

Full Council

8 November 2016



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

Title: **Petition debate – Petition organised by Fin Fighters – “Condemning the trade, sale and distribution of shark fins within our city”**

Ward: Citywide

Recommendation

That Full Council debates the petition and refers it to the Mayor 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 “Condemning the trade, sale and distribution of shark fins within our city.”

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: “Condemning the trade, sale and distribution of shark fins within our city”

Petition wording:

“We, the undersigned residents of Bristol support a city by-law that condemns the possession, sale and consumption of shark fins within our city.

Sharks are essential to the health of our oceans. As apex predators, sharks maintain a critical balance in the ocean. When sharks are eliminated, disastrous effects can happen further down the food chain, including the collapse of commercial fisheries and degradation of coral reefs. Ecosystems with healthy shark populations have higher numbers of fish. A third of shark species are threatened with extinction. Some populations have plummeted by over 90%. Sharks cannot easily recover from overfishing because they reproduce slowly, taking years to mature and producing few offspring.

The shark fin trade is decimating shark populations worldwide at a rate of over 73 million sharks slaughtered annually. Experts agree that sharks could be extinct in 20 years at the current rate of slaughter. The act of shark finning is a wasteful and inhumane practice that involves cutting off a shark’s fins and then tossing the still-alive shark back overboard to drown, bleed to death, or to be eaten alive by other animals. Shark fins have no significant nutritional value and are considered unhealthy for human consumption due to the accumulation of high levels of mercury and other toxins in fins and flesh. Shark fin soup is a luxury that is responsible for tens of millions of sharks being killed every year. While sharks are essential, this soup is not.

We personally pledge never to knowingly purchase or consume shark fins. When the buying stops, the killing can too.”

2. The petition organiser is Lou Ruddell.
3. The petition secured 5,602 signatures (approx. 1,400 of these are from a geographical area beyond the Bristol and immediate travel to work area).
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 views and Full Council’s views.

The Full Council is therefore recommended to refer the petition to the Mayor, together with the comments as expressed by members in the debate at this meeting, in order that the Mayor can consider his response.