

FRIENDS OF STOCKWOOD OPEN SPACES

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Public Forum Statement to Bristol City Council, meeting on 22nd November 2011

Parks and Green Spaces Strategy (Item 7c)

We are a well established group of residents concerned to protect and improve the open spaces of Stockwood for the benefit of people and wildlife. We work with the parks staff and many other agencies to help fulfil these aims, and we can claim to have made a lot of progress in three years since we started.

Today, we ask you to simply note the progress made so far by the cross-party working group, but to reject any recommendations for land sales until there is clarity as to how even the minimal aspirations of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy can be paid for.

It would be wrong to make firm decisions to sell land on the basis of a mere interim report.

It would be worse still if those decisions failed to bring in enough income to fulfil its purpose – i.e. to put the objectives of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy into practice. The cross-party report makes it very clear that its proposals do fail in that respect;

“Even with all the projections being achieved, there will still be a shortfall in achieving the fair (lower) standards”

As we have pointed out before, the original Parks and Green Spaces Strategy does anticipate this problem (at page 42):

““should there be insufficient 'low value' marginal land available.... the council will review the ambitions of the strategy and consider alternative funding sources.””

That is the situation the city is facing today. We urge you to implement this part of the adopted Strategy, before choosing to sell off valued open spaces, knowing that the sale will not bring about the hoped-for improvements to the remaining parks and open spaces. Given that this is not, in any event, a good time to get the best price for public land, there is nothing to be lost (and much to be gained) by waiting a bit longer, in order to make better informed decisions.

When (and if) the sale of land is considered essential to bring Bristol's parks and open spaces to an acceptable standard, we remain strongly of the view that any such decisions should be taken by the relevant Neighbourhood Partnership. We see no virtue in that part of the cross-party report that NP decisions should be limited to those sites that attracted most comment in the consultation.

Pete Goodwin
on behalf of Friends of Stockwood Open Spaces