



Bristol Parks Forum
Minutes of the Meeting
In the Guangzhou Room at City Hall
on 23rd July 2025 at 6pm

Attended.

Committee:

Len Wyatt (Chair)

Frances Roberston

Kate Spreadbury

Sarah West

Parks represented:

Badock's Wood

Birdcage Walk

Cotham Gardens

Eastville Park

Northern Slopes Initiative

Oldbury Court Estate

Owen Square Park Pals

Redland Green Community Group.

Snuff Mills Action Group

Sylvia Crowe/Cumberland Basin South.

Troopers Hill.

Victoria Park Action Group

City Council Councillors attending:

Councillor Ed Fraser

Councillor Lorraine Francis

Councillor Stephen Williams

Bristol City Council officers attending:

Richard Fletcher.

Nu Tran – also works for Your Park.

Other non-Parks Group attendees:

Your Park: Rob Acton-Campbell; Phillipa Statter

Apologies -

City Council Public Health and Communities Policy Committee members – Cllr Cara Lavan
Parks Service – Nic Ferris, Kit Beaumont, April Coombs and Richard Ennion.

Your Park – Charlee Bennett

1. Chair’s Welcome. Len thanked council officers for organising a room in City Hall for the meeting. The City Hall venue is part of a BPF Committee idea to help park group representatives attend meetings – e.g., have meetings online, in City Hall, and in a community Hall, at different times of day and days of the week.

2. The minutes of the last meeting (April 2025) were circulated before the meeting.

Comments are invited before the 31st of July to save time at this meeting. The minutes of this and the April meeting will be signed off at the 18th of October meeting.

3. Report from the Committee – a summary of what the Forum Committee has been doing.

3.1 Actions from the April 2025 meeting, not covered in the rest of the meeting:

1. Parks Forum Committee to write to the Chair of the Public Health and Communities Policy Committee – asking for parks and green spaces to be represented on the task and finish group. Action – **Complete**. The Committee wrote in and made statement at Committee meeting. See item 3 below.

2. Discuss the action ‘Parks Forum to convene a meeting on encampments’ further at Committee. Discussion so far has been about how do we encourage better liaison between Groups and council staff; and how to get better performance in terms of delivery. **Ongoing**.

3 Action: Richard Fletcher to talk about council policy on tree planting at future BPF meeting. Action pending a decision on which meeting. **Ongoing**.

4 Action: Updating information on parks and green spaces groups – and changing details of groups on members page website – **Ongoing action**.

3.2 Report from the Committee:

The Committee met twice between the previous meeting and this one. The main discussions and decisions made are noted below.

1 Finance

Banking arrangements. The Lloyds bank account is now closed, thanks to Frances, Derek and Rob for arranging this. Groups that pay via Bank Transfer have been informed of the new Bank Account.

Monies held for Castle Park – In response to a discussion with Nic Ferris whether Park Work could undertake a project in Castle Park with the money, Nic had talked to the regeneration

project manager who had wondered if we might want to put the money into the bigger regeneration pot as they are planning a revamp of Castle Park. **Decision:** The Committee decided to hold on to money – and move it to a savings account related to our Current Nat West Account. We will seek to spend it on a single project once the regeneration has finished. **Action: Frances to open and move the Castle Park monies into a savings account.**

2 Meeting with the Public Health and Communities Policy Committee Chair, Councillor Stephen Williams. This was held in June with discussions on future funding of parks and green spaces and the Big Conversation; the St Philips Big Park idea; the role of education/awareness in raising the profile of parks and green spaces; and the future of our parks and green spaces generally.

3 Nature in Towns and Cities Stage 2 bid by the City Council. The City Council has been successful and is one of thirty towns and cities to receive funding. Bristol has been awarded a £984k grant.

4 Vehicle Dwellers issues – for a number of our groups this is of increasing importance. The Downs and other parks and green spaces, including those with “meanwhile” areas being used by Vehicle Dwellers. We have asked for views on whether we should be involved in this.

5 Review of links with similar organisations. We have been continuing links with Bristol Civic Society and Bristol Tree Forum during the Local Plan Examination. We have also been contacted by the Bristol Allotment Forum asking for a closer relationship. We are currently liaising on an informal basis as issues arise.

6 Working with City Council and Your Park. No further discussions have been held on how to work better together since the last Forum meeting. **To be carried forward.**

7 Local Plan – the BFP Committee are coordinating with Bristol Tree Forum and Bristol Civic Society on issues, especially the risk that areas of green space may lose their Local Green Space (LGS) status (the best protection in planning terms that a space can get from a Local Authority) as the Inspectors are challenging the how the council has used the ‘Local Green Space’ designation. The council may have to withdraw the LGS designation. BPF cannot intervene in this at the moment, but if this happens there will be a main modification consultation lasting six weeks which BPF will need to respond to quickly and strongly. In response to questions from the meeting, Len told us that the Inspectors criticism is not of the 2019 protection for open spaces scheme, but of the way that the council has interpreted the LGS designation in the Local Plan. In discussion the question was raised whether the designation of Important Open Space (IOS) in the previous local plan would still continue into the new one. Len confirmed that it would not. The new hierarchy would be Local Green Space, then Reserved Open Space and finally Incidental Open Space (also with the initials of IOS).

8 St Phillips Marsh Masterplan – also see item 5 below. Len has attended the consultation Hub in Temple Quay to talk with Bristol Temple Quarter

Team. He had also attended an online meeting with other community groups. The BPF committee has met with Councillor Brown, Chair of the Temple Quarter Partnership and Chair of Economy and Skills Policy Committee, and with the Dings Community Association, Nola Hersey.

We wrote in to the Temple Quarter Partnership about whether we could be involved in the development of the engagement material – a week before the current engagement began. The reply received from the Partnership suggests we can meet with the Masterplan team.

9 Social Media – work continues on setting up a Facebook group, for parks and green space groups.

10 Climate Change and Ecological Emergency – Laurence (Horfield Common) and Peter (Manor Woods Valley) have agreed to investigate “what parks groups can do in response to the climate change and ecological emergency”. The initial work undertaken includes consulting with groups and the national federation. The BPF Committee are due to meet with Laurence and Peter in August.

11 Review of Terms of Reference – we have pulled in examples from other Forums in the UK. The current thinking is that before we do this we may hold a special meeting in September on what the Parks Forum should be doing/look like in the future.

12 Blue/Green Infrastructure Strategy – The Committee has just started a conversation with the City Council officer – Naomi Chatfield-Smith. We will continue to liaise with the Council.

13. New Chair and committee from October 2025 – just to remind people that October is only three months away. Len will be standing down as Chair, a new Chair and Committee members are needed.

4. Presentation and discussion about the Task and Finish Group on Commercialisation in Parks and Green Spaces; and City Events.

4.1 Presentation from Richard Fletcher on the background to the Task and Finish Group.

The Task and Finish group is led by councillors who decide upon the agenda and will deliberate on various themes related to the commercialisation of Parks and Green Spaces in Bristol. The group will report to the Public Health and Communities Policy Committee on its proposals and recommendations in November 2025.

A task of the task and finish group is to look at the income from parks and green spaces. Bristol has 7000 acres of park and green spaces which are visited around 17 million times per year. The council spends £14.4 million a year on parks and green spaces whilst £11.7 million income is generated. There is a General Fund contribution of £2.7 million to make up the shortfall. This is against a background of daily challenge to local authority finances.

Income streams include:

Catering (now via a third-party provider)	£1,990, 867
Bereavement services	£1,832,660
Plant Nursery	£1,678,585
Property leases and licences	£ 852,127
Car Parking charges	£ 452,631
Internal recharges	£ 893,259

Events bring in £427,000 with the Downs being the highest earner at £295,000 and filming in parks bringing in £14,000. Some parks are being underutilised for events, for example Oldbury Court Park Estate.

Over £897,000 has been invested in income generating projects across parks and green spaces.

Nationally income from parks and green spaces has fallen from 22.5% (2016) to 19% (2021). The national aspiration is to ensure that the income reaches 24%.

4.2 Presentation from Councillor Ed Fraser, Chair of the Parks Commercialisation and Events Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Fraser represents Eastville ward and reminded the meeting that he has Eastville Park, two cemeteries, a sports park, and eight allotment sites on his doorstep.

The Parks Commercialisation task and finish group is an opportunity for councillors to focus on the matter in more depth than is possible in a council policy committee meeting. There is cross party representation on the group with three Green Councillors, two Labour councillors, one Liberal Democrat and one Conservative councillor. The group is meeting six times over a period of six months. The last meeting will be in mid-September, and the recommendations will be presented at the November Public Health and Communities Policy Committee. The recommendations are non-binding and would need to be approved via the usual council procedures.

In scope:

Projects that generate income

The structure of the Parks estate.

In late August the group will consider events and festivals and filming in Parks.

The last session is dedicated to internal Parks processes, how can we make these more effective? The group will also have a session to hear concerns about commercialisation and how the impacts will be managed. Councillor Fraser welcomes successful or not so successful stories, do email him directly on Cllr.Ed.Fraser@bristol.gov.uk or email Sarah West who is focusing on commercialisation for BPF at info@bristolparksforum.org.uk

Bereavement services, car parking and licensing are out of scope as they are considered by different committees. The Eastville Lido proposal and Ashton Court Mansion are also not in scope.

Questions and discussions:

BPF will include any updates in regular mailings. The committee is consulting BPF members and will attend a meeting with the task and finish group as well as drawing up a statement.

Work undertaken two years ago with Your Park, the Schumacher Institute and Bristol RSA found that parks are not sustainable in the long term, and we need to look outside for long term and sustainable forms of income which do not damage the asset base. The deterioration of parks can become normalised. Is the City boundary the right boundary for that consideration? People from outside of Bristol regularly use Bristol parks and vice versa.

Councillor Francis said that we need to maintain the principle of what Parks are for, referring to 'Eastville Lido' is unacceptable, the lido does not exist. Councillor Fraser acknowledged that there is much 'noise' about the Lido in the media, but it does not come under the scope of the Task and Finish group.

BPF members shared personal experiences, including noise pollution in Horfield from Love Saves the Day in Ashton Court. This would be audible at Southmead Hospital and surely has an impact on patients as well as local residents and park users nearer the event.

A member queried whether we should be worried about parks being privatised? They felt strongly that Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces must stay within the Council estate. There is an impression that Castle Park could become a privately funded space under a conservancy, and this would not be welcome.

It was suggested that we do not need Parks to be revenue neutral. Council tax should be used to make up any shortfall between expenditure and income.

Councillor Williams explained that the task and finish group is not set up to totally remove the gap between income and expenditure or to remove the need to use the general fund contribution. Rather than look for ways to remove the deficit. The group is looking for creative ways to get people into parks which bring in income. General fund contributions are supported by the One City principle of prevention for good public health. There is also a task and finish group set up by the Public Health and Communities Policy Committee looking at libraries.

Question – has the task and finish group approached other cities to gain information about others' approaches? Councillor Fraser said that both UK and international cities have been approached.

A Forum member noted that the new café contract with Compass can affect what other concessions come into parks. It is better for there to be no competition between existing and new provision.

Victoria Park Action Group (VPAG) told us about their experience with how the organisation for the Krazy Races was undertaken. Richard Fletcher explained that the council actively promotes events in the park as part of the principle that parks are for everyone. Councillors Plowden and Fraser will attend the Krazy Races to observe the event and traffic management. VPAG were not told of the event until very late in the day and had to ask a lot of questions to find out details of what was actually happening. Members had thought that Friends Groups would be consulted as part of site permissions, but it appears that this is not the case, the council's expectation is that the event organiser should consult Friends groups and adapt their plan accordingly. The council needs to work with Friends groups and should track whether this has been done as part of the site permissions process.

Eastville Park told the meeting about their experience of events. Love Saves the Day and Tokyo World made a donation to Eastville Friends of the Park as part of the ticket price, this helped fund the new play area. The surrounding community was unhappy however – noise and traffic. Funderworld undertook a late and small consultation whilst the consultation with Kinetic World was good. Oldbury Court Estate have a close working relationship with Party in the Ponds, but this is organised by local people.

Richard Fletcher reminded us to give feedback to the council events team, if there has been no or minimal consultation or adaptation of plans the events team can tell the event provider that they will not return to Bristol.

The meeting noted that there is a big difference between a ticketed event, which necessitates fences and a barrier, and a payment free event. A Park can be out of use for a week for a big event. A recent event in Queen Square saw the space out of use for two weeks for a two-night event. There was considerable grass damage.

Richard Fletcher said that Parks officers do not have to tell Friends Groups that events are being considered. It is up to the event provider to put up flyers informing people. Friends of Badock's Wood reported that they were told of an alfresco disco adjacent to Badocks Wood which had applied for permissions that both the Friends group and the local residents were not made aware of. However, FOBW usually was consulted / informed by their local Parks Officer, and they consider that Friends group helping the Council look after the parks and open spaces, it was important that Parks Officers did work and liaise with Friends groups including on activities in their local open space.

Councillor Fraser said that the task and finish group will look into the question of when Friends groups should be told.

5. Response to St Phillips Marsh Masterplan consultation – meeting views needed to inform the Forum’s response.

Sarah West chaired this item whilst Len Wyatt presented the item.

Len explained that the Committee has been working for a number of years to find a way to get recognition of the potential benefits to people and wildlife of a big park in the St Phillips area. This is one of the few areas left in Central Bristol which does not have a formal Masterplan yet. There are planning applications and buildings going up already. BPF made representations on the need for a big park to the Local Plan Examination.

The Bristol Temple Quarter project includes St Phillips Marsh and is organised by a partnership of relevant bodies, including those who own land in the area or those involved in terms of planning and funding. An engagement process started in June, with a response due in by 31st July on a Masterplan which shows the general layout and some detail of how the development could be taken forward. The partnership is preparing for a final consultation on the Masterplan in October – to be followed up by a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in early 2026. This SPD has the status of the Local Plan – so is a really important document.

Len took us through three diagrams circulated with the agenda which showed the emerging ideas for green spaces. The BPF committee feels that none of the approaches is enough for the people who will be living in the potential 10,000 homes planned for the area or nearby. The Committee has had a series of detailed discussions about what to do next, should we continue with the Big Park approach, or seek the best of all three scenarios? BPF is still supporting improvements to the existing parks and green spaces, including a linear park along the New Cut and within development green space.

The Committee suggested that BPF go for an updated Big Park approach, delivered at scale. The Dings Community Association support this approach and point out that green spaces improve residents’ sense of agency and control over their environment, so improving wellbeing and encouraging community connection. Without a significant park, the area will be one of high-rise buildings with no real open spaces. Len explained the details behind the BPF committee thinking:

- **One Big Park – which is a multifunctional green space which provides a range of benefits to people and wildlife.**

Re-emphasising health and well-being benefits delivered which can be delivered at scale (shade, close to nature etc); benefits to value of property – points we have already raised and are well-known.

Plus – having a green space large enough for people to establish areas where they have control/influence for multiple types of activity including meeting with relatives and like-minded people.

This will be critical if the intensity and height of development continues as it is now; and people

feel that they have little control/influence over their physical environment. An example mentioned to us of this was Eastville Park. People already need to travel a long way to enjoy a park and green space. A big green space can, if designed right, add to the city as a whole. We believe that smaller areas and linear parks cannot deliver these benefits.

- **The masterplan should depend on what is best for current and future communities (e.g.: families and students) before the community arrives. It should also benefit wildlife at the same time.**

There is a strong view that even with developments already being built, designs must consider current and future communities – before those communities arrive.

- **The location?**

We cannot specify a location as we do not have the information of what is where and who owns what – but suggest that a location should be connected to existing and future green spaces along canal and river; and connect to existing spaces within infrastructure land holdings for wildlife to use.

- **Work with the partnership to co-produce the Masterplan?**

The letter from the Partnership suggests a meeting with the Master planning team. Should we continue with the offer?

Questions from the meeting

Is the committee aware that, in the two engagement events held, the idea of a central park was not chosen? This relates to a ‘coin drop’ exercise where people put a coin in a jar to indicate their preferred options. Perhaps people do not have enough information to make an informed choice? People are focusing on Sparke Evans, perhaps not realising that it is used by Paintworks residents and will not be adequate for the population of the new builds.

We need to be clear that the Big Park is bigger than the green space designated in the plans. Whatever happens, the river edge must be a green way for flood protection.

Len responded that we will not get a Park as big as Eastville, but it is useful to talk about the number of people in relation to the size needed.

Eastville is 39 hectares, Sparke Evans is 2.9 hectares, and St Georges 15 hectares. The ‘large park’ in the masterplan is smaller than Sparke Evans. When we look at any of the scenarios described, all are inadequate for the needs of potentially up to 22,500 people.

Questions were asked about what is currently on the site? Answer, predominately industrial and commercial buildings; and about distances to other parks. Len said that in the Local Plan discussions there was an idea that St Phillips/Temple residents could use Netham Park, Len has checked all these routes accompanied by a neighbour and child in a push chair for realism. For instance Netham is a 15-minute walk away, but the current playground is a further

15 plus minutes up a steep hill which makes it prohibitive for many park users.

We were reminded of the reason Eastville Park was built, to respond to the poor health and living conditions of working-class areas in Bristol. We are building the slums of the future if we build without enough green space. Green spaces build a sense of civic responsibility and prevent poor mental and physical health.

The Forum meeting confirmed its support for BPF to push for a Big Park in the development area of Bristol Temple Quarter.

Len then explained that with the meeting's support for a Big Park, the committee will draw up a press release to get people talking. A response to the engagement will be submitted by the Committee. Groups can of course reply on their own behalf. See Bristol Temple Quarter website details already circulated. <https://www.bristoltemplequarter.com/>

Action: Committee to draw up a press release and a response to the engagement.

6. Any Other Business:

Friends of Birdcage Walk: Where are parks sourcing tabards and hi vis clothing? Members advised that BCC Parks volunteer officers have tabards with 'Park lead volunteer' on. If more are needed there are cheap options online.

7. Dates and locations of meetings in 2025

Saturday 18th October – Eastville Park, AGM and General Meeting - confirmed.

7.45pm Meeting Closed

Kate Spreadbury

9th September 2025