

**Downs Committee**  
**Summary of Events & Finance Sub Group Meeting**  
**13 January 2021**

**Members:**

Gillian Camm (Master and Chair)  
MV Jonathon Baker  
MV David Powell  
MV Peter Rilett  
Councillor Barry Clark  
Councillor Paula O'Rourke  
Councillor Steve Smith  
Councillor Paul Goggin

**Bristol City Council Officers:**

Oliver Harrison – Democratic Services  
Jon James – Head of Parks  
Kevin Jay – Finance  
Amanda Sharpe – Events Officer  
Ben Skuse – Grounds Supervisor

**1. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Amendments: p.3 make it clear the arrangement for Breaking Bread is for one year only. p.4 use the term 'disadvantaged' rather than 'deprived'.

**2. Events Update**

- Certain events scheduled for earlier in the spring are now unlikely to go ahead due to lockdown and Covid restrictions so will need cancelling or rescheduling.
- Other events scheduled are likely to require format changes to be Covid compliant.
- Some event organisers are struggling financially due to Covid impact so will require a sensible financial negotiation and bond agreements with Downs Committee. AS, JB and BC are leading this work.
- We expect events to demonstrate compliance with Covid restrictions. They must follow guidelines and be open to inspection by BCC safety officers.
- There is a proposal to improve the access and ground stability of the water tower site. This is a conservation area with archaeology issues. A permanent structure would need statutory approval and go through the planning process. It is not feasible to deliver a permanent solution for this year so a temporary surface will have to be employed in the short term. JJ is taking this forward with BCC planning.
- The importance of keeping local residents informed on the events programme was discussed.

**3. Finance Update**

- Covid restrictions are badly affecting Downs income, including events, business rates and agreements with the zoo and football league.
- It is not clear where the decision to reduce zoo parking rates was taken. OH and KJ to investigate.
- There was a discussion on Downs finance more generally and its relation to BCC. Although BCC is ultimately responsible for financing the Downs, any excess expenditure has a knock-on effect on other parts of the city. The Downs Committee will try to generate as much income as possible and it is important for members and BCC officers to work together.
- The Downs has experienced serious financial losses due to Covid. It is worth investigating whether there are any support packages that may apply. JJ to take forward.
- The general state of the Downs at the moment is poor. It is currently a critical space for the public during lockdown. High volume foot traffic has led to high levels of erosion and churn. There is an estimated 75% increase in people using the Downs. Circular road has two collapsed roadside drains causing flooding and damaging the footpath. Van dwellers are putting their vehicles on the grass verge which is causing damage. The cost of maintaining the Downs will be higher than normal because of this.

#### **4. Downs Café Legal Position**

- The Café will have to go through the BCC decision making process, which will also require external legal advice. The sub-committee received initial advice from four firms and approved spend for further advice related to the café construction, north car park and changing rooms.
- Members discussed possible options for funding the café build given the significant pressure on reserves this year.

#### **5. Any Other Business**

- A proposal to use crowdfunding to improve conditions at the play park near Clifton Suspension Bridge was approved in principle. A fully costed proposal is needed before final agreement can be given.