

**Downs Committee**  
**Events and Finance Sub-Group Meeting**  
**8<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

**Members:**

David Freed (Master and Chair)  
MV Peter Rilett  
MV Patrick Despard  
Councillor Katy Grant

**Bristol City Council Officers:**

Kevin Jay – Finance Officer  
Ben Skuse – Grounds Supervisor  
Amy Rodwell – Democratic Services

**Apologies:**

Councillor Paul Goggin  
Councillor Steve Smith  
Councillor Jos Clark  
MV Jonathan Baker

**1. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> March**

Make the following amendment on the minutes – Agenda Item 1 Minutes of the Previous Meeting “The Sea Walls Cafe planning permission extension had been re-applied for” should read “The Sea Walls Cafe planning permission extension had been re-applied for”.

There was a discussion around outstanding actions from the previous meeting:

Cleaning Charges – The finance officer confirmed that cleaning would now take place once a day (previously 4 times a day) to reduce costs in the Parks Service.

Surrender of the Lease on the North Car Park – Action to be carried forwards.

Charging for commercial operations on the Downs for those that are not currently being charged – Action to be carried forwards.

Members noted that the level of commercial activity on the Downs was increasing, and it was important that a permit system be put in place. It was noted that commercialising the use of parks for traders was on the Council’s agenda and had been for some time however, there were no timelines attached to the piece of work.

There was a discussion around funding for this piece of work and Members queried if it would be possible to go ahead with a separate scheme for the Downs outside of the council’s timelines for parks citywide, to be funded by the Downs Committee. The Grounds Supervisor advised that this would be expensive specifically due to staffing and enforcement; a license is required for issuing fixed penalty notices.

## 2. Finance Update

The Chair introduced the item and gave a brief update from the recent Downs Agenda Meeting. Key points were as follows:

- It was noted that there was very little detail in finance reports to the Downs Committee and that Members had agreed that they would like to include more in future.
- It was suggested that future reports include a full breakdown of costs related to the Downs but without listing specific figures relating to individual fees; these would remain confidential to be discussed at Events and Finance Sub-Committee meetings.
- The Finance Officer is to review the report and create a draft for the Chair/Vice Chair to review ahead of the next Downs Committee meeting on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> June.

The Finance Officer introduced the report and gave an overview of the Downs outturn figures for 21/22 in comparison with the previous year.

Discussion points:

- It was noted that the increase in expenditure was down to legal fees.
- There were some concerns around how the total expenditure for legal fees/settlement cost etc. be shown in the report as at the moment, the figures are part of a total including other fees; Members suggested that there be a breakdown of specific costs in the report.
- It was noted that there was a complaint submitted to the Information Commissioner which might be withdrawn should the Committee become more transparent, and enough information is shared at the next Downs Committee meeting.
- It was noted that the Kickstart Employee within Grounds Management was doing well and had moved to a different role within the team.
- It was noted that due to consecutive events on the water tower site, the land had been left in bad condition so therefore there was a need to fertilise the area.
- There had been a long-term plan on the water tower site to install roadway and embed surfaces however, plans had stopped until further notice due to a need for an archaeological survey to protect conservation zones.
- There was a discussion around Funderworld as it was one of the first calendar events of the year, but they cannot use another site as their requirements are too large. Members noted that the event is very diverse and generates lots of income to the Downs.
- There was a discussion around transparency and members agreed that a more detailed finance report be published ahead of the next Downs Committee meeting.
- It was noted that income was mostly on target however since the papers for this meeting had been circulated, there had been a reduction in fees for the Adventure Cinema.
- There was a conversation around the reserves and the deficit in the budget. The Finance Officer noted that the exhortation from the Mayor was to generate as much revenue as possible to make the Downs self-funding and that the budget was nearly in that position before Covid-19 hit and before the litigation/legal fees. It was confirmed that the Parks department was picking up some of the costs.
- There was a discussion around the possibility of generating income to the Downs via a car park and it was suggested that the North Car Park is taken over by the Committee and a parking charge be introduced. However, there were concerns raised that this car park was further from the Downs and would require an uphill walk so, therefore, may not be well used if people are able to park on Circular Road for free.

- It was noted that there had been suggestions in the past of closing Circular Road to general traffic and introduce walking and cycling routes, and emergency access only however, this was not currently the case.
- Members agreed that the use of the North Car Park should be explored.
- The Finance Officer highlighted that the 80k pressure on the budget could get worse over time, but it would depend on the work required for the Downs as salaries were a big pressure.

### **3. Events Update**

It was noted that the Events Officer was on leave so the Grounds Supervisor provided a brief update. Key points were as follows:

- It was noted that Funderworld and Foodies Festival had already taken place this year. There was some damage to the site following Foodies Festival but there were plans in place to improve the condition. It was unclear whether Foodies will return in 2023.
- The next event to take place would be Comedy Garden followed by the Race For Life and these would both take place ahead of the next Downs Committee meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> June.
- There was a discussion around the Student Union event and negotiation of fees.
- It was noted that the Forwards Festival would take place in September which was a 2-day event but there was a long-term pressure of the event on the Sea Walls site. The only other option for the event to take place on the Downs would be near the water tower however, the land is different and the damage it could cause is unknown.
- It was noted that there would be some gas connections works taking place on the Downs and contractors had agreed to ensure the site is returned to its original state afterwards.

### **4. AOB**

There was a discussion around the need for an Events & Finance Sub-Group if the Downs Committee plan on sharing more detailed financial information at public meetings. It was noted that some information discussed at Sub-Group meetings was confidential due to discussions around individual fees.

It was suggested that this information could be discussed in a closed session however Members raised that this may look 'secret' and the aim on the Committee was to become more transparent.

### **5. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> August.