

Bristol's Street Trees in Crisis

In order to comply with Bristol City Council's budget cuts, two decisions have been made regarding the management of Bristol's tree-scape that make no economic sense, and threaten the reputation of the City as a Green and pleasant place to live and locate a business.

Decision 1: Slashing of street tree management budget

- The budget for managing street trees has been cut by 75% from £240k to £53k.
- As a result there will be no pollarding of street trees or removal of "epicormic" growth around the tree.
- Emergency cover outside normal working hours is no longer being provided through the tree management contract, despite having no cost benefit.
- Tree management will be limited to felling to address safety risks, despite greater initial costs and the long term consequent loss of tree sites. One felling costs the same as 16 years maintenance. Many more trees will be removed as there will be no maintenance.

Decision 2: No planting of street trees, either replacement or new, even when cost neutral

- Bristol City Council has operated a number of innovative schemes allowing residents or community groups to sponsor replacement or new street trees. Despite fully funding the planting, and maintenance for two years, such planting will no longer be permitted.
- Currently there is huge support from the community for replacing lost trees. Around £200,000 of developers' money is set aside for this purpose, Metrobus is committed to planting 200-300 trees as part of their planning condition, and Bristol University has donated funds to plant 60-100 public street trees.
- It makes little sense, in times of budget constraints, to renounce external funding sources that fully cover costs.

These decisions are a false economy for Bristol City Council

- With no pollarding of street trees, increased tree growth will lead to more subsidence claims against the Council, and create more highway damage, pavement trip hazards, and infrastructure damage.
- New tree growth from previous pollarding points will become unstable, increasing the probability of personal injury and property damage claims against the Council.
- **Just a couple of additional subsidence or injury claims could negate the entire "cost saving".**
- Trees replaced in existing tree pits cost around £300, including 2yrs maintenance (which may increase to £765 if any trees can still be planted). Once sites have been lost, planting a new tree would cost around £3000. This is not a financially sound decision.

These decisions will threaten Bristol's reputation as a Green City

- Bristol currently has a great reputation as a Green City and a fantastic place to live.
- Bristol has variously been declared the World's second Greenest city (1), the Greenest city in England (2), and the best place to live in the UK (3). This reputation hugely benefits the economy of Bristol, and ultimately the finances of City governance.
- Reputational damage will result from any decision that damages the Green environment of the City, particularly in the period following 2015 European Green Capital.

These decisions were taken with no consultation with stakeholders

There has been no consultation regarding these decisions with other Departments within Bristol City Council, who will have to deal with the foreseeable consequences, with insurers, who will face additional damage claims, Avon and Somerset Police, who will have to address public order consequences of mass felling, or Bristol Tree Forum, with its wide reaching understanding of tree issues.

What you can do

- Contact your Councillor (democracy.bristol.gov.uk/mgFindMember.aspx) and the Mayor (www.bristol.gov.uk/mayor) and demand that these decisions be overturned.
- Contact the Bristol Tree Forum (bristoltreeforum.org/contact-btf/) to register your support.