

# Cabinet Agenda



**Date:** Tuesday, 5 March 2024

**Time:** 4.00 pm

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

## Distribution:

**Cabinet Members:** Marley Bennett, Mayor Marvin Rees, Donald Alexander, Nicola Beech, Craig Cheney, Asher Craig, Kye Dudd, Helen Holland, Ellie King and Tom Renhard

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**Issued by:** Amy Rodwell, Democratic Services

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**Date:** Monday, 26 February 2024



# Agenda

## 2. Public Forum

Members of the press and public who plan to attend a public meeting at City Hall are advised that you will be **required to sign in** when you arrive and you will be issued with a visitor pass which you will **need to display at all times**. **(Pages 4 - 49)**

Up to one hour is allowed for this item.

Any member of the public or Councillor may participate in Public Forum. Petitions, statements and questions received by the deadlines below will be taken at the start of the agenda item to which they relate to.

### **Petitions and statements (must be about matters on the agenda):**

- Members of the public and members of the council, provided they give notice in writing or by e-mail (and include their name, address, and 'details of the wording of the petition, and, in the case of a statement, a copy of the submission) by no later than 12 noon on the working day before the meeting, may present a petition or submit a statement to the Cabinet.
- One statement per member of the public and one statement per member of council shall be admissible.
- A maximum of one minute shall be allowed to present each petition and statement.
- The deadline for receipt of petitions and statements for the 5 March Cabinet is **12 noon on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March**. These should be sent, in writing or by e-mail to: Democratic Services, City Hall, College Green, Bristol, BS1 5TR  
e-mail: [democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk)

### **Questions (must be about matters on the agenda):**

- A question may be asked by a member of the public or a member of Council, provided they give notice in writing or by e-mail (and include their name and address) no later than 3 clear working days before the day of the meeting.
- Questions must identify the member of the Cabinet to whom they are put.
- A maximum of 2 written questions per person can be asked. At the meeting, a maximum of 2 supplementary questions may be asked. A supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or reply.
- Replies to questions will be given verbally at the meeting. If a reply cannot be given at the meeting (including due to lack of time) or if written confirmation of



the verbal reply is requested by the questioner, a written reply will be provided within 10 working days of the meeting.

- The deadline for receipt of questions for the Cabinet is **5.00 pm on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February**. These should be sent, in writing or by e-mail to: Democratic Services, City Hall, College Green, Bristol BS1 5TR.  
Democratic Services e-mail: [democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk)

**PLEASE NOTE – The Public Forum deadline for questions has been extended for the following items:**

- Allotment Rents and Water Charges (item 16)
- Goram Homes – Pipeline of Housing Development Sites (item 27)

The Public Forum deadline for questions for these items has been extended to **Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> February at 5pm.**

**When submitting a question or statement please indicate whether you are planning to attend the meeting to present your statement or receive a verbal reply to your question**



**Question: CQ08.01 & CQ08.02**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Question 1

The strategy is being worked through. The aim was to have a strategy adopted in autumn 2024 but this will partly depend on the route to sign off that the incoming committee system recommends.

In the interim, a position statement is in the process of being drafted to summarise our current stance on the future of electric vehicle chargepoints (EVCPs). This is different to an established strategy as it will not set out all future options for EVs and EVCPs or include an action plan.

As part of the current project plan, a possible public consultation would take place.

The strategy and position statement will be brought through the appropriate council governance routes for approval.

Question 2

Bristol plays an integral role in building and operating the Revive EV charging network. Revive was launched by the West of England local authorities in 2019 to increase number of public EV charge points across the region. Over 200 public charging bays have been installed through Revive (80 in Bristol).

Whilst there were plans to introduce an EV strategy for Bristol before LEVI started, it was decided not to progress an EV strategy in isolation whilst the City Leap procurement was ongoing, as Bristol City Leap would be key to understanding how best to deliver a strategy.

Now City Leap has been established, officers are working through a strategy in conjunction with numerous stakeholders including City Leap and WECA.

An EV charging infrastructure strategy will help the council and City Leap in attracting further finance opportunities beyond LEVI.

Preparing a strategy which can be endorsed by Bristol City Leap will ensure deliverability through the capability within the joint venture partnership.

Funding for preparation of the strategy has been made available through the LEVI capability fund and internal transport budgets to enable us to now complete this piece of work.

**Question: PQ10.01 & PQ10.02**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Answered at the meeting

<https://www.youtube.com/live/eijiMpey85Y?si=SW2V0GLiLQDxO94&t=987>

**Question: CQ15.01**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Answered in the meeting:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/eijiMpey85Y?si=m0bccJwTRNxvdTla&t=3504>

**Question: CQ15.02**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Answered in the meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/live/eijiMpey85Y?si=UDP1Fjb-4PtgPlaa&t=3800>



**Question: CQ15.03 & CQ15.04**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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.

Reply:

Answered in the meeting:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/eijiMpey85Y?si=MC8J4x44PTTEeeaX&t=4072>

**Question: PQ16.01**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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 250m<sup>2</sup> 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.

Reply:

Sites without a mains water supply will still receive a discount, in the case of a Band D plot 250m<sup>2</sup> the discount price is £158 (from April 2026).

At Lynmouth Road Allotments, we would look to install a mains water supply once finances allow. This is why increasing the rents to allow for better maintenance and investment in services is key.

**Question: PQ16.02 & PQ16.03**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Question 1.

The rent increase has been consulted on. An extended period of consultation took place from 11th December 2023 until 31st January 2024 to enable the public including the Allotments forum, tenants and community groups to provide their views on the proposals.

We received over 3,500 responses and these views have been taken into account in preparing the proposals.

Question 2

The figures used are an estimate of the cost of maintaining allotment site infrastructure over 15 years based on the Service' experience of maintaining a 2000 hectare parks estate. All infrastructure is in scope, for example hard surfaces, walls, fencing, water supply infrastructure, as well as the removal of waste when needed and procurement of pest control services.

**Question: PQ16.04 & PQ16.05**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Question 1

The responses to the consultation have been taken into account in preparing the proposals alongside other relevant factors and information.

We understand that some allotment holders do not support a rent increase. In response to the consultation we have decided to stagger the rent increase meaning the full increase will not be in place for a further three years.

Question 2

Delays to the rent increase means the costs of delivering the service are absorbed by the wider parks budget, and delays the service improvements and investments, further increases costs to the service.

**Question: PQ16.06 & PQ16.07**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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'?

Reply:

Question 1

As the size of a plot increases, the rent required also increases.

Fees in relation to some on-site facilities, such as toilets, have been removed from the proposal and will be considered through a further consultation process at a later date.

Question 2

The rent increases across bands have been thought through and compared with other authorities, the Band D (250m<sup>2</sup>) is commonly used as the datum point. However, for Band A (consistent with current charging) we can't offer a discount to the even lower cost for this plot size.



**Question: PQ16.08 & PQ16.09**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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).

Reply:

Question 1

The 25% increase proposal was to deliver a council saving applied to allotment income based on a Full Council decision taken in March 2022.

As a saving, this didn't raise any additional income to the Allotment Service. That decision was reviewed after further consideration of the costs of Allotment services, our Strategic aspirations to improve these and the Council's wider budgets for essential services and



parks services. A new rent proposal was subsequently put to consultation which will also invest and improve the service.

#### Question 2

Officers sought comparable with other similar sized Local Authorities, which is publicly available on their websites.

The information on comparable Local Authorities was shared at meetings held with Site Reps on 17th January 2024 (AM & PM) and Allotment Forum on 24th January 2024.

**Question: PQ16.10 & PQ16.11**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Question 1

The Cabinet report provides an 'Estimated breakdown of allotment service costs' based on the proposed enhanced service with investment a sufficient repair and maintenance budget and covering of all service support costs.

Question 2

Additional resources will speed up plot turnover, support the gradual reduction of average plot size and bring more council land to deliver food growing opportunities.

**Question: PQ16.12**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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)?

Reply:

Due to the urgent need to ensure allotment income meets more of the cost of delivering the service, and to deliver our service improvements aspirations set out in the Strategy, we do not intend to delay beyond the staggered increase of rents already proposed.

We have set out that we will further engage on allotment rules and tenancy agreement and further administration fees.

**Question: PQ16.13**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

We understand the health and social benefits that are generated by people growing food and our Strategy sets out how we can provide more food growing opportunities that may be cheaper and more accessible for residents than having an allotment plot - through collective growing for example.

We also know that providing allotments comes at a cost, that the council is subsidising this cost, and that this needs to be viewed against our need to maintain and retain other essential services that support vulnerable residents. Our approach means one in five allotment tenants are likely to benefit from a 50% discount in rent where they already qualify for financial support through benefits.

**Question: PQ16.14 & PQ16.15**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Question 1

After a consideration of the costs of Allotment services, our need to improve these, the Council's other spending needs on essential services and a consideration of the cost of other local government allotment services, we are confident the rent proposal is both fair and reasonable. The rent option was generated after calculating the income required to meet the cost of various elements including the saving applied at Full Council, covering CPI since 2018 when allotment fees were last raised, the cost of an allotment officer, the minimum administrative cost that should be applied, the cost of a bespoke grounds maintenance team and the cost of infrastructure repairs.

These were cross analysed with a fee rate per m<sup>2</sup> approach and an approach based on the relative popularity of allotment plot sizes. The cost / benefit was then calculated for a number of scenarios. The scenario that met an income threshold required to meet a minimum service and service investment cost level was put to public consultation.

Question 2

There is not currently a budget to meet the majority of this cost estimate as set out, and the rent uplift proposal in part mitigated this.

The majority of this cost estimate is based on the replacement allotment water infrastructure over the next 15 years.

**Question: PQ16.16 & PQ16.17**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

**Reply:**

Question 1.

We consulted on proposals between 11th December 2023 and 31st January 2024. Community groups on allotments were contacted directly as tenants of allotments. The consultation survey provided the opportunity to provide details on the impact of the increases.

Question 2.

We are applying an uplift to fees and charges of 6.7% more widely as a response to inflationary pressure. The approved budget amendment means this uplift does not apply to allotment tenants in financial year 24/25. Proposals to introduce more or higher administration fees to the Allotment Service are not being taken forward, with only allotment rents and water service charges being progressed.

These changes will be stepped, to be applied in part from April 2025, and in full from April 2026.

**Question: PQ16.18**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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 75m<sup>2</sup> plot costs the same as a plot of double the size at 149m<sup>2</sup> – 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?

Reply:

After a consideration of the costs of Allotment services, our need to improve these, the Council's other spending needs on essential services and a consideration of the cost of other local government allotment services, we are confident the rent proposal is both fair and reasonable.

The rent increases across bands have been thought through and compared with other authorities, the Band D (250m<sup>2</sup>) is commonly used as the datum point.



**Question: PQ16.19 & PQ16.20**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

The financial table in the report provides an estimate of the costs facing the service in the next 15 years given an estimate of the scale, increasing age and condition of allotment infrastructure.

It is not retrospective.

**Question: PQ16.21 & PQ16.22**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Question 1.

The Allotment rent and service charge rates will not be sufficient to fund the projected infrastructure costs that have been estimated, and are not intended to. However, we do seek to deliver other benefits and cover other costs set out in the report.

Future infrastructure repair costs will need to be found from other capital and revenue budgets or there will be further deterioration and higher eventual repair costs.

Question 2.

All proposals were subject a consultation process that was then extended as a response to the significant level of interest and the consultation report is included in the cabinet report.

Scrutiny were provide a briefing prior to the Cabinet Meeting on the 27th February, so that they could understand how the rents being proposed had been developed and requested a breakdown of the costs.

This was presented and the details can be found here

<https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=149&MId=10832>

**Question: PQ16.23 & PQ16.24**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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/m<sup>2</sup> and this would rise to £0.97/m<sup>2</sup> (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?

Reply:

Question 1.

We sought out information publicly available for similar service providers as Bristol. There is also information available publicly on London boroughs.

Question 2.

Appendix B to the Cabinet report sets out the key messages to learn from the consultation with regard to allotment rents. The comments made by volunteer allotment site representatives, the Allotment Forum and through the public consultation, assessed on the response received by 2nd February 2024, informed our decision not to proceed with the tenancy rules, tenancy agreement and administration charges.

**Question: PQ16.25 & PQ16.26**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

All existing tenants, including collective/community growing groups were invited to provide feedback through the consultation.

We do not have clear feedback through the consultation itself that community groups will not be able to pay the rent proposed. Most are able to seek funding for their on-site activities from grants etc. A discount can apply to community groups depending on whether their activities are delivering social value outcomes for the council.

**Question: PQ16.27 & PQ16.28**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

**Reply:**

Question 1.

The Allotment rent and service charge rates will not be sufficient to fund the projected infrastructure costs that have been estimated, and so are not intended to. However we do seek to deliver other benefits and cover other costs set out in the report.

Future infrastructure repair costs will have to be found from other capital and revenue budgets or there will be further deterioration and higher overall costs.

Question 2.

The water charges are to cover the cost of the water supply. All tenants are encouraged to harvest rainwater, many do regardless of whether there is a water supply on the site.

**Question: PQ16.29 & PQ16.30**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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'?

Reply:

Other local authorities do not publish or do not offer larger plot bandings.

Bristol has added the bandings to ensure a fairer rent is paid by those who are renting larger areas than others.



**Question: PQ16.31**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Benchmarking with other local authorities was one factor considered, others included inflation since the last rent increase (2018), a consideration of the full costs of service delivery, the budget saving applied by Full Council following public consultation and the need to improve services to tenants primarily by increasing allotment staff resources in the first instance.

**Question: PQ16.32**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

All existing tenants, including collective/community growing groups were able to provide feedback through the consultation.

**Question: PQ16.33**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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 FoI 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?

Reply:

An extended period of consultation took place from 11th December 2023 until 31st January 2024 to enable the public including the Allotments forum, tenants and community groups to provide their views on the proposals. These views have been taken into account in preparing the proposals for Cabinet to consider and decide upon.

It is not a requirement for the Council to subsidise its allotment services. The Allotments Act 1950 provides that land let for use as an allotment should be let at "such rent as a tenant may reasonably be expected to pay" for land let on the same terms for such use. There is no prescribed method to determine a reasonable rent and only the council is required to determine this.

**Question: PQ16.34**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?'

Reply

We have expanded the criteria for a rent discount to include anyone in receipt of Universal or Pensions Credit, as these have already been means tested benefit so that we support those on the lowest incomes. Our approach means one in five allotment tenants are likely to benefit from a 50% discount in rent.

There is an urgent need to increase allotment rents to ensure the service does not decline and the cost of delivery does not burden other service areas.

**Question: PQ16.35 & PQ16.36**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

We have expanded the criteria for a rent discount to include anyone in receipt of Universal or Pensions Credit, as these have already been means tested benefit so that we support those on the lowest incomes.

Our approach means one in five allotment tenants are likely to benefit from a 50% discount in rent.

**Question: PQ16.37 & PQ16.38**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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 m<sup>2</sup>).

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?

Reply:  
Question 1.

An extended period of consultation took place from 11th December 2023 until 31st January 2024 to enable the public including the Allotments forum, tenants and community groups to provide their views on the proposals. These views have been taken into account in preparing the proposals for Cabinet.

It is not a requirement for the Council to subsidise its allotment services. We understand that some allotment holders do not support a rent increase as proposed. However, after a consideration of the costs of Allotment services, the Council's other spending needs on essential services and a consideration of the cost of other local government allotment services, we are confident the rent proposal is both fair and reasonable. In response to the consultation, we have chosen to stagger the rent increase meaning the full increase will not be in place for a further three years. The full increase will therefore apply eight years after the last meaningful fee uplift in 2018.

Question 2.

We understand the health and social benefits that are generated by people growing food and our Strategy sets out how we can provide more food growing opportunities that may be cheaper and more accessible for residents than having an allotment plot - through collective growing for example.

We also know that providing allotments comes at a cost, that the council is subsidising this cost, and that this needs to be viewed against our need to maintain and retain other essential services that support vulnerable residents. Approximately 16% of current allotment land is in the 20% most deprived areas of the city.

Our approach means one in five allotment tenants are likely to benefit from a 50% discount in rent where they already qualify for financial support through benefits.

**Question: PQ16.39 & PQ16.40**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Question 1.

Community/collective growing groups apply for a 50% rent discount by providing an annual summary of the activities and how participants or the wider community benefit, this is to ensure that we are offering a discount to groups who add social value. These groups will often be able to access other funding opportunities.

Question 2.

We have a duty of care to ensure that groups using the allotment plots to offer opportunities to people who may be considered vulnerable, are doing so in a safe environment. Information requested is relative to the activities and size of the group. Some of the additional information to be collected were included in the Proposed Rules, so are not yet adopted.



**Question: PQ16.41 & PQ16.42**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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 27<sup>th</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Question 1.

We are confident the rent proposal is both fair and reasonable after due consideration of the costs of Allotment services, our need to improve these, the Council's other spending needs on essential services and a consideration of the cost of other local government allotment services.

Question 2.

An extended period of consultation took place from 11th December 2023 until 31st January 2024 to enable the public including the Allotments forum, tenants and community groups to provide their views on the proposals. These views have been taken into account in preparing the proposals. In response to the consultation we have chosen to stagger the rent increase meaning the full increase will not be in place for a further three years.

**Question: PQ16.43 & PQ16.44**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Question 1.

A small number of overgrown plots are cleared each year by the Parks Service as part of a wider grounds maintenance recharge.

Question 2.

We understand that some allotment holders do not support a rent increase as proposed. However after a consideration of the costs of Allotment services, the Council's other spending needs on essential services and a consideration of the cost of other local government allotment services, we are confident the rent proposal is both fair and reasonable.

In response to the consultation we have chosen to stagger the rent increase meaning the full increase will not be in place for a further three years.

**Question: CQ16.01**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

The rent increase will help address the impact of inflation since 2018, and the need to make service improvements to meet the demands of tenants, those on the waiting list and the service aspirations. It will help cover the cost of additional officer to focus on services for tenants, supporting volunteer site representatives, improving maintenance repairs, and supporting more people to benefit from food growing opportunities.

We have not sought a fee structure that will meet the full cost of this service.

**Question: CQ25.01**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Answered in the meeting:

[https://www.youtube.com/live/eijiMpey85Y?si=\\_pcEbyO5jXIJLbbA&t=9281](https://www.youtube.com/live/eijiMpey85Y?si=_pcEbyO5jXIJLbbA&t=9281)

**Question: PQ26.01 & PQ26.02**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Question 1.

Your understanding is incorrect, Penalty Charge Notices can only be issued to cars, motorhomes, vans etc, but enforcement action cannot be taken against caravans, which are not registered with the DVLA and which do not have registered keepers to take enforcement action against.

We treat parking offences the same regardless.

Since January 2023, Parking Services have carried out 388 visits, logged over 1,318 vehicles and issuing 300 PCN's.

Question 2.

The traveller site at St Anthony's is for Gypsy Roma Traveller community.

Bristol does have Traveller site provision at St Anthony's Park in Avonmouth; this is a transit site for Gypsy Roma Travellers with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010 and can only be used by any one person/family for a maximum of 13 weeks/3 months at a time.

As explained in the report we believe that offering more sites might reduce the pressure on some of the areas where roadside encampments are common. However, we cannot force anyone to use them if they do not wish to do so.

**Question: PQ26.03 & PQ26.04**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Answered in the meeting:

[https://www.youtube.com/live/eijiMpey85Y?si=p6laa8H\\_zZnkcAtJ&t=10000](https://www.youtube.com/live/eijiMpey85Y?si=p6laa8H_zZnkcAtJ&t=10000)

**Question: CQ26.01 & CQ26.02**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Answered in the meeting:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/eijiMpey85Y?si=1EDr-V7tChhfyARk&t=10217>

**Question: CQ27.01**

**Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> 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?

Reply:

Goram Homes' 2024/25 Business Plan shows positive progress. In the 2024/25 financial year, the council's housing company will be building homes on multiple sites across Bristol, including Hengrove Park – the largest development in South Bristol in a generation.

Half the homes it plans to build will be council-owned affordable housing, something that is difficult for private developers to achieve alone, but crucial to deliver in the current housing crisis.

Goram celebrated the first finished homes at One Lockleaze before Christmas. This first Goram Homes site will deliver 268 new homes, more than half of which will be council-owned social rent and shared ownership. Market sale homes are being sold by Linden and are already being reserved.

Goram Homes has also been working with Children's Services on bespoke homes for children on the One Lockleaze site – a notable example of our housing company supporting one of the council's most pressing challenges.

The on-site Skills Academy at Lockleaze is open and has trained more than 260 young people. This unique skills centre is kickstarting careers in construction for people who are unemployed or earning below the minimum wage and is just one of the ways our housing company is supporting the communities in which it builds.

Good progress at Hengrove Bookends where Goram are acting as Development Agent for the HRA. Foundations finished and cranes working, where first phase of council homes is being built. This development is ahead of schedule and will provide the first 53 of the 717 council-owned homes that Goram Homes will deliver at Hengrove Park.

Construction on the next phase of this landmark development - more than 1,400 homes in total - is due to start this summer, subject to reserved matters planning consent.

Goram Homes also now has full planning consent to transform the old highways depot at Dovercourt Road into 140 new homes, 70 of which will be council-owned affordable housing. Construction should start here in spring / summer 2024.

It will also start work on 130 new homes on New Fosseyway Road site in Hengrove this spring / summer, half of which will be council-owned affordable housing.

A reserved matters planning application will be submitted this year for the second phase – an all-affordable 70-bed extra care facility.



Goram Homes also hopes to secure planning consent for Baltic Wharf in the coming weeks and aims to deliver this as 100% council-owned affordable housing.

Goram Homes continues to bring forward more sites for housing, and will focus on submitting planning applications for:

- 50 new homes on a brownfield site at Novers Hill in Filwood
- New homes and commercial space on The Grove Car Park
- And transforming the former St Ursula's school in Henleaze into housing.

The sites prioritised in Goram Homes' 2024/25 business plan will deliver more than 2,100 homes for Bristol when complete. And our housing company's growing pipeline of sites in the city will give us more than 3,000 new homes over the coming years - helping us deliver the homes we need to tackle our city's housing challenges.