

# Bristol City Council

## Minutes of the Downs Committee

20 September 2021 at 2.00 pm



### **Members Present:-**

**Councillors:** Steve Smith (Chair), Jos Clark, Carla Denyer, Geoff Gollop, Paul Goggin, Philippa Hulme, Paula O'Rourke, Jonathon Baker, Mike Bothamley, Simon Cooper, David Powell and Peter Rilett

### **Officers in Attendance:-**

Stefan Edwards, Oliver Harrison, Mandy Leivers, Ben Skuse

## **1 Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information**

The Chair led introductions and read out the safety information.

## **2 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Gillian Camm and David Freed.

## **3 Declarations of interest**

Cllr Geoff Gollop declared an interest as a member of FODAG, Respect the Downs and provides services for Jonathan Baker.

## **4 Minutes of last meeting**

The minutes on item 14 could imply the publication of a limited public report on the judicial review. However, this is superseded by the closed session on 8 September and Item 9 on the agenda today.

RESOLVED the minutes of the previous meeting on 5 July 2021 are agreed as a correct record.

## **5 Action Tracker**

The action tracker was NOTED. The Chair gave a verbal update on the enforcement and Bristol Waste actions, which are ongoing.



## 6 Matters Arising From the Events and Finance Group

### Discussion Notes:

- Additional clarity on Covid payments made to BCC was requested. Were these funds coming down to the individual budget holder? The committee requested the individual codes. [ACTION KJ GG]
- Breaking Bread had difficult time this year, which has affected their income. BB have paid their fees until end July; September is still outstanding and is due for payment in October. BB have been given a 6 week's grace period to calculate the final invoice. This is easier than trying to claim payments piecemeal.
- While BB had to leave their site early, they are being charged on turnover rather than time on site.
- The Ladyboys of Bangkok are appearing at Castle Park rather than the Downs. This was due to availability and budget issues. The alternative location enables them to keep up their income and payment plans.

## 7 Public Forum

The following public forum statements were NOTED:

01. Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge (in person)
02. Suzie Lincoln
03. Carol Thompson
04. Downs for People (in person)

## 8 Ice Cream Concessions

The relevant officer was unavailable for this meeting, however Jonathon Baker was involved in the last Ice Cream concession tender and led the discussion:

- There were concerns about the level of pollution from ice cream vans running their engines. There is a power point at the Sea Walls site that vans can use, but the other two sites do not have them. All electric vans do exist but are very expensive.
- In previous years, the Downs concession pitches have been included in the BCC city-wide tender but are a separate lot with fees coming directly to the Downs Committee. Including them in the city pitches is likely to reduce income as the Downs pitches are premium sites.
- There used to be an additional concession site at Ladies Mile, however this was rendered unusable due to changes in the parking regulations. Members asked for a dialogue with BCC Highways to see if this site can be brought back into use. [ACTION OH SL]
- There was a discussion on the evaluation method of the tender, which includes both price and quality.

### RESOLVED:

- The three Downs ice cream pitches should be included in the November tender, but the sites should remain as a separate lot from the rest of the city.



- Jonathan Baker (MV) and Cllr Jos Clark be the points of contact for this work.

## 9 Legal Review

The Chair gave a quick update on the 8 September closed legal meeting and emphasised that the advice from legal officers is to not disclose any further information. The Chair will respond to emails about this subject in accordance with legal advice.

### 1 Downs Management Report

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The Parks Supervisor introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- We are dealing with intensive event period due to lockdown contracting the time available. Balancing contrasting objectives is difficult, and this has been skewed heavily towards events recently. We currently have the university welcome event and circus on site.
- We have six Bagot goats and four Kashmir goats. This brought us up to ten animals, which are needed for increased grazing. However last week one of our more elderly goats had to be put down, making the current herd nine strong.
- The much higher visitor numbers are still causing issues. Meadow flower areas have been damaged by people walking through them. We do not want this to happen again, so areas have been roped off and signage installed.
- Cllr O'Rourke's wildflower meadow project off the Downs has begun.

Discussion Notes:

- Members thanked Ben and his team for their good work during a very difficult year.
- There was a discussion on the ongoing issue of heavy littering on the Downs and how to address it.
- Removal of all bins was mooted, but this would need a considerable amount of lead time and no parks within Bristol had done this. There were views about gradually reducing the number of bins over time or removing them completely during the quieter winter period. There are many temporary oil drum bins that are withdrawn in winter and usually brought back in April. Any removal of permanent bins would be expensive to reverse.
- Others thought that a no bin policy was unrealistic given the very high volume of waste and the tendency to litter when the existing bins are full. There are businesses on the Downs selling food a drink, this packaging will need to be disposed of and will probably be carried away from the premises. It would be worth considering case studies from other parks to see what can be done.
- Enforcement of littering was also discussed. BCC has established an enforcement team for littering in the city centre that could be utilised for the Downs.
- There needs to be good communication and messaging to nudge people into taking their rubbish home. [ACTION OH] talk to BCC communications about parks bins.



## 1 Wildlife Project Education Programme

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The Avon Gorge & Downs Biodiversity Education Manager introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- There were fewer education sessions in July due to Covid precautions. 10 went ahead but this is below what is usually expected in the summer season. Feedback from schools has been very positive, especially ones from central urban areas. Eight sessions have been booked for the autumn term.
- As part of the Avon Gorge and Downs public events programme, seven events have been planned for October and November including: four walks, two courses and a children's event for the October half term. One of the walks is a goat tour with the Downs Supervisor on 16 October.
- The Nature in the Streets / Rainbow Bridge 2 Nature project which we were running with Off the Record and FODAG to improve the wellbeing of young people, has had to be postponed. 16 young people were recruited, but at the beginning of August there was an outbreak of Covid among the group. The project will relaunch in the spring.
- The first two stages of the Wastes and Strays project have been completed. This is a comparative study of urban green spaces.
- The education team were active at the Downs Festival on 3 September, running an information kiosk and distributing leaflets. They are also running a stand at the University Freshers Fair to engage with students and recruit volunteers.

### Discussion Notes:

- It was confirmed that designated BBQ areas form part of the information issued at the Freshers Fair.
- A review was undertaken in 2016, which looked at all the groups that the education programme had engaged with on the Downs. This enabled the identification of gaps and the development of an audience development plan to increase engagement with more diverse groups from across the city.
- School tours are popular and committee members are welcome to accompany one. A Bristol teacher informed a committee member that the class tour was engaging and educational.
- The project has a small pot of funding to enable groups who would not be able to afford transport to the Downs for education sessions to come.-Members from periphery wards requested a direct contact with the Education Manager to increase engagement in their area. [ACTION OH]

## 1 Events Report

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The Events Officer introduced the report, which was noted.

- Ward members have received complaints from residents about the noise levels of recent events. The events officer will take these complaints and noise compliance reports to the next Events & Finance group meeting. Any committee member who receives a complaint from a member of the



public should direct them to log this on the Bristol City Council website. This will allow the EO to access them.

- In previous years, events officers have presented a grid to show what events are appearing in which location. This is helpful to visualise the schedule. The EO confirmed that the report will be ready soon as the event schedule is finalised.

## **1 Finance Update**

**3**

The Finance Officer was unable to attend this meeting. Members are welcome to submit via email any questions or queries on this report.

## **1 Any Other Business**

**4**

### Downs Governance and Strategy Review

- The Working Group for the Downs Governance and Strategy Review met on the 8 September. There will be a consultation event on 20 October here in City hall. This is not about this committee presenting a new strategy, it is a listening event to hear from members of the public about the future of the Downs.
- Although originally scheduled for the Conference Hall, there have been considerable issues with the audio in the hall recently. If distancing allows, this event should be held in the Chamber.  
[ACTION OH SS]

### Obscuring Trees

- BCC Highways recently contacted the Parks Supervisor to report a road sign outside the zoo was obscured by tree. The Committee delegated authority to the officer to move the sign.

## **1 Date of Next Meeting**

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The next Downs Committee meeting will be held on 15 November 2021 at City Hall.

Meeting ended at 4.00 pm

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_



