

# The BRISTOLIAN

"Smiter of the High and Mighty"

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>> BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL: WE'RE BEING

# ROBBED!

More cash disappearing from 'of concern' authority - this time from cash-in-transit

WE'VE already REVEALED on the internet that Bristol City Council's money management is 'OF CONCERN' and that they're unable to account for LARGE SUMS of our money. Now *The BRISTOLIAN* can reveal that considerable sums of money have disappeared from their internal CASH-IN-TRANSIT service.

That's the department that collects CASH from across the authority and ensures it is safely BANKED! We're talking about money that comes from stuff like car parking, council tax, rents and licence fees. Hard-earned cash that we hand over to the council on a daily basis.

A council report - quietly released last month and exposed by *The BRISTOLIAN* - listed a huge number of major FINANCIAL CONCERNS. Topping the list of problems was a case of 'material income misappropriation' or 'theft' as

it's commonly known. Now it's been confirmed to us here at *The BRISTOLIAN* that this theft took place in the very council service trusted to collect and protect our cash!

Specific details of the scam are still sketchy. However, in similar circumstances that let £165k in the council's MARKET SERVICE go walkabout without explanation, it appears that very basic cash management procedures and financial checks and balances have been systematically IGNORED by managers. Helpfully creating a culture where money can disappear with IMPUNITY and with little chance of discovery.

The council's response to this latest scandal, so far, has been PATHETIC. Their internal audit team plan to develop an 'action plan' to deal with it! That's right. No investigation; no cops called and no blame dished out! This is

said to be because, in another mirror of the MARKETS FIASCO, the accounts in the department have been so abused degraded and generally screwed by managers that investigators can justifiably state that there's "no evidence of wrongdoing".

But then that's because there's no evidence of anything contained in their accounts at all! Information on how much money they've actually bloody collected compared to how much they've put in the bank simply doesn't exist!

And guess who's overseeing this latest financial fiasco? Step forward Facilities Manager, TONY "THE TOERAG" HARVEY, the same man who oversaw the disappearance of £165K of our money in the Markets Service!

*No doubt they'll be giving him a pay rise soon.*

## HOYT-TOYT'S PORK BARREL POLITICS SCAM

News is emerging that Green Cabinet member and Ashley Councillor, Sir Gus Hoyty-Toyty, personally signed off a £62k payment for Bristol City Council to buy the "under threat" Lynmouth Road Allotments in his ward.

The allotments were put on sale by receivers Grant Thornton in September after Scout Enterprises, owners of the land, went bust. A brief campaign to save the land ensued and up popped Hoyty-Toyty to save the day.

He put in a sealed bid of £62k from Bristol City Council for the land on September 25 despite a reserve price of just £20k. The price Hoyty-Toyty was prepared to pay with our money is thought to be excessive as the land is protected by covenants and is of little value to developers.

Meanwhile Hoyty-Toyty has been very coy about how much he spent to help voters in his own ward secure this land, simply announcing on Twitter that the land "cost a 'bit' more than £20k". That 'bit' being three times more!

## MAYOR GRASS FARCE

### A right royal game of city council lawn-acy!

DESPITE being told by bosses to stop any lawnmowing as the council can't afford fuel for lawnmowers any more, there was no shortage of gardeners or fancy kit at Easton's FELIX ROAD ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND last week.

Up to twenty men and ten vans were seen there working all day. Indeed, so keen were parks bosses to get a quality job done, a man was dispatched to collect the top class mower used for Queen Square and once finished the grass was carefully boxed and loose grass taken away in a gas-guzzling van!

And the cause of this sudden flurry of attention and resources for this neglected corner of the inner-city? A visit from his ROYAL TROUSERNESS the mayor the next day of course! Alas, it was all in vain as George cancelled his visit at the last minute and never got the Royal-style tour of the playground.

*The only thing that might have added to the Alice in Wonderland feel of proceedings might have been if the Queen of Hearts herself had shown up to announce she wanted all the flowers individually painted!*

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# COUNTING THE COST OF CITY HALL LIARS

**THE NEW POLITICS?**

ANOTHER day, another attack in the *NAZI POST* on the Green Party's **DANIELLA "LA-LA" RADICE** for having the balls to back a judicial review over the proposed Sainsbury supermarket at Rover's Memorial Ground. One article even provides the unique views of a "**STELLA PERRETT** from Redland" who says La-La is "undemocratic".

Although strangely Ms Perrett failed to mention that she apparently works for the **PLANNING INSPECTORATE** or that she appears to be a member of the **INDYREDPANTS PARTY'S** candidate selection panel. The panel that presumably selected Indyredpant candidate John Hickey who was soundly beaten by La-La in the Bishopston local election this year?

Stella Perrett, it appears, is also an artist, best known for a portrait of Richard Eddy with his Golly (original available for £100!). She also appears to be the secretary of the WASP Estate Improvements Committee. And, on both the WASP site and the artist site, Stella's email address is given as stella\_hender@yahoo.co.uk.

**STELLA HENDER?** Surely there must be two different Stellas? The Stella Parrett criticising La-La Radice for being "undemocratic" while also being a member of the Indyredpants selection panel can't be the same person as Stella Hender, freelance journalist and former Lib Dem candidate who got herself mixed up in the John Astley **PAEDO AFFAIR** back in the day? Surely not?

**PICKUP PACKS UP!**

BRISTOL Labour finally, it seems, is coming to its senses and is giving the hopeless old white men in its ranks the boot. First out the door is our dear old friend Councillor Peter "Hopeless" Hammond who's announced he'll not be seeking re-election next May.

Now joining Hopeless in the exit lounge is bearded weirdo, Councillor Derek Pickup. He's 'sensationally' thrown his toys out of the pram and resigned the Labour whip at the council and now sits as an independent after the Labour Party wisely decided not to select him as a candidate at the next local council elections.

Pickup has a long and dubious history in this city. As a former community grants officer at Bristol City Council in the 90s he was moved out of the department sharpish after community grants meant for Filwood Community Centre ended up in France!

The *Nazi Post*, meanwhile, has come over all tearful about Dodgy Derek's demise saying "one of his greatest achievements was to approve the final £100million funding so a rebuilding programme could be completed on four secondary schools in the city."

Unfortunately what the paper fails to mention is that these four schools are going to cost us in the region of £450million over the next twenty years thanks to Pickup signing a dodgy, overpriced PFI deal to get the schools built! *What a great achievement...*

## LAUNDRY FIELDS

More **TOWN GREEN** shenanigans at **LAUNDRY FIELDS** in Fishponds by **Blackberry Hill Hospital**. The local community and the landowners, the **HOMES AND COMMUNITIES AGENCY (HCA)**, have agreed to split the plot between open space and development land.

The HCA have even agreed to voluntarily register the proposed open space as a **TOWN GREEN**, which pretty much puts a pricey judicial review out of the question. But this isn't good enough for the council's oafish big spending managers who want to rip up this agreement by refusing to register a strip of the land that they want to build a 'bund' - basically a large mound - on!

This mound, we learn, is needed because BCC say - in a big thumbs-up for equalities and diversity in the city - that they want to **BLOCK** the sights and sounds of the nearby **SECURE MENTAL INSTITUTION!**

Presently the council is leaning on the HCA to reject the settlement, which means bringing in an inspector, barristers and all the other costly nonsense that we have to foot the bill for.

*Is this really a good use of the council money and resources as it makes £90m of service cuts?*

Property to the Director of Education clearly states, 'the boundary fencing and gate which used to be along the public footpath in Wellington Hill has now disappeared which has the effect of opening up the playing field to the general public.'

This confirms that any gates or fences, which may have once been there, were not there in 1980, while "Pants on Fire" Clark's 'evidence' says that both were still there a decade later! This has caused anger among local residents. One says, "we don't know how Pete Clark has got the front to submit this. He grew up in the area and he knows as well as we do that this is **TOTAL RUBBISH!**"

But when it comes to making up "total rubbish" and presenting it to inspectors at great expense, Hoskins and Clark are beginners. During the seven year fight to get land at Whitchurch declared a Town Green, city council Property Manager **JAN "THIRD" REICHEL** gave no less than **FOUR** different explanations at different times for the legal status of this land! All of which, incidentally, turned out to be total **BOLLOCKS**. The cost of this pointless exercise went into six figures. *Why are big sums of our cash being forked out to back COUNCIL MANAGER LIARS' doomed and pathetic efforts to block Town Greens?*

*Farcical claptrap from council managers is destroying our playing fields and open spaces while running up massive bills*

FOR two years the Friends of Horfield Common have been fighting to get the **WELLINGTON HILL Playing Fields** protected and declared a **TOWN GREEN**. Ever since the landowners, Bristol City Council, included the fields in their notorious Green Spaces Strategy as a site FOR SALE to developers.

The playing fields meet all the requirements of a Town Green and all that's needed is a rubber stamp from the registration authority, er ... Bristol City Council! But Bristol City Council, the landowner, has other ideas. Why take a cheap, efficient, legal route supported by a whole community when you can engage in an expensive argument based on LIES and DODGY interpretations of the law backed by a few shadowy managers at the Counts Louse?

The fun and games started last autumn when **BOB "THE BORING ONE" HOSKINS**, a council landscape manager, presented to the Public Rights of Way Committee some photos of "individual signs which were installed in Wellington Hill Playing Fields" that warned people not to trespass. All well and good, except the signs weren't from Wellington Hill but from **STOKE LODGE** Playing Fields two miles away!



*Wellington Fields no trespassing sign helpfully situated two miles away in Stoke Lodge!*

With this scam exposed, the council then decided to spend lots of money employing a pricey QC to present their 'evidence' about the land to a **PUBLIC INQUIRY** run by an independent inspector. The hearing is due soon. So step forward another council manager.

This time Area Parks Manager, **PETE "PANTS ON FIRE" CLARK**, who is presenting 'evidence' that the fields were gated and fenced in the 1990s, 'proving' the public hasn't used the land 'as of right' for 20 years.

Unfortunately for Clark his claims are contradicted by his council's own paperwork. A letter dated 1980 from Avon County Council

## The BRISTOLIAN: CRAP EMPLOYER OF THE MONTH

WITH the economy suffering and the safety net of the welfare state being cut from under us, jobs are hard to come by these days. But as one BRISTOLIAN reader found out, you'd be better off punching yourself in the face than accepting employment with some of the cowboys out there.

'Jane' contacted us to warn others about Clover Advertising. "I responded to an advert for an office-based 'energy surveyor', and got an interview. But in the interview it suddenly turned out to be door-to-door sales - and the advertised hours of 10-7 became 10-8," recalls Jane.

The interview began as a sales pitch for Riverford, an organic veg box scheme from Devon. When asked what this had to do with energy surveying, the interviewer cagily said "Um, you'll be doing some of that too".

"They lied through their teeth. Advertising a different job to the one they had," says Jane. "I want people to know they're a bunch of crooks. From the start they were absolute blaggers."



*Wide boy: Appco boss Niarchos*

Other people conned into applying for misadvertised jobs with Clover have told *The BRISTOLIAN* that it gets worse if you work for them! Clover is a Bristol-based marketing company run by Gareth Byrne and Natalie Powell from an office above an unlet shop off Park Street. It's effectively a franchise of the UK's largest direct sales outfit, Appco Group, run by millionaire wideboy Chris Niarchos.

"Billion dollar enterprise" Appco once traded as Cobra Group - until its reputation got known - and sells direct debit subscriptions on doorsteps, mainly on behalf of charities.

Meanwhile in Bristol, Clover - like other Appco companies - recruits mainly young people with vague promises of "fantastic average earning potential". Appco-linked firms don't employ their doorstep canvassers either.

Instead they consider their workers self-employed (so don't pay tax or National Insurance contributions) and only pay commission. That's

right - no basic wage. If you don't sell anything you don't get paid! Appco-style self-employment also means answering to the same boss everyday, being contractually tied to the company and being forbidden to work for competitors.

So you're like a charity street seller only without the Minimum Wage. A few really ruthless I-could-sell-anything-to-your-102-year-old-gran types do succeed - but most Appco workers are simply exploited, with reports of staff earning less than a hundred quid for fifty-hour weeks.

So why does right-on farm Riverford Organics use a company that rinses the desperate-to-work unemployed to sell their lovely organic veg? They proudly display 'Best Online Retailer 2011 in the Observer Ethical Awards' on their website; ethical with vegetables not people though.

Other clients of Clover include the Red Cross, who recently started providing food donations in the UK for the first time in seventy years. So the people who flog their direct debits will likely be the same people forced to use their food banks! **Clover Advertising and Appco Group: you win our first BRISTOLIAN CRAP EMPLOYER OF THE MONTH award. You absolute scumbags!**

## HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO CHANGE A LIGHTBULB?

**COUNCIL** Chief Exec Nicola "LADY GAGA" Yates wants to cut £90 million from what little remains of local services. But it's not only the council that teeters on the brink of bankruptcy unable to provide basic services.

Remember the PFI deals that led to all our new schools being built? Well, the schools have to pay PFI companies before they spend a single penny on books. So when schools get their budget cut - tough. Skanska or Carillion get the money before kids get educated.

And the brand spanking new facilities aren't what they're cracked up to be. The Oasis Academy, that was Portway school, have to pay more for 5 a-side pitches for example. The charge is £40 an hour. How many kids do you know with that sort of money? So the pitches stay unused and local kids play in the streets.

Even worse, the company charge breathtaking sums for basic caretaking. The PFI deal means that a company provides "soft services" like catering, and caretaking. If a light bulb goes, the school staff can't touch it. They must call 'caretaking services' who, when they eventually get there, will charge up to £60 for changing a light bulb!

*Money grabbing bastards are stealing our children's education. Kids should come first. Why not ditch these PFI debts?*

## GASTRO PUB RUN BY IDIOTS!

THE CROFTERS RIGHTS, an absurd new gentrified Stokes Croft gastro-pub nightmare on the site of epic boozers like the BREWHOUSE and THE CROFT, has run in to a few problems.

While its fashionably haircutted managers were able to sort out indoor bike parking for idiot customers on fixies, "exciting street food", "a big versatile arts space for the local community", and "the most expensive (surely 'finest' - Ed.) beers the UK craft beer scene has to offer", it seems they forgot one important detail... To obtain a proper alcohol licence!

Due to this flagrant breach of licensing regulations - or in their words "accidentally making ourselves illegal" - Crofters Rights had its licence to sell booze suspended for 12 days in early October

*The BRISTOLIAN* is reliably informed that the next episode in the short, eventful life of this bar for Nathan Barleys will feature Crofters Rights having to replace the Victorian shop front that they vandalised - and maybe even being prosecuted under the planning regulations. *BYO trebles all round!*

## FERGO IN PITTSBURGH CONGRESS

ENVIRONMENTALIST Mayor Fergo's latest foreign jaunt involved a clean, green long haul flight to the US for a meeting of policy wonks and expense account blaggers at the 'Remaking Cities Congress' in Pittsburgh.

Besides hanging around talking about Banksy with equally underemployed US mayors, he also managed to deliver a low-key speech at a fringe event. And the subject of this speech? Well, it says here, "he spoke emphatically about the importance of citizen engagement in the design and creation of vibrant and sustainable cities"!

Presumably, then, he avoided any mention of Residents Parking Schemes, libraries and Town Greens where Bristolians' views have been entirely ignored in favour of faceless council bureaucrats and private sector interests? *What a hypocrite!*

# B-LIME-Y

*A merry-go-round of useless managers squanders £100k on lethal play equipment while our kids' education suffers!*

**BUDGET** slashing in Bristol has cut so deep that staffing at our kids' nurseries and Children's Centres are now reaching dangerously low levels, sources tell *The BRISTOLLIAN*.

One popular nursery school in east Bristol, which scored 'Good' or above in all areas in its last Ofsted report, now faces a £100,000 budget shortfall – with staffing shortages meaning that qualified Early Years Practitioners are often forced to act as little more than sentries stopping children from escaping.

The situation for staff on the frontline is contrasted with the well-salaried upper echelons, where a recruitment revolving door has seen three new head teachers in little over a year. Each has attempted to stamp their mark on the Centre by remodelling the kids' play garden. The total cost? In excess of **A STAGGERING £100,000!**

One garden makeover, which cost an eye-watering £70k+, even had to be ripped out because it was **UNSAFE**.

Worryingly, there had been no proper health

and safety assessment before it was built, and **NO OVERSIGHT** from Bristol City Council. The garden's potential for injuring children was only picked up on by chance – when someone who worked in H&S came to collect his grandchild and was alarmed by what he saw.

The garden then had to be immediately ripped up and children barred from using it until it could be made safe!

The cost of these **EXPENSIVE VANITY PROJECTS** by senior management has lost them the opportunity to employ extra staff to actually look after the children – yet comes at the same time as the current Head spends thousands on expensive consultants.

At least one such 'expert' is a former colleague of the Head, and is reportedly used mainly to cover staff shortages – when it would be more sensible and cheaper to hire full or part-time staff on permanent contracts.

*So if this is what it's like now, what's it going to be like once Mayor Fergo pushes through his £90 million cuts package?*



## CORPORATE FEED-IN FRENZY

*China and big business cashing in on city's solar power bonanza*

**WHILE** leafing through our latest copy of *Construction News*, the 'Magazine of the Chartered Institute of Building', a headline leaps out: **CONTRACTORS EYE UP BRISTOL'S £47M 'DASH FOR SOLAR'**.

Maybe this a reference to Mayor Fergo's go-ahead earlier this month for a £47m plan to install solar panels on 7,000 council houses and a variety of public buildings in the city?

This is "triggering one of the biggest solar PV projects since the Feed-in-Tariff (FIT) was cut in November 2011," the magazine breathlessly informs its corporate readership. It then lists massive global companies including Lakehouse, Wates, Willmott Dixon and notorious blacklisters Carillion among the contractors who might be interested in this feed-in feeding frenzy. Hardly the kind of local businesses that **MAYOR REDPANTS** and his sidekick, solar-powered windbag **SIR GUS HOYTY-TOYTY** seem so keen to promote at election time!

The article then finds Simon Green from Lakehouse - which grabs lucrative public sector contracts - waxing lyrical: "Because of **MASS PRODUCTION IN CHINA**, the unit cost of the kit has come down considerably and with the feed-in tariff the same as it was, then you have a large enough project, and the **RATE OF RETURN** is as big as it was before," he gushes.

Bollocks. Unit costs have not "come down considerably"; they've been driven down. China has unlimited access to forced, slave and child labour and gives workers zero human rights. So they can undercut competitors in European markets by selling panels below cost. Why? To break Europe's companies and get a monopoly.

Just the sort of practices we should be encouraging here in Bristol for our long-term benefit don't you think? *Anyway, with £47m to play with, why can't we manufacture and install the damn things from Bristol?*

## INDYREDPANT'S UNWISE MONKEY'S HORROR NO-SHOW

Great news! Head of finance and operations at the Arnolfini Gallery **BRENDA "WISE MONKEY" MCLENNAN**, apparently an 'independent' member of Bristol City Council's **AUDIT COMMITTEE**, has been promoted!

In June she was made Deputy Chair of this committee responsible for ensuring sound management of our money and clamping down on fraud and corruption within the council.

Recognise the name? Possibly, as the public-spirited, politically independent Ms McLennan was the candidate for Clifton at the last local elections in May for the **INDYREDPANTS PARTY**, the ragbag of gormless cheerleaders for his Royal Hopelessness the Mayor. So, if nothing else, this unusual appointment of one of the mayor's keenest public supporters brings a whole new meaning to the term 'politically independent'.

Meanwhile Ms McLennan has wasted no time in showing the kind of gumption needed to "shake things up" at Shitty Hall by, err ... Not turning up for the most important Audit Committee meeting of year! That's right, for reasons unknown, Ms McLennan, one of only two people providing allegedly independent oversight of council finances, failed to show at the committee meeting where the council's audited accounts for the 2012 - 13 were agreed and signed off (without a hitch, natch).

Also on the agenda at the meeting was the report from the council's Internal Audit Department cataloguing the series of gross financial failures across the organisation. These included theft, wholesale non-compliance with procurement regulations, dodgy management of cash accounts and - even - a very special mention for **THE BRISTOLLIAN'S** *bete noire*, Facilities Service Manager Tony Harvey's bent Markets Service!

*So nothing there that would in any way interest an independent election candidate who wants to "shake things up" at Bristol City Council then!*

### The BRISTOLIAN

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**The BRISTOLIAN: "it's been a hard day's smite"!**