

# Environment and Sustainability Policy Committee

## 7 November 2024

### Public Forum



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

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Suzanne Audrey              | Loss of established trees  |
| 2. Councillor Donald Alexander | Environment and Sustainability Policy Committee<br>Agenda and Work Programme |

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

- |                    |                           |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Suzanne Audrey: | Loss of established trees |
|--------------------|---------------------------|

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



## PUBLIC FORUM QUESTIONS

### PQ01 Suzanne Audrey

**Question 1.** What is this committee's, and/or relevant officers', understanding of the value of an established urban tree compared with planting a new tree?

#### Officer Response

The Bristol Tree and Woodland Strategy (BTWS) endorsed by Bristol City Council in September outlines the value of trees, including use criteria to inform where increasing (and retaining) tree cover would have most benefit. These criteria encompass a) disadvantage (where Indices of multiple deprivation are greatest), b) below average tree canopy, c) urban heat island risk and d) nature recovery. The BTWS sets out how important trees and woodland are and can be protected.

The benefits from newly planted trees generally increase over time as the trees / habitat matures and from management objectives for example amenity, cooling, habitat value.

There are various methodologies to quantify tree-based benefits that account for a range 'ecosystem services' including those that assign monetary value with differing benefits / assumptions. These include CAVAT (Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees), Tree Preservation Orders that recognise amenity, carbon markets that recognise carbon sequestration/ storage, and habitat designation including Site of Nature Conservation Interest or higher designation. The BTWS describes the total value of Bristol's trees using [I-Tree](#), at £279 million (2017) with £2.7 million annual benefit. All methodologies generally recognise greater value as trees / woodland mature.

**Question 2.** What is this committee's, and/or relevant officers', understanding of the cumulative loss of established trees in different neighbourhoods and across the city?

#### Officer Response

Change in tree canopy is being measured via data provided by Bluesky Limited, this encompasses all land / ownership. The data measures canopy cover by area and location using aerial imagery capture.

The Council records and publishes individual tree loss where we have cause to remove them via annual [tree planting reports](#). However, the number of trees lost by other means – on private land, through development and planning approval etc are not collectively recorded.

**Question 3.** How might it be possible to record/assess the cumulative loss of established trees in different neighbourhoods and across the city, to ensure that current policies do not undermine resilience to urban heating?

#### Officer Response

As above, data provided by Bluesky Limited provided on a 3-year cycle shows tree canopy loss, retention and increase. Current Bristol tree canopy (2023 data) is 18.2%, changed from 16.9% in 2020. Data can be analysed at any scale including at Ward level.

**PQ02 Cllr Donald Alexander**

Why is the agenda so sparse? We're in a climate emergency - I would've thought that a council administration six months into their tenure would want to spearhead new environmental initiatives.

**Officer Response**

I have been frustrated and share your disappointment that the agenda for this particular meeting is limited. We've got ambition and there's lots of work to do.

Several factors affect the speed at which Key Decisions and other relevant reports and initiatives can be brought to Policy Committee. Right now one is the current procurement threshold requirements which creates a barrier we are working around for an innovative project to support local community power generation and use in the city.

You must realise there's limited capacity and resources of staff are constrained by budget the new administration inherited which has hampered the council this year.

I wanted a number of items currently in development to be ready for this meeting but in the event they have been unavoidably delayed despite the best efforts of the Officers involved. I am pleased that the Environment and Sustainability Policy Committee meeting scheduled for 19 December will be considering a Key Decision that seeks agreement to set up a Power Purchase and Supply Agreement for Bristol City Council to buy output from Community Energy, and we've ongoing discussions about the timing of other significant items which the vice chair and myself have been discussing.

Please feel free to refer to the Forward Plan for this Committee which is published on a monthly basis; the anticipated new items will be added to the schedule once agreed. We now offer a six month look ahead when we can; a great improvement from the 28 days notice that was available the last few years. As you know we now have eight times the decision making meetings with all nine cross party members involved – remember some portfolios under the old Cabinet system had no items at all some meetings.

While the brief held by this Committee deals with few routine services, I feel its ambition to not only build on previous work (including addressing where previous targets have not been met) but to also be innovative in its approach to tackling the Climate Emergency should be measured in the impact of those decisions rather than the number of reports it considers. As you recall City Leap took five years to implement!

I agree there is much more for this Committee to do, and we are ready for the challenge ahead.

## **PUBLIC FORUM STATEMENT**

### **PS01 – Suzanne Audrey**

The Performance Report includes: Using the Keep Bristol Cool Framework, we will deliver actions which help protect people and places from the risks of increased heatwaves within the city. The Keep Bristol Cool Framework includes:

- Natural features, or living infrastructure, such as green spaces, trees and water bodies can all help reduce the Urban Heat Island through their natural cooling effect.
- Green infrastructure, such as trees, can be used to improve the resilience of neighbourhoods.
- [Causes of vulnerability] A person's exposure to high outdoor temperatures because they live in an area with a strong Urban Heat Island effect e.g. a very urban environment with limited green space and tree cover.
- Green infrastructure, such as trees, can be used to improve the resilience of neighbourhoods.

Proposed interventions include "increasing tree planting" but there is no reference to the protection of established trees.

<https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/s87379/Appendix%20A%20-%20Keep%20Bristol%20Cool%20Framework.pdf>

When I asked the Economy and Skills Policy Committee how many established trees have been removed for new developments in Bristol i.e. the cumulative loss, I was told that information was recorded for individual projects and it was not a requirement to record/assess the cumulative effect. When I asked whether it might be possible to record/assess the cumulative loss of established trees, I was told this would be referred to the Environment and Sustainability Policy Committee i.e. this committee.

I have been making statements and asking questions on this topic for a while (including under the previous administration) and I remain concerned that the cumulative loss of established trees in Bristol is not being given the attention it deserves.