

# Cabot News

Serving Kingsdown, Cotham, Brandon Hill, Redcliffe, Spike Island and the City Centre

Edited by Mark Wright & Anne White

## WINTER 2005

Thirty years of service!



## Labour's Social Services Failure

**AN ENORMOUS "BLACK HOLE"** has suddenly appeared in the Social Services and Health budget which has been the responsibility of the Labour group on the City Council for the past nine years.

Last year the Liberal Democrat led coalition cabinet tried to protect front line services by awarding the largest Social Services and Health budget increase in recent years. Faced with a large overspend this year and a budgeted overspend for next year of around £12 million (10% of its budget), the new minority Labour administration is now cutting many front line services. Additionally, shortly before Christmas, Labour announced that Bristol's overall two star rating for social services ("satisfactory but not good") had slumped to a single star. In what gives every impression of panic, they have appointed an external consultant at £750 per day to advise them on how to get control of this department; and to compound the situation, the council's head of social services has been signed off sick with stress!

Commenting, local campaigner **Mark Wright** said "It is wrong that front-line services should be cut. This will reduce the quality of life for some vulnerable people to intolerable levels. Savings must be made in areas of non service delivery and administration."



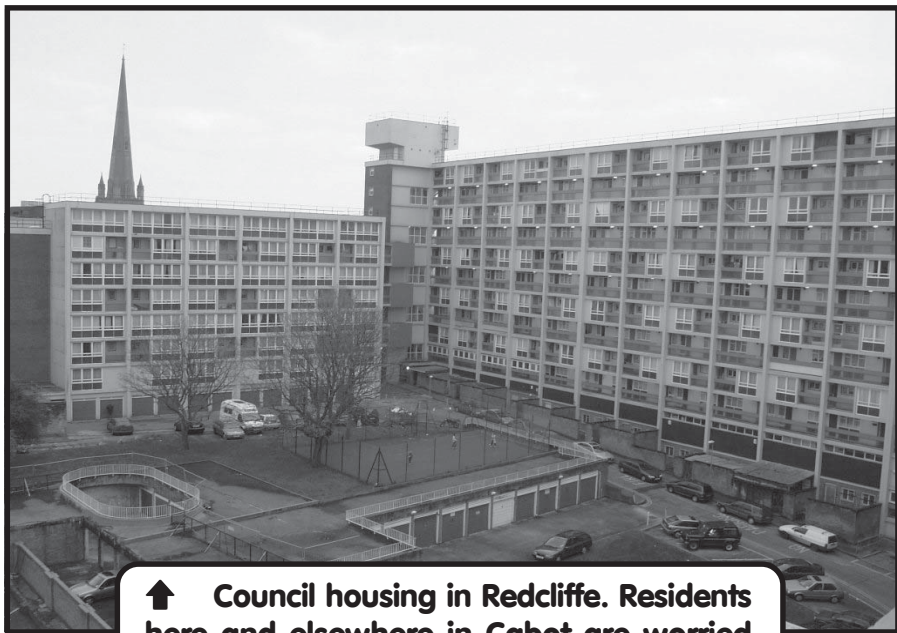
↑ **VITAL SOCIAL SERVICES CUT BY BRISTOL'S LABOUR COUNCIL.** Stephen Williams (L) and Mark Wright (R) say vulnerable people should not have to pay for Labour's mismanagement.

## Council Tenants choose to stay with the Council

Bristol's Council tenants have indicated that they wish their homes to remain owned and managed by the Council - the so called 'fourth option', rather than see the management of their homes transferred to an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), or see the housing stock transferred to a housing association under a Large Scale Stock Transfer (LSVT), or to seek funds through a Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Replies to date indicated that the first preference of 74% of tenants was to remain with the Council, compared with 18% for ALMO, 6% for LSVT and only 3% for PFI.

Every year the Government takes a portion of the rents paid by Bristol's tenants and redistributes it to other local authority housing providers, *mainly in Labour heartlands in the North of England*. This Dick Turpin style robbery is called HRA negative subsidy, and the cost will increase to a whopping £10 million in the next five years; so that by 2010 Bristol will be unable to balance its housing budget. However, for housing stock to remain owned and managed by the Council it has to demonstrate that it has a balanced business plan. Forecasts suggest a £50 million hole by 2010, and this can only be avoided through a 10% saving in management costs, which is likely to decimate the network of local area offices, cut in the amount spent on day to day repairs and maintenance by 10%, and delay for a number of years - or even drop altogether - a substantial part of the long term investment programme.

**Cabot** prospective councillor **Mark Wright** said: "Housing is a major issue in Cabot ward. Many people have the wrong idea about Cabot - they think that being in the city centre the ward is all big Georgian houses and offices. In fact, fully 1/5 of Cabot's housing is city council stock, with much of it concentrated in the Redcliffe and Dove Street area. And these residents are really worried about the future. According to a MORI poll, nearly 1/3 of social housing renters said that the issue of housing would affect their voting decision. The only way to force the government to stop both the unfair robbing of Bristol's housing budget, and to make repair investment funds available to the Council under the 'fourth option', is by using your vote against them at the ballot-box in May."



↑ **Council housing in Redcliffe. Residents here and elsewhere in Cabot are worried about the future of council housing.**

### You just can't trust them...

October: "I don't want to be council leader"  
says Bristol Labour leader Peter Hammond  
November: Peter Hammond seizes the council leadership.

But it seems that Labour leaders have a habit of leadership trickery:

"There is nothing you could ever say to me now that I could ever believe!" - Gordon Brown to Tony Blair when he learns Blair will not step down as leader as he promised he would.

## Lib Dems... the only realistic alternative to Labour

# Liberal Democrats - Action for Bristol



↑ The White Bear Pub. Late licenses in residential areas will be opposed by Liberal Democrats

## Late licence for The White Bear Pub is blocked, again...

The White Bear's application for a late licence has been blocked, again, in court. In a written submission to the court, **Mark Wright** - local campaigner and Liberal Democrat prospective Councillor for Cabot - pointed out that the Kingsdown area is already well within walking distance of several late night drinking areas.

Mark added, "Proprietors need to use a bit of common sense when making applications. Late licence applications by venues in residential areas will be strongly opposed by locals. This particular application was also opposed by the police and the university."

The new licensing act takes effect later this year. This will allow flexible extended pub opening hours up to 24 hours a day. There are some concerns about the impact that this will have on residential streets close to areas with a high density of licensed premises. Following a request from the Redland and Cotham Amenities Society, the area to the east of Whiteladies Road has been designated a "Cumulative Impact Area", together with the City Centre. This means that each licence application does not have to be judged simply on its merits, but that the licensing authority can also take into account other licensed premises nearby and their cumulative impact on the area.

"Residents and local politicians will need to be vigilant and examine new applications which are likely to come when the law changes. **Liberal Democrats will stand up for local residents**" Mark says.

## From Feast to Famine: Labour's Budget

**BRISTOL'S COUNCIL TAX LOOKS SET TO SOAR** this year, despite Chancellor Gordon Brown's pre-election generosity when he announced the increase in his "support grant" - which accounts for approximately two thirds of local government funding. **Bristol's increase was 7.4% against an average of 5.6%, AND Bristol benefited from a number of other factors and corrections of past errors.** It received ~£15 million for growth in services, on top of a similar sum to cover inflation and pay increases.

Regrettably, you will not notice any benefit from these increases. By an extraordinary feat of financial management by Labour, Bristolians will suffer the highest increase in Council Tax that Westminster will allow (expected to be 4.9%), together with savage cuts in services (especially Social Services). **Lib Dem** spokesman on budgetary matters, Cotham's councillor Barry Dodd, notes that the origins of Labour's self imposed problems can be found a year ago when they and the Conservatives voted for a budget which used "non-recurring reserves" to finance this year's expenditure. This simply transferred last year's problems to this year, instead of solving with them properly.

## Bristol Community Sport Axed

Bristol Community Sport (BCS) have not been short-listed for the future running of the Council's sports centres and pools, despite having the current contract. Because the Labour council has never made the regular investment needed to keep Bristol's pools and facilities up to acceptable standards, BCS has faced a continuous fall in visitors and hence needed an ever increasing subsidy from the Council to keep them afloat each year.

**Cabot Councillor Anne White** says: "The Audit Commission were very critical about the sports service provision in Bristol making comments such as: *Bristol's sports services fall well short of those provided elsewhere by similar councils; indoor leisure centres and swimming pools are outdated, and many are in a poor state of repair; there is poor access to most facilities for people with disabilities.* We must ensure that Labour's poor record of maintenance and investment in facilities is not allowed to continue so that the new operator for our sports facilities is not hamstrung in the future."



↑ Cllr Anne White and Mark Wright examine the back of the Industrial Museum site

## Museum of Bristol Update

The Council have appointed LAB Studios to prepare a scheme for the conversion of the Industrial Museum into the Museum of Bristol. The Council have been earmarked £10M of Heritage Lottery money if they can come up with a viable scheme and business plan by June 2005. The Council will have to show how it will fund the remainder of the building costs amounting to over £6M, and prove that free entry can be sustained. Over the next two months local residents will be given an opportunity to comment on the future content of the Museum and the building design.

## Three things to remember...

- 1 Mark and Stephen are the local choice**  
Mark Wright is a Bristolian, and Stephen Williams has lived in Bristol for 20 years; both have a record of working hard for local people.
- 2 Your current Labour MP sits on the fence**  
She did not vote on vital issues like Iraq, student fees, NHS changes and post office closures.
- 3 Only Lib Dems or Labour can win Bristol West**  
The Lib Dems were only 4,426 votes behind Labour at the last general election. The Tories are out of the race. Election experts say the Lib Dems can win here.

## Contacting your local Cabot Lib Dem Team...

[www.cabot-liberals.org](http://www.cabot-liberals.org)



**Cllr Anne White**  
Cabot Ward Councillor

42 Logan Rd, Bristol, BS7 8DR  
anne\_white@bristol-city.gov.uk  
0117 903 1946



**Mark Wright**  
Cabot Ward Prospective Councillor

53 Hampton Rd, Cotham  
Bristol, BS6 6HZ  
mark@cabot-liberals.org  
0117 973 0562



**Stephen Williams**  
Bristol West Prospective MP

Flat 6, 14 Portland St, Kingsdown,  
Bristol, BS2 8HL  
stevewilliams@cix.co.uk  
0117 944 1714

## My problem, query or suggestion is :



NAME ..... TEL .....

ADDRESS .....

E-MAIL .....

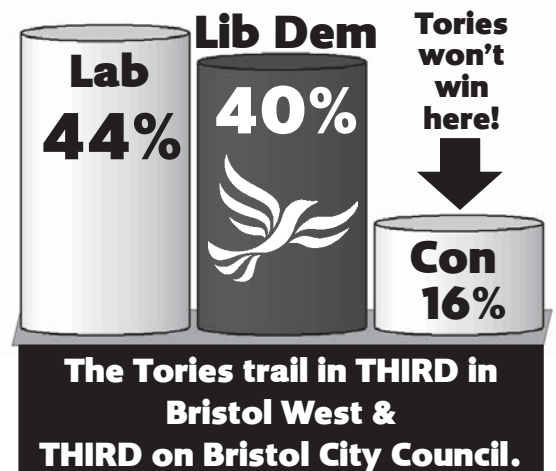
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Printed by KingPrint Unit 6, Fenton Court, 1-3 Fenton Road, Bishopston, Bristol, BS7 8ND. Published by Cabot Liberal Democrats at 53 Hampton Road, Bristol, BS6 6HZ.