



## **Agenda Item No. 8**

### **St George Neighbourhood Partnership (SGNP) Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2014**

**Report of: Rob Acton-Campbell – Environment Group.**

**Title:** Environment Subgroup

#### **Recommendation:**

- 1- Note general progress update (Rob Acton-Campbell)
- 2- NC to Approve Proposal to Create St George NP Environment Fund (Rob Acton-Campbell)
- 3- NP to approve Proposal to spend Green Capital Fund (Rob Acton-Campbell)
- 4- Note Grounds Maintenance Service update (Nick Christo)

#### **Part 1: General progress update**

- 1- The Environment Sub-Group met on Thursday 21st August. Present were representatives from Friends of St George Park, Friends of Dundridge Park and Friends of Troopers Hill. We were pleased to welcome John Atkinson (JA) to his first sub-group meeting in his new role.
- 2- Concerns were again raised about the standards of maintenance in parks, particularly St George Park, with it noted to be significantly worse than Brandon Hill which still has a park keeper. Concerns were also raised about the wall forming the edge of the lake and signs of the path at the edge of the lake subsiding. At Dundridge the swings removed for health & safety reasons have still not been replaced, the delay appears to be procedural within BCC. JA was asked to raise these issues with Parks officers.

- 3- There was again detailed discussion on the issue of fishing and the permit scheme; at the time of the meeting 50 permits had been issued. The current trial runs until 28 Feb 2015. JA confirmed that the measure of success would be whether there had been a reduction in wildlife injuries. It was pointed out that it would be difficult to get an accurate comparison with last year because there was no longer a Park Keeper monitoring the situation and logging incidents.
- 4- It was noted that enforcement of the close season had been relatively successful since the public then knew that anyone fishing was breaching the permit regulations. Enforcement of the permit scheme at other times needed much more proactive action from BCC and the Police. It was questioned whether this was sustainable in the long term.
- 5- It was agreed that the NP should be asked for its view on whether to continue the scheme at the December meeting. JA will prepare a report for that meeting.
- 6- JA is now responsible for allocating work to the Community Payback team, sessions have been booked for Dundridge Park & Troopers Hill. There was the possibility of using Payback to clear an area in St George Park for the planting of whips as part of the Tree Pips Project. Anyone with suggestions for work that Community Payback could do should contact JA.
- 7- There was some discussion on the future role of the sub-group and it was agreed that the sub-group would be happy to take responsibility for the environment actions in the proposed Neighbourhood Partnership Plan.
- 8- The group also supported the idea of an element of the proposed NP single budget being allocated to street and park planting schemes with the sub-group making recommendations on how it should be allocated (see separate proposal). It was noted that the flower meadows now looked good following a slow start.
- 9- There was a discussion over the provision of play equipment in parks. It was agreed that in order to ensure as wide a spread of spending over St George as possible (given the previous investment in St George Park) that the sub-group would support the allocation of S106 money to improve provision at Dundridge. Action also needs to be taken to provide improved play equipment in the NE area of St George. JA was also asked to chase quotes for other S106 works and progress on previously approved projects at St George Park and Dundridge.

- 10- There were also discussions about the Green Capital funding, Health & Safety training for volunteers and a general discussion about street cleaning (which was noted to be better in St George than in Easton).

## **Part 2: Proposal – St George NP Environment Fund**

- 11- Following the Cabinet decision to unringfence devolved budgets. The St George NP will have an annual budget of approximately £38,647 plus any underspends and CIL. Most of this is committed for this financial year.
- 12- The Neighbourhood Partnership is asked to allocate an element of its new unified budget to an 'Environment Fund'. The Environment sub-group would make recommendations as to how this should be allocated to the Neighbourhood Committee. This would be used for items of the type currently funded by the Clean & Green Fund (including tree planting, planting out the planters in Kingsway precinct, funding Community Payback etc) with the addition of planting schemes such as wildflower meadows or hanging baskets that are currently funded through Wellbeing.
- 13- Any applications received by Wellbeing for this type of project would be passed to the Environment sub-group.
- 14- This would allow the sub-group to have an overview of the spending. It would also be clear that if some of the planting can be taken on by businesses then the NP can fund additional items instead eg if someone was to pay for planting the Kingsway planters then the group might fund hanging baskets on the lamppost. Spending would be based on the priorities in the new Neighbourhood Partnership Plan.
- 15- Spending from Wellbeing for planting in 2014 has been £2,595. The majority of this came from the 2013/14 budget. Generally money needs to be allocated from each year's budget for plants to be ordered for the following Spring/summer.
- 16- In addition £1,500 has been ring fenced as Clean & Green. We have also had additional funding for Community Payback sessions. The decisions on this spending were delegated by the NC to the Environment Officer (formerly Denise James).
- 17- To keep the funding at the same level for planting in 2015 then £2,595 would need to be transferred from the current Wellbeing Fund to the Environment Fund. The Wellbeing Fund will have a minimum of £5,400 remaining depending on decisions taken at this meeting.

- 18- The NC is asked to agree that £2,595 (or other sum they consider appropriate) is allocated from the Wellbeing element of the unified budget to the Environment fund for 2014/15. Final decisions on spending this money would then be made by the NC on recommendations based on the Neighbourhood Partnership Plan from the Environment sub-group.
- 19- The NC is asked to agree to continue to delegate decisions on the spending of £1,500 to the Neighbourhood Officer (currently John Atkinson). Sums already allocated from the Clean & Green budget will be considered to have been taken from this sum.
- 20- It is anticipated that the Environment sub-group would make proposals for spending to the December NP meeting so that orders can be placed in good time for planting displays in the spring/summer of 2015.
- 21- The NC & NP are asked to agree in principle that from 2015/16 a sum of around £4,100 should be allocated to the Environment Fund from the unified budget of which the spending of £1,500 would be delegated to the Neighbourhood Officer.

### **Part 3: Proposal – Green Capital Fund**

- 22- The Partnership has been allocated £10,000 for projects in St George from the 2015 Green Capital Company. The funding is aimed at projects which deliver against one or more of the following priorities:
- Increasing people's access to affordable, healthy, sustainable food
  - Enabling more people to access affordable energy
  - Inspiring and educating people about nature and how to care for it
  - Providing activities and initiatives that help people re-use, repair, and share materials
  - Helping people discover more sustainable transport (e.g. walking, cycling or public transport)
- 23- There is no expectation that the project will meet more than one priority.
- 24- The programme of activities funded by the Neighbourhood Partnership fund should take place between 1st January 2015 and 31st December 2015, with activities spread out throughout the year across Bristol.
- 25- The money can either be allocated to community groups or the NP can proactively allocate their funding to activities in their neighbourhood where there is a clearly identified need or to enhance existing activities for Green Capital year (i.e. without a group applying through the application process).
- 26- A further £110,000 remains to be allocated to NPs from this fund.

- 27- The St George NP has asked for applications from community groups to use this funding via the website and at the Forum.
- 28- The NP is asked to agree that the Wellbeing sub-group be asked to assess any applications alongside those for Wellbeing Grants at its next meeting and make recommendations to the next NP meeting in December.
- 29- There have been discussions at both the Environment and Traffic & Transport sub-groups about a 'Green Map' for St George showing green spaces and off road links between them using public rights of way and other paths or back lanes. Some of these routes are in need of improvement to encourage their use for walking (and cycling where appropriate).
- 30- The NP is asked to agree in principle that a project developing a 'Green Map', identifying improvements necessary and if funds are sufficient making these improvements, would be appropriate use of the Green Capital funding.
- 31- Should this be agreed then the Environment and Traffic & Transport sub-groups would work with the Neighbourhood Co-ordinator to develop the project such that any money not allocated to community groups at the December meeting could be allocated to fund (or part fund) this project.

#### **Part 4: Grounds Maintenance Service Update**

- 32- There is a consultation taking place that will help residents and local groups, through the Neighbourhood Partnerships, to influence the new Grounds Maintenance Contract. The consultation is not prescribed in that it has no closing date – the Parks service would like a continual dialogue with Neighbourhood Partnerships so that influencing and contact changes can take place throughout the year. During the months of September and October, the Neighbourhood Officer will be consulting with local park groups, users and other interested bodies to understand their priorities so that the new contract can reflect this as best as possible.
- 33- Things that can be influenced include: areas to be weeded sprayed, grass cutting regimes, litter collections / litter picking, a site presence (park keeper) or not, which shrubs to maintain, what ornamental planting should take place, frequency of hard surface sweeping, toilet opening / closing. The consultation will also ask if there are any aspirations for the green space, e.g what doesn't take place in the park that the partnership would like to see.
- 34- Once information has been gathered through this initial consultation, the Environment subgroups / Neighbourhood Partnerships will establish themes for

the whole NP area, e.g. littering, ornamental planting etc. This will become the base in which the Parks Service will build the new contract around for launching in February 2015. Thereafter, the Parks service will want to allow local communities to influence and introduce local park aspirations, e.g number of bins, different types of grass cutting regimes, introduction of bulb planting etc.