

Meeting of the Tree Forum June 4 2018, 6-8.00pm, City Hall

1 Forty individuals, including six councillors, were welcomed by the Chairman Peter Harnett.

2 Councillor Clive Stevens spoke briefly about the history of the Tree Forum, a partnership formed ten years ago between officers and members of the public. It helped to create the strategy of doubling canopy cover in a generation, and to establish the Bristol Tree Replacement Policy which made developers think seriously about either saving trees on site, or providing money with which to replace them. He stressed the importance of the new area committees that were being created in place of the Neighbourhood Partnerships.

3 Mark Ashdown then presented a detailed analysis of the 707 replacement sites currently seeking sponsorship from the public at a cost of £295 per tree. There were further sites, identified by ward, covered by section 106 agreements, with a cost of £675 per tree, which covered the creation and maintenance of a new site, and 15 years of maintenance. There was some £400,000 available to cover this, which was analysed by ward.

4 Dr Kieron Doick, of the Urban Forest Group of the Forestry Commission, then spoke about his work. He was involved in seeking to understand the real value of the services provided by trees in towns. He stressed their significance in reducing the temperature of towns, which brought real health benefits, as did their role in pollution reduction, and in carbon dioxide sequestration. He strikingly pointed out that just two large trees were enough to provide the oxygen for a family of four. He mentioned other significant benefits including noise mitigation. He noted that his evidence suggested Bristol had a canopy cover of 18.6 %, among the highest in Britain, and that all cities were seeking to increase canopy cover to about 30%. It was important to set targets that were achievable.

His research was based on the I-tree survey system which Bristol had just adopted. This gave statistically significant figures for the size and value of the urban forest. He noted some recent research that emphasised the dramatic difference in both pollution control and carbon dioxide sequestration of trees with a DBH of above 140cm, (a girth of 420cm, an age of 150 years). He stressed that I-Tree reports must be widely publicised to change opinion, especially among local leaders, developers, industrialists, and authorities of all kinds.

5 Richard Ennion then spoke about the way the The Bristol Tree Strategy was developing. He noted the huge success of the One Tree per Child policy which had involved a whole generation of children in planting young trees. Moving to the present he reviewed the work of the Forest of Avon which had picked up responsibility for the I-Tree survey in Bristol. A training session had been held, and the first few sites had been surveyed. He hoped to reach the total of 200 sites surveyed this season, which would then inform the process of deciding how to achieve a 30% canopy cover by 2050.

6 Catherine Brabner-Evans of the Woodland Trust noted the commitment to the whole concept of the urban forest of the Woodland Trust. She had created a Talking Trees campaign to encourage wide support for the concept using modern media systems.

7 Peter Harnett, in summing up the meeting, asked for volunteers, both for the committee itself, and to defend the trees in ward meetings across the city. He announced the next public meeting for the end of October, and announced the Bristol Tree of the Year competition that the Tree Forum had launched. Richard Bland spoke briefly about this, whose details are on the Tree Forum website. The meeting ended promptly at 8.00pm