

Neighbourhoods Scrutiny

2017



Report of: Strategic Director, Neighbourhoods

Title: Parks Service

Ward: Citywide

Officer Presenting Report: Strategic Director, Neighbourhoods: Alison Comley

Contact Telephone Number: 0117 3574357

Recommendation

To note the scope of the Parks Service and the search areas for raising income to support the three-year budget proposal to make the service cost-neutral

Summary

Work is ongoing to identify income generating options within parks and green spaces, as detailed in appendix 1. Being considered are options to maximising profit from existing 'pay to use' services (such as catering and events) and options to provide new business ventures that can contribute to the expectation that the Parks Service can operate on a 'cost neutral' basis by 2020.

Work is also ongoing to identify any further efficiency savings.

Options are being considered to look at 'alternative delivery models' for parks including a Parks Trust concept.

The significant issues arising are:

Given the scale of the challenge a period of 18-months is given to identify and as appropriate implement desirable business options.

A draft citywide engagement plan is presented.



Context

According to the Council’s 2008 Parks and Green Space Strategy, Bristol’s parks and green spaces have over 25 million visits per year (83% of the population), making them Bristol’s most used leisure facility.

The Council’s Parks Service provides across four areas:

1. **Function** – providing spaces for recreational activity, play, to be active, healthy and enjoy formal sport; providing spaces to enjoy nature and the natural environment; providing for events and festivals; contributing to a more sustainable urban environment through flood attenuation, tree planting etc.; contribute to emergency response and civil contingencies.
2. **Maintenance** – maintaining 1,652 parks, green spaces and incidental spaces. This area covers 2,217 hectares (equiv 4,138 football pitches); 137 buildings; 83km of boundary infrastructure; 2,600 items of park furniture.

Maintenance activities are extremely diverse and include grass, hedges, woodlands and trees, rivers and streams, shrubs, meadows, plants and bedding, litter and bins, allotments, car parks, play areas, sports pitches, buildings (toilets, cafes, sports pavilions, operational depots, heritage buildings and estates), walls, railings, footpaths, hard surfaces, sculpture and monuments, scheduled features, bridges, golf courses and other outdoor assets.

3. **Asset management** – inspection and repair, health and safety monitoring, management and compliance, EMAS compliance, issuing and monitoring of leases and licences, tree risk management, commissioning of maintenance and repair contracts.
4. **Improvement and development** – e.g. construction of new facilities and features (through commissioning and delivering in-house); writing and delivering site management plans; applying for external grant funding; delivering Neighbourhood Partnership priorities.

Overview of related budgets:

- In 2016/17, the Total cost of providing the service, including the Downs, was £7m. The budgeted income was £2.5m which includes a recharge to the HRA of £1.05m, Highways £350k, £400k in s106 draw down, £750k income from parking, events, sports and other misc income including profits from other traded services. This leaves a net budget of £4.5m which includes trees and children’s play budgets.
- The 2016 restructure removed £400k from the budget for 2017-18, leaving a total budget of £4.1m. The 2017/18 to 2019/20 savings proposals for parks total £3.95m, with an additional income target of £100k for parking charges. This leaves a maximum of £50k in the budget.

Highways have reduced their contribution to Parks for maintenance of all highways green space, verges, etc. for 2017/18 and the Parks Service is considering how to manage the immediate impacts of this.

Proposal

Draft engagement and consultation programme for next 9 months:

Date	Activity
April	<p>Ongoing one to one discussions on ideas, possibilities and feasibility with a range of stakeholders and advisors, for example:</p> <p>Bristol Natural History Consortium Bristol Parks Forum National Trust Merchant Venturers</p> <p>Practical negotiations with potential commercial operators, for example, Go Ape, Putt in the Park, Bommel UK, Gristwood and Toms, Team Love.</p>
May	<p>Ongoing one to one discussions on ideas, possibilities and feasibility with a range of stakeholders and advisors</p> <p>Proposed Part 1 of <i>Mayor’s Conversation</i> regarding ‘New Ways of Delivering Parks’ – conference / workshop for community, voluntary sector and other stakeholders to generate interest, ideas and seed potential partnerships, commercial opportunities and new models of service delivery.</p>
June	<p>Ongoing one to one discussions on ideas, possibilities and feasibility with a range of stakeholders and advisors</p> <p>Proposed Conference/workshop with commercial and business sector focus to look for opportunities to deliver services differently, generate support and discuss diversifying responsibilities.</p> <p>Part 2 of Mayor’s Conversation regarding ‘New Ways of Delivering Parks’ – exploring key themes, priorities and action plan.</p>
September – October	<p>Engagement with sports clubs, sports leagues and sports governing bodies to discuss sports provision moving forward following up on results from Playing Pitch Strategy public consultation.</p>
September / October	<p>Public consultation on any proposals to deliver required Parks Service savings for 2018/19.</p>

Income generating Options

See Appendix for Parks and Green Space business development options. Options are being investigated to maximise income from our existing business and to create new income generating ideas in parks.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Parks and Green Space – business development options.

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Reference	Business Development Area	Note	Status	Update 7th April2017
Site Specific				
SS01	Hengrove Play Park	Wider negotiation re lease and consider facility in relation to adjacent BCC led development.	Active	Business Options considered
SS02	Ashton Court- Divest mansion - conference / wedding business	Agree shared programme with corporate Property	Decided	
SS03	Ashton Court - develop site Business Plan	Business plan to explore Activity hub around upper plateau golf and family / children hub around courtyard / mansion café.	Due	Project team to be formed
SS04	Ashton Court - Balloon fiesta - consider value to parks		Not active	Executive Briefing required
SS05	Ashton Court Estate - dry hire of mansion	Hire out building only. Can't do if building handed back to Property	Not active	linked to options for the Mansion
SS10	Develop business plans for 'top 20 footfall / most commercially attractive sites'	Business Plans to be progressed follow work at Ashton Court.	Not active	Sites identified.
Cost minimisations				
CM01	Review vehicle dependency and charges	subject to parks benefiting financially - taking the saving	Not active	
CM02	Review security dependency and charges		Not active	
CM03	Review energy dependency and charges		First review of energy consumption	
CM04	Review and rationalise buildings / service provision	Connections to pending Playing Pitch Strategy consultation.	Not active	
Service reductions				

SR01	Highway maintenance	substantial internal payment reductions - impact on service and general fund consequences	Active	
Advertising and Sponsorship				
A01	Advertising fee - roundabout, lamp posts, parks	Concession contract	Active	Business options considered by Parks Devt Board
A03	Corporate sponsorship	Success more suited to conditions under Alternative Delivery Model.	Not active	
Charges and fees				
CF01	Introduce car parking charge at Blaise and Oldbury Court and increase charge at Ashton Court		Active	Feasibility work ongoing.
CF03	Check feasibility of car parking charges at other existing car parks		Active	Feasibility work ongoing.
CF05	Identify options to expand or create new car parking spaces and charge for use		Active	
CF06	Maximise income from events	Grow events programme. Conversations had with licensing. 24 marketable sites.	Active	Met with Events team to understand capacity of 20 parks sites (can be more than one site per park) identified parks and approaches to increasing income. Meeting arranged to identify additional event sites (10 being considered) and ways of marketing sites- Contacted other organisations to understand models
CF08	Car Boot Sales	car boot sales	active	Business options considered by Parks Devt Board
CF09	Winter / Christmas Markets	Christmas markets / winter wonderland - ACE (Ashton Court Estate)?	Not active	

CF11	Investigate market for corporate events	corporate events - building or marquee - ACE most favoured	Not active	
CF12	Introduce charge to use toilets	Subject to BCC fees and charges	Not active	
CF13	Review sport/football charges	Park private sector activity sports / leisure - charge plan? - not preferred - balances against reduced sport facility provision	Not active	Take lead from Playing Pitch Strategy consultation.
CF14	Review fishing charges	invest and market (stoke Park)	Stoke Park active	
Parks and Green Space Strategy				
S01	Develop a volunteer / engagement Strategy		Active	
S02	Review 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Strategy	Parks Forum to be consulted on review of targets: postponed due to priority of income generation & cost saving targets	Active	Site Quality Assessments completed: Calculation of upgrade cost to be done
Enabling (governance, capacity building and culture)				
EG01	Consider options to develop a Bristol Parks Trust	Assumed requirement for substantial multi-million pound dowry. Strategic relationship with National Trust	Not active	
EG02	Consider options to develop a Bristol Parks Commercial Trust (Social Enterprise)	Would facilitate legacy and donation payments and potentially attract charitable status.	Not active	Project mandate for discussion
EG04	Consider options to develop in-house events company	Consider alongside option for commercial trust	Not active	
EG05	Consider Policy and Promotion of Capital Asset Transfer	remove sites from BCC's responsibility via lease / CAT - see Narrowways,	Not active	
EG07	Business development - seek input from commercial sector	National Trust. Royal Parks etc.	Active	Developing 'Critical Friend' relationship with National Trust
EG10	Develop effective on-line sales platform	Systems to allow all Bristol Park products to be sold on-line	Not active	

EG12	Alternative financial accounting system	Quantify value of volunteering and show on balance sheet	see volunteer strategy	
EG13	Quantify value of parks - health and social	Quantify ecosystem services provided by parks (culture, regulating and provisioning services) and show on balance sheet	See payment for ecosystem services	Defra bid via WENP - to assess cultural ecosystem services. Dialogue with Public Health consultant - re Health input, including Parks Development Board. Interest from Fields Trust to pilot valuation of health benefits from parks.
EG14	Review options and potential programmes to align events / activity programme to sales points		Active	Hub model. E.g. Ashton Court - events activity hub (upper café) and children's / family focus (lower café).
EG15	Provide training to staff on 'running a business' and marketing + promotion		Not active	
EG16	Invest available £2m capital fund to support business development	£2m sum exposed to risk contingencies - to be quantified	Active	
EG17	Detail income and expenditure for all heritage estates, top 20 most visited parks and green spaces		Active	
EG18	Map and quantify income generating activity across parks and green space portfolio		Active	
Grants - environmental				
GE01	Defra (Forestry Commission) Woodland grants	By May 2017 these are existing agreements so are they new income so should be removed	Active	Volunteers completed works for KWE and Blaise Castle. Claim to made for both sites worth around £4.5K
GE02	High level stewardship agreements ACE, BC, AG		Active	Claims made in April 2016 for 16/17 received for ACE and BC (Blaise Castle)

GE03	New Countryside Stewardship Scheme Parkland	Stoke Park CS (Countryside Stewardship) being applied for in April 17	Active	Application being prepared by consultant worth around £700K for submission in April
GE04	New Countryside Stewardship Scheme New Woodland/Parkland and grassland	Stoke Park CS being applied for in April 17	Active	Application to be prepared by consultant for submission in April 17
GE05	Additional Basic Payment Scheme entitlements	Webb Patton is in the process of purchase. Will make BPS claim in May17	Stoke Park - active. Other sites business case held due to spending freeze	2016 claim made for around £32K for 151 entitlements. Purchase of around 60-70 entitlements to be made for Stoke Park by consultants. 2017 claim to be made in May 17 worth around £45K
GE08	Sports Grants FA, Rugby, Tennis, Sport England.		Not active	Take lead from Playing Pitch Strategy consultation.
GE09	HLF resilience grants	Resilience planning - HLF	First enquiry	
GE10	HLF Parks and People grant	Stoke Park stage I submission 28/02/17	Active	Stage I Development Grant £400k bid submitted to HLF 28th February 2017, expected June decision.
GE11	Restore Oldbury Court	See prioritisation review of heritage assets. Lack of funds - dowry major constraint	Not active	
Cemeteries and Crematoria				
CC01	Expand memorial products	Expand this to include columbaria product (stone tower). Memorial Wall.	Due	Review due to start w/c 10th April
CC02	Introduce Tree Memorials	Introduce tree memorials in specific sites. Need to explore where we have land in our current sites	due	Review due to start w/c 10th April
CC03	Expand burial sites in North Bristol	A business case has been written and needs refreshing for provision of enough space for next 80 years. Parks Land. Needs work to assess suitability.	due	Review due to start w/c 10th April

CC04	Expand into empty field in South Bristol	Previous plans have been drawn up.	due	
CC05	Woodland Burials	Introduce woodland burials. Need to look at option to do this at South Bristol - new site. Less costly on grounds maintenance.	due	Review due to start w/c 10th April
CC08	Direct cremations	Look at the option for this. This is the option to offer a low cost in-house cremation service. Slightly up from a public authority funeral and a low cost funeral director one.	due	Review due to start w/c 10th April
CC010	Review fees & charges	Bench mark with competitors.	due	
CC11	Pet cemetery	New venture - market interest.	due	
Product Sales				
PS01	Blaise plant nursery -introduce retail sales	Currently the business provides plants & arrangements to other authorities. Stop doing this and provide an onsite retail outlet. Initial business case work required on potential costs & income. Is it a viable business - should we move forward with a detailed business case/plan?	Active	Met with planning consultant advising up to 10% of current W/Sale Nursery could obtain planning permission. Started to outline design layout, costs and income
PS02	Blaise Woodfuel Station	Currently have the set-up, machinery etc. Need to start up the business. Some initial work on costs/income carried out. Need to revisit this and make decision on how we progress.	Active	Business options considered by Parks Devt Board
PS03	Benches	On-line sale of benches - profitable sales. Linked to on-line sales generally	Not active	
PS04	Blaise bore water- sell water retail or to Bristol water?	Is it potable? Sell bottled water? Commercial value to Bristol Water?	Not active	
Food and Drinks Sales				
FD04	Installation of Service Points for mobile caterers		Active	BCC has installed service point (power, water, waste) for a street vendor in city. Research feasibility

				to install similar in Parks.
FD05	Concessions Operating Model & Contract		Active	Bring in line with best practice - outputs from consultant and research of other local authority models required. T&C's need to reflect BCC policy (UKLW, Public Health, emissions etc.) For example fixed concessions fee based on % net sales.
FD06	Mobile Coffee Van / Catering Truck		Active	To maximise opportunities in sites where a permanent catering concession or outlet is not required. Also to test new sites before going to tender/set up new outlet
FD07	Improved technology & Epos of managed sites	Yes	Active	The admin on our managed sites is still very manual and stock control and EPOS systems very basic. Improved technology would improve quality of management information and reduce admin time allowing managers to focus on customer service and maximising sales.
FD08	Investment in new and existing sites	Identifying new sites and where existing sites could generate higher profits if investment made to improve facilities.	Active	Capital Investment in new and existing outlets
New Pay to Use leisure Facilities				
LB01	Go Ape	Ashton Court preferred site. Potential for smaller facilities in other suitable sites.	Active	Business option received
LB03	Sky trail	see Colwick park Nottingham https://www.nwscnotts.com/nwsc/home	Not active	

LB04	Paint ball		Not active	
LB05	Putt in the Park	http://www.puttinthepark.com/	Active	Business options considered by Parks Devt Board
LB06	Crazy golf		Not active	
LB07	Laser quest - indoor	indoor	Not active	
LB08	Indoor children's play area	Looking at in-house - capital investment required.	not active	Looking at Ashton Court - potential in courtyard area within existing building
LB09	Inflatable play (bouncy castle's)	Considering options - run in-house or concession. Considering market saturation	Active	Trial Blaise and Oldbury Court - two weeks over Easter - leading to concession contract tender.
Holiday accommodation				
HA01	Camping		Not active	Sites we prefer can be assessed by Camping and Caravan Club
HA02	Holiday lets		Not active	
Partnership				
P01	Leyhill Prison saving		Not active	
Section 106 and CiL				
CL01	S106 and CiL investment		subject to review	
Other				
O01	Develop consultancy	Market skills / services to adjacent Local Authorities / rationalise? Immediate neighbour resistance - leapfrog and go to Cardiff?	Not active	
O02	Parkwork -extend service to corporate team building	Fixed fee	Not active	
O03	Introducing grazing to replace hay cuts	Active consideration for Stoke Park	Active (Stoke Park)	Started to evaluate all fields where hay cut taken. Met with local farmer about grazing 19ha ACE Smyth field. Possible deal for taking silage cut in return free grazing. Poss saving £3-4K

O04	Payment for ecosystem services	see Natural Capital Trust - assumed no immediate market potential	In part active - reference development of Natural Capital Trust	
O05	Payment for health benefits provided by parks -including preventative and therapeutic care	See Newcastle using Public Health budget to provide stop gap for 90% reduction in core parks budget.... Birmingham (Darren Share a good contact): Archery, Zumba, cycling etc. paid for by Public Health in Birmingham	Not active	Met with Public Health consultant. Bid being prepared by WENP around health. Cultural Ecosystem Services incorporating health benefits of natural capital.
Buildings and facilities				
BF01	Rationalisation / divestment plan	Enact plan against strategy and involve Property	Not active	
Service Efficiencies				
SE01	Shared public services between Local Authorities – e.g. Chelsea and Hammersmith and Fulham	within context of Metro Mayor	Not active	