

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Downs Committee

9 April 2018 at 2.00 pm



Members Present:-

Councillors: Lesley Alexander (Chair), Peter Abraham, Donald Alexander, Clare Champion-Smith, Barry Clark, Kye Dudd, Cleo Lake

Merchant Venturers:- J Baker, F Greenacre, C Griffiths, J McArthur, M Prior and T Ross

Officers in Attendance:-

Mandy Leivers, Jemma Prince, Ben Skuse, Melissa Inman, Oliver Harrison

Others in attendance in whole or part:-

Robert Westlake (FODAG); Chris Goodsall

1. Apologies and introductions

Apologies were received from Cllr Kye Dudd and Tony Kenney. Cllr Clare Champion Smith has stood down from her position and will no longer attend Downs Committee.

2. Declarations of interest

James McArthur declared an interest as a Bristol Zoo shareholder

3. Minutes of last meeting

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the Downs Committee 22 January 2018 are agreed as a correct record.

4. Public Forum

1. Licence for Zoo Parking – Susan Carter – Downs for people

Downs for People is a group of individuals who think using the Downs as a car park is contrary to the Downs Act and intent behind the Act. We want all parking on grass areas of the Downs ended. There is no licence granted to the Zoo. There also appears to be no published report about licence. We feel that as a



public body, the Downs Committee should make discussions related to the parking public. If parking is not ended, it should be at a realistic fee. If it is about income generation, we suggest that charges for the permanent car park of the zoo should be increased.

Statement was noted.

2. Conservation of Turfed Areas – Simon Ferguson

Statement was noted.

5. Matters Arising from Events and Finance Group

Sea Walls Development

Jonathon Baker and architect Chris Goodsall introduced plans for building a visitor centre at the Sea Walls, near or on the site of the public toilets. This is intended to make an iconic statement on downs. It is to be seen as a social enterprise, training young people on site in the café and providing Mandy Leivers with a base for her education work. The design incorporates both private toilets (maintained and used by café) and accessible public toilets. In terms of cost, the building estimate can be met by reserve, but also trying to access capital budget BCC. Also have access to a grant that would cover 1/3 of the budget.

RESOLVED – the following proposals were approved by the Committee

Spend on bollard repairs (cost to be determined by BS)

£6k spend on grass seed for maintenance

Change of charges to University Football on the Downs

Change of charges to Downs League Football

Up to £10k spend to obtain pre-planning criteria for Sea Walls development

Up to £10k spend on survey/structural engineers report for Football Changing Rooms

Intent to create plans for the conversion of Stoke Road toilets to office/retail unit or similar

Water Tower Café rent review should be done by BCC as soon as possible

Cleaning of Sea Walls/Blackboy Hill toilets to be taken on by Executive Cleaning (£11,031.19pa) plus the Unlocking and locking of the Seawalls' by St Monica's staff at £3,650pa

Downs Committee thanked Jonathan Baker for his hard work on these projects

6. Matters Arising from Place and Movement Group - Seven Sisters Loop

RESOLVED – Downs Committee approved works on the Seven Sisters loop for progression

7. Rethinking Parks - Bristol and Bath Parks Foundation



Report was noted

8. Downs Management Report

Events Update

There was an emergency meeting of the Events and Finance sub-group to discuss plans for the upcoming Tour of Britain. Sub-group was joined by Guy Fishbourne (BCC Sport) and Heath Harvey (Sweet Spot Chair) for a detailed presentation. Proposal was also looked at by highways to reduce disruption / road closures. A start and finish point on the Downs is desirable. Will support the Tour by waiving road closure fees and site fees, but there will be a reinstatement bond to repair any site damage. Tour wants an event village by the water tower, featuring catering, charities, etc. Plans to involve city-wide sport and work with schools in local areas. Important to manage access and lay trackways to lessen damage.

RESOLVED – Downs Committee welcomes the Tour of Britain, with a preference for a start and finish location on the Downs. The events sub-group will meet if required to handle the details.

Cycle Sunday event approved.

Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project Education Programme Update

Mandy Leivers presented an update on the education programme. There is a new education officer, who is doing well. Walks and talks have experienced some disruption due to the poor weather. We are constantly trying to expand our audience to show the Downs is for everyone in the city. This includes a new project working with Syrian families (the first event will be this Sunday). We are also running a programme of walks for older people from East Bristol which is about tackling isolation and improving physical and mental wellbeing. Our first event in the Downs Challenge programme, for young people, was a great success.

Maintenance Update

Ben Skuse presented an update on maintenance. The recent poor weather, including significant snowfall has caused issues. Our team and vehicles helped to move people in snow and provide services to vulnerable people. There were problems with Funderworld setting up for an early Easter in boggy ground. My team currently covers cleaning of public toilets until the contractors take over. Happy to say that we have recruited the 5th team member vacancy, who has joined us from Sea Mills on a 3 month trial.

The Bridge Trust has requested Downs Committee approval for the toll booth construction compound. Committee stressed the importance of establishing the start and end date for the compound.

RESOLVED – Downs Committee agree the compound in principle, but recommend that Bridge Trust build in a penalty clause at the end of the contract for any overrun with a charge of £200 per week.

Review of security patrols for the Downs was discussed. This included the possibility of clamping cars illegally parked on the Downs, possible private contractors that could provide a service, or a joint venture with the University's security patrol.



RESOLVED – security arrangements should remain in current state for this year, but Ben Skuse should negotiate for a change of service for 2019.

ACTION – OH to contact David Bunting to discuss what enforcement options the Downs Committee can employ.

9. Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge Report

Report was Noted

10 Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge Report

AOB

a. Members asked that a letter be sent to Clare Campion-Smith expressing the committee’s best wishes for her retirement, and thanking her for her service as a member of the committee, including chairing the committee in 2015-16 when she was Lord Mayor.

b. The Lord Mayor thanked the committee for their support over the last year. On the motion of the Master, the committee agreed a vote of thanks to the Lord Mayor in recognition of her work in chairing the committee.

Meeting ended at 3.40 pm

CHAIR _____

