

Statement to Cabinet – Cllr Patrick Anketell-Jones

The Guild Co-Working Hub

We welcome the Council's initiative in creating the Guild Co-working Hub. It is an idea whose time has come.

However, no one can be in any doubt there is a race on to attract and establish creative, technical and green businesses.

City centres like Bristol are being developed as the new engines of economic growth; the Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone will draw in much large scale investment. It too will be looking for creative, digital media companies to establish themselves there and if we are not careful Bath will be left trailing.

Despite this, Bath is well positioned to make a valuable contribution to the West of England economy by creating the right environment for small, sole proprietor and start up businesses. The city is fortunate in having a compact, walkable city centre ideally suited to ideas based businesses that work so well through informal social contact.

The Guildhall hub is an excellent start but will be no more than a testbed for this kind of commerce; the Council must not lose sight of future development. Once established the hub can inform the shape of sites like Bath Quays and Western Riverside which will be vital in retaining those businesses needing room for expansion.

At the moment I fear that the Council's development plans for these areas are beginning to lag behind those of our neighbours and competitors. When will we see definitive proposals brought forward for these sites?

We have two options before us:-

1. In five years time Bristol will be rapidly moving forwards with its Enterprise Zone, capturing the very types of business we would seek to nurture whilst our plans are still on the drawing board.
2. Or, we too, can have a thriving creative sector, making the West of England and A4 corridor the Country's number one destination for new media and creative businesses.

The development of these creative quarters is being pursued in cities right across the country and the Council needs to make a special effort to ensure it gets its share of this fast growing economic sector.