

Minutes of the Downs Committee

21 September 2020 at 2.00 pm



Members Present:-

Councillors: Councillor Jos Clark (Chair), Councillor Kye Dudd, Councillor Peter Abraham, Councillor Donald Alexander, Councillor Barry Clark, Councillor Christopher Davies, Councillor Paula O'Rourke, Ross Ancell (Vice-Chair), Jonathon Baker, Simon Cooper, Mary Prior and Tim Ross

Officers in Attendance:-

Ben Skuse, Jeremy Livitt, Kevin Jay, Amanda Sharpe and Peter Insole

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed all parties to the meeting and asked them to introduce themselves.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Peter Rilett and Gillian Camm.

3. Action Tracker

The Committee noted the Action Tracker. The Clerk drew the Committee's attention to the following:

- A4018 – James Coleman is now leading the work on this project and will update the Committee at a future meeting
- Future Parks Consultation - a report back on this issue was scheduled for the next meeting on Monday 16th November 2020

4. Minutes of last meeting held on Monday 29th June 2020

The minutes of this meeting were approved as a correct record (moved by Councillor Jos Clark, seconded by Mary Prior).

5. Declarations of interest

There were no Declarations of Interest from Councillors.



6. Public Forum

The Committee received Public Forum Statements from the following (speakers indicated by an S as appropriate):

S Councillor Steve Smith – Byelaws

S Dr Paul Main - Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society – Request for the Erection of an Information Board to explain the Draper Monuments on Christchurch Green, Clifton

S Richard Hensey – Downs Cycle Plans

Robert Westlake – FODAG

Thomas Hathway – Proposed Playground S

Merche Clark – Proposed Playground Rupert

Stuart-Baker – Proposed Playground

Peter Insole, Bristol City Council Archaeological explained to the Committee that he was supportive of the proposed scheme from Dr Paul Main subject to appropriate agreement on maintenance by the Downs Maintenance Manager.

7. Events and Finance Sub-Group - 10th July 2020

The Committee noted the summary of this meeting.

8. Events and Finance Sub-Group - 9th September 2020

The Committee noted the summary of these minutes.

9. Downs Maintenance Report (Ben Skuse)

Ben Skuse introduced this report and made the following comments:

- Following the difficulties with intense crowds and increased litter in the early days of lockdown, the situation had become more normal and the clear up was continuing
- The goats were doing well and there were more in the enclosure. However, there were increased problems with them climbing over the cliff tops to eat food that had resulted in a lot of damage to the fencing. The resultant extra costs had been reported to the Events and Finance Sub-Group
- The Downs Football League season was ready to start following an extended period of rest. The situation concerning Inter Mural Football remained unclear
- Circus Montini had recently arrived to join Breaking Bread on the Downs – This had been an abnormal and busy year



- There had been an increase in the members of the public using litter pickers to help pick up litter. As this became more widely practiced, it might help to remind people that it is unacceptable to leave litter

The Committee expressed their thanks to the Parks Maintenance Staff for their continuing hard work.

10 Events Report (Amanda Sharpe)

Amanda Sharpe introduced this report and made the following comments:

- Breaking Bread was the only event in operation since the last Committee meeting
- It had been extremely successful in its first month. Whilst there had been some initial concern expressed by residents, there had been no complaints. The contact details of organisers were available to make complaints if required
- The feasibility of continuing into the winter was being re-examined following the recent Government advice
- The Circus would commence on 11th October with a reduced capacity from 1,000 to 390 people
- The Safety Advisory Group were satisfied that the event met the required criteria to operate. The Circus had appointed a COVID officer to ensure health and safety requirements were met
- There were a number of requests from returning events to operate in 2021. An assessment on the viability of these would be subject to the future situation concerning COVID-19

The Committee noted that Breaking Bread was working well and wished it well as part of the hospitality sector's recovery from the effects of COVID-19.

11 Finance Update (Kevin Jay)

Kevin Jay introduced this report and made the following comments:

- The forecast for 2020/21 was indicated
- There was an estimated deficit of £127,000 mainly due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

12 Petition for a Playground on the Downs - Councillor Carla Denyer

Councillor Carla Denyer introduced this petition and made the following comments:

- 771 people had signed this petition
- The petition requested that a portion of land is yielded to provide a new playground. There was no public play equipment on Clifton Down
- The number of peoples supporting the petition provided evidence of demand



- The proposed playground would knit in well with the proposed leisure loop, the new Downs Café and the toilet improvements
- There was not yet any detail on the size required or what the playground would look like pending the Downs Committee giving an in principle decision to support it
- The playground could be set back from the road as required
- Discussions were taking place with the future parks project concerning possible sources of funding

Committee members and officers made the following comments:

- The proposal should be supported in principle at this stage subject to provision of more detail and subject to the current financial situation that the Downs Committee was facing
- The principle of a facility for young people on the Downs in this area should be supported. There had been previous discussions in Stoke Bishop about provision of a playground with the support of Trinity College but these had been unsuccessful
- The playground needed to be in an area where young people could play safely
- Important issues to resolve were maintenance, facility safety and compatibility
- An additional playground in the area would add another element of work in terms of grass cutting, including trimming around the fence line and the potential for water forming under the slide. However, there would be no tree risk on this site. It would be helpful if any proposed playground was situated some distance from the road
- The existing playground had been provided for through a specific budget that the Downs Committee used to hold. This equipment tended to have a limited life so a lot work would be needed on maintenance
- The construction of a playground should be supported in principle subject to detailed design and confirmation of funding arrangements

Councillor Paula O'Rourke moved, seconded by Councillor Don Alexander and upon being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED (10 for, 0 against – unanimous of those present) - that the Committee expresses its willingness to work with Councillor Carla Denyer and others on the design, funding and location of a new playground on the Downs.

13 Leisure Loop - Vicki Cracknell/Fin McNab - Update Report

The Committee received an update report from Vicki Cracknell (Cycle Sunday) and Finlay McNab (Streets Reimagined) on this proposed scheme.

Finlay McNab gave a presentation on the findings of the ongoing consultation and responded to members' questions as follows:

- Details of the Downs Loop Community Engagement Study were provided



- Interim findings of the consultation were given
- The study had been research-based (rather than a PR exercise) and was inclusive
- Stakeholder mapping had involved various groups such as walking focus groups
- A display board had been erected on the café from 7th August 2020
- There had been extensive publicity via Bristol 24/7 Post Live and community organisations
- The consultation process was ongoing
- There had been more than 5,200 visitors during the consultation period and 601 surveys. There were 36 people with disabilities
- 82% did not agree that paths were suitable – they were not smooth, even or wide enough
- A number of people with children indicated that they did not currently cycle with them due to fear of traffic and a lack of suitable facilities
- 89% indicated that the proposed loop would improve the situation, 92% of wheelchair users indicated that it would improve the situation for them and 94% of
- A lot of respondents felt that the proposals would improve safety and provide a calmer environment and would be safer for vulnerable users
- In terms of the proposal for segregated paths, respondents felt that this was an option for a wetter day. However, many people thought that it should be more ambitious
- A common theme amongst the various walking groups was that the 20 mph speed limit should be extended
- Most people felt the proposals struck the correct balance between different aspirations
- Responses at this stage in the consultation process were higher than for previous consultations. As many further responses as possible were sought. The high level of responses provided confidence that the themes were widely shared
- Analysis would be carried out on responses from people in other parts of the city
- Rachel Aldred at Waltham Forest had carried out a great deal of analysis on this area of work
- The consultation would finish on 30th September 2020. Subject to a similar level of support being demonstrated in the remaining period for the proposals, Cycle Sunday would like to proceed with the scheme

Vicki Cracknell responded to Committee Members' questions as follows:

- There had been a significant increase in people taking up cycling. The provision of accessible paths along the Downs would help support a future conversation on the development of roads

The Committee expressed support for the scheme but noted that a lot of detail would be required at the planning stage.

Councillor Don Alexander moved, seconded by Councillor Paula O'Rourke and upon being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED (10 for, 0 against – unanimous of those present) – that permission is granted for Cycle Sunday to submit a Planning Application for their proposed scheme.



14 Any Other Business

Downs Football – Requests Concerning Costs

Jonathon Baker advised the Committee of the following requests concerning costs that had been received:

- (1) Students Union – a COVID-19 clause stating that the Downs Committee will not charge for days allocated to play which do not take place
- (2) Downs League – that, since for the first time since 1905 the league had not finished a season, its fee is reduced accordingly. Whilst payment for those matches that had already taken place had been made, they requested that payment for the remainder totalling £11,000 could be waived

Jonathon Baker moved, seconded by Councillor Barry Clark and upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED (10 for, 0 against unanimously):

- (1) that the Downs Football League receives a rebate for the remainder of its matches in 2019/20 that it is unable to pay due to COVID-19**
- (2) That the Student Union Inter Mural League and Downs League receive a clause in their contracts stating that “In the event of the COVID-19 pandemic continuing, they will no longer be charged for days that they are unable to play for 2020/21 football season”**

Action: Jonathon Baker

There were no other items of business for discussion.

15 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting as the Annual General Meeting of the Downs Committee and would be held at 2pm on Monday 16th November 2020.

Meeting ended at 3.40 pm

CHAIR _____

