go wrong. The real test is how they get put right and how the users can communicate with the provider and how they respond. The recycling service in Bristol was set up by Gary 15 years ago. At the time it was well ahead of what any other council was doing both in terms of its range and cost effectiveness. It was not perfect but when mistakes were made it was possible to get them attended to. There has been practically no improvements since, apart from the blue bags for the rapidly expanding amount of cardboard, but a problem now is that response to complaints under the present management structure is poor. It is one thing to ask the public to accept a slightly reduced response because of COVID but to put a blanket ban on replacing bins damaged by their own crews is just not good enough. Inappropriate billing is another matter that comes up. Getting response from the council is bad enough in most areas but here the extra excuse of "its a separate company"-despite it being 100% owned by the council- is trotted out by the mayor.

If you have service issues please let us know. We cannot guarantee a quick resolution but by coordinating we may be able to improve matters overall.

SCHOOL TRANSPORT

We have been working with whomever we can to improve school transport for local children as they move on to secondary school. School places in South Bristol secondary schools are now very tight in numbers and will get even worse over the next year or two. A sizeable number go to St Katherine's School in Pill and thanks to the school, North Somerset Council and the WECA authority, there is a better bus service, but some of it is temporary and most of it is quite expensive. A lot of parents can cope but some pupil premium money, which is there to help the education of children from financially challenged households, is being used to bridge the gap. The only authority that has failed to help is Bristol City Council and the lobbying from us has yet to get any positive result.

More of our children are now going to Oasis Brislington but the transport situation there is very poor. A bus that goes every 2 hours just does not work and there have been complaints from other councillors as well as ourselves. So far neither First Bus or BCC are responding with any help, but due to changing school hours Gary is seeking a meeting with the school and First to explain a solution.

COVID

In Bristol we have, in comparison to most of the country been extremely lightly let off. We have had massively lower levels of infection right from the beginning but now the danger is close by. Very heavy infection rates amongst students in West and Central Bristol have led to concern about infection spreading to the wider community. Even in South Bristol where infections are lower the numbers are creeping up. There is no excuse for complacency and we must all take extra care. Many that escape the health problem will be hit financially. This is one of the nastiest viruses ever for older residents but there is growing evidence that so called "long COVID" might mean that younger people who thought they could ignore the consequences might find later that there is a lingering problem. On that we just do not know enough and although we know a lot more than we did 7 months ago there are still huge gaps. We face a long hard Winter but the better news is that improved treatments are meaning more of the hospitalised survive and although there is no guarantee we are likely to have a vaccine next year. The beginning of the year if you believe the optimists.

We must be fair and say that whatever government had done we faced many deaths and huge financial disruption and also not carp about previous mistakes, but we have to say what in our view could be done better now.

1 The tracing system would be much better done by local teams and not centralised phoning. That was said by us a long time ago and is widely accepted. Central government are still resisting.

2 Whilst there was a small risk reopening schools and some infections have occurred the damage to children, particularly from deprived households, was so damaging that reopening was right. The younger the children the lower the risk and the greater the potential damage with closure. On the other hand dragging students from home and cramming them into shared houses at this time is bonkers. Nearly all the rise in numbers in Central and West Bristol are Bristol University students (UWE students have had nothing like the same levels) and we must be worried that the infection will spread to the wider community. The problem has been repeated across the country. Most university students can do the bulk of their work on line and in some cases having travelled to new towns they are doing that anyway.

BUS STOPS

The three new Bus Stops in Daventry Road and Broad Walk are still on schedule with new designs and raised platforms, a safe haven with level boarding and longer bus stop clear ways. In addition a real time information display will be installed so you will know what time the next bus is due. A problem with tree root undergrowth has emerged on one site in Broad Walk and an alternative site nearby will be adopted. Our candidate for West of England Regional Mayor, Stephen Williams, has plans to bring in cleaner buses, switching them away from polluting diesel and onto electric or hydrogen.

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