

**Subject:** Petition - Full Council 14th Nov  
**From:** Mayor <mayor@bristol.gov.uk>  
**Date:** 30/11/2017 14:41  
**To:** "'rob@bristolparksforum.org.uk'" <rob@bristolparksforum.org.uk>  
**CC:** Democratic Services <democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk>

Dear Rob

Thank you for your petition and presentation at Full Council.

In response I would like to repeat Councillor Asher Craig's reply to the Parks motion, which is a comprehensive reply and update on the situation:

As you are aware the Council launched a city-wide consultation on the future of Bristol's parks and green spaces last week. Many of you will have noticed that this consultation asks the city to consider proposals to save £2.868million from its budget for day to day parks' services by April 2019 meaning that the services would be run in a very different way, working in partnership with communities to look at income generation opportunities, while also making savings and making services as efficient as possible. This approach means that cuts to parks services would be limited.

I have fielded many questions from the media and stakeholders about original budget proposals and decision in February to achieve cost neutral budget by 2020. Well I am delighted to announce my decision (supported by the Mayor and Cabinet) to reduce the level of cuts we were proposing to make to the Parks budget to the tune of £1.69 million. This decision was made in the light of the experience of other core cities and the evidence towards cost neutrality over 3 years just could not be achieved without totally decimating the service and that is not our direction of travel.

Officers will continue with consultations on proposals to cut £3million through a series of income generation opportunities and efficiency savings and the Parks Task & Finish Group, Parks Forum, Trees Forum and many other key stakeholders will be considering the establishment of a Parks and Trees Trust.

As you are aware the government has established a Parks Action Group and launched a £500k fund to help England's public parks and green spaces meet the needs of communities now and in the future. Bristol will be submitting a bid, once details become clearer.

During the last few months, I have visited Sheffield, Newcastle and held discussions with the Parks Forum and other key stakeholders who have been heavily involved in the current budget proposals.

Our priority is making sure that our parks and green spaces remain available for everyone in Bristol to enjoy and that includes maintaining free access. Working with partners across the city, our vision is to provide Bristol with good quality, attractive and enjoyable parks.

We want to be positive and ambitious for our parks whilst being clear that we have to work differently to maintain a high level of service citywide. There is a real opportunity here to come up with some inventive solutions to protect our parks for the future.

We will be listening closely to the feedback we receive from the public and community groups and I would encourage everyone to take part in the consultation.

Bristol's parks and green spaces are a vital part of the city's infrastructure. Parks are good for the physical and emotional wellbeing of citizens, as well as helping to make Bristol an attractive tourist destination.

Maintaining and investing in parks and green spaces is getting more and more difficult as council budgets become smaller. However, there is a real opportunity for a thriving city such as Bristol to come up with innovative approaches to sustain city green space for the future and I am confident that the Council and partners working

collaboratively.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many Friends of Parks Groups and volunteers for the significant contribution that you all make to our parks and green spaces across the city.

I really do value the support the Friends of Parks Groups and other volunteers provide alongside our routine services. Your contributions are to be applauded and I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank you and the Officers and Members of the Parks Forum for your on-going support and co-operation (and rightful challenge) during this difficult budget setting process.

As the Mayor has set out in our corporate strategy, the Council is committed to building a better Bristol which includes everyone in the city's success and this means prioritizing community development and working collaboratively as a City.

Kind regards,



**Marvin Rees**  
**Mayor of Bristol**

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