



Bristol Parks Forum

representing resident led
park groups and citywide organisations
involved in protecting and improving
Bristol's green spaces

Area Green Space Plans – Ideas and Options Cabinet Decision on Land Disposal

To Cllr Gary Hopkins,
cc Cllr Barbara Janke, Tracey Morgan, Richard Fletcher

Having seen the Area Green Space Plan documents, the Bristol Parks Forum continues to support the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy. BPF worked with the council for a number of years on the drawing up of the P&GSS and accepted that the P&GSS would be part funded by disposals of Low Value land. At the time of its adoption in February 2008, under the previous administration, we expressed our view that:

The strategy will be the basis on which the city can improve the many low quality parks and open spaces to create a network of recreation and wildlife spaces that a city of Bristol's size and standing should have.

It was particularly important to us that this 20 year strategy had the support of all three main parties and that all were committed to the principle that 70% of the money raised from any sale of 'low value' land would 'ring fenced' for spending on parks. We are pleased that the current Cabinet is continuing that support.

We also stated at the time that '*we look forward to engaging with Bristol Parks to create the Area Green Space Plans*'. The current public consultation is an important part of that process. It is clear to us that the production of the documents has been led by officers within Parks & Estates and has followed the standards and criteria set out in the strategy. We wish to congratulate the officers involved. We were pleased that because of the school holidays the consultation was extended in order to maximise the opportunity for public input.

You will agree that it is vital that the final Area Green Space Plans take proper account of the views expressed in that consultation and we are therefore concerned that you stated at the Parks Forum meeting on 17 July that it was your intention to take the decision on disposal of Parks & Green Spaces at the Cabinet meeting on 25 November, this date would require the final report to Cabinet to be published less than 3 weeks after the consultation closes.

It was suggested that this could be done because many responses will be received prior to the end of the consultation. We must point out that this goes against the principles of Community Involvement set out in the SCI 2008 and the Cabinet approved method for Community Involvement. Both require groups to get together and go through the material systematically, including options and criteria and write up a consensus result. Your proposal seems to risk excluding responses from some groups from proper consideration.

We are encouraging our member groups to respond to the consultation and we are aware that some have concerns about individual spaces, we could not support a process where these views are not properly considered.

We therefore request that the Cabinet delays its decision on disposals for at least two weeks. In our view this will give officers sufficient time to report on all relevant responses made during the whole consultation period and to give members adequate time to properly consider the report and the advice of the officers involved.

While we agree that this important decision should be made as soon as possible so that the next stage of the work on both the Area Green Space Plans and the Site Allocations can progress we do not believe that this short delay would have a significant impact on the timetable.

We look forward to working with Park & Estates to finalise the Area Green Space Plans early next year and more importantly to beginning the process of bringing significant improvements to Bristol's parks and green spaces.

Yours,

Rob Acton-Campbell
on behalf of the Bristol Parks Forum Committee
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Bristol Parks Forum

Bristol Parks Forum was established by Bristol Parks as an umbrella organisation for community park groups and organisations in the city with an interest in their local parks and green spaces.

The forum is supported by Bristol City Council but acts independently and is the only 'community voice' that is dedicated to all of Bristol's green spaces. The forum's three main roles are to:

- offer an opportunity to share ideas and experience
- act as a consultation body for the Bristol Parks service and other agencies
- influence decision-making, including the allocation of resources

Bristol Parks Forum <http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk>