

## ***Mayoral Candidate response to Questions from Bristol Parks Forum***

### **From Daniella Radice (Green Party) - Received 10 September 2012**

Below are my answers to your questions. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

1. Do you agree that Bristol's green spaces are one of the City's greatest assets and that, given the proven health benefits, investing in their maintenance and improvements should be a high priority for the City?

Yes. I would also like to see more parks including exemplar food growing plots and more fruit and nut trees.

2. Do you support the 'Vision for Green Space in Bristol' and the eight objectives as set out on page three of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy (P&GSS) as adopted by the Council in 2007?

[The P&GSS can be seen at: [www.bristol.gov.uk/parkstrategy](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/parkstrategy) ]

Yes \* listed below

3. If elected, will you uphold the decisions made by Cabinet and Neighbourhood Committees in respect of possible disposal of sites covered by the P&GSS and guarantee that none of the sites will be sold except those where disposal has already been agreed by Neighbourhood Committees?

I take the view that disposals should not be made in the teeth of opposition from local residents, so will defer to these bodies. I would add that I believe that we should make neighbourhood partnerships more representative of their communities by making them elected in the short term. Some NPs may need more assistance in terms of community development and I would examine how these resources are distributed and used. At present they are evenly distributed but some NPs are perfectly able to organise themselves and others need a lot of help.

As a 'Green', I want to see the city retain its green space - it is one of the things that makes Bristol special.

4. Do you agree that successful Park Groups involving local people are vital to ensure that our parks and green spaces fully achieve their potential to benefit the health and well-being of Bristol's residents? What is your view of the way Neighbourhood Partnerships should work with Park Groups to achieve this?

Yes. I am aware, for example, that the Greater Bedminster Partnership has spawned a number of parks groups that have successfully obtained funding to substantially improve their parks and green spaces. I believe it is for neighbourhood partnerships to decide their own priorities without a mayor seeking to impose them. If they choose to prioritise parks, I would hope they act as 'enablers' - helping park groups to find further funding and to find ways to promote use of their parks.

5. If elected, will you ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to revenue budgets to ensure that the standard of maintenance in Bristol's Parks is improved year on year as envisaged by the P&GSS? Do you agree that appointing Park Keepers to individual sites, giving them a say in how the park is managed and encouraging them to engage with users and Park Groups is beneficial to the maintenance of parks and to the public perception of the way parks are managed?

I am sure you are aware that Bristol is facing substantial cuts to its budgets. As such, while I entirely endorse the principle of improving standards of maintenance, it would be inappropriate to guarantee funding levels at this stage. Regarding Park keepers, I would like to see parks groups have the opportunity to have more say over how parks are run, and therefore more ability to instruct park keepers. However, I am aware that in practice, voluntary groups are unlikely to have the time to have a detailed input. I can also give no guarantee that I would fund more park keepers, much as I would like to.

6. If elected, will you use your position as Mayor to work with Park Groups and Council officers to find sources of capital funding for Bristol's Parks to bring about the improvements needed to ensure that everyone has access to high quality green spaces in their neighbourhood?

As stated earlier, park groups have done a fantastic job in finding funding to improve them. As such, I would make officer time available to help parks groups to continue the good work.

7. Dog walkers are major users of Bristol's green space and dog walking has proven health benefits. While the majority of dog owners are responsible and clean up after their dogs; dog fouling is one of the greatest source of complaints from park users. As well as being unpleasant it presents a risk to health, particularly to children. Do you have any innovative ideas to address this issue?

As to dogs, the community may well come up with good ways of sharing parks so that children have dog free play spaces but there are areas where dogs are welcome.

As it is a citywide and not just a parks problem I would like to make it something that people are ashamed to let their dogs do, and would putting some time into a city-wide campaign at some stage during my term of office (without upsetting responsible dog owners of course). I have long admired the work of the Tidy Britain Group on this subject and would liaise with them in forming a campaign.

#### \*Objectives

1. Raise the quality of parks and green spaces.
2. Encourage greater use and enjoyment of Bristol's parks and green spaces by all sectors of the community.
3. Contribute to the wider planning of the urban fabric of the city by providing a range of good quality parks and green spaces, which play a significant role in meeting the needs of balanced and sustainable communities and enhancing the urban landscape, to help make Bristol a green and sustainable city.
4. Protect needed green space from development.
5. Rectify shortage in particular types of green space across the city to ensure all residents have access to formal, informal, natural, sports and children & young people's spaces.
6. Provide a clear basis for beneficial investment in green spaces - identifying those areas of Bristol where investment and improvements in green space are most needed - helping the council 'spend better'.
7. Encourage active and healthy life-styles and promote social inclusion.
8. Encourage community participation in the improvement and management of green spaces.

## From Geoff Gollop (Conservative) - Received 16 September 2012

1. Do you agree that Bristol's green spaces are one of the City's greatest assets and that, given the proven health benefits, investing in their maintenance and improvements should be a high priority for the City?

*Absolutely, the benefits of having these much treasured green spaces is so self-evident that frankly I am still amazed that so many city politicians and groups supported the wide spread disposal of so much of this vital asset.*

2. Do you support the 'Vision for Green Space in Bristol' and the eight objectives as set out on page three of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy (P&GSS) as adopted by the Council in 2007? [The P&GSS can be seen at: [www.bristol.gov.uk/parkstrategy](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/parkstrategy)]

*I do indeed but I will not be supporting any moves that would see Parks sold off against the wishes of the local community. The value of a park cannot be determined by a remote group of officers in the city centre, its worth and value is determined by the individuals who use it. It is over this issue where I believe that the original P&GSS fell down.*

3. If elected, will you uphold the decisions made by Cabinet and Neighbourhood Committees in respect of possible disposal of sites covered by the P&GSS and guarantee that none of the sites will be sold except those where disposal has already been agreed by Neighbourhood Committees?

*I will, being a firm supporter of localism it is just this kind of decision that I believe should be made by local communities.*

4. Do you agree that successful Park Groups involving local people are vital to ensure that our parks and green spaces fully achieve their potential to benefit the health and well-being of Bristol's residents? What is your view of the way Neighbourhood Partnerships should work with Park Groups to achieve this?

*I believe that a successful park group is essential to ensure that the right kind of development takes place to improve our green spaces. What we need to do is ensure that NPs are fully engaged with Park Groups where they are fully constituted. I will make it mandatory that before any investment is agreed for a park that the NP has sort the opinion of the Park Group in question. I want to see NPs and Park Groups working together as representatives of the community to ensure the best possible results for our parks.*

5. If elected, will you ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to revenue budgets to ensure that the standard of maintenance in Bristol's Parks is improved year on year as envisaged by the P&GSS? Do you agree that appointing Park Keepers to individual sites, giving them a say in how the park is managed and encouraging them to engage with users and Park Groups is beneficial to the maintenance of

parks and to the public perception of the way parks are managed?

*I will do everything I can to ensure that our Parks receive the highest level of funding that is possible, but you are asking me to commit to Council spending over three and half years when we don't know what the Government settlement is year on year. I will certainly be aiming to improve our parks every year but with the budget pressures being as they are I cannot be certain that this goal will always be achievable.*

*On the issue of Park Keepers, I think that they are vital and where possible I would like to see one park keeper per park, but we as a city are blessed with an abundance of green spaces so I cannot commit to each Green Space having its own keeper. The reality is that many of them will have to*

*manage several sites at any one time, but where they are in place the remit will be promote and improve the park whilst at the same time engaging with the community to make the most of the resources at their disposal.*

6. If elected, will you use your position as Mayor to work with Park Groups and Council officers to find sources of capital funding for Bristol's Parks to bring about the improvements needed to ensure that everyone has access to high quality green spaces in their neighbourhood?

*Yes, I will be aggressively pursuing external investment streams but will also be looking to ensure that a respectably amount of the Community Infrastructure Levy is used for just this purpose, again to be spent in accordance with the priorities of the community, park groups and NPs.*

7. Dog walkers are major users of Bristol's green space and dog walking has proven health benefits. While the majority of dog owners are responsible and clean up after their dogs; dog fouling is one of the greatest source of complaints from park users. As well as being unpleasant it presents a risk to health, particularly to children. Do you have any innovative ideas to address this issue?

*I have long believed that the answer to this problem is simply more dog wardens. Our existing complement are too few in numbers and so overstretched that their impact is minimal. I would look to recruit more dog wardens so that more parks can be surveyed and transgressors fined to the limit of the law. I would also like to see a system whereby the guilty parties are given a choice of either paying the fine or spending a suitable amount of time in a hi-vis vest cleaning up other peoples mess in the park.*

*We have provided and there is no excuse for not using them. Irresponsible dog owners beware.*

## **From Marvin Rees (Labour) - Received 19 September 2012**

Many thanks for your letter of 22 August, I am really sorry that I haven't been able to reply earlier. You asked for my response on a series of questions about Bristol parks. I set out my answers below:

1. Do you agree that Bristol's green spaces are one of the City's greatest assets and that, given the proven health benefits, investing in their maintenance and improvements should be a high priority for the City?

**Absolutely, green spaces are vital. Labour Councillors recognised this and opposed the original Lib Dem decision to sell them off. We need to invest in them to benefit local communities.**

2. Do you support the 'Vision for Green Space in Bristol' and the eight objectives as set out on page three of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy (P&GSS) as adopted by the Council in 2007?

**The 'Vision' document was produced under a Labour administration and if I am elected as Mayor, I will continue to endorse these objectives.**

3. If elected, will you uphold the decisions made by Cabinet and Neighbourhood Committees in respect of possible disposal of sites covered by the P&GSS and guarantee that none of the sites will be sold

except those where disposal has already been agreed by Neighbourhood Committees?

**Where Neighbourhood Partnerships have taken a local decision not to sell off any of their local green spaces, this decision will stand. Many people fought to retain their green spaces for the benefit of their communities, and I will respect this.**

4. Do you agree that successful Park Groups involving local people are vital to ensure that our parks and green spaces fully achieve their potential to benefit the health and well-being of Bristol's residents? What is your view of the way Neighbourhood Partnerships should work with Park Groups to achieve this?

**I am aware that a number of Parks Groups operate across the City, and working together with local residents, including the Neighbourhood Partnerships, will ensure that the best possible outcomes can be achieved. Local people understand what is required in their locality, and it is vital to listen to them. The recent successes in the Olympics and Paralympics underline the positive benefits of exercise, and using the many green spaces in the City to improve the health of residents must be of prime importance for everyone.**

5. If elected, will you ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to revenue budgets to ensure that the standard of maintenance in Bristol's Parks is improved year on year as envisaged by the P&GSS? Do you agree that appointing Park Keepers to individual sites, giving them a say in how the park is managed and encouraging them to engage with users and Park Groups is beneficial to the maintenance of parks and to the public perception of the way parks are managed?

**I will certainly look at the issue of funding for maintenance, and see how this can best be used. With regard to Park Keepers, I would want to look for best practice examples, and discuss these with user groups and residents to see what would work best in different areas of the City.**

6. If elected, will you use your position as Mayor to work with Park Groups and Council officers to find sources of capital funding for Bristol's Parks to bring the improvements needed to ensure that everyone has access to high quality green spaces in their neighbourhood?

**I will ask Council Officers to work with my office to find appropriate sources of funding for parks and green spaces. Many Neighbourhood Partnerships have already been allocated additional funding for improvements, and I would suggest reviewing how well this has worked by looking at real examples, and building on the outcomes**

7. Dog walkers are major users of Bristol's green space and dog walking has proven health benefits. While the majority of dog owners are responsible and clean up after their dogs; dog fouling is one of the greatest source of complaints from park users. As well as being unpleasant it presents a risk to health, particularly to children. Do you have any innovative ideas to address this issue?

**Having young children of my own I am acutely aware of the problem of dog fouling, and I will work with the Parks Department and residents to see if we can improve the situation. For example, we may be able to put pressure on parents through educating children in schools about the dangers presented by animal faeces, as well as the unpleasantness of having to clean shoes, buggy wheels, or wheelchairs that have become covered in it. Dog owners need to take full responsibility for their animals, and this will be enforced in future.**

**Keep in touch and best wishes**

**Marvin Rees**

**Labour's candidate for Mayor of Bristol**

## **From Dr Jon Rogers (Liberal Democrat) - Received 2nd October 2012**

**Thank you for your questions. Quality Parks and Green Space are crucial to a successful city.**

1. Do you agree that Bristol's green spaces are one of the City's greatest assets and that, given the proven health benefits, investing in their maintenance and improvements should be a high priority for the City?

**Yes.**

**As a both a councillor and a doctor I am very aware of the importance of having a good variety of accessible green space for mental and physical health, as well as the environmental, economic and social benefits. Even jobs and inward investment to the city are influenced by our green space.**

**I will continue to make Bristol's parks and green spaces a top priority.**

2. Do you support the 'Vision for Green Space in Bristol' and the eight objectives as set out on page three of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy (P&GSS) as adopted by the Council in 2007? [The P&GSS can be seen at: [www.bristol.gov.uk/parkstrategy](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/parkstrategy) ]

**Yes.**

**These objectives have underpinned my contributions to cabinet decisions on parks and green space issues over the last three years. In particular, the decision in February 2012 to invest £3.5m additional capital funds into our parks and green space. Coupled with continuing revenue investment we can raise the standards of our parks, balance provision across the city and encourage community participation. We will need significantly more investment over coming years.**

3. If elected, will you uphold the decisions made by Cabinet and Neighbourhood Committees in respect of possible disposal of sites covered by the P&GSS and guarantee that none of the sites will be sold except those where disposal has already been agreed by Neighbourhood Committees?

**Yes.**

**I have been part of the Cabinet that made that decision.**

4. Do you agree that successful Park Groups involving local people are vital to ensure that our parks and green spaces fully achieve their potential to benefit the health and well-being of Bristol's residents? What is your view of the way Neighbourhood Partnerships should work with Park Groups to achieve this?

**Yes.**

**In Ashley ward there are some excellent parks and green space groups, provided strong local direction to the improvement and management of our parks and green space. I think there may be benefit in having neighbourhood environment groups to help coordinate between the parks groups, the neighbourhood partnership, the parks forum and the council. It will depend on individuals and my experience is that one mechanism does not work everywhere.**

5. If elected, will you ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to revenue budgets to ensure that the standard of maintenance in Bristol's Parks is improved year on year as envisaged by the P&GSS? Do you agree that appointing Park Keepers to individual sites, giving them a say in how the park is managed and encouraging them to engage with users and Park Groups is beneficial to the maintenance of parks and to the public perception of the way parks are managed?

**Yes.**

**The introduction of Park Keepers has been a major plank of the Lib Dem approach to locally focussed improvements and community involvement. The capital and revenue implications of continually improving parks and green spaces are significant, hence our desire to see a robust and sustainable Parks and Green Space strategy.**

6. If elected, will you use your position as Mayor to work with Park Groups and Council officers to find sources of capital funding for Bristol's Parks to bring about the improvements needed to ensure that everyone has access to high quality green spaces in their neighbourhood?

**Yes.**

**I have a proven track record, with my Cabinet colleagues of reversing years of decline in our parks. We are investing in over 20 play areas in the current round of funding, and we have been innovative in finding such funding sources.**

7. Dog walkers are major users of Bristol's green space and dog walking has proven health benefits. While the majority of dog owners are responsible and clean up after their dogs; dog fouling is one of the greatest source of complaints from park users. As well as being unpleasant it presents a risk to health, particularly to children. Do you have any innovative ideas to address this issue?

**Owning and walking dogs is a great way for staying physically and mentally fit and active. Owning a dog does carry responsibilities.**

**As a doctor I know the devastating effects of toxacara canis. It is hard to believe that there are a small minority of anti-social dog owners that do not pick up their dog's poo in parks and on the street.**

**I don't have any innovative ideas. We need to use the mechanisms that we already have like education, through leaflets, posters, on dog litter bins, and indeed by word of mouth. It is also important that enforcement and fines are issued by dog wardens and police to those who fail to be educated.**

**I helped introduce many dog free areas to parts of our parks right across the city.**

## **From George Ferguson - Received 4th October 2012**

**1 – Do you agree that Bristol's green spaces are one of the City's greatest assets and that, given the proven health benefits, investing in their maintenance and improvements should be a high priority for the City?**

There is no doubt that many of the green spaces in and around the city are enormous assets in many ways. The 'blue spaces' within the city are of added benefit and should not be underestimated for the contribution that they make to the city as a whole:

Visually the numerous downs and surrounding hills provide a fantastic setting for the city, made more visible and attractive due to the surrounding topography. The blue spaces add sparkle and delight not just for their reflective quality but also the activities they attract.

Recreationally the green spaces are enjoyed by many Bristolians and visitors especially at weekends and during the various festivals. The 'blue' water areas within the city are also important and should be recognised as such and given similar status to our parks and open spaces.

Biodiversity can be enriched by looking after and enhancing the natural environment across the city. The green spaces across the city could be enhanced in many ways to achieve this to provide both visual and practical benefits.

In health terms there is plenty of research that demonstrates the importance of daily contact with the natural environment in terms of mental health (Reading University) aggressive behaviour & violence (Kuo & Sullivan) and general well being (Ulrich).

**2. Do you support the 'Vision for Green Space in Bristol' and the eight objectives as set out on page three of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy (P&GSS) as adopted by the Council in 2007?**

**Response:**

Yes, but I would go further, and suggest Bristol should have an "**Open Space**" strategy, not confined to parks - this would include:

- Parks
- Open land
- Semi-private land (i.e around tower blocks / other social areas)



- Private, communal play spaces (i.e as in Clifton)
- Temporary play spaces (i.e temporary road closures for residents)
- Blue spaces - water and watersides.

In response to the specific items identified by the Bristol Parks Forum 'Vision for Green Space in Bristol' and the eight objectives:

**1. Raise the quality of parks and green spaces.**

I agree, but in the context of an "Open Space" strategy as defined above.

**2. Encourage greater use and enjoyment of Bristol's parks and green spaces by all sectors of the community.**

We need to be careful how we define "all sectors" of community. I would prefer "responsible sectors of community". No motorbikes, no Pit-bulls chewing bark from trees, no irresponsible dog owners failing to pick up dog mess.

**3. Contribute to the wider planning of the urban fabric of the city by providing a range of good quality parks and green spaces, which play a significant role in meeting the needs of balanced and sustainable communities and enhancing the urban landscape, to help make Bristol a green and sustainable city.**

See initial response above.

**4. Protect needed green space from development.**

As a general principle I agree that needed green space should be retained and enhanced wherever possible, although we have to balance the need for inner city development and places to live with the desire to protect our Green Belt.

**5. Rectify shortage in particular types of green space across the city to ensure all residents have access to formal, informal, natural, sports and children & young people's spaces.**

I agree, but this is not always necessary by fully 'public' open spaces. Careful planning of future developments can provide efficient and safe private or semi-private environments for communal use which benefit residents, without affecting the wider provision of open space.

**6. Provide a clear basis for beneficial investment in green spaces - identifying those areas of Bristol where investment and improvements in green space are most needed - helping the council 'spend better'.**

This is an ambition I would support, especially in areas where the city currently lacks decent facilities.

**7. Encourage active and healthy life-styles and promote social inclusion.**

As part of my commitment to health and well-being throughout the city this would be an intrinsic part of my vision.

**8. Encourage community participation in the improvement and management of green spaces.**

Community engagement and local determination is fundamental to my vision of creating the future spaces neighbourhoods require, including communal orchards and local food growing initiatives.

3. If elected, will you uphold the decisions made by Cabinet and Neighbourhood Committees in respect of possible disposal of sites covered by the P&GSS and guarantee that none of the sites will be sold except those where disposal has already been agreed by Neighbourhood Committees?

I would not recommend actively looking to sell off any further sites. However, the process seemed to be all or nothing and maybe it should be given some further thought and time. For example some spaces are underused and uncared for because they aren't overlooked and therefore can attract undesirable behaviour. It might be that sensitive small scale partial development in some locations could provide an optimum solution - maybe funds could be raised by permitting a proportion of development to pay for green space improvements. Each site would need to be considered on its merits and the aspirations of the local community.

**4. Do you agree that successful Park Groups involving local people are vital to ensure that our parks and green spaces fully achieve their potential to benefit the health and well-being of Bristol's residents? What is your view of the way Neighbourhood Partnerships should work with Park Groups to achieve this?**

Yes, so long as the Park Groups and Neighbourhood Partnerships have strategies to engage with the whole community. Whilst toddlers and infants are fairly well catered for across the city, teenagers and young adults have few places to go. The 13-17 year olds should be encouraged to speak out for what they would like. There should be opportunities to engage school children and members of the local community through vegetable and fruit growing, bulb planting and suchlike - all of which can bring about further community cohesion and engagement i.e. planting an orchard >picking & harvesting apples > making cider/toffee apples/cake > Wassail... I would like to see every schoolchild in the city having 'ownership' of a tree.

**5. If elected, will you ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to revenue budgets to ensure that the standard of maintenance in Bristol's Parks is improved year on year as envisaged by the P&GSS? Do you agree that appointing Park Keepers to individual sites, giving them a say in how the park is managed and encouraging them to engage with users and Park Groups is beneficial to the maintenance of parks and to the public perception of the way parks are managed?**

Maintenance of parks and associated budgets should be reviewed. Many of our parks and open spaces were conceived decades ago when concerns for sustainability/biodiversity/health & well being etc were not issues for concern. We therefore have many large open spaces that are primarily laid to grass that is expensive to mow and maintain placing pressure on maintenance budgets. Whilst it is desirable to have some areas of mown grass for informal games/picnics/barbeques/football etc there are many areas that could be identified for reduced maintenance regimes such as slopes too steep for the sort of activities that require a mown grass surface. These areas could be sown with perennial flower mixes (similar/equivalent to those developed for the Olympic Village) that would not only require mowing just once a year, instead of 10 or 15 times, but would also increase the biodiversity and attractiveness of the area.

**6. If elected, will you use your position as Mayor to work with Park Groups and Council officers to find sources of capital funding for Bristol's Parks to bring about the improvements needed to ensure that everyone has access to high quality green spaces in their neighbourhood?**

We should work together not just to achieve high quality green spaces but also green streets. We should also focus on high quality 'blue' spaces and recognise their value and benefit to Bristolians and visitors to the city.

**7. Dog walkers are major users of Bristol's green space and dog walking has proven health benefits. While the majority of dog owners are responsible and clean up after their dogs; dog fouling is one of the greatest source of complaints from park users. As well as being unpleasant it presents a risk to health, particularly to children. Do you have any innovative ideas to address this issue?**

Most dog owners are responsible and management of dog fouling should be their responsibility, however a minority seem to turn a blind eye. Although difficult to enforce, one possible recommendation would be to Keep all dogs on their leads during the hours of darkness.

# **Mayoral Candidate response to Questions from Bristol Parks Forum**

**From Philip Pover - Received 4 November 2012**

Dear Bristol Parks Forum,

Thank you for the opportunity to give my answers (shown in green) to your questions (shown in dark blue below). I hope you won't mind that I have included your questions and references herein – I know that makes the file longer but, hopefully, the colour coding quickly shows my answers.

## **1. Do you agree that Bristol's green spaces are one of the City's greatest assets and that, given the proven health benefits, investing in their maintenance and improvements should be a high priority for the City?**

Absolutely! From the very beginning of my campaign, protecting Bristol's greenspace has been one of my top priorities (along with the protection of vulnerable *people*). [www.philip-pover.co.uk/greenspace.htm](http://www.philip-pover.co.uk/greenspace.htm) describes how I feel that the Mayor and Council should be protecting *all* our greenspace for the future – not selling it off. I think the sale of certain land plots in 2010 was damaging. Although the Council *manages* our greenspace, I personally don't believe it has the right to dispose of it; I see its role more as a caretaker, not owner.

Besides the *existence* of greenspace, I also believe that access should be free for all. There are health and social benefits to having freely accessible parks and green spaces throughout Bristol; plus ecological benefits which we seriously need these days. (My plans for transport are aimed at improving efficiency, and reducing congestion and hence pollution, but we still need our greenspace as well.) The Council have been selling off small plots of land, and nibbling corners off larger areas (eg Horfield) and I believe that has to stop.

## **2. Do you support the 'Vision for Green Space in Bristol' and the eight objectives as set out on page three of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy (P&GSS) as adopted by the Council in 2007? [The P&GSS can be seen at: [www.bristol.gov.uk/parkstrategy](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/parkstrategy)]**

**Vision for Green Space in Bristol** : *A City with good quality, attractive, enjoyable and accessible green spaces which meet the diverse needs of all Bristol citizens and visitors.*

Within twenty years everyone in Bristol will have easy access to:

- A high quality traditional park, staffed by a park keeper in daylight hours, with features such as mature trees, ornamental planting, seating, toilets and a café.
- Good quality playing fields and changing rooms providing for a variety of sports, games and exercises.
- Open, welcoming and well managed natural green space, either meadows, woodland or riverside, with protected wildlife habitats.
- Well-kept, well-maintained, imaginative and challenging play facilities, from traditional equipped playgrounds to natural play spaces, wheels parks or games areas.
- Well maintained green space for informal recreation.

Excellent ... *providing* it is not paid for by selling off other pieces of greenspace – otherwise we will end up with one high quality but very small lawn! Bristol is blessed with a lot of greenspace – I want to see that maintained, even enhanced, but *not* reduced.

Objectives of the strategy

1. Raise the quality of parks and green spaces. *Yes, definitely.*
2. Encourage greater use and enjoyment of Bristol's parks and green spaces by all sectors of the community.  
*Yes, but this will not be achieved by charging admission!*
3. Contribute to the wider planning of the urban fabric of the city by providing a range of good quality parks and green spaces, which play a significant role in meeting the needs of balanced and sustainable communities and enhancing the urban landscape, to help make Bristol a green and sustainable city. *Absolutely.*

4. Protect needed green space from development. Absolutely. But currently the Council is not doing that.
5. Rectify shortage in particular types of green space across the city to ensure all residents have access to formal, informal, natural, sports and children & young people's spaces.  
Yes, but that cannot be done by *reducing* the greenspace; nor should we rob Peter to pay Paul.
6. Provide a clear basis for beneficial investment in green spaces - identifying those areas of Bristol where investment and improvements in green space are most needed - helping the council 'spend better'.  
Absolutely. The Council is not always good at spending well – it certainly needs the guidance of local users. Sometimes it seems to spend significant amounts of money on things locals don't even want (eg Whiteladies Road).
7. Encourage active and healthy life-styles and promote social inclusion.  
Absolutely. A healthy Bristol is good for everyone.
8. Encourage community participation in the improvement and management of green spaces.  
Yes, certainly. Voluntary involvement should be encouraged and facilitated.

**3. If elected, will you uphold the decisions made by Cabinet and Neighbourhood Committees in respect of possible disposal of sites covered by the P&GSS and guarantee that none of the sites will be sold except those where disposal has already been agreed by Neighbourhood Committees?**

I would certainly not want to allow the disposal of any sites *without* Neighbourhood Cmte agreement. Page 42 talks of selling 'some green space' (est £41m!) and that 70% will be reinvested into parks and green spaces. However, unless the N-C had *very* good reasons for disposal, I don't want to dispose of *any* greenspace.

**4. Do you agree that successful Park Groups involving local people are vital to ensure that our parks and green spaces fully achieve their potential to benefit the health and well-being of Bristol's residents? What is your view of the way Neighbourhood Partnerships should work with Park Groups to achieve this?**

Yes, local involvement in the management and future planning of parks/greenspace is essential. Open and transparent consultation is needed to ensure that the right decisions are made *before* work is done. NP's and PG's should obviously be involved but I wouldn't like to exclude everyday users who don't happen to be involved in either. It would help efficiency if NP's and PG's discuss issues amongst themselves, perhaps organise any local voluntary effort etc, and then jointly liaise with the Council before decisions are made and spending committed.

**5. If elected, will you ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to revenue budgets to ensure that the standard of maintenance in Bristol's Parks is improved year on year as envisaged by the P&GSS? Do you agree that appointing Park Keepers to individual sites, giving them a say in how the park is managed and encouraging them to engage with users and Park Groups is beneficial to the maintenance of parks and to the public perception of the way parks are managed?**

All of that sounds great *but* it is likely, at least for the foreseeable future, that the overall budget will be reduced year on year. I am reluctant to make promises I may not be able to keep. I certainly *would* like to return to having park keepers who help maintain the site and interact beneficially with users but not at the cost of selling off other plots of greenspace. Once public land is disposed of it will likely never be available again so my *chief* goal is to retain public ownership. I would hope to save quite a lot of money by bringing the Council management structure and remuneration back to sensible levels and by cancelling projects which nobody actually wants or needs. However, it is not possible at this stage to put an exact figure on those savings and to see how they stack up against cuts imposed by central government. I'm sorry that's not an unequivocal Yes but we must be realistic.

Protecting greenspace is very high on my priority list. I would hope, via other measures, to improve business within the city (have you noticed all the empty shops and offices!) and hence to offset central government cuts by increasing income *without* increasing tax to residents, which I believe is already too high.

**6. If elected, will you use your position as Mayor to work with Park Groups and Council officers to find sources of capital funding for Bristol's Parks to bring about the improvements needed to ensure that everyone has access to high quality green spaces in their neighbourhood?**

Yes, absolutely. I would seek extra funding from central government (but remember they also have restrictions) but also innovative ways of finding other funding, nationally and internationally. Bristol is a fantastic place and should be able to attract more investment than it does. This is partly because *some* things, eg the increasing traffic nightmare and parking difficulties, militate against all the wonderful aspects of Bristol. I want to fix those bad things – for the good of those of us already here and also to make Bristol more attractive to outside investors. (I mean, for instance, making use of the existing underused shops, offices, facilities *not* by over-development nor by selling off more greenspace!)

**7. Dog walkers are major users of Bristol's green space and dog walking has proven health benefits. While the majority of dog owners are responsible and clean up after their dogs; dog fouling is one of the greatest source of complaints from park users. As well as being unpleasant it presents a risk to health, particularly to children. Do you have any innovative ideas to address this issue?**

I can't say they are *new* ideas but I would like to see a comeback of park keepers on-site and also hope that *early* education about responsible attitudes could be improved in primary and secondary schools, and directly to parents and other adults. Although dog licences are no longer required, I think that at least registration might be a good idea. I am not thinking of this as a means of revenue but rather to emphasize that responsibility over a pet's life is a serious business and that there are necessary duties of care, to the pet, to the environment and to other greenspace users. Coordinated guidance to new owners, linking them with local vets and suppliers, and highlighting the practical responsibilities should be beneficial to them and to the wider society.