

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
DOWNS COMMITTEE
HELD ON 6TH SEPTEMBER 2010 AT 4.30 P.M.**

P The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor Colin Smith
P Councillor Cook
P Councillor Goulandriss
P Councillor Hugill
P Councillor Morgan
P Councillor Stone
P Councillor Townsend

P Colin Skellett - Master

P Anthony Brown)
P Giles Clarke)
P Francis Greenacre) 6 Merchant Venturers
P Tony Kenny)
P Peter Rilett)
P Alan Tasker)

**DWN
49.9/10**

APOLOGES FOR ABSENCE AND INTRODUCTIONS

None were received

**DWN
50.9/10**

MINUTES - DOWNS COMMITTEE - 5TH JULY 2010

**RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the
Downs Committee held on 5th July 2010
be confirmed as a correct record and
signed by the Lord Mayor.**

**DWN
51.9/10**

PUBLIC FORUM

Item	Name	Number
Wheel Clamping	John Tottle	1
University Bus Stop	Peter Townsend	2
	John Swallow	3

	Sheila Swallow	4
	Pam Townsend	5
	Dr Lucy Cutler	6
	Dr Simon Chapman	7
	Mr & Mrs Norman	8
	Mrs Hazel Finn	9
	Helen Boyd	10
	Ash Desai	11
	Minal Desai	12
	Rene John, Saville Manor Nursing Home	13

DWN
52.9/10

PROVISION OF A NEW BUS STOP ON SAVILLE ROAD FOR UNIVERSITY BUS SERVICES

The Committee considered a report of the Team Manager, Transport Services Group, City Development (agenda item no. 5) receiving a briefing note for information.

Members received items of public forum as listed above.

During the discussion the following points were made;

- It was confirmed that legal advice stated that the land under discussion, including any grass verge, was an adopted highway and did not fall within the direct authority of the Downs Committee. The Committee therefore had no remit to make the decision regarding the bus stop. This legal advice was questioned by some Members.
- Members requested definitive legal briefing note of the precise jurisdiction of the Downs Committee vs Highways – a debate raised previously in relation to mobile phone masts. As the maintenance of the verges continued to be the responsibility of the Downs Ranger's it could be argued that it was Downs Land.
- The physical structure for the bus stop was required to be in place for the services that would start in two phases on the 18th September and 2nd October 2010. The Council had to make reasonable endeavours to respond to the service from the bus operator.

- Officers clarified that it was not normal practice for the Transport Division to take the provision of bus routes to Neighbourhood Partnerships as it was a frequent occurrence and could stall processes. Members of the Committee strongly advised that the matters should have been brought to the attention of the Neighbourhood Partnerships for the area and with the involvement of university representatives as a special case.
- There was concern that peak demand would see vast numbers of students waiting at the proposed bus stop for their bus and then on their return walking across the Downs.
- Members questioned the level of demand and need for haste when in previous years there was no requirement.
- Members questioned why the bus stop could not be sited on university land.

The Lord Mayor concluded that the Downs Committee believed the plan had been brought with undue haste and a lack of consultation. The Downs Committee strongly suggested that the issue be referred to the relevant Neighbourhood Partnerships and that the minutes of the meeting also be forwarded to the University.

**RESOLVED - (1) that the report be noted.
(2) that the minutes of the meeting be forwarded to Neighbourhood Partnerships and University.**

**DWN
53.9/10**

DOWNS RANGER REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Downs Ranger (agenda item no. 4) updating on works and developments carried out since the last meeting.

The Committee discussed the following topics as presented as part of the report;

Refreshment Facility

The Downs Ranger had received a request for a licence to operate a refreshment facility on the Portway, near to the redundant toilet

block. The Committee agreed that it would be more appropriate for the Committee to develop a plan to develop the area as a whole and make it more attractive before the public were invited to stop or proposals invited. It was a sensitive area, popular for photographs from the Clifton Suspension Bridge and it could be questioned whether it would enhance the area. Any catering van would require licensing and planning permission as well as the agreement of the Downs Committee. As such, it was suggested that there could be a conflict between Members of the Committee that also sat on the Licensing Committee would have to withdraw from the decision.

The Downs Committee would require a lot of detail from officers before they could consider it.

Officers confirmed an assessment would now be put together for the area of land in question. Applications could then be invited if desired. Any development of the plan should be cautious.

Wheel Clamping

As highlighted through an item of public forum, it was confirmed that clamping of vehicles, as stated through signs displayed on the Downs, that two wheels on Downs land warranted clamping.

Further to the decision at the last meeting to extend the clamping scheme until February 2011 it was brought to the attention of the Committee that there was a provision within the contract for an extension of 12 months, after which there would be a report with recommendations for the future. The contract could therefore continue until August 2011.

BBQs

A citywide study was ongoing and a report on the options for the Downs would come back to the Committee at the appropriate time.

Observatory

With reference to the contract for the operator in the Observatory cafe, it had been clarified that a "short visit" was one that was "not longer than one hour".

Trees

It was confirmed by the Head Gardner that the leaf virus on the Horse Chestnut Trees was a national problem although not as bad as last year and not expected to do any long term damage.

Green Flag

Officers were congratulated on the Green Flag Award.

RESOLVED –(1) that the report be noted.

(2) that an additional £4,000 from Reserves for external repainting of the Dressing Rooms be agreed;

(3) that an additional £2,000 from Reserves for the continuation of the Community Payback Scheme be agreed;

(4) That the Committee endorse the twelve month wheel clamping contract extension until August 2011

(5) That permission be given to further investigate the feasibility of reinstating visitor telescopes at the Seawalls and Observatory Tower.

DWN

54.9/10

FRIENDS OF THE DOWNS AND AVON GORGE REPORT

The Committee considered a report by Jack Penrose, of the Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge (FODAG) (agenda item no. 6) updating on work undertaken in the first 2 years and plans for the future.

During the presentation of the report the following main points were made;

- The Zoo parking attendants managed the parking area effectively with minimal litter and no significant damage. The path to the Zoo was very rough and not accessible to buggies. It needed end of season repair.
- The FODAG group, through subscriptions and donations, produced the newsletter and educational events and were regarded as a think tank based on objectivity and the pursuit of knowledge.
- It was the intention of FODAG to debate the unthinkable, not proposals, but to present position papers of topics such as;
 - (i) to re-write the byelaws for present day society and future users,
 - (ii) to be involved in 1861 celebrations as submitted to the Downs Committee in June 2010.
 - (iii) Whether Downs users would look to a reduction in traffic volumes, speed, carbon omissions etc

- (iv) The impact of commuter parking and to ascertain whether there were alternatives to public transport.
- (v) The promotion of temporary proposals such as road closure for cycling or a traffic free Seawalls.

The natural element of the Downs was well looked after with the problems such as litter, speeding cars, parking and barbeques are all wider issues not confined to the Downs.

In response to questions, Jack Penrose confirmed that FODAG were involved with the Neighbourhood Partnerships however, had taken time to establish themselves and increase their knowledge before engaging to a larger extent.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

**DWN
55.9/10**

GREATER BRISTOL BUS NETWORK (GBBN) PROPOSALS FOR CHANGES TO BLACKBOY HILL

The Committee considered a report of the Project Manager, City Development Major Projects (agenda item no. 7) updating on the proposals.

Minor improvements were proposed for White Tree roundabout and Parry's Lane. To accommodate the proposals, small areas of Downs Land were required to become highway. These were land adjacent to White Tree roundabout, for widening the roundabout to improve capacity, and land behind the bus stops of White Tree roundabout to provide a high quality bus shelter and waiting environment. Other areas of land would be given over to the Downs; the unnamed road leading from the water tower to Westbury Road/Redland Hill and re-seeding areas of Parry's Lane and White Tree roundabout.

There were two areas of land; new footpaths and new access to the Downs land as requested by the Downs Ranger which would have an annual maintenance of an estimated £1250 per year.

During the report and ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- Prescribed public consultation would be carried out during September and October 2010.

- To move the cycle path behind the trees could result in it being less well lit and with less natural surveillance. The Police may not favour that option.
- It was BCC policy to paint 24 hour bus lanes red to help enforcement. To make the bus lane time-specific would not help traffic flow.
- Traffic modelling had found that there would be time savings if the junction was signalled, including an average 54 seconds in the morning peak and 12 seconds in the evening peak for Redland Hill.
- It was the hope that those commuters no longer able to park on the unnamed road would use public transport in future.
- The plans would be presented to relevant Neighbourhood Partnerships and there would be a 2 to 3 week delay on the consultation dates proposed within the report.
- To create a cycle path to replace the unnamed road, when the byelaws did not allow vehicular transport on Downs Land, could be confusing to users. It was suggested that such a cycle path would be less confusing and more agreeable if it was part of a recognised cycle route.

There was a vote and it was carried that;

RESOLVED - that the proposed land transfer that would create 460m² of footpath and 290m² of vehicle access on the Downs for which the Downs Committee would have maintenance responsibilities be approved.

Excluding these areas, there is a net gain of 620m² Downs/common land from highway through the GBBN proposals.

**DWN
56.9/10**

DELEGATED AND UPCOMING EVENTS PROPOSED ON THE DOWNS

The Committee considered a report of the Festivals and Events Officer (agenda item no. 8) noting the events and filming that have taken place between committee meetings under delegated powers.

- Officers reported that they had responded to complaints about the Filipino Festival and lessons had been learnt which would be incorporated for future events.
- Technical issues with the Big Leap event had meant that only 15 people had been able to take part.
- The Circus would no longer take place on the Downs in 2010 due to economic pressures.
- It was requested that if the event for the Heart Foundation that involved the closure of Circular Road, re-applied for a future event, that the Committee would like the opportunity to respond to any application.
- Officers confirmed that they hoped to keep the diary largely free to accommodate events to celebrate 150 years of the Downs.

- RESOLVED -**
- (1) that the events and filming activity that has taken place under delegated powers be noted; and**
 - (2) that future events between committee meetings be noted.**

**DWN
57.9/10**

FOCUS ON THE CROCUS - PRESENTATION FROM DISTRICT ROTARY FOUNDATION

The Committee received a presentation from the District Rotary Foundation (agenda item no. 9) considering proposals for the event and crocus planting.

The Committee were concerned that the Conservation Officer had not been noted as being consulted and asked for her to be consulted.

It was the wish of the Committee that any logos should be very discreet and the responsibility of the Downs Ranger to monitor.

- RESOLVED - that the presentation be noted.**

**DWN
58.9/10**

CHARGES FOR CHARITY EVENTS ON THE DOWNS

The Committee considered a report of the Service Improvement Manager for Arts and Culture (agenda item no. 10) which reviewed the charges currently applied to charity events on the Downs and considered whether to keep them the same, reduce them or waiver them completely.

The Committee believed that the key was that to change the policy to reduce fees further could distort the market.

RESOLVED - that the charges currently applied to charity events, as presented in the report, remain the same.

**DWN
59.9/10**

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2009/10

The Committee considered a report of the Principal Accountant (agenda item no. 11) which noted the accounts 2009/10, subject to audit.

RESOLVED - that the accounts 2009/10, subject to audit, be noted.

**DWN
60.9/10**

FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2010/11

The Committee considered a report of the Principal Accountant (agenda item no. 12) which noted the likely financial position for 2010/11.

It was noted that as there would be no circus event in 2010 it would mean a loss of income of about £30,000.

With what had been spent to date out of the reserves fund had resulted in a total of £160,000 remaining.

RESOLVED - that the likely financial position for 2010/11 be noted.

**DWN
61.9/10**

PROPOSED GIFTING OF ASSETS OF CLIFTON DOWN CHARITABLE TRUST LIMITED (CDCT) - CHARITY NO. 1013795

The Committee considered a proposal from the Trustees of the Clifton Downs charitable trust (agenda item no. 13).

It was noted that the Master of the Merchant Venturers was a trustee of the Trust and therefore had an interest in the item.

The Committee supported with broad agreement the transfer of the land with some financial transfer also expected. It was yet to be established how much financial transfer was involved and how it would be achieved.

RESOLVED - that the transfer of land be supported in principle, with more details expected at a future meeting.

**DWN
62.9/10**

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED - that the next meeting of the Downs Committee be held on 22nd November 2010 at 4.00 p.m. at the Council House, College Green, Bristol.

(The meeting ended at 6.40pm)

LORD MAYOR