

Communities Scrutiny Commission Agenda



Date: Monday, 3 October 2022

Time: 1.00 pm

Venue: City Hall, College Green, Bristol

Distribution:

Councillors: Barry Parsons (Chair), Henry Michallat (Vice-Chair), Amirah Cole, Kerry Bailes, Amal Ali, Martin Fodor, Emma Edwards, James Scott and Gary Hopkins

Issued by: Bronwen Falconer, Democratic Services

City Hall, 3rd Floor Deanery Wing, College Green, Bristol, BS1 5TR

Date: Friday, 23 September 2022



Agenda

7. Public Forum

Up to 30 minutes is allowed for this item

(Pages 3 - 17)

Any member of the public or Councillor may participate in Public Forum. The detailed arrangements for so doing are set out in the Public Information Sheet at the back of this agenda. Public Forum items should be emailed to scrutiny@bristol.gov.uk and please note that the following deadlines will apply in relation to this meeting:-

Questions - Written questions must be received 3 clear working days prior to the meeting. For this meeting, this means that your question(s) must be received in this office at the latest by 5pm on **Tuesday 27th September**

Petitions and Statements - Petitions and statements must be received on the working day prior to the meeting. For this meeting this means that your submission must be received in this office at the latest by 12.00 noon on **Friday 30th September**



Communities Scrutiny
Commission
3rd October 2022
Public Forum



Public Forum Questions

Ref	Name	Topic
PFQ1	Ron Heath, Allotments Forum Vice Chair (Attending)	Allotments and Food Growing Strategy Update Report.
PFQ2-11	Frances Robertson, Secretary - Friends of Badock's Wood (Attending)	Parks and Green Spaces Strategy Update Report
PFQ12-19	Bristol Parks Forum Committee (Len Wyatt attending)	Parks and Green Spaces Strategy Update Report

Public Forum Statements

Ref	Name	Topic
PFS 1	Martyn Cordey (Cllr Lorraine Francis attending to present Public Forum)	Parks and Green Spaces Strategy Update Report
PFS 2	Frances Robertson, Secretary - Friends of Badock's Wood (Attending)	Parks and Green Spaces Strategy Update Report
PFS 3	Bristol Parks Forum Committee (Len Wyatt attending)	Parks and Green Spaces Strategy Update Report
PFS 4	Julia Victor, Friends of the Western Slopes (Not attending)	Parks and Green Spaces Strategy Update Report



Public Forum Questions

Questions 1

PF Question 1:

Reference: Item 11 - Allotments and Food Growing Strategy Update Report.

Does the Strategy include those allotment sites which are managed by associations bearing in mind that these sites operate under terms of agreement/lease with the City Council? And if so, could an additional reference be made in the document specifying that the Strategy includes associations?

Officer Response provided by Allotments and Smallholdings Manager

There are five Associations managing 19 sites across Bristol, this is in addition to the 96 sites directly managed by Bristol City Council Allotments Service. The Strategy will include the allotment sites managed by Associations, as they lease statutory land which is protected under the Allotments Acts, to measure the supply and demand of plots across Bristol. We are in the process of collecting data from all the Associations, to include the number of plots available, current tenants and waiting list figures in the Strategy.

The Associations rent allotment land on full management lease or partial management lease, using their own Tenancy Agreements, which tend to align with the terms & conditions set out in BCC's own Allotment Tenancy. Although the Associations have autonomy on how they manage their allotment sites, there is an expectation that they will adopt the themes of the Allotment Strategy, in some cases they already meet or exceed our ambitions for sustainable food production.

Full management lease:

- Horfield & District Allotment Association – 4 sites
- Hotwells & District Allotment Association – 6 sites

Partial Management lease:

- Bristol East Allotment Association – 7 sites
- Ashley Vale Allotment Association – 1 site
- Ashley Down Allotment Association – 1 site

PF Questions 2 - 11

Reference: Agenda item 10 - Parks and Green Spaces Strategy Update Report

2. The documents talk about 'Parks and green spaces'. What is the difference between these two categories? Are there green spaces which are not parks (perhaps sports fields, nature reserves) and are there parks which are not primarily green spaces? Why does the strategy not describe the range of types of spaces included under the strategy and thereby recognising that different spaces have different needs?

Officer Response provided by Parks Development Manager

There is no legal definition to distinguish between a park and a green space. The dual label encompasses spaces that have facilities and a character that people typically would describe as a park (e.g., children's playground) v more informal greenspace that may have fewer facilities but provide important recreational benefit including spaces that may be predominantly designated and managed for nature.

The Parks and Green Space Strategy (PGSS) recognises that parks have differing and unique characters and functions in meeting people's needs with themselves are varied: to explore nature, to exercise, to meet friends, to spend quiet contemplative time, to explore heritage etc.

3. Why is management for nature not a prime objective? Why is there a lack of acknowledgement of the fundamental importance of parks and green spaces as green, natural spaces in their own right as it seems to have been ignored? Surely this is what separates a "park or green space" from other kinds of public realm, playspace, recreational facility?

Officer Response provided by Parks Development Manager

Parks are multi-functional spaces providing a variety of benefits – as outline above. Nature is an important element alongside other primary land use such as land for sport pitches, playgrounds or formal gardens – spaces that may also have wildlife value. We have identified distinct land use typologies to describe these primary functions, this includes Natural Green Space (whether designated or non- designated space where the overriding character is a place to experience nature). Overall, 55% of all land that is publicly accessible green space is Natural Green Space.

4. How will this strategy protect green natural spaces, both designated – e.g. local nature reserves, and non-designated when it doesn't even acknowledge there is a wide range of types of green spaces ranging from large parks with formal and informal areas, 13 Local Nature Reserves, other wildlife areas, small pockets of green spaces etc?

Officer Response provided by Parks Development Manager

The PGSS fully recognises the important role that parks and green space play in providing space for nature and giving people the opportunity to experience and enjoy nature.

The PGSS will define how nature spaces are protected – including legal designations.

5. How will this strategy protect existing green spaces?

Officer Response provided by Parks Development Manager

Parks and green space are protected through a variety of statutory and non-statutory means. These include (not a comprehensive list): international and national nature designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, designated Sites of Nature Conservation Interest designation and national

heritage designations such as Registered Parks and Gardens. The National Planning Policy Framework allows Local Green Space to be identified and protected for community benefit. The PGSS identifies minimum standards for the quantity and accessibility of green space (minimum distance to types of green space from people's homes) – these are material consideration where development to cause or worsen an existing deficit. The new PGSS retains the minimum access standards of its predecessor.

6. Why does the mapping section not include an assessment of what is already there?

Officer Response provided by Parks Development Manager

The PGSS will be accompanied by detailed mapping of parks and green space.

7. How will the previous work of Parks Assessment undertaken a few years ago be updated to provide baseline data?

Officer Response provided by Parks Development Manager

Not clear which 'previous assessment' is being referenced. The new PGSS updated any data on parks and green space.

There will be a new and updated parks quality framework and a process laid out for how this will be implemented.

8. Not all "parks and green spaces" might fit into the Council's concept of "multifunctionality of parks". What does this actually mean?

Officer Response provided by Parks Development Manager

Parks provide a wide range of benefits. Specific parks may provide obvious multiple benefits (experience of nature, playground, café, sports area, informal grassland etc), whereas other parks / green space may be less multi-functional depending on e.g. character, facilities, location.

9. This point is in the presentation:

"Community & Shared Solutions

- We will empower park users, volunteers, and civil society groups to engage in park management and development. Council services will work collaboratively with local partners to mobilise the capabilities, resources and knowledge of stakeholders and unlock the benefit of parks."

What does it mean in plain English? What partners, what capabilities and resources, what did the person who wrote this have in mind when they wrote it?

Officer Response provided by Parks Development Manager

Parks are community assets. The Parks service recognises the vital role communities play in the provision of parks across the city.

We recognise that residents and communities have a role to make parks better. This may come in the form of a volunteer litter-picking to a community charity running a service or taking over a building. Our aim is to try and find ways to make it easier to do these things where we can.

The PGSS will be written in plain English.

10. Approximately 50% of those taking part in the online strategy workshops using something called Miro and therefore being able to “have their say” were from Bristol City Council. Why were the stakeholder workshops heavily weighted with BCC staff?

Officer Response provided by Parks Development Manager

Parks are relevant to several council departments including sustainability, planning, property management, children services, etc. as such in developing the strategy it was important that their views were included.

We invited a wide variety of stakeholders to take part in the workshops.

We do not have the resources to carry out the extensive engagement processes we once did and need to take the best approach possible considering this. We have also been able to consider the results of surveys and consultations carried out by others or at other times.

11. As a Parks group – i.e. a Community Group - we note that there are points made regarding the need for “a simple permission processes and clear points of contact within the Parks Service [and] a less risk-averse approach to management and more emphasis on community led solutions” in both reports. This was pushed hard by one non Parks Dept Council officer at the workshops who seemed oblivious to the existing system. The point made at the workshops and recorded on Miro, that the existing system is fit for purpose, especially in terms of ensuring both organisers and attendees at events in Parks, was not included in the report. We therefore would like to know what is wrong with the Parks Department existing H&S and Risk Assessment training process which enables trained volunteers to lead events and activities in the Council’s Parks and Green Spaces whilst at the same time providing public and private liability insurance?

Officer Response provided by Parks Development Manager

There is nothing wrong with the current health and safety training offered to community groups which is necessary to keep people safe and provide public liability cover.

The point being made is that there is an opportunity to look at how the Parks service and communities can work together better to get things done.

PF Question 12-19:

Reference: Agenda item 10 - Parks and Green Spaces Strategy Update Report

12. What role does the existing function and character of Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces have in the strategy?

Officer Response provided by Parks Services Manager

The Strategy is aspirational about making positive changes in parks and raising quality. It has deliberately broadened how quality will be assessed and seeks to develop the role that communities have in taking these things forward. The quality framework will help ensure that what is important about green spaces is identified, protected and enhanced when change is proposed.

The previous strategy identified that there are different 'types' of green spaces in the city and often different types of space within larger green spaces. The revised strategy doesn't seek to review that typology but we are seeking to update our mapped information when it is obvious that things have changed. Separate to that are the custodial functions of green spaces that are often demonstrated through planning designations such as Local Nature Reserve and these of course remain. We are very aware that green spaces meet a range of community and citizen needs – to visit heritage, experience nature, to exercise, to meet friends, to spend quiet contemplative time and to play to name but a few. Other strategies and initiatives – such as the Playing Pitch Strategy and ecological emergency action plan provide guidance on important green space functions.

13. How have you incorporated the principle of the internationally accepted Green Flag initiative award for parks and green spaces as a mark of quality for Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces?

Officer Response provided by Parks Services Manager

The way in which we assess and measure quality is proposed to be updated from the previous Strategy. The advantage of Green Flag is its holistic approach and we have directly used this, and learned from comments made to us through consultation, to frame what we think is important in understanding what is a good quality park. In some cases it may be that we 'go for Green Flag' accreditation with the support of communities but for others it will be enough that we make positive change guided by communities and the quality framework approach the Strategy will set out.

14. How have the findings of contemporary research, into the value of parks and green spaces to the health and wellbeing of people and wildlife, been used to support the development of the strategy? Where is this referenced in the strategy?

Officer Response provided by Parks Services Manager

A distinct change from the previous strategy is the recognition that green spaces are vital to the health and wellbeing of its citizens. It is a core theme of the Strategy and is built within our quality framework. We are already active in terms of finding ways to improve people's health through the benefits of green space, through green social prescribing for example, and we will be using health inequality information to help guide our priorities going forward.

The revised Strategy has nature recovery as a core theme. Our work to research and implement the objectives of the Council's Ecological Emergency Strategy and the West of England Nature Recovery

Network have informed the Strategy and are being used to inform future land use function and operational site maintenance procedures.

15. Please explain why is there nothing about the quality green environment in the "4 attributes" of a Quality Park? Examples of the green environment include – designations such as LNR, SINC, Wildlife Corridor; and the results of Q1.

Officer Response provided by Parks Services Manager

We see embedded in the Nature and Heritage elements of the Quality Framework the Council' and Service' custodial obligations often identified through designations such as Site of Nature Conservation Interest or Registered Park and Garden.

16. Please explain how the Plan is going to gain more finance (especially for revenue for maintenance) for all the various types of parks and green spaces.

Officer Response provided by Parks Services Manager

Having sufficient revenue funding will continue to be a challenge. The role of the Strategy and the Parks Service will be to ensure that the significant benefits of green spaces for all citizens and for nature are widely promoted and understood. We see this as central to attracting traditional and new sources of funding that relate to improving health and wellbeing, managing for nature, improving neighbourhoods, delivering development and enhancing landscape and heritage. Central to the Strategy is the recognition that raising the quality of green spaces is a shared responsibility – with the council, third party organisations, communities and residents playing a role.

17. Please describe how the new Parks and Green Spaces Strategy will be reflected in the new Local Plan?

Officer Response provided by Parks Services Manager

As with the 2008 Strategy we see the revised Strategy being a supplementary document to the Local Plan and any emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy.

18. What is the intended role of existing parks groups in the new Parks and Green Spaces Strategy?

Officer Response provided by Parks Services Manager

As said previously, central to the Strategy is the recognition that raising the quality of green spaces is a shared responsibility – with the council, third party organisations, communities and residents playing a role. Park groups already play a very significant role in improving green spaces, maintaining them, animating them and ensuring they contribute to the wellbeing of communities and individuals. It is absolutely the case that wherever you experience a quality green space or area of quality green space in the city, there is almost always a community park group involved or leading that. Through our engagement work we have heard from park group representatives and others that they want us to improve how we help them to be involved and take responsibility and this is a theme of the Strategy.

19. How does the Council intend to continue to encourage existing and future parks groups using the new Parks and Green Strategy?

Officer Response provided by Parks Services Manager

As Q7.

Public Forum Statements

PF Statement 1:

Reference: Item 10 - Parks and Green Spaces Strategy Update Report

Statement to Bristol City Council to support the management of more green spaces for Nature and to strengthen the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

Since the declaration of an Ecological Emergency, Bristol City Council deserve much credit for the actions they have taken and this has been reflected by the reduction in mowing and other initiatives.

We would like to propose that they go further. The fields above South Purdown are a good example, where the current mapping dictates that both fields are still mowed in their entirety leaving very little, if any, margins. If these fields were part of a designated SNCI, the current hay-cutting regime would not be considered appropriate or nature-friendly. When a whole space is mowed completely to the ground, often with very little margins, a vast number of invertebrates and other creatures are killed and chances to produce the next generation are severely diminished.

We understand that the council will soon be engaging with local communities and 'Friends of' groups as part of a review into managing more green spaces for nature. We would like to propose that all green spaces that are not currently managed by, or in agreement with, a community group are approached using the same principles that would apply to an SNCI – that they are treated to a baseline survey or checklist before any cutting regime is implemented. Citizens should also be able to play a valuable role with these baseline surveys in providing data, which can inform the cutting regimes. Below is a suggested list of points that could be included within such a baseline survey:

- **Have key indicator species, such as certain butterflies, been identified and taken into account?**
- **Are specific species' food plants being adequately protected?**
- **Is there a sufficient margin being left?**
- **Would the space benefit from a rotational cut and how could this be implemented?**
- **What are the barriers that prevent some areas being left uncut for longer?**
- **How can these barriers be overcome or reduced?**
- **Is there sufficient public awareness of why and how the space is being managed for nature?**

Such an assessment could be reviewed annually to ensure that the best outcomes for nature are being met.

We also request that the council adopt a policy whereby their operatives and contractors receive regular nature awareness as part of their mandatory training, and that they are encouraged to value themselves for the role they play in being part of the solution to address the Ecological Emergency.

In order to achieve the highest positive outcomes for nature, we believe the best way forward is through co-operation between all stakeholders. These include: the council, operatives, contractors, community groups, nature campaigners and local residents. We need a holistic approach that takes into account the need for insects to thrive and regenerate. The inclusion of more green space being optimally managed for nature will also assist the council in meeting their goal for being carbon neutral.

Thank you

Martyn Cordey

This letter is supported by some members of the following groups and other supporters who wish to be named:

BS5 Wildlife Group

Bristol Butterfly Group

Narrowways Nature Reserve

Friends of Royate Hill Local Nature Reserve

Friends of Greenbank Cemetery

Friends of Eastville Park

Bristol Rewilding Group

Avon Reptile and Amphibian Group

Bristol Postcode Wildlife Steering Group

BS9 Wildlife Group

BS13 Wildlife Group

Friends of the Western Slopes (Novers Hill)

Brislington Meadows Group

Friends of South Purdown

Friends of Horfield Common

BS4 Wildlife Group

Friends of Hengrove Mounds and Hawkfield Meadows

BS13 Wildlife Group

BS16 Wildlife Group

Friends of Victory Park

BS11 Wildlife Group

BS3 Wildlife Group

BS7 Wildlife Group

Somerset and Bristol Butterflies and Moths

BS1 & 2 Wildlife Group

Green Party Wildlife and Habitats Working Group

BS34 Wildlife Group

Ben Barker, Secretary, BS3 Wildlife Group

Friends of Stockwood Open Spaces

Martyn Cordey

Dani Calross

Dougal Matthews

Fiona Castle

Terry Hooper

Andrea Bailey

Louise Chalice

Anna Spencer

Trish Sparkfield

Sally Morrisey

Dylan Peters

NB: Additional statements in support of the above were received from

Dougal Matthews

Kate Scott

Kelly Allen

Jenny Young

Carol Bath

Pearl Luxon

Sara Cech-Lucas, founder of Bee Happy Shire

Alison Harrington, Friend of Lamplighter's Marsh

PF Statement 2:

Reference: Item 10 - Parks and Green Spaces Strategy Update Report

Statement from Friends of Badock's Wood on the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy to the Communities Scrutiny Commission, 3rd October 2022

A fundamental difference between what most people consider to be a Park or Green Space and other spaces in the city is the green. The grass, plants, flowers, shrubs, trees, wildlife, nature, etc. Other recreational "parks" exist – Horfield Skateboard Park for example. These hard surfaced recreational areas are not the sort of Parks we expect to be covered in the Strategy, whilst the adjacent Horfield Common we would expect to be a key site covered by the Strategy.

The Parks and Green Spaces Strategy needs to explicitly recognise from the outset that this is a strategy about our Green Spaces. That is those predominantly vegetated spaces that form a continuum from a "park" – often fairly formal green spaces with flower beds, play spaces – including playgrounds, tennis courts, bowling greens etc through wildlife sites including Bristol's 13 designated Local Nature Reserves to all other green spaces managed by Parks Department for the people of Bristol.

The "slide deck" (as the document provided with the Update Report is described) seems to vacillate between wanting to focus on green, recognising the importance of the Ecological Emergency and what

it describes as the “Green Grid”. However, it then seemingly ignores the green yet again when it lists 4 attributes that make a quality park yet not a single one of those attributes relates to nature, wildlife etc. Indeed it is probably fair to say that those 4 attributes should be ascribed to everything that is done for, in and by the City.

Increasingly people are seeking solace by spending time in quiet, green spaces. The lifeline our Parks and Green Spaces extended to the people of Bristol during the Covid 19 pandemic lockdowns, and continue to do so, is invisible but research has shown how important GREEN space is for, in particular but not only, mental health. We are living in a time of unprecedented mental health concerns and this emphasis on the value of green, natural spaces comes up in research over and over. Similarly social prescribing in Bristol, as in other places, recognises the importance of walking in green spaces and there are Walks for Health across the city, a legacy of the city’s own Walk for Health work some years back.

Yet this seems not to be recognised in this Strategy despite the large amount of research undertaken and reports produced in recent years which clearly emphasise it is being somewhere green and natural that makes a huge difference to the health and well-being of people. The importance of “urban green spaces” as opposed to “grey spaces” in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 11 – is considered in detail in research by Hyder and Haque published in Journal of Sustainable Development; Vol. 15, No. 2; 2022 . The emphasis is on the green, natural vegetated spaces.

These green spaces that we are custodians of are not only for everyone in Bristol, they are for nature and wildlife. The strategy must not just pay lip service to the twin threats of the ecological emergency and climate change but must be very clear that parks and green spaces in all their green guises are front and centre of our challenge to tackle these as a city. As custodians, on behalf of the public, of our green spaces, the City Council needs to be clear that any activities, of any sort, not just commercial, must be cognisant, and careful, of this. We have already seen loss of green spaces in the city e.g. through Sports strategies – astroturf is the antithesis of a green play space that benefits nature and the planet, ditto floodlighting.

The Parks & Green Spaces Strategy must ensure that any uses of the public’s land for financial gain puts the proceeds back into the central budget line for Parks Department to manage, maintain and enhance all of our green spaces. There needs to be a strong commitment to this. Letting non council bodies run parks and keep the funds they raise, does not help provide funds to look after green spaces that are not suitable for commercial ventures or income generation. We must not find ourselves in a situation where those parks and green spaces which can deliver financial profits are transferred to external bodies and the council is left managing the rest but without those profits, which seems to be happening in some other cities. Local Nature Reserves are one example of our green spaces that cannot (and should not) be commercialised, but there are others. All income from any letting of Parks spaces for, for example, festivals must be kept within Parks budgets and used to benefit all parks for everyone. We recognise that other departments have concomitant costs when events, especially large ones, are held. But any surplus income must be held centrally for the benefit of all of Bristol’s Parks. This does not seem to be addressed anywhere in the work that we’ve seen to date.

By putting the green, natural, vegetated spaces at the centre of this strategy everyone will benefit. There is little point improving people’s access if the green spaces are not protected, maintained, enhanced and offering the best opportunity for people to have better health and well-being as a result of visiting and spending time in these green, natural spaces.

PF Statement 3

Reference: Item 10 – Parks and Green Strategy Update Report

The Bristol Parks Forum is the only ‘community voice’ that is dedicated to all publicly owned parks and green space (POPGS) in Bristol. We work with Bristol City Council to ensure our POPGS are well looked after and to help local groups to enhance their green space. More information about us can be found at <http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/>

The Forum has a vision for all POPGS in Bristol by 2030 which can be seen at: www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/vision

In preparation for this Statement, we consulted our members for their views of the report. Comments received are reflected below.

The new Parks and Green Spaces strategy provides an opportunity to reset the way that the Council and others view and treat our POPGS. Our questions already submitted (see Q references here) and statement are designed to clarify points and hopefully strengthen the emerging Strategy. Where there are links to our Vision for 2030 these are noted as V statements.

The critical importance and value of our POPGS for the health and well-being of people and wildlife, especially during the COVID pandemic, has been generally accepted. Recent research and publications (Q3) have further highlighted that value. (See references). But often we believe the importance and value of POPGS are not considered fully in decisions about their maintenance and future. 2030 Vision link – Places that have a positive influence on our well-being.

In part this is because of the way that POPGS can be seen as a uniform resource to be used – which can lead to a “one size fits all approach” to them. This can be refined by analysing what the functions and characteristics of each space (or even parts of spaces) are now and what they could be in the future (Q1). An example of this would be considering these factors when considering the location and detail of new infrastructure.

In defining the attributes of a Quality Park, there seems to be a gap in the presentation on how the natural green environment is to be covered. In addition to the formal designations given to POPGS we believe that functions and characteristics are a useful tool (Q4) to help define attributes. 2030 Vision link – Places where wildlife thrives and where our heritage is protected and explored.

POPGS can be a source of pride for the local community – and also create a lot of interest in how they are maintained and what is their future. We believe that there needs to be a recognised and defined standard to which the Council, parks groups and communities can aspire to and achieve. The Green Flag Initiative (Q2) is one such initiative. <https://greenflagaward.org/>. 2030 Vision link – Excellent in terms of quantity and quality.

The 2008 Strategy rightly raised expectations that some POPGS may be improved due to new resources being made available in the future. However, the financial crash, plus decisions on the funding available to local authorities and POPGS, against other priorities have made those expectations difficult to achieve, especially for funds for revenue maintenance held by the City Council. It is critical that the Strategy inspires people and gives them confidence that their green space will be well maintained (Q5) so that the space can achieve health and well-being benefits for people and wildlife. Where there is uncertainty about funding this needs to be made clear. 2030 Vision link – all points.

In the presentation the Local Plan feeds into the plans and documents which in turn feed into the Strategy, but there is no link the other way. The 2011 and 2014 Local Plan, and through the retention of the existing green infrastructure policies, the 2018/9 review, is informed by the 2008 Strategy.

The importance of the role that the Local Plan in POPGS cannot be overemphasised, for the way that some green spaces which are critical for many reasons, can be changed into housing and development; and how existing spaces can be used to support planning applications by promises of improving them.

The two-way links between the two documents need to be defined. Otherwise, the risk is that the growing well documented concerns about the disposal of green space; will be matched by the concern that existing green spaces in some parts of Bristol cannot support the significant growth in the number of people living nearby. An example of the latter is the area around Castle Park where hundreds if not thousands of new homes are to be built or are under consideration/proposed. New green space (not just public realm) will be required and the strategy should facilitate that in relevant areas. 2030 Vision link – excellent in terms of quantity and quality, and available in all areas of the city.

In the Statement above, we have used the phrases “parks groups” and “communities”. We believe that while this is a false split, it is critical to ensure that the Strategy acknowledges and builds on the existing work being carried out by Groups and others; and the work by the Council and others to encourage future parks groups, so that POPGS are used and supported by a more diverse range of people in line with their functions and characteristics (Q1, Q7 and Q8). 2030 Vision link – Hubs of activity that empower local communities.

We also received comments on:

- Changing the strategy so that it is called the Parks, Nature Reserves and Green Spaces Strategy to better reflect the range of POPGS involved, and to link better into the ecological initiatives such as Nature Recovery etc.
- The need to have assurances on the speed that actions in the Strategy will be delivered once published, especially those dealing with the Climate and Ecological emergencies.

Thank you

References:

World Health Organisation (WHO), 2017, Urban Green Spaces: A brief for action.

Urban green spaces: a brief for action (who.int)

The Parks Alliance, 2020, Making Parks Count – The Case for Parks. Parks the Smart Investment. Making Parks Count – The Case for Parks – The Parks Alliance

Univ of Exeter, 2022, https://www.exeter.ac.uk/news/research/title_910082_en.html

PF Statement 4

Reference: Item 10 – Parks and Green Strategy Update Report

Statement by Julia Victor, Chair Friends of the Western Slopes

I am unable to attend the meeting in person.

This Parks and Green Spaces Strategy aims to address the ecological emergency and manage more land for nature. This is long overdue. What better way to achieve these aims than by actually listening

to the very people that keep this city afloat and you, here today, in power: stop enlisting so many of these green spaces as prime real estate and work with communities and 'Friends of' groups to truly manage these precious natural resources. This Parks and Green Spaces Strategy needs to be reflected in the allocations of the next Local Plan – there is no point in proclaiming an aim of managing “more land for nature” when so many Sites of Nature Conservation Importance are, or have already been, butchered for development. There is no point in “working with communities” if these communities do not get a say in what happens to the green spaces they love. This is our land. And the council is merely a custodian of it. It is time you listened. The Green Spaces Motion from September 2021 and a recent petition signed by over 5000 Bristolians to ‘Stop Building on our green spaces’ should have been enough for this council to realise that parks and green spaces in Bristol mean so much to residents of this city and we are tired of having to fight tooth and nail to protect every beloved blade of grass from decisions made behind closed doors.

It is time now to value not just our traditional parks but also our green spaces. The ones that sit silently beside polluted roads; the ones that quietly provide abundantly for nature; the ones that have been rich, untouched grazing pasture and diverse meadow for centuries; the very ones that have been allocated in the local plan to be bulldozed for housing that no one living beside can afford. Novers Hill, Brislington Meadows and Yew Tree Farm are just that – green spaces that are part of this ancient city's heritage; locked into prominent hillsides, visible from all the highest perches in the city and loved so dearly by generations of Bristolians. It is time to acknowledge that a green space that provides for nature, is no less valuable than a park that provides for people.