

Full Council
14 November 2017



Report of: Shahzia Daya, Service Director – Legal & Democratic Services

Title: Petition debate – “Protect our parks”

Ward: Citywide

Recommendation

That Full Council debates the petition and refers it to the Mayor / relevant Cabinet member for a formal response.

Summary

Under the Council’s petitions scheme, where a petition has 3,500 or more signatures from people who live, work or study in Bristol, the petition organiser can request a Full Council debate.

The Council has received a petition entitled “Protect our parks”

The petition organiser has requested that Full Council debates the petition.



Details of the petition

1. The wording of the petition is as follows:

Petition title / subject: "Protect our parks"

Petition wording:

"Bristol City Council's published budget proposals show that they will stop funding our parks from April 2019, relying instead on revenue generated from parks events and other outside sources. Bristol Parks Forum believes this is impossible to achieve in such a short timescale. Many other big cities are exploring this option, some have already decided it simply won't work; this was also the conclusion of last year's Select Committee of the House of Commons. We, the undersigned, call on Bristol City Council to withdraw this budget plan and work with the Parks Forum and others to develop a realistic alternative."

Additional comments / background information from petition organiser:

"Bristol's parks & green spaces are important to the people of Bristol and to their health and wellbeing. They also play a vital role in attracting visitors to the city and reducing the impact of air pollution and climate change, the current plans place our parks at great risk.

The Bristol City Council proposal is for the Parks Service to operate on a 'cost neutral' basis from April 2019. This means they will stop funding parks - a budget cut of £4.5m. Unless Bristol Parks find ways to replace all this funding with additional income there is a high risk that there will be a drastic cut in the maintenance of parks that will lead to a downward spiral of reduced use and increased anti-social behaviour as standards fall.

The budgeted parks income for 2016/17 was less than £1m. Increasing income on the scale proposed would require significant investment of both of capital and commercial expertise over several years.

Bristol Parks Forum believes that while a significant increase in income can be achieved; having well maintained parks operating on a cost neutral basis by 2019 is simply not possible."

2. The petition organiser is Rob Acton-Campbell (Bristol Parks Forum)
3. The petition secured 4411 signatures meeting the petition scheme criteria.
4. The Full Council is asked to debate the petition.
5. Under the petition scheme, the petition organiser is permitted up to 5 minutes to present and speak to the petition. The petition scheme allows a further period of up to 15 minutes for discussion of the petition by councillors at the Full Council meeting.

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6. The Full Council has agreed the following in relation to dealing with petitions with over 3500 signatures: The topic of the debate should be referred to the Mayor/Cabinet, or other relevant body with the petitioner's views and Full Council's views.

RECOMMENDATION

Following the debate, the Full Council is recommended to refer the petition to the Mayor, in order that the Mayor can consider his response, in liaison with the relevant Cabinet member.