

Notes of Bristol Parks Forum Meeting held on 2nd July 2022 at the Greenway Centre, Southmead

1 Welcome and introductions

Those present introduced themselves. A list of all those present is held by the BPF Secretary. Len and Frances sent apologies for their absences which were due to Covid.

BCC officers present:

Richard Fletcher, Parks Services Manager.

Richard Ennion, Parks Development Manager.

2 Matters arising from the last meeting

Mark advised that he had attended a workshop on the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy that is currently under development. The workshop was effectively an on-line 'Post-it Note' session but it appeared that the developing strategy would be significantly different to the current strategy.

3 Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

Richard Ennion went through slides on this that are available at:

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BPF020722ParksGreenSpacesStrategy.pdf

This will be an update of the Strategy to cover the developing priorities for the next 10 to 15 years and there has already been a lot of input from stakeholders. Richard Fletcher advised that different skills/people and equipment will probably be needed and they are already working on this – gradually due to financial constraints. Comments from members included the need for better communications, the impact that the introduction of parking charges has had on footfall, the way play experience is to be included and grass cutting. Richard Fletcher replied that grass cutting is always an issue (long grass at present); they cannot please everyone but are trying a different approach at present.

4 Nature Recovery in Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces

Richard Ennion went through slides on this that are available at:

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BPF020722NRN.pdf

He commented that "A lot of good stuff has been happening – but that they are perhaps less good at publicising what has been achieved!" A question was raised about how nature protection fits into the planning process. He replied that there is a hierarchy of protected status and priorities to give this protection but that this is obviously complex in practise.

5 Future Parks

Slides were available for this subject at:

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BPF020722FutureParks.pdf

but Richard Fletcher chose not to use them.

The Parks Department are having a general update about Parks. They are considering different approaches to the usage of Parks and different funding sources. They have had a consultation and have had quite a wide response from community and

commercial interests which is being assessed; possible projects include a climbing wall, a rose garden and play areas including an outdoor gym. He agreed that it was important to attract young people into parks and engage in these activities. He reminded the Forum that, since 'austerity,' the income of the Parks Department had been reduced from approximately £5 million per year to £1 million!

A question was raised about Bowling Greens some of which are struggling to maintain their facilities or even to survive. Richard replied that the Council was encouraging local groups to take over clubs such as bowling clubs and quoted the example of a club that had brought in a younger, more active membership which had been able to operate the club independently.

He mentioned two current concerns in Parks – one is that staffing levels are still being affected by Covid and the other is ash die-back, the extent to which it is affecting the Council's trees and what action needs to be taken.

Richard Ennion added that the Council is currently consulting on a fairly extensive tree-planting programme and on proposals for Oldbury Court.

6 Your Park Bristol and Bath

Rob summarised the activities of this group which is a charity and independent of Bristol Council and the Bristol Parks Forum. These include:

- Roots to Well-being, encouraging activities in parks with training grants;
- Love your Parks Community Project, funding community groups with small grants;
- Promoting links between parks groups and corporates; and
- Encouraging disabled groups to use parks.

Fund raising in the short term has been difficult because of Covid and the situation in Ukraine and also because corporates are reluctant to donate to new ventures. This is a particular concern because they have two paid employees.

7 Cycling and Walking Infrastructure

Rob addressed this in Len's absence. There are many issues that need to be considered concerning cycle paths in parks. This document is a guide to current policies and procedures and sets out the legal framework, references and documents that need to be considered.

It is intended to be neutral and not pro or anti cycling!

Len asked some specific questions, all agreed that the work was important, useful and should continue and that Len should be thanked for his work.

The feeling of the meeting was that the final document should follow Len's suggested shorter format (using checklists with supporting information and pointers to other sources), but that Len should make the final decision.

8 Bristol Parks Forum Committee

Mark and Rob both wish to reduce their involvement with BPF. Mark has been Chair for years and has a very demanding job. Rob has also been involved for many years, in particular with the requirements for maintaining the website and being the voice of the BPF on emails. He also feels that there could be conflicts between his roles in the BPF and Your Park Bristol and Bath.

So, in short, before the AGM in October, new voices are urgently needed on the BPF Committee!!

Mark said that the BPF brought big benefits to the parks community in Bristol particularly because of its links with Council officers, the two Richards in particular, and also with Councillors. In addition, it can encourage and assist parks groups, which the Council needs.

Richard Fletcher said that there is a huge amount of volunteering in Bristol parks and that this should feed through to support for the BPF. He felt that the BPF is needed more than ever.