

Fy Nghyf / My Ref: NRS/CW/BD/06.11.14

Dyddiad / Date: 19 November 2014

Councillor Bob Derbyshire
Cabinet Member for the Environment
City of Cardiff Council
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
Cardiff
CF10 4UW



Item 9 Appendix E

Dear Councillor Derbyshire

ECONOMY AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 6 November 2014
Parks and Green Spaces: Strategic Framework

On behalf of the Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee I would like to thank you and officers for attending the Committee meeting on 6 November 2014. The Committee had a number of comments and requests following the meeting, as set out below.

The Committee was pleased to receive an overview of the Strategic Framework for Parks, and recognise that this high level approach will enable the Directorate to develop a vision for the individual work streams ongoing within the Parks Service. We appreciated the overview of the individual work streams given by Jon Maidment and Rosie James, and have a number of observations that are directed more toward individual work streams than the Framework itself.

In relation to the Quality Value Assessments being undertaken to inform decisions within the 'Land Rationalisation' work stream, the Committee was not able to glean from the evidence provided a clear methodology for this work, and would like to have sight of the approach that is being taken. As you will be well aware, any decisions on land disposal or change of land use (e.g. community growing or conservation) will be highly emotive to local residents, and it is important that the Council can demonstrate that the approach has been carefully scrutinised and that Ward Members are in a position to answer their constituents' concerns. This is something we previously discussed with you at our June Committee meeting, and we hope that the assurances given that Members would be involved in this process still apply.

The Committee notes that the milestones and timeline in relation to land disposals given within the Sport, Leisure & Culture Directorate Delivery Plan have clearly slipped, with the first pilot tranche of land disposals not taking place in Quarter 2. The Committee requests clarification on when this pilot is now scheduled to take place,

and requests assurances that further information on this work stream will be brought before the Committee.

The Committee welcomes the assurances you gave at the meeting that we are now “preaching to the converted” with regards to the use of wildflowers on pockets of green space across the city, and we look forward to seeing them introduced. The Committee feels that Cardiff has been left behind in this respect, with a number of neighbouring authorities visibly introducing areas of wildflowers, which are recognised as one of the cheapest, most attractive and sustainable options for land management. We recognise that this approach will need to be closely coordinated with Highways and hope that aspirations demonstrated by the Cabinet Member will not fall down because of a Council ‘silo’ mentality.

In this respect, the Committee was not convinced that wider opportunities to work with other services, such as Economic Development, Transport, Highways and Leisure, are being effectively captured within each work stream. We are concerned that opportunities to plan and undertake work in a coordinated manner will be missed if the overlaps with other service areas are not formally captured, and recommend that the Strategic Framework or individual work stream documentation make it explicit where other service areas will be involved as partners.

Finally, the Committee wishes to note its concerns about the prospect of alternative delivery models being introduced to manage and maintain the parks and green spaces within the city. We feel the quality of the parks and green spaces within the city make an essential contribution to what Cardiff has to offer to residents and visitors, and question whether the specialist knowledge and expertise demonstrated by the Parks Service would be jeopardised by a move to an alternative delivery model.

I would be grateful if you would consider the above comments and provide a response to the requests made in this letter.

Regards,



Councillor Craig Williams
Chairperson Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee

cc Chris Hespe - Director of Sport, Leisure & Culture
Jon Maidment - Operational Manager, Parks & Sport
Cheryl Cornelius – Cabinet Office
Members of the Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee