

The following statements have been submitted – full details are attached:

	Name	Subject
CS01	Cllr Andrew Brown	Statement on Agenda Item 14 - Appointment of Independent Persons
CS02	Cllr Richard Eddy	Ancient Hedgerow Destruction at Yew Tree Farm
CS03	Cllr Patrick McAlister	Israel – Gaza Conflict
CS04	Cllr Mohammed Makawi	Israel – Gaza Conflict
CS05	Cllr Emma Edwards	Yew Tree Farm

CS01

Members Forum statement from Cllr Andrew Brown

Subject: Statement on Agenda Item 14 - Appointment of Independent Persons

At the time of writing, there is not anticipated to be a debate on this item, so I am therefore taking the unusual step of submitting this statement for the record.

I welcome this paper as it will “regularise” the position of Independent Persons in the complaints regime and I will be supporting it when it is voted on.

However, it is regrettable that it took persistent questioning by members of the public and others to identify that there was an issue with this aspect of the complaints procedure; and I believe the council could have been clearer in their responses to them and others at various points on the journey to today. In addition, there is clearly a broader sense of dissatisfaction with the current workings of the system.

Along with colleagues on the Values and Ethics Committee, I will continue to work to improve the system, and to improve the reporting made to the committee in future years such that it is provided with assurance that the system is working as it should so that justice is both done, and seen to be done.

With regard to the Independent Persons appointed: I would have liked to have seen a more detailed “potted biography” in the information put before the chamber.. I would further recommend that as and when future appointments are made that the (independent) chair of the V&E committee at the time should have some involvement in the process.

Cllr Andrew Brown

Chair, Audit Committee

Member, Values and Ethics subcommittee

CS02

Members Forum statement from Cllr Richard Eddy

Subject: Ancient Hedgerow Destruction at Yew Tree Farm

As the Mayor and Cabinet will know, an abortive attempt to destroy protected ancient hedgerow was made earlier this year. The outrageous action was only stopped due to the heroic acts of the farmer at Yew Tree Farm - allied with citywide supporters - and the ensuing 'stand-off' was widely reported in the local media.

Nevertheless, the incident revealed that Bristol City Council had lamentably failed to uphold its obligations to protect ancient hedgerow - enshrined in national legislation - due to a bureaucratic error, in that it had failed to respond to the legal landowner's application within the prescribed period of time. The Council's Legal Services and Development Management Officers acknowledge this manifest failure but claim Pontius Pilot-like that they are now unable to do anything meaningful to protect ancient hedgerow here - which was recently accorded the status of a local Site of Nature Conservation Interest.

On Tuesday, 7th November 2023, contractors engaged by Longmoor's destroyed ancient hedgerow at Yew Tree Farm, claiming the previous Planning regime gave them the right to do so. I understand that Planning Enforcement Officers attended on the day.

This gives rise to three related points:

Firstly, now that Longmoor contractors have achieved their vandalism at Yew Tree Farm, does Bristol City Council intend to take action against the landowner due to their abject failure to create the breach in the location indicated in the original application (contrary to Regulation 6 of the Hedgerow Regulations)?

Secondly, if not, why not (contrary to national legislation)?

Thirdly, I understand there is a proposal to plant 250 metres of replacement hedgerow somewhere else on site. Is Bristol City Council aware of this and have relevant Officers been consulted about this proposal, given that the site is now designated a SNCI?

CS03

Members Forum statement from Cllr Patrick McAlister

Subject: Israel – Gaza Conflict

I condemn the horrific outpouring of violence in Israel and Palestine over the past several weeks, and call upon Bristol City Council to do everything it can to urge the UK government to encourage peace, restraint and respect for international law in this conflict.

The murder of 1,200 Israelis by Hamas on October 7th has rightly been universally condemned by the political institutions and parties of the UK. The targeting of civilians runs contrary to every moral principle and we all surely hope for the safety and release of those kidnapped and taken hostage.

Since then, the Israeli government has engaged in disproportionate and indiscriminate attacks on civilians in Gaza. This has included artillery strikes, sniper attacks, and the denial of food, water, medical supplies and fuel to the Gaza Strip – this is collective punishment and a breach of international law. Over 11,000 people have been killed in Gaza since October 7th - nearly 5,000 of them were children.

Horrifying stories are emerging from hospitals in Gaza, where surgery is being conducted by the light of phone torches, anaesthetics are running out, and patients in intensive care - including babies in incubators - die when the power does.

Attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank - a territory not controlled by Hamas - by Israeli settlers, with the backing of the Israeli state and military, have intensified. Over 120 Palestinians there have been killed. These settlements are illegal under international law, as recognised by the UK and UN, among many others.

The United Nations has described Israel's actions as amounting to ethnic cleansing, and there is clear evidence of war crimes having been committed by both sides of the conflict. Extremely disturbing rhetoric has been issued by Israeli government officials, politicians and institutions. These include the statements such as "We are fighting human animals and we are acting accordingly" (Defence Minister Yoav Gallant), "This is a struggle between the children of light and the children of darkness, between humanity and the law of the jungle" (Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu), and "We are now rolling out the Gaza Nakba" (Israeli Security Cabinet member Avi Dichter).

It is shameful that the government of the United Kingdom continues to uncritically support the actions of the Israeli state as it violates international law and human rights day after day, and openly declares its intention to continue doing so. There is never an excuse for war crimes, no matter the provocation.

Violence only breeds more violence - whether the violence of the gun and bomb or the violence of occupation and oppression. The only way forwards towards a just and lasting peace is an immediate ceasefire, a release of hostages, democratic dialogue and an end to the illegal occupation. The British government should be advocating for these ends through every means possible, as it did upon Russia's invasion of Ukraine; that it does not is

extremely telling about the priorities of those in power in this nation. Instead, it has sent UK military forces to support Israel, making this country directly complicit in the ongoing destruction of civilian lives.

Throughout all of this, the contemptible surge in antisemitism, Islamophobia and the violence from the far right we saw in London over the weekend, shamefully encouraged by the Home Secretary, continues, posing real worry and danger to millions of innocent citizens of this country.

I urge Bristol City Council to use every means it has at its disposal to call for a peaceful resolution to this conflict, and to support the communities most impacted here in Bristol. And I urge fellow councillors of all stripes to use their voices within their respective parties to call for the same: a ceasefire, an end to the siege, and for a just and lasting peace.

CS04

**Members Forum statement from Cllr Mohammed Makawi
Subject: Israel – Gaza Conflict**

The city of Bristol is a sanctuary of 91 languages and dialects that includes people from all over the world. Bristol, I am addressing you with the voice of humanity and justice for the defenceless residents of Gaza, a voice that rejects the rhetoric of bombs, bullets, murder, and crimes against humanity committed against them.

Since the war began, more than 11,180 Palestinians have died, including no less than 4,609 children, 3,100 women, 700 elderly people. 28,200 have been wounded, and a million and a half displaced.

They are not just numbers, but innocent souls that were bombarded by warplanes in their homes and hospitals, not military barracks. Their bodies were buried under the rubble. Children, the same as our children. Mothers & fathers, the same as our mothers and fathers.

As democratically elected representatives, we must stand with justice and reject wars, genocides, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, forced displacement, and occupation.

The Green party called for cease-fire from the beginning of the conflict, & I hope the Mayor & my fellow councillors will do the same and listen to the people of Bristol & around the UK who have come to the streets week after week to demand an immediate cease-fire & stop to the mass killing of the people of Gaza, as well as an end to the occupation to free Palestine for good.

Let's do the right thing and be on the right side of history before it's too late.
Thank you.

CS04

Members Forum statement from Cllr Emma Edwards

Subject: Yew Tree Farm

Earlier this year councillors from all parties in this chamber came together to vocalise their support for Yew Tree Farm, Bristol's last working farm, when it came under threat from developers. Many members even visited the farm to show support for the owner, Catherine Withers, and the ancient hedgerow which supports wildlife and is under threat from developers.

Only two weeks ago in this chamber the draft local plan was voted for, also with cross party support. A local plan which would strengthen protections for Sites of Nature Conservation Interest and take Yew Tree farm off the table for consideration for development. In light of this, I hope councillors from across the parties join me in condemning the actions of contractors this week who, without warning, took a chainsaw to the hedge and cut a larger-than agreed upon gap in it, in a location also not agreed upon.

What does it say about this council that such actions can take place, can't be prevented and now, no remedy is offered? This is nothing less than ecocide and goes against this council's own policies and ethos about environmental protection of SNCIs.

The destruction of this ancient hedgerow is a direct result of incompetence within the council and was sadly inevitable once it had failed to fulfil its duty to deal with the application by Newcombe Estates appropriately. Information that should be shared has been withheld, leading to preventable mistakes.

The Green Group is calling for a full report of the actions and decisions that lead to this destruction, and to see steps being taken to make sure something like this never happens again. I invite members of the other parties, members who stood with me along the hedge back in the summer to show their support, to join me again in condemning this act and calling for a report.