

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Downs Committee

2 July 2018 at 11.00 am



Members Present:-

Councillors: Cleo Lake (Chair), Peter Abraham, Donald Alexander, Barry Clark, Kye Dudd, Chris Davies, Paula O'Rourke,

Merchant Venturers: J Baker, A Brown, F Greenacre, C Griffiths and T Ross

Officers in Attendance:-

1. Apologies and introductions

Apologies received from James McArthur (MV)

Councillor Cleo Lake introduced as new Lord Mayor and new Chair of the Committee
Councillors Chris Davies and Paula O'Rourke welcomed as new committee members

2. Minutes of last meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of 9 April 2018 meeting are an accurate record of proceedings

3. Declarations of interest

None declared

4. Public Forum

A Public Forum Statement 'Licence for Zoo Parking' was received from 'Downs for People'. Due to IT issues it was not possible to circulate this to the group, so it was agreed that the clerk would read the statement and Downs for People would provide a commentary. The statement was circulated to members after the meeting.

DFP commented that the committee has been considering clamping powers for individuals parking on the Downs, but showed mixed messages by allowing zoo parking on the Downs. They expressed concern that



negotiations with the zoo are private and their belief that as a matter of principle there should not be parking on the Downs at all. They said the parking area was being used for non-zoo parking after hours. They said the zoo should be charged higher fees for the site and the resulting income could be used to increase BCC enforcement capabilities.

At the invitation of the Chair, TR gave an update on the current negotiations with the zoo. There is a periodic licence, which is not at end but continuing. The agreement is between two bodies that are not public. The basis is an existing lease which runs until 2024. There have been number of discussions ongoing between the zoo and committee, including the matter of additional payments. There is no report here today because there is a new zoo director taking up position right now. The ongoing situation is being monitored by the sub-committee. The committee acknowledged public concern on this matter, but the agreement is a commercial interest between private bodies.

PA asked whether the agreement, once reached, could be made public.

ACTION OH to check if this would be possible.

5. Improving Protective Measures For Pedestrians At The Clifton Suspension Bridge And Avon Gorge

Chief Inspector Zoe Chegwin and Sergeant Will Stephens gave a presentation about increasing safety around the Clifton Suspension Bridge. ZC is chair for working group for reduction in suicides, which involves all emergency services, relevant charities such as Samaritans, universities / colleges and BCC. In last 6 months there have been 45 incidents at sea walls. In 1998, additional fencing was placed on the bridge which reduced suicides. There has been a recent increase in suicides, want to put up additional barriers in nearby areas to prevent attempts: Observatory, bird watching area and sea walls. The Sea Walls has considerable fencing so other areas are a priority. The observatory has a 100m knee high fence, bird watching fence is also very low. The working group will get a formal plan together then come back to the committee with specific proposals.

The committee thanked the police for their report, the formation and work of the suicide reduction working group and hope they will be able to support proposals in the future.

6. Downs Management Report

Melissa Inman gave a summary on events

The foodie festival went well overall, but had additional music this year which has created complaints. MI is picking this up with organisers. It was not raised at the planning stage that they would use amplifiers. Future events have a new provision about noise. Some members attended the event and enjoyed it, but were surprised by the level of noise.



The Lets Rock concert was on the Downs for the first time (Ashton Court previously). There were approximately 8000 customers. There were several complaints, which will be taken up with organisers. A full report will be produced for the events sub-group.

Race for life was held this weekend, but too soon for analysis

Gromit unleashed is now up and running

Have not heard from Student Union as yet on their plans

The circus is at end of the year, which always goes smoothly

Tour of Britain event will take place in the first week of September. MI will update through the events group.

Ben Skuse gave an update on Downs Maintenance

We are carrying out remedial work. Goats are doing well, have increased consultation with dog owners.

Have a trial taking place for more frequent recycling bins. Chair welcomed recycling pilot scheme and asked about ongoing litter issues. Litter is bad over summer. Early morning sat/sun there will be litter which has not been picked up, but is then resolved when BCC staff are operating. Bristol Waste Company is producing marketing material that is helpful. Kingdom is the only company that is enforce littering in Bristol. They were city centre only, but are broadening remit. BS is not sure it will be commercially viable for them to cover the Downs. KD updated on the Kingdom trial, which has run for 9 months and generated 7000 fines. Downs would be hard to manage, but intent is to expand Kingdom into other parks. Committee thanked Ben and his team for their efforts in cleaning the Downs, which is an enormous job.

ACTION BS to check legality on whether FPNs for littering on the Downs would need extra byelaws

There is no summer bedding in parks apart from college green. BS has been speaking to business owners to get sponsored flower beds, but limitations on displaying sponsor signage. Some members asked if the committee could take a more active role in establishing summer bedding in future, by getting sponsors or by paying for bedding on Downs land via the committee itself.

ACTION BS to establish funding requirements and report to sub group.

Re: toll booth compound, prep work is done estimated finish March 2019. We need to specify fines for any overrun. Bridge Trust has appointed contractor.

There are a few issues about trees due to drought, with some felling required. Tree management are currently assessing them for risk. It is common for these tree species to shed limbs in droughts.

Members asked about fire plans, given the recent spate of wildfires across the country. BS said he would bring forward the hay cut to lessen fire risk.

Mandy Leivers gave an update on Education



Good time for teaching, as many species of flora and fauna are active. We have had over 1000 children visit, including 3 schools that have not been to the Downs before. Feedback from schools is very positive. We have held two Rainbow group evening sessions. Audience development plan with refugee families is going well. Held an intro session with families to build up the programme. Good link up with FODAG. Had great feedback from the families. Next session is 15 July and will be based on birds. 'Routes to wellbeing' working with elderly in St Pauls. On the first walk the weather turned, which put off some. Hopeful for the next one. Held the second Downs challenge activity, learning about trees, especially the whitebeam. We had a great joint event with zoo, including peregrine simulations. Have 2 peregrine chicks nesting, but we are unable to ring them due to location. ML will be going to the Downs music festival to promote her work.

7. Finance Report

Members discussed the issue of whether certain reports should be restricted or not. Some asked whether the minutes of the sub-committees could be included in the main Downs Committee papers. However, these documents have always been restricted in the past as they contain sensitive discussion between private bodies. It was agreed that there should be a summary document of the sub-committees activity included in the Downs Committee papers as per the last meeting.

ACTION OH to draft summary documents and include them in DC papers as a standing item.

PA queried why the finance report is marked as confidential, as it is generally public interest. TR said the report contained details of meetings between two private bodies and was commercially sensitive. DA agreed would prejudice the committee's ability to do business, e.g. work with contractors and end of year public reports should be sufficient. Committee noted that JP's reports now contain much more detail than previous financial reports and so are not suitable for public view in current format.

ACTION Finance sub-group to establish what can or cannot be released to public.

Jemma gave introduced the finance report. BCC finance plan looking at reducing costs across the board. DC agreed to support this plan by bridging the Downs grant gap over 3 years to the value of £262k. In Jan 2018 looked like DC would better target and in end of year £98k has gone to reserve. 18/19 full budget indicated that it should be possible to break even by 18/19. We have saved £160k in real terms, big thanks to all teams involved.

At the invitation of the Chair, JB gave an update on toilets on the Downs. A planning application to replace the sea walls toilet is in. This includes a small cafe, which will cover the running costs and an education centre for ML. There are proposals for upgrading the changing rooms, which could integrate a public toilet. The aim of all proposals is to generate revenue while maintaining public conveniences. Do not plan to build new buildings, but replace old ones.

Noted that one sub-committee member had objected to the orientation of the proposed Sea Walls toilets.



DC pays £12k a year to maintain toilets. The combined Sea Walls cafe will cover itself. Stoke road is shortly to be reopened, but will need maintenance provision. Difficulty is locking at weekends. Sea Walls toilet is currently being opened and closed by St Monica's staff. Committee expressed their thanks for this.

Committee noted that the Downs League have agreed to increase in fees, which should generate around £20k revenue (dependent on number of teams playing).

8. FODAG Update Report

The FODAG report was noted

9. Any Other Business

BS raised that Vicky Cracknel, who is organising the Cycle Sunday event on 16 Sep, would like permission to create a loop by joining the Stoke Road pedestrian footpath. This would mean pedestrians cannot use it while event goes on. Members were uncomfortable about this being decided as AOB and requested an interim meeting of the events committee to decide it.

ACTION OH arrange events committee meeting ASAP.

Meeting ended at 1.00 pm

CHAIR _____

