

**Julie Towers**

Hi, I'm Julie Towers. I'm from Penna and I'm delighted to introduce to you a great role I'm working on at Bristol City Council for the Director of Economy of Place. And here with me today is Stephen Peacock who is the Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration of Bristol and this role will report in to him and work closely with him.

So I'm delighted to be able to introduce Stephen and for him to say a little bit about the role and why we think it's a great opportunity.

So, Stephen, first of all, you've been executive director of growth and regen in Bristol for nearly 18 months. What attracted you to Bristol?

**Stephen Peacock**

Well, Julie, this is my first job in the local authority and it attracted me because I guess it's quite unlike any other job I could imagine doing right now. The combination of Bristol being one of the most dynamic and exciting cities in the UK with that combination of challenge and opportunity. So it's obviously a very successful city, rightly recognised for its great Universities, strong business community, cultural life, but it also is one of the most unequal cities in the UK in terms of poverty inequality.

So in Bristol you have all of those opportunities and challenges and it's probably one of the most fascinating places for people who are interested in making a difference on that scale to come and apply their trade.

**Julie Towers**

Yeah, absolutely. There's been some recent practise in Bristol in terms of growth outside of London and obviously it's sort of having that thing--Just, okay.

**Stephen Peacock**

[coughs]

Sorry about that.

**Julie Towers**

Bless you, don't worry.

[laughs]

Yeah, I was saying Bristol has been in the press for many things recently and continues to be a great place outside of London for growth.

Do you think there are any sort of factors to that?

Are there particular opportunities in the city that you see that would attract people to come and do their growth regen work here?

**Stephen Peacock**

Well, I mean one thing that we've got is it's a great place to live. We've got fantastic cultural assets. We've got a beautiful city with the water running through it, many different neighbourhoods each with their own character and a long history of that innovation that is the lifeblood of the city. So from Brunel onwards, you know, the home of the aerospace sector just to the North of the city there. BBC in the heart of the city. So we have some fascinating industries and businesses a lot of people who go to University of Bristol and University of West of England and stay. And so the student retention rates are very high. So it's a very vibrant city from that perspective.

But I've mentioned before the challenge that comes with that and the fact that, you know you've got a rapidly growing population which places pressure on the housing sector. We have over 13,000 families, for example, on the waiting list for accommodation, we have a significant street homelessness problem in Bristol. And so, and still today, if you're born in certain parts in Bristol, your life chances are just a whole lot worse than if you're bought in some of the wealthier parts of higher education participation employment and all of those issues, of course that have been exacerbated by COVID, which as is well documented has had a disproportionate effect on some communities.

So Bristol is that city of contrasts. It's a phenomenal place and we are seeing change happen right now. So there's a number of really exciting projects going on which this director role will lead for the council.

**Julie Towers**

Yeah, let's turn to the role, it is a really fascinating role. Director of Economy of Place. It's got a broad portfolio, as you mentioned, what are you looking for in the sort of person that takes this role? What good look like? and what do you hope they might achieve in three years time?

**Stephen Peacock**

So, well, first and foremost, we tend to look for people to share our values and share our outlook. So the focus on behaviours and an attitude of mind that is about putting the values of the council first. So those values will be familiar to a lot of people who've worked in public life of course, collaboration, respect, innovation, etc.

But the emphasis here is on bringing that sense of inclusion and diversity and wanting to make a positive difference through every part of the job.

The job is very broad you see, and it's not a question of one or other technical skillset here. You know, the director will be managing a very large diverse team across five really very broad in different areas. What binds them together therefore, it's got to be that focus on getting the best out of people about managing to a complex and ever-changing agenda and being able to work in a politically like organisation and inspire trust and confidence to senior politicians.

'Cause here in Bristol we have a directly elected man city man which is a really interesting model. And I find it very, a fascinating way of getting work done to work hand in glove really within an administration, my own role brings me into contact with the mayor pretty much every day. And the director will have a lot of access and a lot of need to work with the administration.

So it has a lot of different features but probably the two things I would say are energy and emotional intelligence are the things we're looking for.

**Julie Towers**

Yeah, absolutely. And you yourself said at the beginning you made a transition into local government and this portfolio has got some interesting things in their libraries, sort of culture arts. Bristol is famous as a city for some of these things.

So are you quite open to background and transferable skills?

**Stephen Peacock**

Absolutely, because as you've just said, I mean we've got libraries, culture, economic development, strategic transport, major capital projects and regeneration.

So they were a very broad portfolio. So we will be looking and open to candidates with a variety of backgrounds. I think that ability to demonstrate agility, to cut through to see the signals through the noise to be able to understand how to get the best out of teams where you may not be familiar with the territory you're working with but you understand how to work with people, how to engage, how to develop, how to mentor and how to manage and deliver against a budget and a target.

These are all quite universal skillsets that you can pick up in a number of different backgrounds and industries.

**Julie Towers**

Yeah, absolutely. And you yourself are living proof of that. So it's obviously a welcoming environment, which is great.

Stephen say a little bit more about the senior leadership team that the new director will join 'cause you've been very clear that you work as a team. And even though this has got a particular portfolio you want sort of a joined up thinking what can they expect of the team? and what do you expect to the new director in that team?

**Stephen Peacock**

Well, everybody, as I've mentioned really starts I think starts off wanting to do the right thing. So we're collaborative. We place a lot of emphasis on showing up, you know with the right behaviours. So I

suppose teamwork and respect is extremely important. These are people you spend a lot of your working day with and you wanna make sure you've got a harmonious and productive working environment.

We do work as a team. I have four directors in total, and a team who work with the directors and we work on, as I said, on a collegiate basis, we work in my directorate on, you know, a very regular a drum beat of board meetings of key executive meetings. And so you'd be joining that group.

There's a weekly meeting with fellow directors. There's monthly meetings where we review all projects on a project board basis but there's also very frequent contact with cabinet members. So this director post will interface with probably four or five of our cabinet on a weekly basis because of the portfolio and how broad it is. So I'm working very regularly with senior colleagues across the organisation, not just in my director but also elsewhere from an HR legal finance and other areas of the organisation. And then working down through the team, a very large team. So we're talking, as I said, about six, five or six different areas here which all told we'll have hundreds of staff. So being able to work effectively in quite a dispersed working environment across large teams, multiple sites, of course, with COVID that's all become very different. Obviously everybody's moved to remote working. So there'll be a lot of moving parts and no dull days that's for sure.

### **Julie Towers**

Absolutely, a city like Bristol sort of, you know, cool city part of our sort of UK construct but also internationally sort of respected for its work as well. And you mentioned the sort of major programmes. I just wondered, you know a key part of this job obviously is about delivery and making sure that the place is, you know sort of fit the purpose for the future as well.

So a lot of visioning, but actually you've talked previously in sort of coping around Bristol the inclusion, the inequalities of COVID impact of that. And Bristol has been very sort of focal in the news around black lives matter and then the recent sort of challenges we've had in the UK around diversity and you've made some great pledges as a city council for your workforce and your community.

What would you say to potential candidates about that diversity aspect of the city which obviously is it's lifeblood?

### **Stephen Peacock**

Well, we, as a council have made a pledge to take positive action around diversity and equality and we are committed to that through right away from the cabinet decisions that were made earlier this year around an action plan for that, right away down to the everyday decisions we make. Fundamentally, we want to be a good reflection of the city we serve. And in terms of our approach to diversity not just as people and as our senior teams we definitely are looking for more diversity at the senior ranks of the council, but clearly in the way then we design services and we service the changing nature of our city. We have to be able to reflect the people we serve and, like a lot of organisations, you know, we need to make sure that we can constantly evolve and adapt.

So we would particularly welcome approaches from people who are perhaps in protected groups and who may not have considered working in Bristol in this type of role before, we welcome that very much.

**Julie Towers**

Yeah, and you said earlier to support that agile working is definitely the way forward but for most organisations, well, what would you say to candidates thinking about coming to Bristol about their sort of future work sort of balance.

How will that look?

**Stephen Peacock**

So we're like every employer and trying to work out how the changing face of work will be for our people. And like everybody, we don't expect everything to go back to the way it was.

So whilst it's difficult to say exactly what that working pattern will be like in six, 12, 18 months time. I think it's fair to say that, you know there is scope for more of a flexible approach. And I think most people have witnessed that in their workplaces, things move around we will be making some announcements and some decisions as a council that will affect all of our employees over the next three to six months. And we're just starting a process in fact of engaging our senior colleagues in that return to work.

We're very fortunate that Bristol is, it's just a lovely city. So we're actually not seeing, you know the kind of Exodus you might have seen in some other urban areas in the country right now. We are actually seeing an influx of people, interestingly. And that's a sign that Bristol is just a good place to be and never far from green space and, you know, quality of life is good.

So I think we would expect the working pattern to change. But clearly there are things where being in touch with people and connecting, you know physically through meetings really do matter. We're all gonna have to get used to the new normal.

**Julie Towers**

Yeah, absolutely. Thank you very much, that's really helpful. And I know that will be hugely valuable to prospective candidates. There's a whole range of other information on the micro-sites. So I hope people will take a look and get in touch with myself. And of course, if people would like to have a chat with Stephen through the process I know he's gonna make himself available.

So I will please encourage you to take a look at the information and then have a look at this great role a huge opportunity to influence a fantastic city. Thank you very much, Stephen.

**Stephen Peacock**

Thank you.