



# Bristol Parks Forum

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

## Open Letter following Full Council Meeting 14<sup>th</sup> November 2017

Dear Cllr Craig,

Further to your statement at the Full Council meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> November, we would like to formally thank you for listening to our concerns and accepting that it is not possible for parks to become 'cost neutral'.

We were also pleased to hear your acknowledgement both in the meeting and in an earlier radio interview of the huge amount of effort that volunteers currently put into helping look after Bristol's parks and green spaces.

As we said in our statement to the meeting; we understand the financial position that the Council is in.

£2.86m is still a huge budget reduction to implement over three years and, as you would expect, we have particular concerns over the proposals for 'reducing service provision'.

We are also concerned as to whether the planned level of income can be achieved. Some of the proposals will require significant upfront investment (eg car parking charges). There will also be issues around the management and collection of charges for commercial activities that will need to be resolved.

As discussed with you previously; we remain of the view that it is vital that a Head of Parks is recruited to manage the service through this period of change. In addition there will be a need for commercial and marketing expertise and experience if the full potential of the opportunities for income are to be realised.

The inevitable pressure to raise as much income as possible must, however, be tempered by the need to ensure that parks remain primarily a place to escape from the pressures of urban life. We will certainly challenge any proposals that will have significant adverse impacts on park users or park wildlife. The parks must also support community activities and it is important that not-for-profit, volunteer-run activities are treated separately from commercial events and allowed to continue; indeed they must be encouraged and supported.

It is clear, however, that you and Parks Officers are aware of these issues and open to having further discussions with us and others about them. We welcome the opportunity to attend the Parks Task & Finish Group meetings set up by Scrutiny and will engage with the team you have looking at the scope for additional events.

We will respond to the current consultation ourselves in detail and will also encourage our member groups to do so. We are pleased that there will also be some drop in sessions where the issues can be discussed.

We also feel that it is critical that a new positive forward looking vision for our Parks and Green Spaces is set out and implemented taking into account the results of the Consultation.

We look forward to further constructive discussions with you in the future, including the merits or otherwise of moving to a Trust model along the lines of that currently being proposed in Newcastle.

Bristol Parks Forum Committee

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

## **For Bristol Parks Forum**

**18<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

**Bristol Parks Forum Website: [www.bristolparksforum.org.uk](http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk)**

**Bristol Parks consultation: [www.bristol.gov.uk/parksconsultation](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/parksconsultation)**

