

AGENDA ITEM NO.2

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DOWNS COMMITTEE HELD ON 30TH JANUARY 2012 AT 4.30 P.M.

P The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor
Councillor Gollop

A Councillor Cook)
P Councillor Davis)
A Councillor Goulandris) 6 City Councillors
A Councillor Hugill)
P Councillor Morgan)
A Councillor Stone)

P David Marsh (Master)

P Anthony Brown)
P Francis Greenacre)
A Tom Hood) 6 Merchant Venturers
P Peter Rilett)
A Roger Smedley)
P Sir James Tidmarsh)

DWN

18.1/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Councillors Goulandris, Hugill, Cook and Tom Hood.

DWN

19.1/12 MINUTES - DOWNS COMMITTEE - 21ST NOVEMBER 2011

**RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the
Downs Committee held on 21st
November 2011 be confirmed as a
correct record and signed by the Chair.**

DWN

20.1/12 PUBLIC FORUM

Jack Penrose Chair of Friends of Downs and Avon Gorge

(FODAG) spoke to his statement regarding the report on parking problems which had been prepared by FODAG and circulated to the Members of the Downs separately.

The Committee agreed that the statement would be considered in conjunction with the Downs Ranger Report which touched upon parking enforcement and other related issues.

DWN

21.1/12

PROPOSED STAFFING STRUCTURE - ESTATES

Tracey Morgan, Service Director Environment and Leisure explained that as requested at the last meeting she and her officers had met with the Downs Committee sub-group to discuss the concerns that had been raised by Members on the impact of the proposed staffing structure of Estates, on the Downs.

Tracey Morgan indicated that a series of questions had been raised by the sub-group and these were set out in the paperwork circulated at the start of meeting together with the council's response. Some supporting information had also been provided as requested including the operational line management shown on the revised structure and job descriptions pre and post the proposed restructure.

Before going through the paperwork with the Committee, Richard Bevan, Parks Estates, Play, Cemeteries and Crematoria Manager indicated that at this stage the information to be shared with Members was confidential as staff had not yet been informed. This was planned for Monday 6th February, followed by consultation with the Trade Unions prior to the formal consultation process. The Committee provided their assurance that the information would go no further.

The Committee were comfortable with the responses provided by officers and appreciated that some changes had been made in response to their concerns. It was agreed by officers that as the information was a lot to take in, Members would have a further opportunity to respond within the next two weeks as it was important that the review was not put on hold for any longer.

It was noted that any negative impact on the Downs brought about by the revised structure would quickly be brought to the attention of the Committee by the Downs Ranger through his regular report to each meeting.

RESOLVED - that the updated be noted.

DWN

22.1/12

REPORT OF THE DOWNS RANGER

The Committee considered a report of the Service Director, Environment and Leisure (agenda item no. 5) updating on works and developments carried out since the last meeting.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion:-

- Parsons Brinckerhoff inspection report of the rockface. It was agreed that the Downs Ranger would send a copy of the report to Richard Morris, Treasurer to Society of Merchant Venturers. **Action Robert Westlake.** It was also agreed that the Downs Ranger would prepare a brief summary of the report together with the recommendations for circulation to Members of the Downs Committee. **Action RW.** It was noted that a full copy of the report was available from the Downs Ranger on request.
- Parry's Lane Burger site. The Committee requested further information on the proposal received from an operator independent to the current holder of this concession to use this site during the evening, including trading hours etc. **Action RW.**
- In response to a question, the Downs Ranger explained that there were currently no plans to replace a member of the Downs team who had retired in December 2011 because new ways of working had been introduced instead. In view of increasing health and safety risks associated with cliff edge maintenance an external contractor has now been bought in to undertake the main elements of this work involving rope access.
- Diamond Jubilee Celebrations. It was noted that the memorial outside the Council House to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee was in a very bad state of neglect. The Service Director of Communication and Marketing indicated that he was meeting an officer on the following day that might be able to help resolve this issue. He agreed to feedback the outcome of this meeting to the Lord Mayor and Master. **Action Peter Holt.**
- It was noted that the University bus stop at Saville Road had damaged the grassed area and it was in a worse state than last year. The Downs Ranger indicated that the area would

be re-instated and the University invoiced accordingly (as in the previous year).

- The Committee was aware that the University were considering alternative locations for the bus stop so it was important to continue to press them on this issue, which was negatively impacting the Downs.
- Public Forum - parking problems on the Downs. The Committee thanked FODAG for the work undertaken as part of their traffic project and the report which had been circulated separately. It was recognised that the problems associated with parking on the Downs were very complex and that the Committee had very little ability to influence the Highways Authority. It was agreed that a brief be prepared by the Downs Ranger in consultation with the Biodiversity Education Officer, FODAG, the Lord Mayor and Master and that Parking Services be invited to the next meeting to respond to the issues raised and to advise the Committee on the best way forward. **Action RW/ML/FODAG/GG/DM**

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

DWN

23.1/12

BARBECUE USE ON THE DOWNS

The Committee considered a report of the Service Director, Environment and Leisure (agenda item no. 6) considering recommendations of the Downs Ranger to effectively manage portable/disposable barbecue use. The use of barbecues on the Downs is a breach of the byelaw but over the years the enforcement has proved to be a perennial problem.

The argument was put forward by the Downs Ranger that the byelaw could be seen by some visitors as out of step with modern life and strict enforcement with subsequent penalties could be interpreted as draconian and outdated. A modification to the byelaw to permit barbecue use in certain restricted areas was therefore proposed for a twelve month trial period.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion:-

Comments in support of the trial included:-

- the modification to the byelaw would demonstrate that the Committee is prepared to be flexible in the way the Downs are managed.
- the proposed designated area near Circular Road had

recently been cleared of scrub so there was a low fire risk and the area was furthest away from any habitation on the Downs.

- the use of barbecues is difficult to enforce as it is considered by the police as low level crime. Installing twelve slabs with appropriate signage across the Downs will assist staff and security to direct barbecue users to the designated area. It was suggested that the two Universities be asked to include information on barbecue use on the Downs within fresher's welcome packs as The Downs was very popular with the students.

Comments against included:-

- the potential legal costs associated with amending the byelaw to carryout the trial, which in past experience could be very substantial.
- The permitted use of barbecues in the designated areas will encourage illegal use elsewhere on the Downs and undo the work already done over the past two years to 'educate' barbecue users.
- The risk assessment outlined within the body of the report was entirely right and should be enough to dissuade Members not to support this proposal.
- If the trial was to go ahead, 12 slabs were unlikely to meet the demand and it would be difficult for staff and security to manage public expectations.

The views of the Committee were divided on this proposal with no obvious majority either way. Upon a vote being taken:-

The Committee unanimously RESOLVED -

(1) that the continued efforts to effectively manage the illegal use of barbecues on the Downs be approved.

(Voting - For 7, Against 0)

(2) that *subject to further clarification of the legal costs associated with modifying the byelaw, the installation of 12 designated

barbecue points for a twelve month trial period be approved.

(Voting - For 5, Against - 3)

*It was agreed that the Lord Mayor and Master be delegated the authority to determine whether the trial would go ahead or not based on the legal costs involved.

DWN

24.1/12

DELEGATED AND UPCOMING EVENTS PROPOSED ON THE DOWNS

The Committee considered a report of the Service Director, Communication and Marketing (agenda item no. 7) -

- (1) noting the events and filming that have taken place between committee meetings under Delegated Powers; and
- (2) noting proposed future events between committee meetings.

The Service Director of Communication and Marketing asked the Committee to consider the viability of increased medium to large scale commercial event activity taking place on the Downs.

The Committee were adamant that in the current economic climate, no application should be turned away as income was very important for the sustainability of The Downs. However, each case would be assessed individually as noise levels, light pollution, parking, protecting the natural environment and the well being of local residents all had to be taken into consideration.

RESOLVED -

- (1) that the events and filming activity that has taken place on the Downs under delegated powers be noted; and**
- (2) that the proposed future events to take place on the Downs between Committee meetings be noted.**

VARSITY POLO MATCH 2012

The Committee considered a report of the Service Director, Communication and Marketing (agenda item no. 8) which outlined proposals for a Varsity Polo match between Bristol University and the University of West of England to be held on the Downs on 13th May 2012.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion:-

- joint ventures between the two Universities in Bristol were welcomed and to be encouraged.
- concerns were raised that the cost to re-instate grass which had been damaged by a polo event held in the past had been significant.
- It was confirmed by officers that the site fees had been agreed with the organisers and were in line with the council's approved schedule of charges for events. Concerns were raised that the fees for such an event were far too low and therefore it was likely that a significant amount of the Bond would need to be used to re-instate the grass. It was important that the organisers be made aware of this before the event.
- In business it was usual for the site fee to cover any anticipated re-instatement costs and the Bond only used as an emergency contribution for something unplanned. Following the 2012 event the site fee would have to be reviewed if this event was to be repeated in future.
- It was felt that the risk assessment in the officer's report was not robust enough and there were possibly some copy and paste issues from a previous event application (Section 4 para 6 & 7)
- Whilst the Committee supported the proposal, further information on the parking arrangements for the event was requested for the next meeting, together with a response to the various issues raised above. **Action:**
Peter Watts

RESOLVED - that the proposals for the Varsity Polo Event on 13th May 2012 be approved and that an update be provided at the next meeting.

**DWN
26.1/12**

**AVON GORGE AND THE DOWNS WILDLIFE PROJECT
ANNUAL REVIEW**

The Committee considered a report of Richard Ennion, Neighbourhoods and City Development (agenda item no. 9) which provided an update on the Avon Gorge and the Downs Wildlife Project.

The Committee was very impressed with the progress and achievements of the AGDWP and congratulated all concerned.

RESOLVED - that the update be noted.

**DWN
27.1/12**

FINANCE REPORT 2011/12

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Services (agenda item no. 10) which informed Members of the estimated outturn and potential use of the reserves for 2011/12.

In response to a question relating to Income 'other concessions' on Appendix A it was confirmed that Property Services collect the money and transfer it to the Downs account at the end of the year.

RESOLVED - that the estimated outturn and potential use of reserves for 2011/12 be noted.

**DWN
28.1/12**

A.O.B

Cycle Stands - The Democratic Services Officer indicated that 12 out of 14 Members had responded to her email of 20th January 2012. All responses were in support of the proposal from BCC Transport Services to install 5 cycle stands on the tarmac outside the changing rooms on the Downs. It was noted that the Democratic Services Officer would now contact Nick Pates, Walking and Cycling Officer to progress the issue. **Action Ruth Kenrick.**

29.1/12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

**RESOLVED - that the next meeting of the Downs Committee
be held on 23rd April 2012 at
4.30 p.m. at the Council House.**

(The meeting ended at 6.35 pm)

LORD MAYOR