

Downs Committee
Notes of Events & Finance Sub Group Meeting
22 November 2021

Members:

David Freed (Master and Chair)
MV Jonathon Baker
Councillor Jos Clark
Councillor Geoff Gollop
Councillor Paula O'Rourke
MV Peter Rilett

Bristol City Council Officers:

Kevin Jay – Finance
Stefan Edwards – Events Officer
Ben Skuse – Grounds Supervisor
Oliver Harrison – Democratic Services

Apologies:

MV Patrick Despard
Councillor Paul Goggin

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting 25th August 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

2. Finance Update

The Finance Officer presented their report and highlighted the following points:

- There was a total overspend of around £273k
- An additional gardener post has been allocated to the budget. This cost is offset by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) kickstart scheme.
- There were additional cleaning costs due to the ongoing Covid19 pandemic.
- Costs for managing travellers on the Downs and additional maintenance were other reasons for the overspend.

Discussion Notes:

- Members discussed the shortfall in the budget and considered the loss of income from zoo parking. Members expressed hope that events could cover this loss.
- Members recognised that Bristol City Council (BCC) would pay the deficit but that the Committee should strive to fill it. In any case it was agreed that BCC should be made aware of the deficit.

- There is a business rates charge on the accounts for properties on the Downs. BCC will not be charging this year. Members asked for a permanent settlement for business rates.
- Covid grants are held centrally by the Council. The Downs Committee overspend will hit the BCC parks budget and Covid grants will be used to mitigate the impact. Members expressed their desire that Covid grants be given to DC 'above the line' to show a better outturn for the committee but understood that 'below the line' was the BCC standardised approach and that all departments were likely to show a deficit.
- It was confirmed that a net zero budget was an ambition for the committee, but this was unlikely to be achieved given financial pressures on the Downs.
- The Downs and BCC budget processes are currently unaligned, KJ is trying to get them to follow the same process.

3. Events Report Update

The Events officer presented their report and highlighted the following points:

- The early closure of the Breaking Bread event had led to lost income in September.
- There were issues with parking and traffic management at Student Union and Foodies events. Officers assured the Committee that this was being learned from.
- Love Saves the Day was well received and had higher than anticipated attendance.

Discussion Notes:

- The Committee discussed Team Love events at Sea Walls, which may be the only viable location for this but would need to be balanced with other concerns.
- Members understood that noise complaints had been received from residents, but that noise was within legal limits. There was a discussion about an expansion in the size of these events, but it was recognised that further consultation would be needed.
- There was a discussion on the appropriate level of fees for events.
- The Committee discussed the installation of a power point at Sea Walls to support events and concessions. Officers confirmed that they were working on this.

4 Proposed meeting dates for 2022

The proposed meeting dates for the Events and Finance Group meetings in 2022 were agreed.

5 Any Other Business

None.