

Downs Committee
Summary of Events & Finance Sub-Group Meeting
24 February 2021

Members:

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

Apologies:

Councillor Steve Smith

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting 13 January 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

2. Finance Update

- Kevin Jay produced a full year draft outturn for 19/20 and forecast for 20/21. Income may change based on events that are able to go ahead. Loss of income due to certain big events not appearing this year is significant, as is the Zoo shutdown and football league.
- The Downs Football League should be able to commence from the first Saturday in April based on the roadmap. Due to timescale a full league competition may not be possible.
- The Downs may struggle to break even in 20/21 depending on current variables. Covid is causing losses across the Council, the forecast for Downs will reflect that.

3. Events Update

- Format modifications may be needed for some events due to Covid restrictions which consider tents indoor spaces. The events team will be speaking to event organisers about the government roadmap. Some have already indicated they can be moved to a later date if there are complications.

- The Sub-committee resolved to decide any potential Covid related event fee reductions on a case by case basis rather than using a scoring matrix. However, members would like to be aware of what other sites may be charging to inform negotiations.
- Not many large events are able to pay site fees up front as they get their income from ticket sales.
- This is the first time that the committee has encountered problems with events paying their fees. The events team have enacted new training and systems that will make them more dynamic with securing outstanding fees in future.
- On planning for hard access at the water tower site. JJ has received Informal advice from the BCC planning department, who have confirmed this will require planning consent. An archaeology report may also be required due to Roman road.
- Installation of a temporary surface would be prohibitively expensive. The maintenance team has already started reinstating the track area.
- Moving site access to behind the changing rooms presents a firmer surface, but there is a lot more foot traffic there so it would need stewarding. The café will need to be involved as it may affect their business.
- The committee will need to work up a scheme for the site that will pass planning. The site has issues that need to be addressed to make it viable in the long term. A feasible year-round weather independent site would be hugely beneficial.
- Including power points at the site would be a big selling points as generators are expensive and polluting.
- JJ will bring a costed scheme to make the site fit for purpose to the June sub-committee.

4. Downs Trading Pitch Discussion

- Sue Long attended to discuss trading pitches on the Downs. She receives many approaches for trading pitches and responds that there are no vacant pitches available. The committee may want to consider new pitches under the lighter temporary terms used in other parks to compensate for Covid losses.
- The Sub-committee resolved not to review the trading pitches on the Downs at this time.

5. Downs Café Legal Position

- The advice from lawyers has been secured and circulated to members.
- Planning permission for the café lasts until March 2022.
- It is unlikely that these issues will be resolved in enough time to secure the planned Quartet funding.

6. Zoo Parking Invoicing

7. Any Other Business

- BS has inspected the playground at Clifton as requested at the last meeting. The ground there is unstable. The maintenance team are able to put in a temporary measure, but will need a longer term solution for next year.