



# BPF

## Minutes of Bristol Parks Forum meeting

### Windmill Hill City Farm

19th January 2008

#### Present:

**Fraser Bridgeford** - Chair, Forum  
**Hugh Holden** – Vice Chair, Forum  
**Alison Bromilow** – Forum

**Peter Wilkinson** – Bristol Parks  
**Richard Fletcher** – Bristol Parks  
**Beth Garman** - Bristol Parks

**Al Havvock** - Cllr - Windmill Hill  
**Charlie Bolton** - Cllr - Southville  
**Chris Davies** - Cllr - Knowle West - Fo Redcatch Pk  
**Gary Hopkins** - Cllr - Knowle  
**Jon Rogers** - Cllr - Ashley  
**Mark Bailey** - Cllr Windmill Hill - VPAG  
**Lynne Hutchinson** - Bristol Evening Post

#### 38 Parks Forum Members representing the following groups:

Friends of Badocks Wood  
Malago Valley Cons Grp  
Friends of Callington Rd NR  
Southville CDA  
St John's Churchyard  
RCAS  
Walking the Way to Health  
Gores Marshalls  
Friends of Badocks Wood  
Old Sneed Park NR  
Castle Park Users Group  
Withywood Park Group  
FO St George Park

Civic Society  
Fox Park Group  
Avon Gardens Trust  
Malago Valley Conservation Group  
Northern Slopes Initiative  
Wilmott Park Group  
Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society  
Fo Troopers Hill  
Fo South Purdown  
Bristol in Bloom  
Bristol Street Trees  
Friends of Redcatch Park

#### Post meeting Note – 15 Feb 2008

The meeting between BPF representatives and members of the Council Cabinet was held on the 21st Jan and it was clear that the strength of feeling expressed in this BPF meeting had been fed back to the Cabinet members. A further meeting between BPF representatives and Bristol Parks was held on the 22nd Jan and email discussions continued during the following week.

These discussions resulted in the funding section of the Strategy being significantly changed from that in the 10th Jan version. It was confirmed that the basis of any land disposals was to raise funds to improve parks and open spaces not to fund other departments. A message about these changes was sent by email to members of the BPF on 30th January and the responses received confirmed that the BPF members were happy with the new arrangements. The BPF will therefore be issuing a statement of support for the revised Strategy to the Cabinet meeting on 21st Feb when it is hoped that the Strategy will be adopted.

**Agenda** - revised from published

**Parks and Green Spaces Strategy - what is happening and what do we need to do next**

- ◆ **Alison Bromilow - update since Christmas and next steps**
- ◆ **Richard Fletcher - public responses to PGSS**
- ◆ **Peter Wilkinson - PGSS review update**
- ◆ **Q&A session**
- ◆ **News items**

**Minutes**

**Alison Bromilow - update since Christmas and next steps**

**Summary:**

The Parks and Green Space Strategy (PGSS) was considered for adoption at the Cabinet meeting held on 10th January. Cabinet papers were made available on the council's web pages one week before the meeting and it was at this point that Forum members were first aware that there had been a change in the financial underpinning of the PGSS.

The changes were that:

- ◆ The amount of income proposed to be generated by selling green space was increased from £36 million to £51 million; and
- ◆ The commitment made to the Forum by Cllr Rosalie Walker at the Forum's conference in September to reinvest 80% from cash raised from the sale of land back in to improving green spaces was reduced to a minimum of 50%.

Both of these had a significant knock-on effect to the amount of land that would needed to be sold. The Forum estimated that there would need to be an increase from 50 acres to 200 acres.

The figures put forward at Cabinet on the 10th January had not been changed when they were considered at the joint Scrutiny Commission meeting (chaired by Gary Hopkins) held on October 4th 2007.

Also identified was that "lifecycle costs" – the cost of repairing and replacing facilities and equipment that have worn out over time – now had to be covered by raising cash from the sale of green space.

**AB** sent emails to BPF members although some members may not have received these. These emails make up Appendix A (available at the meeting).

Subject: Parks and Green Spaces Strategy - cabinet meeting 10th Jan 2008

Subject: PLEASE EMAIL YOUR COUNCILLOR URGENTLY ABOUT PARKS

Subject: Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

Subject: Statement on behalf of Bristol Parks Forum for full council meeting 15th Jan - state of the city debate

Subject: Parks funding

**Q:** Are there any explanations/justifications for the difference in percentage?

**A: Cllr G Hopkins** - No parties were aware of the change.

**AB** made statement at the Cabinet meeting on the 10th Jan that the BPF had been consulted on the PGSS over a long period of time and had, reluctantly, accepted

that 100% of the money raised by selling green space could not go back into improving remaining green spaces but accepted a lower figure of 80% - based on advice from CABI Space. The Forum could not accept going back on this commitment by pushing the figure down to 50%.

AB also questioned the validity of the amount of money to be raised by S106 developer contributions. The CABI representative had advised that the developer may challenge the S106 level of contribution if the council were not investing money raised from disposals back into parks improvements. The amount had gone down from £30 million to £15 million. In addition, some of S106 was to be used to support 'lifecycle costs' as well as spending on capital (new facilities).

Response from Jim Cliffe, S106 officer: Jim is legally happy with status of developers' contributions - which are not linked to BCCs decision on the percentage of land receipts reinvested in parks. He disagrees with CABI advice that 80% should be the minimum that is reinvested into parks or it would undermine S106 policy.

At the Cabinet meeting a decision on adopting the PGSS was deferred on a technical point – maps contained in the version of the PGSS that cabinet members had, were not available on the version given to the public and made available online. This meant that Cabinet could not adopt it - although they would have, even with the changes in funding. This has allowed some breathing space for the Forum and others to put forward objections to the changes in the Strategy.

At the council's 'State of the City' meeting – AB made another statement: see Appendix B

**FB:** Cllrs Rosalie Walker, Helen Holland and John Bees cannot make the Forum's meeting today so Forum representatives - Hugh Holden, Ben Barker, Rob Acton-Campbell, Alison Bromilow and Fraser Bridgeford - have arranged to meet with them on Monday 21<sup>st</sup>. These representatives need to take a clear message to that meeting on what Forum members want in terms of funding the PGSS.

#### **POINTS OF CLARIFICATION:**

Maps now on website but do not show land that is likely to be sold off.

**Q:** Do we have any say about which land is sold off?

**AB:** All comes under next stage of strategy when Area Green Space plans – PW will explain.

**Comment:** Instead of clutching at straws – need to reconsider whole idea of PGSS with these new figures.

**Comment:** Sounds like something has changed between Nov/Jan – eg a person or secret committee decided these changes and wanted to get it through – is that how it appears to you?

**AB/HH:** Yes. Where / when we don't know

**Cllr Hopkins:** We (Lib Dems) believe that because the basis of funding the PGSS has fundamentally changed, the original consultation was not valid. The Lib Dems

did agree to dispose of green space to allow for the catch up of 20-30 yrs of under funding Parks but using capital raised from land sales for revenue/lifecycle costs is a dangerous decision; and is a decision that likely would be 'called in' at a future Cabinet meeting if pushed forward on that basis.

**AB:** In a recent Evening Post article a BCC spokesman said that money from sale of land would go to other depts eg housing, transport...

**Peter Wilkinson:**

Establish some principles:

- ◆ There is a massive legacy in Bristol's parks of a lack of investment over the last few decades
- ◆ Bristol Parks has produced a powerful financial model that shows to raise Bristol's parks and green spaces from a rating of Fair to Good needs significant investment.
- ◆ The financial model is based on the real costs (2006 prices) of putting in infrastructure to pass on decent parks to the next generation e.g. to replace a good park bench will cost c£600.
- ◆ The development of the Strategy has always been about having high aspirations – to produce something that was genuinely about investment
- ◆ The financial model produced very high figures for the amount of capital investment needed over 20 years - £87 million - and also produced figures for annual revenue costs (grounds maintenance) and also for infrastructure lifecycle costs.
- ◆ The PGSS public consultation process clearly showed a need for people to see that that the council had considered the revenue stream needed to maintain £87 million of capital investment - including the replacement of equipment/infrastructure (Lifecycle costs).
- ◆ The figures showed that at the end of the 20-year period of the PGSS there will be a need to spend nearly £1.5M more on grounds maintenance (based on 2006 prices).
- ◆ In the council's current proposed medium term financial plan there is growth in the grounds maintenance budget of £400K – a significant move towards the figure needed after 20 years. This is an uplift that hasn't been seen for many years.
- ◆ For this money Bristol Parks has been asked to improve problem areas – shrubs, hedges that have not been maintained properly.
- ◆ In next 2 years it is anticipated that there will be a further growth in the Parks' budget.
- ◆ There is a Full Council meeting to set budget on the 26<sup>th</sup> Feb.

In addition, in the draft budget for next year is £100k growth for Highway Tree maintenance

**Identification of low value green space for disposal (sale):**

The council does not intend to keep selling until it reaches a target, it wants to identify green space which:

- ◆ Doesn't contribute positively in a neighbourhood;
- ◆ Fits with the Bristol Development Framework (BDF) – which sets out what Bristol needs to be like in 2026 (the BDF replaces the Bristol Local Plan).

Within the BDF there needs to be a really strong policy framework to protect open space – incorporating green space standards from the PGSS.

When establishing the value of a site the council will consider a wide range of factors:

**Community value:** level of use; local people's views; the extent to which local community is involved; how important/accessible to equalities groups; schools use; implications of demographics change in area; is abused and site of ASB.

**Custodial value:** significance of site within its local context; accessibility; importance within landscape; for wildlife; historical/archaeological; common land; protected; economic value – bringing prosperity to local shops/businesses; enhances economic value of neighbourhood; role in mitigation climate change.

The next step is to identify low value open space and to decide what to do with - using Area Green Space Plans (see below).

**N.B:** The BDF released for comment on Jan 11<sup>th</sup> 2008 – comments on this framework to be in by February 22<sup>nd</sup>. This project being led by Sarah O'Driscoll, Service Manager – Strategic and Citywide Policy. This will set the land use planning framework for the city. PGSS has to be dealt with alongside BDF. BDF will identify what is valuable green space and will protect it.

**Comment:** Get your open space designated on the Bristol Development Plan, as this document will be the basis of all planning decisions and objections.

**HH:** Will the PGSS be formally incorporated within the BDF?

**HH:** Advice from Head of Parks, Birmingham that PGSS should be part of BDF - BPF should push for it to be part of BDF for more protection of green spaces.

**PW:** The key policy areas of the PGSS – including the standards – should be enshrined within the BDF. There is also still potential for the PGSS to be adopted as SPD if this is needed.

**AB:** In BDF is reference to PGSS as a supporting document and aims of the strategy are written in to the development framework.

**PW:** To remind you that the PGSS is a protection mechanism designed to improve green spaces, it is not a land disposal strategy.

## End of Session

### Session 2

Purpose of this session – What is going to be the position of BPF going forward taking into account the events of the past few weeks? What does the Forum want to take to the Monday meeting to council Leaders?

- ◆ General agreement that the PGSS is a solid document that will deliver good Parks for Bristol for the future.
- ◆ The development of the Strategy itself is a professional parks process carried out by officers
- ◆ In parallel to this is a political process where decisions are made on how to fund the strategy
- ◆ The revised PGSS (excluding finance content) includes slight changes / improvements in response to consultation responses.

**Comment:** We should withdraw our support for the PGSS because once we agree to selling off a bit we are compromising ourselves.

**Q:** Can we be made aware of important dates and deadlines so we are not caught on the back foot?

**PW:** We will produce the decision making timetable for the PGSS and the BDF for the meeting on Monday.

Look at page on BCC website for the BDF Options paper which is out for consultation at the moment until February 22nd. The headline dates for the whole BDF process should be available on the Options paper (**June 2008** present Core Strategy to Secretary of State).

**Immediate PGSS timetable:**

**21<sup>st</sup> Jan** - BPF meeting with Cllr Helen Holland, Cllr Rosalie Walker and Cllr Jon Bees

**24<sup>th</sup> Jan** - Agenda briefing - Cabinet and senior officers meet to decide what happens at the Cabinet meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> February - considers draft report

**31<sup>st</sup> Jan** - PESC (Physical Environment Scrutiny Committee) chaired by Gary Hopkins. Questions for PESC to be submitted by 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan (Tues - 5pm). Statements to be submitted by 30<sup>th</sup> Jan (12 noon).

**21<sup>st</sup> Feb Cabinet** - Questions to be submitted 6 clear working days before (5pm Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> Feb). Statements to be submitted by 12 noon the day before the meeting. Cabinet papers are published on the council's web pages 5 working days before the date of the meeting.

**Area Green Space Plans:**

AGSPs are the means by which the PGSS is delivered locally. The Plans consider what changes to quality, accessibility and quantity of green space are required to meet the needs of future populations within a particular area. RF is temporarily working on these now - to decide which areas we deal with first. This is likely to be the south of the city as the Plans need to inform the BDF. The areas considered for AGSPs will be the 14 Neighbourhood Partnership areas the council is currently rolling out. Each Area contains 3-4 wards and the Partnership is a forum for local councillors, BCC officers and local people to decide on priorities.

**HH:** Why has amount of S106 funding per head changed?

**PW:** An appendix has been added to the revised PGSS which provides figures for how S106 agreements are calculated for green spaces. The amount of money projected to be raised from S106 agreements has been revised downwards because of the final Green Space Standards that the Strategy proposes to adopt – which results in the provision of less of the most expensive types of space – and because a more realistic view has been taken of the number of housing developments for which a S106 agreement can realistically be made (= 75% of the potential entitlement under SPD4).

**PW:** A breakdown of how the £87 million of capital funding required to fully implement the PGSS given in the original draft document was:

£36m - from land sales

£30m - from S106

£10m - existing resources

£11m - grant aid

The draft PGSS document also said it is also necessary to identify resources for lifecycle and maintenance costs from capital funding as well as revenue budgets. The current budget for lifecycle and maintenance costs - c£500K - extends to £10m over 20 years.

**Q:** Will there be consultation on local improvements?

**PW:** Yes - RF currently working on Area Green Space Plans

**Q:** If green space is sold off what will happen in 20 yrs if BCC finds itself in same situation?

**PW:** The principle behind lifecycle costs is that we should not see the same spiral of decline.

**Q:** The current move to regenerate city centres is for more residential use - how will the increase in numbers of people in city centres be serviced if we have no green spaces left?

**PW:** There is an issue in predicting where population growth will be, but the Bristol Green Space Quantity Standard is based on a minimum area per person.

**Cllr Jon Rogers:** Please explain the implications (if any) in a delay in adopting the PGSS for this current year's budget proposals?

**PW:** There should be no effect

**FB: Can we say BPF do not support the selling of green space for any revenue or lifecycle funding. - (PASSED)**

**Further questions/comments from the floor:**

**Cllr Charlie Bolton:** If the changes are reversed and it reverts to 80%, will it have an impact on this year's budget?

**PW:** No, this is agreed separately

**PW:** The PGSS will be reviewed in 5 years - in particular as we don't know the BDF land use policy yet. There will also be a S106 review in 2 years – there is a lot of pressure on S106 – there are many who think too much goes to Parks therefore the amount might go down – we will then have to look at it again.

**Comment:** I suggest the BPF formally withdraws its support for the PGSS as it is – what is the point of consultation if it leads to this?

**Cllr Gary Hopkins:** This would be a dangerous position to take – the investment side of the PGSS has full support – it is only the funding issue that is a problem. You shouldn't give anyone the excuse to withdraw from investing in parks. The funding side – there is always competition for funds and Parks has been the end of the line for too long but funding revenue can come from savings made in the council elsewhere.

**Comment:** I propose that we should not compromise or deviate from the original agreement

**Comment:** There has been such a big change in the PGSS that I think we should be consulted again.

**Peter Wilkinson**

The current BCC policy is that all land disposal funds go to a central fund and even to get 50% is unusual.

**Fraser Bridgeford****IN SUMMARY**

No one wants to be in this situation

We will go to the meeting on Monday:

- ◆ To maintain original position as strategy originally consulted upon with no room for agreement or compromise – any cabinet offer has to go back to BPF.
- ◆ Lifecycle/revenue costs should not be funded by land disposal.

**AOB**

We need a representative for the Street Trees Forum to put pressure on public departments to plant street trees

We also need a representative for the Bristol Cycle Path consultation

Sheila Stevens wants to hear about BPF groups who would like their presentation and displays to be included by Bristol in Bloom judges.

Mary Bannerman – reported that the Castle Park Users Group has applied to register Castle Park as a Town Green.