

Public Health and Communities Policy Committee



Supplementary Information

Date: Friday, 23 August 2024

Time: 10.00 am

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

Item 6 - Public Forum - Statements

Details of the public forum statements received for this meeting are enclosed.

Please note: The views and information contained within these public statements are those of the individuals concerned and not those of the Council.



Public Health and Communities
Policy Committee
23 August 2024



Public Forum Statements

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Public forum statements have been received as listed below (full details are set out on the subsequent pages):

1. Richard Matthews: Allotment rents
 2. Ben Davidson: Allotment rents
 3. Bob Radford: Allotment rents
 4. Harry McPhillimy: Allotment rents
 5. Bea Angus: Allotment rents
 6. Richard Curtis: Allotment rents
 7. Jo Pengilley: Allotment rents
 8. Ruth Hecht: Allotment rents
 9. Cllr Bador Uddin: Allotment rents
 10. Sarah Rogers: Community Resilience Fund
 11. Michaela Andrews: Healthy weight / diet
 12. John Daw: Allotment rents
 13. Tom Bosanquet: Allotment rents
 14. Rob Acton-Campbell: Funding for area committees
 15. Emma Lysay: Allotment rents
 16. Cllr Rob Bryher: Funding for area committees
 17. Christopher Faulkner Gibson: Allotment rents
 18. Bristol Allotment Forum, rules review sub-group: Allotment rents
 19. Sarah Freeman: Allotment rents
 20. Cathy Spence: Allotment rents
 21. Penny Russell: Allotment rents
 22. Abdullahi Farah: Community Resilience Fund
 23. Stuart Lindsay: Allotment rents
 24. Dave Adlam: Allotment rents
 25. Alexander St Jean Dick: Allotment rents
 26. Jenny Poppy: Allotment rents
 27. Ena Yarde: Allotment rents
 28. Sally Wyatt: Allotment rents
 29. Len Wyatt (Bristol Parks Forum): Finance report
 30. Sophia Foster: Allotment rents
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31. Joanna Mellors: Allotment rents
32. Tamara Evans Braun: Allotment rents
33. Katy Ladbrook, on behalf of Allotment Forum Subgroup for Rents and Allotment Forum Subgroup for Value for Money: Allotment rents
34. Vanessa Harvey-Samuel: Allotment rents
35. Caroline Dalcq: Allotment rents
36. David Baines: Allotment rents
37. Ellen Rowland: Allotment rents
38. Bridget Ely: Allotment rents
39. Tess Price, Troy Tanska, James Martin, Dom Francis: Allotment rents
40. Gem Lindsey: Allotment rents
41. Chris Dowell: Allotment rents
42. Jordan Smith: Allotment rents
43. Ana Sanchez: Allotment rents
44. Tim Beasley: Allotment rents
45. Ian McCaig: Allotment rents
46. Karen Zahra Coles: Allotment rents
47. Cllr Guy Poultney: Funding for area committees
48. Lorna Lindfield: Allotment rents
49. Cllr Lorraine Francis: Allotment rents

Statement 1 – Richard Matthews

I accept that rents must be increased to help make the allotment service viable and fit for purpose. I am fortunate that I will be able to afford the increases but others will struggle so you must be sure that the increases are fair.

I am particularly worried however that the proposed rent increases are being separated from a review of the tenancy agreement and rules. At the moment I pay for a service where the service standards are very poor (in fact pretty non-existent). In return for an increase in rent I would expect service standards to be specified in a revised tenancy agreement (Eg what the council will provide regarding water supply, maintenance of common areas, response times to queries to the allotment office etc). Without this approach the tenancy agreement is very one-sided: it tells us what we must do but is unclear what the council will provide in return for paying rent.

I note an intention for a yet unspecified stakeholder engagement on rents but this must be coupled with proper dialogue on rule changes so that we can fully explore together what is sensible and appropriate in combination with proposed rent increases. As just one example, we must drop the crazy idea of requiring all glass to be replaced with plastic. Has anyone calculated how many tonnes of glass will be chucked away and the cost of replacement plastic?

So please work with us to get this right, including also a proper role for the allotment forum to feed into policy making. Allotment people want to be constructive and help find solutions.

Statement 2 – Ben Davidson

I do not have time to attend meetings about allotments but I do wish to comment on allotment policy and the meeting of the Public Health and Communities Policy Committee, which will be held on Friday 23 August.

There is a problem of allotments being unused. At Thingwall Park where I have my plot around half the plots are virtually unused despite having tenants.

There is a problem of inspections and management not working to ensure that the land is used. Many plots are overgrown.

Have you considered using the services of the National Allotments Society who run courses on how to manage non-cultivation in order to improve the culture of actually using allotment plots, rather than allowing them to go to waste, becoming covered in brambles to an extent that new tenants will not take them on.

I would disagree with a policy of bringing new land into cultivation which is not already within the allotment system. While there is a long waiting list and many people believe they want an allotment there are better intentions than reality of growing food. This leads to a cycle of new tenants who stay a few years while allowing their plot to become neglected. The council loses out on unpaid rent when these tenants move on.

I had to move plot simply because I was unable to manage the tall overgrowth from my former neighbours. Fortunately I am on a plot with two neighbours who do cultivate, but this is unusual. The solution is to follow the example of NAS advice and look at the examples of Hotwells Allotments Association or the allotments in South Gloucestershire to see how they can be run creating a better culture of cultivation.

Spending money to bring new land into allotments would be an absolute waste of money given that there is already a management problem of tenant terms not being adhered to. It would be better to focus on this.

Statement 3 – Bob Radford

I'll be brief.

Everyone agrees that allotment rents need to rise as the previous administration had failed to act since 2018.

The aspirational report of March 2024 implies that the service has operated at a loss whereas in actual fact, figures produced after a FOI request, show a healthy profit of £864,614 over the previous 6 years which one assumes has been ploughed back into general expenditure and not allotments.

I urge you not to vote through the proposed exorbitant rent increases which are based on the inaccurate and unproven figures in the report.

There has been a statutory formula for raising rents since enacted in 1950 as opposed to a growth project report proposing the rents are used as an income stream to fund a theoretical future policy.

It's unlawful and immoral to treat hard working allotment holders this way. There's a simple, legal and ethical process to raise rents. I urge you to use it. Don't vote the proposal before you through.

Statement 4 – Harry McPhillimy

I write concerning the item on the 23 August PHC committee and hope you can support the following concerns and raise them at the committee.

I accept that rents must be increased to help make the allotment service viable and fit for purpose but this should be proportionate, not, as in our case a FOUR TIMES INCREASE.

I am particular worried however that the proposed rent increases are being separated from a review of the tenancy agreement and rules. At the moment I pay for a service where the service standards are very poor (in fact pretty non existent- at our Lynmouth Road allotments we are not provided with water, composting materials or even a sign, we maintain our own boundary and communal clean ups). In return for an increase in rent I would expect service standards to be specified in a revised tenancy agreement (Eg what the council will provide regarding water supply, maintenance of common areas, response times to queries to the allotment office etc). Without this approach the tenancy agreement is very one sided: it tells us what we must do but is unclear what the council will provide in return for paying rent.

I note an intention for a yet unspecified stakeholder engagement on rents but this must be coupled with proper dialogue on rule changes so that we can fully explore together what is sensible and appropriate in combination with proposed rent increases. As just one example, we must drop the crazy idea of requiring all glass to be replaced with plastic, charging for cold frames and small ponds, cutting down of many trees? (My blood pressure is rising just talking about this)

So please work with us to get this right, including also a proper role for the allotment forum to feed into policy making. Allotment people want to be constructive and help find solutions.

Allotment holders demonstrated, petitioned, held meetings and wrote numerous emails to prevent this outcome. We thought The Green Party at least had our backs, at least that's what they promised. Do you know how disheartening this is and how much like a betrayal it feels?

Statement 5 – Bea Angus

My personal circumstances and Protected Characteristics have now changed since I answered the consultation back in December, therefore the data from the previous consultation is no longer valid and out of date. I am now 7 months pregnant and any rent increase will impact myself and my partner even more than before now, due to our reduced household income now and when our baby arrives. Myself

and my partner are both self employed gardeners, and I will only be able to receive Maternity Allowance. If the rent increases come in to affect in September 2025, I will be on maternity leave. We do not receive Universal Credit, so won't be entitled to the rent reduction. Any proposed rent increases need to be started again with a new consultation based on peoples current circumstances. This is just one example of how the process of rent increases is flawed and the whole thing should be started again properly.

Statement 6 – Richard Curtis

During 2023, the Allotments Forum was presented with the budget figure for the years 2017-2018 through to 2021-2022. These figures show that the revenue income for this 5-year period exceeded the revenue expenditure of the allotments service by more than £20000.

Had the 25% increased agreed by the full council been implemented in 2018, the income which is currently in excess of £25000 per annum, would have raised this by more than £60000, sufficient funds to provide an additional member of staff.

I do not know why this 25% increase was never implemented but would like the committee to consider the following suggestion.

The current band system of rents means that some people with smaller plots are effectively paying more than those with larger plots. In Band B (75-149 square metres) everyone pays £50 per annum, however if a plot is just 75 square metres the rent is equivalent to 67p per square metre, whereas at the other end of the band it is only equivalent to 33p per square metre. In the past the practice used to be that all plot rents increased by a fixed amount each rent rise, but following representations from the Allotments Forum, pointing out that the differences between bands was decreasing, it was agreed that all Bands would increase by the same percentage. Although this was a fairer way to proceed it still did not remove the inconsistencies between different size plots within bands.

Most people accept that to maintain the Allotments Service, it is necessary for rents to increase at a reasonable level, on a regular basis, however the proposed new rents would appear to revert to a system where different percentage increases would apply to each band and would therefore not comply with the previous agreement with the Allotments Forum.

I should like therefore to make the following suggestions.

1. Implement the agreed 25% increase from September 2025.
2. Form a group of Officers, Councillors and members of the Allotment Forum to consider a fairer system of setting allotment rents and increases.
3. All income from allotment rents is ring-fenced to the Allotments Service.

Statement 7 – Jo Pengilley

By bringing this massive allotment hike proposal to the committee in an unchanged format, you have completely disregarded all the work that lots of people in the city have done to show how unfair the changes are.

Some individuals within the BAR campaign benchmarked the increases and showed that some tenants will pay an increase of up to 492% more for their plots which is outrageous. We have been promised collaboration, discussions and shown a willingness to work with the council at every turn, but have been ignored. Still this ridiculous proposal is back on the table. It was 'called in' previously as not fit for purpose. Why should council allotment tenants pay for years of mismanagement by BCC? Surely a fairer increase would be the 25% originally proposed before the consultation, whilst collaboration can take place.

I now urge you to disregard it AGAIN as it is unchanged from March, which is extremely disappointing and frustrating.

Statement 8 – Ruth Hecht

I'm fed up and weary: this is the 4th time this year that I have stood in front of councillors to say I completely agree that allotment rents should go up, but not in this particular way.

These specific rent increases are completely illogical and unfair. The process by which the decision will be made, and the decision itself is legally questionable. Most distressing of all, many people including some community groups will have to give up their plots because they simply will not be able to make an allotment financially viable.

Are you really prepared to vote through these particular increases which will mean that:

- Some people's rent will go up by 7% and some by 492% - the majority of people's rents will *double in price in a single year*
- The majority of people on benefits are in Bands B, C and D and their rents will go up by 78%, 123% and 109% respectively – so the rhetoric that people on benefits will receive a 50% discount does not mitigate the fact that *their rents are doubling*
- People who *don't* have water on site will pay on average *three times more* than the rent they're currently paying *for a facility they don't have*

Is it tenants' fault that the Council have failed to put the rent up for 8 years? Even when it was agreed in March 2022 to put the rents up by 25%, the Council failed to implement the increase. It seems we're being made to pay for the Council's historic mismanagement.

The Council's consultation was flawed for all the reasons identified in the Call In, including a lack of transparency in the budgetary information presented; an inadequate Equality Impact Assessment; a lack of alternative proposals to the single one presented; and benchmarking against selective Authorities charging the highest rents.

One of the arguments for these severe increases (for a service which currently only has an average annual deficit of £25k), is the need for capital expenditure on sites. There is £1.14m from the sale of Brislington Meadows, so rather than charge tenants for capital works, why not join the dots, and use *that* money to improve sites?

One of the key principles in the Council's Parks and Green Spaces Strategy is collaboration and it's heartening that Councillors have recently met with allotment holders. I thank you sincerely for that. It's very positive that going forward there is a commitment to an open dialogue with tenants.

However, it's important you understand that if you vote through these particular rent increases, once you add on the cost of seeds, compost, tools etc. in addition to the rent *some people on low incomes and on benefits will have to give up their plots because it simply won't be worth their while from a financial perspective to keep them on*. It will be easy to find other tenants because the waiting lists are huge – but do you really want allotment sites to become places where only people who are better off can grow? These rent increases are not an issue for me. I can afford it – but I know that many, many others can't.

If you *do* go ahead with these particular increases then there is a possibility they will be challenged by a Judicial Review, and / or that the service will become unmanageable because Reps on whom you depend will resign and / or tenants might go on rent strike.

Understandably you want increased rental income as soon as possible, but you don't have to make this decision now. Legally you have to give tenants a year's notice of a rent increase, but why couldn't you give notice in November this year rather than September, and thus pass a more reasonable increase at your October Committee meeting?

Ruth Hecht, tenant at Dubbers Lane, Eastville; member of the Allotments Forum Sub Group on Rents and Value for Money

Statement 9 – Cllr Bador Uddin

I welcome this opportunity to revisit this controversial rent rise issue which Members are being asked to approve today. The proposed increases underpin the Authority's new *Food Growing & Allotment Strategy* and were part of the public consultation exercise which attracted over 3,000 responses. My ward colleague, Cllr Mark Weston, has previously raised the Conservative Group's concerns over various aspects of the planned changes, not just to fees but also the terms and conditions of revised tenancy agreements. Whilst the need to raise rents is accepted, as the report makes clear, these have not been reviewed since 2018, **we maintain that the introduction of these inflation busting hikes should be much more staggered or phased in over a longer period of time in order to reduce their impact.**

The benefits of Allotments have long been recognised as a vital resource for our citizens and city. They provide individuals and families not just access to fresh produce, but promote better physical and mental health, are an important educative tool, foster a sense of community, preserve urban biodiversity, are ecologically and environmentally beneficial, and encourage a productive use of scarce land. Any move that negatively impacts on these worthy outcomes or objectives are best avoided. Raising allotment fees disproportionately affects those who rely on these spaces for affordable gardening opportunities. A significant increase may make it untenable for many current allotmentees, particularly low-income families, the elderly, and those on fixed incomes, to maintain their plots. Of course, similar considerations will also apply to unnecessary or wasteful changes to allotment tenancies. I support the ambition to upgrade site facilities and expand this statutory service by increasing the number and availability of allotment land across the city. But this has to be done in a fair and reasonable way. The last Administration rightly deferred a final decision on these matters to a successor policy committee. Members are now in a far better position than before to be more responsive to the expectations of those we serve. So, in that spirit, I hope you will take this opportunity to accommodate the objections raised by knowledgeable plot holders, and not just simply rubber-stamp officer recommendations which may be biased towards or reflect bureaucratic convenience and expediency.

Councillor Bador Uddin, Henbury & Brentry Ward

Statement 10 – Sarah Rogers

I am writing in support of the CRF extension being proposed by Penny Germon,

The CRF project, its associated funding and outcomes achieved has demonstrated what a flagship investment this was for Bristol. With the council declaring a climate emergency, the change for key anchor community-led organisations is a timely and costly one, but an important one that also needs time and support.

As a resident of Hillfields, I was one of the members of the Area 6 committee involved in the CRF process and I saw the huge positive impact that this funding could have, not only for the buildings and the organisations managing them, but the generations of residents who will benefit from the community connection and support needed.

For the community of Hillfields, the oldest social housing in the UK, we are in desperate need of this CRF investment funding. The preservation and restoration of the Community Centre in Hillfields is crucial for the local community. Local changes and the situation with the building has meant there has been a significant delay to this CRF fund being delivered, something which could not have been known last year. This has resulted in a major change to the project and a delay in it achieving its intended outcomes.

This work has not gone away and is probably needed even more. It is important that the space is held and maintained in order to better serve the community - next year and for many years to come. Therefore I am in full support of this CRF funding being extended to allow organisations like the one in Hillfields the breathing time to deliver what they intended,

Statement 11 – Michaela Andrews

As we all know, lifestyle choices have a large impact on the incidence of many of the chronic diseases that affect our communities here in Bristol. One of the greatest ways we can impact our health is through the food we choose to eat.

Consuming meat and dairy products has repeatedly been linked with some of the most prevalent chronic illnesses, while plant-based food has been linked to more positive health outcomes. Last year a large peer-reviewed analysis of nearly 50 studies conducted between 2000 and 2023, found a clear consensus that wholefoods plant-based diets are associated with significant reductions in the risk of some of the most common diseases affecting people today, such as cancer, heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

Recent modelling by the Office of Health Economics predicts that a transition to plant-based diets could save up to 170,000 quality-adjusted life years across the UK. Adjusted for Bristol's population, that's around 1100 years of quality life, at the low cost of cutting out the beef, and the eggs and putting in more lentils and chickpeas.

The council cannot snap its fingers and make this change happen overnight. But it can work to normalise and support the transition to a plant-based food system by promoting the benefits of plant-based food to residents, which would have a positive health impact that would be felt across the city

Statement 12 – John Daw

Woodcroft Community Orchard share wider concerns that the suggested rent increases are being rushed through to catch up with a lack of action by the previous administration. We believe it would be fairer to stagger rises over a longer period whilst working with stakeholders to devise a sustainable model for the future. Community groups can be a key mechanism for this but thus far we have felt distanced from the process. Community groups are beneficial for broader BCC aims around health, wellbeing and community cohesion, any steps to reform services should aim to develop and enhance this as an asset.

Statement 13 – Tom Bosanquet

Allotment Rent Increases:

So.. after a big hoohah earlier in the year, you've simply re-tabled the same crud?

Again you're trying to raise (or, rather, sky rocket) rents without sorting out any of the underlying problems.

I'm lucky - I can afford to pay a bit more (though 'bit' is stretching it - the percentage increases are frankly incredulous & highlight the poorest of poor management) - many I've spoken to can't afford the increases.

But, how can you justify raising rents when the system feels like it is on life support? Seemingly the only people trying to deal with the many, many overgrown plots are the stoical allotment reps - over-burdened volunteers! Pretty thankless. The waiting list is chaos & probably largely out of date.

Come up with a proper plan and employ a decent number of staff who can work to properly overcome all the issues. I don't think anyone imagines this will be sorted overnight, but work with us & build a better system - harness the wonderful people power (that you saw come out fighting against the rent rises earlier in the year!). Until you've tackled these issues, continuing to propose such preposterous rent rises is just sticking the middle finger up to all the allotment users - a bit like prodding a wasp's nest;)

Lib Dem & Greens - You understood us last time, please remember this: Cllr King's approach was like using RoundUp on an overgrown plot which could simply have been cleared with many willing hands - don't continue this economic & ecological bigotry.

Labour - I sincerely hope you can move beyond the Reesian era.

Statement 14 – Rob Acton-Campbell

Agenda Item 7 - Funding for Area Committees

I strongly support the principle of Area Committees (ACs). They bring the potential for local residents to be involved in Council decision making on issues that they care about such as improvements to parks & green spaces or highway schemes.

I am not suggesting that the funding proposal should be rejected. However, the report before you today highlights major issues with the current structure.

The table within the report showing the CIL funding available (excluding Neighbourhood Plan areas) indicates a range of funds from £699k for Area 4 down to only £6k for Area 6 – St George, my area.

There are two issues that come out of this, the first is particularly relevant to my area, the second applies to other ACs as well:

1. Committee Sizes

Area Committee 6 covers three Wards, two of which are single Councillor Wards, so we have a Committee of only four Councillors. All other ACs have 7, 8 or 9 members. Given that the number of Councillors is closely related to the population of the Areas, then Area 6 must also have by far the lowest population, somewhere around half the average for the other Areas.

This small area will give the Committee plenty of time to discuss local issues, but without the potential for discussing the allocation of any significant sums of money it will be very difficult to encourage residents to get involved.

There is no obvious way of resolving this issue without significant changes to ACs across the City to try and get a more balanced spread – something this Committee should consider for the future.

2. Value for Money of Operating the Area Committees

I realise figures given are only a snap-shot of the CIL available now and these figures will change, but with no major development planned in the St George area there is unlikely to be a significant increase in our figure and this is probably the case also for some other areas.

Taking this report at face value; the proposal is to spend £10,000 this year (assuming the £90,000 cost is shared equally between ACs) to allocate only £6,000 of CIL funds in the St George area. Given the lack of potential for development in the area, it is quite possible (even likely) that the cost of allocating the funds in future years will often exceed the value of the CIL funds that the AC has available.

This is not just a whinge because my area is not benefitting from CIL, inevitably whichever ACs cover areas with large developments are bound to have the highest level of funds to allocate; it is right that this money should be spent close to where development happens. However, the Ward boundaries do not reflect what people consider to be their local area, St George Park for example serves as the local park for large parts of Easton and the southern part of Eastville Wards.

If ACs are to have significant CAZ funds to allocate this would make them better value, but those with little CIL will in effect become Transport sub-committees, with little influence over other community infrastructure.

An option to ensure all ACs have adequate funds available to ensure the costs of supporting them are worthwhile – and to encourage residents to engage – might be to allocate a small amount of the 85% of CIL that currently goes to the strategic city-wide pot to ACs, perhaps for example £100k per AC per year. I urge this Committee to consider this or other options to ensure the new Area Committees succeed.

Statement 15 – Emma Lynsay

Last /early this year there was a flawed consultation for rent increases (and changes to allotment rules)

The Cabinet decision being Called-In by the Communities Scrutiny Commission. On 27th March a deal was made that the rent increase would be stopped and that the PHCC would reevaluate the situation and collaborate with the allotment community and the Allotment Forum to find a more equitable solution. Are you going to uphold this agreement and work with local allotment holders?

It's not looking promising given that we get 10 days notice during school holidays that it is now back on the cards. I'm on holiday and have been for the entire "notification time", how many others will have not seen this? Given the scale of complaints last time would it not be in the service's best interest to work with their tenants?

None of the comments previously raised about the proposals have been adequately addressed. The proposed rises are significantly above inflation with poor justification, for insurance the waiting list is not managed at all, so many people on the list will no longer want a plot, as is commonly experienced by those hanging the sites, so they number waiting is likely to be inaccurate and should not be used as an indicator of demands in it's current format.

Can the committee guarantee the additional income will be ringfenced to the allotments budget given that parks as a whole is self funded.

The proposals will adversely affect some of the most disadvantaged plot holders across the city when the importance of community and access to health good is already recognised globally and locally as key social determinants of health as well as the importance of community. (See Bristol director of public health annual reports). How many of those with limited income will be put off in the future?

I acknowledge there needs to be rises but given the current proposals are not clear on what we will get back, the financing of the service or justification for why increases are so much higher than inflation I feel this decision should be going back to full consultation.

Many thanks

Statement 16 – Cllr Rob Bryher

Dear public health and communities policy committee members

My apologies for not being able to be there today to speak to my statement.

I am extremely pleased to see that the papers for today's meeting include a route forward for funding Area Committees' work so they can begin the process of opening up CIL funding for our local communities. My own area is chomping at the bit to get their CIL funding bids in, so this is appreciated.

It is worth reflecting on how far we have sadly fallen in terms of community engagement. 10 years ago, we had Neighbourhood Partnerships at which communities across the city engaged with decision-making at the local (rather than citywide) level to make change on the ground. While funding was still not what it should have been then, there was a definite sense that good community relationships existed and were nurtured by part of the council's governance structures.

Since then, we have seen the centralisation of decision-making into City Hall force local civic and community groups to hope they can gain a seat on a One City board or favour with the one individual who can improve things in the way they would like. Area Committees - with numbers rather than names, and meetings taking place in City Hall - have become divorced from communities who don't have a guaranteed resident seat at the table as they did under Neighbourhood Partnerships. As an approach to including residents in local decision-making, this simply won't do.

There is a lot of potential to win back trust with the public under the new committee model, but it requires two things:

- 1) proper engagement with communities so Area Committees are accessible and inclusive of them.
- 2) fairly allocated resources for different areas of the city.

On 2), it is great to see that the Equity Fund proposals will be brought in. I believe this was due to the hard work of members within the committee model working group that this will become an option and I thank those councillors for that.

However, as the ward councillor for St George West, I do not believe the proposals for Area Committee 6 provide residents of the three St George wards with a fair slice of the pie.

If you divide all 70 councillors equally into 9 committees, there should be 7 or 8 on each committee. The St George wards only have 4 councillors and no other Area Committee has less than 7! This is not only mathematically unfair, it also means that we have far less CIL contribution than any other area, with only £6,002.04 available (as at 30th June 2024), with the next closest being Area Committee 9 with £9,007.43.

St George has less development potential in general and so our lack of funding in comparison to other areas will be cemented by our much smaller geographical size than the other Area Committees. We are also unlikely to find ourselves as beneficiaries of the Equity Fund as we are not at the lowest levels of deprivation, despite there being substantial hardship for many individuals and families in our wards. We have also had arguably much less infrastructure implementation due to our position on the outer fringe of the inner city area.

The effect of this on St George as an area is pretty huge. I would like to see a revised set of proposals where St George is combined with our natural neighbours in the Bristol East constituency the north of the river - Easton and Lawrence Hill - to form an 8-councillor Area Committee and for other ACs to be adjusted accordingly.

Thanks for reading and I hope you will at least consider my plea!

Rob Bryher

Green Party councillor for St George West

P.S. If you do keep the current proposed structure of nine committees, I'd like to see my suggestion to name committees taken up – please see below:

Campaign to give the Area Committees names!

- 1) Outer North West
- 2) Inner North West
- 3) Inner West
- 4) Inner East
- 5) North East
- 6) St George
- 7) Inner South
- 8) Outer South
- 9) South East

No	Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4
1	Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston	Henbury and Brentry	Southmead	Horfield
2	Stoke Bishop	Westbury on Trym and Henleaze	Redland	Bishopston and Ashley Down
3	Clifton	Clifton Down	Cotham	Hotwells and Harbourside
4	Central	Ashley	Lawrence Hill	Easton
5	Lockleaze	Eastville	Hillfields	Frome Vale
6	St George West	St George Central	St George Troopers Hill	-
7	Southville	Bedminster	Windmill Hill	Filwood
8	Hartcliffe and Witherwood	Bishopsworth	Hengrove and Whitchurch Park	-
9	Knowle	Stockwood	Brislington West	Brislington East

9:50 PM · May 15, 2024 · 779 Views

Statement 17 – Christopher Faulkner-Gibson

You are being asked to approve allotment rent increases that were flatly rejected by 78% of respondents to the consultation.

Many Green Councillors were so concerned that they referred the matter to the Scrutiny Committee. The proceedings were never properly concluded, as the proposals were withdrawn at the very last moment and replaced with an agreement to hold them back for later consideration.

The same, unamended proposals are now back, and the consultation might as well have never taken place. We are told that - on legal advice none of us have seen - these increases must be levied because this was the most recent consultation.

This is surely nonsense, as it would mean that no consultation would ever actually be a consultation: all proposals would have to be enacted without amendment simply because they were the most recent to be proposed!!!

I implore the Committee not to proceed with these discredited proposals, which we have shown to be illogical and unfair.

Allotment rents can be increased at any time provided tenants are given one year's notice. Traditionally, this has been tied to September, being the start of the invoice year but in practice this does not have to be so.

We fully understand the need for an increase in allotment rents, as there has been none since 2018, but this is not the fault of allotment tenants.

When a 25% increase was agreed by a vote in full Council in 2022, (and which the Parks Department failed to implement) the proposed increase was not the result of a consultation – so why not simply decide to accept the result of the consultation – i.e. that the increases were rejected by 78% of respondents and simply decide to announce a 25% increase, which would cover inflation since 2018. This is perfectly within your remit.

We find the entire basis for the illogical new banding, and unfair differentials in increase (ranging from 78%, 123% and 109% respectively for bands B, C and D and the whole range across all bands differing from 7% to 492%) so ludicrously unjust that, when taken together with the deeply flawed consultation process, we believe there will be grounds for Judicial Review should they be voted through.

The Gunning principles require proposals to be published at an early, formative stage before final decisions are made in order that they can be amended according to feedback received – this has not happened: officers are stubbornly refusing to listen, refusing to consider alternatives and insisting on forcing their will on us despite our very well researched and reasoned objections.

This is not collaboration, this is not consultation, this is not democracy, this is not fair, this is not right. Please vote against these proposals and replace them with an altogether fairer system.

Statement 18 – Bristol Allotment Forum, rules review sub-group

The Allotment Forum welcomes the opportunity to work in collaboration with Bristol City Council in reviewing the terms, conditions and rules pertaining to allotment plot use and lease agreements.

The Forum has established a working group of allotment tenants, co-workers and site reps to review the current and proposed rules and if necessary recommend changes.

To do this, the following will need to be agreed:

1. Timescale

A meaningful timescale for completion: we suggest at least 12 months from commencement, allowing for the fact that the Forum working group members are all working in their own time and that Allotment Officers are thinly stretched – this cannot be a speedy project.

2. Terms of Reference

We will need to agree a framework with the Allotments Office as to the overall aims and objectives of both the review and the rules themselves. We suggest this will include but not be limited to: supporting the 2024 Food Growing and Allotment Strategy; underpinning an acceptable standard of cultivation and the encouragement of good horticultural practice to get the best out of each plot; providing a framework for the resolution of disputes and promoting fair treatment of, and harmonious relationships between, tenants; supporting the role of site reps; and ensuring fairness to all those on the waiting list.

3. Consultation Results

The results of the consultation exercise on rules and tenancy agreement changes (that ran between December 2023 and January 2024) need to be analysed and the resulting report published – without this the consultation will have been meaningless and a great deal of invaluable information and insight – including from community groups – will be lost.

4. Officer Support

The Forum Working Group will carry out most of the ‘legwork’ but will need access to and help from the Allotments Manager and Officers. The Working Group will require background information, data and context relating to the rationale behind the proposed changes. We will also require help with liaising with the various associations, community and special interest groups to ensure all voices are heard. The expert input from the Allotment Office will be essential to a successful outcome.

We believe that with the active support of the Public Health and Communities Policy Committee and the Allotments Office, the Allotment Forum can play a pivotal role in moving this issue on from its unfortunate beginnings to a successful conclusion, for the benefit of all.

Statement 19 – Sarah Freeman

If the Council intend to go ahead with these over inflated rent increases, they risk the “goodwill” that currently exists on allotment sites.

The Site Reps and allotment volunteers are one of the greatest assets the Allotment Service has, do you really want to risk this?

They might find that allotment tenants will no longer volunteer to clear plots for the Council or assist in any other way. All goodwill could be lost, instead there will be resistance and expectations.

I, for one, will expect improvements or else what am I paying for? I don't pay an above inflation increase to receive nothing in return.

If at the end of FY2026, when the new rents, if approved, have been in existence for a year, if there have been no changes or improvements for the extra money, I am paying I will be asking questions. I will want to see where my money has gone.

It is important that all of the funds from the collected rents are being re-invested into the allotment sites and not being used to prop up other areas of the council.

This is what I suspect these rent increases are all about

Statement 20 – Cathy Spence

As an allotmentee and Bristol resident I expect better conduct from Bristol City Council regarding consultation processes. I don't feel that the many good suggestions that came forward through the process last December/January were considered at all. Decisions seem to be followed through regardless of anyone's input. Please treat us respectfully. For the most we are in agreement that there needs to be a rent increase but this needs to be done in a more fair way. Being charged more because my plot size is the most common or popular rather than being charged for what I am using is unfair.

Statement 21 – Penny Russell

I am an allotment holder in Perretts Park and have held an allotment there for the past 10 years, on two different plots, alongside my partner. I am disturbed to find that the allotment proposals from before the election have resurfaced in almost exactly the same form.

It seems that most of the proposals in the allotment document are counter to the Bristol One City approach - 'to work together to make Bristol fairer, healthier and more sustainable'. I don't know if this is still the approach the new administration is taking, but I hope it is.

The rent increases suggested are far too high. I appreciate that we haven't had a rent increase for some time, and there would be an argument for a slight rise of some sort, but the rises suggested are way above any inflation rates and would put an allotment out of the reach of many people on lower incomes. It's no good saying low income plot holders will get a discount, it's those who are slightly above the benefits poverty line who would be hit, including many pensioners. The huge increase in charges seems to go directly against providing opportunities and inclusion for everyone in the city.

Many of us who live in the Perretts Park area - in particular the terraced houses in Totterdown - live in small houses, with very small gardens, if not in even smaller flats with no gardens. Having an allotment gives us somewhere to grow our own food that we don't have space for 'at home', and to encourage

and interact with wildlife on a much bigger scale. Both of these have contributed immeasurably to my good mental health over the years that I have been growing at Perretts Park. This was particularly true during the pandemic when our allotments were the difference between sinking into anxiety and depression, and managing to keep working and living healthily.

It is disappointing to read the suggestion that mature trees will have to be removed - I'm hoping this really bad idea will be realised for what it is. Our allotment site has a number of big trees which provide a very necessary haven for birds moving around the site, and the area, alongside all the invertebrates they eat and the pollinators which also use them. It seems contrary to everything else that the majority Green council plans for the city to be demanding the removal of these trees.

Some of the rules that were originally proposed also seem bizarre at the least. I don't know how many of these are still in the new proposals. It was stated that all glass in greenhouses must be replaced, will Bristol city council be paying for this? The cost to replace the glass in a greenhouse is prohibitively expensive and again well beyond the means of most tenants. It seems nonsensical to ban the use of glass, it is a far more sustainable material than the polycarbonate that is likely to replace it, and lasts much longer. We can also use recycled windows to make cold frames etc at low cost and in a sustainable manner.

There are already rules in place in terms of permissions for various elements of the allotments, maybe these need to be made clearer, and need applying properly. I don't see how this can be achieved without the heavy involvement of (volunteer) site reps, currently being alienated by these proposals.

It feels as if the proposals for allotments are in direct opposition to the city's vision for collaboration and inclusion in Bristol and I strongly oppose them. Most of the rule changes looks like a potential business opportunity given your proposed rental increase and charges. In short, the proposed changes appear to be nothing more than a money-making scheme and I can't see how they will improve allotment sites, or the city as a whole. Very disappointing to find this whole situation resurrected with little or no adaptation or consultation under the new administration.

Statement 22 – Abdullahi Farah

Dear Councillors

I am writing on behalf of Bristol Somali Resource Centre, as the preferred bidder and partner of the Tenant's Hall Community Development project, to respectfully request an 18-month extension to the timeframe for the expenditure of the CRF Capital grants awarded to our project.

This extension is necessary to provide additional time for our project and others in similar situations to overcome unforeseen challenges that have significantly slowed progress through no fault of our own. As you are aware, the Tenant's Hall Community Development project is a vital development scheme in Barton Hill aimed at revitalising a crucial community space to serve the diverse needs of our local residents and provide much needed affordable housing in the area, the scheme will provide 100% affordable rentals which is in serious need in the area.

Since the project's inception, we have made significant strides, including advancing the development to a RIBA Stage 2 with fully agreed plans by the local community to progress and we have received some positive pre-application planning advice. These milestones reflect our strong commitment to the project

and our ability to manage complex community-led housing (CLH) development. However, despite our best efforts and careful planning, we have encountered substantial delays due to circumstances beyond our control.

Our partner Registered Provider (RP), who plays an essential role in the delivery of this project, has faced serious capacity issues. These issues stem from their involvement in several other CLH schemes, which have experienced delays in the planning process and staffing issues. These delays have had a cascading effect, impacting our project's timeline and slowing down progress considerably. In addition to these capacity issues, our project has been further hindered by the abrupt halt to the Community Ownership Fund (COF). The sudden withdrawal of this critical funding stream has introduced a level of uncertainty and financial strain that we had not anticipated.

The COF was intended to provide a key source of support for the ongoing viability of the community centre towards the capital, and its unavailability has necessitated a reassessment of our financial strategy and further contributed to delays.

We understand the importance of meeting the original timeframe for the CRF Capital grants expenditure. However, the combination of our partner's capacity constraints and the unexpected cessation of the COF brought by the new government has created challenges that require additional time to resolve. Without an extension, there is a significant risk that the project may not be completed to the high standards we have set for ourselves or within the budget and timeframe originally envisioned.

The requested 18-month extension would allow us to address these challenges effectively and ensure that the project is delivered successfully.

Specifically, this additional time would enable us to:

1. Resolve Delays:

Work closely with our partner RP to navigate the planning process more efficiently, leveraging their experience and resources to overcome current bottlenecks and avoid further delays.

2. Secure Alternative Funding: Identify and secure alternative funding sources to replace the Community Ownership Fund, ensuring the financial sustainability of the project and allowing us to move forward with confidence. We are already in some positive conversations with funders

3. Maintain Project

Quality and Integrity: Ensure that the project meets all design, safety, and community requirements without compromise, delivering a facility that will serve the community for years to come.

We believe that granting this extension will ultimately lead to a more successful outcome for the Tenant's Hall Community Development project, providing long-term benefits to the community we serve. It will also demonstrate flexibility and understanding on the part of the CRF, recognising that complex, community-led initiatives often face unique challenges that require adaptive timelines.

We remain fully committed to the success of this project and are confident that, with the requested extension, alongside our RP partner we can deliver a community space and housing that meets the needs of the community.

We would be happy to provide any additional information or documentation required to support this request and to work closely with you to ensure that all grant conditions continue to be met.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to your positive response and to continuing our work on this vital community development scheme.

Statement 23 – Stuart Lindsay

It is my understanding that the inauguration of allotments were for the people and affordable!! Research into LA's management shows Bristol is amongst the highest charging already and an awful lot do not have complicated measurement rules that often mean a plot is either somewhat less than the maximum BUT charge an excessive amount [next fee upward] if a metre or more over. A great number use the Rod, which in today's metric system is 25 sq metres so 6 rods = 150 sq metres. An awful lot also give a discount to pensioners who are over certain age attainments, and do so even when not claiming social benefit help like pension credit etc. ...

THE 1907 Act.....

the Smallholding and Allotments Act of 1907 was passed, and it forced councils to provide allotments where there was demand.

This is still in place today and a local authority is obliged to provide allotments if there is demand from more than 6 people (although this does not apply in central London for example where space is insufficient).

Over the years many allotments have been "re purposed" housing/ industrial / pleasure gardens. Circa 1,000,000 plots have seemingly disappeared ? in the past 100 years.

The idealism of allotments is not as a cash cow for the local council, it is, and should be affordable, for the " health and well being of the people" that wish to work one, to provide a sustainable supply of food at an affordable cost.

Statement 24 – Dave Adlam

This submission is about two areas.

Consultation

There has not been an adequate consultation on these proposals. The previous proposals were withdrawn by Councillor King in March 2024 just before they would have been thrown out because the consultation process was called in as being inadequate. Hence this is a new proposal for which no consultation has been performed.

Fees

Bristol City Council is looking to revise the allotment rents, having not done so for the last six years. In setting the allotments rents the council is required to follow section 10(1) of the Allotments Act 1950:
 (1) Land let by a council under the Allotments Acts, 1908 to 1931, for use as an allotment shall be let at such rent as a tenant may reasonably be expected to pay for the land if let for such use on the terms (other than terms as to rent) on which it is in fact let:

Provided that land may be let by a council as aforesaid to a person at a less rent if the council are satisfied that there exist special circumstances affecting that person which render it proper for them to let the land to him at a less rent.

There are essentially three broad approaches to determining what “a tenant may reasonably be expected to pay”:

1. Look at what other councils are charging.
2. Look outside allotments at what other similar land is being charged at.
3. Look at how the allotment service could be run as a no-cost / no-profit service.

Charges from other Councils

All councils are under financial pressure and as such many have raised allotment rents above levels that are compliant with section 10(1) of the Allotments Act 1950. Hence to use allotment rents charged by other councils that are not themselves compliant with Section 10(1) of the Allotments Act 1950 as the basis for setting the Bristol rents would itself not be compliant with Section 10(1). In addition BCC would need to show that they are providing the same level of service as is being offered by the councils they compare against. No evidence of that has been provided.

Hence this approach should be discarded as unreliable and we need to return to first principles to establish what a reasonable rent is.

Look at similar land charges

Doing a google search reveals the following case law that points to using commercial agricultural rents as guidance. Note that the same judgement also states that the council is not required to subsidise the provision of allotments. This is discussed in the third section.

<https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/litigation-and-enforcement/311-litigation-features/19835-raising-allotment-charges>

The key point from the judgement is repeated below.

(3) Section 10(1) did not prescribe any method for the determination of a rent that a tenant may reasonably be expected to pay; the court considered, however, it was difficult to see how that task could be approached without some sort of valuation exercise; the most usual way of doing this would be to look at the rents charged by other authorities which had been fixed under the same statutory formula; if for some reason that was of no assistance, it might be possible to get assistance from agricultural rents; while the cost of providing the service might be a relevant factor, it could not be the only factor.

The most comparable land prices would be the commercial rents required for Cropping land, which is the most expensive to rent but also the closest in use to allotments. The following website shows that land in the Southwest is some of the most expensive (see figure 6) and that cropping land is also expensive (see figure 7).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/farm-rents/farm-rents-in-england-202223>

Combining these graphs it would be generous to say that cropping land in the southwest would attract a rental of £400 per hectare per year. This equates to £1 per 25 square meters, or £10 per year for a full size 250 square meters plot.

Self-Supporting Service

The final option to be considered would be to charge allotment fees that mean that the allotment service is run as a self-supporting service. This is supported by the legal case referenced above in that the council is not required to subsidise the allotment holders. But then neither should allotment holders be required to subsidise the council.

The figures provided to the Allotment Forum show that the budget over the last few years has been close to balanced. This suggests that the current rentals, or possibly a small rise in allotment rents, can be justified.

To facilitate the efficient running of the allotments the Allotments Forum has offered to form a financial oversight sub-committee to assist with financial planning. There is anecdotal evidence of considerable waste by BCC including sites where the council has let multi-year contracts for activities such as mowing of hauling ways where the contracted entity has never been seen. This sort of waste should be eliminated before rents are put up.

Other sources of revenue should also be looked at. For example the quickest way to increase income and remove the waiting list pressure would be to borrow funds to convert available land into allotments now. The income from the new allotments, combined with a modest rise in rates for existing allotment holders, would pay back such a loan over the 15 years of the allotments plan.

A further consideration in the spirit of self-sustainment and user pays would be for the allotments office to charge a small annual administration fee for those on the waiting lists. Existing allotment holders should not subsidise those waiting for an allotment. This would also have the effect of managing the waiting lists as it is unlikely that those who have lost interest since being placed on the waiting list would continue to pay to be on it.

Conclusion

Of the three options examined, only the Self-supporting Service option is sustainable, both in terms of the continuation of the allotment service, and in being able to justify the rentals under section 10(1) of the Allotments Act 1950.

Statement 25 – Alexander St Jean Dick

Please can you start a proper new consultation with allotment tenants and other stakeholders as previously agreed when the last attempt was thrown out. I am amazed at the unbelievable information and arguments provided at tax payers expense yet again, especially after the last complete mess up was thrown out earlier this year.

Many things have changed since the last consultation. My partner is now pregnant, but wasn't in the last consultation therefore we had different concerns.

The economy and cost of living has changed massively since also, especially for those on lower income, especially those who aren't on universal credit, especially harder working self employed tradespeople such as us. I work 70 hour weeks and grow as much food as possible to keep afloat yet don't have disposable income you want to tax.

Even GPs want a massive pay rise so how are those on much lower income meant to pay this ridiculous tax?

There are many inconsistencies in how the data was presented and a lot isn't valid. Please explain how Bristol, Plymouth and Bath are similar sized authorities with similar sized populations, similar protected characteristics, and similar cost of living plus many more. Also are they all leading authorities (in the top 10 Core cities) as mentioned in the text? I think not. Hence inconsistent and incorrect.

Allotments maybe a leisure activity for the entitled, those with higher paid jobs. This is not the case for those who simply cannot afford to attend these leisure activities quoted, or to buy sufficient healthy food, and grow food to feed their Family, a basic human right. Obvious knock on effect with using the nhs, or rather no visits to the over stretched NHS through health enhancement and disease prevention by growing your own food.

Please explain how the nhs can fund the extra patients they will get from people no longer being able to afford healthy food because they can no longer afford to rent allotments.

Same if people get ill because of a poorer diet and cannot work so will have to claim more benefits.

Please can you explain how growing healthy food, essential for a healthy life, especially for those who cannot afford to buy equal quantities of ita food should be compared with leisure activities, where you don't get food to eat at the end!

It is obvious that the equalities risk assessment was a complete paper exercise written by people who have no knowledge of health requirements of global majorities. A reduction to those on universal credit doesn't help those who don't get universal credit. This can not be fixed by a overstretched NHS pumping chemicals into people when this is preventable by exercise and healthy home grown food in the first place.

We grow food to prevent diabetes and cancer which has killed my father and most of his 5 siblings at a substantially younger age than their parents. No one has outlived them yet and I will be surprised if they do.

My father's generation had a high income and bought food. My grandparents grew their food on allotments but had a low income. My father's generation was the only generation in history to not grow food! I am older than my father when he died already. Do not kill me in the name of greed and laziness.

Statement 26 – Jenny Poppy

I write concerning the item on the 23rd August PHC Committee and hope you will take the following concerns into consideration when discussing this item.

It is obvious that allotments rents need to rise so that the allotment service is viable and provides a response service. But the increases proposed are not proportionate, fair or equitable.

I will be paying 4 times my current rent under the new proposals but there are is still no commitment to providing a water supply to the site (Lynmouth Road). Generally all allotment holders are being expected to pay large increases in rent without any clear detail of what the council will provide in return. I am concerned that the rent increases are being considered separately from a review of the tenancy agreement and rules.

Allotment holders have demonstrated, petitioned and some have spent huge amounts of time producing constructive and informed proposals to make the rents fair and the service more effective. Please work with us to improve the service and for the allotment forum to have a proper role in feeding into policy making.

Statement 27 – Ena Yarde

I currently have an allotment plot on St Werburghs City Farm Site and am making this statement for information.

I fully understand it is necessary to raise plot rents. However:

1. I am very concerned that there has not been a transparent and fully publicised, inclusive consultation at any stage.
2. I am dismayed that many individuals/ community groups will not be able to afford a massive rent rise and this be forced to give up their plots.
3. Thus this huge rent rise will go against the ethos of allotments being inclusive spaces and available to all.
4. A huge rent rise will have a disproportionate affect on pensioners, some ethnic minorities and community groups with historically lower financial status and lower access to open spaces to grow.
5. I am 60 in January and my plot has helped support my physical and mental health and been a lifeline and sanctuary. I have a tiny garden in St Werburghs. My plot has also ensured my 12 year old son has grown to love a variety of fresh fruit vegetables and herbs, experience how they grow and be happy to try new flavours and textures. I would be dismayed to have to give it up.
6. There appears to be no transparent detailed commitment to infrastructure or maintenance for ploholders attached to these rent rises e.g ongoing access to water, access to plots. Support with maintenance of overgrown areas.
7. Many of the proposed Allotment Plot rules are unfair and very likely discrimination particularly the proposal to charge plot holders for each 'extra' person working on their plot. As it reads I would be paying extra for my own husband to visit and work on my plot.

Statement 28 – Sally Wyatt

I hope you the council do the right thing especially with you raking in a reported 2.2 million pound a month from the CAZ charges (another tax on skint people). I doubt you will though. I have been emotionally trying to withdraw from my beloved allotments as it's been brought home to me how much it isn't my place. All the love and effort I've put in over the years to something that is in fact a commodity to the council. This whole thing has really changed how I feel about the place, still a place I love and want to stay but tinged with something else as well a worry it is hard to explain. Thanks to everyone from Bristol Allotmenters Resist who have tirelessly fought on our behalf fighting for something so worthwhile.

Statement 29 – Len Wyatt (Bristol Parks Forum)

Statement for Agenda Item – 12 Finance Report.

The Bristol Parks Forum is made up of over 70 local Friends of Parks and Green Spaces groups.

These exist to help connect local communities with their parks and green spaces; and to support maintenance and improvements in their parks, nature reserves, play spaces etc.

We are looking forward to maintaining a constructive relationship with the City Council.

While recognising the financial constraints that the Council is under, we feel it is important to emphasise the very valuable role that the Parks and Green Spaces have in helping the health and well-being of the people of Bristol whatever their income; and in delivering the Council's targets on Climate and Ecological Emergencies and Nature Recovery. Reducing budgets still further in the future could in our view put these benefits at risk.

We look forward to working with the Policy Committee and the Area Committees to help draw upon the Parks Groups' extensive knowledge of the Parks and Green Spaces they care for.

Statement 30 – Sophia Foster

Dear All

Ever since the consultation process started last December, communities groups have been in a state of uncertainty, making it hard to plan for the future.

We need a clear and transparent strategy specific to community groups developed in collaboration with the groups. Until this happens community groups should be excluded from the rent increases. To apply allotment rent rises to those of us on small holdings would make such projects financially unviable and our social, educational and ecological value will be lost. We have actively met BCC's broader aims of health and wellbeing, inclusion, food growing and other community building activities ensuring marginalised groups have access to green spaces.

I urge committee members to work collaboratively with community groups to develop new rent proposals that are equitable and supportive to our work on the ground.

Statement 31 – Joanna Mellors

I make this statement to request that the Committee **implements the 25% rent increase that was approved in 2022** – with its associated and agreed Equalities Impact Assessment.

Reasons:

1. The original decision (of which this is a worse 'copy' that does not even include the phased introduction over 2 years) was subject to a Call-in (Cabinet decision to increase rents made 5th March; Call-in on 27th March). It must be wrong for a worse proposal to be approved now when the original decision was subject to an unresolved Call-in.
 2. The 25% proposal is broadly in line with inflation; it is easy to understand and administer. There is minimum risk of opposition (eg rent strikes, tenants giving up their plots, loss of income and an increase in administration costs etc). Instead, the Service's income will increase by a guaranteed quarter while preserving goodwill and giving time for a new system to be properly developed.
 3. The current proposals include swingeing increases. The average is 200% (ie 3 times current). The greatest impact is on the larger sites for which no Benchmarking evidence has been provided; this is legally unsafe.
- One interpretation must inevitably be that lower income tenants will be forced to give up their plots so that wealthier applicants on the waiting list can take them over. Has the Allotment Office considered

the knock-on effect on the volunteers that actually run the sites (ie the Site Reps); they will be the ones dealing with the abandoned plots and re-letting. Anecdotally morale among the Reps is already very low.

Yes, I can afford the increase for my plot but very much abhor the likely impact on those less fortunate than myself and on the Allotment Community as a whole.

4. The Allotment Office have completely by-passed the Allotment Forum at all stages of this process; the Forum is the properly constituted representative of Bristol allotment tenants. The proposals before you today were only brought to the Forum's attention on 24th July because a Forum member noticed something in a Forward Plan published the previous day (ie 23rd July). Tenants have not known what was being proposed until the Papers for today's meeting were made available on 15th August. The Allotment Service has now written to tenants but the letter was misleading; yes, the proposal today is effectively the same as that made to Cabinet in March, but doesn't include the two year phased introduction that formed part of the decision.

I hope that Committee members have read the papers attached to the Call-In on 27th March. The Call-in hearing did not go ahead; instead, Cllr King undertook not to implement the increases. **All the concerns set out in the Call-in papers and the Public Forum Supplementary Information still apply because the proposal before you today is effectively the same as that which was called-in in March.**

I urge you to approve the 25% increase rather than the current proposals. Thank you.

Statement 32 – Tamara Evans Braun

The proposed rents are not reasonable and need to be reassessed.

The recent allotment consultation results show that 78% of respondents disagreed with the proposed rent increases and its very clear that the tenants do not think the rent rises are reasonable! 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". The definition of reasonable is defined by case law and 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". Rents are due to rise between 7 and 492% depending on the plot. This rise is not on line with the increase to local leisure facility prices, nor does it have any historical precedent.

The councils EIA confirms that people may be priced out of the allotments and the councils risk assessment in the report put to cabinet admits that these price rises will push people off their plots. It also states a risk that exceeds the councils risk appetite being a legal challenge to these rent rises. The only argument the council has that their new rents are 'reasonable' is by comparing the rent rises to a few other local authorities. In policy 103, the NAS specifically says it "does not endorse the use of benchmarking against other allotment providers".

On page 6 of the 92 page consultation 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."

According to the council's own risk assessment in the consultation report, 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.

The previous scrutiny committee meeting along with the fact the decision process was called in show that the whole process for making these proposals has been totally flawed. The consultation itself was poorly publicised. A survey conducted by Bristol Allotmeers Resist for example showed that only just over half of allotment holders were even notified about the consultation.

It would surely be more appropriate and reasonable to go back to the drawing board and consider the levels of increases in collaboration with the tenants and stakeholders.

Statement 33 – Katy Ladbrook

Joint statement from the Allotment Forum Subgroups for Rent and for Value for Money: Caution over decision to change allotment rents and Tenancy Agreements (item 8).

The decision put to this meeting for determination today has received widespread objection, and the Committee should acknowledge the dozens of public statements, hundreds of protestors, thousands of survey responders and many thousands more petitioners who raised concerns on this matter earlier this year. Please ensure that these voices are not censored from the democratic process today. The previous Council administration agreed that this matter should be revisited by this Committee in collaboration with the allotment community. A change to allotment rents needs proper stakeholder engagement and not just to be decided today without regard for the extensive objections.

We reiterate our acceptance that allotment rents must go up, but this proposal, and the process and evidence on which it is based, is problematic in many aspects. **If agreed today it will see on average tenant's rents increase by over 200%, and those on benefits increase by 100%, and we know this will cause people who are on low income to have to give up their allotments.** We have serious concerns that the impact on community allotments in particular has not been properly considered. This is despite the discount schemes proposed to mitigate financial hardship, which will not go far enough to ensure that allotments remain affordable.

Objections to this rent increase proposal are based on several expert assessments of the benchmarking and stakeholder engagement process. The complaints and rebuttals are well evidenced and range from legal, environmental, procedural, and financial. They include the concerns from the Communities Scrutiny Panel on the quality of information provided prior to the Cabinet's decision, and a subsequent Call-In by councillors because the consultation and attempts at stakeholder engagement were so badly conducted. **Any decisions made today which are evidenced by that same flawed consultation report should also be treated as void.**

The Committee should carefully consider the risk of damaging relations with the allotment community if a decision today is made without proper stakeholder engagement. The Site Representatives and associated volunteers are one of the greatest assets the Allotment Service has. Their significant contributions are not measured on any budget lines but the hours of practical help they put into the

allotment community are essential. The Allotment Service would not be able to function without them. None of us can afford for this relationship to break down further.

We understand that you are considering short-term solutions to increasing the allotment rents without unintended exclusion of tenants, in lieu of a fairer and properly consulted rent restructuring, and so would like you to consider the following recommendations, some of which, it has been verbally agreed, should be introduced:

- Implement a 25% rent increase, in accordance with the increase agreed in 2022 which is generally accepted by the allotment community and is in line with what would have been inflation rate increases accumulated since 2018 (when rent was last increased). We understand that an Equalities Impact assessment of the proposal was approved at the time.
- Exclude Community Group tenancies from increases, until a proper audit can be conducted and unintended exclusions and negative impacts on protected characteristics be avoided.
- Reinstate the 50% discount for tenants who have allotments on site with no water, and uphold the 50% discount for tenants who are recipients of Universal Credit and Pension Credit benefits.
- Commitment to decision made at Council Cabinet on 5th March 2024 to allow option for payment of rents in quarterly or monthly instalments (either online or by cash/card).
- Commitment to decision made at Council Cabinet on 5th March 2024 to stagger the rent increase (50% of agreed increase to be implemented in 2025/26 billing cycle, the rest to be implemented in 2026/27).
- Commitment to decision made at Council Cabinet on 5th March for a hardship fund or waiver for any tenants who will be unable to afford a rent increase (despite the discounts which are available to some benefit recipients). In accordance with the Allotment Act which protects the legal requirements that **allotments must be affordable to people on low income**.

These decisions could be deferred until this Committee's October meeting, which would still allow for the legal notice period (increases could be issued to tenants in November). Further discussion of how to approach longer term solutions would be welcomed by the allotment community, and we repeat our invitation that this Committee work with the Allotment Forum, which exists specifically as a consultative body for BCC on behalf of the allotment community of Bristol.

As stated in [Appendix 1](#), Cllr Ellie King's offer to the Call-in committee (27th March 2024):

"If the call-in committee vote to take "no further action" in this evening's session, myself and the Director of Management of Place will agree not to act on the decision as delegated in March's Cabinet meeting. I will confirm this in the upcoming April Cabinet meeting.... Councillors, or party groups, will have their own opportunity to propose a plan for an improved, financially sustainable allotment service to the Public Health and Communities policy committee."

In accordance with that agreement please commit to proper engagement with the allotment community and a collaborative approach to setting the 2025/26 rent increase and any future changes to the Tenancy Agreements.

Allotment Forum Subgroup for Rents (Ruth Hecht, Tim Beasley, Bob Radford, Joanna Mellors)

Allotment Forum Subgroup for Value for Money (Sarah Freeman, Ruth Hecht, Tim Beasley, Katy Ladbrook)

Statement 34 – Vanessa Harvey-Samuel

I am a plot holder at Speedwell Allotments and have had my plot for about 7 years.

I urge you all to step back and fundamentally reconsider **your** approach to the issues before you.

You are a **new** Committee. You can do things differently.

Most Bristol Allotmenters recognise rents must rise and see open, transparent and collaborative approaches as far preferable to the perceived inaccurate, opaque obduracy which appears to have characterised BCC's approach to date.

Why have your constituents had to resort time and again to FOIs to get clear information?

Why is there no detailed, published and consulted on Plan on what BCC proposes to do with the additional £300k it wants to raise each and every year for 15 years?

Why did the previous Scrutiny Chair lead the Call-In of these proposals?

What is proposed with regard to rent increases is incomprehensible. It seems to suggest for instance that those plot holders with no water will pay between 113%-492% more. Where is the logic in that? A proposal to use square footage is rejected because the current IT system would not support this (though tenancy agreements do record the information).

Is that it? As Councillors are you prepared to accept - the computer says No?

Is it not time for a time limited external root and branch review of the service and in the meantime implement the previously agreed and planned 25% rent increase?

Statement 35 – Caroline Dalcq

Here is my statement for the agenda item: "Allotment Rent and Water Charges" at the Health & Communities Committee on 23rd August 2024.

The rent increases proposed are **completely inconsistent across the bands, which would be most unfair**. 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.

I understand these are the same rent rises that went through the flawed consultation, condemned by the scrutiny committee and withdrawn at the call in committee meeting.

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

As an alternative, **in collaboration with tenants, we could 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. 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.

I hope we can count on the members of the new Committee to take the right decisions.

Statement 36 – David Baines

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I hope we can count on the members of the new Committee to take the right decisions.

Statement 37 – Ellen Rowland

Dear policy committee,

As someone on the waiting list for an allotment, I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed allotment rent rises.

Statement 38 – Bridget Ely

Despite a massive amount of work on behalf of allotment members who have taken so much time and effort to reach out to those of you who profess to have listened to the realities of your proposed increases ... you clearly have not listened or recognised that with the formation of the Allotment Forum you have the opportunity to create, utilise and garner the resources of thousands of people who could actually save money ..

To most of us Bristol is a beacon of creative, resourceful, forward thinking people and known for thinking out of the box, example setting and revolutionary thinking .. so very well done if you are completely blinded to what is happening in front of you and crush this chance moment to engage, enthuse and turn our City into a grey, drab and lifeless copy of everywhere else in the UK .. you definitely aren't listening or simply don't see what a golden opportunity has been created in front of you yours, very sadly

Bridget Ely and hundreds of us looking at you right now ..

Statement 39 – Tess Price, Troy Tanska, James Martin, Dom Francis

We are a group of allotment users and organisers in the Bristol Allotmenters Resist campaign. We want to work collaboratively as an equal partner with the Council, to develop an inclusive and imaginative allotment service that meets the future needs of the city's diverse population.

We are concerned that the November 2023 allotment rent and rules proposals were not drawn up using this approach, and as a result, they were inconsistent with the Council's stated goals of widening access to food growing, and not fit for purpose.

We note that collaboration is one of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy's five key principles:

' We will seek to engage a more diverse range of stakeholders and commit to codesigning change in partnership with communities. By delivering with – rather than to – communities, we can achieve more, deliver greater benefits, and accomplish our shared objectives.' pg10 PGSS 2024

The PGSS appeared to recognise the wider benefits of allotments for their users, which are well documented and include better physical health, mental health, opportunities to connect with others, learn new skills and develop increased connection to nature, as well as access to fresh food.

However the proposed rules and rent exposed a lack of understanding within the Council about **how** these benefits are achieved; failing to acknowledge social connections as well as natural surroundings and meaningful activities. As a result, the proposals would likely have created barriers to access and reduced the benefits, particularly for community projects and disadvantaged groups. For example

through increased bureaucracy, sharp rises in rent and fee costs, harm to biodiversity and tight restrictions on the use of space, placing unmanageable limits on the area that can be used for gathering and social time, play, storage, composting, wildlife areas etc.

In order to avoid repeating these mistakes, we believe it is vital that the proposed ‘stakeholder engagement process’ puts the voices, expertise and energy of allotment tenants and users at the centre of developing the service, working collaboratively with the Council to create new proposals, instead of being consulted on a set of proposals that have already been drawn up.

This process will need to include a broad representation of the full diversity of allotment users in the city, as well as consideration of the wide range of ways allotments are now used.

Income and spending plans need to be considered as part of this process, not separately from it. If budgets and rents are already fixed, it closes down possible solutions to challenges. It also appears as though the Council’s desire to engage with allotment users is purely cosmetic and people may lose faith in such a process before it has started.

There is an urgent need to invest in developing the skills of those involved in running allotments, both paid and unpaid, if allotments are to be genuinely welcoming, open and accessible to all. This is just as important as infrastructure to the effectiveness of the allotment service, but it appears to be completely absent from the Council’s current investment plans.

The Liveable neighbourhood consultation could be looked to as a model, using a two-stage process that develops a shared vision of the aims for the allotment service, before working up more detailed, concrete proposals ready for feedback from stakeholders.

Bristol Allotmenters Resist recently organised a full-day community event, open to all allotment users, to explore the question ‘What’s next for Bristol’s allotment communities?’ We used a range of participatory, deliberative and creative techniques, both to ‘problem solve’ immediate challenges and also to re-imagine how allotments could be run in the future. Around 50 people took part from across the city, including a number of people who had not previously been involved with BAR, and it was clear that there was a real desire to create change and a wealth of skills and knowledge available to help develop the allotment service. The event was organised entirely by volunteers on a very small budget. The records of the event offer clear evidence that there is enthusiasm among allotment users for a more collaborative, partnership approach to running allotments, and also that such processes can be carried out without huge costs to the Council.

Without such a collaborative process, the Council risks missing the opportunity to develop allotments as inclusive, open hubs for growing community and connection, urban biodiversity, climate resilience and health as well as food.

We are calling on the committee to set aside the existing, ineffective and damaging rent, rules and spending proposals, and commit to working in partnership with allotment users to develop new, more effective proposals. With this approach, we believe allotments can deliver access to food growing for many more people, and also help to address some of the wider challenges facing the city around health, social isolation, nature connection and community cohesion.

Statement 40 – Gem Lindsey

I would like to raise my objection to the proposed rent rise to allotments in Bristol.

As a holder at Bell Hill my allotment has been a source of great healing after I suffered a mental health issues and had to give up work. I am now working part-time and rebuilding my life but the allotment rent rise would result in me having to give this important part of my healing journey up and I would lose the connection and community that is so important in my recovery so I ask that you please reconsider the rent rise.

Statement 41 – Chris Dowell

I am sure many other allotmenters will give more detailed input on how ill considered and damaging these proposed, nonsensical hikes in allotment rents really are.

It is an average 200% increase, 100% for those on benefits. It is genuinely crazy.

They do add up to nothing less than an act of vandalism against the allotment and grower movement in Bristol and must be rejected in their entirety.

Myself, I wish to convey the strength of feeling, the deep anger so many of us feel, both about the suggested price hikes but also the exceedingly poor and frankly duplicitous process behind them. I have spoken with many plot holders, several of who have said they will have to give up their plots if this goes through, and all are very, very angry indeed about the way BCC has completely mishandled the process from start to finish.

As you will know very well, when the previous administration attempted this ill-gotten plan it provoked very widespread anger and protest, making a considerable splash in the media. The so-called 'consultation' was a sham and a farce and has been utterly discredited. Even so, it revealed 78% opposition. In the face of that opposition the proposals were called in and the call in accepted.

It is inexcusable that the new administration now seeks to sneak through exactly the same deeply flawed, damaging proposals. Putting these proposals back on the table is nothing short of a shameful travesty, an utter disgrace.

We were told there would be a new, constructive engagement before new proposals were presented.

There has been no engagement, no new proposals. Why has this not happened?

Why has the call-in been ignored and why does this committee think there is any justification for forcing through the same unworkable proposals, without any meaningful consultation of the citizens who's lives it will damage?

Instead there is a cynical attempt to circumvent the original call-in on a technicality and simply repeat all the errors of the previous administration. Indeed, errors magnified and made even worse in the attempt to push this through in a completely dishonest, underhand way. This has poisoned relations between BCC and allotment plot holders who are deeply angered. It has all been a tremendous waste of time, energy and money.

It even harms the way we feel towards our allotments. I have worked mine with love and devotion for almost 20 years, sharing produce with the community. Now that relationship with my plot has been harmed, it feels not like my special place but a commodity that the council wants to wrangle over and blackmail me with. Others have expressed similar feelings.

I therefore register my total and absolute opposition to this flagrant disregard for due process and also the contempt it shows for very people you are supposed to be serving.

Until the very strong and legitimate feelings of allotment plot holders are taken, as previously promised, the matter of allotment rent increases should simply not even be on the agenda.

Vote these insane proposals out of existence once again, and for all time.

And please, at long, long last, let's have a serious, grown up discussion of the way forward and some genuine local democracy.

Statement 42 – Jordan Smith

In summary of my position regarding the increase to allotment fees across Bristol.

I am disgusted by the allotment holders that are trying to dictate to the council how much they are willing to pay for keeping their highly sought after plots.

If you told your landlord or mortgage holder that you were unwilling to pay what would happen to you?

We are all aware of the increase of inflation and the soar in the price of utilities. So why do allotment holders believe themselves to be immune to these exterior factors?

I note that there has been no real price hikes in rent for said allotment holders for a number of years and it has certainly not been done so in line with inflation.

So surely it would be an inevitability that this would not persist forever?

Whilst I sympathise with low income households in less affluent areas losing their plots (many of whom I do not see complaining about the price increases) most of the allotment holders that are complaining do not find themselves in that category and should take a long hard look at the 3 – 5 year waiting lists for the privilege they are receiving.

How is the emphasis of re-investment into the environmental conservation and maintenance of allotment sites across Bristol a bad thing for the holder of current allotments?

How do allotment holders who believe these increases to be unreasonable plan on keeping sites from closure and bankruptcy?

Do those same people believe that it should be paid for by other tax payers of whom don't get to enjoy the privileges of a plot holder?

I fully support the councils plans to increase rates and urge allotment holders to understand that there are others that would crawl over their corpse to gain a green space.

Statement 43 – Ana Sanchez

I'm writing to object the proposed rent increases that will be put forward for the above mentioned meeting.

There are several reasons for which I think those increases are not fair for many and they don't really make much sense due to being so random.

I'd like to point out several issues:

1. Despite a verbal agreement with Councillors that they'd try and put forward a 50% reduction on sites without water and at risk of flooding, they have not done that and have put in the huge rent rises as suggested before, meaning people on those sites will be paying a much bigger increase than anyone else.

2. There was also a verbal agreement that those rent increases would be for one year only, 25/26, and in the meantime they'll look a fairer ways of increase the rents for tenants. This recommendation has not been included in the papers and I fear those charges could easily continue beyond the year 2025/26.

3. There was a consultation on allotment rents and rules back in December. Around 70% of people who responded to it objected to those rent increases. The consultation was 'called-in' and although I don't really understand all the details and the implications of the call-in, it seems rather unbelievable that the exact same proposed rent increases are being considered now, this doesn't seem right at all and would be good to see that the council has listened to all those people consulted or else, what was the point of the consultation in the first place?. I would be very grateful if the council would take into account the views of the people that will be affected by these proposals.

4. There's no clarity on how the money from allotment rents will be spend and no agreement at all that the money will be ring-fenced, which makes the whole rent increase even more random and unfair. Would really help us all if specific accounting details of allotment maintenance and real planned improvements (and real costings for those) would be available. I see that not much is done or has been done in my allotment for example since i become a tenant 3 years ago, and I know that in many other allotment sites not much maintenance has taken place - with no specific details there will be no accountability and the risk of no action at all which will be shameful if we have a rent increase but no change at all in the service that the Council provides.

5. There was a proposed 25% rent increased a couple of years ago by the Council that was never implemented. I don't think a particular reason was given on why that increase was not implemented but if the same 25% increase was to be put forward now, it would seem reasonable for most and fairer than the proposed increases being put forward for approval on this meeting. I totally understand that the rents need to increase and I'm sure the Council can work towards a reasonable system that helps keep allotments affordable for all.

6. There has been mention of the problem with plots not being rented and that creates a gap in the money that that Council can receive. Would be great to see some proposed changes in how the

allotments are managed to increase the revenue of those un-used plots. It seems that the Council could do other actions as well as increasing the rents reasonably to increase the overall revenue. I believe all plot holders would welcome some proposals from the Allotment Officers on how they plan to tackle those other issues.

Statement 44 – Tim Beasley

I shall start by reminding the nine political representatives, the Councillors, on this Committee, that you have a range of choices available to you in considering this Agenda item. Just because it's been put before you, does not mean you have to agree it at all.

You can vote to dismiss it entirely, and start all over again.
You can edit or amend it with counter-proposals.

At this stage I would advise you to amend it by adopting the recommendations submitted jointly by the Allotments Forum Rents & Value for Money sub-groups – see their submitted Statement (and previous emails to you).

This is by far the most sensible, logical, and fair, holding option for you to adopt, whilst trying to extricate the Allotments Service from the mess they have been left in by the mismanagement of Senior Officers/Managers, and the previous Labour administration, over the last 8 years.

We are all watching you!

If however you foolishly vote to adopt in full, or the majority of, the proposal before you at Agenda item 8.1 - particularly in relation to Rent Increases – you will make a mockery of any sense of genuine local democracy. **You will ignore the fact that 78% of some 2996 respondents to the original BCC survey launched last December, stated they opposed these Rent increases** (a mere 13% were in favour). You will ignore the many Statements & Questions submitted by allotmenters at various Council meetings this year; you will ignore the huge groundswell of opposition that continues to this day; you will ignore the in-depth fact-checking and research conducted by allotmenters on this matter. You will choose conflict over collaboration.

If you wish this Council to proceed over the coming months and years on a basis of democracy, participation and collaboration, then you must reject the BCC senior manager proposal at item 8.1. That along with the many Appendices and links to previous meetings, will have required you to read in the region of 400 pages – an impossible task I'd imagine - largely designed to bolster the Proposal whilst downplaying the level of opposition and constructive criticism. The many Questions (and Statements) submitted to this and previous Council meetings have highlighted the inconsistencies, errors, missing facts & information, whilst making the case for the aforementioned recommendations outlined by the Forum sub-groups. **Have you read them all?**

You are perhaps being told you face some sort of 'Budgetary black hole'. Well then amend that Budget! Consider too which fools agreed an unbalanced Budget where expenses are so much greater than current (and projected) income...without first putting in place a clear strategy for its future balancing that isn't based on making us pay more for a failed service.

We outside the political corridors of power face our own personal budgetary black holes, why do you think we can fill yours for you? We have been assailed by 16 years of austerity cuts, compounded in the last 4/5 years by rapidly increasing costs of just about everything – housing, food, all insurances, all utility bills, council tax and other local taxes & fees, virtually every product we need to buy to live reasonably, debts, holidays and

much more.

I note with incredulity the 20th August Bristol Labour statement/alternative proposal regards this matter. This in fact is merely a reiteration of their own party's Cabinet decision back on 5th March regards allotments rent increases. It's a heinous piece of party-political game playing, and it just doesn't wash.

We expect more and better from our (recently) elected local representatives - you councillors. We expect far greater understanding and honesty from you if you wish to attract our participation and collaboration.

So do the right thing today.

We are all watching you.

Statement 45 – Ian McCaig

I am an allotment tenant at Metford Road Allotments. I fully endorse the the joint statement submitted by the Allotment Forum Subgroups for Rent and Value for Money.

Statement 46 – Karen Zahra Coles

This proposal will increase rents by 200% on average, and by 100% for people on benefits. It will exclude those on low incomes from our allotment community.

This proposal is based on 'evidence' cherry picked from a demonstrably flawed consultation process without any meaningful stake holder engagement - not even with the Allotment Forum, which was created specifically for that purpose. Please keep allotments affordable and do not agree this proposal today.

Statement 47 – Cllr Guy Poultney

Dear colleagues,

The move to a Committee system of governance represented an opportunity for Bristol City Council decision-making to take a step towards become more responsive, more transparent, more accountable, and more effective.

The new Area Committee structure represents an opportunity to take the next step along that same road. The Committee Model Working Group and the Sub-Group assigned to explore reform of Area Committees saw two strands to this project:

- To devolve, where possible, decisions affecting specific neighbourhoods to the Area Committees representing those neighbourhoods.
- For the delivery of council services in a neighbourhood, where possible, to be directed, prioritised, steered or influenced by the Area Committees representing that neighbourhoods.

A first wave of functions was agreed for implementation from May which included:

- A role in the prioritisation of highways maintenance works and road safety schemes.
- Formal consultation on the provision and maintenance of parks and play areas.

- Formal consultation on any proposal to dispose of local authority land, community buildings or any community asset transfer.
- Formal consultation on any new allotment provision
- A role in the influencing the delivery of street cleaning, provision of street bins and street recycling.

Crucially, the Committees themselves would meet not in City Hall but in the neighbourhoods they represent. This ambition reflected the overwhelming consensus of the public consultation conducted as part of the CMWG's work. Opening up local decision-making to local scrutiny and giving local people the opportunity to affect the decisions that make a difference to their lives.

This represented a first step - a first wave of devolved powers and budgets. A 6 month review of Committee Model Working was promised. However, we find ourselves two-thirds of the way to that review with the Area Committees yet to meet owing to a funding shortfall caused, seemingly, by an administrative oversight.

The proposal before you represents a significant increase in the costs anticipated by the Committee Model Working Group, from a little over £9000 per year to £180,000 per year. However, there is little detail in the report on what this money will be used for, beyond the employment of three officers and a small budget.

I urge you, in your consideration of this item to get assurances that:

- This decision does not in any way restrict the council's future discretion in respect of the forthcoming review of Committee Model Working and specifically the further enhancement of Area Committee structures.
- The released funding is being spent in a way which reflects the two strands of the CMWG's approach outlined above.

Statement 48 – Lorna Lindfield

I am an allotment holder with advanced cancer and M.E., live without support and am unable to work. As a Disabled person who filled in the Council's consultation questionnaire, I don't feel that my views were taken into account in the Equalities Impact Assessment. I submitted this opinion to the council earlier in the year, and to the Call-in Committee which was cancelled 30 minutes before it was due to take place.

The PHCC appears to be appealing to answers supplied during the cancellation of the Call-in Committee. As the Committee did not officially sit, these answers have not been rigorously debated or allowed to be challenged.

In the Council's report it said that over 75% of Disabled people who filled in the survey disagreed with the rent rises, but the EIA did not identify any potential impacts on Disabled People.

For this reason I don't think the BCC presenting the same arguments as those put forward by the Labour administration pre the 2024 local government election is valid or respectful of the work and effort that I have put into communications with the council. My statement stands that by taking the same position as the Labour administration about the rent takes due regard of Public Sector Equality Aims.

The PHCC is not justifying why allotment holders should fund the food-growing aspirations of the committee, when we are already working and volunteering on allotments growing food for ourselves and charity donation.

The Council figures have not explained why projected costs have shot up, given that increases under new categories must have previously been a part of other categories.

Statement 49 – Cllr Lorraine Francis

As a city, Bristol City Council have recently announced the worrying information that as a Local Authority we will see a minimum debt of 22 million by 2025. This is worrying for all residents as the risk could see Westminster stepping in and punishing us for a combination of years of underfunding. The 22million is a legacy of ongoing debt.

In December 2023, the Labour administration sanctioned a review of allotments. A survey was issued during the Christmas period, ending in the start of the New Year. If this was not enough of an issue, many allotment holders and members of the public, made their voices heard and demanded a fairer and more transparent review of the costs and other proposed changes. Green councillor's made a successful case for a Call-In, resulting in a call-in date on 27 March.

We attended the meeting in the council chamber, a place where citizens of Bristol expect truth, honesty and openness. What happened was the opposite, with the Call-in being cancelled by the administration. The review would be pushed to the new committee in June 2024 and a revisit to the process would be forthcoming.

What happened. The same plan has been proposed with the same costs, with no call-in. So not only did the call-in fail, there is a plan to ignore the residents and green councillors at the time, who wanted fairness, transparency and openness.

A brief focus on three specific areas of the previous consultation. summary said it found: 69.4% of respondents said that the protected characteristic would not be affected by the new proposal. Whilst failing to identify the cohort in question. Whether they were on the waiting list, where they live and how many people actually answered the question.

There was/is an emphasis on mean tested benefit and giving concessions. But with the ongoing 'cost of living crisis', how will people be able to manage a plot?

If 10% of all plots are situated in 20% of the most deprived area's, who are the people who currently manage the plots and what is the demographics of those who did respond. Allotments costs money to run, so how many people will require a concession? How much will the concession impact on the budget and ultimately savings.

My proposal:

1: That the allotment price rise as planned for 2025, will be backdated, so that allotment holders can pay any arrears they will incur, in instalments, making it an equitable process.

2: That the council have a review of their pricing, by way of a review. This will allow the council to have a clear picture of their plot's which will mean that pricing is based on factual data.

2: a - That officers trust the allotment holders, by allowing them to potentially map their allotments, in order to identify vacant lots. This will free up officer time, to manage the data.

3: That the council explain the 250,000 pounds which the Park's team are having to spend to cover the management of allotments. What exactly does this mean. If allotments are understaffed, have unverified plots and are being managed by the allotment holders themselves, where is the investment by Park services being spent.

I would hope that we can bring new life into how Bristol manages its allotments and that we have open dialogue with residents, being inclusive and not excluding. Currently, many feel that they have not been heard and this is not what I want as a Green Councillor in Bristol.

Since writing this statement, I see that Labour has gone to press, mentioning their plan to address the issue. It was labour's administration who managed this process and I am also not sure if they should be pre-empting a democratic decision, before the process has taken place.

Lorraine Francis
Cllr Eastville Ward