

Parks and Green Space Strategy
Meeting with Bristol Parks Forum on Tuesday 7th October 2008.

Present:

Richard Mond, Head of Parks, Estates and Sport, Peter Wilkinson, Parks Service Manager.
Fraser Bridgeford, Alison Bromilow and Rob Acton-Campbell .

A. Principles and process:

1. Who decides on green space disposals?

- Cabinet –formally in formal Cabinet meetings if this is a key decision (e.g. larger sites); , also has an advisory role either by individual Executive Members or collectively in informal meetings;
- Cabinet Delegates non-key strategic asset management to Asset Management Board – Chaired by Chief Executive Jan Ormondroyd, with John House (Deputy CEO), Carew Reynell (lead on resources), Alun Owen (lead on property), David Bishop (lead on planning and regeneration);
- P&GSS Board – Chaired by RM, with Alun Owen, Zoe Wilcox (Head of Planning) and Nick Hooper (Housing) manages the delivery of the P&GSS and has delegation from AMB to agree specific disposals at same time as signing off Area Green Space Plans.
- P&GSS Board has agreed it will agree individual disposals which come forward as an exception to the rule, in advance of AGSPs.
- The policy is the collective responsibility of all Directorates, with the AMB ‘refereeing’ between them.
- It’s important to distinguish between green space which fits the P&GSS definitions, and other open space e.g. grazing land or allotments. The map published with the P&GSS is a helpful guide but is not infallible, and the principles in the P&GSS take precedence..
- Property Services coordinates at an operational level

2. Application of capital ring fencing with asset transfers to other BCC Directorates.

AMB has not formally made a decision ratifying that the 70% applies to all inter-directorate green space transfers/developments, as we haven’t yet brought this to them for decision – but we do believe that this will be agreed

- Highways may be relevant, as with LRT proposals.

Action: RM to seek decision from AMB over inter directorate land transfers and application of capital ring fence.

3. Disposals in advance of Area Green Space Plans:

- This was always going to be an issue as life doesn’t stop in a city like Bristol – although the market conditions will make a difference for the foreseeable future; the P&GSS does not say that nothing will happen prior to AGSPs
- However it’s clearly preferable to look holistically in the context of an AGSP, therefore procedure is required to establish level of need on a small number of cases where disposals may come forward earlier.
- Two scenarios – proposals from BCC and from third parties. In both cases intelligent judgement is needed.
- Proposals from third parties – P&GSS checks and balances are provided by the P&GSS team who are consulted by Planning; is the land low value, what other policies apply etc.
- Proposals from BCC – similar checks and balances will apply
- RM proposed that Planning and Property should introduce ‘safety net’ systems to ensure that P&GSS sites are picked up in their applications processes to ensure that sites are identified and the team are consulted early;

- BPF require early consultation 'pre application' in line with the Statement of Community Involvement. All agree this is important to retain the credibility of the P&GSS. In a large organisation like BCC there cannot be 100% assurance that all officers would be aware of this , hence the need for "safety net" processes as above.
- Already agreed that exceptions are reported to the P&GSS Board for approval, although BCC has still to develop systems to ensure this happens.
- Neighbourhood Partnerships also wish to have early consultation on new development. BPF are active members in many which is helpful.

Action: P&GSS Board to agree consultation procedure with BPF for pre AGSP disposals, and that such disposals are reported to them. RM to ensure planning and property safety nets are in place.

4.Life Cycle Maintenance Fund:

- Arnos Vale Cemetery endowment uses the Quartet Fund – which has both performed better than BCC investments as well as less well recently;
- Adopted P&GSS formula is to fund revenue uplift by paying off Council debt; this is financially very efficient.
- Establishing the fund early is tricky as communities are seeking 70% up front for investment; but officers think that it's important to develop the fund early for the reasons put forward by the Parks Forum during the original P&GSS consultation.
- With S106 the fund could in principle be established immediately, although Corporate Finance perceived by PW to be reluctant to do this for relatively small amounts of funding and until progress made on disposals.
- More difficult with external grant where endowment type funds unlikely to be agreed by grantor;
- transparency is important and a traceable, transparent report on the development of the fund is desirable.
- Six monthly report on progress with the fund was agreed. Similar to reporting to Arnos Vale Trust.
- All recognise that with market conditions as they are, BCC might be better to hold back on disposals until stronger land values return in a couple of years.
- This will of course impact on the investment programme, although external grant such as Pathfinder will continue to be important.

Action: RM to discuss establishing the Life Cycle Fund with finance. PW to ask Jane Greenaway to draft a statement to explain how the fund will work and why it is a better option than Quartet.

5.Community Infrastructure Levy:

- PW explained the background and likely timetable for local authorities to be given the option to adopt CIL in 2009;
- It was understood that CIL can work alongside S106 policy and not necessarily replace it, although it is recognised that development can only deliver a finite amount of betterment;
- A further consultation has been due in August, but PW had not seen anything. Previous guidance had been very vague;
- Regional work was being undertaken by GreenSpace SW with funding from Natural England, to explore how CIL could be secured for strategic Green Infrastructure. Mapping work was proposed regionally to establish 'green space hub's which had a market beyond their locality and which might justify strategic CIL investment.

Action: PW will seek a briefing note on CIL in Bristol and likely next steps

B) Specific developments:

6.Filwood Park:

- RM had informed BPF (Rob) via email about the 'in principle' decision to sell the park prior to the 70% ring fence applying. He did this 'as a matter of honour' following the negotiations leading up to Cabinet in February. For this reason RM was not willing to argue retrospectively for a 70% share of this receipt.
- BPF also informed about Hengrove, Purdown and Junction 3 as disposals agreed prior to the P&GSS being adopted and therefore prior to the capital ring fence being implemented;
- This issue would be subject to statements/questions at the forthcoming Full Council meeting;
- The disposal has been advertised locally prior to the park being sold to English Partnership by the end of March, although clearly people coming forward now had not all been aware;
- It was agreed that transparency was essential with any disposals such as this;
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- PW confirmed that Sam Parry was now leading on the local AGSP covering Filwood Park, and it was still a P&GSS aim to see a 'proper' formal park created at the heart of Filwood. This process would dovetail with the masterplan covering Filwood ward;

7. Chocolate Factory:

- RM admitted that this proposal hadn't been processed as we would have chosen, however having learned from this it was now important to move forward to resolution;
- It had been agreed with Cllr Bradshaw and David Bishop that a consultation would be held with BPF over the disposal;
- There was need to speak to planning to resolve how this might be managed in tandem with their timetable to determine the planning application; but the consultation could also impact on the council's decisions as land owner so would not be "out of time".

Action: RM to confirm with David Bishop how the consultation would be taken forward.

8. Vale Lane (adjacent to Manor Woods LNR):

- RM confirmed that the site was not on the P&GSS layer, but was SNCI;
- Rob stated that the land should in fact be P&GSS and RM agreed that if it fitted the definitions it should be
- Rob felt that the 70% ring fence should therefore be applied;
- It was accepted that there will probably be other situations where land has been identified as P&GSS when in hindsight it shouldn't have been, and vice-versa. The AGSP process was intended to remedy such anomalies;
- PW confirmed that a procedure was being produced for amending the P&GSS map layer, which would be reported to the P&GSS Board for agreement as soon as possible;

Action: Jane to ensure the procedure to amend the P&GSS layer is reported to the Board as soon as possible.

9. Waterfront site (beside Lloyds Amphitheatre):

- RM explained that the city docks public spaces were included on the P&GSS map as formal space - an exception to the typology guidance as they were nearly all 'hard space'. This was because they are an essential part of the recreational infrastructure for city centre residents and visitors, and it would be ridiculous to ignore their contribution;
- However, RM confirmed that the 70% ring fence would not apply to the sale of dock side spaces such as the Waterfront site (the latter being a long-established development site).

10. Crow Lane, Henbury:

- PW explained that the proposal to integrate housing on the edge of the green space had been around for over two years, and was the basis for the image in the P&GSS – and the policy in the adopted strategy;
- The so called 'Hardiman Original' produced by Steve Hardiman had already been presented to Henbury neighbourhood meetings over 12 months ago;

➤A project team had now been set up to take forward this 'masterplan', which would explore the feasibility of this approach. It might include private and social housing;

C)Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA):

➤PW explained that this process, which was a statutory requirement of all LDFs, was now being programmed to work in tandem with the AGSP programme;

➤This required the published AGSP programme to be amended to ensure that the open space contribution to this capacity study would be brought together. The stage was the 'call for sites' with Alison was aware of via the Bristol Planning Network.

It was agreed that the meeting was useful and would be repeated on a quarterly basis.

D) AOB

RM advised that a Cycle City report was coming forward to Cabinet in which he had made positive comments on the synergies in parks provided carefully planned and managed. He was aware that this issue was potentially controversial and wanted to alert Forum officers to the report.