

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
DOWNS COMMITTEE
HELD ON 22ND APRIL 2013 AT 4.00 P.M.**

- P The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor
Councillor Peter Main (Chair)
- A Councillor Davies)
A Councillor Goulandris)
P Councillor Hugill) City Councillors
P Councillor Janke)
A Councillor Khan)
P Councillor Morgan)
- P Peter Rilett (Master)
- P Chris Booy
P Anthony Brown)
P Francis Greenacre)
P Tom Hood) Merchant Venturers
P Andrew Densham)
P Sir James Tidmarsh)

DWN

27.4/13

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND INTRODUCTIONS

Apologies were received from Councillors Davies, Khan and Goulandris, Richard Bevan and John Williams.

DWN

28.4/13

**MINUTES – MEETING OF DOWNS COMMITTEE – 28TH
JANUARY 2013**

**RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the
Downs Committee held on 28th January
2013 be approved as a correct record
and signed by the Chair.**

PUBLIC FORUM

The following items of public forum were received and are available for inspection in the minute book.

AGENDA ITEM	ISSUE	NAME	STATEMENT NO
N/A	ClimbBristol and Avon Gorge	Martin Crocker, Project Officer, ClimbBristol	1
N/A	Use of the Downs off Ladies Mile as a car park – request for revocation of Licence	Kate Ashbrook The Open Spaces Society	2
8	Public Sector Equality Duties	David Redgewell and Martin St Amant	3a & b
8	Funderworld	Cllr John Goulandris Stoke Bishop Ward	4

It was agreed that the public forum which had been received in respect of an agenda item (3a & b and 4) it would be considered by the Committee before the relevant item was discussed.

The following public forum statements were unrelated to the agenda and considered separately: -

Statement 1 - ClimbBristol and Avon Gorge –

Colin Knowles, Chair of Climb Bristol and Martin Crocker, Project Officer spoke to this statement.

The Committee noted the contents of the statement and supported the aims and aspirations of ClimbBristol and Avon Gorge to deliver improvements in the conditions for climbing in the Avon Gorge and make it a unique recreational asset to Bristol.

Statement 2 - Use of the Downs off Ladies' mile as a car park : request for revocation of licence.

Julie Boston spoke to this statement which requested that the Downs Committee revoke the decision made at the meeting held

on 21st January to renew the seasonal licence for the zoo car park for five years.

The Committee indicated that upon a vote being taken at the last meeting, ten members had been in support of the motion and one against, therefore the view of the majority of the Committee had been made quite clear. The views of the Committee were unchanged so the decision should therefore stand.

DWN
30.4/13

PROPOSED HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT – SUSPENSION BRIDGE ROAD AREA

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Engineer (agenda item no. 4) relating to the proposed scheme of highways works to improve the Suspension Bridge Road area, in particular with respect to pedestrians.

Francis Greenacre and Chris Booy declared an interest in this item as they were trustees of Suspension Bridge Trust.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion that took place:-

- The comment was made that this was a carefully thought out solution to manage pedestrian activity in the area. The proposal also picked up issues raised by the Traffic Study Working Group in their report to be considered later on the agenda, relating to the provision of a coach drop-off point and re-location of the ice cream van parking area.
- It was confirmed that the coach parking proposed for Observatory Road would be limited to one coach at any one time for dropping off and picking up. There would be a maximum waiting time of 20 minutes which would be regulated by a traffic regulation order, in line with other coach parking across the city.
- It was pointed out that one of the aspirations of the Traffic Study Working Group was for Observatory Road to be stopped up altogether. It was noted that this was a long term aspiration and funding had already been identified for the highway improvement outlined in this report (£112k) which complimented the recommendations of the working group.
- There was a longer term aspiration to re-locate the ice cream van to an alternative site altogether. However, it was commented that in the current vicinity, the ice-cream van not

only brought in an income to Downs Committee but also provided a service to users of the Downs, particularly popular with users of the children's play area. It was noted that the license had one year to go and would be reviewed as part of a wider review of the licensing of mobile food outlets city-wide. The outcome of the licensing review would co-incide with the construction of the proposed coach drop off point and it was requested by the Committee that reports on the two issues be brought back at the same time in Summer 2014. **Action RW/DS**

RESOLVED that the following be approved:-

- (1) the clearance of shrubbery and self seeded trees on Suspension Bridge Road and Observatory Road;**
- (2) the adoption of 'Downs' land by the Bristol City Council as highway and stopping up of highway to allow construction of a bus drop off point on Observatory Road;**
- (3) the slight repositioning of the ice cream van area on Observatory Road.**

**DWN
31.4/13**

INSTALLATION OF TRAFFIC SIGNS ON GREEN SPACE NEXT TO CLIFTON DOWN (ROAD)

The Committee considered a report of the Service Manager, City Transport (agenda item no. 5) requesting permission to erect two Entry/Exit speed limit (20mph) signposts on the green space land, either side of Clifton Down (Road).

Clifton Down (Road) has been included within Phase 1 of the city's 20 mph speed limit rollout programme. To avoid the risk of failed prosecutions, it is of the greatest importance that speed limits are signed lawfully and clearly so that drivers are not in any doubt about the prevailing speed limit. As there is no footway on the western side of Clifton Down (Road), it was proposed to install upright signposts, 3 meters in height with back-to-back 20 and 30 speed limit terminal signs on the green space land indicated at Appendices 2 & 2A of the report.

The following issues were noted during the discussion that took place:-

- In response to a question, officers confirmed that it would be possible to install the signs on single posts rather than the

hooped design which had been circulated at the meeting which took up more green space.

RESOLVED - that the Committee grants permission to erect two signposts on the green space land as identified in the report using single posts on each side of the road.

DWN

32.4/13

OUTDOOR TRAINING SYSTEMS (OTIS)

The Committee considered a report of Area Environment Officer (agenda item no. 6) requesting consideration of a proposal for an outdoor training system on the Downs.

The following issues were noted during the discussion that took place:-

- It was proposed that this type of modern outdoor training system would replace the current 'Trim Trial' equipment which was installed about 35 years ago and was well passed its shelf life.
- If the concept was agreed by the Committee in principle, further work would be undertaken by officers to find out what training systems were on the market and explore funding options.
- The Downs is already well used by personal trainers, and people exercising. The training system would require an annual license fee which would provide a regular revenue stream to the Downs Committee.
- In view of the previously reported non payment by British Military Fitness for the use of the Downs for 'Bootcamps', the Festival and Events Officer highlighted his concerns, particularly around the legal position regarding enforcement which was currently unclear. He explained that the administration for personal training license had recently transferred from the Events Team to Sports Development and the process was being reviewed. If this project was to progress to the next stage, it was important that he and Sports Development were consulted as part of the process.

Action: John Knowlson/Richard Gwyn

RESOLVED THAT THE COMMITTEE:-

- (1) Approves the concept of an Outdoor Training System for the Downs in principle;**
- (2) Agrees to receive further information about the OTIS training system and any other similar products on the market, together with funding options**

DWN

33.4/13

THE DOWNS CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Leisure (agenda item no. 7) giving an update on the results of recent public consultation regarding the redevelopment of the children's play area and seeking the views of the Committee as to which option should be progressed and implemented.

The following issues were noted during the discussion that took place:-

- Concerns were raised that Option 2 based on Clifton suspension bridge had just been one idea shared at the Downs sub-group meeting and was not intended to be the final 'bespoke' option.
- It was felt that both options were out of keeping with the natural characteristics and drama of the area and space.
- Francis Greenacre felt that the Committee should not express a preference at this stage as it would unhelpfully restrict the sub-group of the Downs Committee which was being proposed to take the project forward with officers.
- Officers raised concerns because the timescale was very tight and there was a risk that the £70,000 of funding from BCC could be withdrawn if the project is not progressed and the scheme completed on site by March 2014.
- Cllr Janke pointed out that 80% (36 responses) of local people were in favour of option 1 (without a bespoke play structure) and the Committee needed to take account of this view or could lose public confidence in the consultation process.
- Cllr Janke indicated that the current play area was at the end of its shelf life and already in a state of disrepair. She was very concerned that if the project was delayed or withdrawn it

would end up being closed down which could attract anti-social behaviour.

- RESOLVED -**
- (1) that a subgroup of the Downs Committee consisting of Cllrs Janke and Morgan, Francis Greenacre and Anthony Brown be appointed with devolved decision making powers so that further decisions relating to the proposals can be made quickly and allow the project to progress at an appropriate rate.**
 - (2) that a decision on the option to be taken forward be delegated to the above sub-group in consultation with the Lord Mayor and Master.**

DWN

34.4/13

REPORT OF THE DOWNS RANGER

Public Statement 3a & b – Public Sector Equality Duties

David Redgewell spoke to these statements which raised concerns about the tone and content of the Downs Ranger Report regarding the scrub clearance work on the Downs, which had prompted unpleasant homophobic comments in the Bristol Evening Post.

In response the Lord Mayor indicated that it was well-known that this area of the Downs was used by some people for illicit purposes. However, the Downs Ranger report did not target anyone and was in no way anti gay - the ultimate aim of the scrub clearance is to make sure the Downs is a safe and accessible space for all residents. Unfortunately, the council had no control over the content of the Bristol Evening Post. He pointed out that much work had been done by the council and Destination Bristol to promote LGBT tourism and investment. Since becoming Lord Mayor, he had also taken the opportunity to raise the profile of LGBT and support equality and diversity in Bristol.

The Committee noted the contents of the public forum statement and requested no further action at this time.

Public Statement 4 - Funderworld

This statement submitted by Cllr Goulandris raised concerns about several complaints which had been received by himself and Cllr Abraham as local Ward Councillors from local residents about Funderworld vehicles which had been left on Stoke Road for a number of days and overnight, causing chaos for motorists and buses, far worse than anything seen in previous years. Whilst the significant income generated by Funderworld was to be welcomed, he felt that the Committee needed to balance the needs of local residents against the disruption caused by Funderworld, and in his view it was not worth the money.

In response, the Festival and Events Officer explained that the site area had been reduced due to the ongoing presence of Bristol Water with no reduction reflected or requested by Funderworld in the license fee. The persistent wet weather had caused a delay in the setting up of the site and the opening of the event, however the vehicles had not been parked illegally. A good relationship had developed between the council and the organisers over the years and Funderworld had always shown a willingness to respond to issues raised in order to minimise disruption. Discussions had already taken place to improve the situation which was caused by the weather hampering vehicles accessing the site, including an offer from the organisers to fund a drop kerb next to the café. The Festivals and Events Officer indicated that as far as he was aware no complaints had been received by Events, Parks, Highways or the Police. He requested that any future complaints to Councillors be referred to the council's formal complaints procedure 'Fair Comment' so that they are logged and dealt with accordingly. The Festival and Events Officer indicated that it was an unfortunate fact that any major event brought with it a certain element of noise and traffic disruption.

The Committee noted the contents of the public forum statement and requested no further action at this time.

The Committee considered a report of the Downs Ranger (agenda item no 8) updating on works and developments carried out since the last meeting.

The following main issues from the Downs Ranger report were noted:-

- At the end of February the Avon Gorge featured in the BBC programme Country File. The Committee commended the officers that had been involved in the filming as they had

come across very well and had done an excellent job in raising the profile of the Downs.

- Significant Rock Fall at Sea Walls. Since publication of the Downs Ranger Report, the report of Parsons Brinckerhoff had been circulated to Members of the Committee for information. It was agreed that a small, time limited working group be set up to look at the report in more detail and make recommendations to the Committee at the next meeting. It was agreed that Robert Westlake, Andrew Gordon and Chris Booy be on the subgroup. As a number of apologies had been received from Councillor members of the Committee, it was agreed that an email be sent out to all Councillors on the Committee to invite a Cllr representative on the working group. **Action: Ruth Quantock**
- Request from the Bridge Master that he be granted permission to access a small section of Downs land near to the bridge. This is to provide a fenced compound for contractors retained to carry out essential bridge maintenance. **The Committee granted this request.**

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

DWN

35.4/13

TRAFFIC STUDY WORKING GROUP

The Committee considered a report from Service Director, Environment and Leisure (agenda item no. 9) requesting approval of the recommendations of the Traffic Study Working Group.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion that took place:-

- Members requested some extra time to look at the action items recommended by the Traffic Study Working Group in more detail. It was agreed that Members would feed back any comments through the Downs Ranger within the next 10 days. **Action: Committee Members**

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee thanked the work of the working group and in particular FOD&AG member Brian Sprosen for preparing the documentation and finalising the report.

RESOLVED - (1) that the traffic working group is retained to oversee the implementation of the recommendations in the report.

- (2) that the working group monitors the effectiveness of any recommendations that are implemented and reports twice yearly to the Committee.

**DWN
36.4/13**

DELEGATED AND UPCOMING EVENTS PROPOSED ON THE DOWNS

The Committee considered a report of the Service Director, Communication and Marketing (agenda item no. 10) -

- (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 following issues were noted during the discussion that took place:-

- Extension to Circus Tender. The current tender permitting a circus at the Downs expires in 2013. New World Circus have requested a one year extension, the proposed fee for 2014 is £33,000.

- 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.
 - (3) that the Circus Tender be extended to 2014.

**DWN
37.4/13**

FINANCE REPORT 2012/13 AND DRAFT BUDGET 2013/14

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Services (agenda item no. 11) informing Members of the estimated outturn for 2012/13 and draft budget for 2013/14 for approval.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion that took place:

- There is a current projected net underspend of £58,294 largely resulting from unbudgeted income of £29,140 received from Bristol Water in connection with their installation of a new water main across the Downs and increased events income.
- In response to a question regarding 'other concessions', it was clarified that these are collected separately by the relevant council departments and then transferred to the Downs budget at the end of the financial year in a lump sum.

**RESOLVED - (1) that the estimated outturn for 2012/13 be noted; and
(2) that the draft budget for 2013/14 be approved.**

INFORMATION ITEMS

DWN

38.4/13 STATEMENT FROM FODAG FOR NOTING

A briefing note had been prepared by FODAG and circulated to the Committee which highlighted a number of key issues.

The statement from FODAG was noted.

DWN

39.4/13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED - that the next meeting of the Downs Committee be held on 1st July 2013 at 11.00 am in the Merchants' Hall, The Promenade, Clifton, Bristol BS8 3NH.

DWN 40.4/13

The Master indicated that this would be the Lord Mayor's last meeting of Downs Committee and on behalf of the Committee he thanked him for his contribution to the work of the Committee and for chairing the meeting effectively.

The Lord Mayor indicated that Cllr Brenda Hugill would be stepping down as a Councillor and thanked her for many years service on the Downs Committee.

(The meeting ended at 6.00 pm)

CHAIR