

**CROSS PARTY WORKING GROUP - PARKS AND GREEN SPACES:  
21 SEPTEMBER 2011**

**Notes of meeting**

**Present:**

*Councillors:* Cllr Garry Hopkins, Cllr Ron Stone, Cllr Mark Weston, Cllr Tess Green

*Officers:* Tracey Morgan, Richard Fletcher, Ian Pagan.

**1. Next stages in the process**

Councillor Weston explained that the Conservative Group were unable to support any final recommendations of the Working Group going forward as his Group were of the view that all recommendations should go back to the neighbourhood partnerships for discussion in the first instance.

He accepted the approach which had been followed by the Working Group but felt that the classification for disposals were "controversial" and "less controversial" rather than "non-controversial" and noted that other Group's preference was that only controversial disposals should be referred back to neighbourhood partnerships. He reiterated the view of his own Group that all proposals should be referred .

Councillor Stone expressed concerns at the implications of pursuing such an approach for all sites because of the danger of amendments to what had been accepted by the working group (and the danger of town and village green applications being lodged). Also there was no way of accounting for the lobby group(s) which might attend partnership meetings and sway the Partnership's decision taking. All of this had the potential of disrupting the funding stream which the Working Group's own set of proposals had assumed.

Councillor Weston noted this but felt that ultimately local people must be able to exercise their own voice in determining what happens to their local green spaces and parks.

Councillor Hopkins acknowledged the need for local involvement in the process but stressed that decisions must be taken at the lowest logical level. When it came to a conflict between what the city needed and what local people saw as in the best interest of their particular area, then someone needed to take a management decision based on the overall needs of the city.

Councillor Stone commented he had supported neighbourhood partnership involvement in the process but that during the Working Group's review he could see that the issues had changed since the original plans, due to budget considerations. He agreed that officers could not start on a 17 year programme without surety as to what the ground rules were for delivering that programme. The practical realities of the situation warranted the line which the majority of the Working Group were now taking. He thought that the Working Group had achieved ;

- Clarity about funding streams
- Clear criteria for the officers to work to
- A flexible process and flexibility to speed up or slow down the programme as

needs dictated.

Councillor Weston expressed his general satisfaction with what had been achieved by the Working Group in terms of agreement on funding streams, incentives for neighbourhood partnerships, parks standards and a commitment to ensure that new parks would be built. Notwithstanding the position of his Group in relation to reference of all proposals to neighbourhood partnerships, he undertook not to make an issue of the differences between the groups when the proposals were made public.

Councillor Green and Councillor Stone expressed the view that in terms of giving officers some form of assurance of a way forward, they support the proposals as they stand. It had been a difficult process but over the last few months, they had come to understand the issues more fully and to see the need to have a strategic view of the strategy as well as giving decision making back to the neighbourhood partnerships, therefore they supported the compromise.

The Working Group discussed play areas in parks and the levers available to ensure that provision was made. Richard Fletcher advised that when proposals were considered by neighbourhood partnerships, officers would stress the expectation that the standards laid down in the P&GSS would be adhered to. Partnerships would need to present a rational argument if they decided not to abide by the strategy. It was noted that the executive member could always call in any proposal where play provision had not been provided. The Parks Forum would also need to be involved.

The Working Group discussed that arrangements for taking forward the Group's proposals.

It was **AGREED** :

- (1) A final report would be drafted which would come, in the first instance, to the Working Group for sign off
- (2) the report should be split into clearly defined sections,
- (3) the report would remain a confidential document until it had been signed off by the Working Group
- (4) A copy of the final report should be supplied to the Parks Forum
- (5) The report should be submitted to full Council for debate
- (6) Cabinet would take a final decision, having considered and taken account of the outcome of the debate at full Council including any motion(s) passed
- (7) The report should be moved and seconded by Councillors Stone and Hopkins respectively

At this point in the proceedings, Councillor Stone was handed a message from his Group Office.

Councillor Stone explained that he had received instructions from his Group that the

Labour Group also wanted all proposals to be submitted to the neighbourhood partnerships in the first instance. He had been asked to speak to Councillor Weston about how to take this forward. He said that he thought that he had been pursuing his Group's line in discussions at the Working Group, which was that all proposed disposals which were regarded as contentious should be submitted to neighbourhood partnerships but that other non-contentious sites need not be.

Councillor Hopkins expressed his concern at the situation which had now arisen. He pointed out that the Working Group had undertaken a detailed review and the original proposals had been modified to take account of new information. The changes which had been agreed were a consensus view. He was worried that submitting all of the proposals to the neighbourhood partnerships would lead to changes being made by people who did not have detailed knowledge and understanding of the issues and a city wide perspective.

Tracey Morgan sought clarity as to the action which she should now take, now that there appeared to be no agreement.

Councillor Hopkins concluded that if there was now no agreement on a way forward, then presumably the existing Cabinet decision would have to stand and it would be for the other parties to challenge it, should they choose to do so.

After further brief discussion, it was;

**AGREED –**

That the meeting concludes and that a further session be convened to take place on Tuesday 27 September 2011 (3.00pm -5.00 pm)