

Bristol City Council Minutes of the Downs Committee

20 May 2022 at 2.00 pm



Members Present:-

Councillors: Steve Smith (Chair), Geoff Gollop, Katy Grant, Philippa Hulme, Paula O'Rourke, David Freed (Vice-Chair), Mike Bothamley, Mark Burchfield, Gillian Camm, Patrick Despard and Peter Rilett

1 Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and issued the safety information.

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from MV Jonathan Baker, Councillor Jos Clark, and Councillor Paul Goggin.

3 Declarations of interest

Councillor Geoff Gollop declared an interest as a member of Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge and a supporter of Respect the Downs.

4 Public Forum

The following Public Forum Statements were received and noted by the committee:

1. Robert Westlake – Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge (in person)
2. Mark Ashdown – Bristol Tree Forum (in person)
3. Chris Millman – Downs for People

Members acknowledged the statements and noted their support.

The Lord Mayor noted that the statement submitted by Downs for People had mentioned that the analysis did not cover comments made in free-standing survey response written answers, but he wanted



to reassure everyone that they had been considered. He noted that it was important to collaborate effectively with those groups who had submitted statements and others.

5 Downs Engagement Report

The Lord Mayor introduced the report and noted that the purpose of the extraordinary meeting was to adopt the Principals and Work Plan for the Downs.

The Lord Mayor noted that the Biodiversity and Education Manager was not in attendance but had advised prior to the meeting of suggested changes to the report, which are as follows:

- Section 1.2 – correction to responsible person’s job title which should read, Avon Gorge & Downs Biodiversity Education Manager and Avon Gorge & Downs Learning and Engagement Officer.
- Section 1.3 – correction to the responsible person / body to include expert input from the Avon Gorge and Wildlife Project.

The committee approved the suggested changes.

Discussion notes:

- Members commended the report and noted that the process for reviewing the Downs had been done in a constructive way. Also, that the Committee had become more transparent in the recent years, but more accountability was needed with regards to use of funding.
- The Governance Working Group had worked on setting the principals and work plan for over a year and members were committed to the piece of work.
- It was noted that some groups had expressed in their Public Forum submissions that they felt the process was moving too quickly but members advised that this was a ‘starter for ten’ which sets a good direction of travel for the future of the committee and that this was a working progress so wouldn’t like to delay.
- It was noted that feedback from the survey lacked views from young people as it was mostly older people who had responded. Also, that there was little response from BME citizens.
- Members noted that it was important to reach the wider community to feed into the future of the Downs and not just the surrounding areas as it is a space for all of the city. It was noted that section 5.2 of the Work Plan was around engagement; It was suggested that a sentence be added around consultation to include a range of demographics.
- Members noted that the re-election of Merchant Venturers representatives to the committee ran on a different timeline to the re-election of Bristol City Council representatives so therefore meant that there was a lack of continuity, and that this was something that needed to be reviewed.
- There was a discussion around funding it was noted that the committee should consider how to access charity funding to support work of the Downs.

The Lord Mayor proposed that the Work Plan and Principals be adopted by the committee with suggested minor changes as discussed in the meeting.

Resolved; That the Downs Committee Work Plan and Principals be adopted.

6 Any Other Business



There was none.

7 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 28th June 2022 at 11.00am at the Merchant's Hall.

Meeting ended at 2.30 pm

CHAIR _____

