



Libraries: A sustainable future



Cllr. Anthony Negus at Redland Library

Street Trees

The Bristol Tree Forum (BTF) and Anthony expressed our concerns to the Cabinet https://bristol.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/285721 about the 78% budget cut for street trees. With no pollarding, or trimming, our trees will grow out of control. Roots will invade footpaths and structures resulting in injuries, damage and resulting claims which will quickly negate this saving. The only solution then would be to cut down our fine trees with no budget even to replace them with saplings. This decision will now be consulted but, despite assurances about future years, there is no reliable plan and we must keep fighting to save our trees. Contact Anthony, or sign up at BTF:

<https://bristoltreeforum.org/contact-btf/>

No. 9, 72 + 8 bus services; Freedom of Information Request

Senior managers of First bus finally met with Anthony in September with their BCC counterparts. Anthony presented a long list of his own and constituents concerns about performance and justifications. First's solution of reducing the frequency to increase reliability has simply not worked. Those questions that have not been answered have now been submitted as a Freedom of Information (FoI) request to First, BCC and the Traffic Commissioner including percentage of services not running, percentage shortfall in drivers and extent of windfall profits from not delivering services.



www.twitter.com/CothamLDs

www.facebook.com/CothamLDs

"None of the above" was the greatest response to the consultation on cuts to libraries (and neighbourhood partnerships, school crossings and public conveniences). Anthony chaired the all-party group tasked to review options for libraries, their time shortened by the Cabinet decision date being brought forward, but nevertheless the group sought a long term sustainable solution for a wider service across the city than the desperate solution suggested so saving Redland and Bishopston libraries.

Our report: http://www.bristollibdems.org/library_rescue_plan proposed working to establish one of the mutualisation options recommended by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and adopted by other councils. This could be set up in 18 - 24 months and the report suggests how all our libraries could operate during that period until they could all be managed communally. Buildings lost to Community Asset Transfer will drop out of the library service forever. A petition for Redland Library has easily passed the 3,500 signature threshold and will be debated by activists supported by Anthony at Full Council on 14th November. There will be other related motions; we are not giving up on this.

Consultation was flawed

The City Council Lib Dem group criticised this single, desperate, proposal with minor tweaks that discouraged asking for ideas. Anthony told Cabinet in July that this consultation was flawed. This was not accepted. View the webcast, item 6: https://bristol.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/299706

Most agree that Libraries should be future-proofed and supporting their communities yet volunteering has been dismissed while Neighbourhood Partnerships have been crushed. Cutting approximately 35% of the budget will close 65% of our branch libraries, and the buildings likely sold. Other councils have followed DCMS guidance on a range of other ways to run libraries, from joint-venture, through social enterprise to a Public Service Mutual which is a revitalised and local facing re-mixing of all library service resources (buildings, money, paid staff + volunteers within a Provident Society).

Student Mitigation

Anthony has been building bridges across the unbalanced communities in Cotham ward for 10 years, working with the universities, residents, students and landlords. On 19th July he secured unanimous support at an important debate he led in Council, highlighting the issues arising from increasing growth in student numbers and recommending action to mitigate them. This gives the mayor the strongest platform to work with other university towns and cities to make a robust case to Westminster to recover business rates from student landlords, equivalent to £10m annually. Universities and their students bring great financial and social value to the city but the council cannot fund 100% of our services with less than 90% of rates income. The city must also design sustainable proposals to mitigate the impact of further expansion of student numbers on the housing crisis in the city.

Anthony says "From other meetings I can report that both universities are at last addressing this with new building instead of impacting on established communities and the wider housing market. Alongside this BCC has finally agreed to be tougher with waste issues; the effect is likely to be seen most in high-density areas like Cotham. See my 'Front Gardens Initiative' story for a very practical local proposal for greater harmony".

Please speak to your neighbours but if you do have antisocial behaviour problems with students contact:

community-living@bristol.ac.uk and community@uwe.ac.uk

If not students then try the police or email:

neighbourhood.enforcement@bristol.gov.uk

Or log a complaint at: <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/>

Lib Dems... working hard all year round!

Front Garden Initiative

Anthony says "I am launching this new initiative to bring together long-term residents and students. The universities, student unions and other agencies have agreed to work together and with landlords to re-establish shrubs and small trees. The goal is low-maintenance planting to re-green the HMO dead zones within our local streets, creating more opportunities for wildlife. It has taken some time to get round to all parties but I have gathered offers of assistance and shrubs from a number of sources including Bristol City Council and I'm looking for help in arranging work sessions, where HMO landlords agree. I have written to all local agents and their Bristol professional organisations. This initiative will tackle a great number of important issues particularly community participation and cohesion, environmental and street scene improvements and well-being".

"If, with support, this takes off it could be a way of restoring our streetscene, bringing together people of all ages, greening the differences between ownerships and maybe making all of us feel a bit happier about where we live, and our neighbours. It's taken some time, and it's not all there yet, but this could make a lasting difference in Cotham ward, and many other parts of the city".

"Two local landscape architects have offered their support pro bono and I have some offers of trees and shrubs. Where suitable, one small tree or shrub and some greening to the front wall is all that is envisaged. Local residents have expressed support and I could see this happening on an announced street action day".

"During the over eight years that I have been a councillor I have consistently rejected opportunities to find favour with residents by rubbing newcomers, principally students. This initiative is an even more positive step to bring the community together. Delineated space for waste bins and boxes will be part of each proposal and, especially in the face of the recently announced fines for littering and anti-social waste practice this might ease some of your management issues in the context of residents feeling more ownership and pride in where they live. However you might feel about this I took some soundings earlier this year with student residents and have liaised with both student unions and really believe that this simple initiative will pay off".



Pesticides and weeds in Cotham

Early in 2016, following representations from a number of environmental groups, it was decided to run a trial of glyphosate-free weed treatments. I share the concerns about pesticides and with the then other Councillor agreed that this could be in the new Cotham ward. Acetic acid (vinegar) was sprayed but this one year trial was largely a desktop exercise and unsatisfactory. Pelargonic acid is this a new glyphosate-free treatment that I have pressed to be trialled but the sturdy weed growth now makes Cotham unsuitable. Local lobbying has so far prevented any other treatment from being used in Cotham ward and Bristol Waste Company is forced to use manual hoeing. I met with officers and lobby groups but with no resolution Cotham ward has endured another weed-growing year.

If the outcome of the next trial is worth pursuing then Cotham ward could play its part in that further process but it should not be the single ward in Bristol that looks such a mess and is frankly dangerous in places.

CN, KN and CM Parking Zones

Lining and signing modifications in response to last year's consultation are complete in CN. Anthony has attended six meetings on KN and CM, alone in representing Cotham residents, to resolve their specific concerns and finally secured a consultation for all residents about hours, and days, of operation because of proposals to charge for Sunday parking in the Central Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ). But incredibly instead of waiting for approval, the consultation went out without mentioning this fundamental threat of additional Sunday parking pressures in KN. CM will stay as it is but this costly KN consultation has misled residents and the Mayor has decreed there will be no review. It is madness to force a decision on the wrong information and then prevent reconsideration, and you can be assured that Anthony is fighting this nonsense.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pavings: Irreplaceable Pennant stone slabs have been removed at night from streets in at least 6 separate local incidents, mostly in Kingsdown. Local residents have circulated a warning flyer and with Anthony have been liaising with the local police and highways officers about ways this criminal damage can be stopped. Please be vigilant!

Kingsdown Vaults: ...is open for business again, and we hope it stays that way!

Portland Street Green Space: Is there anyone out there who would support making this space to the side of the sports centre more attractive and used? We might remove some of the shading trees and open it up? Please contact Anthony with your ideas.

Bike stands in Chandos Road: There is no pavement space for cycle parking so Anthony and others have been trying since the beginning of the CN parking zone's consultation to locate a stand in the road near the shops. This has been complicated and we've now been told that the Traffic Regulation Order (legal sign-off for CN alterations) is finalised without this included. Anthony is challenging this and trying to get a pavement buildout for the stand.

Event Charges Rising: Redland May Fair, along with other local and city events, is trying to cope with higher charges imposed by Bristol City Council (BCC). This will affect the street events in Chandos Road and Cotham Hill as well as larger ones such as the Harbour Festival and the Balloon Fiesta. The city lost VegFest for a year and others are at risk. Anthony argued at Cabinet that revenue should be sought from those that benefit financially from these events rather than the organisers and says "Bristol has a reputation for all types of events and ease of setting them up". An RCAS spokesperson told Anthony that the Redland May Fair was going ahead next year after negotiating to moderate the extra cost. This local institution returns funds for the community and it is run by volunteers.

Get in touch...



Cllr Anthony Negus

Cllr.Anthony.Negus@bristol.gov.uk

0117 353 4713

c/o Lib Dem Group Office, City Hall, PO Box 3176, Bristol, BS3



Miles Taylor

miles4cotham@gmail.com



@milesvtaylor