

Statement from the Scrutiny Parks Task and Finish Group

For Cabinet – 1st May 2018

Task and Finish Group Members present: Cllr Wellington (Chair for this session), Cllr Bolton, Cllr Negus, Cllr Fodor, Cllr Whittle (sub for Cllr Johnson).

This statement has been endorsed post meeting via email by the four Lead Members of OSMB.

Ref Cabinet agenda item: Parks and Green Spaces – future funding model 2018-2020' Cabinet proposal

The Parks Scrutiny Task and Finish Group have considered and debated the 'Parks and Green Spaces – future funding model 2018-2020' Cabinet proposal. The group members fully appreciate the current financial position of the council and the need to make changes. The group have therefore agreed on the following comments to be made to the Councils Executive:

- The introduction of advertising in parks and green spaces: the public consultation showed there to be strong opposition to this and the majority of the group members present to write this statement are also very opposed to this. The group hope that the level of opposition to this will be accepted and reflected in the response from the Cabinet. If the Executive decides to reject the consultation response / views of the public, the group request that this course of action is pursued as a last resort i.e. if the other income proposals do not achieve the overall target. And at the very least if it is pursued, it is done minimally, and kept very low key.
- Measures to make clubs such as bowling and football clubs cost neutral: the majority of the group generally accept this. However there are some reservations about this and concerns that a number of clubs, particularly football clubs, may well struggle to accomplish this. The group would like some assurances that this will not result in small sports clubs across the city closing. It was suggested that BCC should now reach out to higher-level funding from others, such as the Football Association.
 - The group suggest there is further scrutiny to be carried out on a future model for how and which 'grass-roots' sports clubs BCC supports, and the follow on from City of Sport.
- Introduction of new, competitive fees and charges for any business operating from a park or green space: the group have mixed views on this and there were some concerns expressed about the ethos and practicalities of enforcing this. However the principle that those using the parks as workplaces do pay towards them was accepted by most Members of the group.

- Although it's not specifically addressed in this report the group suggest there are tensions arising from increased charges for community groups to hold events in parks. They ask that this is kept an eye on and that it does not result in stifling the likelihood of future parks groups and volunteers, who are needed now more than ever.
- Members and VCS groups across the city will continue to carefully monitor progress on the proposed changes. Members wish to reaffirm the importance of continued scrutiny activity on these changes, assessing the possible risks and challenges that may come about from them.
- The group were informed there would be further consultations taking place on a number of the finer details. They request that they are made fully aware of these and that all local stakeholders and groups are able to engage in them because this will be the point at which most changes will be understood more widely. The process and work already done needs to transparent to ensure the plans are fully understood by those who have not been engaged to date.
- Given the current and difficult financial circumstances, the group consider this to be a very good and comprehensive piece of work by those involved.
- Finally, the group would like to see a refreshed, clearer and bolder vision for the future of Bristol Parks; a strategic vision that is not so focussed on cost cutting but reflects the immense and broader benefits parks and green spaces provide and how they will be positively protected for future generations.