



Letters & Opinions

Long agenda meant vital issues flew under radar

ON November 14, Bristol City Council was presented with an impossibly long agenda to discuss. This was the first full council meeting since July, with the September meeting being cancelled due to the mayor and cabinet supposedly going to London to meet ministers.

The trip was a taxpayer-funded farce, leaving library and parks campaigners furious that they could not have their say.

Campaigners turned out in force this time though to make their points skilfully. A Lib Dem motion calling on the mayor to scrap his ridiculous slashing of libraries was passed, when a small number of Labour rebels defied party instructions, so the Lib Dem, Green and Tory votes carried the day.

A second motion from the Tories on parks was supported by Lib Dems and Greens but voted down by the Labour majority. The administration looked in total disarray on both issues.

What will probably go unreported, though, are items further down the list that because of the ridiculous agenda did not get proper attention.

These include the Spatial Plan, which outlines the 100,000-plus houses for the West of England and where they will go. There are some good elements, but many serious errors which will come back to bite Bristol citizens.

Controversial elements of the pay and structure for council senior managers slipped through and a report detailing the massive increase in the number of complaints (some very serious) upheld against the council by the local government ombudsman could not even be discussed.

Constitutional changes to make it even more difficult to question the mayor are planned for next month. What else will be slipped by that will later anger the Bristol public?

Councillor Gary Hopkins
Leader of Lib Dems
Knowle Ward

Support for farmers in times of hardship

◆ THE Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI) has been around since 1860 and is farming's oldest and largest welfare charity.

This year, we have given out more than £1.1 million to the retired, sick



◆ Vaping no longer seems to mean what it used to, says reader David

and disabled and we remain committed to looking after farming people throughout their lives, not just when they are working.

In today's world there are so many challenges people must face in later life and health issues can be draining, both physically and mentally.

However, our motto is 'once a farmer, always a farmer' and we will not shy away from supporting farming people of all ages, including retired farmers, farmworkers and dependants.

This year, we have paid out more than £214k towards home help costs and close to £100k on disability aids, equipment and adaptations. We have also given out more than £92k towards care home top-up fees – the difference between how much a council is willing to pay a care home and the care home's fee to self-funding residents.

Recently the care home of a 92-year-old former land girl closed indefinitely for 'refurbishment'. Most of the residents moved on quickly to a sister home, but they wouldn't take this lady because of her physical needs. Her daughter told us: "It was like a sinking ship. In the end there was only mum and one other lady left there with no proper night staff. Mum cried and cried."

Needing to find a new care home for their mother at short notice, the family identified one that was suitable –

but the local council wanted her to an alternative home further away. It became a battle the family contacted RABI the costs of the top-up fee showed their preferred home because couldn't afford to pay the fees selves. We agreed to do this.

Most of us will need to rely at some point in our lives, if ourselves, then for loved ones.

Demands on the care sector already great, but things are likely to get worse with a rising older population. We stand the anxieties many people face and we are committed offering long-term support families in financial hardship in farming sector. It's simple; write for the long haul. To contact telephone 0808 281 9490.

Paul
RABI chief executive

Old word a good for objectionable

◆ AM I the only one to be put this appropriation of an old a new (and unpleasant) activity

As far as I have been aware ripe old age of 82), the verb has meant to stare with a gormless, rather stupid expression on one's face.