

Tree Forum Committee meeting

24 July 2018 Final minutes.

Attended: Mark Ashdown, Peter Harnett (chair), Stephanie French, Vassili Papastavrou (notes), Councillor Liz Radford, Jim Smith, John Tarlton, Chris Wallace, Tim Brandram (BCC - first part only).

Peter Harnett welcomed Tim Brandram for the first part of the Tree Forum Committee meeting.

A. First half of meeting

There was a general discussion about improving communications between Bristol City Council Tree Officers and the Tree Forum. There was also discussion regarding consultation on tree fellings and consultation over species selections for tree replacements. Both Tim and Peter stressed the work pressures that Bristol's Tree Officers are under. The subsequent discussions were in this context.

Vassili Papastavrou had previously tabled a draft paper on community engagement in urban tree management decisions, which he is currently finalising. Commenting on the paper, Tim Brandram noted that the liability rested with the council and that the council had a duty of care. He added that a Highways officer had commented stating that if a tree fell over when we are consulting that would not be a defence in court. However he felt that there may be opportunities for consultation regarding the longer term management of trees and gave the example of a number of plane trees in St Georges Park infected with *Massaria* ([link below](#)).

Tim stated that the frequency of inspection is determined by the target risk with trees on busy 'A' roads inspected more frequently than some park trees.

Councillors receive felling lists and notices are put on trees but this is to notify them of fellings rather than to invite comment. However, only some councillors pass this information on. The downside is that the tree forum is often not aware of tree fellings and therefore cannot mobilise support for their replacement. In addition there is considerable reticence about any discussions about alternatives to felling.

In discussion it was stated that consultation allows the facts to come out and the community to understand the nature of the decision. Reports on individual trees are not prepared. Instead the information is recorded on a tablet (Diameter at breast height, nature of target, examination of root plate and defects are recorded, together with the results of other tests if conducted (picus, sonic tomography). There was a discussion as to an appropriate amount of information to put on a felling notice and the implications of including certain information.

Several members of the committee reiterated that they had every respect for the professionalism and training of the tree officers employed by BCC and any discussion on the various options should be taken in that context.

Regarding the discussion on replacement species, it turns out that the software is currently only capable of including one species when several might be suitable. It was pointed out that the tree selection guidelines do invite local involvement. It was pointed out that failure to engage with sometimes very well-informed members of the community can have a detrimental effect.

In terms of the Bristol City Council organisation, Tim stated that:

- Tree planting: Richard Ennion with John Atkinson and Holly Paton
- Tree management: Tim Brandram
- Planning: Lawrence Wood and Matt Bennett (Lawrence is leaving end of August)

The Tree Forum Committee thanked Tim Brandram for attending our meeting and were grateful for his input.

It was agreed that:

- 1 Tim will see if as well as notifying councillors of felling orders, where appropriate (urgency allowing) a notice will also be sent to a BTF email address (which Mark/Chris has now set up), and where possible (e.g. not legally contentious) the reason for the felling. We would trial the use of a central email address so that all tree fellings will be passed to the trees of Bristol web site.
2. We would try and improve communication between the Bristol Tree Forum committee and BCC Officers whilst recognising their time pressures. We would try and use the tree Forum as a conduit for community engagement to avoid hundreds of emails coming from all directions.
3. Tim Brandram will see if the tree replacement software can be adjusted to include multi-species option on the sponsorship forms.
4. Tree selection criteria need to be included in the Bristol Tree Strategy that is being developed and updated to take account of new publications (eg the recent TDAG guide)
5. Tim also agreed to attend another BTF meeting later in the year to review progress (next time during Tim's working day)
6. Liz was going to explore the possibility of contacting other councillors to help us to expand the Tree Champion list, particularly in areas with little BTF involvement.

B. Second Half of Meeting

Aims of BTF and Constitution. Stephanie, with involvement of other committee members as appropriate, will incorporate Peter's draft into the 2008 BTF Aims and Constitution. It was noted that the original constitution will need updating.

Community Engagement in Tree Management Decisions. Vassili thanked those committee members who contributed comments and would be grateful of any further comments as he finalises the document for publication.

Partnership with WT, BCC and FoAT. We need to read it, be sure that we like it and sign. Mark Ashdown will cast a careful eye over it and advise the rest of us.

Section 106 Progress. Well done Mark and Liz. Area 1 already underway. Cost per tree is not £295 and now £765. Liz will make sure that that the "double counted" maintenance money is ring-fenced for tree maintenance

BTRS. Stephanie will draft a letter on behalf of the Tree Forum Committee saying that if a developer cuts down a huge tree, then the btrs calculations have to be with trees that will reach a similar stature (not cherries!!)

Stoke Park. Vassili pointed out that the Tree Forum is not being consulted on some key tree management issues, such as the removal of young woodland in Stoke Park to return it to low nutrient grazing land for cattle.

Next Committee meeting: In September. Jim Smith offered to host in Filwood (Vassili to liaise with Jim over a venue)

Sean Harding - to be invited to next Committee meeting as the most appropriate way to benefit from his expertise and interest

AGM - sometime in the Autumn

Ends.....