

Bristol Student Community Partnership (BSCP) Minutes

23 January 2023

Present:

<p>University of Bristol (UoB) Evelyn Welch (EW): Vice-Chancellor and President Lucinda Parr (LP): Registrar & University Secretary Liam O'Shea (LOS): Head of Public Affairs & Executive Communications Steve Smith (SS): Community Liaison Officer Kirsten Slater (KS): Community Liaison Assistant John McWilliams (JMW): Director Civic Engagement</p> <p>University of the West of England (UWE) Emma Dent (ED): Business Support Team Leader Tracey John (TJ): Civic, Director Research, Business & Innovation</p> <p>Bristol Student's Union (Bristol SU) Izzy Russell (IR): Student Living Officer</p> <p>Bristol City Council (BCC) Cllr Katy Grant (KG): Councillor, Clifton Ward Cllr Tom Hathway (TH): Councillor, Clifton Down Ward Cllr Phillipa Hulme (PH): Councillor, Horfield Ward Cllr Paula O'Rourke (POR): Councillor, Clifton Ward, Lord Mayor Cllr Guy Poultny (GP): Councillor, Cotham Ward</p> <p>Megan Finnie (MF): Neighbourhood Enforcement Team Becky Gale (BG): Private Housing Service Hannah French (HF): Civic, Deputy Head Policy & Public Affairs</p>	<p>Residents Groups Ken Booth (KBRG): Grange & Mortimer Road Merch Clarke (MCRG): Clifton Down Rob Harris (RHRG): Redland & Cotham Chris Jeffries (CJRG): Clifton & Hotwells John Manley (JMRG): Richmond Peter McCartney (PMCRG): Highbury Villas Katherine Rogers (KRRG): Richmond Terrace Andrew Waller (AW): Noise Pages Jill White (JWRG): Hampton Park Sarah Cuthill (SCRG): Cotham Vale & Trelawney Fiona McVey (FMVRG): Chandos Road</p> <p>Bristol Waste Company (BWC) Jak Boydon (JB): Community Engagement Manager Izzy Davies (ID): Community Engagement Officer</p> <p>Landlords/Letting Agents Pippa Barry (PB): Private Landlord</p> <p>Avon & Somerset Police Jon Scott (JS): Acting Inspector Sian Harris (SH): University Police Officer</p>
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Minutes

Item 1: Chair's Welcome & Introductions

Steve Smith (SS) welcomed UoB Vice Chancellor, Prof Evelyn Welch (EW) as a guest speaker to the meeting. As the meeting was larger than normal other introductions would not be held. Members were asked to introduce themselves when they spoke.

Item 2: Developing a Civic University Agreement (CUA)

EW reported that she was excited to be working at the UoB and would be grateful for any contributions which would help to make the university the 'University for Bristol as well as the University of Bristol'.

EW introduced, John McWilliams (JW, UoB), Tracey John (TJ, UWE) and Hannah French (HF, BCC) who were working together on developing the Civic University Agreement.

EW highlighted the positive work of the UoB in the city, such as the training of doctors and dentists who would stay in the area and the development of the new Dental School that would see 1,000 patients a week for free. The intention is that there would be increasing student input into the community, including through volunteering.

The CUA included relationships between UoB, UWE, BCC and the City of Bristol College. Of most interest to this meeting would be the theme of 'Enabling through Community' which includes students in the community, social and environmental issues.

EW was pleased that the appointment of SS had improved student behaviour in the community. EW reported that she would meet with as many Residents Groups as possible during March alongside SS to gain further feedback. She also noted that most of the growth in student numbers would be in new areas of the city which would bring its own challenges. EW thanked Paula O'Rourke (POR, Lord Mayor & Councillor) for her feedback.

EW asked for feedback on what was seen of the benefits of having a student population, both from UoB & UWE, how the Universities could benefit everyone and what where the negative impacts of having a student population in Bristol. EW also asked how we could help promote a shared sense of community.

John McWilliams (JMW) commented that the University has always been a civic University, but more recently additional thought had gone into what that means, with community engagement taking its place alongside teaching and research.

JMW mentioned that feedback on the CUA was welcome and could be sent to: community@bristol.ac.uk. JMW could provide further information on categories for improvements but feedback but members should not get hung up on groupings.

Comments & Questions from Residents Groups & Councillors

Peter McCartney (PMCRG, Highbury Villas Residents) noted that the area was a direct neighbour of the University and had an almost universally negative experience of students. He noted that there were common themes coming from all the resident's groups with the same difficulties.

There was a need to ensure that the University provided additional support to SS who was doing an excellent job. PMCRG also felt that Bristol Waste Company (BWC) could do more as problems were not only with students but included other residents and commercial areas.

Cllr Guy Poultny (GP, Councillor, Cotham) echoed Peter's comments and agreed that there was a need for a bigger team at the UoB. Enforcement was also necessary from the council, in the areas of planning, waste and HMOs which would also cover areas associated with UWE.

GP reported that he did get a lot of feedback about positives and many residents appreciated having younger people. He noted that anti-social behaviour and waste problems had diminishing a little bit.

GP was concerned that present activities were responding to the current situation but not dealing strategically with the problem of increasing student numbers. Large parts of Cotham were now mostly populated by students who did not use local services/shops leading to the loss of the leisure centres and bus services as students used the University's subsidised facilities/services or Voi.

Pippa Barry (PB, Bristol Student Landlord) also commented on the difference that SS made an increased support from BWC but felt there was a need for more education for students when they were starting to rent. PB also felt that increasing student numbers were putting pressure on housing stocks and she was concerned about increasing rental costs for students, particularly with the increase in energy costs as well. PB reported that she currently had a waitlist of over 60 students for 22/23.

Cllr Tom Hathaway (TH, Councillor – Clifton Down) welcomed the development of Civic University Agreement and acknowledged the world-class knowledge and facilities that UoB brought to the city. He believed that students

boosted the local economy through using shops and services. TH also agreed that there needed to be a larger Community Liaison Team.

TH expressed concerns that housing providers would rather create purpose-built student accommodation, rather than provide family or residential housing. He also felt that there should be more done to bring in local students rather than the focus being on bringing in international students.

Jill White (JWRG, Hampton Park Residents) reported she also felt that everything is positive. They were keen to introduce the students to the community. JW felt that there was scope for the local community to be involved with some of the excellent student societies (eg orchestra, choirs). JW felt students were willing to be involved but busy. JW welcomed the input of EW as the previous VC had not wanted to be involved.

Fiona McVey (FMVRG, Chandos Road Residents) also thanked SS for his work and felt that significant changes had been made. She reported that the Chandos Residents Association tried very hard to integrate students and found that they were happy to come to the Chandos Fair but not take part in other initiatives, such as litter picking. They had tried to gain support using poster invitations and flyers.

Cllr Katy Grant (KG, Councillor Clifton) reported she was new to the group and welcomed being able to connect to the issues. KG believed that the UoB did give back to the city but was aware of the issues created by the student population. She felt there would be mutual opportunities for the University and Council to work together e.g., via shadowing.

Responses

EW acknowledged the issues around provision of accommodation, which also impacted staff working at the University, as well as students who wanted to stay on in Bristol after they graduated. EW reported that following uplifts in student numbers caused by Covid and disruptions to examinations, this year UoB had chosen to admit 800 fewer students than last year. Available beds for students had dictated the number of students accepted.

There needed to be a collective conversation regarding accommodation in Bristol, EW noted that 13% growth of housing need in Bristol had been students (87% from elsewhere) but there were also impacts from other areas such as the increase in Air BnBs. EW had taken part in a Radio 4 programme with Evan Davis discussing housing issues, which used Bristol as an example.

EW indicated would like to discuss the issues around University subsidies and any impact on local services. She noted that GP & TH had different views on this, it was noted that this was because they represented different Wards. EW felt there was a need to support the local economy - should not lose local business because of University subsidies.

Action: EW to further explore the impact of students on the local economy and services with Councillors

Liam O'Shea (LO, UoB) reported that a Community Liaison Assistant post was being funded and would be advertised soon to provide support to the Office.

The Community Fund would also be re-instated so Residents Groups could apply for funding for events to help support students to integrate.

Action: SS to circulate funding applications to Residents Groups when available

Operation Beech would continue to be funded and the University will continue to work with landlords and BWC.

Tracey John (TJ, UWE) was interested to hear comments in the meeting and noted the need for balance for communities, whether that involves UoB or UWE. TJ reported that UWE was building 900 bed student accommodation, although she acknowledged that this was for first years, international and postgraduate students. She noted that it was important that universities and other public bodies were accessible for the public and worked with communities.

SS acknowledged the difficulties in getting students involved with local activities and would continue to see what work could be undertaken with internal communications and advertising volunteering opportunities. A student string quartet had played at the High Kingsdown student brunch and, it may be something similar could be arranged for other events. SS had also advertised opportunities on the volunteering pages but did not get any feedback from students.

TH also felt that there was a need to get students involved in local democracy, particularly as mass voter registration no longer happened.

Izzy Russell (IR, Bristol SU) mentioned that there would be a Volunteering Week commencing 13th February. IR was happy to help with promoting voluntary activities and would also like to discuss local democracy with TH.

Action: Residents Groups to contact IR and/or SS regarding volunteering opportunities

IR to contact TH regarding promoting local democracy involvement

Andrew Waller (AW, Noise Pages) explained that he acted in a co-ordinating role for Residents Groups and had a standing email conversation involving 10-11 Residents Groups. Normally AW and one other person from a Residents Group attended the meeting, they would normally try to discuss the agenda in advance to then raise issues for the meeting. AW welcomed the fact that more Residents Groups than normal were able to join the meeting with the VC.

AW welcomed the idea of taking a more strategic view of issues and said he would poll the Residents Groups to see what they had to add. JMW reported that they were aiming for a timescale of early April to complete the CUA to enable it to be approved through the relevant organisation's committees, however, ideas still welcome after this date.

Action: Residents Groups to contact AW regarding comments on the CUA

Item 3: Last Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Item 4: Updates on Actions

Bus Services: Following a request from GP, SS reported he would forward on the information on bus services to GP.

Revised Terms of Reference: LO requested the agreement of the revised Terms of Reference for the BSCP. AW reported that he had requested minor corrections regarding the use of the term 'neighbourhood partnerships' which should be changed to 'Community Groups' there was also a need to include landlords/letting agents in the participants. The revised Terms of Reference were otherwise agreed.

Action: LO to make changes and recirculate the Terms of Reference for the next meeting

Item 5: Police Liaison/Operation Beech – Introduction of Acting Inspector Jon Scott

Jon Scott (JS) was introduced as the replacement for Stephanie McKenna. JS reported that he was familiar with the issues in the area as he had been the Neighbourhood Sergeant for Cotham and had worked with Sain Harris (SH, University Police Officer) in this role.

SH reported that the last few weeks had been quiet over the holidays and exam period. Operation Beech was now operating again after the break and would carry on now until the Easter holidays.

Item 6: Anti-social behaviour guide for private landlords

Becky Gale (BG, Private Renting Service, BCC) introduced the BCC anti-social behaviour guide for landlords and letting agents ([Anti-social behaviour of tenants: A guide for private landlords and managing agents \(bristol.gov.uk\)](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/anti-social-behaviour-of-tenants-a-guide-for-private-landlords-and-managing-agents)). BG explained this was a best practice guide for dealing with antisocial behaviour and set expectations for landlords. The guide included a section specifically on students. BG thanked those who had provided feedback for their input. BG provided her contact details in the chat for anyone who wished to contact her regarding the guide.

Item 7: Community Protection Warning & Protection Notices CPW/CPN

Megan Finnie (MF, BCC) reported on the various sanctions that could be imposed by the BCC Neighbourhood Enforcement Team with regards to noise and waste, under the Antisocial Crime & Protection Act:

Community Protection Warning (CPW): A written warning which can be adapted for each complaint with the details of actions which must be taken or stopped (eg when they should take their waste out).

Community Protection Notice (CPN): If a CPW is not adhered to a CPN may be issued, again specifying what actions must be taken or stopped, if this is not complied with sanctions can be imposed.

Financial Penalty Notice (FPN)/Prosecution: Failure to comply with a CPN is a criminal offence and can lead to a fine of £100 (which can be repeated) or prosecution.

MF reported that NET would normally allow the Community Liaison Office to try and resolve any problems with student behaviour in the first instance but would get involved when more serious enforcement action was needed.

MF confirmed that the level of the FPN is set nationally, and that NET had not issued an FPN for students a fair few months.

PMCRG queried why there were no prosecutions being made against students. MF explained that there was a high evidence threshold for noise complaints and that sufficient evidence had to be collected over a period of time. Often this meant in student properties that students will be moving on before there is enough evidence to prosecute and the BCC Legal Team would not then consider prosecution to be in the public interest. However, CPWs and CPNs did work to stop problems before they got as far as a prosecution.

MF also confirmed that if there is a regular issue with a particular property they may refer the matter to the BCC Private Renting Service.

GP requested more information regarding the link-up between planning, licensing and NET. BG explained that this was not an area she was expert in, but she believed that HMO licences could be revoked but was not aware of this happening and would only be used in extreme cases. She also explained that once planning permission had been awarded, they would not withhold a request for a licence.

Item 8: Any other business

University housing references: Landlords had raised concerns that the University Halls of Residence references provide references that only state whether students have paid their rent on time and do not address any aspect of student behaviour. SS had discussed this policy with Student Accommodation and the Secretaries Office who confirmed that they would not include any further information in references. Members of the Partnership asked that this policy be looked at again as they felt it was important that landlords were aware of issues with tenants looking to rent properties.

IR expressed concern that a change in policy might mean some students may be left without housing and asked to be involved in any discussions regarding changes.

Action: SS to follow-up on requests for more reference information to be provided, involving IR in any proposed changes

SS reported that there would be 'living in the community' Kitchen Talks given by Chief & Senior Residents for all first-year students in University and Private Halls during May. Representatives from the Community Liaison Office, Police, BWC and BCC NET would also attend meetings.

SS also reported that the meeting with the Secretary's Office involved discussions around the placement of the Community Rules in the Student Agreement and Disciplinary Regulations.

International students and waste: Izzy Davies (IR, BWC) asked if the student agreement was available to students in their first language to aid their understanding of what they were required to do. Kirsten Slater (KS, UoB) explained that this did not happen because students needed to obtain a minimum level of English language to enrol on at the University which should mean they can understand the regulations. The University could however look at providing more targeted communications/education for this group of students.

Action: KS to follow-up on waste communications with international students

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the BSCP would be held: 2-3.30pm, 17th April 2023 via Zoom.