

**To all members of the Bristol Parks Forum      30 January 2008**

## **Good news on funding of Parks and Green Spaces Strategy**

The funding proposals for the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy have been revised as follows:

- The cabinet is proposing to ring-fence 70% of money raised from sale of land for parks.
- The area of land needed for funding the PGSS and keeping improved parks up to good standard has now been agreed as 90 acres, [2.4% of park land].
- The council has confirmed that land sold off will only be 'low recreation value' land. The funding model will be reviewed in 3 years and if insufficient land is found to be available the effect on the strategy will be assessed.
- The disposals programme will not be driven by need to find money for other departments or issues.
- In addition, the council intends to increase maintenance spending to start to redress the historic shortfall by £400,000 in the 2007-8 budget and further in the medium term budget proposals 2008-2010.

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We have had a number of meetings and discussions with Cabinet members and Parks officers since the last Parks Forum meeting.

It has become clear that the figures in the consultation PGSS were under-calculated and that the proposed work to raise and maintain parks to a good standard would not be possible under the £87 million that was identified in the PGSS.

Following our talks the revised financial model is going to be put to the cabinet meeting on 21st February when the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy goes for cabinet approval.

**We think that this is a good deal for parks and recommend that the Forum endorses this funding proposal and supports the adoption of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy.**

Fraser Bridgeford, Hugh Holden, Alison Bromilow, Ben Barker, Rob Acton-Campbell

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*A press release is being sent out at midday on Wednesday January 30th 2008 from the council and a separate one from Fraser.*

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### **RING FENCING OF CAPITAL FROM DISPOSALS**

We have discussed the issue of the ring-fencing of money raised by selling off park and green space land. In the past it has been the decision of the council that money will not be ring-fenced for any departments but all placed in a central pot and allocated according to a set of priorities. For this reason there was no ring-fencing written into the consultation version of the strategy.

However, in view of the concern about the loss of green space and the lack of alternative funding for improvements to Parks the cabinet has agreed that it will ring fence 70% capital receipts from land disposals.

We are pleased to have this guarantee and welcome the council's acknowledgement that the disposal of Green Space and funding of the PGSS is a special case. We consider that the 70% figure will overcome our concerns that developers may use the lack of support from the council for parks, as evinced by a 50% reinvestment figure, to argue against their contributions under Section 106.

### **LIFE CYCLE COSTS.**

We have now had full figures for the funding of lifecycle costs and the mechanism by which these will be continued without further disposals being needed in the future.

Life cycle costs cover the replacement costs of benches, play equipment, paths etc when they become worn out. The proposal is to use some of the money raised from land disposals, Section 106 developer contributions and grant income to form a pot to fund future replacement costs. The figures have been looked at again to reduce the amount of money that will be needed from selling off land so that the total is reduced. There is also a commitment that this is a once only way of setting up the 'life cycle' fund, and that after it is achieved no further land sales will be required.

### **CAP ON LAND SALES AND AREA GREEN SPACE PLANS**

We have also had a commitment that no more land will be sold than that identified in the next stage of the strategy consultation as 'low recreation value' land. The 'recreation value' will include its value for nature conservation and other factors described in the strategy, the use of this term is intended to highlight that we are not talking about monetary value. As was pointed out at the Forum meeting, some land disposals where anti social behaviour is a problem - for instance as a focus for gathering or an area where fly tipping is a problem, would be welcomed by the local community and parks groups.

Bristol Parks' timetable to produce the 14 Area Green Space Plans is from now until the end of 2009. Within this each Area Green Space Plan will have its own timetable - perhaps over 4 months. The south of the city is likely to be the early focus.

Parks will be giving Forum members and others a firm timetable when it is available.

### **OVERALL LAND SALES REDUCED**

As a result of the increased return from disposals the amount of land that needs to be sold is now 90 acres rather than the 166 acres that would have been necessary under the figures presented to cabinet on January 10th. The figure [45 acres] for funding the consultation draft Parks and Green Spaces Strategy has been found to be unworkable, and the amount of money needed to raise all our parks to good standard and to maintain them at that

standard in the future under-calculated. We are confident that the new figures represent a robust funding model for achieving the parks we want.

**We have considered trying to arrange an additional Forum meeting to discuss these proposals before they are finalised and put to cabinet. Unfortunately the timescale is too short and delaying the adoption of the strategy further is not in our interests.**

The commitment to using the Area Green Space Plans to determine land sales means that Park Groups have a real opportunity to determine which areas of land will be sold. The community will be involved in making the decisions about what land is available for disposal through the AGSP programme that will start immediately after the PGSS is approved. Therefore those of you who believe in the value of any or all green space still have an opportunity to make your voice heard.

**FB/HH/AB/ BB/ RAC**