

Communities Scrutiny Commission

14th September 2023



Report of: Patsy Mellor

Title: Director, Management of Place

Ward: City-wide

Officers Presenting Report: Richard Ennion

Contact Telephone Number: N/A

Recommendation:

To review progress to develop a new Parks and Green Space Strategy (PGSS).

The significant issues in the report are:

1. A draft PGSS vision, key principles and seven priority areas (themes) are set out.
2. Key commitments for each priority theme are set out.
3. The Allotment and Food Growing Strategy is now merged within the PGSS, as a key theme.
4. A draft PGSS is due to be released for consultation by the end of October. A new PGSS is expected to be approved by Cabinet in March 2024, subject to consultation feedback.

1. Summary

Work to develop a new Parks and Greenspace strategy (PGSS) has continued since Scrutiny was last updated on the 3rd October 2022. At that meeting, scrutiny reviewed the emerging elements, including:

- Guiding principles
- Priority themes
- Why parks matter
- Policy context
- Need for a new strategy
- Stakeholder input and expectations

A summary of the how stakeholders have been involved in developing the new PGSS was presented, with detail on this circulated following the meeting.

A decision was made subsequent to the meeting to consult on a draft PGSS.

Updated elements and actions for review:

- Vision, principles, priority areas (key themes) and key benefits
- Context and contributory elements, to include: a Bristol Tree Strategy (see other agenda item), Food Strategy (as a sub-section of the PGSS) and the Managing for Nature approach.
- Land in scope that includes, spaces open to the public such as parks, green spaces and active and closed burial grounds, allotments and other food growing land and much of the land used for grazing in the city.
- Seven priority themes with key BCC commitments

Timetable for adoption of a new PGSS

- It is expected that new PGSS will be adopted by Cabinet in March 2024.

Consultation

- It is expected that consultation on the new PGSS will be from the end of October for 6-weeks.

2. Purpose

The draft PGSS document remains in development and is subject to change ahead of consultation. Cabinet is expected to approve a new PGSS in March 2024, subject to consultation feedback.

The following key elements of the draft PGSS are being shared for review:

A Vision for Parks in 2038

Our Vision: By 2038, all residents feel able to access fun, safe, sustainable parks and green spaces and experience associated health and wellbeing benefits.

Our vision will be guided by these
Strategic Principles

Collaborative

Creative

Equitable &
Inclusive

Financially
Sustainable

Informed

Our principles will drive change in seven
Strategic Priority areas

Nature
&
Climate

Children
&
Young
People

Community
Participation

Health
and
Wellbeing

Culture

Employment
&
Skills

Food
Growing
and
Allotments

Our work will deliver the following benefits
for parks and green spaces

Quality
&
Equitable

Accessible
&
Connected

Sustainable
&
Resilient

Playful
&
Fun

Healthy
&
Active

Educational
&
Inspiring

Safe
&
Welcoming

PGSS Context

Bristol One City Plan ‘Ultimate Goal’	In 2050, Bristol is a fair, healthy and sustainable city. A city of hope and aspiration, where everyone can share in its success.			
Overarching One City Strategies	One City Climate Strategy: “In 2030, Bristol is carbon neutral and climate resilient. We have collectively achieved a fair and inclusive transition; capturing the opportunities of new jobs and investment, improved health, wellbeing and education, and a better environment for local people. We have helped lead the way to a safer global climate.”	One City Ecological Emergency Strategy: “From today, we will work together as a city to ensure that 30% of Bristol’s land is managed for nature. We will create space for nature, and unite to find new, fair and inclusive ways to reduce and eliminate the threats to habitats and wildlife. Together we will take action for nature so that both people and wildlife can benefit.”	Bristol Health and Wellbeing Strategy: ...Citizens to thrive in a city that supports their mental and physical health and wellbeing, with children growing up free of ‘Adverse Childhood Experiences’, and the gaps in health outcomes between the most economically deprived areas and the most affluent areas of Bristol significantly reduced.”	One City Food Equality Strategy: “Food equality exists when all people, at all times, have access to nutritious, affordable and appropriate food according to their social, cultural and dietary needs. They are equipped with the resources, skills and knowledge to use and benefit from food, which is sourced from a resilient, fair and environmentally sustainable food system.”

Spaces included in this strategy

See maps:

- **PGSS Footprint Citywide - Draft 1.2**
- **PGSS Footprint detail - Draft 1.2**

The Strategy addresses spaces that are open to the public such as parks, green spaces, all cemeteries – active and closed, allotments and other food growing land and much of the land used for grazing in the city.

Most of this land is managed by the Council’s Parks Service but includes some sites that are open for public use and managed by other council departments or other partners, e.g., Arnos Vale Cemetery (leased to Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust).

Priority Themes

Seven priority themes are identified with key commitments against each.

1. Nature and Climate
2. Children and Young People
3. Community Participation
4. Health and Wellbeing
5. Culture
6. Skills and Employment
7. Food growing

Priority theme: 1. Nature and Climate

Our vision: Our parks and green spaces are rich in nature that is accessible to all. Parks and green spaces provide a networked habitat for wildlife and play a significant role in keeping Bristol cool and help to tackle the climate emergency.



Sustainable
& Resilient



Accessible
& Connected



Healthy
& Active

See maps:

- **PGSS Managing for Nature Citywide - Draft 1.2**
- **PGSS Managing for Nature detail - Draft 1.2**

Why is Nature and Climate a priority?

- We are facing an ecological crisis. The latest [State of Nature](#) report shows that over half of all UK wild species are in decline. To reverse this decline, we need to restore habitats and create new spaces for nature. We need to move from a patchwork of isolated habitats to a connected ecological network, defined by the [West of England Nature Recovery Network](#).
- The city has declared an ecological emergency, calling for 30% of the city's land to be 'managed for the benefit of wildlife' by 2030. Our Managing for Nature (M4N) work shows that 39% of PGSS land is currently being managed for nature, but the figure for all council land is 15%. We have identified the potential to improve existing habitats and create areas of new habitat totalling 744 hectares. This would be a significant contribution to the Bristol Ecological Network, achieving over 50% of PGSS land managed for nature and 30% overall for all council land.
- Whilst we are looking strategically at nature recovery to maximise the benefits for wildlife, we fully recognise how important it is for people to experience nature close to home. Contact with nature plays a vital role in our emotional, psychological, and physical health and wellbeing.
- Bristol's city-wide One City Climate Strategy sets out how the city aims to become a carbon

neutral and climate resilient city by 2030. Our parks are already contributing to these goals in many ways, but we recognise that there are further opportunities to use our land to support the city's goals.

- Given the likely increase in temperatures during the summer, it is vitally important that parks are utilised as 'cooling spaces' – spaces that themselves are cooler, but also can reduce peak temperatures within neighbourhoods (given their heat reflecting properties). Moreover, innovative ways of establishing green spaces must be developed to offset new developments within the most densified urban areas of our city.
- The role of trees in our city will be pivotal in delivering protection against higher temperatures. Extensive research has highlighted an imbalance in the tree coverage across the city, particularly in certain areas of high deprivation, where tree canopy is just 9% compared to 26% in our most treed neighbourhoods. Our emerging Trees Strategy will address this inequity and ensure the benefits of trees can be enjoyed everywhere.

Summary of opportunity for nature:

Area of land currently managed for nature	15% (BCC total)	759 hectares
New opportunity	% uplift	Area uplift
Improved management of designated Sites of Nature Conservation Interest	8.4%	425 hectares
Habitat creation – through changes to green space maintenance regimes in the Nature Recovery Network	4.4%	223 hectares
Creation of other habitats (inc., Hallen Marsh)	1.9%	96 hectares
Contribution from newly planted woodlands	0.3%	15 hectares
Total	30%	1,518 hectares

Our Commitments for Nature and Climate

Nature

- We will develop positive actions from our Managing for Nature approach to support the city's ambition to achieve 30% of city land being managed for nature. We will work with partners, communities and parks groups to progress our mapping of nature opportunities to inform where and how we create more nature-rich spaces, aiming to create 300 hectares of new wildlife spaces by 2038.
- We will reduce pesticide use by 50% by 2030 in allotments, small-holdings and parks and green spaces.
- We will establish at least 50 hectares of trees and woodland within 10 years of the adoption of this strategy, by identifying sites for tree planting and through our One Tree Per Child programme.
- We will pursue all forms of funding to support our strategic nature recovery programme including new markets such as Biodiversity Net Gain.

Climate

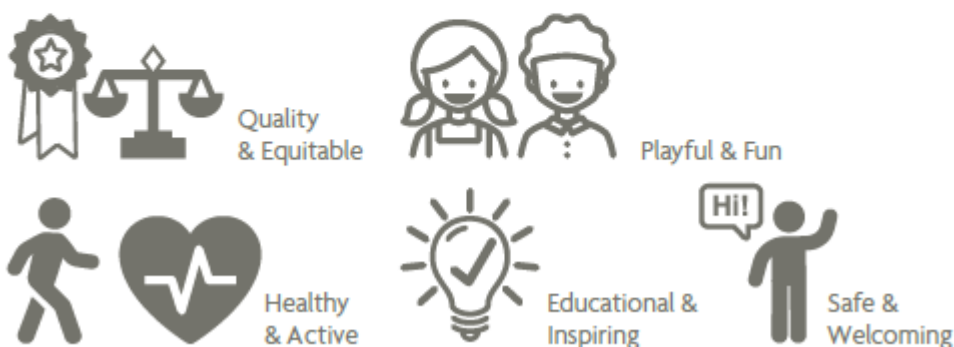
- Based on the Keep Bristol Cool approach, we will identify priority areas where the provision

of more natural vegetation, including trees, would help keep communities cooler as we expect more extreme urban heating due to climate change.

- To respond to the impact of climate change on nature we will ensure that our habitats are designed to thrive in changing climate conditions and that we develop nature corridors as set out in our Managing for Nature approach.
- Through the City Leap partnership, we will consider how parks and green space can be used to host green infrastructure (such as ground source heat pumps) in a way that maintains the other benefits of our spaces.
- We will identify opportunities for parks and green spaces to provide flood protection such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) like the one in Fonthill Park

Priority theme: 2. Children and Young People

Our vision: Our parks and green spaces provide exciting and diverse play spaces that ensure all children and young people can flourish, develop, have fun and feel safe and included in our parks and playgrounds.



Our Commitments for Children and Young People

- We will meet our minimum standards for a good mix of accessible facilities for children and young people, including a children's play area within a 10-minute walk from home [subject to funding]. For young people and young adults, we seek to provide a multi-use-games-area (MUGA) within 1km of home and a good quality 'wheels park' within 2km of home.
- We will involve children and young people in decision-making about play provision and play experiences, aiming to be inclusive and relevant to the needs of the communities that we serve.
- We will do more to meet the needs of children with disability or impairment, and recognise that girls' use of play facilities, particularly multi-use games areas, drops off in adolescence as they feel that these facilities are not for them. We will work towards Green Flag's Safer Parks guidance 'improving access for women and girls', which outlines how changes to park design and management will help women and girls – and all park users - feel safer and more welcomed in our parks and green spaces.
- We will explore ways of integrating play, education and learning into all aspects of our parks and green spaces to release pressure from our existing playground infrastructure. Where possible, we will work with local councillors and communities to commit resource to improving play facilities where they are most needed.

Priority theme: 3. Community Participation

Our vision: We will empower park users, volunteers, and community groups to engage in park management and development. We will work collaboratively with local partners to support communities to make the most of their park.



Quality
& Equitable



Accessible
& Connected



Educational &
Inspiring

Our Commitments to support Community Participation

- We will work collaboratively with other council services and community partners to ensure our work is done with, not to, communities. Developing opportunities to engage a more diverse range of decision makers will be a key tenant of our service delivery in the future. We will look at ways we can establish more effective working relationships with the city's 'anchor organisations' and the many other organisations and services that share an interest in supporting citizen's access to parks and green spaces.
- We will continue to develop projects together with Your Park Bristol and Bath, a key charitable organisation and partner, that can help support volunteering, community grant funding and help grow the capacity in our communities to make green space management decisions.
- We will invest in our workforce and develop our service in terms of the skills, processes and structures needed to engage and collaborate with community partners and volunteers and make things happen.

Priority theme: 4. Health and Wellbeing

Our vision: Our parks, green spaces and allotments provide a range of health benefits to all communities and contribute towards greater wellbeing across the city.



Accessible
& Connected



Healthy
& Active



Safe &
Welcoming

Our Commitments for Health and Wellbeing

- We will prioritise improving quality and accessibility of parks-for-all alongside providing targeted health interventions for those who would benefit most.
- We will conduct research to understand why some people don't use parks or only do so occasionally and feed this into action to address barriers and encourage more active use in general.

- We will take a partnership approach to attract funds and expertise from a variety of sources. By rolling out our 'Wild and Well' approach (see case study) we will build essential relationships between the health sector, community organisations, parks groups and green social prescribing practitioners and sport providers.
- We will work with the council's Sport Development Team to maintain the current provision of playing pitch supply and work to improve the quality of these pitches and ancillary facilities, such as changing rooms – this work has started. How we will do this will be set out the new Playing Pitch Strategy, which will be developed over the next two years.
- We will expand the number of allotments and increase the number of people experiencing the significant health benefits generated through food growing and we will provide collective and supported food growing opportunities in different parts of the city. We will also increase the number of people that can apply for a discounted allotment space, supporting people on lower incomes who rely on benefits and tax credits.

Priority theme: 5. Culture

Our vision: Our parks and green spaces reflect the diverse cultural heritage of our local communities, and develop into vibrant, welcoming and creative cultural hubs for their communities.



Playful & Fun



Educational & Inspiring



Safe & Welcoming

Our Commitments for Culture

- We will continue to develop 'Our Spirit of Place' approach to understand the unique character and importance of spaces involving stakeholders to ensure our decision-making around cultural offerings in parks is aligned to the needs and aspirations of our communities.
- We will secure external funding and co-design plans with stakeholders and communities to enhance the benefits of existing sites such as St Peter's Church and Ashton Court Mansion.
- We will explore opportunities to develop infrastructure so that a range of parks sites can be used for medium to large sized cultural events. Our current event programme will be guided by more ecologically conscious practises.
- We will conduct a review to ensure our parks and green spaces are more accessible and inclusive to community-led cultural initiatives.

Priority theme: 6. Employment and Skills

Our vision: The Parks Service workforce will reflect the communities we serve with the skills and experience to help us achieve our ambitions for a vibrant and inclusive parks and green spaces.



Quality
& Equitable



Educational &
Inspiring

Our Commitments for employment and skills

- We will address the current employment barriers for under-represented groups through the delivering of our *Health and Wellbeing Transformation Programme*.
- Through our staff succession plan we will develop skills fit for the future, including expanding our apprenticeship programme to provide a range of career opportunities with mentoring to ensure that skills and experience are passed down.
- We will continue to develop a Parks Volunteer Programme in partnership with Your Park and others, offering volunteers and community groups training to support capacity-building.
- We will also seek to create volunteer opportunities across the service - new roles to add capacity that are supported by specialists in our officer working group

Priority theme: 7. Food Growing and Allotments

Our vision: The city will produce a thriving network of accessible land for local people and communities to grow healthy and sustainable food. This network will tackle food inequity, strengthen food resilience and support community cohesion and wellbeing.



Quality
& Equitable



Accessible
& Connected



Sustainable
& Resilient

See Maps:

- **PGSS Food Growing Citywide - Draft 1.2**
- **PGSS Food Growing detail - Draft 1.2**

The Food Growing and Allotments strategy is now included as a theme within the PGSS.

Our Commitments for food growing and allotments:

The successful delivery of this Food Growing and Allotments Strategy will be driven by three key commitments:

1. Reducing the number of people who are waiting to access Bristol City Council owned food growing spaces. And providing more shared or collective opportunities to grow, by bring more land in to use for growing and by taking measures to ensure land already used benefits more growers
2. Delivering new spaces for food growing while maintaining the balance of land outlined in the wider Parks and Green Spaces Strategy.
3. Working to ensure people and communities from every area of the city can access suitable food growing opportunities.

We will deliver on these commitments by focussing on four key priorities:

Effective Use of Existing Space: Our extensive mapping of BCC allotment land has highlighted the potential for optimise availability of allotment plots by supporting existing tenants to use their plots more efficiently and effectively and reducing the number of plots left dormant and unused.

By establishing a stronger tenancy agreement, engaging more proactively with our Allotment Associations, and improving the information and guidance available to tenants, we will support a greater number of plots to be used for their full benefit and adapt sites, so they make the most of the space available.

Collective Food Growing: Collective growing plots are a great way to enjoy the benefits of an allotment plot without having to commit to an individual allotment tenancy or join the waiting list for a plot. These have been established by a group or organisation to satisfy a particular community need and interest in food growing, providing social interaction and community cohesion.

There is great opportunity for these initiatives to encourage the participation of under-represented groups, and to be a stepping- stone for everyone to progress from an interest in food growing to taking on their own allotment plot. Increasing opportunities for collective food growing will require a collaborative and creative approach, but it has the potential to reduce pressure on our allotment waiting list and ensure the benefits of food growing are accessible.

Repurposing Land: Our network of allotment spaces sits alongside a network of small holdings and grazing livestock. While we will continue to keep land for these uses, we are aware that they have limited benefit beyond the individual users; and whilst allotment tenants are required to cultivate 75% of their plot during the summer months, many small holdings tend to use less than 10% of their site for food growing.

Having conducted extensive land mapping, we will explore opportunities to repurpose some land to extend our food growing spaces. Doing so will increase our allotment capacity and will ensure we can deliver more equitable food growing across the city.

Food Growing on Private Land: Achieving our ambition of having an equitable share of food growing space for people of all communities and backgrounds will require the establishment of plots in every ward in the city. Yet, there are 7 wards in the city which have no council owned allotment sites or council owned land with the potential to be repurposed. Achieving our ambitions will therefore require a collaborative, cross-city approach.

We will therefore focus resource on developing opportunities to work with a variety of partners to expand food growing spaces beyond council owned land, focussing on the areas where there is an

existing deficit. Where possible, we'll work with communities to explore ways our park spaces could be used for local food growing.

3. Policy

At a **national level**, our strategy supports the government's ambition to ensure everyone has a green space within at least a 15-minute walk. We also considered international agreements such as the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration as we think globally and act locally through strategic delivery.

At a **regional level**, our strategy supports the West of England Combined Authority (referred to as WECA in this document) and its ambitions concerning climate adaptation, improving biodiversity and enhancing a 'legible network of physical green spaces.'

At a **local level**, the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy has been primarily influenced by Bristol's One City Plan as it sets out a city-wide and shared vision for what we want Bristol to look like in 2050. This is the guiding strategic document for other key strategies such as the One City Climate Strategy, so the relevant goals within it are referenced throughout this document.

Bristol One City Plan 'Ultimate Goal'	In 2050, Bristol is a fair, healthy and sustainable city. A city of hope and aspiration, where everyone can share in its success.			
Overarching One City Strategies	One City Climate Strategy	One City Ecological Emergency Strategy	Bristol Health and Wellbeing Strategy	One City Food Equality Strategy

4. Consultation

a) Internal

As previously undertaken and advised.

b) External

As previously undertaken and advised.

Public consultation on a draft PGSS is planned from the end of October 2023 for 6-weeks,

5. Public Sector Equality Duties

5a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following "protected characteristics": age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:

i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under

the Equality Act 2010.

- ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
 - tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.

5b) An equalities impact assessment has previously been circulated.

Appendices:

Maps:

PGSS Food Growing Citywide - Draft 1.2

PGSS Food Growing detail - Draft 1.2

PGSS Footprint Citywide - Draft 1.2

PGSS Footprint detail - Draft 1.2

PGSS Managing for Nature Citywide - Draft 1.2

PGSS Managing for Nature detail - Draft 1.2

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None