



Bristol Parks Forum

representing resident led park groups and citywide organisations involved in protecting and improving Bristol's green spaces

Open Letter following Parks Forum Meeting 8th April 2017

Dear Cllr Craig,

This letter is the result of a unanimous vote taken at the Parks Forum meeting on 8th April.

At this meeting our members expressed disappointment, even anger, at your failure to attend any of the three meetings which have taken place since your appointment; they found this particularly insulting given your public statements to the effect that you are "working with the Parks Forum".

Major changes to the way the parks service is to be shaped and funded have been announced as BCC policy. Our members should have the reasoning behind this, together with its implications, explained to them by the responsible Cabinet member and be given the opportunity to express their views. At present this is being left to highly regarded parks officers, who have to take the flak without having taken the political decisions, which is very unfair on them.

We are obviously aware of the huge financial pressures facing parks all over the country, but if using volunteers is part of the solution, then we need to be included in the process.

We remain willing to work with you and parks officers to look at possible revenue raising and cost reducing options. However, all we have heard over the past few months has strengthened our view that your stated aim of achieving a 'cost-neutral' parks service by April 2019 is simply not attainable and if pursued will result in the maintenance of parks in Bristol effectively ending on that date.

There is no doubt an opportunity to significantly increase income with sufficient capital investment and time to build businesses but it is clear that the ideas brought forward so far (as presented to Scrutiny) are nowhere near reaching the £4.5m required to fill the gap.

We were told at the meeting that Parks are now working on an 18-month timescale to develop these proposals; this would leave less than a year before the parks budget is removed. Many of the suggestions will require much longer than this to agree and implement.

We are pleased that you have offered to meet us as a committee next month and look forward to discussing this further. Our next full meeting is on 24th June, 9.30am at Redcatch Community Hall, which we hope you will be able to attend to talk to all our members.

Bristol Parks Forum Committee

Mark Logan (Chair), Sam Thomson (Vice Chair), Rob Acton-Campbell (Secretary)
Derek Hawkins (Treasurer), Hugh Holden, Fraser Bridgeford, Sian Parry

For Bristol Parks Forum

4th May 2017