

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
DOWNS COMMITTEE
HELD ON 21ST NOVEMBER 2011 AT 4.00 P.M.**

- P The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor
Councillor Geoff Gollop (in the Chair)
- P Councillor Cook)
A Councillor Davies)
P Councillor Goulandris) City Councillors
P Councillor Hugill)
P Councillor Morgan)
P Councillor Stone)
- P David Marsh (Master)
- P Anthony Brown)
P Francis Greenacre)
P Tom Hood) Merchant Venturers
P Peter Rilett)
A Roger Smedley)
P Sir James Tidmarsh)

DWN

1.11/11

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND INTRODUCTIONS

Apologies were received from Councillor Davies, Becky Coffin and Helen Hall (on sabbatical). The Lord Mayor welcomed the new Master David Marsh and Sir James Tidmarsh to the Committee.

DWN

2.11/11

MEMBERSHIP OF THE DOWNS COMMITTEE

**RESOLVED - that membership of the Downs
Committee for 2011/12 be as follows:-**

**The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor
Councillor Geoff Gollop**

**Councillor Cook
Councillor Davies**

**Councillor Goulandris
Councillor Hugill
Councillor Morgan
Councillor Stone**

David Marsh (Master)

**Anthony Brown
Francis Greenacre
Tom Hood
Peter Rilett
Roger Smedley
Sir James Tidmarsh**

**DWN
3.11/11**

CONFIRMATION OF CHAIRMAN

- RESOLVED -**
- (1) that Councillor Geoff Gollop be confirmed Chairman of the Downs Committee for 2011/12 in accordance with Section 10 of the Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act 1861; and**
 - (2) that the appointment of David Marsh as Master for 2011/12 be noted.**

**DWN
4.11/11**

RETIRING MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

- RESOLVED -**
- (1) that the committee note the members of the committee who have retired; and**
 - (2) that a letter of thanks for past services be sent to those members.**

**DWN
5.11/11**

DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS

- RESOLVED - that the following dates and times for meetings of the Downs Committee be noted:-**

Monday 30th January 2012
Monday 23rd April 2012
Monday 2nd July 2012 (visiting meeting held at Merchant Venturers Hall)
Monday 10th September 2012
Monday 19th November 2012 (Annual Meeting)

All meetings to be held at 4.30 p.m. other than 2nd July 2012 visiting meeting at 11.00 am and the Annual Meeting at 4.00 pm.

**DWN
6.11/11 DELEGATIONS**

RESOLVED - that the delegations to the Strategic Director Neighbourhoods and City Development, Strategic Director Corporate Services and Service Director Communications and Marketing, as set out in the report, be approved for 2011/12.

**DWN
7.11/11 MINUTES – DOWNS COMMITTEE – 12TH SEPTEMBER 2011**

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Downs Committee held on 12th September 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Lord Mayor.

Matters Arising

- 53.9/11 Roads – the Downs Ranger confirmed that following discussion with Alun Owen there was no GBBN funding available for the widening of Stoke Road. It was noted that the issue would be further considered in line with the FODAG traffic project.
- 59.9/11 Tender Applications for Provision of Circus 2011-14. Cllr Cook raised a concern that the Committee papers for this item had referred to Tony Hopkins Entertainment as having been awarded the 3 year contract, however following

his further investigations it appeared that this company did not actually exist. The Festival and Events Officer (Site Licensing) agreed to look into this issue and report back to Cllr Cook, the Lord Mayor and Master as a matter of urgency.

DWN

8.11/11

PUBLIC FORUM

None received on this occasion.

DWN

9.11/11

DRAFT PROPOSED STAFFING STRUCTURE – ESTATES

Anthony Brown, Merchant Venturer highlighted the key issues and concerns outlined in his submission to the Committee (agenda item 9).

Tracey Morgan, Service Director Environment and Leisure responded to the concerns raised by Anthony Brown, and echoed by the Committee. She explained that due to the financial pressures facing the council, changes had taken place across the Directorate including a number of cuts to managerial post within the service in order to protect front-line staff and continue to deliver quality services. This could be evidenced by the recent Britain in Bloom Gold award to the City. Tracey Morgan indicated that the proposed staffing structure which had been circulated, was at a very early stage and the number of posts within each department and the further detail would be informed by the consultation process to take place over the next six weeks. Once the direction of travel had been identified the council's Managing Change Policy would be implemented to achieve the desired outcome. Tracey Morgan explained that the structure had to be considered as a whole in order to achieve economies of scale, provide greater flexibility across the teams to assist with staff shortages or support big events and succession planning. However, she provided assurances that the quality of services would be maintained or increased across the board. She recognised that the Downs Committee budget was ringfenced, and the council would continue to be accountable for ensuring the same quality of service is delivered in future.

The following comments were made by Members during the discussion that took place:-

- there were concerns that there was insufficient information available to enable any meaningful consultation with Downs Committee at this stage.
- the Committee could not afford to lose the expertise of the current workforce assigned to the Downs or to lose the current sense of cohesion.
- the Committee has a duty under the 1861 Act to protect and maintain this unique urban space and prestigious visitor attraction.
- It was felt that the quality, skills and commitment of the current in-house operation were highly attuned to the complex nature of the Downs and could not be replaced by staff who were part of a pool team trained only in the maintenance of municipal parks.
- It was suggested by the Lord Mayor that a sub-group of the Avon Gorge and Downs management steering group meet with Tracey Morgan and her officers, once more detailed proposals are available for consultation.

RESOLVED - (1) that once more detailed proposals are available for consultation, the Service Director Environment and Leisure and officers meet with a sub-group of the Avon Gorge and Downs Management steering group.

(2) the outcome of the meeting be reported back to the Downs Committee in the interim period before the next meeting.

DWN

10.11/11 ANNUAL REPORT OF FRIENDS OF DOWNS AND AVON GORGE – THE FIRST THREE YEARS

Representatives of FODAG presented an overview of the key issues and achievements in the first three years since the formation of the Friends groups and challenges for the future (agenda item no. 10). Jack Penrose, Chairman indicated that the presentation had been amended to reflect FODAG's response to the draft proposed staffing structure (item 9), which re-iterated the concerns raised by the Committee.

On behalf of the Committee, the Lord Mayor thanked FODAG for their hard work and achievements which complemented the work of the Downs Ranger and his team.

DWN

11.11/11 REPORT OF THE DOWNS RANGER

The committee considered a report of the Downs Ranger (agenda item no. 11) updating on works and developments carried out since the last meeting:-

The following main issues were noted during the discussion:-

- Annual Downs Day. A meeting has taken place with the Lord Lieutenant's office and it is proposed that the event be combined with the Diamond Jubilee celebrations. This event will therefore be a lot bigger than initially envisaged. It was agreed that a sum of up to £10,000 be earmarked from the reserve to contribute to the funding of the event and that the Lord Mayor and Master be delegated the authority to release the funds as necessary.
 - The Lord Mayor declared a non pecuniary interest as a member of the Lord Lieutenants Committee.
 - The Downs Ranger agreed to monitor the ongoing planning of the event and report back to the Committee if he had any concerns that it was getting too big or would have any adverse impact on the Downs.
 - It was noted that the idea of an annual Downs Day had come about because the Committee did not want to wait 150 years in order to celebrate the Downs, however it was anticipated that future events would be much lower key.
- As part of the 150 year celebration of the Downs Act a history trail and a series of information panels organised by Francis Greenacre and a small sub-committee have been installed in various locations around the Downs. To reflect the importance and diversity of the Downs an additional trail guide is proposed subject to funding to be approved by the Committee. Francis Greenacre declared a pecuniary interest as he will be receiving a fee funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund for writing the trails and producing the exhibition.
- Landscape – Clifton Camp Hill Fort. In response to a question regarding the public consultation/information in respect of the planned scrub clearance and tree management, it was confirmed by the Downs Ranger that an

extensive programme of public information and feedback had already taken place and some information on the scrub clearance had been included on the information panels.

- Bristol Water update. It was hoped that the re-instatement work would address the drainage problems caused by the previous installation of water pipes on the Downs. It was suggested that in light of the works, a Merchant Venturer on the Bristol Water Board might like to suggest that they make a regular financial contribution to community and social events on the Downs.

- RESOLVED -**
- (1) that the sum of £2,000 from the reserve for the design, manufacture and installation of information panels describing the history and proposed works to the Hill Fort at Observatory Hill be approved; and**
 - (2) that the sum of £1,500 from the reserve for an additional trail guide be authorised.**
 - (3) that the sum of up to £10,000 be earmarked from the Reserve to fund the Annual Downs Day and Diamond Jubilee Celebrations**
 - (4) that the Lord Mayor and Master be given delegated authority to release the funds in (3) above.**

DWN

12.11/11 DOWNS 5 YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN

The committee considered a report of the Service Director Environment and Leisure (agenda item no. 12) which set out the revised five year management plan.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion:-

- It was confirmed that printed copies of the document would be kept to a minimum (25) with a focus on electronic media including CDs and the website.

- RESOLVED -**
- (1) that the revised Downs Management Plan be approved; and**
 - (2) that a budget of £875 for design and printing costs of the updated plan be approved.**

DWN

13.11/11

DELEGATED AND UPCOMING EVENTS PROPOSED ON THE DOWNS

The committee considered a report of the Service Director Communication and Marketing (agenda item no. 13):

- noting the events and filming that have taken place between committee meetings under delegated powers; and
- noting proposed future events between committee meetings.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion:-

- It was confirmed that the outstanding debt in respect of the site fee for use of the Downs in 2009 by the Circus was now cleared.

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

DWN

14.11/11

RACE FOR LIFE 2012

The committee considered a report of the Service Director Communication and Marketing (agenda item no. 14) informing the committee of the proposed plans for the Race for Life in 2012. Following the 2011 event some local residents had reported that the additional 10K route had had some impact on the length and duration of the road closures for Stoke Road. The Committee had concerns that restricting public access to the Downs went against

the spirit of the 1861 Act and requested that the event for 2012 be re-appraised with a full report to the Committee.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion:-

- Participation in the event has decreased over the years since 2007, due mostly to the economic climate and an increasingly competitive charity events market. Depending on the numbers entering in 2012, the Committee were of the view that the event could well begin to downsize by 2013 requiring less road closures in future.
- The existing route plans (2011) together with some potentially changed routes for 2012 had been submitted by Cancer Research UK, however it was imperative for the charity that a decision was made by the Committee at this meeting, otherwise it would become extremely difficult for effective planning to take place which could seriously jeopardise the success of the charity event.

RESOLVED - that the existing two day plans (2011) be approved and that the numbers participating in the 2012 event are reported back to the Committee as soon as practicable after the event so that the situation can be reviewed.

DWN

15.11/11

AVON GORGE AND DOWNS WILDLIFE PROJECT – REPORT AND FUNDING FOR THE SEASONAL EDUCATION OFFICER

The committee considered a report of Richard Ennion, Bristol Parks (agenda item no. 15) relating to the successes of the Avon Gorge and Downs Summer Education Officer post in 2011, and requesting that the Downs Committee consider funding the 6-month post for five years.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion:-

- The Committee were full of admiration of the work of the AGDWP Education Officer and the full-time seasonal educational officer for 2011. They were keen for the education programme to continue and be further developed to create opportunities to enable people of all ages and backgrounds to discover, and enjoy the wildlife and landscape of the Downs. It would also be good to provide some stability in this work area and be able to plan ahead.

- In response to a question about seeking alternative external funding it was confirmed that this had been explored however, whilst money was available for capital projects, it was not available for the funding of posts. External funding would continue to be explored in the future, any help from fund raiser contacts known by the Merchant Venturers would be gratefully received.
- The Finance Officer confirmed that the annual sum required for the post could be funded for at least three years from additional income, not yet included in the Downs budget (rent of an overflow car park from Bristol Zoo and the result of the re-negotiated site license for the circus)

RESOLVED - (1) that the report be noted; and

(2) that funding for the Avon Gorge and Downs Summer Education Officer post for five years be approved.

DWN

16.11/11 PARKING ON THE DOWNS

The committee considered a communication from the Chairman of the Transport Working Group of Henleaze, Stoke Bishop and Westbury on Trym Neighbourhood Partnership (agenda item no. 16) relating to parking problems on the Downs.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion:

- It was acknowledged that parking has been an ongoing problem and regularly discussed by the Committee but the solution was not that easy. If restrictions were applied to the roads around the Downs the parking problem would be displaced to other areas in the vicinity. Parking was a city-wide issue and not only prevalent around the Downs.
- The Downs are marketed as one of Bristol's Destination Parks so restricting parking would have a negative impact on the number of visitors.
- A few ideas were put forward including having some designated parking areas on the Downs or applying a two hour parking limit in some of the roads around the Down.
- The Lord Mayor had previously raised concerns about the proliferation of unsightly advertising vans parked around the

Downs. The Downs Ranger indicated that nothing could be done by the police or parking services unless they were parked illegally or causing an obstruction. He was waiting for an opinion from the council's legal section.

RESOLVED - (1) that FODAG be invited to consider the various parking issues raised as part of their ongoing traffic project and bring back some recommendations/proposals in due course.

**DWN
17.11/11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED - that the next meeting of the Downs Committee be held on 30th January 2012 at 4.30 p.m. at the Council House.

(The meeting ended at 5.55 pm)

CHAIR