

Cabinet

Supplementary Information



Date: Tuesday, 5 March 2024

Time: 4.00 pm

Venue: The Council Chamber - City Hall, College Green, Bristol, BS1 5TR

2. Public Forum

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Agenda item 8 - Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (LEVI) Bid

CQ08.01 & CQ08.02 Councillor James Crawford

Agenda item 9 - City Leap Power Purchase Agreement

None

Agenda item 10 - A4 Portway Strategic Corridor Outline Business Case (OBC)

PS10.01 South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside

PS10.02 Bristol Civic Society

PS10.03 Bristol Cycling Campaign

PS10.04 Bristol Walking Alliance

PQ10.01 & PQ10.02 South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside

Agenda item 11 – City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) – Maintenance and Integrated Transport Block Allocation 2024/25

PS11.01 Ian Beckey

Agenda item 12 - Bristol Street Outreach Contract Extension

None

Agenda item 13 - Accelerating the Transformation of Temporary Accommodation

None

Agenda item 14 - Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

PS14.01	Len Wyatt, Chair of Bristol Parks Forum
PS14.02	Dan Ackroyd
Agenda item 15 - Investment in Parks	
PS15.01	Bristol Parks Forum
CQ15.01	Councillor Amal Ali
CQ15.02	Councillor Martin Fodor
CQ15.03 & CQ15.04	Councillor Gary Hopkins
Agenda item 16 - Allotments Rents and Water Charges	
PS16.01	Sarah Freeman
PS16.02	Debbie Wyatt
PS16.03	Holly Wyatt
PS16.04	Tom Bosanquet
PS16.05	Sue Allen
PS16.06	Ruth Hecht
PS16.07	Christopher Faulkner Gibson
PS16.08	Jo Pengilley
PS16.09	Mara
PS16.10	Noreen Ratcliff
PS16.11	Elise Unger
PS16.12	Tina Holmes
PS16.13	Iain McCaig
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PS16.15	Joanna Mellors
PS16.16	Caroline Dalcq
PS16.17	Kirsty Forman
PS16.18	Vanessa Harvey-Samuel
PS16.19	Harriet Buckland
PS16.20	Lorna Lindfield
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PS16.22	Tess Price - Allotment-based community groups
PS16.23	Sue Edgerley
PS16.24	Elizabeth Gold - Metford Road Community Orchard
PS16.25	Harry Mac
PS16.26	Dr Stephen Pill
PS16.27	Neil Bennetta
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CS16.01	Councillor Mark Weston
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PQ16.01	Harry Mac
PQ16.02 & PQ16.03	Kirsty Forman
PQ16.04 & PQ16.05	Tamara Evans Braun
PQ16.06 & PQ16.07	Ruth Hecht
PQ16.08 & PQ16.09	Gillian Skinner
PQ16.10 & PQ16.11	Lauren Mason
PQ16.12	Elise Unger
PQ16.13	Troy Tanska
PQ16.14 & PQ16.15	Dominic Francis
PQ16.16 & PQ16.17	Alice Hastie



PQ16.18	Christopher Faulkner Gibson
PQ16.19 & PQ16.20	James Martin
PQ16.21 & PQ16.22	Katy Ladbrook
PQ16.23 & PQ16.24	Tom Bosanquet
PQ16.25 & PQ16.26	Tess Price
PQ16.27 & PQ16.28	Joanna Mellors
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PQ16.41 & PQ16.42	Stephen Pill
PQ16.43 & PQ16.44	Julie Parker
CQ16.01	Councillor Chris Jackson

Agenda item 17 – Football Foundation Funding for Playzone – Ball Courts

None

Agenda item 18 – Home to School Travel Support Policy Changes

None

Agenda item 19 - Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning (ESL) Plan 2024-28

None

Agenda item 20 – Future Bright Plus – Phase 3 extension of existing programme

None

Agenda item 21 – WorkWell Partnership – Specialist Employment Support Programme

None

Agenda item 22 – Variation of Alternative Learning Provision Framework to cover Post-16 SEND Support

None

Agenda item 23 – Bristol Holding Limited Group Company Business Plans 2024/25

None

Agenda item 24 – Finance Exception Report (P10)

None

Agenda item 25 – Transport Funding Bid – A432 (Fishponds Road)

CQ25.01 Councillor Amal Ali

Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

PS26.01 Angelo Giambrone

PS26.02 John and Vivien Harding

PS26.03 Eileen Newby

PS26.04 Mark Leese

PS26.05 Richard Norwood

PS26.06 Kathryn Rendell

PS26.07 Anne Bragg

PS26.08 Robert Westlake



PS26.09	Christine Bowles
PS26.10	John Lee
PS26.11	Jon Craton
PS26.12	Martin Platt
PS26.13	Jules Appleby
PS26.14	Anne Carroll
PS26.15	Sue Ramlugon
PS26.16	Malcolm Roberts
PS26.17	Margaret Wilmot
PS26.18	O.W. Batley
PS26.19	Bob Priest
PS26.20	Withdrawn
PS26.21	John Curran
PS26.22	Sharon Smithen
PS26.23	Rebecca Holdstock
PS26.24	David Clymo
PS26.25	Alan Baldwin
PS26.26	Pete Valance
PS26.27	Roger Lake
PS26.28	Dr Bob Turvey
PS26.29	Tania Calabrese
PS26.30	Gary Reader
PS26.31	Angela Reader
PS26.32	Lee Holdstock
PS26.33	Giles Drewett
PS26.34	Bill Linnell
PS26.35	Stephen Small
PS26.36	Paul Guest
PS26.37	Withdrawn
PS26.38	Jacqetta Edmonds
CS26.01	Councillors Smith, Scott, Gollop, Goulandris and Michellat
PQ26.01 & PQ26.02	John and Vivien Harfding
PQ26.03 & PQ26.04	Angelo Giambrone
CQ26.01 & CQ26.02	Councillor Steve Smith
Agenda item 27 – Goram Homes - Pipeline of Housing Development Sites	
CQ27.01	Councillor Chris Jackson
Agenda item 28 – Co-production Policy and Process for Adult Social Care	
None	
Agenda item 29 – Q3 Quarterly Performance Progress Report – Q3 2023/24	
None	
Agenda item 29 – Q3 Quarterly Performance Progress Report – Q3 2023/24	
None	
Agenda item 30 – Safety Valve Programme	
PS30.01	Joanna Booth
PS30.02	Jai Breitnauer
PS30.03	Jen Smith
CS30.01	Councillor Christine Townsend
CS30.02	Councillor Andrew Brown



Issued by: Amy Rodwell, Democratic Services
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E-mail: democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk
Date: Tuesday, 05 March 2024



Question: CQ08.01 & CQ08.02

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 8 – Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (LEVI) Bid

Question submitted by: Councillor James Crawford

Whilst I welcome news of progress in the LEVI bid, I am greatly concerned that Bristol City Council still doesn't have a published strategy outlining how EV chargers will be rolled out in the city. The Labour Administration often direct queries about the strategy as the remit of the City Leap Joint Partnership, so I ask:

Question 1: When will a strategy be published for scrutiny and implementation?

Question 2: The CLJP was touted as an innovative scheme that would help Bristol decarbonise across multiple sectors, however BCC is the only authority in WECA to not have an EV strategy in place. Why are we flagging behind our neighbouring authorities?

Statement: PS10.01

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 10 – A4 Portway Strategic Corridor Outline Business Case (OBC)

Statement submitted by: South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside (David Redgewell)

We welcome this ongoing investment in the improvements on the A4 public transport corridor from Hotwells Road

to Avonmouth, and seven side,

Involving new bus and coach priority measures and bus lanes for local bus services and National and Regional coach services,

Improvement in cycle lanes and walking facilities and promenade facilities around the Avon Gorge and Clifton suspension Bridge,

It's very important that we have clear bus service improvement with both stagecoach west On the Bristol park and ride service via Bristol Temple meads station, Bristol cabot circus, Bristol city centre, Harbourside, Hotwells, sea Mills, Shirehampton Railway station, Portway park and ride. The interchange needs major improvement by the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and Bristol city council at shirehampton bus stops and interchanges.

The non-accessible footbridge needs removing and an at-grade crossing put in place for access from station road and the bus stops at the station.

The footbridge is not accessible to passengers with reduced mobility,

And in 2024 Bristol city council should be removing these outdated footbridges both at shirehampton Railway station and at Avonmouth, Portway park and ride.

Needs a new Terminal building and access for bus services to seven side and Portishead,

There are at present no bus stops for park and ride. Railway replacement bus services both side of the roads for Park and ride site,

This needs urgent dealing with by the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council Railway Directorate as there are no marked bus stops for Railway replacement services on the Bristol Temple meads station to Clifton Down station, Avonmouth Dock and seven Beach line, at Portway park and ride,

Other bus services operating on the road interchange with stagecoach west bus service 13 Shirehampton, sea Mills, Westbury on Trym Southmead hospital bus station, Horfield, Henleaze Gloucester Road and Bristol Royal infirmary and the city centre.

But also services 41 First group plc Wales and West buses Division.

Kingwood Town centre, St George, Lawrence Hill Station, Old Market Street, Bristol cabot circus Bristol city centre Harbourside, Hotwells, sea Mills, Shirehampton Village, Avonmouth Village and seven side,

Along the Portway as far as the junction for sea Mills and shirehampton,

Starts on 8th April 2024

But with the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council bus service improvement plan,

In the Enhanced partnership what frequency of bus services improvement on this corridor has Bristol city council as Highway Authority negotiated with First group plc Wales and West buses Division and Stagecoach west to improve bus frequency along this very important bus and coach services corridor for passengers and better and cleaner bus on this corridor,

Including modern clean bus washed and cleaned interiors.

Their a need to address the interchange with Bristol Temple meads station, Bristol Lawrence hill, Bristol Stapleton road, montpellier, Redland, Clifton Down station, sea Mills, Shirehampton, Avonmouth Dock, St Andrews Road seven Beach line,
And future services around the new level crossing at Avonmouth Dock for line to Henbury, Filton North, Filton Abbey wood station,
With the need to improve bus rail Interchange facilities at sea Mills but especially at shirehampton and Portway park and ride bus rail Interchange.

It's is disappointing that the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council and Bristol city council have provided more bus rail Interchange facilities in this Scheme and ferry links at Hotwells with the cross Harbour ferry and the Bristol Harbour ferry's
In the way the Greater Manchester combined Authority mayor Andy Burnham Liverpool City Region mayor Steve Rotherham and mayor Andy street do on their bus and railway schemes .
We are supposed to developing one brand from Buses west bus ,Metro west railway Network, west link ,scooters and E Bikes,
One brand one public transport Network for the Bristol city Region.
Intergrated journeys for passengers.

On coaches it's very important that we discuss the bus lanes priority measures with National Express coaches limited, Megabus Scottish City link coaches, and Flixbus all of which use the portway to connect the rest of the south west of England,
In line with the western Gateway Transport Board chair councillors Don Alexander Region bus and coach strategy with peninsula Transport Board to improve coach travel across South west England,

On walking and cycling facilities we welcome the improvements and especially to improve facilities for residents and Tourists to enjoy the Avon Gorge under the Clifton suspension Bridge,

We welcome this Scheme going forward as part of Intergrated Transport approach for Bristol city Region.

We need to move away from just putting in more bus priority measures and lanes without looking at passengers exprence and interchange facilities Bus stop shelters cctv cameras and maintenance of the Real-time and especially removals of tagging,
But shirehampton and Portway park and ride interchange must have good interchange facilities for passengers and a new terminal building at Portway park and ride and ev chargers on the park and ride site,

We wish to construct of the A4 corridor public transport Network and improvements to walking and cycling,
Construction work get underway way a quickly as possible as the is a need to progress city region Transport settlement money with bus service improvement plan bus services improvement on the Ground in Greater Bristol and Bath city region,
We welcome the financial allocation to this plan ,

Statement: PS10.02

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 10 – A4 Portway Strategic Corridor Outline Business Case (OBC)

Statement submitted by: Bristol Civic Society, Alan Morris

A4 Portway Strategic Corridor Outline Business Case

Bristol Civic Society is disappointed by certain aspects of the A4 Portway outline business case (OBC) scheme that is presented to Cabinet for approval.

New Bus Lanes or Improved Pedestrian and Cycling Facilities

We support the inbound bus lane (which already exists for part of the route) but we are not convinced of the need for an outbound bus lane. The OBC claims bus delays outbound, but the data aggregates Hotwell Road and Portway, and Hotwell Road is worse for congestion. We cannot see the supporting evidence, as data from First Bus has been redacted due to commercial sensitivity.

For pedestrians and cyclists, the main proposal is for a widened shared use path. Our view is that cycle paths, particularly on a major arterial road, should be physically segregated and properly designed to facilitate cycle journeys and reduce pedestrian/cyclist interactions. We are also concerned about reducing pedestrian refuges to 2m when this is the minimum for acceptability and not likely to encourage pedestrians to use these crossing points.

A segregated cycleway would benefit both cyclists and pedestrians. For pedestrians, it would move most of the traffic away from the pedestrian route beside the river, and significantly improve the pedestrian experience. It would give more separation between the pedestrians and the noise and pollution of the motor traffic, giving back a greater sense of the beauty of the gorge as a place.

General

Apart from a few new trees, the scheme does not include any greening or landscaping scheme; in a world of much hotter temperatures, cyclists and pedestrians would benefit from more trees and greenery along their routes. Hard surfacing seems to be being increased to a greater degree than soft landscaping; adding to the city's heat island.

We note that there is no comment in the OBC about the visual effect of the proposals and whether good quality materials and finish will be used to enhance the walking and cycling experience.

Statement: PS10.03

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 10 – A4 Portway Strategic Corridor Outline Business Case (OBC)

Statement submitted by: Bristol Cycling Campaign, Nicholas Davies

The Bristol Cycling Campaign is opposed very strongly to the current scheme proceeding.

- The Arcadis report accurately describes the proposals for cycling and walking as “Minor widening to facilitate a shared foot/cycle way”. That lacks ambition and will not facilitate any more than minimal modal shift, not the 50% assumed.
- This is a bus only scheme to all intents and purposes, as is acknowledged in the objectives (“total bus segregation”). That is a missed opportunity; it should include cycling and walking.
- The scheme has evidently not been prepared in conjunction with WECA, DfT or Active Travel England. BANES and South Gloucestershire have worked constructively with WECA to produce excellent cycling and walking schemes. Why can’t Bristolians have the same?
- The scheme does not comply with LTN 1/20 and makes no serious attempt at doing so. It does not comply with the CRSTS criteria, which are not buses only, and are not intended to future proof against traffic growth. If the scheme is built it will endanger WECA, and Bristol’s, future eligibility for Government funding for transport schemes.
- Proceeding to OBC will simply waste public money as the scheme has to be redesigned.

Statement: PS10.04

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 10 – A4 Portway Strategic Corridor Outline Business Case (OBC)

Statement submitted by: Bristol Walking Alliance, Alan Morris

A4 Portway Strategic Corridor OBC

Bristol Walking Alliance is disappointed by the A4 Portway outline business case (OBC) scheme that is presented to Cabinet for approval.

We are not convinced that the need for an outbound bus lane outweighs the value of a segregated cycleway. A segregated cycleway would benefit both cyclists and pedestrians. For pedestrians, it would move most of the traffic away from the pedestrian route beside the river, and significantly improve the pedestrian experience. It would give more separation between the pedestrians and the noise and pollution of the motor traffic, giving back a greater sense of the beauty of the gorge as a place.

In addition, we believe the opportunity should have been taken to consider the Portway not only as a transport route but also as a recreational area within easy reach of the city which deserves to be made more accessible.

The OBC justifies the decision on the basis of setting the gold standard of provision for buses to achieve improved journey times, better reliability and frequency through continuous bus priority, thus encouraging the modal shift. We recognise that difficult choices have to be made, but aside from the Hotwell Road section, we believe the impact on outbound bus times and reliability, and modal shift, is marginal. And, as frequently happens, a bus lane is prioritised at the expense of setting the gold standard for other transport modes.

The OBC (section 2.1) claims bus delays outbound, but the data aggregates Hotwell Road and Portway, and Hotwell Road is worse for congestion. Supporting data from First Bus is redacted due to commercial sensitivity.

The OBC and consultation report record that consultation responses contained substantial questioning of the outbound bus lane.

We raised a number of other issues in [our response](#) to the consultation including the need for improved and additional pedestrian crossings, improved signage, and addressing barriers for those who use wheeled mobility aids. These issues do not seem to have been addressed in the proposed scheme.

Question: PQ10.01 & PQ10.02

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 10 – A4 Portway Strategic Corridor Outline Business Case (OBC)

Question submitted by: South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside (David Redgewell)

Question 1: What discussion have take place with First group plc stagecoach west and other bus, coach and railway operators On level of bus services along the A4?

Both in terms on the service 9 Bristlington park and ride Bristol Temple meads station, Bristol cabot circus Bristol Broadmead shopping centre, Bristol city centre Hotwells, sea Mills Shirehampton railway station Portway park and ride, interchanges with Bristol Temple meads station ,Bristol Lawrence hill, Bristol Stapleton road, montpellier, Redland Clifton Down, sea Mills Shirehampton, Portway park and ride, Avonmouth Dock, St Andrews Road seven Beach, The new First Group plc Wales and West buses Division New 41 bus service kingwood Town centre, st George, Bristol Lawrence hill Station, oid market, Bristol cabot circus Hotwells, sea Mills Shirehampton Avonmouth Dock, St Andrews Road Trading estate, Service 13 Shirehampton Dursley Road ,Shirehampton, sea Mills, Westbury on Trym, Southmead hospital bus station, Henleaze, Bristol BRI Bristol city centre,

And National Express coaches limited service along the Portway A4 coach services to Bridgwater, Taunton, Exeter bus and coach station, Plymouth coach station and Penzance, Taunton and Barnstaple bus and coach station and Bideford, Exeter bus and coach station Torquay and Paignton, Megabus Scottish City link services to Exeter, Plymouth coach station and Barnstaple bus and coach station Flixbus coaches Bristol, Bridgwater bus and coach station Taunton, Exeter bus and coach station and Plymouth coach station.

What discussion has Bristol city council as Highway Authority and the West of England mayoral combined transport Authority and western Gateway Transport Board had with Bus,coach and railway operators on this Scheme Rail operator First group plc Great Western Railway company, Sea Mills, Shirehampton and Portway park and ride station, interchanges with local bus services in at a new interchanges at Portway park and ride building On this Scheme and bus priority measures walking and cycling facilities

Question 2: as part of the Work to improve the Portway A 4 Transport corridor and improve bus services corridor, What discussion are taking place to improve walking and cycling facilities and access to Shirehampton station by removing the none accessible footbridge from station road Shirehampton to the Railway stations And to provide the a bus railway integration step free access lucy on the Portway outside shirehampton Station, With at grade crossing for disabled access and passengers and to remove the Footbridge at Avonmouth on the Portway A4 to provide an upgrade Surface level crossing for pedestrian and especially passengers with reduced mobility?

Statement: PS11.01

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 11 – City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) – Maintenance and Integrated Transport Block Allocation 2024/25

Statement submitted by: Ian Beckey

We welcome this investment of £8.772 million of the city Region transport settlement fund by the Department for transport funding through the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority funding of the intergrated block grant for improvement in walking cycling wheeling and public transport facilities, We also welcome the investment in traffic signals of £10.579 In traffic signals to improve traffic flows and buses in city , It's very important that this investment is sent on improving the road network and priority measures for walking cycling wheeling and public transport especially improve in reliability and Punctuality across the city bus network The resurfacing on the road network is very important to bus and coach passengers throughout the city Region.

On pavement and public realm we welcome the pavement repairs especially for people with reduced mobility and partly sighted people, Surface treatment and even surfaces is very important to with reduced mobility and partly sighted people especially walking around the city centre and Harbourside with Tourist hotshots in the summer and residents streets And routes to bus stops and transport interchanges and Railway stations,

We welcome the list of repair and maintenance of the Network. We hope Bristol city council and the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority will consult with disabilities equities groups in the city about individual schemes, We note with concern the lack equities officers at the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority, With so much work planned in partnership with Bristol city council as Highway Authority on the city Region transport strategy funding.

Statement: PS14.01

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 14 - Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

Statement submitted by: Len Wyatt Chair of Bristol Parks Forum

1. Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

We welcome the finalisation of the Strategy; and the emphasis it provides on the importance of the benefits that Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces provide.

We are pleased to see that there is an improved emphasis in parts of the Strategy to support working with and empowering communities; and references to both Friends of Parks Groups and Your Park to achieve this.

This aligns well with our ongoing work to strengthen relationships within and outside the Bristol Parks Forum.

As an aspirational document there are, of course, many things to do to achieve the outcomes required, especially in terms of being able to fund the necessary changes; and maintain them in the longer term. To this end the Forum will continue to work with the Council and other organisations on initiatives to find the best ways to enable that funding to be accessed.

We note that there is an additional emphasis on food growing in parks and green spaces. As can be seen from a number of community gardens in Bristol's parks there are many benefits to this happening. However, care is needed to pick the right site, in the right context, so that potential conflicts with the existing functions of that park, or part of park are avoided.

We note that in the Report to the Cabinet, in Annex A2 there is a series of maps which give an idea of the current situation in terms of the Green Space Provision standards across Bristol.

It is clear from these maps and statements in the Strategy that more parks and green space is needed in the central areas of Bristol. A large, green park, in addition to smaller areas will be critical to the development of the St Philips site. Noting that the strategy states that the Council has developed a **minimum** standard of provision, a large green park would deliver across many of the key Parks and Green Spaces Strategy's Priority Themes and Key Actions and Outcomes. We note an aspirational figure is quoted in the Strategy of 2.9ha new open space in the Central Area/Zone; and 1 ha in the Inner Urban Area/Zone.

Finally, we would draw the Council's attention to potential improvements (see below) that can be made in the general approach of consultations, which have been developed from a number of recent consultations.

We believe these can be carried out, relatively simply. The changes would mean that organisations, such as ourselves, do not have to use so many resources to try to enable people to find their way around the consultation; and to respond more effectively.

The improvements are:

- Ensure that the introduction to the consultation/questionnaire, clearly states all of the changes involved;
- Ensure that supporting information or further detail is included as an Annex to the main document(s), not just shown within the questionnaire.
- That there is a PDF version of the survey available on request so that, if necessary, people can read the whole survey, rather than skip between pages.
- That it is made clearer how people can save a copy or request a copy of their response once completed, before they submit it.
- That in addition to reporting on the points raised by respondents, that evidence is provided as to how those points were treated in relation to the final version (eg: whether those points were taken on board and changed the text, or if not the reasons why).

2. Bid to WECA Green Recovery Fund

The Bristol Parks Forum welcomes the bid for funds. We welcome the fact that it contains a bid for revenue funding to support the longer-term benefits that the projects could deliver.

Statement: PS14.02

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 14 - Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

Statement submitted by: Dan Ackroyd

It's great that this council is applying for money from the 'West of England' 'Green Recovery Fund'. And it's great that the council has acknowledged that the complete lack of maintenance spending on allotments isn't working, and that a minimum level of maintenance needs to be carried out.

But it's appalling how this council does not view consultations as part of the 'requirements gathering' step in decision making, and instead seems to view a consultation as something to be done after a decision has been made, and will only change course if people will complain loudly enough.

From the "Parks and Green Spaces Strategy" document:

"We will seek to engage a more diverse range of stakeholders and commit to co-designing change in partnership with communities"

"using an open dialogue with stakeholders and communities – will seek to adapt to new ideas and new ways of thinking."

"proactively forming relationships with stakeholders and communities across the city."

Why would anyone engage with this council?

You already had a pretty great way of engaging with the Allotmenters. The Bristol Allotments Forum should have been involved in the discussion when drafting the changes to Parks and Green Spaces strategy, and the Allotments Rents and Water Charges.

But you didn't 'co-design' anything with them. Instead you just announced what you wanted to do, and have back-pedalled a small amount.

The same thing happened recently at the Licensing committee. This council carried out a consultation and then wanted to throw the results of it away.

This council has a pattern of just refusing to talk to people who might disagree with them, and instead wanting to talk to people who already agree with what this council wants to "get done".

That is wrong.

You should focus more on improving communication with the groups that are already engaging with you, rather than just ignoring those people, even if they aren't fully aligned with your vision of what should happen.

Statement: PS15.01

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 15 - Investment in Parks

Statement submitted by: Bristol Parks Forum

The Bristol Parks Forum welcomes this report and the much-needed investment in Bristol's parks and green spaces that it promises.

[Our Vision](#) for Bristol's parks calls for everyone to have access to good quality parks and green spaces.

To meet these aims there needs to be investment in parks and green spaces in all parts of our city. Existing barriers that prevent some members of our community using parks, need to be addressed.

This proposal is a positive step in that direction; especially considering the wider context in England where many Local Authorities are facing having to make cuts to many of those services which benefit the health and well-being of people and wildlife.

In the longer term we look forward to similar investment to enable the maintenance of the projects once completed.

The Bristol Parks Forum thanks the current Administration and Council for engaging with the Parks Forum; and we look forward to working with the next administration and Council so that our Vision for Parks in 2030; and the Council's Strategy can be achieved.

Question: CQ15.01

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 15 – Investment in Parks

Question submitted by: Councillor Amal Ali

Question 1: I welcome the £500k investment for Oldbury Court, on top of the funding it's already received, taking total investment to a £1m. This funding will help preserve an important heritage asset and will empower people to take part in the management of this community asset. The £500k earmarked to spend on accessible play equipment would be very welcome in Lawrence Hill. Netham Park would make a great candidate for this investment, as it's an area with a growing population as it's close to Temple Quarter, is used by people from many different communities, and does not have any accessible play equipment – nor in nearby parks. How can we decide, and influence, where this funding will be spent?

Question: CQ15.02

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 15 – Investment in Parks

Question submitted by: Councillor Martin Fodor

Question 1: In the Budget debate Cllr King proposed a more collaborative approach to allocating Strategic CIL to ensure all members can take part in cross party discussions. Given all members voted unanimously in full council last February for my Budget amendment which created this £2m Strategic CIL fund why has it been drawn up with no cross party discussion?

Question: CQ15.03 & CQ15.04

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 15 – Investment in Parks

Question submitted by: Councillor Gary Hopkins

Whilst welcoming the changes in the budget regarding extra investment of strategic cil in parks we seek clarity.

Question 1: Despite the majority of residents of knowle welcoming the regeneration of our shopping centre there is a potential legal challenge to the decision taken by our planning committee to grant outline planning permission for the development. Given that we have been told that only growth areas qualify to benefit from strategic cil investment in their parks can you confirm whether or not Redcatch park can now be considered for strategic cil investment.

Question 2: if there is a temporary delay in redcatch qualifying fr cil investment because of the challenge can it be confirmed ,especially as the development will generate £4M of cil ,that redcatch park would be a good candidate for investment.

Statement: PS16.01

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Sarah Freeman

The Council is looking at staggering a 100% increase over two years. That is unacceptable, this is still a 50% increase each year. An increase well above the rate of inflation. The Council keeps stating there has been no rise in rents since 2018, that is their fault not allotment holders, who appear to be having to bear the brunt of the Councils failings. Even so a 5% inflation rise since 2018 doesn't equate to a 50% rise in FY 25/26.

The 1950 Allotment Act Section 10(1) states:

“An allotment shall be let as such rent as a tenant may reasonably be expected to pay for the land”.

What the Council are proposing is not reasonable. The allotment rent increase could be considered unlawful. See below

(Reference: Case: R (Wood and Turley) v Leeds City Council)

The Council mentions “it needs to bring more overgrown plots into cultivation. I hope they do not expect allotment holders to do this for them? (as this is what happening currently)

If allotment rents rise by 50% the Council cannot expect allotment holders to clear plots for them anymore. You risk the goodwill from allotment holders that currently exists.

You should be asking yourselves what the consequences will be of above inflation rent increases e.g. plot take up.

Conclusion

I urge the Council to rethink their proposed changes to the Bristol Allotment Rent and Tenancy Agreement.

Statement: PS16.02

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Debbie Wyatt

I am writing to ask you to challenge the proposed increases in allotment rents , which I believe are scheduled for Cabinet approval on March 5th.
I believe the proposed increases are too large and will have a seriously damaging impact particularly on low income households and Community Groups.

The consultation reported in the documents for the meeting was flawed, notice of the consultation was not even received by many Allotment holders that I know personally. The proposed rent increases are illogical, the percentage increase bears no relation to any inflation figures, and I do not believe the additional income would be spent on Allotment sites.

Statement: PS16.03

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Holly Wyatt

'Alongside the Council's online consultation process, I began an online petition via change.org which has been submitted to Democratic Services. At the time of submission, this petition had reached 6,414 signatures of support; with 3,965 verified as being from Bristol residents. As such, this petition will be going to the next Full Council meeting for debate; but I felt it was important to highlight at this Cabinet meeting the volume of support this petition has received. One of the core demands in this petition was that 'access to space to grow your own food should be for everyone and not the reserve of more affluent households'. Over 6,000 people agreed with this statement, and I would strongly urge the Council not to ignore the voices of those they have been elected to represent. These rent increases will absolutely make allotments unaffordable for some of those who could most benefit from access to space to grow their own food, and the impact of these proposals will disproportionately affect the poorest residents of our city.'

Please do let me know if these is anything further I need to do.

Statement: PS16.04

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Tom Bosanquet

Some themes from the Rees administration have been an unwillingness to collaborate, lack of clarity, opaque presentation of data, and a mean & controlling spirit.

These have all been on show throughout the Allotment rules & rates consultation, just as we've seen them as the planning system is gamed (Castle Park, Broadwalk), tower block residents herded (Barton House), ecological richness destroyed (Yew Tree Farm), and residents awaiting safe road crossing points ignored again & again (CIL funded project blockages, esp St.Luke's Rd). There's been spin & there's been blame.

So I've lost almost all faith in Bristol Labour – a crying shame, as your party should be a vital voice for many people. But you've lost your way & I can't wait for the Rees clique to be moved on in May. Sad to say, though, your negative legacies are going to keep on biting Bristol for years to come.

Statement: PS16.05

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Sue Allen

Unfortunately I am unable to attend the meeting and would like to complain about the very large increase in allotment rent and water charges.

I know the council are looking to make savings but the large increase in rent is causing a lot of stress and worry to allotment holders. We know there has to be an increase but surely not this big. There are a lot of low paid workers and pensioners who do not qualify for any discount and may have to give up their allotments as they cannot afford the increase. This will lead to mental health problems and social isolation. Please reconsider such a big increase.

Statement: PS16.06

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Ruch Hecht

In your Food Growing and Allotments Strategy you say that you want ‘A fairer approach to tenancy fees’, yet clearly the proposed rental increases are anything but fair.

The percentage increases which tenants will have to pay range from 7% to 492%. People on sites *without* water will be paying a far greater increase than those *with* water. Band D has been used as a comparator in your report – the majority of those on benefits in Band D are on sites with water, and they will pay *more than double* what they are currently paying – and if they’re on a *smaller plot* they will pay a *larger* increase. None of this is fair. It’s completely illogical, and at no time during the consultation process has any explanation been given as to how these random increases were arrived at.

79% of Disabled people who took part in your consultation disagreed or disagreed strongly with the proposed rent increases, yet in the Equalities Impact Assessment you said there would be no disproportionate impact on Disabled people. The Council’s own mapping data shows that most of the allotment sites in the City are in the areas of greatest food poverty and social deprivation – yet this doesn’t form part of your report. People who are on low income, but not on benefits, have responded to a survey which the campaign has done to say that if the rents go up as proposed they will no longer be able to afford their plot and that it no longer makes financial sense for them to grow their own food. Community groups which are tenants on the largest plots will see their rents rise by up to 200%, which may force some to close.

There is no doubt that your proposed increases will impact most on those who can least afford it, and thus are completely at odds with your strategy which puts allotment sites at the heart of a network of green spaces across the whole City where people can grow their own food.

One of the key principles in your Parks and Green Spaces Strategy is collaboration; another is creativity. You say you want ‘an open dialogue with stakeholders and communities’ and ‘will seek to adapt to new ideas and new ways of thinking.’ Since the beginning of February I have emailed both Cllr. King and Jonathan James more than once on behalf of Bristol Allotmenters Resist requesting a meeting to discuss solutions to the problems presented by your proposed rent increases. I haven’t even had a response to my emails, let alone an agreement to meet. This doesn’t feel very collaborative or very creative. I and others are fully supportive of rents being increased, because it’s clear that the Allotment Service is under-staffed and under-resourced. However, the current proposals are not the way to do it. Given we weren’t able to talk to members or officers about solutions prior to this meeting, let me put some to you now.

Instead of increasing the rents by the proposed amounts - which look as if they’ve been arrived at by a cat walking over the keyboard - you could:

1. Raise rents by inflation. This was agreed by Council in 2022, but never implemented. Raising rents by inflation is something which tenants can understand; it’s fair and logical. This is what most Local Authorities do.
2. Charge per square meter. At the moment people with different sized plots pay the same because of the banding system; a much fairer way to charge would be for people to pay for

the actual size of their plot. Many Local Authorities do this, so why not Bristol? The rents could then rise each year by inflation.

3. Charge people in line with the Council Tax band where they live (not where their plot is). This means that you could charge people more if they live in affluent areas of the City and less if they live in the more deprived areas. This is far more equitable than the current system whereby someone who lives in Redland is paying the same rent as someone who lives in Hartcliffe.

Once a method has been chosen, you could put a clause into the Tenancy Agreement about the rents rising annually by inflation. That way you wouldn't have to go through this, frankly, farcical process every time you wanted to raise the rents.

Please could you tell me if you considered any of these alternative options to increasing the rents – or indeed any others - before you made the current arbitrary proposals?

Statement: PS16.07

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Christopher Faulkner Gibson

Statement relating to Agenda Item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges.

I fully understand that allotment rents need to increase. The fact that previous agreed increases were not implemented is the fault of Bristol City Council, not the allotment tenants who are now facing punitive increases to compensate for this failure.

However, we want to work constructively with the Council, and we all agree that improvements are needed and must be paid for: the current staff levels are totally insufficient. We do not disagree with you on the principles but on the detail and the means of implementation.

Your decision to phase in the increases over two years is welcome, as is making monthly Direct Debit payments available but this does not go far enough.

79% of respondents to your consultation (many of whom live in the two most deprived deciles of the city) said that they either disagreed or disagreed strongly with the rent rises. This is not reflected in your EIA, and I cannot see how you can justify the rent increases given this level of opposition.

Whilst I was pleased to see the new rules and additional fees postponed for further review and consultation, I do not believe that the responses to the consultation on rents have been properly considered.

Various suggestions have been put forward as to how the allotment charging regime can become fairer, but this is not reflected in your consultation report – you seem determined to go ahead regardless, ignoring both the level of opposition and the constructive suggestions that have been put forward.

In common with many other tenants, I believe your proposals will, if implemented as they are, be vulnerable to Judicial Review. The Bristol Allotmenters Resist group is actively investigating this, and it is believed that the costs could be met through a Crowdfunder appeal with little difficulty.

I also find it astonishing that so much anger is being stoked up across the entire city so close to an election. I am aware of several people who are vowing that if these increases go ahead they will no longer vote Labour, saying they feel betrayed that a Labour Council is penalising working people in this way.

Please, step back from this and take an altogether more imaginative and collaborative approach.

Statement: PS16.08

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Jo Pengilley

To Councillor King,

I have found the whole process of the 'consultation' deeply unsatisfactory. Whilst I am glad that the ludicrous rules have been parked, I am left with a project to create a community pollinator garden in limbo, with no real way of knowing what will be implemented in the future, or when. We had been granted £8.5k for the project from WECA. Volunteers worked hard for 9 months to clear the plot and now the plot is covered up awaiting further news.

I am a community worker on a low wage so the proposed huge rental hikes have been stressful too. I love my plot and know every inch of the soil there so I will have to try and find the money to continue, but I had wanted to grow vegetables to support my low income. The huge proposed increase of **109%** will make this economically unviable. I understand the need for a rent increase - I live in rented accommodation that goes up each year. Spreading this over 2 years won't help if the figure remains at the same rate. The whole process from the 11th December to today has been disastrous. I have lost faith in the councils process. All we want is fair rent for a fair service.

Statement: PS16.09

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Mara

Dear Bristol city council,

I'm 21 years old and am a student studying at the university of the west of England . When I was a child growing up in a low income household my local allotment down in west Bristol was my haven. The sense of a caring community full of a mosaic of different people from all walks of life that allotments bring was something I never experienced at home . My aunt would grow potatoes, leeks , cabbage and tomatoes on her large plot that would keep us fed for months which would mean that we would save loads of money !!! Allotments aren't just a hobby for a lot of people it's also a way of saving money in the living crisis. If my aunts allotments was treated the same way you plan to treat these people down in Bristol with the insane increase in rent prices we would of been beyond skint and would of never experienced the beauty of low income people all working together side by side on our plots.! I of course understand the inflation rates and the need for a rent rise as everything else goes up too . We all understand and are thankful the council has kept it down for so long but the proposed rent increases are insane !! With plots going up by triple or quadruple it's like your trying to make up for it all in one go but not putting into account that people can't actually afford for it to go up insanely . Even by paying the rent monthly instead of all in one go won't help much it will need to be payed . If these proposed prices go ahead it would be only the well off and the comfortable middle class would be able to enjoy the beauty of an allotment something I know the council is against ! The council is for us all and for the forgotten lower class ignored by the government.

I expect you to take our responses seriously and will see you all on Monday

Thank you

Statement: PS16.10

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Noreen Ratcliff

I have a plot at Hope Allotment.

I am unable to attend the meeting

> As a pensioner allotment holder myself for 8 years, I have never seen or heard from anyone at the council so am mystified by these rising costs claims. What does the council actually do for allotment holders.

> Furthermore I am concerned that many allotment holders are pensioners who will not be able to afford these price increases and for many this is their main form of exercise and social interaction. Being priced out will only increase pressure on adult social care budgets.

> With prices going up within BCC it is getting difficult to manage.

Please do think wisely

thank you

Statement: PS16.11

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Elise Unger

Whilst it is understandable that allotment rents need to increase in line with inflation, the increase should be exactly that, **in line with inflation**. The price rises you are proposing for 2025/26 are completely outrageous, for example, a small plot which presently costs £50 per annum would rise to £89 by 2026. This is an almost 80% increase. Prices have not gone up by 80% since 2018, if I went to a council run gym in the city for a swim in 2018 it would have cost £4.50, now in 2024 it costs £5.80. That's a 28% increase in price. Why then the 80% price hike on my allotment rent? For some other plot holders, the increases are far greater, up to 400% increases for some community plots; volunteers who give up their time for free to help educate, physically and emotionally nurture others within their community and grow food to distribute to local food banks, groups such as the various community orchards around the city and the volunteers who help run PROPS. However, you wish to financially punish these groups the most! Your rationale is that allotment rents haven't gone up since 2018. That is **not** the fault of the allotment holders and they should not be punished for it. It is Bristol City Council's inability to manage its budget and implement a rent increase that is at fault, for example, the agreed 25% price rise issued by the Allotments office in 2022 that should have come into effect by September 2023. Councillor Ellie King even took an action at the forum meeting of 27/07/22 to "Clarify the rent increases" and the timetable so that notice of the increase could be issued to plot holders by autumn of the same year, yet this somehow all disappeared into the ether. What is the reason for this, or have none of you noticed? Please show some integrity, compassion and wisdom; seek to apply a **reasonable** rent rise for all plot holders, in line with inflation, to come into force in the coming year.

Statement: PS16.12

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Tina Holmes

Staggering the proposed rent increases over a couple of years, doesn't make it any more affordable - we will still end up paying an excessive increase.
Introducing monthly payments is great, but not when the total is still the same.

SI don't understand how Cllr King doesn't understand this?

Statement: PS16.13

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Iain McCaig

1. I am an allotment tenant at Metford Road Allotments (Plot 29B)
2. I accept that rent rises are necessary and inevitable in the present financial climate. But the increases proposed are significantly higher than the cumulative rate of inflation since 2018, when rents were last increased. The Council' has not demonstrated clearly how increases on this scale are justified. Moreover, the increases proposed are illogical and inherently unfair: They will lead to tenants paying significantly more per square meter for smaller plots than larger ones. For instance, under the current pricing system the rent for a plot at the top of a band is the same as a plot half the size at the bottom of the band. In addition, the percentage increases in rent (for sites with water) vary significantly from band to band: A 140%;, B 78%; C 123%; D 109%; E 66%; F 88%, G 136%; H 220%. How are these variations justified?
3. Kicking the can down the road by deferring these increases and introducing them over two years does not make them any less illogical or unfair.
4. A better approach would be to arrive at a fair and reasonable rent per square meter (with a lower rate or discount for sites without water and facilities) in consultation with the Allotment Forum, and charge tenants according to the actual area of their plot. Subsequent annual increases could simply be tied to the rate of inflation.
5. It is hard to see how the Council's stated objectives of promoting greater accessibility and diversity will be furthered by these unfair increases, even with the proposed extended discounts.
6. Allotment tenants and their site representatives comprise a significant body of knowledge and experience. They understand the particular character and significance of their individual sites and will know how best to manage them. The Council should see them as a resource and trust them to deal with the local, day-to-day management of sites. This would free-up Allotment Office resources to deal with high level issues.

Statement: PS16.14

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Ana Sánchez

The amount of people opposing the rent increase in your consultation was 78%. Despite this, you continue to go ahead with the same rent increase originally proposed - only that your new proposal is to stagger it over 2 years. This rent increase you're proposing is still higher than national inflation, this is totally illogical and unjust.

You have not been clear and open when sharing allotments outgoings and income and seem to have added to your budget extra expenditure out of nowhere. This way of trying to justify your proposed rent increases lacks transparency and seems once more illogical.

It's fair to say that most (if not all) sites need better management of the empty plots (and therefore better management of the long waiting lists). This seems to be the major problem for people in the waiting list waiting to grow their own food and for people who are handed overgrown plots who have to work hard and take a good 2 to 3 years to properly clear the land so they can start growing food. Also the empty overgrown plots are not generating income for BCC. How can you justify the rent increases to pay for this better management when the site reps (volunteers) are the ones dealing with the plots that need allocating and the waiting list? once more this is not clear how you are going to achieve this key issue with your rent increase proposal.

One last point regarding the Community Groups & Collectives - I really don't think you are even remotely aware of the benefits that these group bring to the community, all the activities, learning, hands on experience, safe natural spaces and connection to nature that they offer to many of us... all run by volunteers giving their free time to the community! Perhaps you could focus on a way of estimating the value they add and be supported to continue with their mission instead of having them pay double their current rent.

Many thanks.

Statement: PS16.15

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Joanna Mellors

I would like to thank Cllr King and the Allotment Office for their February decision to remove the proposed new rules and charges from today's Cabinet considerations.

I am looking forward to the Allotment Service being able to put the last three turbulent months behind them and returning to providing the day-to-day service that Bristol Allotments need.

To that end, please could Cabinet give serious thought to my proposal at the end of this statement.

You will have heard repeatedly that the Consultation process was seriously flawed. The requisite valuation/benchmarking appears – to this retired Chartered Surveyor – to have the air of a 'back of envelope' exercise. The budgets show projected infrastructure expenditure of £301Kpa over 15 years – more than £4.5M; and yet, when asked, the Parks Officer – at a Scrutiny Commission meeting and following receipt of a written question – was unable to come up with a single project that was in the pipeline. I would suggest that the Budget in the Brief before you is another 'back of the envelope' exercise.

Research of the law makes me believe that it will be legally unsound for Cabinet to approve, at the very least, the rent increases for the larger Banded plots (E, F, G &H). Such plots are predominantly occupied by the Community Groups: there is no evidence that the members of these Groups (not local authority tenants) were properly consulted; the Equalities Impact Assessment does not consider the impact on them; and the Benchmarking exercise is silent with regard to comparable evidence. I have written to Cllr King about this.

In 2022 there was Cabinet approval (supported by an Equalities Impact Assessment) for a 25% increase; all existing discounts etc to remain in place.

Cllr King, in her letter of 2nd February, proposes a more collaborative approach to working with Allotmenters. I welcome this and suggest that such discussions should include devising a new approach to future rent increases.

In the meantime, **I urge Cabinet to reject these rent proposals and advise the Service instead to instigate the 25% increase for which they already have authority.** This would ensure an increase in revenue flow from March 2025 and would not cause anything like the distress and ongoing turbulence that will come from the current proposals.

Statement: PS16.16

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Caroline Dalcq

The covering report for agenda item 16. 'Allotments Rents and Water Charges' states you 'need to implement a **fairer and more sustainable approach to tenancy fees**' with which I would completely agree with.

The rent increases you propose, though, are **completely inconsistent across the bands**. The current banding system means that someone with a plot at the top of a band pays the same as someone with a plot at the bottom of the band.

For example, a 75m² plot costs the same as a plot of double the size at 149m² – in effect the smaller plot is twice the cost per square metre of the larger plot. Moreover, the percentage increases (given for sites with water,) are, ranging in turn from the smallest plot to the largest: 140%, 78%, 123%, 109%, 66%, 88%, 136%, 220%.

This is unfair.

And no explanation has been given for this variation.

As an alternative, the first increase for 2025/26 could be implemented as planned but the second halted. In the meantime, **in collaboration with tenants, work out the cost per square metre** needed to fund a level of service that satisfies both parties, to be formally agreed with the Allotment Forum. This could be introduced in 2026/27. Thereafter, a simple annual inflationary rise, using the same % increase for all, should suffice.

This will be simple, fair, and reduce administration. Details of the size of all plots by square metre is already held by the Allotments Office, so no further surveying work is needed.

Please let our voices be heard. Please let us, as the main stakeholders, have a (real) say in this.

Many thanks,

Statement: PS16.17

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Kirsty Forman

I am making this statement in objection to the current budget proposals for increases in rents and water charges for allotment plot holders.

I do not object to rent increases in principle, or altogether, but I do vigorously object to the proposals currently under consideration.

Some councillors who have been lobbied on this subject appear not to be fully informed on this and/or to understand that a large proportion of those who are actively campaigning against the increases proposed actually think that there should be some increases, but not these as proposed.

The 25% inflationary increase in allotment rents agreed in 2022 has not been implemented or effectively managed. It is not fair or reasonable to impose a punitive level of illogical rent increases which do not take account of plot sizes or water or service provision, to increase the income of the allotment service to make good the deficit in income as a result of this mis management.

The figures published by Bristol City Council in support of these proposals are extraordinary in claiming a proposed figure of £300,000 for building and maintenance expenditure without any details to justify or explain this if this is intended to relate to a 15-year programme of work, how can it be justifiable to claim this for one year?

It would be considerably fairer and more reasonable to conduct an effective and proper consultation with allotment tenants and site reps to achieve an agreed rate of annual rent increase based on actual plot sizes and services provided and build in annual increases. This would be far cheaper to implement in the long term and allow for greater certainty for budgeting for the Council and tenants alike.

Statement: PS16.18

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Vanessa Harvey- Samuel

To members of the Cabinet

I am a tenant at Speedwell A allotment site and have held my plot for 6 years. I believe the right decision has been made in withdrawing, as an outcome of consultation, the proposals regarding fees, charges and Rules so that further consultation and consideration can be given to these contentious matters.

I urge you to do the same with the proposed Rent increase resulting in doubling rental income. This is a political decision which only you can make. Just as it was a political decision to forgo rent increases over the past 5 years including the 25 % agreed by Full Council in 2022 to take effect in the coming financial year.

Like many others I support the case for a rent increase but not by such a significant amount with no information as to how the money is to be spent. Your legal advice on consultation underlines the requirement to provide sufficient reasons for any proposals to permit intelligent consideration.

Allotment holders have been requesting details of current and past expenditure and plans for the proposed new expenditure throughout the consultation period and beyond to no avail. Even last week in response to an FOI seeking the breakdown of expenditure for 2022/23 the Council replied saying these figures were unavailable. How has the Allotment Service been able to claim that the budget is dramatically over spent when it has no record of what was spent not in this financial year but last year? In the period 2017/22 the average overspend from figures that have in the past been presented to the Allotment Forum was in the region of £26K - this could easily have been accommodated by the 25% rise in rents.

In the report presented to you today Buildings and Infrastructure is represented as costing £301K. In 2020/21 this figure was £37,660, in 2021/22 this figure was £33,881 and as I say we're told the figure for 2022/23 is not yet available.

As a consultee I certainly do not feel I have sufficient information to permit intelligent consideration of these proposals but more to the point does the Cabinet?

What is this money to be used for? How is to be spent in a year? Where is it coming from ? How sustainable is the service's plan? It was readily acknowledged at the Allotment Forum meeting on 24 January that the money raised would not be ring fenced.

The strategy is full of laudable aspirations but no evidence of ground work in terms of surveying sites, prioritising work, costing work. The impression from officers at the recent Communities Scrutiny meeting was that desktop exercises had been

undertaken. However, they appeared unconfident that the work was fully scoped and costed. Shouldn't this be done before embarking on consultation?

Allotments are so important to many people. To expand the opportunities available across the City must be right. But to do so in such an apparently cavalier manner causing financial hardship and real anxiety to perhaps the very people who benefit the most cannot be right.

Statement: PS16.19

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Harriet Buckland

Dear Cabinet,

please see my statement below in relation to the increased allotment rents and water charges to be discussed by the cabinet tomorrow afternoon:

I agree there is a need to increase rents but strongly disagree with the method and magnitude of increases. I would support rent increases that take the following points into consideration, along side a much more collaborative approach with the allotmenting community.

- Raise rents by inflation. This was agreed by Council in 2022, but never implemented. Raising rents by inflation is something which tenants can understand; it's fair and logical. This is what most Local Authorities do.
- 2. Charge per square meter. At the moment people with different sized plots pay the same because of the banding system; a much fairer way to charge would be for people to pay for the actual size of their plot. Many Local Authorities do this, so why not Bristol? The rents could then rise each year by inflation.
- 3. Charge people in line with the Council Tax band where they live (not where their plot is). This means that you could charge people more if they live in affluent areas of the City and less if they live in the more deprived areas. This is far more equitable than the current system whereby someone who lives in Redland is paying the same rent as someone who lives in Hartcliffe.

In addition to the above, the rent should take account of **any/all** limiting factors associated with any given plot. Charging the same rent for a plot with good aspect, good site facilities, water as one that may have multiple disadvantages eg shade, no water, steep, poor access is clearly unfair. Multiple discounts to account for multiple constraints to growing must be facilitated.

To support inclusivity, shared plot tenancy must be supported and encouraged.

The same goes for community allotments. The current proposals will be a significant barrier for these groups - many existing community growing groups will likely discontinue as a result of these and they will discourage/prevent the development of new ones. This is extremely short sighted since again, these groups have immense value to the community, well being, food growing, skill shares, and often by their very nature provide support to the rest of the allotment site on which they exist. The range and reach of their value is significantly under appreciated.

Allotment plots are more than growing spaces they are an incredible boost to mental health which in turn lessens the impact of mental health costs on our strained NHS and should be available to those who need it most, often those that are under the most financial strain.

The allotmenting community forms a significant part of the electorate **and** the negative impact of these proposals is also clearly appreciated and understood much more

widely/outside the allotment community. Pushing this forward in the manner proposed will have a significant impact on election results with much of the community swayed to support a party which better understands the value and supports the development of the allotment community.

I trust you will will take these points into consideration and reconsider the proposed rent increases.

Statement: PS16.20

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Lorna Lindfield

I have cancer and chronic fatigue. I am a part-time NHS employee and am currently unable to work.

I am managing alone, living in a flat. I already fund my allotment rent out of household food and fuel budgets.

Cancer has had a huge impact on my mental health. The allotment is the only thing in life that I positively want to get out of the flat for.

The allotment means I can,

- eat a wider range of fresh vegetables than I could buy,
- get out in the sun and fresh air,
- do an activity without spending money,
- meet like-minded people.

I have already adapted my methods to my disability and low income by,

- building irrigation channels,
- using no-dig methods,
- accepting help from friends to do the heavy work,
- growing lower effort produce,
- rainwater harvesting.

Statement: PS16.21

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Sally Wyatt

I object to the rent increases for the allotments. Both me and my partner work full time but are still a low income household but aren't eligible for any benefits. When we took our allotment on it was £25 a year it's £85 now. We have both never gardened before and just thought we would give it ago as it wasn't expensive. We really got into it and grow all our own food we make jams and wine. It's brilliant. I've been through a lot with my plot and it's kept me going. We don't have holidays or luxuries. If you go ahead with these rises we would of never of tried it and we are wondering how we can afford it now. I pay a subscription which goes towards me getting new glasses every month I've got a high prescription and my glasses are loads of money. I will probably have to choose between that and my plot. It's all wrong and you need to sort it out.

Statement: PS16.22

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Tess Price

This is a collective statement from a number of allotment site-based community groups and projects, who have come together to state our concerns about the impact on our groups of the Council's proposed rent rises.

Bristol has a fantastic range of motivated and committed community groups/projects on allotment sites, and collectively we bring huge benefits to the city including on access to healthy food, physical and mental health, reducing isolation, building community and opportunities to connect with nature and land.

The Council acknowledges this in its PGSS Food Growing and Allotments strategy, and claims to want to encourage and support us: Page 44 states: *“Collective growing plots are a great way to enjoy the benefits of an allotment plot without having to commit to an individual allotment tenancy or join the waiting list for a plot. These have been established by a group or organisation to satisfy a particular community need and interest in food growing, providing social interaction and community cohesion.*

There is great opportunity for these initiatives to encourage the participation of under-represented groups, and to be a stepping-stone for everyone to progress from an interest in food growing to taking on their own allotment plot. Increasing opportunities for collective food growing will require a collaborative and creative approach, but it has the potential to reduce pressure on our allotment waiting list and ensure the benefits of food growing are accessible.”

But in fact these Allotments Rents proposals will be really damaging to us and they risk closing many of us down.

- The rent rises are huge, ranging from around twice as much to almost 6 times as much as current rents. The rises are higher on larger plots, disproportionately affecting our projects.
- Your proposed 50% discount won't work to make the rent rises manageable for us. Some of us are already receiving discounts of 50% or even 100%, so for those groups rents will still rise massively.
- The discount scheme itself will involve a large extra administrative burden on groups and potentially large extra costs. In order to receive the discounts, groups may have to keep records of all participants/visitors including date/time of visits, equalities monitoring data, records of food yields and maintenance activities. GDPR law is likely to apply to these records. Groups may also have to set up Public Liability Insurance if they don't already have it.

The potential impacts on us are as follows:

- Some of us will be forced to close our projects, or parts of our projects, because they are no longer financially viable. Many of us provide free hands-on food and fruit growing learning opportunities; we give away surplus produce to our local communities, and to local Food Banks; and we provide outdoor healthy spaces and community to people who may otherwise be unable to access such things. **Does Council really want us to charge for such services?** If so you will make these services unaffordable and inaccessible to many of these people.

- Some of us who raise funds through member subs will have to increase those subs to cover our costs, effectively closing our groups to those on a low income.
- Some of us will be forced to seek new or additional grant funding to cover our costs. This will increase our workload, make the future of our groups vulnerable to cuts in grant funding, and prevent us from planning for the longer term.
- We all rely largely or entirely on volunteer labour to keep our projects running. The extra administrative burden is likely to be impossible to sustain for many of us, already struggling to balance this work with paid employment, family and caring commitments. As a result some of us may have to close because key organisers and volunteers won't be able to continue to run and manage the projects.
- Potential new groups/projects will be disincentivised by the new rents and the need to meet stringent requirements to obtain the 50% discount. New groups of this kind never start out fully formed with lists of volunteers, and are rarely able to obtain grant funding in their early stages. They are nearly always the result of the hard work of a few committed individuals, often for years, in order to get the group up and running and get plots safe and ready for the intended use. Your rent and discount scheme proposals will act as a very high barrier for any new groups of this kind.

We are asking you as a Cabinet to help safeguard the future of our groups/projects by voting against these destructive proposals.

We are asking that the Council works together with us and other community groups/projects to develop new rent proposals that can support a viable allotments service and enable us to flourish as well.

Furthermore the Council needs to back up their stated encouragement for community groups by looking to work with us and support us. The community groups/projects can help support the allotments with support and training, resources and organisation, but we can only do this if we are supported to develop. From this could come the innovation which is more important than rent rises to tackle the service reform.

Groups who have co-written and signed up to this statement:

Alive Dementia-friendly
 Allotment Beaufort Road Community Growing Collective
 The Birch Collective
 Easton Community Garden
 Edible Bristol
 Fishponds Community Orchard
 The Haven Project
 Herbalists Without Borders Bristol (Herb Allotment)
 Metford Road Community Orchard
 Redland Green Community Orchard
 Royate Hill Community Orchard
 Street Goat
 Thingwall Park Community Chickens
 Woodcroft Community Orchard

Statement: PS16.23

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Sue Edgerley

I think the rent increases are too high with no apparent measure of how they were decided. Appreciating that rents have not increased since 2018 it would seem more reasonable to increase rents in line with inflation over that period.

The proposed new rents are too high even considering discounts for those who qualify based on low incomes. It will be turning allotments into a middle income hobby rather than providing all with the option of growing their own food.

I can't see how the high water charges can be justified without making water more accessible on allotments. Watering can be difficult for a majority of allotment holders who have to carry heavy cans over a distant for repeated watering trips through the summer.

Statement: PS16.24

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Elizabeth Gold, Metford Road Community Orchard (MRCO).

MRCO was established 25 years ago on five allotment plots that sloped too steeply for conventional vegetable growing. It is managed as an organic permaculture 'forest garden' with mature heritage fruit trees including plums, apples (with at least one variety found nowhere else), cherry, mulberry and medlar. Vines, figs and soft fruits are also grown. Produce in season is shared among the members and donated to local food banks.

MRCO is a paid-for membership group of around 40 people. It doesn't have a waiting list and is always open to new members who can then reap the physical and mental health benefits of exercise, fresh air and food, closeness to nature and being part of a community working together.

In addition to a healthy community of people, MRCO provides a diverse wildlife habitat for slow worms, newts, frogs, butterflies, bees, birds and small mammals. At a time when so many front gardens in Bristol are becoming car parks the existence of diverse and interconnected green spaces is increasingly important.

Since its establishment, MRCO has been self-managing and financially self sufficient. All maintenance (including to shelter, shed and composting loo) has been carried out by members with only minimal support, financial or otherwise, from BCC. Under the current proposals our rent will double. We aim to keep our membership fees low to remain as affordable and inclusive as possible. But if our rent doubles we will be forced to raise the price of membership. This will jeopardise the aims of social diversity and inclusivity.

Community Orchards benefit everyone, not solely their members, (think about that when you're eating local honey). They should be encouraged and supported by the Council.

Statement: PS16.25

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Harry Mac

We are using this final opportunity to try to be listened to by the cabinet before they introduce punitive rent increases. For example, on our plot, which has no water, you are going to force an increase of cost to 4 times as much over the next two years. Keep the 50% concession for sites with no water in recognition of the difficulty this causes.

You did a consultation and 6 times as many people said they did not want these huge rent increases as said they did want them. Are you actually listening to what allotment holders have said? Note that again and again, allotment holders understand the need for an inflation-related increase in rent- as was supposed to be implemented by the council a couple of years ago then suddenly withdrawn. We just do not accept this attempt to grab money from people who are trying to be sustainable and grow their own food. The latest figures produced for allotment expenditure look invented and seem to bear no relationship to previous allotment expenditure. This provokes deep suspicion, as does this fact your proposed charges are a good deal higher than the other core cities that Bristol compares itself with, but you have tried to obscure this fact.

Allotment holders are united as never before- If allotments become simply unaffordable for some of us, then the rest of us feel angry about that. You do realise there are thousands of us spread over 100 sites and 34 wards across the city, plus our friends and families? Listen to us now, be reasonable, or you will definitely lose our votes.

Statement: PS16.26

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Dr Stephen Pill

It is not an exaggeration to say that Site Representatives are vital for the Allotments Service in Bristol: without our substantial and voluntary efforts, a service already in crisis would collapse.

There has been general concern among Site Reps that the consultations on Allotment rents and on rules has not been handled well, and that the rushed circulation of immature and ill-thought out proposals with no prior engagement has - and predictably - provoked widespread and needless anxiety and anger in the Allotment community across the city.

Among the consequences of this mishandling will be a scar on relationships between tenants and Council that will persist long after the current Mayor has left office. This will inject unwarranted heat into future discussions that will make reaching agreement less easy for all parties.

In addition, Cabinet members who ordinarily spend no time thinking about Allotments have been drawn into the furore, and are now forced by an arbitrarily-imposed timetable to make an invidious decision: either to starve the Allotments Service of additional funding by rejecting the proposals before them, OR, by agreeing them:

- To condemn many allotment tenants on low incomes to swingeing rent rises that 78% of consultation respondents have clearly said are too steep
- To impose on community growing groups on larger plots rises that will pose an existential threat for many - despite declaring such groups as priorities for support.
- To leave behind a complicated mess for others to sort out, and for which there will surely be a political cost.

There has been insufficient time for Bristol's Site Representatives to arrive at a consensus on final financial proposals unveiled only a few days ago - which is in itself symptomatic of the problems I am pointing out.

Nevertheless, it is clear that many believe (including an informal group of 35 with whom I am in contact) that:

- An inflationary rent rise is fully-justified
- Further increase beyond this is also warranted but ONLY with clear linkage between additional money and agreed improvements to service
- The many who are on low incomes but not on benefits need help by a gradual escalation of fees over several years
- Community groups need special consideration - and a consultation not undertaken in this exercise.

Therefore I urge Cabinet when faced with the binary decision of approval or rejection to instead choose a third way: to reject the proposals in their current form, to approve and implement the 25% increase already agreed by Full Council in March 2022, and to require a renewed engagement with Site Reps and tenants in the coming months to settle the terms of a rent escalator for the coming few years.

This approach, if taken, will create more goodwill than you might imagine, and it will have benefits beyond setting those future discussions onto a promising footing.

Statement: PS16.26

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Neil Bennetta

I currently have half an allotment plot in Lynmouth Road.

There is no running water there, so in summer months when the water collection from my shed roof runs out, I have to carry the water from my home to the allotment to water the plants.

Will the increase in rent change this?

I currently can only see that my annual charge covers the rent on the land, plus an occasional visit from an allotment officer.

The perimeter hedge (which is alive with birds during spring and summer) secures the site and is maintained by the allotment holders along with our access gate. The lock for the gate is provided by the allotment holders kitty. We have a partially sighted member who needs a key to access, with the other members using a coded lock, so this is also provided by the kitty.

We currently work together to keep the area tidy for local residents and see no input from BCC.

The unrealistic increase in cost for us at Lynmouth Road, as you are abolishing the no water discoun, is unfair and not inline with inflation or any other reasonable benchmark. It does appear that the system is broken and just putting more money into it will not fix the fundamental issue.

It is also worrying that the older people who have worked some of the plots for a very long time and rely on their plots to bolster their diet and provide an economical way of obtaining healthy good quality fruit and vegetables will be forced off due to the significant increases you are proposing.

Please explain how you have reached out to these people and engaged with them, as some do not have access to modern communication technologies.

Statement: PS16.28

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Charlotte Eddisford

As as a Labour party member, and supporter, I urge today's cabinet members to delay the current proposals on allotment rent increases, to ensure that we achieve an equitable and effective solution to the current issues.

I am grateful of Cllr King and the Allotment Office's February decision to remove the proposed new rules, which were flawed. However, I remain very concerned that these rent increases were separated from these rules, to be pushed through cabinet with little consultation with those most affected by the proposed changes.

The cabinet needs to understand that allotment holders are not against rent increases in some format. Raising rents by inflation, by the square meter, was agreed by the Council in 2022, yet not implemented. We understand the need to address inflationary increases.

The cabinet also needs to understand that I, for example, am not protesting and fighting these rent increases for my own benefit, but on behalf of the voices which are not being heard through this process, who were not able to engage in the online forum or submit letters to this cabinet hearing. These voices are best represented collectively through the allotments forum, and I strongly suggest that these rent increases as tabled are delayed, to enable a proper consultation with the allotment forum, in order to avoid negative unintended consequences which will result from the current proposal.

My main concerns involve:

- 79% of people with additional needs who took part in your consultation disagreed or disagreed strongly with the proposed rent increases, yet in the Equalities Impact Assessment you said there would be no disproportionate impact on Disabled people.
- 23% of people on low incomes with low or no savings are not receiving means tested benefits (Joseph Rowntree foundation, 2023). Your response to this issues being raise in the consultation: "The rent uplift will impact on people with low income who are not eligible for a discount." Was to repeat the Universal/ Pension credit discount: "We have extended the reach of the 50% discount to include those that are in receipt of Universal or Pension Credit. This is expected to benefit one in five of all our tenants." This does not address the very live issues, a stong theme in the consultation, that the discount will not go far enough to support those on low incomes but not in receipt of universal credit.
- The Council's indices of deprivation mapping data shows that most

of the allotment sites in the City are in the areas of greatest food poverty and social deprivation – yet this doesn't form part of your report.

- Community groups, carrying out activities for the social good, are amongst the tenants on the largest plots, who will see their rents rise by up to 200%. Many are running on a shoestring, on lower budgets, and some will be forced to close.
- The percentage increases range from 7% to 492%. People on sites without water face a far greater increase than those with water. Band D has been used as a comparator in your report – the majority of those on benefits in Band D are on sites with water, who will pay more than double – and those on a smaller plot will pay a larger increase. The amendments are not equitable, or logical, and need further consideration.
- The transparency of the budgeting process- Budgets/ Profit and losses have been tabled through the allotments forum vary wildly from the large budgets shown in the briefing documents.

I attach the bristol indices of deprivation mapped against allotment wards, and the table of % increases, which show the significant ranges of the increases.

A new plot holder myself, I have already spoken personally with two long standing plot holders (15 years plus) living on low incomes, who were visibly upset and worried that they would not be able to accommodate these rises. While the amounts tabled may not seem a lot to you, I implore you to consider those most affected by these rises when you consider this agenda item.

The best way forward is to progress swift consultation with the allotments forum to agree an equitable rent increase.

Statement: PS16.29

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Tamara Evans Braun

Section 10 of the Allotments Act 1950 provides the power for the Council to charge “such rent as a tenant may reasonably be expected to pay for the land if let for such use on the terms on which it is in fact let.” The definition of reasonable is determined by case law.

The National Allotment Society (NAS) gives a number of guidelines for setting reasonable rents. One of which is comparing to leisure facilities. It also suggests that the “present level of rent and its historic tradition” should be taken into account and also the “likely effects of rent levels on plot take-up”.

The rents are due to rise between 7 and 492% depending on the plot. This rise is not on line with leisure facilities, nor does it have any historical precedent.

The consultation results show that 78% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposed rent increase. It is very clear that the tenants do not think the rent rises are reasonable.

The councils EIA confirms that people may be priced out of the allotments and your risk assessment in the report discussed today says one consequence may be that “tenants feel they don't want to afford an allotment plot following the rent increase.” (the wording on this is awful by the way! I am really disappointed that a labour lead report could imply people in any way choose not to be able to afford something.)

As far as I can see the only argument the council has that their new rents are reasonable is by comparing the rent rises to a few other local authorities. I'd like to note that in policy 103, the NAS specifically says it “does not endorse the use of benchmarking against other allotment providers in the determination of rents, as this fails to take account of differences between localities in present and future costs and the resources available to meet them.

Looking at your own risk assessment as well as admitting that these price rises will push people off their plots and you anticipate a legal challenge. Personally, my family's rent is going up from £70 to £156. That's more than double, I am not on benefits but I am a self employed parent and times are tight. I appreciate that you as a council are also struggling financially but this is not where to try and balance the books. Please help us in our efforts to eat locally, stay fit and healthy, reduce our carbon footprint and save money on food! Do not vote through these rent rises.

Statement: CS16.01

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Councillor Mark Weston

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the agreement brokered with the Mayor over the deferral of these rent increases for one year. This move seems particularly sensible given the controversy that was generated by the original, accompanying rule changes, and lack of proper consultation with all stakeholders.

The subsequent withdrawal of the tenancy rules, administrative fees, and charges by the Cabinet Member in February was equally wise and sensitive to the concerns and reasonable objections of allotmenters. Some of the proposed restrictions around trees, hedgerows, ponds, and wildflowers seemed - even to me - to be overzealous and excessively bureaucratic.

My meeting with the various allotment groups (held in January) to discuss these issues was also very instructive and positive. Much more of this kind of collaborative engagement with those most affected by any new Allotments Strategy needs to be maintained.

I accept that rents will have to increase. As the consultation outlined, these have not been reviewed since 2018, the costs of maintaining the service are growing, there is an understandable desire to improve site facilities, as well as try to increase the number and availability of plots across the city. More people and community groups getting involved in the growing of food should be encouraged.

So, I agree with the action that has been taken since the public consultation closed and the promise made that allotment holders will have a greater role in helping to shape how this land-use is managed.

The only criticism I wish to raise with the Mayor and Cabinet today is a concern that the planned rent increases to be phased in over two years are still too steep. Perhaps this is a battle which will have to be fought with the next Administration. However, whilst an attempt has been made to reduce the impact of such a big rise (178%) in a combined rent and water charge for a Band B allotment plot, I suggest that more gradual increments (over four years) would be less of a shock to those on low incomes, are costs more easily absorbed by all plot holders over a longer transition period, and represents a fairer settlement when such rent hikes are sadly inevitable.

Statement: CS16.02

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Statement submitted by: Councillor Martin Fodor

We need an allotments service that can provide a reasonable level of service. The current arrangement sees a mix of associations and council-managed sites. The latter need site reps to operate well.

The budget for the service has now been revealed to lose a substantial sum after years of austerity and is subsidised by the income earned in parks. But little of this was made clear during the recent consultation.

As the paper acknowledges, there has been a substantial response from tenants, now over 3500 responses. Due to this outcry, the rent and water fees are now being put forward, but new charges and rules have been left half 'pending' by the Labour administration.

As chair of the Communities Scrutiny Commission, I was contacted by dozens of residents from across the city during the consultation. The proposals appeared without any cross-party councillor scrutiny.

New rules fees and charges were proposed, extra work for site reps, and extra fees and responsibilities for people who'd used plots for many years. Extra charges for larger community gardens and orchards were worrying growing groups, who said some could never have got going with the extra costs.

It was only after much pressure I secured the cross party, backbench scrutiny we should have been invited to undertake. I secured a discussion for our commission members about the proposed rents and water charges. I also secured information for the first time including the proposed future annual service budget, including a sum for investment we were told would last for 15 years.

But there's no sight of any real 15-year capital programme, and without other income [e.g. proposed new levies on various things with extra charges for sheds, etc] this can't happen. With extra charges postponed there isn't extra money going into the service for this.

The current notional budget we received in our scrutiny papers is well short of spending on the service. It also lacks money for a sum called 'corporate income target'. This is really a cut to the service - a £55,000 kickback /budget cut 'returned' to the corporate centre that was written into most departments to shrink spending under austerity.

The reaction against massive rent increases then spilled over into budget day, as some years ago a cost-of-living rise was approved by the Labour Cabinet. Inflationary increases haven't been implemented since 2018.

The Mayor's budget deal with Tories that 'saved' allotments from an annual inflation increase was illusory; these smaller rises have not actually been levied since at least 2018 - even though Cabinet actually agreed such rises should be made. The lack of smaller, staged inflation rises has under the guise of keeping allotments affordable has directly led to the decline of the service offered as running costs have risen year by year.

So barring an unprecedented change of heart – none of your Cabinet papers have ever been rejected as far as I know - we expect Cabinet to nod through the proposed increases phased in two stages, half being levied in April 25 and the other half of the rises for plot and water rents in April 26.

Yet the response to the consultation has mobilised many issues and ideas. The way plot rents are calculated and charged is now highly contested due to inequalities in the bills for different plot sizes, the unequal scale increases for smaller and larger plots, and the impact on big areas used by community growing projects. Alternative ways to levy charges, better ways to pay in stages, and the benchmarks used to compare Bristol fees to other authorities have all been challenged and alternatives have been suggested e.g. square meter charges rather than bands. The Cabinet papers do have a summary of consultation responses around the plot charges and a very mixed set of responses and strong reactions are clear, plus some useful suggestions that would have been better worked through in a more collaborative way with stakeholders before the proposals came out.

Most people accept that standstill prices aren't an option. And a service without a capital fund to invest is one in decline as everything from water pipes to fencing could and does need repairs and investment.

Since allotments really lose money, even after the full proposed Labour Cabinet rises in 2025 & 2026, the capital programme seems to be an illusion and the kickback of £55k is too. Being subsidised by the wider parks budget which earns money from events and concessions isn't a long-term solution.

There's now a very highly mobilised group of service users whose trust in the council has been eroded and who experience a very weak service. One extra member of staff being promised won't change that, even if some capital gets found.

The relationship with service users and stakeholders needs to be rebuilt - there are worried tenants, their helpers, community growing groups fearing new plot and water fees, and site reps [where they exist] who've been led to believe they shall have lots more rules to manage. Disadvantaged areas of the city seem to be taking a greater burden in future. The various rule changes and extra fees are left to the new committee system to rethink. The relationships will need to be rebuilt to produce collaborative, constructive solutions to a better funded service. A polarised debate with broken trust is not a happy situation to pass on to the next council.

I welcome the heightened awareness of this important service, but we are rightly worried at the crop of problems being left behind by the Mayor.

Question: PQ16.01

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Harry Mac

Question 1: Why are you proposing to nearly quadruple our allotment rent for a standard sized 250m² plot at Lynmouth Rd allotments from £42.50 per@ to £158 per@?

We are a site without a water supply. For no reason you are removing the long-standing 50% discount for this huge inconvenience (and, yes, we capture rainwater where we can using sustainable methods).

You are asking us to pay premium prices, higher than all the comparable core cities for a site with no water supply.

Question: PQ16.02 & PQ16.03

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Kirsty Forman

I am an allotment tenant of Bristol City Council . Over the past 29 years my allotment has allowed me to grow clean, fresh and healthy food for my family, enabled my children to grow up understanding about the source of that food and to be nourished by it. They have an appreciation of the importance of the natural world and how we interact with it. Allotment gardening has been a cornerstone of my wellbeing and ability to cope with life's challenges, providing me with purposeful activity, exercise, food, and fresh air and a connection to nature whilst living in a city.

Question 1: Proposed rent increases. Although the proposed rule changes have been withdrawn at present, the flawed consultation which included the rent increase proposals which are going ahead to BCC Cabinet on 6.3.24, must also be defeated by the improper consultation, and should not be presented to the Cabinet as they stand for this reason. How will BCC rectify this and put forward rent increase proposals which are properly consulted upon by the Allotments Forum, tenants, and community groups?

Question 2: Budget data. What does the figure of £233,196 quoted in relation to 'Buildings & Infrastructure – annualised cyclical replacement/maintenance over 15yrs', and £31k for 'waste clearance and pest control' relate to?

Question: PQ16.04 & PQ16.05

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Dr Tamara Evans Braun

On page 6 of the 92 page report, the council's own legal advice states that “ The consultation responses must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising the decision.” and “There must be clear evidence that the decision maker has considered the consultation responses, or a summary of them, before taking its decision.”

As acknowledged in your report, Section 10 of the Allotments Act 1950 provides the power for the Council to charge such rent as a tenant may reasonably be expected to pay for the land if let for such use on the terms on which it is in fact let.

On page 37, the consultation results show that 78% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposed rent increase. Out of these 49% strongly disagreed. Only 13% agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed rent increase, with only 3% strongly agreeing. That is a tiny number. This surely demonstrates that an overwhelming majority of respondents, do not think the rent rises are ‘reasonable’.

According to the council's own risk assessment on page 69, a legal challenge is anticipated and the risk of this exceeds the council's cautious risk appetite suggesting the council also acknowledges that tenants do not find the rents reasonable.

Question 1: As only 13% of people responding to the consultation agreed with the proposals, how can the council consider the levels of increase in rent and water charges be regarded as what allotment tenants can reasonably be expected to pay?

Question 2: Wouldn't it be more appropriate and reasonable to consider the levels of increases with the tenants and stakeholders as part of the process that you have proposed for the rules and fees on page 3, paragraph 7?

Question: PQ16.06 & PQ16.07

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Ruth Hecht

In your revised Parks and Green Spaces strategy you state you want to 'Implement a fairer and more sustainable approach to tenancy fees' and that your 'proposed new fees approach' will take into consideration 'the variation in size of plots' and 'the variation in on-site facilities (e.g. toilets, car parking)'. However your new fee structure uses the same banding as before in relation to the size of plots (with two additional bands), and there is **no** consideration of on-site facilities other than in relation to water and flooding - discounts which already exist.

Question 1: How can you explain the anomaly between what you say in your Strategy about the rent increases and your proposals?

In your covering report you say that there 'is a need to implement a fairer and more sustainable approach to tenancy fees.' The rents you've proposed are *totally* illogical and unfair. The percentage increases are completely random, and not connected to the size of the plot *in any way*. For example the % increases for tenants on sites with water, from the smallest plot to the largest, are in order of size: 140%, 78%, 123%, 109%, 66%, 88%, 136%, 220%. For no apparent reason, some people's rent will double, some triple, some quadruple, and for a few people it will sextuple.

Question 2: Please explain how these random and illogical increases can be described as 'fair'?

Question: PQ16.08 & PQ16.09

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Gillian Skinner

The 25% increase that didn't happen

Using Minutes from Forum meetings:

January 2022: rent increase of 25% proposed, to come into effect in September 2023.

July 2022: No increase in September 2023 because Notices had not been served. The Increase of 25% was a full Cabinet decision (made in March 2022) with an agreed Equalities Impact Assessment. It was linked to the need to make a £55K saving in 2023/24. Implementation had 'yet to be clarified....'

October 2022, the 'timeline for the proposed 25% rent increase' was not yet available. The 25% increase was mentioned again in January 2023 and again in July 2023 ('the expected increase is 25%').

October 2023: the original 25% proposed rent increase dropped. No reason was recorded.

Question 1: Why was the 25% increase never carried out, with notices served in either March 2022 or March 2023 or indeed today?

Calculation of the increases (method chosen)

At the Communities Scrutiny Commission on 27/2/24 Officers were asked how they had selected the method of calculating the increases. The percentage increases range from 66% (Plot E, with water) to 492% (Plot H, no water) with the most common plot size seeing an increase of 78%. Officers indicated that they had sought comparables from other local authorities and 'had held a series of workshops'.

Question 2: Please could officers supply details of those workshops (dates and organisations represented).

Question: PQ16.10 & PQ16.11

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Lauren Mason

Question 1: According to budgets circulated publicly to members by the Allotments Forum for years 2017-2022: average Allotments Service yearly income has been £257K, expenditure £283K, deficit £26K. How therefore can an estimated budget be presented to Cabinet which shows an expenditure of £688K (2.5x higher than previous years) and a deficit of £299K (12 x higher than previous years)?

Question 2: Aside from employing one additional Allotments Officer to improve administrative capacity, how is raising rents anticipated to reduce the allotments waiting list?

Question: PQ16.12

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Elise Unger

Question 1: Please would Bristol city council consider taking all proposed price rises in 2025/26 for allotments including the new additional water charges off the agenda until after the May elections when the new council will be able to take time to respond to the recent consultation in a proper and legal manner, and address necessary rent increases in a fairer and more inclusive way, eg, through engaging with site reps, community groups and representatives from the BAR (Bristol Allotmenters Resist)?

Question: PQ16.13

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Troy Tanska

'With regard to the proposed Allotment rent increases, and with reference to BCCs recently released Equalities Impact Assessment which should look at how the proposed increased allotment rents of between 7-496% may impact on Bristol residents including those living with intersectional disadvantages such as poor health, isolation in outlying areas, low income, poor local access to facilities and amenities.

We need to know more about how these allotment rent increase proposals may negatively impact on take-up of allotments in the city's areas of greatest deprivation in the future - particularly on those residents with low incomes, for example with minimum wage / low paid jobs such as nurses, care and teaching assistants, cleaners etc. who do not receive UC /PC and will not benefit from proposed mitigating rent relief measures, and how this in turn could have a major effect on food poverty in these areas where fresh fruit and veg is often of poor quality, more expensive, or not available locally.'

Question 1: Bristol City Council's own mapping shows that most allotment sites are in the wards with the greatest food poverty and greatest social deprivation. Why has this information not been included in the Equalities Impact Assessment?

Question: PQ16.14 & PQ16.15

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Dominic Francis

Question 1: In the consultation about the allotment rent increases, you only provided respondents with one option, without any information about how the proposed increases had been arrived at, nor budgets to support them. The percentage increases look as if a cat walked over somebody's keyboard, because the increases are so completely illogical. Did officers consider other options, such as raising the rents with inflation, or charging per square meter, or a standard water charge - all three of which are used by other Local Authorities?

Question 2: Why are the "predicted, annualised infrastructure repair and maintenance costs" so high - £301,000 - and which expenditure line did these come under in previous budgets?

Question: PQ16.16 & PQ16.17

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Alice Hastie

Community Groups and large sites

At the Communities Scrutiny Commission on 27/2/24, Officer Jon James indicated that there were very few large sites (the newly created Bands G&H) - mostly let to groups such as 'Food Growing organisations and CICs etc.'

Rents, for sites with water, will rise from £165pa (current rent) to £389pa and £528pa respectively in 2026. Members of Community Groups are not direct tenants. It is noted that there are no benchmarking figures from the Cities quoted in the Benchmarking Table/Comparison Summary. It is also noted that the Equalities Impact Assessment para.2.4 (page 82) makes no reference to consultation with the Community Groups and their members.

Question 1: What specifically was done to consult the Community Groups and their members and to assess the impact on them of the increases?

Budget announcements 28/2/24

The Council's Budget has been agreed with claims that agreement was reached not to increase 'the allotment fees'; figures of 6.7% have been mentioned. The new fees (proposed during the Consultation) had already been postponed (Cllr King's letter of 2/2/24). I have found no reference to this increase in either the Report or the original consultation papers.

Question 2: What is/was this fee increase, please?

Question: PQ16.18

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Christopher Faulkner Gibson

The covering report for agenda item 16. 'Allotments Rents and Water Charges' states you 'need to implement a fairer and more sustainable approach to tenancy fees' with which I would wholeheartedly agree but the rent increases you propose are completely and ludicrously inconsistent across the bands.

The current banding system means that someone with a plot at the top of a band pays the same as someone with a plot at the bottom of the band. For example, a 75m² plot costs the same as a plot of double the size at 149m² – in effect the smaller plot is twice the cost per square metre of the larger plot.

Moreover, the percentage increases (given for sites with water,) are, ranging in turn from the smallest plot to the largest: 140%, 78%, 123%, 109%, 66%, 88%, 136%, 220%.

This is unfair. And no explanation has been given for this variation.

As an alternative, the first increase for 2025/26 could be implemented as planned but the second halted.

In the meantime, in collaboration with tenants, work out the cost per square metre needed to fund a level of service that satisfies both parties, to be formally agreed with the Allotment Forum.

This could be introduced in 2026/27. Thereafter, a simple annual inflationary rise, using the same % increase for all, should suffice.

This will be simple, fair, and reduce administration. Details of the size of all plots by square metre is already held by the Allotments Office, so no further surveying work is needed.

Question 1: So why are Bristol City Council persisting with an antiquated and unfair system of setting allotment rents instead of updating it along the lines suggested above?

Question: PQ16.19 & PQ16.20

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: James Martin

Question 1: What is the purpose of the 15 year projected building maintenance cost to be paid in one financial year (2025/26) if not to inflate the expenditure figure? If indeed the council has incorrectly accounted for long term building maintenance this is no justification to make allotment holders pay for their mistake.

Question 2: If the £300,000+ building maintenance expenditure was due to incorrect accounting in previous years. Where is the apology, statement, and full cost accounting for these projected figures?

Question: PQ16.21 & PQ16.22

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Katy Ladbrook

Question 1: Explanation of financial projections

The *Allotment Rents and Water Rates* proposal includes a huge unexplained increase in buildings and infrastructure expenditure from £33k to £301k per year. The CSC meeting last week heard from Jon James that this is due to a new 15-year program of works which is going to cost allotment tenants and the Parks Service at least £4.5m. How does this Cabinet feel able to approve this increased expenditure with no further explanation of the 15-year program of works, which will create a huge financial deficit for the Allotment Service (and therefore the Parks Service), when the financial accounts this is based on are patchy and do not at all indicate a that the Parks service is currently “significantly subsidising” the Allotment Service?

Question 2: Use of a flawed consultation to evidence this financial proposal

The *Allotment Rent and Water Rates* report does not include summary of any engagement with scrutiny (appendix c = "no"), however it was subject to scrutiny by the CSC on 27th Feb. There are unresolved level-two complaints of maladministration of the consultation process, including over missing financial information. How does the Cabinet feel able to make a decision on increased rents and rates based on results of a flawed consultation and incomplete financial information?

Question: PQ16.23 & PQ16.24

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Tom Bonasquet

Cherry Picking – a beautiful & seasonal activity gathering some of the most wonderful fruits (as long as you don't have too many trees on your plot of course!), or selective and biased extraction of data or information for analysis.

When the consultation first came out, I was immediately drawn to the part about aligning rents with similar sized local authorities. Using a regular internet search I easily found some comparisons & tabulated them to compare cost per square meter. For my Band A plot, I calculated that my current rate was £0.41/m² and this would rise to £0.97/m² (inc Water). This was higher than all the other 13 authorities I compared.

In your comparison summary you cite Bath, Plymouth & Birmingham – on all of these I found the comparison cost per square meter to be below the proposed new rates and out of kilter with what you'd put in your table.

Question 1: So, have you been cherry picking to try to support your comparisons?

A paltry 13% of respondents to the consultation agreed with your proposed rent rises. You finally seem to have heard some of the disquiet and agreed to drop the proposed rule changes (good!), but for the rent increases you're holding firm. Old budgets generally balanced, so it seems you've massaged the proposed figures, including a £300k Buildings & Infrastructure fund with scant detail, alongside a mysterious Corporate Income Target. It is murky to say the least and it certainly doesn't feel like you've been trying to bring people with you – in fact, it feels like you've prodded a hornet's nest! Such a shame, because the energy & spirit of Bristol Allotmenters is a force of wonder, with so much collaborative potential. But you've apparently heard nothing new and have tried to rush changes through before the reins of power are taken from your hands in May!

Question 2: Have you learnt anything from the Allotment consultation process?

Question: PQ16.25 & PQ16.26

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Tess Price

These questions have been put together in discussion with a number of representatives of community growing/food producing groups in Bristol, who are all concerned their projects will not be sustainable under the new rent proposals.

Your Equalities Impact assessment states that the Council intends to encourage community food groups because they provide a low cost way for people to engage with food growing. Your risk analysis identifies access to community plots as a key mitigation for the future unaffordability of individual allotments to those on a low income. These suggest you are relying heavily on community growing projects to offset the negative impact of the rent rises on access to food growing.

Question 1: Do you have any reliable information about how many collective food producing groups there are on allotment sites, how they are currently paying the rents and what impact these huge rises will have on them?

Question 2: If you don't have this information, how can you be sure that you won't be closing many of them down, instead of 'encouraging' them?

Question: PQ16.27 & PQ16.28

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Joanna Mellors

Budget for Buildings and Infrastructure - Ringfencing.

The Rent Increase is in part being justified by the need to spend more money on the Allotments Buildings and Infrastructure. Historically, surplus allotment funds have been passed to BCC Central funds (Allotment Forum Minutes 27/4/22). At the Forum Meeting of 27/4/22, during a discussion about income and expenditure Cllr King undertook to investigate 'safe-guarding' the service to the Allotments.

The Budget just for Buildings and infrastructure (Note: grounds maintenance and tree works are itemised separately) for 2025/26 is £301K. This is a huge increase and, if spent on the Allotment infrastructure should make a major difference to the service provided.

Question1: What guarantees can the Council provide that this substantial sum (£301K every year; almost 8 times the average of previous expenditure and a total of £4.5Million over the projected 15 years) will be ringfenced and actually spent on Works for the benefit of Allotment users?

Water charges - request to consider reinstating the 50% discount

Historically, sites with no water have received a 50% rent discount. Under the new rules, this discount has been abolished and replaced with a 'reduction ' to reflect the 'cost' of a water charge. The cost to a tenant of having no water on site is NOT the cost of the water itself – it is the cost of transporting water from the nearest source to the plot simply to keep the growing plants alive. The reduction is only eg £10 (Band B); £20 (Band D); £40 (Band H) - this simply does not reflect the hard work involved in taking water to a site.

The reality is that tenants of sites without water will see charges rise by percentages ranging from 113% to 492%.

Few sites have no water; reinstating the 50% discount would have minimal impact on the overall budget. The new charges will have a disproportionately large impact on a small minority of tenants. They are carrying by far the biggest individual burden within the tenant community. As there are not many of them, their voice will be 'small' when looking at the statistics of the Survey.

Question 2: Please will the Cabinet member for Public Health & Community and the Allotment Service reconsider these charges, and restore the 50% discount for tenants on sites with no water instead of offering a reduction that bears no relation to the actual task of keeping a plot sufficiently watered?

Question: PQ16.29 & PQ16.30

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Roger Mellors

Allotment Office have provided comparable figures from other Local Authorities as evidence for the new charges - page 10 of the Report. These show maximum rentals in the range £126 to £212.

These figures are the basis £178pa proposed for Bristol Band D sites.

Traditionally, Bristol has had two additional Bands - E&F; the new rents are £249 and £311 - considerably higher than the comparable evidence. Even more troubling is the creation of two further Bands - G&H - with new rents of £389 & £582 - nearly 3 times the highest comparable.

No comparable evidence has been provided in relation to these large sites. Additionally, the Report gives no rationale behind the creation of the two new Bands - G & H.

Page 6 of the Report sets out the legal test: rents must be what it would be reasonable for a tenant to pay. Judicial decisions indicate that a valuation exercise should be carried out, looking at rents charged for similar facilities etc..

The Allotment Office have done this for Bands A to D, but their comparison chart shows no evidence for the rentals proposed for Bands E to H.

Question 2: On what basis can Cabinet be sure that the law has been complied with in respect of the proposed charges for Bands E&F and for the new Bands G&H?

In your Decision Pathway report about the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy you say that you will 'implement a fairer and more realistic approach to tenancy fees.'

Question 2: Please can you explain how the current proposals which mean that some people will have their rents increased by 7% and some by 492%, and people who **don't** have water on site will have their rents increased by far more than people who **do** have water on site is 'fair'?

Question: PQ16.31

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Debbie Wyatt

Question 1: You say that the proposed increase will bring Bristol allotment rents in line with rents of other local authorities with a similar sized allotment portfolio. This approach is not consistent with the National Allotment Society's rent policy (NAS Policy Document 103) which does not endorse this form of benchmarking, as it fails to consider differences in local authorities' costs and resourcing. What is your response to that?

Question: PQ16.32

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Alex Mason

Question 1: In your revised Parks and Green Spaces strategy you rightly say that 'Collective growing plots are a great way to enjoy the benefits of an allotment plot without having to commit to an individual allotment tenancy or join the waiting list for a plot.' You then go on to say that in the short term you will 'Carry out an audit into who uses existing BCC allotment spaces and engage with stakeholders to understand the barriers that underrepresented groups'. Given you haven't yet carried out that audit, how do you know that the proposed rent rises will not adversely affect community groups, particularly as the rent rises are biggest on the larger plots used by community groups?

Question: PQ16.33

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Christopher Faulkner Gibson

You say that the proposed increase will bring Bristol allotment rents in line with rents of other local authorities with a similar sized allotment portfolio.

However, this approach is not consistent with the National Allotment Society's rent policy (NAS Policy Document 103) which does not endorse this form of benchmarking, as it fails to consider differences in local authorities' costs and resourcing.

Furthermore, no details of comparable services supplied to allotment holders in those other authorities have been provided, nor has any information on costs and resourcing, so that we are not in a position to judge the validity of the benchmarking – a serious flaw in terms of the consultation exercise, as was the omission of the rents charged by the other authorities from the consultation documents: we had to resort to Fol requests to get it .

The NAS recognises that rents must be set in accordance with the legal requirement that they be reasonable and that the definition of reasonable is determined by case law.

At present the key test established in case law for rent increases is comparability with charges for other leisure services.

Question 2: Given that no other leisure services in Bristol are subject to the same percentage increases as allotments, the proposals appear incompatible with the law and, together with the flawed consultation process, this makes Bristol City Council vulnerable to judicial review. What is your response to that?

Question: PQ16.34

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Luke Matthews

Question 1: In 3.2 of your Equality Impact Assessment you say that 'The increase in rent will make the Allotment Service more financially sustainable to provide services to our tenants, some of which are currently receiving applicable benefits to obtain the discounts, this is assisting will relieving poverty.' [sic] How will raising rents relieve poverty?

Question: PQ16.35 & PQ16.36

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Lorna Lindfield

Question 1: In your Equality Impact Assessment produced in 2022 about a 25% allotment rent rise, you said that there would be a negative impact on Disabled people, older people and Black and Asian people. However, in your current EIA you have said there will be 'no disproportionate impact' on those groups, even though in your new proposals, the average rent for someone on benefit will rise by 95%. How can you explain this?

Question 1: I have cancer, chronic fatigue, and am currently on a low income, and your proposed new rents will have a direct impact on me. To pay my allotment fees I already have to find it from my household food and fuel budget. In your Equality Impact Assessment, how have you taken into account how people like me, who are on a low income, but not on benefits, will be affected by the rent rises?

Question: PQ16.37 & PQ16.38

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Caroline Dalcq

Legal advice (Page 6 of the Allotment Rent and Water Charges Report) states:

“The consultation responses must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising the decision.

The leading cases on consultation provide that consultation should occur when proposals are at a formative stage, should give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit intelligent consideration and should allow adequate time for consideration and response.

There must be clear evidence that the decision maker has considered the consultation responses, or a summary of them, before taking its decision.

However, on page 37 (Survey results, 4.1) it is stated that 78% of respondents (or 2337 people) disagreed with the proposed rent increase; this proportion is even higher amongst respondents from the most deprived decile (79%) and those with a disability (79%). Propositions have been made for fairer alternatives (including aligning the rise on inflation and charging plots per m²).

Furthermore, an estimated breakdown of allotment service costs has only been made publicly available at the end of February. Apart from the fact that the consultation was badly timed (launched in the busy end-of-year period) and badly advertised (direct communication about the consultation was poor and missed a lot of tenants/stakeholders), people consulted didn't have all the information needed for an informed opinion; e.g. the key information of what would be done with the extra money raised from the rents. Indeed, on 14th January the Allotment Forum voted by a vast majority (48 votes to 3) to declare the public consultation on rents a failed process that needed to be re-run, not extended.

So, in the view of these points, here is my question:

Question 1: Apart from staggering the original increase over two years, how can you justify the process of determining the new rent and water charge levels to be legal; i.e. how can you say that "the responses have been conscientiously taken into account", that there is "clear evidence that the decision maker has considered the responses", that "sufficient reason was given to permit intelligent consultation" and that "adequate time was allowed for consideration and response"?

The Council's food growing and allotments strategy is seeking to widen access to food growing, and mentions rent discounts for those on means tested benefits.

However, even for people who pay discounted rates, the rent rises average +117%: more than double the existing rents. For a standard full plot, the discounted rent will rise from £42.50 to £89.

These rent levels are likely to be a barrier that excludes people receiving benefits from renting an allotment, which is the exact opposite of the Council's stated aim. As the Council's own mapping shows, most sites are in areas of greatest food poverty and social deprivation.

Community growing projects are very likely to be affected by the rises, as the largest plots are suffering some of the biggest rises (large plots with water on site will rise from £165 to £528/yr). This will further reduce access to food growing for many of the people that need it most.

Question 2: How will the rent rises increase access to food growing opportunities while making allotment plots unaffordable for tenants and community groups?

Question: PQ16.39 & PQ16.40

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Tim Beasley

You refer to a 50% rent discount scheme for community growing groups. Your report makes no mention of existing discounts offered to community groups – some already receive a 100% discount, some 50%, some 25% and some no discount at all. In order to apply for the discounts, it appears that groups will have to keep records of all participants/visitors including date/time of visits, equalities monitoring data, records of food yields and maintenance activities. GDPR law is likely to apply to these records. Groups may also have to set up Public Liability Insurance if they don't already have it, in order to receive discounts. In addition, the proposed rent rises are highest on larger plots, in some cases rising to 4, 5 or 6 times as much as current rates, hugely outweighing any discounts. These larger plots are likely to be the ones rented by community groups.

Question 1: How do you expect community groups to fund higher rents while still providing a resource free to those who use it?

Question 2: How do you imagine groups will meet the large extra administrative burden to receive the rent discount, when most of these groups run entirely on volunteer labour and often struggle to find people who can offer the time and effort needed to keep the groups running?

Question: PQ16.41 & PQ16.42

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Stephen Pill

Full Council, after proper process, agreed a 25% inflationary rent increase in March 2022 - 2yr ago. Four months later, on 27th July 2022 Cllr King took an action to clarify the Allotment rent increase and timescale. Had she completed that action and implemented the increase, the Council's coffers would have been receiving the benefit since last year.

Question 1: Would she agree that had she done this, and had she kept separate the calamitous consultation on Allotment rules from the consideration of rents, it would have lessened the heat of public anger she has provoked, and might have allowed a negotiated settlement acceptable to all, rather than an imposed one which will stir long-lasting resentment?

The Allotments Forum is the mechanism chosen by Bristol City Council to bring Council and tenants together. On 14th January the Forum voted - by 48 votes to 3 to declare the public consultation on rents a FAILED process that needed to be re-run, not extended.

Furthermore, it can be demonstrated that this consultation has failed ALL FOUR of Lord Justice Woolf's tests of a proper consultation.

Question 2: Why has Cllr King taken so little regard of the Forum's opinion that she has failed to inform her fellow Cabinet members - now also drawn into this furore to take a collective decision - of the opinion of the Allotment Forum?

Question: PQ16.43 & PQ16.44

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Julie Parker

Question 1: One of the themes to emerge from the public consultation process, reported in the document entitled "Cabinet Supplementary Information" (page 83) was "There are alternatives to increasing rent: such as (for example) bringing more overgrown plots into use." The council's response to this is to say "We will continue to clear overgrown plots". Exactly how many overgrown plots have been cleared by BCC's direct effort in the last 3 years?

Question 2: 79% of respondents to your consultation who live in the two most deprived deciles of the City said that they either disagreed or disagreed strongly with the rent rises. Why isn't this reflected in your EIA, and how can you justify the rent increases given this level of disquiet?

Question: CQ16.01

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 16 – Allotment Rents and Water Charges

Question submitted by: Councillor Chris Jackson

Question 1: I'm glad that allotment rent rises are being staggered over two years, to give people time adapt to the change. I also get that, in the age of the Tories continuing to cut our budget, why we need rents to rise - after they had been frozen for a significant amount of time. Could Cllr King please outline what rents will be spent on?

Question: CQ25.01

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 25 – Transport Funding – A432 (Fishponds Road)

Question submitted by: Councillor Amal Ali

Question 1: I welcome these improvements to the A432. I have long been aware of how dangerous the road can be and thought it should be prioritised for safety improvements. As the report says, between 1 August 2020 and 1 August 2023 there have been 140 collisions on this section of the A432, comprised of 1 fatal, 11 serious and 128 slight collisions. How does this data compare to other roads in Bristol?

Question: CQ27.01

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 27 – Goram Homes - Pipeline of Housing Development Sites

Question submitted by: Councillor Chris Jackson

Question 1: Please could the Cabinet Member for Housing Delivery provide an update on Goram Home's recent work?

Statement: PS26.01

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Angelo Giambrone

My statement is in the form of an email recently sent to Darren Jones...

Dear Mr Jones,

I have previously written to you and cc'd you on messages regarding caravans and van dwellers, so my topic will not be unfamiliar to you. Following my numerous emails and photographs to BCC during last year, asking that new policies be introduced to deal with van dwellers and caravans pitching where they want, for as long as they want, with no power to move them to the dedicated meanwhile sites, I finally received a disappointing and unacceptably delayed response that the council cannot introduce new policies, but that they provide a 'service' around existing policy (see trail). It took them 8 months to address my messages, only to be shrugged. Very frustrating and unacceptable.

But as I (and others) strive to improve our neighbourhood and our city, they have pointed me in your direction, so may I ask for your help on two counts please:

1) BCC are failing in delivering this service around existing policy, as they are not enforcing the existing parking restrictions on the Downs, which I'm sure you already know (vans park in restricted areas for weeks at a time - example photos attached). This may at very least serve as a deterrent, as vans are still parking up for weeks on end. Given that my complaint was not addressed by BCC for 8 months, I do not intend to waste my time with their complaints process again, as it clearly does not work. Hence, I'm bringing this service failure and the failure of the complaint system to your attention. But parking rules are not the key issue here.

2) According to the BCC response, a policy introduction to prevent people from 'living' on the Downs (and elsewhere in Bristol) falls to you and the Mayor, and not the Council. This means that my future reports and pursuit of change will be directed to you and the Mayor's office. Many Councillors I know already share my feelings, and that of thousands of other residents, so no need for me to convince them. The Councillors are aware that my approach has always been in a diplomatic and considered manner, which will of course continue. But how much longer do I and others have to tolerate this inaction? The problem started 8 years ago and has become a growing issue.

So please receive my update for this week. The caravan graveyard continues to blight the Downs. Many of these caravans and vehicles have flat tires (having been there for years) and I would question whether they have just been dumped. Can I simply leave a dilapidated and potentially unroadworthy caravan anywhere on the streets of Bristol, setting precedent and indicating to other like-minded people that it is absolutely fine to do so? Seemingly so. Can I make it my home and live anywhere indefinitely, unchallenged? If no, then why are rules not being enforced? If yes, then new policies are required. If they are indeed inhabited, this is not a campsite.

Now onto the subject of litter and piles of rubbish. Junk that has been there for weeks still remain, joined by a very significant new pile of rubbish. This new pile (visible from the main A4018 in full view of thousands of people every day) was reported to BCC a week ago...

<https://fixmystreet.bristol.gov.uk/report/5498767>)

...and I have now provided an update showing an increase in the problem. Why does the council let this disrespectful degradation of a public space go unchallenged? This is not an isolated incident and happens time and time again, and will continue while these dwellers are left to live in this way. It portrays a very poor image of our city to thousands of locals and visitors alike, as they pass on this busy artery into the city. We are embarrassed when friends and family visit Bristol, as they question what on earth has happened to the beautiful Downs. There is an element of damage this is causing to the city, which runs much deeper than the visible piles of rubbish and vans. Why are rules not being introduced?

I have also reported the dumping of a generator and other rubbish, left behind in the spot of one transient van when it moved on.

I would kindly ask you the question that I was asking the council all last year. Will you introduce a policy to stop this type of 'street living', which is clearly to the detriment of the area and undermines the choices and investments that Bristol residents like myself have made? Will you introduce a policy to enforce use of the meanwhile sites for anyone wishing to live on Bristol's streets? I do not accept a statement that 'it is difficult', which is something I have heard time and time again. Many things in life are difficult, but this does not mean action cannot be taken. After all this time, years no less, this is procrastination and burying of the problem.

I hope, with your help, 2024 brings positive change and a reverse of the downward spiral we are seeing.

Statement: PS26.02

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: John and Vivien Harding

We are concerned about caravan dwellers on the Downs, Parry's Lane and surrounding roads. There appear to be more and more vans and caravans appearing in this area. Some have rubbish outside making it an eyesore in an area that is supposed to be for the people of Bristol to enjoy.

Do these people pay a fee to park there? Surely you just cannot decide to camp anywhere free of charge, when the residents in the area pay some of the highest Council Taxes in Bristol.

What happens to the human waste from these vehicles, most are old and do not have any drainage facilities. We did come across human faeces with wipes on the corner of the road where these vans are parked near a tree. At the time I wish I had taken a photo, which prompted me to write as it is very concerning for health and safety reasons.

There must be a reason why Bristol has one of the highest number of caravan dwellers in the country. The reason being that the Council is unable to control the problem. The law is you can park for 5 hours around the Downs, you get a fine slapped on the windscreen if you overstay, also with all these vans and caravans the parking spaces are being taken up from the public who wish to use the Downs. One law for the law abiding public and another for those who choose to ignore the law.

Whilst the caravan dwellers are using the highway as their homes, they should be charged a fee, some work, after all they manage to buy these large camping vans and caravans, some have bicycles too. This money could be used towards a permanent site for them. We would all like not to have to pay taxes and Council tax but unfortunately things do not work that way.

I think what annoys a lot of the public is that these people are breaking the law and get away with it, there is no deterrent. I expect some are genuine cases, which need help, the illegal immigrants are put into hotels or on barges, fed and have medical help, so why are these people living in these run down old caravans.

I understand that there are transit sites for travellers ie St Anthony's in Avonmouth, it always looks empty? Why are these caravans not in there, all tax payers money. Unless all of this is stopped and sorted out it will only increase out of control. Now a third world country.

Statement: PS26.03

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Eileen Newby

I request that Bristol City Council bans overnight sleeping on Highways and By Ways

It is a legitimate request from those of us who live in the city ,pay taxes and conform to normal hygienic and aesthetic ways of living in the city.

The vulnerability and needs of the people who have opted for this lifestyle can be dealt with after a ban has been imposed giving Bristol time to address their needs .

There are countless student accommodation buildings being built daily in Bristol ,the irony of the comparison cannot be lost on anyone with an iota of sense.

Perhaps co-opting these buildings and reclaiming these buildings for the vulnerable might be a solution. ??

i am seeing Bristol deteriorating regarding the way those with itinerant life styles choose to live their lives and ruin the ambience and quality of life for its taxpayers and traditional residents .

i can see a rebellion from Council Tax Payers on the horizon if BCC do not address this effectively. Where ever one travels in rural and tourist areas overnight sleeping on Highways is banned .There is no reason why BCC cannot do it too

Statement: PS26.04

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Mark Leese

It seems we elected a mayor under the misapprehension that it would enable decisions to be made and executed in the city without stalemate. Perhaps in some cases this has happened but the issue of vehicle dwellers on Durdham Downs appears to be politically a hot potato for anyone wanting higher office. As a local resident, business owner and motorhome owner I can offer three perspectives.

Home owner and local resident.

The Downs have always been a special place in Bristol. A unique green space open to everyone. It now resembles a shanty town. There are parking restrictions in place on The Downs but they do not seem to be enforced for some. Many of my friends and family have expressed incidents of feeling uncomfortable or witnessed anti social incidents around the encampments. I've had the misfortune to change a flat tyre in the vicinity of the vans on White Tree cut through and the stench of wee is apparent. Furthermore these vehicles and their associated stuff are beginning to encroach further and further onto The Downs. As a rate payer I believe we make provision that is underused for travellers.

Business Owner.

As a long established agent proximity to The Downs has always had an impact on achievable hose price. Whilst this is not necessarily a prime concern for the council we have found in the past 18 months an increasing number of adverse comments about the encampments from prospective buyers. Particularly those from out of town. I can reasonably say therefore it is having a negative impact on the appeal of our city not just for residents but perhaps for businesses seeking to relocate. Having a traveller encampment adjacent to one of the main and most scenic entrances to the city is not a good look. Homeowners will also feel aggrieved if the value of their home drops as a result which is likely to rebound on their elective representatives who are not taking control of the situation.

Motorhome Owner.

I use campsites and official stopovers. There are a number of forums online that promote free stopovers and places to park. There is a lot of social media chatter about the ability to park up on Durdham Downs without being moved on. As well as the permanent van dwellers there is increasing awareness of a free camping site in a beautiful location. Therefore, if you do not begin to enforce parking restrictions or impose bylaws as a way to enforce the problem is clearly going to escalate beyond its current levels. As an aside you are shutting an amazing campsite that brings revenue to the harbour area on Baltic Wharf to build a few flats. Short-sighted and removes another unique asset from Bristol.

Statement: PS26.05

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Richard Norwood

We are fed up with the vans around the Downs and BS9. The loss of parking spaces, the gradual destruction of a beautiful space, the litter, the smell, the human waste, barbeques, anti-social behaviour and the extra crime around the Downs and BS9.

Either the Council believes in the rule of law, and equality of all people before the law, or it doesn't. Why should vans be able to park there long term whilst others get fined for exceeding the parking restrictions by 20 minutes? If there is no rule of law, no equality before the law and the authorities choose to enforce the law against some people but not others, we are not far away from societal breakdown, vigilantism and anarchy.

This really comes down to whether or not it is right to uphold the rule of law. I sincerely hope that our mayor believes in and now actively upholds the rule of law.

The situation has endured for years and is getting worse due to the lack of any decisive action by the Council. Central areas of Bristol are fast becoming slums with children living in vans. We are going backwards as a society and a City if we allow this situation to continue. Many cities have successfully introduced overnight camping bans in central areas.

There has also been a significant upturn in thefts from cars, garages, and houses in BS9 in the last couple of years as the van dwellers have increased. This is not a pure coincidence.

Statement: PS26.06

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Kathryn Rendell

I have read the above report with interest as I have previously contacted my local councillor regarding the increasing number of kerbside Vehicle Dwellers on The Downs.

The number of vehicle dwellers permanently parked around the Parry's Lane end of The Downs is increasing all the time. The report confirms this. Issues around vehicle dwellers are therefore going to become greater and the sooner they are properly addressed the better. The report is lengthy and full of background information but gives no indication that the issue is a priority and will be addressed soon.

I understand that for many of the dwellers, living in a vehicle is an economic necessity although for some it is still a lifestyle choice. Ideally, of course everyone should be able to live in a 'bricks and mortar' home, but if that is not possible, in a civilised society everyone should have access to running warm water and toilet facilities. My main objection therefore to the presence of a large number of vehicle dwellers around The Downs is the public health danger posed by waste disposal, particularly human excrement, in a green area heavily used by the public, including many children and dog walkers.

In addition, green areas are an essential area of open-ness, green-ness and nature within a city environment and should not become spoiled by increasing numbers of permanent and often dirty and badly maintained large vehicles.

The Report describes how 'meanwhile sites' have been successful and generally appreciated by vehicle dwellers who have been happy to pay a reasonable amount towards the costs. The Executive Summary says 'The most appropriate way of addressing vehicle dweller numbers and working with any potential growth is to provide increasing access to meanwhile sites across the city'.

So this must be the way forward. Stop talking about it and get on with it!!

One final point I would like to make. The report says 'Vehicle dwellers are citizens of our city and need to be respected with equal access to services as would be available to any other resident'. For those also struggling financially and paying a very large amount of council tax each year, this must be very difficult to swallow.

Statement: PS26.07

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Anne Bragg

I am writing on behalf of the Residents of The Grange Saville Road. over the last couple of years the number of Caravans and Campers has increased to such an extent that it now feels like a Gypsy Encampment!!! May I remind the Council that residents in this area are the most highly taxed in Bristol and it's not only disgusting but revolting that we have to put up with men peeing up against our walls and the human excrement in the bushes! Whilst we appreciate the chronic housing situation in Bristol we cannot understand why the Council has allowed the situation to become like it has, marring one of Bristols beauty spots. I would never have moved here had I realised what a blight it has now become. When are you going to do something about it? We are all elderly, we have become nervous of going out after dusk as we have no idea who is skulking around and we have all witnessed the using of our walls as a urinal!!!! I wonder how any of you would feel if it were your home that was being violated and people were camping in your back yard? BCC have allowed Bristol to become a filthy dirty pot holed cesspit. Shame on you all!!!

Statement: PS26.08

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Robert Westlake

The statement is submitted on behalf of the Friends of the Downs & Avon Gorge and on behalf of the Downs Advisory Panel.

The Friends group is a voluntary organisation representing over 300 members.

The Downs Advisory Panel represents Downs Users, visitors and neighbours and advises the Downs committee on a range of topics.

The 51 page report that Cabinet is asked to consider details the history of van dwelling in Bristol but does little by way of offering a solution to this long standing problem. The report spends a disproportionate amount of time highlighting the plight of the homeless in Bristol and of the welfare needs of those who live in roadside encampments, even details support organisations for van dwellers but fails to fully acknowledge the impact of van dwelling communities on their near neighbours and the detrimental impact on the environment.

Where is the support for those long-suffering citizens and ratepayers who feel disappointed and let down by those who should be protecting their rights.

To quote from the report "It is recommended that the creation of a Council officer's Task and Finish group is considered, in order to look into the issues and options around vehicle dwelling in Bristol, with the intention that this work feed into a review of the Bristol City Council's Policy for Vehicle Dwelling Encampments on the Highway to explore the inclusion of roadside parking, encampments, squatted sites and meanwhile sites."

Members of the Cabinet may be aware that the Downs committee who have responsibility for the good governance of the Downs commissioned their own internal Parking Task & Finish Group report. That report has just been published. The findings would go a long way to bringing about a resolution to the problems now facing us. In addition the Downs Advisory Panel has reviewed the Downs committee Parking report and added further recommendations.

Just how long would any new review likely take. The Downs in particular have suffered from roadside encampments for over five years already. This recommendation for a review is simply unnecessary and looks like obfuscation, prevarication and an excuse to do absolutely nothing.

This is a classic case of kicking the can down the road.

I would strongly suggest that the issues have been looked at for long enough, and are well known and well documented. There is no need whatsoever to commission a Task & Finish Group. Our citizens know what is needed and deserve better from those that purport to serve us. The time for debate and review is past, what is needed now is for the Council to take action.

The City Council has a range of options, powers and new legislation available to hand should they choose to use them. Likewise the Police. The evidence is there. It now needs the political will.

Recommendations

- Wellbeing/suitable sites should be identified. I find it hard to believe that after all this time sites are not readily identified and available around a city the size of Bristol.
- Injunctions and new Traffic Regulation Orders including parking restrictions should be investigated and implemented as a matter of urgency.

- Enforcement, clearly current parking restrictions for vehicle dwellers around the Downs are not being enforced. This could be implemented immediately.
- Enforce current bye-laws.
- Introduce and implement a 'No overnight Parking' bye-law.

Robert Westlake
Chair
Friends of the Downs & Avon Gorge
&
Chair
Downs Advisory Panel.

Statement: PS26.09

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Christine Bowles

I wish to add my voice to those who feel that concrete action is urgently required in dealing with the issue of van dwellers on the Downs and elsewhere around the city.

There are now a significant number of people living in vans in Bristol, and the number seems to be constantly increasing. As well as on the Downs, I notice that vans are now permanently parked in roads on the edge of the Redland residential area. To date very little action, if any, has been taken to address the problem, and I am concerned that even with the imminent departure of the Mayor, who has constantly evaded the issue, the situation will not change.

I appreciate that some of the van dwellers are vulnerable for various reasons eg health problems or poverty. Where this is the case, surely they need better and more secure options than living in a vehicle with no utilities or sanitary arrangements? However, many others have adopted van dwelling as a conscious, low cost lifestyle choice. Is it reasonable that they should be allowed to take up permanent residence in an area that was bequeathed as a place of recreation for the people of Bristol? The vans are unsightly, insanitary, and some of the occupants exhibit antisocial behaviour eg being hostile to local residents or keeping large aggressive dogs, so that it can be quite intimidating to go near them.

I am in favour of the suggestions put forward by local councillors:

Increase the number of legal sites available to van dwellers
Introduce a by-law prohibiting overnight camping on highways
Tighten up parking restrictions on the Downs, and enforce them: Ordinary motorists are subject to parking restrictions, but it appears that van dwellers are not!

I also believe it is imperative to source more appropriate social housing accommodation for those who are in genuine need. I am aware that this is a problem in many parts of the country, including Bristol, but a good starting point would be to insist, when granting planning permission, that property developers build genuine social housing as part of their plan, rather than “affordable housing” (a meaningless phrase, affordable to whom?) which is useless to those who cannot afford to buy any kind of property.

It is all very well publishing consultation documents that analyse the problems of van dwellers, but go no way at all towards resolving them. What we need is action, and we need it now.

Statement: PS26.10

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: John Lee

I am a resident of the Stoke Bishop Ward and a Bristol City Council Taxpayer.

I have read the report. It presents vehicle dwelling as a complex problem that requires yet further analysis. But inaction will only increase the problem. It is an issue that is close to becoming unmanageable. At the very least further growth should be prevented by the Council passing a city-wide by-law prohibiting overnight camping on highways.

I am not unsympathetic to the needs of the vehicle dwellers and I agree that their complex issues should be supported effectively. But it must be the case that support will be more effective if vehicle dwellers are provided with sites where they can be given proper services. It must be very difficult for the complex needs of vehicle dwellers to be managed properly if vehicle dwelling is spread across many locations in the city.

There must also be a proper balance between the issues that lead to van dwelling and the legitimate concerns of the residents in the areas in which the dwellers base themselves. The report gives the impression that the needs of van dwellers are paramount. This is not the right approach.

Proper regard must be paid to the rights of Conservation areas. This is particularly true in the case of the Bristol Downs which is an asset which must be protected.

The Council needs to develop an action plan which can be implemented quickly to the benefit of both the van dwellers and the local residents.

John Lee

Statement: PS26.11

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Jon Craton

This statement provides my comments on the document 'Vehicle Dwellers – The Bristol Model'.

During the last 8 years, the van dweller issue in Bristol has developed into a major challenge for the city. It is negatively affecting both the economy of Bristol and the quality of life of all who live here.

BCC is failing its residents (van- and property- dwelling alike) in not taking urgent action to deal with the problem. The lack of appropriate facilities for the volume of van-dwellers residing on Bristol streets is leading to issues for everyone in the city and undoubtedly impacting both the physical and mental health of those who choose to – or are forced to – live in this way.

I strongly support a two-pronged approach be taken to dealing with the Bristol van-dweller issue. Firstly, the urgent establishment of means-tested, BCC managed sites and secondly, a

city wide, blanket ban on overnight streetside camping. This can be funded through:

- Council tax contributions. I for one would be willing to pay higher Council Tax if I knew it was going towards resolving the issue,
- Voluntary donations from Bristol-based companies.
- Contributions through means-tested, daily charges to van dwellers to access the facilities provided in such sites.

The report's recommendations appear to be 'kicking the issue down the road' in proposing that the next administration be left to deal with the problem. BCC leadership need to own the problem now and introduce measures along the lines described above as a matter of urgency.

The following provides background to what has informed my views on this subject.

I have been a resident of Bristol for over 25 years and have spent most of this time living in the Westbury Park and Westbury on Trym areas of the City. During this period, I have been actively involved in generating substantial inward investment into the city via a range of business incubators for early-stage start-up companies. These have created numerous employment opportunities for local people and have contributed to the thriving start-up economy that Bristol now enjoys.

My views on street-side dwelling have been informed from two perspectives – firstly that of an entrepreneur attempting to generate further inward investment into Bristol-based businesses and secondly, that of a resident of the city.

During the last 6 years I have had numerous opportunities to speak with visitors to the city who are contemplating either basing their start-ups in Bristol, or committing significant funds to support the businesses that are already located here. Many have commented on the burgeoning presence of streetside encampments that have sprung up around the city. They have also expressed concern that the local authority is not doing more to actively manage the issue – and many have regarded this as a proxy for BCC's general competence in

the way in which the city is run.

I have no doubt that the alarming growth of street-side encampments has negatively impacted the quantity of financial support that has been provided to the Bristol-based businesses in which I'm involved.

Additionally, I know of several entrepreneurs who run Bristol-based businesses who are actively seeking to re-locate their operations due in no small part to the lack of action on

street side dwelling. Like myself, they feel that their voices are not being heard regarding the need to take urgent action and that there is a marked asymmetry in the way in which street-side dweller demands are being prioritised over those of the businesses and residents

– whose continued contribution to the running costs of the city are of fundamental importance.

This is deeply concerning since, if allowed to continue its current trajectory, will only negatively impact the wider Bristol economy.

As a resident of Bristol, I have witnessed first-hand the substantial growth in street-side dwelling during the last 8 years. The notable lack of resolute action and enforcement from the local authorities has led to the perception that street side dwelling is not only accommodated in Bristol, but that it is actively welcomed by the city. One doesn't need to spend long searching the internet to find numerous traveller- and van-dweller websites that highlight Bristol as a 'go to city' for street side dwelling – and there are even TripAdvisor style websites that actually rank areas for the city in terms of facilities and absence of enforcement activity.

This has fuelled the substantial growth in street-side dwelling – and created a near perfect storm in terms of further propagation of the issue. Lack of urgent action will only serve to increase the numbers of vans and caravans that appear on our streets and around our green spaces.

Statement: PS26.12

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Martin Platt

I wish to express my concerns over the reluctance of the council to enforce traffic measures around the Downs and specifically on Parrys Lane.

Initially I had sympathy with casual van dwellers parking overnight in legally taxed and insured Campervans and conversions, however this has been allowed to progress to the status of a permanent encampment, which now comprises mainly of unhitched touring caravans, with no vehicles to move them. They do not move, in violation of the parking restrictions which the council fails to enforce.

Furthermore, there are now bottled gas canisters and even petrol electrical generators attached to these vans stored on the public highway.

As of today, there is clear evidence of fly tipping next to one of the vans on Parrys lane.

Whilst there is clearly an issue to be resolved with regards to housing in Bristol, the Downs exists for the pleasure and usage by all the residents of the city, and I would like an explanation as to why the council choses to discriminate where and when it enforces parking restrictions.

Statement: PS26.13

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Jules Appleby

I am writing to express my huge concern and disgust for the now seemingly-out-of-control situation on the Downs. Near Whitetree roundabout, on the short length of road, there are around 20 caravans nose to nose. Many are not even inhabited: they've just been dumped. And, of those that are lived in, the inhabitants are treating the land around them as rubbish dumps.

I have seen rats on many occasions and it does not feel safe to walk near there.

This area is supposed to be a beauty hot spot but the situation is not disgraceful. If I were to park my car there, I'm sure I'd be clamped and fined within a day. How is it that people are allowed to live in vans and dump their vehicles with no penalty.

I appreciate people may need a place to live but it should not be in such a historical location in Bristol that is now being ruined. The city paper on this matter is now very out of date and the situation is a lot worse now.

To resolve this, the road needs to be closed, abandoned vehicles removed and disposed, and dwellers moved on with suggestions to other locations outside Bristol.

I understand the matter is being discussed on Tuesday and I urge you to protect our Durdham Downs.

Statement: PS26.14

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Anne Carroll

I have contacted you before as well as my councillors several times about the rubbish, litter and general awful state of the Parry's Lane part of the Downs, which has now been occupied by van dwellers for several years, with nothing done about it by the council.

This eye sore cannot continue. Why aren't overnight parking restrictions put in place? Why do you think it's acceptable for people to live in such primitive conditions? Where are they going to the toilet, apart from the bushes?

For goodness sake, do something about this situation.

Statement: PS26.15

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Sue Ramlugon

The report gives a good background to the situation and explains the position of many of those who are unable or choose not to live in permanent dwellings in a very informative way. However it offers little in the way of proposing a remedy for the situation.

1. Whilst recognising that it is in the interests of every citizen of Bristol to have harmony between all members of the community, one issue that harms this relationship is a lack of accountability on the part of the Vehicle Dwellers. I am sure many behave responsibly, but the issue of fly tipping, human waste, refuse and antisocial behaviour does not help the situation. As an example, where kerbside living is undertaken, parking regulations cannot be enforced if there is no registered address for a vehicle. There are already Byelaws in place for the Downs which prohibit overnight parking, but if the authorities do not enforce them they are useless. Kerbside parking on the Downs has doubtless been exacerbated because of the apparent tolerance by the Council.
2. Surely if the existing laws and regulations were enforced appropriately and any aggravating and criminal behaviour dealt with promptly there would be more harmony for all who wish to be part of the community of the City of Bristol.
3. A further point in the report recognises that a proportion of Vehicle Dwellers are vulnerable, due to various individual circumstances. It would seem that the Council is failing in a duty of care by allowing people to live in inadequate conditions.
4. Whilst a housing crisis in the City is acknowledged by all, commissioning a report simply delays any positive action. Initiatives could be taken to alleviate this, such as Help Bristol's Homeless initiative to provide individual homes as a first step out of homelessness.

I do recognise that the financial resources of the Council have been stretched to the extreme, but the wide-reaching effects of this issue must make it high on the priority list and not just pass it on to the next administration.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my statement.

Statement: PS26.16

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Malcolm Roberts

I read the lengthy and detailed report produced by BCC.

Unfortunately it puts the van Dwellers to the fore and doesn't really get to grips with the impact upon those people who live a more traditional lifestyle and pay council tax.

Much is made of citizens of Bristol but obviously many van dwellers have moved to Bristol out of choice and - if my understanding is correct - have no intention of paying for the services provided. The detailed (and no doubt expensive) report presents Bristol as a positive force rather than an authority who has blatantly ignored a problem and allowed it to fester.

As has so often been the case with the regime overseen by the Mayor the opinions and concerns of the vast majority of council tax paying " citizens" is not accurately represented in this report. The Mayor and his team seem content to allow public areas like the Downs, which are used by a wide range of people, to be adversely impacted by a small number of individuals who want a free parking slot.

I understand and appreciate that it is difficult to find accommodation but that doesn't seem to have impacted upon the student population who are offered " luxury" accommodation. Nor does the report seem to take into account the attitudes of some of those preferring this alternative whilst living a somewhat chaotic and unhealthy lifestyle at the expense of others.

What do the van dwellers live on ? Do they pay tax and NI if working - do they claim benefits and if so how does that work without an address? What happens if they have children?

My concern is that the resources being diverted to this problem - and it is a problem not a minor irritant- are out of all proportion to the numbers involved. BCC faces huge financial challenges some of which are of the council's own making and the majority of residents are fed up with paying up whilst the council deals with a small minority.

I'm no member of the rabid right but BCC need to take action to remove the caravans and vans parked randomly in various areas including the city's best known communal facility and deal with the impact upon the vast majority of tax paying residents. I am amazed that those representing us continue to treat us like idiots.

Introduce a tourist tax and think about the image of the city which has been damaged significantly by these illegal squatters.

I've written before on this topic but things have got much worse.

Statement: PS26.17

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Margaret Wilmot

The Downs

- Although not a central Bristol resident, I have enjoyed walking on the Downs at least twice a week for over 10 years and, like a lot of people, enjoying its natural beauty as part of a health and wellbeing regime.
- Unfortunately, the natural beauty and appeal of the area has increasingly been spoilt over recent years by the ever-growing number of vehicle dwellers parked on the surrounding kerbsides; some even parked on the grass verges.
- A great number of people (not only those who live nearby but also visit from surrounding areas of the city) use the Downs to enjoy family walks, picnics and exercise. For many it is their only access to an outside natural environment where they can enjoy the many benefits of the outdoors.
- The huge, and growing, number of unsightly vehicles using the Downs as a permanent campsite prohibits any benefits the Downs were intended for.
- Parking, for those who come to enjoy the Downs from surrounding areas, is becoming increasingly restrictive due to the number of vehicle dwellers permanently taking up space.
- There are parking restrictions for car drivers – why aren't there parking restrictions for vehicle dwellers?
- Most of the caravans/vans are in a deteriorating state, which indicates there are very likely health and safety issues.
- There does need to be alternative sites to offer vehicle dwellers in appropriate areas where they can enjoy their chosen lifestyle and don't affect areas of beauty and enjoyment for others.
- I'm at a loss to understand why the current Council has been incapable of resolving this long-standing, and ever-growing, problem and as such are passing it on to a future Council to deal with.

Statement: PS26.18

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: O.W. Batley

Mayor Rees and Cabinet,

I write in connection with the report on van dwelling.

Very disappointed to see the lack of tangible solutions offered in the report. It is simply not good enough to suggest that this is something the next administration should review and consider. What a waste of a report and what a waste of officer time.

This problem has arisen on **your** watch due to **your** inaction. It is your responsibility to come up with solutions to resolve this issue.

Local residents don't want van dwelling on the roads of our city. It should not be permitted for many reasons including the welfare of the van dwellers themselves and the environment.

There is a simple solution which other local authorities have adopted. Van dwelling on the highway should be banned by the introduction of a city wide byelaw and this should be robustly enforced. At the same time the city needs to provide sufficient designated van dwelling sites, with suitable facilities, for those van dwellers who can show a close association with Bristol or have jobs in Bristol.

If you don't set in train now the simple solution offered above then your legacy as Mayor will be that of failure - failure to respond to residents' concerns and the appalling failure to allow so many people to live effectively as squatters on the highway with no basic facilities. As a city we don't allow tenants to live in substandard accommodation and we should definitely not allow people to live in vans and caravans in conditions far worse than sub-standard houses.

Action is required TODAY. Acknowledge **your** responsibility and leave behind a decent legacy.

Statement: PS26.19

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Bob Priest

I have read the BCC document entitled Van Dwellers The Bristol Model. I found it to be disappointingly partisan, overly long and void of firm actions that could be taken now to resolve the issue any time soon. Instead, the authors appear to prefer yet more bureaucratic processes which will stifle any actual action being taken.

The report goes to great lengths outlining the background to the van dweller population, their needs and desires, stating that they need to be respected and represented. But what about the general public, who not only have to put up with squalid encampments and anti-social behaviour, but also have the “privilege” of paying for the social support and cleaning services not paid for by the recipients?

One of the founding tenets of the document is a City Wide approach to the issue. Whilst I agree with that in principle, I think the Downs is a special case. It has a special significance to the whole of the City and needs better protection in my view.

With respect to the Downs, little mention is made of why it's acceptable for van dwellers to break the law by out-staying parking restrictions and being allowed to get away with it.

I have raised this question with both the Mayor and my MP, but neither gave a satisfactory answer. The irony of having parking restrictions, that were put in place to stop commuter parking getting in the way of Downs users, being flouted by around 60 vans with no action being taken isn't lost on me!

I don't mean to show a lack of compassion to those van dwellers going through hard times, but as well as not understanding why they should be exempt from the law, I don't understand why they have to live surrounded by such squaller. If they valued the environment and kept their surroundings clean and tidy I'd have more sympathy. As it stands, it is hard not to see them as just taking advantage.

The Council's handling (or not!) of the issue around the Downs, in particular, has been shameful. Due to lack of action, clusters of dwellers have now formed, which will be harder to deal with. The result is that one of the jewels in Bristol's crown has been devalued, which impacts all of us.

As for solutions, mention is made in the report of sharper enforcement. An obvious solution is to ban overnight parking around the Downs. How hard can that be to implement and police?

I agree with the provision of more Meanwhile, Permanent and Service sites and would add that van dwellers should be required to relocate to them once available.

I don't believe that continuing to develop Policy Statements helps anything. Action is needed to address the issue, not more bureaucracy.

Yours sincerely,

R.H.Priest

Statement: PS26.21

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: John Curran

I have read the Council Report (undated) on this subject and offer the following comments which do not relate to the more itinerant groups (GRT, Cultural and New Age).

The Council estimates that the number of permanent or semi-permanent vehicle dwellers has increased over 4 years from 150 to 600. It is tempting to say that this growth has been encouraged by the Council's policies but, with more certainty, it can be said that those policies have not succeeded in preventing that growth.

With more of the same, and this report gives one no reason to expect anything else, it can be assumed that this growth will continue -- another 450 by 2028, or another quadrupling ?

The report refers to the dwellers as "Bristol citizens". I'm not sure what definition of this descriptor has been used by the authors. Clearly, they are "Bristol residents", but among all the statistics presented, there are none to indicate their length of residency in the city. Without that information it is difficult to rebut the suggestion that a number have moved to Bristol from other areas of the country which are less welcoming. As the report acknowledges, Bristol has one of the largest number of vehicle dwellers.

It is regrettable that the report, having analysed the problems so thoroughly, does not suggest specific discouraging measures. Some are surely in the minds of those council employees who are closest to the problem but who, for some reason, fell constrained from including them in this report.

It will be difficult to relocate those who would be forced to move by such measures but, as is the case whenever problems are not dealt with quickly, there will be greater difficulties in the years ahead if steps are not taken now to prevent further growth.

There is much in the report that I agree with. Vehicle dwellers should be given the same decency and fairness as other residents and the same access to Council and other public services -- and the Council can only deal with the issue on a city-wide basis. But I disagree that it is wrong to describe this as a "problem". If the authors consider it is not a problem now, at what point would they change their mind - when the number reaches 1000, 2000, 5000 or when ?

That so many people cannot afford built accommodation is already a problem, and it does not cease to be a problem, indeed it creates other problems, when transferred to our streets.

Any further delay in delivering solutions will bring bigger problems. Council needs to act now.

Statement: PS26.22

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Sharon Smithen

Van Dwelling on the Downs

1 Van dwelling is a particular Bristol centric issue but there is no real explanation why that should be. This creates frustration for residents as it's not seen as much or at all in other cities such as Bath, Cambridge, Manchester or Birmingham etc.

2 As soon as you google 'van dwelling UK' Bristol pops up and in particular, Parrys Lane. Bristol has become UK renown for van dwelling. It impacts mostly Westbury Park, Cote Lane and upper Parrys lane.

3 As it's not nationwide phenomenon, this contradicts evidence that suggest that the scale of the problem is down to housing costs, rent, vulnerabilities etc.

4 Other cities such as Bath, Cambridge, London and Oxford have higher rent and housing costs but fewer or barely any have van dwellers. If they are there, it's more by stealth as opposed to the overt van dwelling as have here that causes issues.

5 Van dwelling only occurs in places that due to their nature encourages this type of life style eg beach towns such as Falmouth or a Brighton although Brighton has clamped down on overnight parking along the coast. Also mountainous areas eg the Peaks or Dartmoor etc

6 In reality, Bristol has offered a benign atmosphere for van dwellers with a highly benign policy. The huge rise in van dwellers can be linked to the previous van policy which acted as a particular incentive. In effect, it was a de facto amnesty to van dwellers as action would only be taken if deemed high impact (a highly subjective BCC test) so in effect, action has rarely been taken enough.

7 Therefore, Bristol acts as a magnet for van dwellers. It also encourages people to more readily leave rented accommodation and for instance, save money for a house deposit or have more monthly sending money etc.

8 People move from places all over the UK to live in vans in Bristol.

9 Bristol has no way of knowing the true identity of the person in the van and their provenance as there are no proper identity checks eg passports or driving licence . A person can pretend to have been born here or lived here many years or be anyone. How does a social worker with a clip board know who they are talking to? Bristol CC cannot say with any certainty or evidence where the van dwellers originated from - the van dwellers can say that they are anybody and come from anywhere and probably do that!

10 The boho festival vibe attracts people who want an alternative life style.

11 Bristol constantly speaks about balancing the rights of van dwellers with the rights of the citizens who pay council tax, are invested in the city via rent or mortgage etc and have a lot to gain or lose. This is just unfair and galling. I could literally arrive in a van tomorrow and have as much say as someone who is invested enough to pay rent, a deposit and has laid down roots here. This is what upsets people. For residents, the impact of any policy is greater because they have invested in the city and hope to be here for years and can't just move around.

12 Bristol policies eg congestion charge and evictions has deliberately displaced van dwellers to the more affluent area of the Downs. Why not extend congestion charges to the Downs - it is the lungs of the city - that cut off point I found to be highly suspect.

13 The financial burden of the van dwellers is not costed. However the van dwellers are really disproportionately expensive. There are endless consultations, social workers assessments, police time and even councillor time. On the Downs, there is the published extra cost of rubbish collection costing tens of thousands . There are other less obvious but significant costs eg loss of Downs hire fees as the area becomes run down, loss of employment as employers choose not to relocate here as areas such as the Downs, frankly look like a dump. Also the Downs committee has and will be continued to be bombarded with complaints. The van dwellers are not a good advertisement for Bristol as a 'go getting' city and will detract investment and also encourage businesses out of the city. Quite frankly, it bewilders visitors who wonder why it is allowed.

So the surveys that BCC have done are one sided and incomplete as they do not even look at the bigger picture of the true cost of van dwelling and therefore the councils meeting is uninformed and based on incomplete data.

14 If it was discovered that van dwelling was costing BCC millions that is different from if it was costing ten thousand. Has anyone, for instance, considered whether it might be cheaper for BCC to rent private houses en bloc at private rent prices and place van dwellers there on a social rent? Even people on full benefits and/ or low income can afford social rent, BCC could just then subsidise the difference between private and social rent. This takes people out of vans and into housing (claiming central government housing benefit) and the cost might not be much more than all these huge incidental costs. Alternatively, build pods and prioritise van dwellers for these.

However by the mere act of doing this exercise and having to do a detailed financial assessment, this will help determine the true situation and whether the person can pay for but won't pay for accommodation. The process also helps properly regulate who they are and what their true identity and situation is.

If we think of the spaces for van on the Downs as a benefit this would be a better approach - to claim a benefit or space you need to be properly identified and finances checked - eg students don't qualify, homeowners don't qualify, those earning about £21,000 etc or not on benefits can't have a place. Those with capital assets of more than 6,000 (DWP cut off) can't have a spot. The people there need to be properly ID and assessed like you would for benefits.
Why treat this differently?

15 In the long run, society cannot function with an increasing number of people coming out of mainstream and living in vans. The policies that Bristol has eg van dwellers policy, encourages people who might otherwise have remained in rental accommodation to give up, buy a van. It also might encourage people to work fewer hours eg less than 16 as they have fewer expenses so it is also detrimental to the labour market. There is a really issue with this in this country.

Moreover If more people lived in vans eg retirees that there would be a society break down. It could be tempting for anyone to rent out their home, live for a year in a caravan alternating between street living and caravan sites etc. if that home was rented to students that would be lost council tax.

16 If people were vulnerable in its usual definition eg due to disabilities, mental illness diagnosed or special needs they should be a high priority for social housing and in the meantime, houses in n and b or hotels. So there are huge gaps or lack of detail in the report. What is the definition of vulnerable?

17 By vulnerable does the report mean to drugs and drink? This is a country wide issue but again other councils including labour led councils do not and won't tolerate van living so why here? Why the emotional black mail onto residents?

18 Moreover. it is not good for vulnerable people to be left in caravans. It can't be good for this health or welfare. As a mother of a vulnerable autistic adult son with complex needs I would be appalled if he was living in a caravan. However I am also perplexed as he would be a priority 1 for housing. So have these vulnerable people been offered housing and refused? Again, is this a matter of choice?

19 The whole van living system is unregulated with people unknown. There are no number plates attached to many of the caravans and anyone could be the owner. How do we know who owns these caravan at that the people living in them are not paying rent to slum landlords? Bristol CC has no idea one way or the other as to who owns the vans and if rent is being paid. There is no registration of ownership of camper vans. Anyone can say to someone with a clipboard 'it's my caravan' but it might not be true. Given the shady dealing of rentals in other councils eg sheds being rented out etc (Slough) I believe that it is highly likely that there is an exchange of money somewhere and someone is making money. Who organises the transfer of the caravans from one site to another? Moreover the whole thing could be tied up to a shadowy underworld and lined to slave labour and /or migrant issues/ unregulated exploited workers. Someone has the ability to source and move caravans around. The whole transportation and organisation seems slick. Are we meant to believe that a highly vulnerable person can source a caravan and arrange for its transportation. That is not something people I know who are vulnerable could do. Also the whole thing could easily be connected to money laundering- caravans paid for in cash etc also identity theft.

Ultimately BCC could find itself caught up in a large scandal because it has allowed the proliferation of unregulated habitats with possible links to criminal organisations. How can BCC have any idea what is happening? Do they survey the caravans 24/7?

Have you noticed the number of ads for cheap old caravan - any bought in any condition! Hmmm why?

20 Impact on local communities: What is missing from any council literature any idea of how many caravans/ van dwellers will be thought of as too many? Where does it end? When there are 500 or 1,000 van dwellers or 2,000 etc. There is no number control and in fact every policy of BCC has encouraged van dwelling? When does BCC think that enough is enough?

Even just removing the ones who have made life choices by doing proper ID checks (passports/ driving licences) and financial assessments (as you would do for housing) (why did they leave their rented accommodation and the address of that etc) is a start to see exactly what you have here. I

have no faith in the report as self made evidence is just not reliable but in fact is just that , 'self made' evidence. It would be a start to actually know through proper ID and financial checks who is living in a van in Bristol - as you know everyone who lives in houses through the electoral roll. They need to produce ID.

21 People need green space. People need somewhere to walk and mentally unwind. Wherever you walk on the Downs you can see camper vans. Originally they were centred on Parrys Lane but now they have spread around Circular road. The vans, camper vans and also parked commuter cars all merge to make the Downs very ugly. Moreover there is also a distinct queezy feeling that they void effluent in the surface water drains and into the bushes - all unsanitary and gross.

22 The Downs-

Having lived away from Bristol for over a decade I fully appreciate and realise how unique the Downs is. It's one of the beautiful tourist areas of Bristol combined with Clifton.

People come to the Downs to see the view of the Suspension Bridge across the gorge.

It seems very odd that Bristol City Council have no desire to protect and preserve the Downs. What other city would allow one of its most scenic touristic parts to be taken over by van dwellers? The impact on Bristol will be detrimental. It will merge in people's minds and add to the impression of a shoddy city and give weight to the impressions that Bristol is a city in decline. Other cities do everything to preserve and make the best of any thing of aesthetic value. This has seen huge improvements in cities like Manchester and Birmingham. In contrast, Bristol seems to take for granted what it has or is dismissive of what it has. It seems to encourage the deterioration of the Downs. Would camper vans be allowed in the jewellery quarter of Birmingham or around the colleges of Oxford - of course not! Are they allowed around Victoria Park Bath - of course not. Taken to the an extreme. Should there be camper vans outside Buckingham Palace? There is poverty and homelessness in London is there not? what about around the Eiffel Tower etc etc. You can apply that argument to every city but common sense dictates that you preserve key beautiful sites.

So why in Bristol do we treat an iconic spot like this - what makes it so different from other cities?

23 When people move to Bristol they need certainty before they invest their £500,000 or more into housing, The planning system exists to give them a level of certainty or at least in other cities it exists for that reason. Nothing can be built unless it agrees with planning development rules and moreover people get a say. Bristol has ignored that.

Bristol Council has illegally (acted ultra vires) enforced a camp site on the inhabitants of upper Parrys Lane and Westbury Park with no planning and allowed them no proper say. It has all been enmeshed into a general van dweller policy but it's people living on Cote Lane/ upper Parry Lane who bear the brunt of it - no one or few people in the Council has it exactly right on their doorstep. What gives you the right to have a view when it does not impact you - it's not exactly a shared burden.

In fact it would be fairer to disperse van dwellers to each and every street of the city especially those who say 'we don't really mind it' its easy to be generous with someone else's discomfort! This policy I would support - we can all take 1 or 2 vans on each and every road and also in South Glos. Better still, streets can vote to invite camper vans to their street - what about that?

The Inhabitants of upper BS9 all complain but they get ignored. It's like a bad marriage. What happens when one party in a marriage complains and the other one refuses to listen, eventually the

one who complains grows tired and wants out. This is what will happen to Bristol. It will start as a trickle but as Bristol insists on following its odd agendas people will give up and leave.

The trickle will become a flood.

People won't want to buy houses near Parrys Lane top when they realise that the van encampment is de facto permanent - which it is. This is what you have as neighbours. Before rejoicing with some peculiar socialist sour grapes (look at them in big houses - incidentally not me I could not afford one by the Downs when I moved here and now certainly have no wish to have one - I think that having that view or being generous to van dwellers is easy if you are not affected by it)

Think this! Bristol has relied upon big business to bring money into the city. Increasingly there is no need to be in Bristol as more and more people work remotely. Do we want to scare big business away? People will realise that despite a planning system in reality a van dweller could move outside your home and you have no protection. As the numbers increase, they will appear outside St Andrews Park, Redland Green Park, Mina Park, Snuff Mills, along Coombe Lane for Blaise etc. why not? They have no licence plates. Suddenly people will have no faith in buying a house in Bristol, it will be a city in decline and people will prefer to live in South Glos, Bath or even Cardiff. Eventually big business will realise this and leave and Bristol will become a slum city.

The police have a policy I believe to direct them to the Downs but what happens when that site is full- what about directing to Redland Green or St Andrews Park or would that be classed as high impact within a week even if just say 5 camper vans:

In reality this is an issue disproportionately carried by a few people who live by the Downs - those around Westbury Park, Parrys Lane etc - they should have a weighted say. As for me, I live some distance away (30 mins walk) so I won't be a hypocrite and say 'it's ok'. We had van dwellers 15 minutes walk nearby just off the Portway - didn't know they were there as not visible - not therefore an issue.

Personally, I think that it creates a negative impact on visitors and would deter inward investment. It makes the city look terrible. I think that jobs will be lost as a consequence that might have come here and the City will be poorer. I also loathe walking on the Downs now and avoid most of it but by the Observatory.

The housing problem is a vast problem but the 200 or so caravans has a disproportionate larger impact on Bristol than the actual issue of the housing problem. I have huge sympathy with the homeless especially ex in care and families and think that needs to be run better and families to have access to kitchens at least. BCC knows that most homeless people (especially with kids) are in hotels, b and b etc and you need to convert that cost from BCC funded costs to housing benefits costs paid by central government cost. This is not what this is all about.

In the meantime, I think that BCC are using the van dwellers as a flag or outward manifestation of failed policies, hitting the wealthy on the Downs (Westbury Park, upper Stoke Bishop) hard but in the process are destroying the city. That is something other cities like say Manchester would not do - yet they have poverty, homelessness etc. they are too business minded and also maybe care about all their residents.

Finally perhaps those who are in favour of van dwellers who live in areas like Redland Bishopston or Cotham on band F or G council tax when their houses have vastly inflated values due to being in the catchment of RGS or Cotham schools

(and should be band H) should offer to pay more council tax to help relieve homelessness etc but that is another issue. I'm wondering how a 1.25 million pound house in Cotham can be Band E! In BS9 that value house would be a Band H. I leave that for another day!

Statement: PS26.23

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Rebecca Holdstock

I have strong concerns about the vehicle encampment around the Downs, particularly along the top of Parry's lane.

The litter is unsightly as are the vehicles and caravans themselves. Human waste is being incorrectly disposed of in the bushes nearby. It is believed that someone is renting out a number of these caravans and profiteering from this venture.

I would like to see:

- A significant increase in suitable alternative sites for people living in vehicles.
- A city-wide by-law prohibiting overnight camping on highways
- Changes to parking restrictions around the Downs, together with better enforcement
- Parry's Lane closed off and in time grassed over.

Statement: PS26.24

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: David Clymo

I wish to add my support to the requests of various local councillors who are pushing for:

- A significant increase in suitable alternative sites for people living in vehicles
- A city-wide by-law prohibiting overnight camping on highways
- Changes to parking restrictions around the Downs, together with better enforcement

I would request, however, that any review of parking restrictions on the Downs incorporates the impact of current restrictions on surrounding streets, including Julian Rd, Rockleaze, Ivywell Road, Downleaze etc. These roads have been blighted by commuters and long term student parking since the RPS schemes were put in place in Clifton/Redland and the Downs (even though the Downs restrictions are barely enforced - and having a rule that is not enforced is much worse than having no rule at all).

I consider that the situation on the Downs is currently worse than before the parking restrictions were put in place and commuters have just been moved to adjacent residential roads.

Statement: PS26.25

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Alan Baldwin

As a resident local to the Downs, I'd like to express my disappointment at the way that what should be a beautiful part of the city is now becoming more and more scruffy and littered as van living grows on the roads surrounding the Downs, notably the one way section of Parry's Lane.

I would request that parking restrictions to be implemented (and enforced) around the downs - there is Pay and Display parking all over the rest of the city. There could be a designated period of free parking to ensure users of the Downs are not discouraged.

I would further request that overnight camping on highways is prohibited - other than in designated areas. Such areas would require sanitation. No sanitation is available on the Downs, and the incidence of human waste in the trees and bushes on the Downs is increasing, reducing the attraction of the Downs as an amenity, and raises health concerns. If van dwelling is to be encouraged by the council and supported, then an area (even if it is on the Downs) with suitable facilities for sanitation and rubbish collection must be created.

Statement: PS26.26

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Pete Valance

The inactivity of the city's managing body has allowed a disgraceful situation to develop.

Every year more and more large converted vans, caravans and camper vans are choosing to park on the roads around the Clifton and Durdham Downs. The significant hotspot is the short length at the top of Parry's Lane.

Who tows the old derelict caravans up there, you may ask?

I have recently witnessed what looks like a builder/gangmaster with a large 4x4 with a tow hook collecting a labourer from a caravan in the morning and checking a fault on the caravan before they drove off.

What is to stop more enterprising individuals from towing caravans onto the Downs and renting them out?

Why would anyone park in a dedicated site when they can live, Council Tax free, on Bristol's premier beauty spot?

We need:

- 1. Close off the top of Parry's Lane and in time grass it over.**
- 2. A city-wide by-law prohibiting overnight camping on highways.**
- 3. Changes to parking restrictions around the Downs, together with better enforcement.**

The latter could be self-financing.

Statement: PS26.27

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Roger Lake

I have a number of observations and comments on this report. I will address some general points and then make some remarks about the encampment on the Downs.

General

The report is a welcome analysis of the history of the growth of Van Dwellers in the City. However, it is hard to tell if BCC sees it as significant problem that needs to be dealt with or it is accepting of the current situation with all the associated social, health and welfare consequences. Not to mention the cost.

1. The exponential growth of the number of people living in Vans is a direct result of the permissive nature of the council's policy. It now appears to be in crisis, with more and more people living in the streets. Where and how will it end?
2. According to the report, virtually no other city has seen the level of growth in Van Dwelling, so why has this been allowed to happen in our City?
3. Whilst the report acknowledges the balance between residents wishes and the needs of Van Dwellers, where are the views of local residents and what consultation has there been?
4. The report clearly states that the strategy is to 'support and manage' the situation, not to find a solution. Surely the vulnerability of individuals, families and children is only going to be exacerbated by them living in such poor conditions and therefore there has to be a solution.
5. There is an urgent need to find permanent sites for the Van Dwellers, introduce no overnight parking and enforce parking restrictions, just as BCC does for cars.

The Downs

I live adjacent to the encampment on the Downs and today there are approximately 65 vans in four streets centred around Parry's Lane. For years we have seen the growth of this site leading to significant environmental concerns. The area should be for recreation use for the all Bristol residents but sadly it has now become a caravan site and inaccessible to residents. It is just completely inappropriate to use this area for this purpose.

1. When will something be done or will this site be there indefinitely?
2. Despite representations and communication with the Mayor and others there is a singular lack of understanding of residents concerns and a sense of hopelessness that nothing can be done.
3. We share the high levels of concern for the Van dwellers, in terms of their mental and general health issues. These can only be exacerbated by living in such poor conditions. We have concerns about the level of drug misuse and the potential exploitation of young women. We have seen women being dropped off by vans and going into the caravans and being collected later.
4. We have noticed a high level of rats in the vicinity of the encampment as well as the general detritus. It presents a very bad image of the city.

Statement: PS26.28

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Dr Bob Turvey

1. The following comments refer to vehicles and caravans parked on the stretch of Parrys Lane which crosses the Downs.
2. There is a 5 hour parking restriction on the road. Why are motorhomes allowed to park there without moving for months? They should be ticketed each and every day for this offence. I would like to park on this road to visit the Downs and the shops in nearby streets. I am stopped from doing this because the Council takes no action to enforce a bylaw. My single largest outgoing is the rates I pay on my house. I feel that part of what I pay for is being stolen from me by the people who park on this section of Parrys Road. I also feel that dwellers in these vehicles avail themselves of Council Services without paying for them. This is unfair to those of us who do pay for the services.
3. A number of caravans have been parked there for months without moving. Some have number-plates, many do not. If caravans are not considered as vehicles, then in my opinion they are rubbish which is obstructing the Highway. It is an offence to obstruct the King's Highway. They are also stealing parking places from me. I believe they should be towed away.
4. Several vehicles have neither MoT nor tax. It takes but a moment for a Council employee to check such matters via the DVLA website; the Police can do so instantly via ANPR. Such vehicles should be dealt with according to the Law. I pay money to tax, insure and MoT my car and I don't see why others should be allowed to dispense with such obligations when their vehicles are on the King's Highway.
5. I believe that the Downs Committee should liaise with Bristol City Council and the Police to give back the use of this road to those of us who pay for it; and they should do so as soon as possible.
6. I think a city-wide ban on overnight camping in public roads is an excellent idea. When introduced it should be **enforced every night**.

Statement: PS26.29

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Tania Calabrese

As a local resident who pays significant council tax, please confirm what action is being taken regarding the increasing number of van and caravan dwellers on the roads around the Downs please?

Issues with photo evidence provided where possible. I feel with the volume of caravans on Parry's Lane it is too intimidating to try and take photos.

- Parking and road restrictions are not being enforced for these dwellers when other vehicles are being clamped or fined for extended parking or no road tax.

- Ladies Mile was resurfaced last year with signs informing a towaway scheme was in place. I was shocked to see one of the caravans had been allowed to remain and the council had chosen to resurface around the caravan rather than enforcing the towaway scheme.

- Council allowing a caravan special dispensation by not forcing them to move to complete roadworks. They just put cones around their van.

- Rubbish and dangerous items such as gas bottles are being left around the caravans. They are using the downs as their own private gardens, hanging washing, adding awnings, hanging items from trees (boxing bags and garden lights) and constantly parking on the grass verges. Where is chemical toilet waste being disposed of?

- Safety concerns, particularly with the high volume of young women, children and teenagers who use the downs. Do the council actually know who these van and caravan dwellers are as presumably not registered? As local residents we have a right to know if there are register offenders living locally.

I know a lot of residents have raised these concerns as our local streets are being overrun by these van and caravan dwellers, there will be strength in numbers and the fact that nothing is being done gives them the view this is accepted by the local authority and gives rise to custom and practice.

There are specific sites that have the appropriate facilities where these van and caravan dwellers should be forced to relocate too.

I look forward to hearing the actions to tackle this issue asap.

Statement: PS26.30

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Gary Reader

I have seen the review that has been undertaken and although I do have sympathy for those who, through no fault of their own, have been forced to live in their vans, I do feel that a permanent solution does need to be found to this matter. Many caravans and mobile homes are now parked around the downs and as far as I can ascertain the people living this way have no access to proper sanitation and are thus having to use the downs they are parked on which is very unhygienic for the many that live in and use this area. A permanent solution that provides access to proper washrooms and sanitation has to be a better answer.

More broadly - many of the vehicles parked on the downs are in areas that are supposed to be limited to 5 hour parking. None of the parking restrictions are enforced and again I have some sympathy here because if you try to move these people on where can they go to if no permanent solution is being offered? More broadly, the parking restrictions and their enforcement around the downs does need to be reviewed to come up with something better than there is now. Such a review should also encompass the streets, like the one I live in, that are close to the Downs. We have had some van dwellers in the street together with students who often park their cars for a full term taking up spaces for residents. I think a shift to residents parking would be a useful step.

I hope the meeting is a productive one

Statement: PS26.31

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Angela Reader

I have been lucky enough to live by the Downs for the past 31 years 9 in Henleaze and 22 in Sneyd Park. I feel privileged to live in an area of such beauty and I enjoy the fact that it is enjoyed by so many. In recent years the beauty of the Downs has deteriorated significantly on a weekly basis there is anti social behaviour, drugs, motorcycle racing, cars racing, no policing.

I know that Bristol has a chronic shortage of affordable housing and therefore I feel genuinely very sympathetic to the people living in their vans and caravans. I strongly urge the council to provide a significant increase in suitable alternative sites for people living in vehicles with clean and adequate sanitation.

In recent years the van dwellers numbers have increased significantly. I have a dog and the amount of human faeces and dirty toilet paper in the bushes is both disgusting and unhygienic. There is no enforcement of any parking restriction at all, the 5 hour parking restriction is pointless. Parking on the Downs and adjacent roads need to be reviewed, changed and enforced. I live in a road just off the downs which has regular vans with people sleeping and living in their vehicles. On parts of the Downs there is a shortage of parking space for those wishing to use the open spaces for recreational purposes as the van communities have taken up most of the highway.

I also feel that the council is in danger of discriminating against travellers who are moved on very swiftly when they camp on the Downs yet you freely allow others to live for years without any penalties.

I believe a city-wide by-law prohibiting overnight camping on highways should be introduced.

Please look to protect The Downs for all residents of Bristol. It is such a wonderful resource for everyone.

Statement: PS26.32

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Lee Holdstock

Sir, Madam,

Following my previous correspondence to the Bristol Mayor some two years ago, I note that little has changed regards the van dwelling situation on and around Parry's Lane. The proposal to close the section of Parry's Lane that bisects the Downs has not progressed and in the meantime van numbers have increased.

This ongoing use of a public amenity space is unacceptable. Residents of the city should expect to be able to use and enjoy these spaces without long rows of poorly maintained dwellings ruining the aesthetic of the recreational area. As the result of BCC inactivity, the impact has now progressed beyond aesthetics. Refuse is now building up by a number of the vehicles, the assorted possessions of van dwellers are also now spilling onto the grass areas and I have witnessed vermin under the vans on several occasions. More recently I have encountered human excrement and toilet paper in the wooded areas immediately adjacent to the encampment.

I suggest that Bristol City Council have a duty of care to ensure that van dwellers at this location do not present a direct risk to public or environmental health. With heavy goods vehicles speeding along this section of Parry's Lane, those residing along the road in flimsy caravans should equally not be allowed to continue to expose themselves to risk of collision. To continue to allow them to do so also brings into question BCC's duty of care to the van dwellers themselves.

I call on BCC to action to take action to removal all vehicle used as medium or long-term dwellings from all areas surrounding the Durdham Downs. Further delays are unacceptable.

Statement: PS26.33

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Giles Drewett

You have commissioned a report into the subject of van dwelling across Bristol from the GRT team who have a completely different target and agenda to those who actually have to look to try and manage it – which is NET. Is that a deliberate move or are you just so disconnected that you don't even care to check into what you are doing?

As a resident of Bristol for the past twenty five years – I have seen a visible deterioration in the management of the City, and the appearance of the City to outside visitors. This is manifested in waste, antisocial behaviour and visible deterioration such as graffiti. Whilst BCC may congratulate themselves on this all-inclusive approach – they fail to realise that those who take advantage are not grateful, they don't care.

There is a housing affordability crisis across the country, this is a fact. However nearly every other local authority in the country is managing the issue without a blanket permission for people to set up camp however and wherever they wish. BCC/Mayors office chose the easy route, and now have the hard decisions to make.

If BCC endorse the notion that all people within the City may pick and chose the rules by which they abide, and will relax Parking, planning, ASB and littering rules for everyone within the city without penalty – then that is fair and Bristol will either survive Chaos or it will not – however it is nor fair to selectively apply those rules. If Vehicle Dwellers are residents of Bristol, then the rules apply to them, if they do not – then they should not be permitted. It is neither intolerant nor heavy handed to apply the rules fairly and correctly – that is the responsibility of leadership (lacking for 8 years...)

If, and not incorrectly, BCC determine that they are responsible for everyone within the city limits – then they should take that responsibility and deal with it – not negate it and leave upon residents. Either accept Van Dwelling and provide adequate appropriate space in areas which have been consulted and democratically accept it, or regretfully refuse that it is an option because it is not fair upon the permanent dwelling residents of the city who are massively invested and continue to pay huge sums in council tax.

I personally have been affected by the Council's poor performance on this issue for the past five years. My children cannot leave the house and walk to school safely, there is a continuous smell of drugs and the neighbourhood is heavily littered. Having started from zero twenty five years ago in Bristol to a point where I now proudly employ more than 120 people, it is disappointing to see the City in such a mess with such lacklustre leadership – it is a simple formulae:

1. Keep the City clean
2. Keep the City Safe
3. Encourage enterprise within the City to grow employment, taxes and revenue

I am not a hugely intelligent person, but even I can see that letting the city degenerate into a no-rules free for all does not create long term future. Please start to create boundaries and rules, it might be boring and non-headline generating – but it is required for routine management.

Statement: PS26.34

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Bill Linnell

I refer particularly to the vehicle dwellers on the Downs:

1. The Downs is a facility for all the citizens of Bristol. The enjoyment is grievously impaired by the presence of the vehicle dwellers, especially on Circular Road and Saville Road.
2. Considerable damage is being done to the grass verges of the roads.
3. Domestic litter is spread around the vehicles.
4. Above all, the Council, by ignoring these vehicles, is rewarding the flagrant breaching of the laws and thus encouraging a culture of lawlessness, which will spread into other parts of society.

There are many sites around the city which could easily, conveniently and at minimal cost be adapted to provide a safe home for these vehicle dwellers, with proper facilities - and there is no reason why this cannot be done in time for the people of Bristol to reclaim The Downs this summer.

Statement: PS26.35

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Stephen Small

I wish to add my support to the requests of various local councillors who are pushing for:

- A significant increase in suitable alternative sites for people living in vehicles.
- A city-wide by-law prohibiting overnight camping on highways.

In addition the Report requires reviewing, as an ex Director of a PLC I would return to the producer with the following comments.

- Little to no statistics.
- Vague wording with no substance.
- One sided as no views or comments from Council Tax payers.
- In short go and do it again and include Residents / Council Tax Payers views who also have rights as they pay for the running of the City.
- BCC appear to be doing nothing, which works well for BCC but not so well for residents of Bristol.

Additional comments

- I recently attended a meeting run by Darren Jones, where a lady said she could not sell her home because potential buyers did not want to look out on Vans and Caravans. Check with DJ it was at Stoke Bishop Village hall, minutes must have been taken.
- During COVID vans and caravans were removed. Why have they been allowed back?
- This is not a great advert for the City, certainly will not encourage external investment into business or property building.

Solution

- A significant increase in suitable alternative sites for people living in vehicles, where there would be water, toilets and electric. Surely as a caring Council this is the correct thing to do.
- A city-wide by-law prohibiting overnight camping on highways
- Actually enforce new by-law

Conclusion

The views of residents / Council Tax Payers must be taken into account. They pay for the running of the City. Why are they ignored? Doing nothing is not a solution the three points above are a solution, time to action them.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments and concerns

Statement: PS26.36

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Paul Guest

I am finally writing to express my disappointment and disgust at the situation regarding the illegal encampments on the roads surrounding the Downs. This is a situation which has been seemingly tolerated by the council for several years now and has become a more serious issue because of this lack of response. I write this as a local resident and regular user of the Downs and reference the large and growing encampment on Parrys Lane which is a particular cause for concern. I will list my objections to the encampment on Parrys Lane and am sure that the reasons mentioned will no doubt apply to other camps across the city.

The Downs is a beautiful amenity space for all of north and west Bristol residents to enjoy and the unauthorised campsite that has been set up here is out of control. This is obviously not appropriate and the constant inactivity by Bristol City Council is disappointing. The campsite is clearly unsuitable for permanent living for many reasons -

1. Hygiene - There are no facilities on the Downs to provide suitable toilet facilities or fresh water. As your report identifies, most of the dwellings do not have toilets or showers and so the effluent of the dwellers must be going somewhere? Given that on any day, it is possible to see 20-30 vans/caravans parked on the Parrys Lane encampment, the volume of filth going into the bushes is going to be considerable and must be stopped.
2. Safety for users of the Downs - I have personally experienced an incident where a vehicle drove across the downs with a caravan in tow in order to park in their preferred spot, narrowly missing my daughter. It is simply not acceptable that I should have to consider the safety of my family in an amenity area where children should be able to run freely.
3. Drug use - As your report identifies, there is a higher level of drug use by van dwellers and given the dumping of rubbish around the area, it is highly likely that people and in particular children will find discarded needles in the undergrowth near the caravans. As a father of two young children, I am constantly appalled by the rubbish dumped around the Parrys Lane camp and will not now let my children go into the bushes near this camp for fear of what they may find, be it human waste or drug paraphernalia. It is commonplace to smell marijuana use in the area, which I do not wish my children to see being tolerated in a public space.
4. Lack of enforcement of parking restrictions - many of the vans and caravans are permanently parked around the Downs and clearly face no consequences of breaking the rules on parking. If the rules are not enforced here, why bother having them? Is it acceptable to enforce rules for residents who park illegally and non-enforcement for van dwellers and caravans, as I have had parking fines for illegal parking in Bristol?
5. Rubbish - It is common to see rubbish around the campsite including broken furniture and household waste. This must attract vermin and at the very least makes a once attractive part of the city, now an eyesore and health hazard.

I would like to conclude by stating that the council needs to act on this issue and move these camps to suitable sites where the van and caravan dwellers can have facilities for sanitation and support for their needs. The camps have become a serious health hazard to the thousands of people who regularly use the downs and need to be removed. Bristol council must act to enforce the existing rules on parking and remove vehicles that will not comply with these rules. If the rules are not suitable to allow for this, then I think that new rules on overnight camping on the city's road should be introduced and enforced. Suitable sites for van dwellers must be provided to allow for all residents of the city to feel supported by their council, but these are not being met by the continued encampments on the Downs and other parts of the city.

I hope that this is a situation which will be addressed quickly as it is impacting the use of one of Bristol's most beautiful areas, causing health hazards to the general public and is a more serious issue than just a blot on the landscape.

Statement: PS26.38

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Jacquetta Edmonds

We live on Ivywell Road, adjacent to the Downs, and continue to be very concerned about the the vehicle encampments around the Downs for the following reasons:

- The grass verges where vans are parked are reduced to mud in the winter and never fully recover in the summer.
- The Downs is meant to be a place of natural beauty for everyone in Bristol to enjoy. The parked vans significantly detract from this natural haven with bits of old equipment left outside the vans or shoved underneath. The encampment has also encouraged the abandonment of derelict vans and caravans.
- the vans reduce the parking spaces available for other visitors to the Downs
- Any decisions made to change parking regulations around the Downs should take into consideration the impact on adjacent roads such as ours.

Statement: PS26.39

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Bob Lewis

I am writing to draw attention to issues which relate to unauthorised kerbside parking by Van Dwellers on the Downs; the area of the City which is most familiar to me.

In order to put my comments into context, I should emphasise that I believe that every citizen of the City is entitled to a home, together with ready access to all necessary support services.

However, in my opinion, allowing uncontrolled parking around the edge of the Downs fails both Van Dwellers and equally importantly the Community Tax paying citizens of the City.

Bristol is a City of which we should be rightly proud. One of the jewels of the City is the Downs, with its unrestricted access to all who wish to use them for leisure and enjoyment.

The situation that has developed over recent years, with ever increasing numbers of Van Dwellers has, in my opinion, had a significant negative visual impact on the Downs and has adversely affected the enjoyment of its users.

Clearly the Downs were never intended to accommodate full time residents; consequently there are no facilities such as toilets and rubbish collections for people living there permanently. As a result bushes have been used as toilets and rubbish has been left to pile up on the grass areas surrounding the vans. Waste bags containing food are often attacked by vermin with the contents of the bags being strewn around. I suggest that this represents a potential health hazard, particularly to children. The proliferation of piles of rubbish can also encourage bad behavioural changes in other users of the Downs with increases in litter being left for others to collect.

In my opinion, the answer to this problem is not to try and accept the existing unsatisfactory situation, but to address the causes of the problem; namely by:

- (a) the provision of adequate purpose built facilities in appropriate locations;
- (b) introducing restrictions, which do not allow overnight parking and that such restrictions are enforced. It is a source of huge frustration to car users that whilst they are subject to parking time limits, Van Dwellers are not.

The Paper refers to an increase in numbers of Van Dwellers from an estimated 150 pre Pandemic to around 600 now. Consideration should be given to the fact that the lack of positive action may well be a factor in this increase and be a draw to Van Dwellers from other towns and cities who choose Van Dwelling as a way of life.

It would seem to me to be appropriate to consider the impact of Vans on others whose views of the City might be influenced; for example, potential University students and their parents. Significant numbers of Bristol University students are accommodated in Halls of Residence on the edge of the Downs.

Statement: CS26.01

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Statement submitted by: Councillors Smith, Scott, Gollop, Goulandris and Michellat

This report is a missed opportunity. While rightly highlighting the risks and vulnerabilities experienced by people living in vehicles, it fails abjectly to address the impact of vehicle dwelling on council tax paying residents and the damage being done to iconic locations such as the Downs.

We are extremely disappointed that our feedback to the Mayor and the views of our residents have been completely ignored.

The report acknowledges that the Council's current lax 'do nothing' policy espoused by the Mayor has resulted in a vehicle dwelling crisis for Bristol :

"Bristol has the highest number of vehicle dwellers of any authority in the UK"

The Mayor has been asleep at the wheel as this crisis on the streets of Bristol has escalated. His lamentable lack of leadership on this issue has seen parts of Bristol come to resemble the world's worst shanty towns with litter, rubbish and human waste dumped on the roadside. This report was an opportunity for the Mayor, belatedly, to tackle the problems he has allowed to develop on his watch. Sadly, he has not had the courage to deal with the challenges and this report simply kicks the can down the road and asks the next administration to deal with the problems he has caused. What an appalling legacy to leave as Mayor.

To be clear, we don't believe that anyone should squat in the streets without access to washing and toilet facilities in 21st Bristol. The Mayor's current policy of so say 'tolerance' is in fact moral and civic cowardice. A policy of 'do nothing' is not helpful either to vehicle dwellers or residents. There is nothing compassionate about leaving people to live in inadequate caravans on the side of the road.

The report fails to examine the approach taken by many other local authorities, which have successfully removed vehicle dwellers from the roadside. The solution to vehicle dwelling is relatively simple : provide designated sites for vehicle dwellers with local links, which have basic facilities such as access to water, toilets and ideally hook up electricity coupled with the introduction of a city wide by law, which prohibits overnight camping on the public highway. Why is this obvious solution not promoted in the report?

Whilst the report complains about the difficulty in identifying sufficient suitable sites for vehicle dwellers, that didn't prove to be a problem during COVID, when vehicle dwelling on the highway was effectively proscribed. It is our view that little real effort has been put into finding sufficient sites, which again is a major failure on the part of the Mayor.

In summary, this is one of the worst reports we have ever seen produced. It says absolutely nothing, accepts no responsibility for the current crisis and fails to offer any tangible solutions, even though these have been successfully implemented by other local authorities. It denigrates complaints from residents as 'hate mail' and has completely ignored the suggestions made by local councillors. Its main recommendation is laughable:

"It is recommended that the creation of a Council officer's Task and Finish group is considered, in order to look into the issues and options around vehicle dwelling in Bristol, with the intention that this work feed into a review of the Bristol City Council's Policy for Vehicle Dwelling Encampments on the Highway to explore the inclusion of roadside parking, encampments, squatted sites and meanwhile sites."

Frankly, Sir Humphrey Appleby himself couldn't have produced any finer vacuous blather!

Question: PQ26.01 & PQ26.02

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Question submitted by: John and Vivien Harding

Question 1: I understand that it is illegal to park a caravan on the highway without a road tax. Why aren't fines issued also you are only allowed to park for 5 hours in most areas around the Downs? The General public have to adhere to the law and byelaws otherwise they get a parking ticket slapped on the windscreen. A law for one and a law for someone who chooses to not to obey.

Questions 2: Why are these caravans not using the Traveller's Sites ie St. Anthony's In Avonmouth or does it not exist anymore?

Question: PQ26.03 & PQ26.04

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Question submitted by: Angelo Giambrone

Question 1: Why are local residents being let down by authorities not introducing new policies to prevent van dwellers on the Downs?

Questions 2: With this problem being in place for many years, why are decisions not being taken to remove the dwellers and is it because the council is happy for them to remain?

Question: CQ26.01 & CQ26.02

Cabinet – 5th MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 26 – People Living in Vehicles in Bristol

Question submitted by: Councillor Steve Smith

Question 1: Is the Parrys Lane / Downs encampment currently considered to be high or low impact?

Questions 2: When was that last reviewed, by whom and on the basis of what data?

Statement: PS30.01

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 30 – Safety Valve Programme

Statement submitted by: Joanna Booth

The safety valve intervention the cabinet is trying to pass with no scrutiny or engagement with other political parties is very worrying. The Department is offering £53m over six years.

This is not just a gift, however, as noted by IPSEA when it warned of safety valve arrangements in a recent article, "in exchange for this financial assistance, local authorities have agreed to contain their spending on provision for children and young people with SEND, to avoid deficits building up again." <https://www.ipsea.org.uk/news/ipsea-writes-to-local-authorities-over-concerns-with-safety-valve-agreements>

This action portends future cuts in spending for the most vulnerable population. The outgoing Labour administration should not be binding the hands of future Bristol governance for six years.

Statement: PS30.02

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 30 – Safety Valve Programme

Statement submitted by: Jai Breitnauer

Bristol City Council have been in secret talks with the DfE since July 2023, and applied for Safety Valve in secret on 12th Jan 2024.

Yet the report was only published yesterday with no time for questions and limited time for statements.

This decision will have a huge impact on vulnerable young people - especially as the cessation of High Needs Block funding was announced on 6th Feb.

BCC is going to drive up the need for EHCNAs while at the same time doing a back door deal with DfE to restrict access to statutory funding. This hasn't been handled transparently or democratically. The

Safety Valve report needs to be deferred so proper consultation and co-creation can take place with stakeholders. Anything less is dictatorial and disrespectful to the people of Bristol.

Allow democracy to run its course.

Statement: PS30.03

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 30 – Safety Valve Programme

Statement submitted by: Jen Smith

Bristol City Council was invited by the DfE to apply for the Safety Valve Programme in July 2023. It then went into a development period with the DfE with the application being submitted to the DfE on 12 January 2024.

This was supported by the Chief Executive, the Director Education and Skills and the Council's Section 151 Office.

So this has been imminent since last summer yet the council chose to submit this to Cabinet to be rubber stamped the day before the meeting?

What is Bristol playing at? Why has this been a secret from the public?

For something that will have such a huge impact on the city's SEND population, it is reprehensible to act this way.

Being on the Safety Value Programme means huge cuts will be coming to SEND. The public had already guessed this was coming due to the Better Value for SEND, shortbreaks, Home to School Transport and top up funding.

But this is whole new level of cuts which will have a hugely detrimental impact on children and young people in Bristol who have already had their education decimated. And will impact on those who are coming through the system and will come through the system.

This whole agenda item should be pulled. It should be subject to proper scrutiny and public scrutiny.

Not only has Bristol City Council kept this quiet, it's also been dumped as a Cabinet agenda item far too late for people to take part in the democratic process.

It is unconscionable that Bristol is operating in this manner.

Statement: CS30.01

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 30 – Safety Valve Programme

Statement submitted by: Cllr Christine Townsend

Cabinet Statement Safety Valve Paper 5/3/24

This Decision Pathway Report paper under the heading 'Consultation Details' lists the following public meetings with the implication that they were in some way involved in this process: -

Audit Committee, 20/11/23 2.

Scrutiny - Finance Task Group, 23/11/23, 05/01/24 4.

School's Forum Meeting, 16/01/24 5.

As the author of this report, other senior managers and politicians will know safety valve and delivering better value SEND are not one and the same.

There is no evidence from the papers of the above meetings that this is the case. The words 'safety valve' do not appear in any documentation from any of these meetings so how will the author of this report evidence these claims as being part of a 'consultation' when required to do so a bit later down the line?

The Audit Committee had a paper that gave an update on the Delivering Better Value SEND which is of course not the 'safety valve' as these are two entirely different pathways from the DfE. The Finance Scrutiny meeting listed had zero reference to the safety valve as does the Schools Forum meeting of 16/01/24.

To make formal claims in a paper than cannot be evidenced is not acceptable practice, as, in the absence of any evidence it clearly did not happen.

The contract this Labour Administration is wanting to enter with the DfE has a timeline of six years – well beyond the period of the next national government - political commentators are having us believe the Labour Party is likely to win the next general election.

That this administration feels it necessary for this contract to be entered into this close to the next general election is a message for anyone interested in education and the funding plans of any future Labour government in relation to public services – despite 14 years of real terms cuts, something this administration continually points at when the day to day functions of this council break down under its' administration, that it wants to enter such a contract tells us that under a Labour government education will not receive the funds it needs and those with SEND are to be subject to plans constructed by this current Conservative government for at least six years.

Statement: CS30.02

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 30 – Safety Valve Programme

Statement submitted by: Cllr Andrew Brown

Statement on Item 30 – Safety Valve Programme

My group and I are disappointed that this item has been published so late and with so little time for public statements to be submitted, and no opportunity for public questions.

We understand that there are immense pressures in the DSG, that the current position is unsustainable – not just for the service but for the council – and that the current over-ride is not guaranteed beyond the 2025/26. We also understand that the Council frequently has to undertake confidential negotiations with Central Government on all sorts of areas in order to receive or maintain grant funding.

We further understand that if a deal is rejected once it has been negotiated, there may not be a further opportunity to enter into negotiations again or that the same terms could be achieved.

That being said, we are concerned that having reached the point where the Council was able to publish this paper that it wasn't published in good time for there to be reasonable public examination. As I understand it, the Chair of OSMB agreed to invoke APR16 on Friday, but the paper still wasn't published until just before noon on Monday. Again, as I understand it, a decision is required by the Department for Education by 11th March – was consideration given to holding an extra Cabinet Meeting for this one issue in order to allow public scrutiny of the proposal?

Finally, as Chair of Audit, I note that the committee is listed as having been consulted on these proposals. I would like to put on record that we were not "consulted"- and neither was the Finance Task Group I sit on – rather we were briefed in exempt session and on the strict understanding that absolute confidentiality was a requirement of the DfE throughout the process. I – and other members – were clear we expected there to be some form of public scrutiny at the end of the process.

Cllr Andrew Brown
Deputy Leader, Lib Dem Group
Chair, Audit Committee