

Geoff Raw - Chief Executive
Brighton and Hove City Council
King's House

13th June 2016

Dear Geoff

We are jointly submitting the following letter under Council Procedure Rule 23.3 to be included on the agenda for the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee meeting of 28 June 2016.

Trees are the longest living entities on our planet, and one of its greatest natural resources. They help to keep our air supply clean, create shade, reduce noise pollution, improve water quality, help prevent erosion, provide food and building materials, make our landscapes and cities look attractive; they are much-loved by members of our communities and have been shown to reduce crime and improve people's mental health and general wellbeing. A single tree can produce around 260 pounds of oxygen per year: two mature trees can therefore supply enough oxygen annually to support a family of four or to absorb as much carbon in a year as a car produces while driving 13,000 miles. Trees are the lungs of our planet that help sustain life.

We hear daily of the Climate Change challenges our planet faces and, locally, the problems with the 'heat island effect', making our city hotter than nearby rural areas, increasing summertime air pollution levels and heat-related illness, and problems with flooding. Increasing tree and vegetation cover lowers surface and air temperatures, by providing shade and cooling and through evapotranspiration, and also helps to alleviate flooding by reducing rainwater runoff.

It is now ten years since publication of the ground-breaking scrutiny panel 'REPORT OF THE STREET TREES SCRUTINY PANEL', that Cllr Janio and the current Chair of this Committee gave support to when it was brought before The Scrutiny Commission. Other reports on adapting to Climate Change and dealing with Flood Risk Management have agreed that the implementation of planning policies require decision makers to be fully informed by relevant studies about climate impacts now and in the future. We also believe that a Tree and Woodland Strategy was proposed many years ago, but we can find no record of this. Finally, during the previous administration, the Brighton & Hove City Climate Change Strategy 2011-2015 was published by the Brighton & Hove City Sustainability Partnership, but we have failed to find a mention of trees in this strategy.

Given that so much work has taken place, we are surprised that the council still has no strategic document that supports the development of trees across the city.

The City recently adopted the Brighton and Hove City Plan, which will be followed over the coming months and years by detailed discussions on Part 2 of the plan. This will serve as a reference document for planning decisions and, although a great

deal of time and effort has been spent on report writing about trees and specifically how they can help us adapt to Climate Change and aid Flood Risk Management, there still appears to be no formal guidance for planners on the role that trees can play it. We feel this is a serious omission.

We acknowledge that planning policy currently falls under the remit of the Economic Development & Culture committee, but the implementation of any policy would be the responsibility of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee. We would not wish to see technical arguments used to delay action on trees.

With this in mind, we would like to request that officers bring a report back to this committee, within six months, consisting of a scheduled plan of work that would review existing tree management strategy, whilst also recommending to the Economic Development & Culture Committee that they consider whether a new Supplementary Planning Document on Trees should be added to the 'City Plan Part 2 Framework'.

The time to act is now: before it is too late.

Yours sincerely

Cllrs. Tony Janio

Tom Druitt