

Statement: PS14.02

Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024

Re: Agenda item 14 - Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

Statement submitted by: Dan Ackroyd

It's great that this council is applying for money from the 'West of England' 'Green Recovery Fund'. And it's great that the council has acknowledged that the complete lack of maintenance spending on allotments isn't working, and that a minimum level of maintenance needs to be carried out.

But it's appalling how this council does not view consultations as part of the 'requirements gathering' step in decision making, and instead seems to view a consultation as something to be done after a decision has been made, and will only change course if people will complain loudly enough.

From the "Parks and Green Spaces Strategy" document:

"We will seek to engage a more diverse range of stakeholders and commit to co-designing change in partnership with communities"

"using an open dialogue with stakeholders and communities – will seek to adapt to new ideas and new ways of thinking."

"proactively forming relationships with stakeholders and communities across the city."

Why would anyone engage with this council?

You already had a pretty great way of engaging with the Allotmenters. The Bristol Allotments Forum should have been involved in the discussion when drafting the changes to Parks and Green Spaces strategy, and the Allotments Rents and Water Charges.

But you didn't 'co-design' anything with them. Instead you just announced what you wanted to do, and have back-pedalled a small amount.

The same thing happened recently at the Licensing committee. This council carried out a consultation and then wanted to throw the results of it away.

This council has a pattern of just refusing to talk to people who might disagree with them, and instead wanting to talk to people who already agree with what this council wants to "get done".

That is wrong.

You should focus more on improving communication with the groups that are already engaging with you, rather than just ignoring those people, even if they aren't fully aligned with your vision of what should happen.