

Resources Scrutiny Commission – Extraordinary meeting
22 November 2022 (part 1 of the meeting)
23 November 2022 (part 2 of the meeting)



Public Forum

Questions have been received as listed below (full details are set out on the subsequent pages):

1. Questions from Suzanne Audrey

Statements have been received as listed below (full details are set out on the subsequent pages):

1. Statement from Len Wyatt on behalf of Bristol Parks Forum Committee



PUBLIC FORUM - QUESTIONS

1. QUESTIONS FROM SUZANNE AUDREY

Topic: Budget consultation

Background:

I note with interest, the following items under Section 3: Effective development organisation [[Bristol's Budget Proposals 2023–24 \(bristol247.com\)](#)]

- R7. Mayor's Office. Reduce the amount of money we spend on staff and activities performed by the Mayor's Office with a deletion of this function from 2024/25 (upon the end of the Mayoral term) and identify opportunities for reductions in 2023/24. Proposed reduction: £75,000 in 2023/24; £425,000 in 2024/25.
- R16. Networking, partnership and influence services. Review and possibly reduce or stop some services that focus on partnership working at home and abroad. This includes our work with national and international networks which focus on the role of elected Mayors. Proposed reduction: £0 in 2023/24; £90,000 in 2024/25; £160,000 in 2025/26

It looks as if the expenditure in R7 and R16 is considered important under a mayoral system but can be significantly reduced or removed altogether on the changeover to a committee system.

Question 1. Please can you explain what the activities are under "R7. Mayor's Office" and "R16. Networking, partnership and influence" that need to be largely retained for the elected Mayor in 2023/24 but can be removed for the committee system in 2024/25?

Question 2. If R7 and R16 are considered important under the elected mayoral system, will the committee system of governance be disadvantaged or undermined by the loss of funding being proposed for the committee system by the current Mayor's office?

The replies to these questions are set out on the following page.

Resources Scrutiny Commission - Budget Scrutiny Questions and Responses

No.	From	Service Area	Question	Portfolio Holder/ Executive Director/ Director Finance	Response
22/11/22 Public Forum					
1	Suzanne Audrey	Resources - Democratic Services (R7 and R16)	Please can you explain what the activities are under "R7. Mayor's Office" and "R16. Networking, partnership and influence" that need to be largely retained for the elected Mayor in 2023/24 but can be removed for the committee system in 2024/25?	Mayor/ Stephen Peacock	<p>R7. All administrative and policy support for the Mayor will cease in May 2024 because of the end of the Mayor's role. Activity such as the mayor's correspondence, specific local and national partnership work, policy research and development, ensuring the council is responsive to political leadership and mayoral project and event support will no longer be required. Support arrangements for the committee governance system are as yet undecided, but resource required will be determined and requested through the ongoing governance committee working group. In the meantime, and through the 23/24 financial year, we will continue to look to offer staff savings as the opportunities arise, such as possibly suspending the summer internship programme or other reductions and changes in roles. Although the impact is still being assessed, it is likely it will reduce our capacity and ability to respond to emerging challenges in Bristol. Should this proposal be taken forward in to the budget no residual value will remain.</p> <p>R16. Specific relationships predicated on Mayoral role (membership of organisations such as Mayor's Migration Council and Global Parliament of Mayors) will cease, as well as other relationships built with the incumbent will alter significantly. This will be an opportunity to reduce resources committed, while reassessing inline with the emerging political priorities and international connections and profile of the new council administration. There is an opportunity to reduce resources because of new governance model is expected to reduce demand from international networks and other global cities who work on the mayoral model.</p>
2	Suzanne Audrey	Resources - Democratic Services (R7 and R16)	If R7 and R16 are considered important under the elected mayoral system, will the committee system of governance be disadvantaged or undermined by the loss of funding being proposed for the committee system by the current Mayor's office?	Mayor/ Stephen Peacock	These proposals have been submitted by the Mayor and Cabinet and relate to the Mayor's Office only. There are not any proposals in the budget consultation relating to the committee system, the members working on the future governance model need to identify the expected support required and future costs. You may wish to respond to these proposals as part of the public consultation, which will conclude on 23 December 2022.

**STATEMENT 1 - Bristol Parks Forum Committee:
Statement to the Resources Scrutiny Commission Emergency
Meeting.
22 / 23 November 2022.**

Council budget proposals 2023/24 and beyond.

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

The Forum has a vision for all publicly owned parks and green spaces in Bristol by 2030 which can be seen at: www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/vision

This Statement has been prepared by the Bristol Parks Forum Committee.

Our Statement is based on these issues:

- The urgent need for more detailed information about what the financial figures in the consultation actually mean for the Parks Department and the way it operates.
- The need to cancel the cuts proposed.

1 URGENT NEED FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT THE FIGURES MEAN

The Bristol Parks Forum is working to ensure that our members have the best information available to them, so that they can give informed and reasoned responses.

Without additional information, there is a real risk is that people will provide responses based on emotion, rather than the financial and operational need to provide a quality parks service that is capable of maintaining its parks and green spaces.

The information in the consultation provided lacks adequate explanations or detail. We request that the Scrutiny Committee asks the Council to address the points below, and the answers be made publicly available by the Council. Where necessary the Council should update the consultation questionnaire.

The consultation information currently shows the following:

- A catch all statement with no detail: *“Review the council's green spaces to enable community or alternative management, reducing the council's costs. Stop, reduce, change or pause activities to make savings and reduce staff costs”*
- A decrease in the budget in 2023/24 of *£ -1.39 million*
- Followed by a subsequent increase in budget in 2024/25 of *£ 2.89 million*
- No further savings or increases have been detailed for following years

We need a clear explanation of what the first statement means.

We need to see what the 2022-2023 budget is so that the effects of the proposals can be put in context.

We need to have an explanation for the rationale behind the significant increases and reductions to budgets; and how the Parks Department is expected to achieve being cost neutral (income matching expenditure)

We hope that the proposal does not include volunteers taking on the liabilities of the Council as landowner and land manager of parks and green spaces.

If it does, it should be understood volunteers may be unable to sustain any commitment in the longer term. Volunteers should be seen as the “cherry on the cake” rather than the “cake” itself.

2 CANCEL THE CUTS

The Parks Department over recent years has taken many cuts in its funding, but still as far as it possibly can, provides a critical service to the people and wildlife that use our parks and green spaces.

You are all aware that parks and green spaces provide many benefits, including but not limited to improved health and wellbeing, pollution and climate change amelioration, water storage and flood prevention, resilient ecosystems, cooling effect (mitigation to urban heat) and healthy soils in which to grow food.

We are extremely concerned about the very detrimental effects the cuts will have on both the short- and long-term future of our Parks and Green Spaces. These free to access public resources must be protected for the health and well-being of future generations. This cannot be achieved by the proposed cuts.

Our message is simple – Bristol City Council - cancel the cuts.

We request that the Scrutiny Commission asks the City Council to provide the information and carry out actions set out in 1) above; and calls on the Council to cancel the cuts proposed.

Thank you.