

The BRISTOLIAN

"Smiter of the High and Mighty"

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JUNKET GEORGE DOES EUROPE

COUNCIL: 'WE DON'T KNOW'

Full cost of cuts consultants lost in accounts black hole

Bristol Mayor takes taxpayer-funded jaunts to Dublin and Cannes to help cultivate sense of self-importance

With £35m of unachievable cuts randomly delivered across council budgets, now **MAYOR GORGEOUS** can get on with the more serious aspects of his role... Like enjoying jolly outings abroad at the expense of ordinary Bristolians.

The year's first freebie trip overseas for George came in February when he spent a couple of days in Dublin at the 'World Alliance of Cities Against Poverty'. A stop-off on the **INTERNATIONAL POVERTY INDUSTRY** grand tour, the event was themed around technology and cities, and attracted mostly faceless EU and UN bureaucrats with fat expense accounts and plenty of time on their hands.

Gushing publicity offered lucky attendees the opportunity "to marry practical experience to blue sky thinking" and hear words of wisdom spouted by self-important bigwigs from the Big Four accountancy firms. They, of course, are famed for their robust approach to preventing poverty by, erm, creating it on a grand scale across the entire western world by signing off dodgy bank balance sheets just prior to their collapse into bankruptcy and creating the need for mass public bailouts.

See the pattern here? Those that have caused mass poverty are now selling solutions to it back to governments. Other speakers included the aptly named Patricia Bastard of Yellow Window Design Consultants and the Queen of the international poverty scene, former Irish premier Mary 'Antoinette' Robinson.

But this was a mere warm-up for the main event that Junket George attended a few weeks later: the MIPIM property conference in Cannes, delightfully situated on the French Côte d'Azur. And what was this conference all about? Public

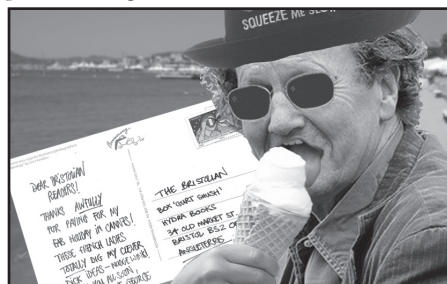
relations people will try to tell you "MIPIM provides a unique opportunity for industry decision-makers to meet, develop long-term relationships and showcase their latest development projects."

However, a more honest appraisal is available from Clare Barrett, managing editor of *Property Week* magazine, who helpfully explains, "It's basically a four-day party with loads of lobster and champagne on yachts."

When now-disbanded quango the South West Regional Development Agency attended this piss-up a few years ago, they managed to run up a £61k bill for running a press conference and two cheese and wine parties. But it is suspected that George and

the large entourage he assembled for this must-go event managed to smash that pre-austerity record with a **WHOPPING £100K+ TAB**. George even forked out for his glamorous assistant Zoe to attend and to provide him with her late night 'list-ticking' services, as well as dragging along a local artist to flaunt - just to show people how wacky he is.

No doubt Cannes reverberated to the question, "Qui le fuck est la poshe idiote Anglais avec les pantalons rouges"?



Fergo: working hard on your behalf on French Riviera

Bristol City Council's cuts-crazed senior officers don't know how many consultants they employ, or how much this small army of freelancers undertaking 'reviews', and slashing services - each on up to **£600 PER DAY PLUS EXPENSES** - costs the authority.

Questions about this were raised at a recent full council meeting by trade unionists concerned about the effects of dumping properly-employed BCC staff for reasons of cost - whilst at the same time spending far more cash per head on these hatchets-for-hire. In typical fashion, **HIS ROYAL GEORGENESS** tried to deflect criticism by boasting that to save money he has brought his own business chums onboard as unpaid consultants, but his face went as red as his trousers when pushed for a categorical assurance that these 'friends' of his would not be involved in procurement - either now or in the future.

After wriggling around under a barrage of questions about how utilising these faceless suits would 'enhance democracy in Bristol' - one of his manifesto pledges, lest we forget - Georgie went nuts, claiming that this was blatant politicking, and promptly changed the subject.

So we are none the wiser about the fire sale sweeping through Bristol's public resources like libraries, day centres, play areas, residential homes and other key amenities - other than it is clear that George thinks George knows best, and the rest of us should **KEEP OUR NOSES OUT**.

The jobs that are lost when council workers are 'downsized' have a direct effect on our local economy, as families are made more reliant on benefits, and have less local spending power. Most of the consultants don't even live in Bristol, and even more worryingly, are completely unaccountable for their actions - as Gorgeous George's outburst when questioned showed.

Six months of cutting services down to the bone, and it is evident that the review is not working for the people of Bristol - even if it does earn the consultants a few quid to take home to their out-of-town country houses.

But how can senior officers in Bristol honestly not know how much is spent on these social parasites, whilst singing the praises of backroom cuts?

BRISTOLIAN BITES

Occ Health now a load of ATOS

A frisson of excitement went through the city's chattering classes when the council's brand new Public Health chief, JANET MAXWELL, immediately started talking up her eco credentials and pushing for Bristol to become European Green Capital. So it's a pity that as she cycles over to the Farmers' Market to save the bloody whale she can't show the same respect to her own staff that she does for the environment.

For Janet's first proper decision at the council after a couple of months dicking about with green poshos is to appoint one of the country's most notorious companies as a partner. Step forward ATOS, which has just been awarded a contract by Janet to look after the wellbeing of Bristol City Council's long suffering staff by running the occupational health service.

ATOS is of course the company making a mint out of government contracts by throwing disabled people off benefits after finding them 'fit for work' following dubious tests. Indeed, the company first shot to fame in 2011 when **1,100 PEOPLE DIED** in the first 8 months of that year soon after being found 'fit for work' by ATOS!

Just the firm to help out ordinary underpaid overworked council workers who don't have the benefit of a six-figure salary like Janet's, don't you think?

Pie spy shows locals who's boss

Since starting in 2003 at a shop on Stokes Croft, posh pie empire **PIEMINISTER** has gone on to become rather famous, and along the way contributed to the gentrification of BS2 which saw less wealthy local people priced out by trustfunded 'creatives' wearing ironic facial hair. Well, they couldn't afford the pies, so why hang around?

CRISPIN BUSK was Pieminister's UK Account Manager until he left in 2010 to start up his own upmarket instant noodle business, Kabuto. Whilst his Kabuto noodles lack the name recognition of his old company's products, privately-educated Cambridge graduate Crispin certainly took on board the Pieminister ethos of pitch-up-in-cheap-area-and-price-out-locals.



Cadbury garden closed thanks to cackling posho

Having moved in next door to popular Montpellier pub the Cadbury House, he decided he didn't like hearing people enjoying a few drinks and chatting in its much-loved beer garden, so began a campaign of noise complaints to the council.

And in a **VICTORY FOR BRAYING HOORAY HENRYS** everywhere, Busk succeeded in almost getting the pub's licence revoked - with the lasting result that you can't enjoy your beer outside past 10pm.

ANOTHER BUREAUCRAT, ANOTHER PLANET?

Bristol union bosses stitch up ordinary workers in brazen bids to protect status

UNISON TELLS UPPITY WOMEN 'STOP ORGANISING IN UWE'

Women workers in the University of West of England have been warned by Unison officials that they cannot 'organise' with other women trade unionists from Unite and UCU as this will bring Unison into 'disrepute'. Unison officials were apparently shocked when - as one of them put it - 'these troublesome middle-aged women' decided to organise across unions to fight for better conditions and pay for all women workers. *What planet are they on? A pretty sexist one as far as we can tell.*

UNISON LEADERSHIP ROOTS OUT RANK-AND-FILE RADICALS

Unison's actions are no surprise as don't-rock-the-boat full-timers have been waging a war against so-called 'militants' (i.e. active union members) for several years. This included the disgraceful expulsion of rank-and-file members for 'racism' because they used the 'Hear No Evil, See No Evil, Speak No Evil' three monkeys motif on a flyer! Unison leadership paranoia about its own members in Bristol even extended to internet denunciations of an elected branch secretary a couple of years ago - just because one timeserver lost their own election!

What planet are they on? They might as well join the Tories on their doomed asteroid of austerity.

UNITE ELECTIONS GET NASTY AS MCCLUSKEY FACES PAY CUT

Elections for General Secretary of Unite got nasty recently when incumbent union boss Len McCluskey was challenged by Bristolian Jerry Hicks. Hicks called for the General Secretary's salary to be cut from more than £122,000 to an average

wage of about £26,000.

This didn't go down well with King Len, who denounced him as a 'red opportunist' attempting to 'hijack' the union. *Seems like Len wants to keep his cushy Planet Unite to himself.*

TRADES COUNCIL BANS YOUNG BRISTOLIANS FROM MAY DAY

Young Bristolian 'anarchist troublemakers' have been blocked from participating in Bristol's Workers' Day celebrations this year because they wanted to 'do some history' explaining the political origins of May Day. According to a Trades Council official event organiser, "everyone knows" the history of the Haymarket in 1886, which led to seven anarchists being sentenced to death for campaigning for an eight hour working day. Well, you do, don't you? Given that the TC-organised May Day event already has an average participant age in the sixties, having a few young enthusiastic faces would make a change and help stop it dying out. Surely history is not that frightening? *Well, apparently on Planet Trades Council it is...*

SW TUC PLANS MEMORIAL FOR WORKERS - IN A CATHEDRAL!

Similarly the South West TUC has chosen to stage its 'Workers' Memorial' event for May Day in Bristol Cathedral. It's not rocket science to realise that this might cause problems attracting Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist etc, let alone atheist, union members! The four anarchist labour organisers murdered by the state in 1886 in Chicago which led to the worldwide 'Workers' Day' would be turning in their unbelieving graves so much that the cemetery will be shaking. *A strange Christian planet for SW TUC, it seems...*

MASSIVE MARKETS OVERSPEND PROVIDES FOOD FOR FRAUD

Why is Facilities Management leaking money like a sieve?

More news on Tony 'The Toerag' Harvey, the council's self-perking Facilities Manager following last issue's exposé of his parking charge dodge.

Now we can exclusively reveal he's a lot more careful with own money - about £50k a year from public funds - than he is with ours. Accounts published in November reveal that the Toerag's Facilities Management department is overspent by **AN INCREDIBLE £602,000** - racked up in just eight months! Much of which - £283,000 - he hasn't even bothered to account for.

The accounts do show, however, that the Toerag spent £104k on sacking staff and paying out redundancy - and that he overspent £51,000 on markets, which, er, are supposed to earn us money! So why exactly have council taxpayers been subsidising The Toerag's personal St Nick's

Market fiefdom to the tune of £1,500 a week?

The markets overspending doesn't stop there: in a special separate column in the accounts listed as 'Other income' we find Harvey recording a **FURTHER £165,000 LOSS** as "Markets Licence income shortfall". That's a "shortfall" of about £5k a week. What's on earth has The Toerag been up to with our money?

One possible explanation comes from the local branch of Unison. In an open letter to Mayor Gorgeous before the budget they said: "We have just had a situation in markets, with a deficit of £200,000 that may well turn out to be **FRAUD...**"

So that's all right then. Especially when you discover that another one of The Toerag's areas of responsibility is... City Council security and cash collection. *Your money safe in their hands? Ha!*



CHOC'S AWAY - FERGO OFFERS SHANKED SHAW REDEMPTION

*'No poor people' housing development for rich liberals
Chocolate Factory back from dead after secret meetings?*

Information about what His Royal Mayorness George was actually doing at the MIPIM conference in Cannes [see 'JUNKET GEORGE DOES EUROPE' on front page] has been suitably vague. He's variously been described as "attracting inward investment", "banging the drum for Bristol", and - so says the great man himself - "increasing our international standing". Conveniently for SUPERFERGO, none of this wishy-washy PR babble is provable one way or the other.

The Bristolian can exclusively reveal that high on George Ferguson's list of priorities at Cannes was an attempt to restart a controversial high-class housing project which he himself had originally been closely - and financially - associated with.

Whilst sunning himself on the Côte d'Azur at our expense, our Glorious Mayor Redpants had at least one private meeting with PAUL ISAACS from property developers Generator Group. In its own words, Generator Group "comprises a specialist developer, funding partner and advisor that exercises both its intellectual capital and financial knowledge to deliver effective and innovative solutions to a full range of property related matters." And it just so happens that Generator Group and Mr Isaacs have produced "a due diligence report and advice on a strategy to take the site forward" for an unnamed "strategic development site in the south west". The site in question? The so-called CHOCOLATE FACTORY in east Bristol's Greenbank, on the site of the old Elizabeth Shaw production line.

The Chocolate Factory is a site that the mayor has had both a significant personal and commercial interest in down the years. Those with longer memories may recall Ferguson was at the forefront of a campaign to have planning permission refused for the original site developers, Persimmon - only to pop up as the architect of a new "sustainable" scheme when Persimmon then sold the site on to local developers Squarepeg.

The Squarepeg-Ferguson project - basically a

housing scheme for wealthy liberals - quickly unravelled when it turned out to be totally unaffordable. Despite securing planning approval, they then had to go cap-in-hand to council planners and explain that they couldn't pay for any infrastructure costs (such as roads and education, in an area with an acute school places shortage) due to the huge cost of their upmarket scheme. Squarepeg also refused to include any more than 25 affordable homes in the 252 dwelling development, having grudgingly upped their initial offer of 14 - still short of the council's call for 10-30% to be suitable for lower income families.

Further controversy came when it emerged that somehow George had managed to "improve" his scheme by purchasing a piece of public land next to the Greenbank section of the Bristol and Bath Railway Path. He managed this coup in a private telephone call with the City Council's then Head of Planning, DAVID 'BASHER' BISHOP - against all stated city council procurement rules and regulations - in a manner never fully explained.

However, even with the granting of massive favours by his little council helpers, in 2009 George's ridiculous scheme collapsed under the weight of its own stupidity, never to be heard of again. Until now, that is, with the declaration by Mr Isaacs' company that the Ferguson/Squarepeg scheme "is neither deliverable nor viable" and the news that Generator Group has apparently produced a report on the site "offering various exit strategies based on appetite for risk and preferred timelines."

At which point George - now Mayor - reappears holding private meetings in Cannes with this major stakeholder in the site. Should our mayor really be holding meetings with developers regarding a site in which he's had a commercial interest? And what is the mysterious second project that Georgie is cooking up with Generator Group?

It's looking murky already...



Piggie in the middle? Mayor Fergo, his telephone chum ex-Planning boss Bishop, and Generator's Paul Isaacs...

BRISTOLIANBITES

BCC: enough to make you gag

What's the best way to make your organisation look bent from top to bottom? How about having to reveal under the Freedom of Information Act that you've been putting legal gagging orders on your staff - at the staggering rate of TWO A MONTH FOR FIVE YEARS?

Big congratulations then to Bristol City Council on its latest PR success in the national press where it's been revealed that the authority forced staff to sign 121 gagging orders between 2005 and 2010 - the second highest figure for a council across the country. *The Bristolian* is currently digging into more recent figures and will release them as soon as it has them.

Our contacts reveal that these gagging orders would certainly have been forced upon teachers, social workers and care workers working with vulnerable children and adults, as well as any staff who may have uncovered criminal wrongdoing or gross management incompetence of any kind.

The revelation comes as Bristol City Council - which is supposed to be saving money - has been forced to admit that forty per cent of its financial systems are "UNACCEPTABLE" and vulnerable to fraud and theft from criminals such as crooked managers. Basically, it's a culture of cover-up and denial at Bristol City Council - at our expense, naturally.

Anal phoney 'Independents'

The 'Independents for Bristol' (IfB) - Mayor Redpants' second crack at creating a political 'party that's not a party' in under a year following his 'Bristol 1st' ticket - is picking up pace, with eight people so far selected to run for council seats.

A typical flavour of IfB comes from its Clifton candidate, chartered accountant BRENDA MCLENNAN, the finance & operations boss at the Arnolfini Gallery. From her £800,000 Clifton Wood mansion she is promising "to shake things up at City Hall" as one of these "new types of politician" running for the IndyRedpants. And how very, very new her personal management practices are at the Arnolfini.

McLennan's snooty art gallery recently advertised for stewards, offering to pay them the princely sum of £6.20 AN HOUR - a whole 1p an hour more than the minimum wage! And for that "a flexible approach to working days and hours is required" as the gallery is open six days a week! Just the kind of progressive attitude to low pay and employment this city needs more of, isn't it?

A correction

In the last *Bristolian* we said "the rich are laughing into their caviar as their political allies in the City Council slash public spending for the young, the old and the disabled".

We now accept this was a disgraceful and inaccurate representation. We should have said, "the rich are laughing into their lobster and quaffing champagne..." Hearty apologies.

The BRISTOLIAN

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INDIE REDPANTS FOR BRISTOL!

Excitement is in the air for the forthcoming councillor elections in May after the creation of a new political party in the city that's key selling point is that it's really not a political party at all!

The newly formed 'Independents for Bristol' (IFB) party is running a slate of well-heeled middle class candidates across many leafy Bristol West wards. Although this wholly independent, anti-establishment party does appear to have managed to avoid standing candidates against any vulnerable Lib Dem cabinet members such as Clifton East's longstanding Minister for Culture & Junkets **SIMON COOK**, or over-promoted bartender-turned-Housing supremo **GUY POULTNEY** in Lockleaze.

This new party's website is full of the usual inconsequential guff about integrity, openness and honesty and talks of "a new type of politician being needed" due to "widespread disillusionment with party politics in the UK", although there's no sign of any actual policies or beliefs they might actually pursue should they be elected.

The party has been set up by former BBC journalist and professional posh bloke **STEPHEN PERRY**, who also set up Mayor Gorgeous's Bristol 1st Party. A fact which, when pointed out to him, gets Perry rather hot under the collar.

After all, how can a self-styled anti-establishment independent posh bloke possibly have a conflict of interest or be in any way less than honest about what he is up to?

Other supporters and candidates for the party include George's old millionaire mucker from Clifton, eco-waffler **ALISTAIR SAWDAY**, and one of George's campaign workers and former Lib Dem prospect, **JASON BUDD**.

Independent? My arse.

PRATTLE ROYALE IN ASHLEY!

It's all go in Ashley ward, which covers St Paul's, fashionable Montpelier, St Werburgh's and upmarket St Andrews, as sitting councillor and sacked former Lib Dem Transport chief **'JOLLY' JON ROGERS** is fighting to hold his seat from a Green onslaught. The Green's ultra-naïve **SIR GUS HOYTY-TOYTY** won the ward at a canter last time out, but it seems Jolly Jon has developed a triangulation strategy to fight back.

The beleaguered paper millionaire Lib Dem can now be regularly found on Facebook breathlessly hyping the joys of Reiki, pottery and other madcap green pastimes... How long before we discover he's converted to Buddhism or attached solar panels and a windmill to his spacious St Andrews pile?

He's up against Green **ROB TELFORD**, a political anorak and desperate wannabe in the provincial Lib Dem mould, best known for running an inane Twitter account and being prepared to turn up for the opening of an envelope anywhere, anytime in the Ashley Ward.



Telford vs Rogers: like a particularly scary mirror

Despite both candidates being politically predisposed to the mayor's proposed parking zones, strangely neither will commit to one in Ashley due to the uncertain electoral calculus involved in actually having an opinion on them! Just the kind of decisive conviction politicians we need to take the city forward. The other option for voters in Ashley, who's also yet to express an opinion on anything, is the Indie Redpants candidate, **KARL BELIZAIRE**, a "social entrepreneur" and self-styled "influential force of social innovation". Or 'wanker' as we would traditionally call him.



MONDAY: My amazing plan to transform Neighbourhood Partnerships into modern sustainable democratic moots of the people where they can have a proper inclusive say in how this fine city is run has taken a great leap forward.

The very nice people from the consultation team have set up an excellent online survey for people to have their say about their Neighbourhood Partnerships - and judging by the smashing comments we have had from all seven people who engaged with this inclusive process, it's all looking really positive and exciting indeed for democracy in this city.

Not long now before every neighbourhood from Stockwood to Henbury will be able to 'cry freedom' and decide everything from which potholes they want repaired to what colour they want their park benches painted (well, if there are any park benches left once we start chopping them up and burning them in the City Hall biomass boiler to save on fuel bills). Because as the lovely and clever Parks supremo Mrs Morgan explained to me when I bumped in to her in the corridor, "the parks amenities furniture transformation sub-budget has been reabled for cultural regeneration initiatives, and the transformed budget will be expended on the long term place making objective of delivering a contemporary

continental green capital streetscene scenario through the promotion of non-permanent sculptural practice."

I was confused too but then Mrs Morgan said, "George is going to spend the money on large inflatable vegetables, dear". Sometimes it's all really bananas at George's City Hall!

TUESDAY: Had hoped to get started on my brilliant plan to transform equalities in the city today, so I popped down to the Equalities Unit at about 9.30am but no one had arrived for work yet. When I popped back at 1 o'clock they had all gone to lunch, and then in the afternoon they were all on a training course. Still, it is good to know that we're investing so heavily in equalities training. It really underlines my commitment, don't you think?

Even without my amazing equalities plan to make us all more equal I think there's the buzz of equality in the air right now in this city. I saw two black men across the street in St Paul's yesterday who looked perfectly happy. They even stopped and greeted me with some of their traditional street jive moves. One I had not seen before. They both raised their right arm and flicked their wrist from side-to-side while chanting "King Anchor, King Anchor". Not sure what it means? Probably traditional patois? Or is King Anchor a popular dancehall artist? We're nothing if not streetwise hepcats at George's City Hall!

WEDNESDAY: Went over to the Create Centre today just to breathe some amazing sustainable air. Touched base with lots of the green sustainable thinkers this council has. It gives me a lot of hope for the future when I meet a staff team where hemp clothing's the norm and who think nothing of still wearing their bicycle clips in the office.

While I was staring out of the window with not much to do, I saw the Property Services guys from the sixth floor all heading out for lunch. Does anyone know why so many of them take their golf clubs when they go out to lunch? Sometimes it's a confusing place, George's City Hall!

FRIDAY: After spending yesterday helping my good friend Dr Jon sort out his bottle recycling (it soon mounts up), today I met with finance boss Mr Robinson again. I wanted him to go through the figures for my brilliant plan to save the Homeless Prevention Fund by scrapping adult education. He must have been there for ten minutes punching figures in to his calculator, scratching his head and swearing under his breath. Eventually he got up, said, "I won't be a minute" and disappeared. He reappeared ten minutes later with a sheet of paper full of figures and confirmed it all added up. He also told me he thought it was a great idea and a fine example of creative thinking from a politician and made a funny little laugh.

I also asked him why we couldn't collect the £165,000 worth of market licence fee arrears the Lib Dem administration were responsible for, and then spend that money on the homeless. Mr Robinson went very quiet for a minute while his mouth open and closed like a goldfish before explaining that this "wouldn't be possible for all sorts of reasons". He then had to go as he was attending a house warming party for Mr Morris the Market Service Manager at his big new house in Weston-super-Mare and he was already running late.

Reflecting on Mr Robinson's explanation, I must say it's very convincing. We're right on top of the accounts at George's City Hall!

Email Gus stories to BristolianNews@gmail.com