

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Downs Committee

24 September 2018 at 2.00 pm



Members Present:-

Councillors: Councillor Cleo Lake (Chair), Councillor Peter Abraham, Councillor Donald Alexander, Councillor Paula O'Rourke, Jonathon Baker, Anthony Brown, Francis Greenacre, Charles Griffiths, James McArthur and Tim Ross

Officers in Attendance:-

1. Apologies and introductions

Apologies were received from Cllrs Clark, Davies and Dudd

2. Minutes of last meeting

Amend minutes:

Mary Prior was in attendance.

Item 5: Change Wessex Water to Bristol Water

Minutes agreed as true record.

3. Declarations of interest

None

4. Public Forum

Downs for People introduced their public statement, quoting from the downs act that the park should be open and unenclosed and for public resort. Using it as a car park is contrary to this principle. Downs committee should not subsidise zoo for parking at low cost. Annual fee should be £100k.

The Lord Mayor thanked the authors for their statement and stated negotiations with the zoo were ongoing but on a commercial basis so cannot be made public. Providing best value for the Downs was a high priority.



Cycle Sunday

Vicky Craknell introduced her public statement, thanking the committee for extending the route. Event was well attended by a variety of people including children, elderly and even the disabled using mobility aids. Promoting leisure cycling rather than commuter cycling. Have doubts over the viability of the planned seven sister's cycling loop and whether families will use it due to location. Would prefer to do shared use cycle path Stoke Road to Lockleaze or improve cycling around Sea Walls.

The Lord Mayor thanked Vicky for arranging the event and making it a success. The Seven Sister's Loop is an ongoing issue for the Place and Movement group, but was being pursued as funding was available for it.

Cllr Abraham suggested that the event could be brought to different parks across the city, especially to communities distant from the Downs.

5. Matters Arising from Events and Finance Group

Cllr Alexander gave an update on the Blackboy Hill urinal. Temporary closure may be needed due to anti-social behaviour. Difficulty is that the urinal is a heritage building. Request a mandate to deal with at the next finance committee. Currently the urinal is being cleaned once a day, but further action may be needed.

Committee agreed to delegate the matter to the finance group with Cllr Alexander as lead.

6. Downs Management Report

Maintenance Update

Key points are very dry recent weather conditions. Good subsequent rains meant good surface. Had to deal with frequent traveller encampments. Tour of Britain, Cycle Sunday, Lets Rock events in rapid succession. Redressing ground to make good for football pitches. Some health and safety issues to improve fencing and dissuade suicides. 40m stretch of fencing at the observatory needs improving. Looking at suitable companies now, will bring costing to finance group. Some railings need repair, BCC surveyors are looking at this. Downs dressing rooms were vandalised. With the end of summer holidays so should be fewer incidents.

Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project Education Programme

2018 has been an even better year than 2017, with more public engagement and an increasing variety of schools from different areas coming to visit. In October Long Cross visited who had never been to the Downs before. Had great feedback from them, children engaged with learning outside rather than classroom environment. Refugee family project going well, but had to postpone latest due to bad



weather. Downs project. Peregrine watch was very good. Spider and mini beast project went well. Also had night time project for children, looking at bats, moths etc. also engaged with mansion house. We were not very visible at Lets Rock but good to speak to an audience unaware of wildlife in gorge. Fresher's fair next week to engage new students. Some will become volunteers. Leigh Woods, fungi walks, half term event. Busy autumn! Beaver group tomorrow night.

7. Delegated and Upcoming Events Proposed on The Downs

Music event on Downs was very successful, but have some learning points. Organisers have expressed an interest in delivering a two day event next year, will require lots of scrutiny. An alternative event was held at St Mary's church for residents in the local area which proved to be very successful.

Tour of Britain was successful, but with smaller numbers this year due to falling on a school day. Some small amount of parking on site, but that was within planning expectations.

Upcoming events: Cycle Sunday needs to be added. Any returning events have permission in principle. Any new proposals for large events in 2019 schedule are required to provide detailed proposal and invited to event and discuss proposal at Event sub group meeting. Will circulate upcoming circus tender via email.

Tour of Britain: Members asked for more community outreach. This was promised before by organisers but did not happen. They also asked if it was possible for the route to be more reflective of the city rather than just the suspension bridge.

8. Finance Report

DC is on target to deliver a balanced budget in 18/19 with some increases in income and expenditure.

9. Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge Update

Jack Penrose has retired from chair of FODAG, Robert Westlake has been elected as new Chair. FODAG has been approached by Groundworks South about a lottery funding grant to be shared between Stoke Park, Blaize and the Downs. Future proofing parks and 'kick the dust' programme to encourage young people to volunteer and get involved in friends groups.

Committee had no knowledge of the proposal and asked Robert to make an approach to Groundworks South and ask them to attend the next Downs Committee in November.

10 Any Other Business



Michael Everett was introduced as the leader of a suicide prevention group patrolling the Downs. They have 20 trained volunteers patrolling the park and prevented a suicide last week. Michael was introduced to Ben Skuse, who is a member of a suicide prevention working group.

Meeting ended at 3.30 pm

CHAIR _____

