

The BRISTOLIAN

"Smiter of the High and Mighty"

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CUFF LOVE

Council wants local residents seeking help put on lockdown



It's not just budget cuts that are starting to bite in Bristol – now it's **HANDCUFFS** around the wrists as well.

The startling move to issue security guards at Phoenix Court 'Customer Service Point' with cop-style restraints – authorised by Strategic Property Director **ROBERT 'ORRIBLE' ORRETT** – comes as BCC continues to trim budgets across the whole city. This leads to fewer council workers working out of fewer buildings being told to cut assistance to hard-up Bristolians wherever possible. That means more people trekking to one of just five 'Customer Service Points' that have consolidated the functions of the much more numerous old Neighbourhood Offices –

with limited waiting space and long queues before being seen.

As you can imagine, as a place where people at the end of their tether go – like those facing eviction due to the Bedroom Tax, or who those made homeless with their families because they can't afford their private landlord's rent rises – Phoenix Court is a place with a sometimes tinder-box atmosphere. Therefore you would expect a bit of patience, and at least a friendly face.

Not at **PHOENIX COURT**, where the BCC customer services approach reigns supreme. Burly bouncers run the door like that of a particularly disagreeable nightclub, and only let so many people in. With the housing crisis in Bristol, this

means many trying to access services are simply left out on the pavement – kids and elderly alike, rain or shine. Try to get some shelter, and you lose your place.

If you ask too many questions, you are now very likely to end up being 'restrained' in cuffs by one of the doormen.

Rumours of anti-Somali attitudes persist – not surprising when one Somali man trying to get in recently was forcibly ejected onto his head, requiring hospital treatment. Another was told, as he lay on the floor "if you want to live in this country, you better learn the rules". Priceless – flee your wartorn country to avoid persecution, pass draconian asylum tests, only to get beaten up when you try to access housing services.

None of those working on the service desks want this level of security or violence. It has become so bad that residents in Easton are working on a petition about the **OUT-OF-CONTROL** security guards at Phoenix Court.

Staff shortages currently mean new housing applications routinely take six months to be processed. And in the meantime, you are more likely to be attacked if you are a punter than a staff member: recently, one homeless person was sat upon by an office manager shouting obscenities, until the police turned up. It was this incident that prompted Orrett – more used to covering up fraud than addressing employee welfare – to kit out his own little **PRIVATE ARMY** with cuffs, despite not having properly addressed the legal issues of using force in this way.

How long before some bright spark in Shitty Hall proposes that parking wardens be equipped with tasers, or park keepers with CS gas?

We are already checking on rumours that school dinner ladies are getting pepper spray to dissuade any young Oliver Twists. "Please Miss, can I have some mor-ARRRGHH MY EYES!!!"

FERGUSON FAMILY FIND FUNDING - NOTHING FOR KNOWLE WEST

Congratulations to local group **PLAYING OUT**, which has secured major government funding for its work in encouraging "resident-led street play activity" (that's helping parents make roads safe for kids to play on).

The announcement of the cash injection came just as several streets around the City Centre were closed to traffic for the first 'Make Sunday Special' events. The latest bright idea of Mayor George Ferguson – who's still having trouble getting his

'boulevards of solar-powered giant inflatable vegetables' scheme off the ground – five monthly traffic-free Sundays are planned until October, costing Bristol a total of nearly **£200,000**.

Whilst a boon to the street performers and circus groups paid to entertain, you can't help but wonder if the money could be spent better elsewhere...

Certainly **KWADS**, the Knowle West-based support service for friends and family of those

affected by alcohol and drugs, which has just had £180,000 funding snatched away by the council-supported quango Safer Bristol, could do with a bit of that **JUGGLING-AND-MIME CASH**.

So maybe KWADS could ask Fergo for some assistance – or perhaps not. Knowle West isn't really fashionable enough for Fergo, and anyway kids there already play out in the streets safely...

Without help from Playing Out (director: Alice Ferguson – DAUGHTER OF THE MAYOR).

Visit **TheBRISTOLIAN.net** for the latest news!

BRISTOLIANBITES

TAKE GEORGE HOME!

If you missed it when it first went up onto the super soaraway *Bristolian* website, the **GEORGE FERGUSON 'OBEY' POSTER** is still available for you to download!

Simply follow the link below and print out as many copies as you desire – and we know that when it comes to Bristol's Number One Citizen, it's difficult to dial down the desire... www.TinyURL.com/FergObey



A SICK RACKET...

Bristol City Council traffic bosses are using the **RESIDENTS PARKING ZONE** in Kingsdown to bleed money from hospital patients, visitors and staff, an internal memo reveals.

The Kingsdown RPZ has proved a **HANDY CASH COW** for the council, providing thousands of pounds in parking fees and fines thanks to the proximity of nearby medical facilities such as the Bristol Royal Infirmary, St Michael's, the Children's Hospital and the Oncology Centre.

In a document seen by *The Bristolian*, council traffic chiefs say, "It is likely that the Kingsdown scheme, for which we have most data, will generate more income than the future schemes will. This is because it is close to a number of **KEY ATTRACTORS** such as the University and the Hospital."

And there was us thinking that hospitals were much-loved vital public services to be respected and cherished. Not at Bristol City Council. They're an income attractor!

So mind how you park if you're unfortunate enough to have a relative at the BRI: The ghouls will be waiting to turn your care into cash...

PARKING HYPOCRISY

Talking of RPZs, one thing Mayor Fergo didn't mention when he was belatedly trying to sell Residents' Parking Zones to a sceptical Bristolian public, is how he **PERSONALLY BENEFITS** from permit-free parking in Southville.

Yes, his very own trendy bar/theatre the **TOBACCO FACTORY** actually advises its patrons to park on neighbouring streets!

The Tobacco Factory website brassily states "we recommend on-street parking. There are a number of residential streets off Raleigh Road...which are probably your best bet."

Now that's joined up thinking, George!

INHUMAN RESOURCES?

Overtime ban threatened - but no one knows effects

Showing the sort of blue skies nonsense we are becoming familiar with under Führer Fergo's regime of redtrouser lunacy, a clique of overpaid senior managers has decided to **SLASH** overtime payments to a huge section of council employees.

The measures, put to the Human Resources Committee at its last meeting, were submitted as 'information' – but it's clear that the councilors on the HRC, which is supposed to oversee all changes to terms and conditions for BCC staff, haven't a clue what to do.

The overtime ban the bosses want in place will initially affect those on pay grades BG11 and above – hitting mostly middle managers – but sure as shit rolls downhill, it won't be long before those on lower wage packets suffer too.

Chaired since May by Labour's Mike Langley, ably assisted by his Brislington East wingman Mike Wollacott, their party colleague Bill 'In The Arse' Payne, plus duff Lib Dems Fi Hance and Glenise Sweeting 'Sour' Morgan and rounded out by Tory buffoon Dick Eddy, the HRC has so far **BOTTLED** the issue. It's not as though it is the first they have heard about it – the 'no overtime' policy was brought up at a **FRACTIOUS** full council meeting in February.

You would think that in the half-year since then some detailed costings would have been offered, or research started into the effects of such major cutbacks... But this being Bristol City Council,

there has been nothing of the sort.

Instead, it appears the committee members are following the lead of the very people they are supposed to be directing: the **CUTS-HAPPY** top bosses running the council from the shadows, seemingly to please the increasingly temperamental and aloof George Ferguson.

Unions have asked for a financial breakdown, and an explanation of how the changes will affect service delivery, only to be told that senior managers have 'considered' this – but that there are no actual figures or even minutes of meetings to back this up. Funny, that...

The usual lame promises that 'this will not happen again' were offered, plus the announcement that a full report on savings, and service delivery will be forthcoming at sometime in the next six months to a year.

The clear result of this policy will be the **GRINDING TO A HALT** of a vast array of out-of-office-hours services, from building security and maintenance of the docks system to public health inspections and support for vulnerable people - because no one in their right mind would work for nothing. Perhaps that's the aim – for all we know Mayor Ferguson, the HRC and their senior officer chums want us all eating horsemeat burgers and the city flooded.

That would make more sense than the excuses they've offered so far.

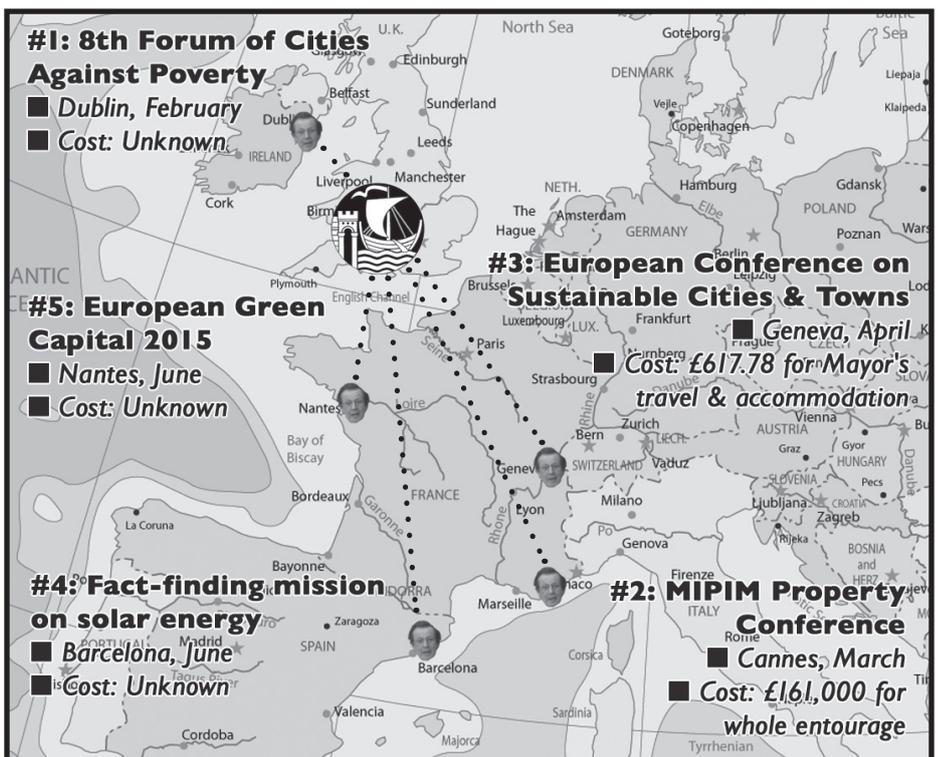
REDTROUSER RADAR

Help us track our beloved King George!

It's tricky keeping abreast of exactly where our illustrious millionaire Mayor has been **JETTING OFF** to - five trips in just six months this year

alone, racking up an impressive 5,000 air miles.

So please drop The Bristolian a line if you spot the Redtrousered One on an overseas FergoJaunt - our contact details are just opposite...



NOTHING VENTURED, NOTHING GAINED...

A couple of examples emerge of just how charitable our old friends at the **SOCIETY OF MERCHANT VENTURERS** really are.

First, please step forward **TIM ROSS** who seems well-versed in that old Venturer trick of turning public money into private wealth.

Ross was, until June last year, Chairman of financial basketcase waste company May Gurney (see *The Bristolian* #4.3 & 4.4), currently being rescued from financial collapse via a multi-million pound takeover by anti-union construction outfit, Kier Group. Indeed such are the financial problems at May Gurney that Bristol City Council has been discouraged from enforcing the penalty clauses in its waste collection contract with the company as it was thought it would bankrupt them and our rubbish could go uncollected.

However, bankruptcy is not something that's likely to happen to Ross: once the ink was dry on May Gurney's contract with the city council, he cashed in 100,000 of his shares in December 2011 to pocket **A COOL £235,000** - conveniently before the share price of the company went south! He scarpers as Chairman of May Gurney six months later, just a few months before the share price tumbled below a pound.

Our second all-heart, all-charidee Venturer is **CULLUM MCALPINE**, scion of the civil engineering giant Sir Alfred McAlpine Ltd, a firm that is never far from a tasty government contract or two. Cullum is a director of the company and has been personally named in papers lodged with the high court as being "intimately" involved in the

operation of a "clandestine" organisation - The Consulting Association - holding a list of people barred from the construction industry. Or trade union blacklisting as it's generally known.

The court papers claim, "McAlpine was the founding chairman at the [Consulting Association's] inception in 1993. He was intimately involved in the foundation and operation of TCA. He formally offered Mr Kerr the position of director in August 1993. He finalised the written particulars of Mr Kerr's employment, sending them to members for approval and obtaining legal advice in relation to them. He oversaw the arrangement of life and health insurance for Mr Kerr as part of his remuneration."

Ian Kerr was the director of The Consulting Association, the organisation which operated the **ILLEGAL BLACKLIST OF WORKERS** on behalf of big construction firms until he was exposed and prosecuted in 2009.

Perhaps Mr McAlpine should keep better company - as should the Society of Merchant Venturers.

AND ANOTHER THING ...

Venturer **DAVID ORD**, co-owner of the Bristol Port Company at Avonmouth, has donated more than £330,000 to the Tory Party since 2005.

He was also one of forty donors to attend dinners with senior ministers, including the Prime Minister, in the last quarter of 2012.

So, did Ord use his access to 'Dodgy' David Cameron to lobby for the scrapping of plans for an electricity-generating Severn estuary barrage?

COUNCIL FRAUDWATCH

Sticky-fingered or just very careless with our money?

Another month another bent council manager exposed at that open cess pool that passes for our local authority...

Latest to come to our attention is **PAUL COX**, a manager in the council's landscape department. Responsible for allocating 90% of the department's work to outside contractors, Cox has just been convicted of conspiracy to defraud along with local builder **ROGER LOWREY**.

Their scam was simple. Lowrey inflated his fees charged to the council, Cox waded them through and the pair split the profit. It's thought the pair ran the **SCAM** for eighteen months in 2009-11. However, what's interesting is that the fraud wasn't exposed by the council's armies of auditors, handsomely remunerated senior management or their many finance bods - none of whom apparently had any idea what was going on - but by a member of staff at Lowrey's building firm.

It seems extraordinary that Cox was able to present **BENT INVOICES** for eighteen months with no one noticing doesn't it? Where was the basic oversight? Or were our council management turning a blind eye again?

And speaking of blind eyes, over at the council's Markets Service - where Facilities boss, **TONY 'THE TOERAG' HARVEY** has overseen the disappearance of £165,000 of licence fees - confusion reigns. Two weeks ago his Royal Georgeness announced that there was "no evidence" of fraud in his Markets Service although he could offer no explanation as to what might have happened to our £165,000. Then two days later George's loyal Cabinet gopher Sir Gus Hoyty-Toyty announced that money has been **STOLEN** from the Markets Service safe!!!

When asked if he was calling the police about this theft of public money, Hoyty-Toyty declined to do so. This is odd, as a week later, Hoyty-Toyty put out a press release, which could have come straight out of Tory Central Office. "Our approach is one of **ZERO TOLERANCE**, a stance which has the backing of the public," announced the fraud-buster general in relation to council house tenancy fraud.

So it's one rule - "zero tolerance" - for plebs in council houses; and another rule for Sir Gus's dodgy manager pals in suits is it?

BRISTOLIAN BITES

THE 'PLOT 6' THICKENS

Politicians from across the spectrum are quick to insist that 'Plot 6' at Temple Meads train station - situated in the heart of the Tories' so-called **ENTERPRISE ZONE** next to Brunel's original building - is pencilled in to become a much-needed transport interchange. No, 'onest guv!

This seems a bit strange as plans for the site have always shown Plot 6 occupied by a grotty speculative development of office blocks. And now *The Bristolian* learns that desperate planning bosses offered the plot to the BBC last year as a base for their operations in the city - and as part of a transparent attempt to boost the Enterprise Zone's thin claims to be a centre for the creative industries.

Alas, the BBC declined the offer, presumably not really wanting to move to a **DULL WASTELAND** of office blocks and car parks.

But surely our councillors and Mayor Fergo need to have an urgent chat with Enterprise Zone boss - unelected Tory-boy Venturer Colin Skellett - and find out what his plans really are?

MALLETT'S MAYOR

Ever wondered what connects esteemed can-do, hands-on, low-impact city godfather George Ferguson and 'wacky' kids' TV has-been **TIMMY MALLETT**? Well, we've found the man to ask...



Step forward John Miles, of the John Miles Organisation, talent spotter extraordinaire and representative to the stars. Yes, our very own Mayor has himself a **SHOWBIZ AGENT!**

He's in illustrious company - JMO boasts not just Fergo and Timmy on its books, but also dead alleged kiddy-groper Terry Nutkins, audience-killing king of 'family entertainment' Noel Edmonds and *Points West's* Alex Lovell!

How long before he's charging for autographs?

HIBAQ TO BASICS SCANDAL

It seems that those pesky mutterings about "unprofessional personal relationships" we mentioned in the last *Bristolian* might sabotage new Bristol Labour councillor **HIBAQ JAMA's** political career before it gets going.

Of course, it's never wise to brazenly have affairs with people who work for you whilst mistreating other staff members.

But then to dump your lover the moment you're selected for a political candidacy on the grounds that they don't match your carefully-honed public image? That just seems foolish.

Because that sort of thing tends to come back and haunt you...

The BRISTOLIAN

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£103 IS THE MAGIC NUMBER...

We investigate that venerable local tradition the arbitrary Council Tax charge

Anyone who has ever had trouble paying their Council Tax, been hassled over the Single Occupancy Discount or chased over wrongly-issued demands will know the significance of £103.

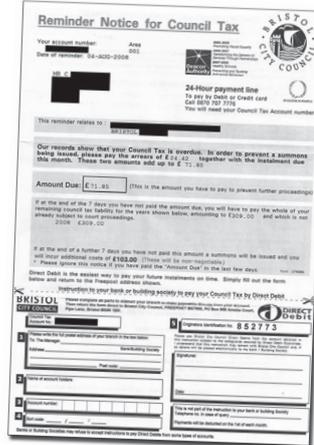
This is the charge the City Council makes for summons to the Magistrate Courts to make you 'liable to pay the tax'. Why they have to do this is a bit of a MYSTERY to those who live by common sense: after all, they sent you a bill, so don't they know who should be paying it?

But what the Council doesn't tell us is how they come to that odd - but precise - figure of £103. *The Bristolian* can reveal that the actual summons costs just £3, with the Magistrates Courts taking £25 in expenses. And what a surprise... Bristol City Council rakes off a MASSIVE £75 for itself. For doing what exactly?!

No wonder BCC has been flinging these liability orders out like confetti over the Bristol public. In 2007-8 the Council raked in a WHOPPING

£1.6 MILLION from these threatening summonses - and with the sharp rise in snooping on Council Tax payers (including the hiring of extra investigators) of recent years, you can expect it's increased since then.

It seems to us, what with Con-Dem cuts and costs of uneconomic 'witch-hunts' on the public, BCC needs to find other ways of raising cash. What better than that to clog up the over-stretched courts with liability orders - wasting all our time and money - whilst making £75 a shot. Whether the Council Tax-payers are guilty or innocent, it's a good earner. If it was done by anyone other than the council it would be called for what it really is



– a protection racket based on intimidation and threats.

It's not all bad news; one angry Council Tax payer who was WITCH-HUNTED for 18 months by BCC over his single person discount contacted *The Bristolian*. Like so many, he was found to be completely in the clear and so refused to pay the £103 charge: "I didn't see why I should be charged for the privilege of being found innocent," he told us. Standing up to the council's bullying worked - BCC backed off and waived the costs.

So fellow Bristolians, complain and refuse to pay the £103: it's just a money-making scam designed to scare you into coughing up for no good reason.



MONDAY: Bumped into our brilliant new Chief Executive Mrs Yates today while I was wandering around on the third floor trying to find something useful to do. She was at the photocopier running off a considerable amount of paperwork headed 'GAGGING ORDER'. I asked her what she was up to as a bit of a conversational opening gambit and apparently she was just doing some early preparatory work to pop in the top drawer of her desk. Then she gave me a little grin, grabbed the paperwork and headed off to her office - sorry, I mean flexible work space.

I must say she seems very professional and efficient and she can operate a photocopier! Certainly an improvement on Mr Sims, who seemed to need a PA to switch a light on for him never mind operate a Blackberry or that iPad he was given that he thought was a clipboard for the first three weeks. I sense already that Nicola is the person to lead the new hi-tech open City Hall culture George and I are embedding. Good times!

TUESDAY: High-level meeting with new Cabinet member, Labour's superb Mark Bradshaw today. To be able to work alongside such a supremely gifted and able politician and first rate intellect is a privilege. Mark and I discussed very important matters relating to George's proposed RPZ scheme that I can't

tell you about. Although we will inform the public at an appropriate time. As Mark said, car parking is far too important to discuss in public.

WEDNESDAY: Had an excellent two o'clock with George today. I must say he's in a far better mood since he went up to Harley Street to see his doctor about his anxiety issues. He's now installed a comfy sofa in his office and he was lying on it wearing only his favourite Fairtrade silk dressing gown (red, of course) with his feet up reading *Fifty Shades Of Grey!* He's also mentally firing on all cylinders again and has had yet another brilliant idea - 'City of Cheese'

Apparently he bought a particularly ripe and vibrant brie at our first Make Sunday Special food market and he thinks Bristol Brie could be a really amazing international place-making tool for the city. I could only agree and promised - as the Cabinet lead on food - to get on it right away. I then had to leave as he needed to take his Effexor, whatever that is, and relax for a while.

THURSDAY: Finally got in today to see Mr Mann, our transport boss, over at Brunel House. What a strange meeting. When I walked in Mr Mann was holding a small teddy bear at his face level and appeared to be having a conversation with it. "Hello Sir Gus," he said, "this is Teddy. He helps me with policy."

Thinking I had better change the subject sharply, I pointed at a large green safe in the corner of the room that seemed to be wrapped in about four toughened steel chains secured by around six padlocks. "That's where I keep the Greater Bristol Bus Network performance statistics," explained Mr Mann. "We can't be too careful. We don't want them getting out to the

press or public, do we?" he muttered quietly.

If nothing else, I suppose we should be impressed by Mr Mann's commitment to information security. The rest of the meeting was about RPZs, which I can't tell you anything about because car parking is quite rightly a top secret issue.

FRIDAY: Had a row today on Twitter with those horrible, nasty, beastly people at *The Bristolian*. They keep banging on about this missing £165,000 missing from the Market Service that I'm ultimately responsible for. It is of course all complete nonsense. As George has kindly explained to them there is no evidence of any wrongdoing at all. So come on guys, sometimes you just have to accept that £165,000 just disappears from public sector organisations without any explanation. Mankind isn't perfect, is it? We just can't explain everything, can we? Like how bees fly; UFOs; the Loch Ness Monster; the Bermuda Triangle; Alastair Sawday; homeopathy and David Lynch films. Some things are simply pure mystery.

Besides I'm happy to confirm that Mr Harvey, the Facilities Manager responsible for overseeing the money, has fully investigated himself and has confirmed nobody has done anything wrong. The Metropolitan Police seem to be able to investigate themselves without all this fuss. What more do these people want?

They should join UKIP with all the other racist stirrers and RPZ resisters who want to destroy mine and George's progressive coalition for Green progress in Bristol with their relentless focusing on silly little details and small amounts of missing money rather than looking at the big canvas of Bristol George and I are busy colouring in green.