

Full Council
15 January 2019



Report of: Tim O’Gara, Director - Legal & Democratic Services

Title: Petition debate – BRISTOL: Save Our Bear!

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 in relation to the ‘Ursa’ The Bear (within the Bearpit/ underpass by The Horsefair).

The petition organisers have requested that Full Council debates the petition.



Details of the petition

1. The wording of the petition is as follows:

Petition title / subject: BRISTOL: Save Our Bear!

Petition wording:

“We the undersigned Ursa Bear is being evicted from her home in The Bearpit. Bristol City Council (BCC) have given Ursa until January to be out, but is this what Bristolians want? We think not, and if you agree, Ursa Bear needs YOUR help. If we gain 3500 signatures BCC will be forced to debate her eviction and potentially negotiate her survival. If Ursa Bear brings a smile to your face as she welcomes you into our city. She needs YOUR help.

Want to get to know Ursa? She was created by sculptor Jamie Gillman in 2013, stands at 12ft, loves cider, and loves her role as guardian of The Bearpit, and of Bristol!

She is the product of an Arts Council grant and the imagination of The Bearpit Improvement Group (BIG). This volunteer led community group spent 10 years attempting to make The Bearpit, safe, inclusive and welcoming through art and activity. However, after struggles with the council BIG were disbanded in 2017. The Cube has already been removed and the council have ordered many of the structures - including the community performance theatre - to go alongside Ursa. Join us in saying NO to these wasteful and top-down decisions.

Ursa Bear brings smiles to our faces, she represents creativity, alternative thinking and freedom of expression. She represents community and what public space SHOULD be. Our freedoms in public space are being rapidly reduced without consultation. Let us create debate about OUR rights to OUR space - AND LET'S SAVE OUR BEAR!”

2. The petition has been organised by Caitlin Telfer.
3. The petition has secured 3859 signatures to date from Bristol residents.
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.
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.