
Parks and Green Spaces

Consultation Overview

By April 2019 the council has a target to reduce what it spends each year on parks by at least £2.868 million. This means services will need to be run in a very different way; we will need to work more with communities, make more money, create more partnerships, make services as efficient as possible and reduce some of the things we do now. As we move forward we want to be positive and ambitious for our parks whilst being clear that we have to work differently to maintain a much valued level of service citywide.

In order to make the savings, we have taken the approach of trying to earn as much money as possible so we can keep service reductions to a minimum. The alternative would be to make the savings by reducing the service and removing facilities which cost the council a considerable amount of money to keep and maintain.

Our proposals are described in the survey below. Please give us your views.

Savings to other services

You can see the full list of savings which we propose to make over the next five years as part of our Corporate Strategy and Budget Consultation at www.bristol.gov.uk/corpstrategy

Next steps

Your feedback, along with the views of other local groups and partners and the results of our **Equalities Impact Assessment** will be taken in to consideration in developing a set of final proposals that match local needs wherever possible.

The proposals will be put to the Mayor and his Cabinet to make a final decision. In making a decision they will also take consultation responses and the Equalities Impact Assessment into consideration.

The consultation results and the council's decision on how to deliver future services will be published in early 2018.

Introduction

1. Introduction / key communication messages

Overall, the cost of the council providing essential services and changes in our income will leave us with a gap in our finances of £108m over the next five years. This is because prices keep going up, as does the demand for services such as social care and education, because we have a growing population. The council is having to make savings across many of its services.

We believe Bristol's parks and green spaces are a vital part of the city's facilities. Parks are good for the physical and emotional wellbeing of citizens, as well as helping to make Bristol an attractive tourist destination.

Providing and maintaining parks and green spaces is not a statutory function of the council (i.e. the council does not have to do it). Most councils choose to spend money on public open green space because of its importance to citizens. Maintaining and investing in parks and green spaces is getting more and more difficult as council budgets become smaller. However, there is a real opportunity for a thriving city such as Bristol to come up with innovative approaches to sustain city green space for the future.

By April 2019 the council has a target to reduce what it spends each year on parks by at least £2.868 million. This means services will need to be run in a very different way; we will need to work more with communities, make more money, create more partnerships, make services as efficient as possible and reduce some of the things we do now. As we move forward we want to be positive and ambitious for our parks whilst being clear that we have to work differently to maintain a much valued level of service citywide.

In order to make the savings, we have taken the approach of trying to earn as much money as possible so we can keep service reductions to a minimum. The alternative would be to make the savings by reducing the service and removing facilities which cost the council a considerable amount of money to keep and maintain.

Our vision is:

Working together for a Bristol with good quality, attractive and enjoyable parks and green spaces in every part of the city / neighbourhood.

We will do this by:

- Keeping free access for all to the city's parks.
- Making money from our parks that we will use directly to support their maintenance and improvement [and seeking to make them more financially secure for future generations].
- Welcoming community management of local spaces, supporting volunteering and neighbourhood decision-making.
- Recognising that our parks are vital for our health and wellbeing and ensuring they are attractive and accessible for all our citizens.
- Being clear about our strategy for parks, our minimum standards, our investment plans and how we intend to deliver them.
- Being clear that having good, safe, clean and well-maintained parks is a collective responsibility.
- Ensuring that the planning process protects green space from development where green space is

needed and where it helps protect the city from high temperatures and local flooding during heavy rainfall.

2. What are we consulting and engaging on?

We have already started to deliver some of the £2.868m savings we need to make. £963k agreed in the 2017-18 Corporate Strategy consultation is being saved through improving services and increasing charges in cemeteries and crematoriums, increasing income from cafes and other businesses in parks, reducing money we give to other organisations, and closing the business operating in Ashton Court which does not cover the costs of keeping Ashton Court open.

Now a further £632k of savings is needed in 2018-19 and £1.272m is needed in 2019-20 (i.e. £1.904m in total across these two years). We propose that the £1.904m of savings would be:

- £1.040m achieved by generating income, including from the proposals we set out below;
- £490k saved by making efficiencies and reducing parks services, including from the proposals we set out below;
- £375k generated by increasing income from established businesses – eg cemeteries and crematoriums;

If we are able to raise more income than we currently predict then this can be used to prevent service reductions.

Because of the Council's overall requirement to make savings, we have ruled out keeping the parks service as it is and not making changes. Therefore, we are consulting now on a number of proposals for 2018-19 and 2019-20 that would help move us closer to our savings target.

We are also engaging with you to identify what concerns you have with changes we propose, what preferences you have when considering change and what ideas you have for helping the Council make the savings it needs to. Further consultation on specific proposals may follow once we have ascertained your views on the approaches we propose.

Generating Income

1. The council is exploring a wide range of options to generate more income from parks which we propose would begin in 2018. This approach is intended to mean that cuts to parks services are limited.

- 'Parks Services' include parks and green space maintenance and management, allotments, closed burial grounds, children's play areas, Blaise plant nursery, outdoor sports pitches and pavilions, nature reserves, buildings in parks.
- The Parks Service already makes income from: the council's Cemeteries and Crematoria service; hosting events; fees and charges e.g. for sports pitches and parking; leasing land; cafes and concessions such as ice cream vans; the plant nursery at Blaise; allotment charges; and filming. The council currently spends £6m a year on its day to day parks services, this is offset by an income of around £1.5m, leaving a budget of £4.5m.
- Other parts of the council also pay for the Parks Service to carry out grounds maintenance and tree maintenance for them.
- Friends' groups and others raise money to help improve parks and green spaces.
- We also get money from developers in the form of planning contributions.

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree
 Strongly disagree

We want your views on the following income generating proposals:

2. Proposal 1: Increase income from cafes and concessions (e.g ice cream vans) and provide more of these in our parks.

- Our aim is not to simply 'charge more', but to provide attractive and competitive food outlets that provide a profit we can use to support free-to-use parks services.
- Cafes and concessions will be provided where it is clear that income can be generated to support our Parks service. You would expect to see more concessions in busier parks at busier times.
- Cafes are currently located at St Andrews Park, Castle Park, Ashton Court Estate, Blaise Estate, St George Park, Oldbury Court Estate, Victoria Park, Canford Park, The Downs, Horfield Common, Redcatch Park. These will be routinely reviewed to make sure they maximise income to support the Parks Service.

We estimate this will raise a minimum of £120k.

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree
 Strongly disagree

3. Proposal 2: Introduce appropriate advertising in parks and green spaces.

- Advertising would take place where there are higher volumes of visitors – busier parks and parks that have a boundary with busy roads and pedestrian routes.
- We are already taking forward a proposal to use green spaces adjacent to main roads, roundabouts for example, for commercial advertising.

Advertising content will not include:

- Tobacco, alcohol or e-cigarette advertising
- Religious advertising
- Pay-day loan advertising
- Any content that can be deemed to offer escort or sexual services
- Party political content
- Content that contravenes the council's equalities policies

We estimate this will raise a minimum of £50k.

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree
 Strongly disagree

4. Proposal 3: Introduce new, competitive fees and charges for any business operating from a park or green space.

Any individual or company running a commercial activity in a park will be expected to pay a fee to do so. Fees may vary but will be based on the level of income made by the business. Types of business would include:

- Professional dog walkers
- Hot Air Balloon operators
- Fitness trainers

We estimate this will raise £54.5k.

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree
 Strongly disagree

5. Proposal 4: Introduce new fee-paying activities into parks and allow private businesses to operate pay-to-use facilities from parks.

We will seek to introduce activities such as:

- Inflatables such as bouncy castles
- Adventure golf
- Aerial adventure trails
- Car boot sales
- Zorbing
- Camping and Caravanning.
- Commercial Climbing
- Commercial Ballooning
- Allotments

We estimate this will raise a minimum of £315k.

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree
 Strongly disagree

6. Proposal 5: Increase money from events in the parks of the city.

We would do this by:

- Looking to host more, larger fee-paying events that raise significant income. These are likely to be in parks that already host events.
- Looking to host a greater variety and greater number of events overall.
- Seeking to host events in more parks.

The current sites that host events are:

- Ashton Court Estate
- Clifton and Durdham Downs
- Oldbury Court Estate
- Kings Weston Estate
- Blaise Castle Estate
- Eastville Park
- Castle Park Canford
- Park Victoria Park
- Greville Smyth Park
- Queen Square
- College Green

The council has an Events Policy which sets out its approach to managing events (www.eventapp.org/bristol) and event charges. Community and charity events have a significantly discounted fee.

The council currently invests 85% of all income received through events into its Parks Service and the remaining 15% to support the Events Team.

We estimate this will raise £300K.

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree
 Strongly disagree

7. Please tell us if you have specific concerns about any of the proposals to raise income (Q2-6). If you do, how might your concerns be alleviated?

8. Do you have any other ideas of how we might raise income from our parks and open spaces?

Reducing existing service provision

We want your views on the following proposals which will reduce existing service provision:

9. Proposal 6: The operation of chargeable sports facilities and other facilities in public parks only when they generate no cost to the Council.

We would do this by:

- Reviewing fees and charges so that they are more in line with the type and quality of facilities being requested and the cost of provision;
- Working closely with sports clubs and leagues so they can use facilities and make pitches ready without council help;
- Review and reduce the number of changing rooms and pavilions in the city to lower maintenance costs;
- Pursue longer-term 'self-management' arrangements where facilities are run or maintained by a club or other organisation.
- The council is already working closely with sports governing bodies, clubs and sports leagues to ensure that proposals work and are supported.
- The council will be changing the way football pitches are maintained so that over time their quality is improved and the playing experience is improved for teams.
- The council has been working with the Lawn Tennis Association and is already implementing a sustainable model for the provision of tennis courts in parks.
- Sports included:
 - Cricket
 - Football
 - Bowls
 - Rugby
- Information on the location and type of sports facilities in the city can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/parkssports>

This will save a minimum of £50k.

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree
 Strongly disagree

10. Proposal 7: Reduce the number of days Hengrove Play Park is open to five days a week – Wednesday to Sunday – all year round. Currently, over the summer months, the play area is open six days a week.

- The Play Park is open only five days a week in the winter months.
- Opening for five days a week reduces the staff required to two members of staff.

This will save £15k.

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree
 Strongly disagree

11. Proposal 8: Reduce the level of grounds maintenance on parks or parts of parks across the city where it is appropriate to do so.

Some grounds maintenance services will remain unaffected, proposals being considered are:

1. Reducing grass cutting, to include:

- Increase the amount of green space that is cut once a year.
- Increase the amount of green space that is cut three times a year.
- Not strimming around obstacles as frequently; leaving longer grass.

2. Leaf collecting:

- Leaving leaves where they fall in more locations than we do currently. We will continue to collect where they are likely to blow on to roads and footpaths and cause a hazard.

3. Change of function:

- We will look to change sites or parts of sites to a different function or management regime that lowers costs e.g. grassed area to woodland.

4. Pruning shrubs and hedges:

- We will identify locations where we can remove shrubs and reduce our maintenance of them where this will not cause a nuisance.

5. Hay cuts

- We may reduce the number of sites that we cut for hay and introduce a different management regime. The Council employs a contractor to carry out hay cutting.

This will save a minimum of £300k.

A map identifying the location of sites managed by the Parks service that may be affected is here - <http://tinyurl.com/parkssites>

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree
 Strongly disagree

12. Proposal 9: To no longer provide hanging baskets in parts of the city and to replace formal bedding displays with more floral meadow displays.

Hanging basket displays would no longer be provided at:

- City Hall
- College Green
- Central Library
- Park Street
- Blackboy Hill
- Swallow Royal Hotel
- Blackboy roundabout
- Victoria Rooms

Floral bedding would be reviewed at:

- Old Market Roundabout
- Blackboy Roundabout
- Blaise Hallen Rd Triangle
- Castle Park
- Eastville Park
- Greville Smyth Park
- Sea Mills Square
- Shirehampton Green
- St George's Park
- Thomas memorial
- Victoria Park
- Victoria Rooms

This will save a minimum of £20k (hanging baskets).

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree
 Strongly disagree

13. Proposal 10: Flexible opening times for parks facilities (e.g. toilets) in order to reduce out-of-hours staffing costs.

We would seek support from volunteers to keep facilities open longer if the council is unable to and introduce automatic locking systems where appropriate.

“Out of hours” would be any time before 7.30am and any time after 3.00pm, seven days a week. Facilities affected will include:

1. Cabot Tower in Brandon Hill Park
2. St Andrews Park paddling pool
3. Toilet facilities in parks at:
 - Victoria Park
 - Canford Park
 - Blaise Estate
 - Oldbury Court Estate and Snuff Mills
 - St Andrews Park
 - Brandon Hill Park
 - Redcatch Park

This will save a minimum of £15k.

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree
 Strongly disagree

14. Proposal 11: Remove play areas and play equipment when they are no longer safely usable and do not replace if the council’s minimum provision standards demonstrate that there is suitable provision nearby.

The minimum provision standards are set out in the council’s Parks and Green Space Strategy (www.bristol.gov.uk/policies-plans-strategies/bristol-parks-and-green-space-strategy) and which parts of the city are within the standard and outside the standard (<http://tinyurl.com/parksplay>).

Savings from this proposal will increase over time. Saving would be a minimum of £40k.

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree
 Strongly disagree

15. Proposal 12: We propose to look for opportunities for community groups and organisations and businesses to manage, maintain or enhance local green spaces.

We may not accept management by other organisations if a park or green space is able to generate income that could be used to support the parks service as a whole.

Savings from this proposal will increase over time. Saving would be a minimum of £50k.

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree
 Strongly disagree

16. Please tell us if you have specific concerns about any of the proposals to save money by reducing the service (Q9-15). If you do, what you do differently?

17. Do you have any other ideas of how we might save money from reducing the service?

Other proposals

18. Proposal 13: We propose to increase the number of pay and display parking spaces in parks, and increase the parking charges on sites that already have pay and display parking.

This supports the council's transport policy of offering short stay parking to encourage retail and leisure activities, and it would help improve turnover in these car parks for wider benefit.

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree
 Strongly disagree

19. Proposal 14: We are considering the merits of the Parks Service being delivered by a Trust or similar organisation rather than the City Council.

A Trust would be an independent charitable organisation that took responsibility for managing parks and green spaces.

The Trust could be responsible for all green spaces or just some of them.

How the Trust operates would be a point of negotiation as it was being established. However it could mean that:

1. All decisions on the management of parks in the city would be made by a Trust Board separately to the council;
2. The Trust could seek funding contributions from sources that the council cannot, such as grants and charitable donations;
3. Income raised would be held solely for parks management and maintenance – none would be available or used to support other council services (for example if a surplus was made).
4. The council would not give money to the Trust in years that income fell below expectations.
5. Assets may be given over to the Trust as part of a long-term lease i.e. 100+ years.

Would you agree or disagree with this approach?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree
 Strongly disagree

Please tell us if you have any specific concerns about the proposals in Q18 and 19:

20. Would you or your organisation be able to offer help or support to enable us to deliver our vision for parks?

Please select only one item

Yes No Already help/support parks and green spaces

What support do you think you can give if you don't already?

Please provide your contact details if you are able to help:

(All contact details will be treated confidentially and only used for the purpose of contacting you about your offer of support for parks and green spaces)

Name:

Email address:

Address:

Postcode:

About you

We would like to receive feedback from people with as wide a variety of views and needs as possible in Bristol. It would be very helpful if you could complete the following 'About You' questions. This will help us ensure that no-one is discriminated against unlawfully.

Information provided will be treated confidentially and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and only used to ensure that everyone is treated fairly.

What is your age group?

Please select only one item

- Under 18 18 – 24 25-44 45-64 65-74 Over 75
 Prefer not to say

What is your gender?

Please select only one item

- Female Male Prefer not to say

Are you transgender?

Please select only one item

- Yes No Prefer not to say

What is your ethnicity?

Please select only one item

- White British Other white Mixed / Dual Heritage Black / Black British
 Asian / Asian British Other ethnic group Prefer not to say

If other, please specify:

Are you disabled?

Please select only one item

- Yes No Prefer not to say

What is your religion?

Please select only one item

- No religion Christian Buddhist Hindu Jewish Muslim Sikh
 Any other religion or belief Prefer not to say

If other, please specify:

What is your sexual orientation?

Please select only one item

- Heterosexual (straight) Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual Prefer not to say

Data Protection: Data you supply will be held and used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Personal information you supply is confidential. The council will only publish aggregate or summary results from the consultation, which will not identify individuals. Information will be stored for two years.