

DISCLAIMER

The attached minutes are DRAFT minutes. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information, statements and decisions recorded in them, their status will remain that of a draft until such time as they are confirmed as a correct record at the subsequent meeting.

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
DOWNS COMMITTEE
HELD ON 18TH NOVEMBER 2013 AT 4.00 P.M.**

- P The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor
Councillor Faruk Choudhury
- P Councillor Abraham)
P Councillor Janke)
A Councillor Khan) City Councillors
P Councillor Payne)
A Councillor Colin Smith)
P Councillor Townsend)
- P Anthony Brown (Master)
- A Chris Booy)
P Chris Curling)
P Andrew Densham) Merchant Venturers
P Francis Greenacre)
P Sir James Tidmarsh)
A Chris Pople)

DWN

1.11/13

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND INTRODUCTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllrs Khan and Smith, Chris Booy and Chris Pople. Jack Penrose, Chair of FODAG had also sent his apologies.

DWN

2.11/13

MEMBERSHIP OF THE DOWNS COMMITTEE

**RESOLVED - that membership of the Downs
Committee for 2013/14 be as follows:-**

**The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor
Councillor Faruk Choudhury**

**Councillor Abraham
Councillor Janke**

**Councillor Khan
Councillor Payne
Councillor Colin Smith
Councillor Townsend**

Anthony Brown (Master)

**Chris Booy
Chris Curling
Andrew Densham
Francis Greenacre
Chris Pople
Sir James Tidmarsh**

**DWN
3.11/13**

CONFIRMATION OF CHAIRMAN

- RESOLVED -**
- (1) that Councillor Faruk Choudhury be confirmed Chairman of the Downs Committee for 2013/14 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 Anthony Brown as Master for 2013/14 be noted.**

**DWN
4.11/13**

RETIRING MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

RESOLVED -

- (1) that the Committee note that Peter Rillett (former Master) and Tom Hood have retired from the Committee; and**
- (2) that a letter of thanks for past services be sent to the retiring members of the Committee**

(Action: Ruth Quantock)

DWN

5.11/13

DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS

The Master commented that the timing of the Annual meeting of Downs Committee 2014 could potentially cause a problem for the Master and Lord Mayor (particularly if it over ran) because as was the tradition they would be required to attend the Antient Society of St Stephen's Ringers Annual Dinner immediately following the Committee meeting.

It was agreed that the November 2014 meeting be delayed by one week to assist the future Lord Mayor & Master.

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

Monday 27th January 2014

Monday 14th April 2014

Monday 7th July 2014 (visiting meeting held at Merchants Hall)

Monday 8th September 2014

Monday 24th November 2014 (Annual Meeting)

All meetings to be held at 4.00 p.m. other than 7th July 2014 visiting meeting at 11.00 am.

DWN

6.11/13

DELEGATIONS

RESOLVED - that the delegations to the City Director, Strategic Director Neighbourhoods and Strategic Director Organisational Development, as set out in the report, be approved for 2013/14.

DWN

7.11/13

MINUTES – DOWNS COMMITTEE – 9TH SEPTEMBER 2013

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Downs Committee held on 9th September 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Master

DWN
8.11/13 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	Zoo parking on Downs	S Carter	1
N/A	Use of The Downs by Bristol Zoo for parking	Cllr Morgan	2

At the invitation of the Lord Mayor, David Redgewell explained that he had left a Public Forum statement with Central Entrance on 14th November relating to item 11 Proposed Residents Parking Scheme in Clifton. The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that this had not been received. It was agreed that David Redgewell would be invited to speak to his statement before the relevant item.

Statement 1 – Zoo Parking on the Downs

Susan Carter spoke to her statement which raised a number of issues relating to the decision of the Down Committee to allow zoo parking on the Downs and the framework governing the function of the Committee.

Statement 2 - Use of The Downs by Bristol Zoo for parking

Cllr Morgan had sent her apologies so her statement was taken as read.

The Committee noted the issues raised in both statements and requested a report be brought back to the next meeting following further investigation into the points made. **Action Ruth Quantock to co-ordinate.**

DWN
9.11/13 ANNUAL REPORT OF FRIENDS OF DOWNS AND AVON GORGE

Roger Garrett (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).

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

The Master particularly wished to thank Brian Sprosen (FODAG) for his significant contribution to the work of the Traffic Management Subgroup of the Downs Committee.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

DWN

10.11/13

PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE OVER BRIDGE VALLEY ROAD - UPDATE

The Committee considered a report of Dr Adrienn Tomor UWE (agenda item no. 10) requesting support in principal for a stone pedestrian bridge over Bridge Valley Road.

Roger Garrett (FODAG) reminded Members that this was not a new concept and in 2011 FODAG drew to the attention of the Downs Committee, the need to make progress on the pedestrian link across Bridge Valley Road. The need to “create a safe circular path allowing people to access the Gorge from the Downs” has already been identified in “*A Management Plan for the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge, 2010-2015*” (sections 5.6 and 6.29). The *Conservation Area Enhancement Statements November 1993 – Bristol Local Plan Advice Note 2* also identified the “issue of over use of the peripheral routes to the Downs and encourage more protected pedestrian and cyclist movement through the spaces”. However, despite various campaigns at that time there had been no take up to develop such a scheme. With enthusiasm and skills the University West Of England have been working (for free) with FODAG to develop this proposal for a stone pedestrian footbridge over Bridge Valley Road to link footpaths leading to the Downs.

Dr Adrienn Tomor circulated a summary of the proposal and highlighted the key issues. Since publication of the report a response to the pre-planning application enquiry had been received which was generally positive and provided the necessary confidence to move forward to Planning Application subject to support in principle from the Committee.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion:-

- Councillor Janke suggested that the Committee defer a decision until Planning Permission had been agreed which would be based on a full technical assessment by planning

officers. In response Dr Tomor indicated that the feedback from the council on the pre-application had included comments from the Urban Design Team and Landscape Team, Highways, Nature Conservation, Planning Building Regs and Standards and no main objections had been raised.

- As reported previously, the Downs Committee Reserves had been significantly impacted by the rock fall at Sea Walls and the Committee would therefore not be in a position to offer any funding for the project. In response Dr Tomor explained that following approval in principle by the Committee and subsequent Planning Permission, UWE will look to identify funding from a range of sources including lottery funding, educational grants and sponsorship amongst others.
- Francis Greenacre commented that whilst he supported the project in principle, he didn't accept the argument within the report that metal bridges are only designed for up to 100 years - the Clifton Suspension Bridge immediately came to mind.
- Dr Tomor clarified that a stone bridge was the only option that UWE were willing and able to take forward. During previous meetings of Downs Committee it had been specifically requested that cycling should not be allowed on the bridge, therefore no cycle access was included in the pre-application proposal.
- The comment was made that as Bristol is recognised as the 'Cycling City', the Committee needed to take a positive approach to accommodating cycling across the Downs in the future. The inclusion of cycle access might also attract funding for the bridge.
- The Master commented that the Traffic Study Working Group had also previously recommended that to mitigate the ongoing problem of illegal cycling on the Downs, the Committee consider the future development of a dedicated cycle path from Clifton/ Suspension Bridge via the Promenade and Ladies Mile to Sneyd Park / Stoke Bishop. To achieve this aspiration it would be sensible to include cycle links to and from the bridge.
- As Chairman of the cycling and walking charity Sustrans, Chris Curling declared an interest and confirmed that unfortunately there was no further funding available from the Cycling Ambition Fund.

Upon a vote being taken it was

RESOLVED -

- (1) that the Committee agrees in principle to support the request for a stone pedestrian bridge over Bridge Valley Road with a separate cycle lane.**
- (2) that a further update be provided at the next meeting.**

(Voting 6 For, 0 Against, 3 Abstentions).

Note: One member had already left the meeting so did not take part in the voting.

DWN

11.11/13 PROPOSED RESIDENTS PARKING SCHEME IN CLIFTON

Public Forum item.

David Redgewell raised a number of issues relating to public transport access to the Downs, parking and cycling issues. He also pointed out that there was no equalities impact assessment (EIA) within the Resident's Parking Schemes report.

In response, Mark Sperduty indicated that a full equalities impact assessment had been undertaken as part of the individual residents parking schemes. His brief had been to provide an update on the impact of these schemes on parking on and around the Downs, so no EIA had specifically been undertaken.

The Committee noted the comments made by David Redgewell and the Lord Mayor requested that any future report should include an EIA.

Mark Sperduty presented this report which outlined the current progress on the proposed Residents' Parking Schemes (RPS) that were likely to affect parking on and around the Downs, and what measures were being considered to address the potential impact of these schemes and the parking problems that already exist.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion:-

- The Downs Committee Traffic Study Working Group had recently recommended a series of traffic improvements on the Downs including parking restrictions to alleviate existing and expected problems, and improved parking provision for visitors to the Downs. These recommendations had been supported by the Committee and were due to be presented to the three Neighbourhood Partnership covering or

bordering the Downs to gain their support and help bring forward funding opportunities to implement them in the future.

- In response to concerns, the City Council was currently preparing a series of proposed parking restrictions (single and double yellow line) in a comprehensive and co-ordinated plan (copies were available for inspection at the meeting). This included the potential for 4 hour limited waiting on the roads across the Downs to tie into the hours of operation of RPS in the area, and the provision of disabled parking bays.
- The next stage of RPS was to finalise the plans for initial consultation with local Councillors, NPs, residents and then depending on the outcome progress to statutory consultation. Pending the outcomes of this process, the restrictions could be in place in approximately 6 months' time which would minimise the initial impact of any displaced parking as a result of RPS.
- Members were concerned about the number of signs that had been proposed across the Downs (around 80). In response Mark Sperduty indicated that these were required for the restrictions to operate and be enforceable. However, the feasibility work was currently looking into options for keeping these to an absolute minimum and a design sought which is in keeping with the local environment.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

DWN

12.11/13

REPORT OF THE DOWNS RANGER

The Committee considered a report of the Downs Ranger (agenda item no. 12) updating on works and developments carried out since the last meeting.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion:-

- The OTIS outdoor training system which was launched by the Lord Mayor in September has quickly proved to be a popular addition to the activities available at the Downs. The Downs Ranger indicated that he had received numerous positive emails and comments with just two dissenters concerned that the Committee by permitting sponsorship of the equipment could be seen as endorsing a private company. In response, the Committee took the view that the advertising which had been vetted and approved beforehand was a small price to pay for the equipment which had been installed at no cost for 12 months, however the situation

would continue to be carefully monitored. In view of severe budget constraints the Committee needed to look at innovative ways of making improvements to the Downs for little or no cost.

- At the last meeting the Committee agreed that the dangerous Ash tree located along Ladies Mile should be felled. Francis Greenacre asked why this had not yet happened. In response, the Downs Ranger explained that following the challenge circulated to Members from a representative of 'Bristol Street Trees' that intimated the decision to disregard the tree officers report might be unlawful, he had felt it prudent to delay the felling. The Committee were satisfied that it had not acted unlawfully and that the removal of the Ash tree should now go ahead as soon as possible. **Action Robert Westlake.**
- The Committee wished to put on record its thanks to the Downs Ranger for his continued good service, and in particular for dealing with issues arising outside of the meeting promptly and keeping Members informed.
- The trial barbeque area had proved popular this summer and had been well used. Security staff had dealt with unauthorised portable barbecues whenever the weather was fine and it had been useful to be able to direct people to the designated barbeque area. The Committee had previously agreed to extend the trial by one year and a report was due to come back to the next meeting.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

DWN

13.11/13

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:-

- Following stakeholder consultation including FODAG, the policy for events on the Downs was attached to the report for comments and approval. Minor changes included a section

covering the need for notification to immediate residents and greater clarification regarding the trigger points for full Downs Committee approval. Much of this was already working in practice but was now being formalised to provide a clear and transparent framework for how each application will be assessed.

- Funderworld. The organisers have requested a meeting with BCC to discuss options for the 2014 event. Key issues for discussion include a request to re-negotiate the fee and concerns that the current decision making process for event activity can lead to extended waiting times for Committee feedback due to the frequency of the meetings and the organisers are therefore keen on exploring other viable sites. It was noted that in view of budget constraints, regular income was very important to the Committee and it therefore wished to be kept up to date on discussions.
- Race for Life. The Committee requested additional staffing be provided by the organisers to oversee parking and to ensure participants are not parking on the grass or the triangle near the water tower. The Committee also requested that notices be put around the Downs about 'No Parking'. **Action Robert Westlake.** Richard Bevan indicated that the amount of litter post event was a significant drain on the resources of the Downs Team and that the organisers be encouraged to police it themselves. **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.**
- (3) that the Policy for Events on the Downs be approved**

DWN

14.11/13 A.O.B

Mike Allen, Finance Business Partner indicated that a financial report was due to be considered by the Committee at the next meeting in January, however he just wanted to flag up that due to the financial impact of the Rock Fall at Sea Mills and the Committees commitment to the Childrens Play area, the Reserves were very low. In view of earlier discussion regarding events on

the Downs, the Committee really needed to focus on securing more income.

DWN

15.11/13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED -

That the next meeting of the Downs Committee be held on 27th January 2014 at 4.00 p.m. at City Hall.

(The meeting ended at 6.00 pm)

CHAIR