

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
DOWNS COMMITTEE
HELD ON 19TH NOVEMBER 2012 AT 4.00 P.M.**

A The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor
Councillor Peter Main

P Councillor Davies)
P Councillor Goulandris)
A Councillor Hugill) City Councillors
P Councillor Janke)
P Councillor Khan)
P Councillor Morgan)

P Peter Rilett (Master and in the Chair)

P Anthony Brown)
P Francis Greenacre)
A Tom Hood) Merchant Venturers
P Andrew Densham)
P Roger Smedley)
P Sir James Tidmarsh)

DWN

1.11/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND INTRODUCTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Peter Main, Cllr Brenda Hugill and Tom Hood.

DWN

2.11/12 MEMBERSHIP OF THE DOWNS COMMITTEE

**RESOLVED - that membership of the Downs
Committee for 2012/13 be as follows:-**

**The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor
Councillor Peter Main**

Councillor Davies

**Councillor Goulandris
Councillor Hugill
Councillor Janke
Councillor Khan
Councillor Morgan**

**Anthony Brown
Chris Booy
Andrew Densham
Francis Greenacre
Tom Hood
Peter Rilett (Master)
Sir James Tidmarsh**

**DWN
3.11/12**

CONFIRMATION OF CHAIRMAN

- RESOLVED -**
- (1) that Councillor Peter Main be confirmed Chairman of the Downs Committee for 2012/13 in accordance with Section 10 of the Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act 1861 but, in his absence, the Master of the Society of Merchant Venturers assumes the Chair.**
 - (2) that the appointment of Peter Rillet as Master for 2012/13 be noted.**

**DWN
4.11/12**

RETIRING MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

- RESOLVED -**
- (1) that the Committee note that David Marsh has retired from the Committee; and**
 - (2) that a letter of thanks for past services be sent to him on behalf of the Committee
(Action: Ruth Quantock)**

**DWN
5.11/12 DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS**

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

**Monday 28th January 2013
Monday 22nd April 2013
Monday 1st July 2013 (visiting meeting held at Merchant Venturers Hall)
Monday 9th September 2013
Monday 18th November 2013 (Annual Meeting)**

All meetings to be held at 4.30 p.m. other than 1st July 2013 visiting meeting at 11.00 am and the Annual Meeting at 4.00 pm.

**DWN
6.11/12 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 2012/13.

**DWN
7.11/12 MINUTES – DOWNS COMMITTEE – 10TH SEPTEMBER 2012**

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Downs Committee held on 10th September 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Master

DWN

8.11/12

PUBLIC FORUM

One item of public forum had been received and had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. As the issue concerned cycling on the Downs footpaths it was agreed that it would be considered in conjunction with the Downs Ranger report which referred to several complaints being received on this issue (section f).

DWN

9.11/12

ANNUAL REPORT OF FRIENDS OF DOWNS AND AVON GORGE

Jack Penrose, Chairman of FODAG presented an overview of the key issues and achievements since the formation of the Friends group in 2008 and challenges for the future (agenda item no. 9).

The following main issues were noted during the discussion:-

- Resident Parking Schemes (RPS). FOD+AG will be advocating that proposals for RPZs in Redland, Henleaze and Clifton are delayed until a full impact assessment has been undertaken by those promoting the RPZs. The assessment to include, the effect of commuter parking transferring to the Downs. Noise and light pollution, visual impact, public transport etc.
- The Traffic Management Group will also be looking at this issue as it was felt that the Downs were increasingly being used for free car parking as a result of the implementation of resident parking schemes across the City.
- It was important that traffic officers consult with FODAG on the development of RPS in neighbouring wards to the Downs. Cllr Morgan agreed to forward the TRO reference relating to Henleaze and Redland to the Democratic Services Officer to ensure FODAG get the opportunity to comment on the proposals. **Action: Cllr Morgan/Ruth Quantock**
- Dr Adrienn Tomor (UWE) was introduced to the Committee who was working with FODAG on a Building/Education project 'Bridge over Bridge Valley Road'. An update will be provided to the Committee in due course.

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

DWN

10.11/12 IMPROVEMENTS TO DOWNS PLAY AREA – UPDATE

The Committee considered a report of the Service Director, Environment and Leisure (agenda item no. 10) requesting agreement of the current draft as the design to go to public consultation and to commit match funding up to the value of £70,000 for the delivery of the project.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion:-

- Members of the Committee accepted the design in principle but had concerns about the type of equipment which had been identified to go to public consultation as it did not complement the landscape of the Downs. The comment was made that the Downs was not a municipal park, it was unique and therefore it was more appropriate to have bespoke play equipment, preferably locally sourced.
- Cllr Janke indicated that improvements to the playground were long overdue and desperately needed. The Downs Committee had a responsibility to upgrade the playground and should not miss the opportunity of some match funding from the council. It was important for users of the existing playground to influence the type of equipment purchased. Cllr Janke emphasised that the Committee should not delay the process of going to public consultation on the design or jeopardise the project going ahead.
- Officers explained that the play equipment which had been proposed was not set in stone and open to other ideas coming forward from the consultation exercise. Officers confirmed that the council's procurement policy would allow the purchase of bespoke play equipment and would look in to some local suppliers. **Action: John Knowlson.** It was pointed out, however, that bespoke equipment would be more costly so the Committee should expect to receive less items of play equipment for the money available (approx £15 – £25K).
- It was clarified by officers that the project manager assigned to this piece of work would not be responsible for seeking sponsorship and this would be for the Downs Committee to pursue if they wished to explore this option further. Cllr Janke offered to approach Bristol Water as she had had previous

dealings with them and had a contact. **Action Cllr Janke.** The Downs Ranger indicated that local companies were more likely to sponsor individual pieces of equipment and this could be explored further once the design is finalised and the cost of the equipment known.

- Officers indicated that the consultation period was likely to be 3 months and would involve attending local meetings and the setting up of workshops. It was requested that the Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife sub group be consulted as part of the process. **Action: John Knowlson.** In response to a question relating to publicity, it was confirmed that the consultation would be widely publicised – Evening Post etc.
- Francis Greenacre queried why some parks investment projects in the local area received 100% funding from the Capital Stimulus fund eg Victoria Square Play Area and the Downs Committee were being asked to find 50%. Officers present were unable to explain the rationale behind this decision. Cllr Janke indicated that Cabot, Clifton and Clifton East Neighbourhood Partnership were trying to find S106 money to supplement the match funding required for the Downs Play Area.
- The Committee discussed whether to match fund the project up to the value of £70,000 out of Reserves or take up the option to capitalise its contribution as set out in the report (£8900 per annum from the Reserves). In conclusion, the Downs Committee agreed to opt to capitalise its contribution as it bought some time to seek sponsorship. It was noted that the funding was on the condition that following public consultation the final design comes back to the April meeting of Downs Committee for approval. **Action John Knowlson.**

- RESOLVED -**
- (1) that the Committee agrees with the current draft (in principle) as the design to go out to public consultation; and**
 - (2) that the 50% grant up to the value of £70,000 offered via the Parks Capital Stimulus Fund for the development of the playground be accepted; and**
 - (3) that the Committee commits match funding up to the value of £70,000, via sponsorship and/or met from**

Reserves subject to the final design coming back to the Downs Committee for approval in April 2013; and

- (4) that the Downs Committee contribution be capitalised over the useful life of the play equipment (estimated 10 years). The annual capital financing cost @ 4.5% (revenue cost) to the Downs will be £8900 per annum from the Reserves.**

DWN

11.11/12 REPORT OF THE DOWNS RANGER

At the start of this item Andrew Gordon was introduced to the Committee who had recently been appointed the Estate Management Team Leader and line Manager to 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:-

- Bristol Water update. The Downs Ranger confirmed that the project is currently on programme and a good working relationship has been developed with the site agent. The works were being delivered responsibly and with sensitivity to the natural landscape.
- Request from Oxfam South West Campaigns to stage a photo shoot on the Downs. The Committee did not have a problem with this going ahead in principle, subject to further discussions between the organisers, the Downs Ranger and Peter Watts.
- Traffic Management Working Group. It was noted that Cllr Hugill had recently stepped down from this group. Cllr Janke indicated that as part of her Ward work it would be useful for her to be up to date with these issues and offered to sit on the group. This was agreed by the Committee. Cllr Janke requested a half an hour meeting with the lead officer Richard Bevan to bring her up to speed. **Action Richard Bevan/Cllr Janke.** The subgroup intend to present a report

with recommendations based on their findings to Committee in April 2013.

- Anti-social behaviour.
 - Cycling on the Downs footpaths. The item of public forum was also considered as part of the discussion of this item. It was agreed that the warning signs on the tarmac be repainted as they were very worn and appeared no longer applicable. It was agreed that additional temporary signs be installed at each end of the footpaths that are most frequented by cyclists. It was hoped that these measures together with taking up the offer of the services of a Community Support Officer would help to provide the necessary focus to deter errant cyclists.
 - Control of dogs. Cllr Janke indicated that she had received a complaint about a dog which had been let off its lead on the Downs and was out of control. Richard Bevan advised that as a rule of thumb, dogs have to be held on a lead whilst on a public highway or adjacent footpath to a highway. When dogs enter open spaces (Downs) or parks it is reasonable for the dogs to run free for exercise to catch a stick or ball but dog owners would be expected to still have verbal control over the dog and its behaviour. Unfortunately it would not be possible for dog owners to be prosecuted or given fixed penalty notices as the legislation does not cover this type of land. One member suggested the introduction of a bye-law. In response officers indicated that this could be difficult as the Government does not encourage the use of bye laws, however a few dog warden patrols of this area might help to educate irresponsible dog owners. **Action: Robert Westlake**
- Management and Resources. Francis Greenacre pointed out that under the re-structuring of the Estates Department the Downs team were grass cutting at Cote House and assisting colleagues with grass cutting at Blaise Estate and Kingsweston House. He raised concerns that this might impact on the day to day service delivery to the Downs. In response, the Downs Ranger indicated that payment had been received for Cote House which would be re-invested into the management of the Downs.

RESOLVED - (1) that the request from Oxfam South West Campaigns to stage a photo

shoot on the Downs on 4th December 2012 be approved in principle, subject to further discussion between the organisers, the Downs Ranger and Peter Watts

(2) that the report be noted

DWN

12.11/12 DELEGATED AND UPCOMING EVENTS PROPOSED ON THE DOWNS

The Committee considered a report of the Service Director Communication and Marketing (agenda item no. 12):

- 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:-

- A meeting had taken place with the organisers of Race for Life to discuss site specific concerns raised by the Committee regarding a lack of control over car parking and the impact of the route. A number of options were being considered and a further update will be brought back to the next meeting of the Committee (28th January 2013). **Action: Peter Watts**
- Downs Day 2013. Following a recent restructure of the Event Team in order to meet budget saving requirements, the team are unable to provide a dedicated officer for delivery of the project as in previous years ('In Kind' support equivalent to £2500 approx). However, Peter Watts indicated that he would continue to support Downs Committee and be able to provide advice regarding the correct process to follow to commission an appropriate production company to oversee the event management. FODAG indicated that they were very keen for 'Your Downs – Your Day' to go ahead in 2013 and to be the first of many, particularly to help achieve their aspiration of wider access to the Downs. It was agreed that FODAG would work up a structured proposal for

consideration by the Committee at the next meeting in January 2013. **Action FODAG.**

- The Committee supported the 'Rainbow Run 2013' taking place on the Downs in principle, subject to a full report coming back to the Committee in January 2013. **Action: Peter Watts**

- 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
13.11/12 GROOVYBUG 2013**

The Committee considered a report of the Service Director Communication and Marketing (agenda item no. 13) informing the Committee of the proposed plans for a new event to be held on the Downs proposed for 16th, 17th and 18th August 2013 and to seek their consent to proceed with the site licensing process.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion:-

- The timing of the 3 day event was good as currently there were no regular events taking place on the Downs in August.
- The Committee were keen to support an event on the Downs which was specifically for children as there were currently not many other events for this age group.
- The organisers have advised that subject to a successful first year they would like to attend for at least three years which would provide a good income for the Committee to re-invest into the management of the Downs.

RESOLVED - that the Committee gives consent for the organisers to hold 'Groovybug 2013' on the Downs and to proceed with the site licensing process

**DWN
14.11/12 A.O.B**

It was brought to the attention of the Committee that the Air

Ambulance helicopter had landed on the Downs as part of what appeared to be a public awareness exercise. The Downs Ranger indicated that whilst the helipad at Bristol Royal Infirmary was under construction the Downs Committee had previously granted permission for the Air Ambulance to land on the Downs in an emergency situation only. Officers agreed to investigate the incident further. **Action: Peter Watts**

DWN

15.11/12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED - that the next meeting of the Downs Committee be held on 28th January 2013 at 4.30 p.m. at the Council House.

(The meeting ended at 5.45 pm)

CHAIR