

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

DOWNS COMMITTEE

23rd January 2017

Report of: Service Director, Neighbourhoods

Title: Downs Budget Report

Ward:

Officers Presenting Report: Gemma Dando, Director Neighbourhoods and Communities

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RECOMMENDATION:

Members:

- **To note the contents of the report**
- **To approve an additional finance meeting to discuss the contents of this report**
- **To invite a status report on the Downs Committee to the next meeting in April including a suggestion of an operating framework and potential reduction in meetings.**

1. Policy

Not applicable

2. Consultation

Robin Poole, Neighbourhoods Finance Business Partner
Councillor Asher Craig, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods.

3. Context

3.1 A meeting took place on 17th November 2016 to talk about the finances of the Downs and a number of other matters. The outcomes of the meeting and the actions were as follows:

- a) Finances – needs to be more open and transparent. There is a need for some clarity on budgets, forward planning, and an appetite for some collaborative working to help a) the council meet financial

challenges **and also** b) enable the downs to have more money to spend within the confines of the downs. There is a joint appetite for better finances as long as there are mutual advantages.

- b) Organisation of the Downs Committee, decision making, conversations, reporting – this needs looking at and a really clear arrangement for the future.
- c) Management plan – a really clear management plan will help to direct the finances, direct the spend of any additional money created by the downs, and direct the work of volunteers, BCC employees and other people involved in making the downs a fantastic city asset.
- d) Legal clarity – this is important in terms of context but the desire is to have a collaborative relationship without needing to refer too much to the details of the Act. It is important for clarity for all that we do have a joint understanding of this individual legal context though so this does not take away from the uniqueness of this area.

Specific actions are as follows:

- e) Budget building conversation for 2017-18 – collaborative way to look at the finances.
- f) Investigate some of the opportunities for different models, income, etc. and share information with all of the committee for discussion.
- g) Look at constructing an agreement (the Downs Committee agreement) which defines financial and operational agreements.
- h) Finish the management plan as soon as possible to inform some of the above discussions.

3.2 This work commenced after the November meeting, but the finance and operational work was put on hold temporarily until the council's budget context and any potential impact on the Downs budget was understood.

3.3 On 12th January, the council published updates to the draft Corporate Strategy consultation and the current plans to balance next year's budget, as well as future plans for savings from council budgets which will be further consulted on and form part of the 5 year financial strategy.

3.4 The budget plans include a proposal called "**New ways of delivering parks and open spaces**". This has been defined as follows: "We want to work towards making the cost of running our Parks Service cost

neutral to the council. There will be a robust exploration of the options available resulting in a detailed plan for the long term future. This might include looking at commercial business models, increasing our income and working with communities.” The proposal sees all of the parks budget removed by 2020 and at this point the intention is that the service is self-funding. There is also a proposal to remove the subsidy of £25,000 for salary costs for the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Programme.

- 3.5 This proposal affects the Downs budget as there is a council contribution towards the management of the Downs of £262,000, and also the £25,000 subsidy for the Wildlife programme also comes out of the Downs budget.
- 3.6 It is recognised that the Downs Act 1861 makes provision for the Downs Committee to requisition the council for “up to £300 a year” for execution of the Downs Act. This would translate as around £25,000 - £30,000 in 2016 if RPI (relative pricing index – i.e. comparing the value of goods and services in 1861 and 2015) was used as the indicator for calculating the potential increase in the council’s maximum obligation under the Act.
- 3.7 The Downs budget is contained as Appendix 1 of this report. It should be noted that the budget does not contain the true costs of management of the Downs, only the direct operational costs and income. For example, the budget does not contain any management costs for the teams that work on the downs or the teams that support the committee, nor does it contain any contribution to machinery, equipment, premises for staff. An accurate reflection of the cost to the council of managing the Downs is being produced.
- 3.8 It is recognised that the Downs has unique income generation potential in Bristol, and also has a unique relationship between the council and the Merchant Venturers. There are also many active residents that have an interest in the management and sustainability of the site. This may put the Downs in a good position to consider a different operating model (for example a Trust or another model that can generate enough income to cover the full operational and maintenance costs).
- 3.9 In order to meet the significant financial challenge that the council is facing, there will need to be a significant reduction to the council’s contribution to the Downs budget across the next three years.

- 3.10 It is proposed that an additional finance meeting is held to discuss detailed proposals for a reduction in the council contribution to the Downs budget in 2017-18, as well as a future financial model for the Downs. Things to consider would be a reduction in the security services that currently work on the downs and are unique to this area, an increase in income that might include football, concessions, events and any other ideas. 2018-19 would look for a further reduction in council contribution, with the Downs being fully or mostly self-funded by 2019-20.
- 3.11 During the meeting on 17th November it became clear that there are different thoughts, opinions and interpretations of the role, legal status, financial responsibilities and decision-making responsibilities of the Downs Committee. Members of the Downs Committee are all very busy people, and as such it is proposed that a status report about the Downs Committee complete with recommendations about an operating framework and a potential reduction in meetings comes to the next Downs Committee meeting. This report should be co-produced and could be led by members of the Downs Committee rather than council officers.

5. Public Sector Equality Duties

5a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:

- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
- ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This

- involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
- tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.

The proposals for reduction of budgets across the parks department will require a full and detailed Equalities Impact Assessment. Proposals related to the Downs will form part of this EqIA.

6. Legal and Resource Implications

The Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act 1861 provides that the Downs should remain as a place for the resort and recreation of the citizens of Bristol, and that a committee should be appointed to manage them. The recommendations of this report are within the powers conferred by this statute.

Appendix 1: The Downs budget

This is the budget as it appears on the finance system. It does not reflect the true costs of the management of the Downs – this piece of work is underway.

Downs 10359		Annual Budget	Spend	Notes
R1000	Salaries - Basic Pay	148,010	148,010	1 supervisor, 7 staff. No other costs of other staff included
R1001	Salaries - National Insurance	29,456	29,456	
R1002	Salaries - Superannuation	9,081	38,552	
R1003	Salaries - Other Pay	0	4,428	
R1004	Salaries - Noncontractual Overtime	40,176	40,176	This is paid for by the football income
R1100	Agency Staff	25,692	0	
R1200	Other Indirect Employee Costs	18,217	1,000	
R1800	Redundancy Payments	0	0	
R2000	R&M - Departmental planned (internal)	124	0	
R2002	R&M - Departmental response (Internal)	6,775	7,000	Repairs for buildings, walls, property services works
R2003	R&M - Departmental response (external)	0	0	
R2004	R&M - Building Practice planned	10,967	10,000	
R2005	R&M - Building Practice response	3,058	3,000	
R2076	Grounds Maintenance - Non Contract	1,575	8,000	Additional grounds works not done by team
R2100	Electricity	0	2,213	
R2101	Gas	0	3,234	
R2103	Solid Fuel	500	0	
R2300	Business Rates	0	4,000	
R2400	Water Services - Unmetered	0	2,000	
R2703	Waste Management	3,035	4,000	
R2900	Contribution to Premises provision	9,992	0	
R3001	Diesel	683	0	
R3020	Vehicle Maintenance - Contract	236	1,000	
R3201	Hire of Plant	150	0	
R4000	Equipment - Purchase	3,642	8,000	Grounds maintenance equipment
R4001	Equipment - Hire	0	0	
R4007	Materials	1,596	1,596	
R4200	Protective Clothing	250	250	
R4300	Printing	35	35	
R4304	Photocopier Operating Lease	20	400	
R4305	Photocopier Charges - Usage	100	400	
R4306	Photocopier Charges - Consumables	0	0	
R4308	Stationery	156	0	

R4317	Marketing \ Non-staff advertising	700	0	
R4400	Services - Professional Fees	8,388	0	
R4401	Services - Fees and Charges	10,255	70,000	Replacement fence for gorge, wildlife project officer
R4404	Services - Consultants	0	0	
R4405	Services - Security	33,811	33,811	Patrols
R4504	Comms - Telephone Rental	600	600	
R4507	Comms - Mobile Telephones	0	1,000	
R5000	TPP - Grounds Maintenance	(7,592)	1,000	
R5010	TPP - Other	1,800	6,500	
R5028	TPP - Sports Facilities	422	500	
R5301	TPP - Payments to other Departments	35,400	5,000	
R7004	Internal Trading Charges - Accountancy	3,400	0	
R7007	Internal Trading Charges - Legal Services	8,000	0	
R7009	Internal Trading Charges - Grounds Maintenance	60,000	1,500	
R7010	Internal Trading Charges - Facility Management	3,262	8,600	
R7011	Internal Trading Charges - Printing	1,703	1,700	
R7014	Internal Trading Charges - Transport	2,412	6,000	
R7020	Internal Trading Charges - Other	14,685	20,000	
R9140	Donations	(5,000)	0	
R9141	Sponsorship Income	(1,400)	0	
R9151	Balances brought forward	(262,090)	(262,090)	This is the council contribution to this budget
R9157	Road Maintenance	0	0	
R9201	Sale of Plants / Floral Displays	(700)	0	
R9215	Concessions	(57,500)	(40,000)	This is the income from ice cream vans etc.
R9216	Events	(45,000)	0	
R9217	Room Hire	0	(200)	
R9307	Fees - Licensing	0	(4,000)	
R9308	Fees - Other	(43,500)	(3,000)	
R9310	Fees - Leisure Services	(18,000)	(110,000)	This is where the events income appears - Massive Attack etc
R9312	Fees - Car parks	(34,600)	(34,600)	
R9404	Rents - Other	0	(400)	
R9408	Rents - Commercial	(18,000)	(18,000)	
R9410	Rents - Controlled Shops	(1,399)	(200)	
Total	10359	3,583	471	
Downs				