

Downs Committee
Events & Finance Sub-Group Meeting Minutes
22nd February 2023

Members:

Patrick Despard (Chair)
Jonathon Baker
Mike Bothamley
Councillor Steve Smith
Councillor Kye Dudd
Councillor Katy Grant

Officers:

Jo Byron (Events Officer)
Kevin Jay (Finance Officer)
Ben Skuse
Amy Rodwell (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies:

David Freed
Councillor Jos Clark

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting on 7 December 2022

The Chair ran through the actions from the previous meeting and asked MB to provide and update on parking. MB noted that the Parking Task & Finish Group had met to discuss various issues and key discussion points were as follows:

- The Committee were hoping to assist in the council's decision making process to accelerate parking initiatives on the Downs.
- Committee members discussed the introduction of pay and display on street parking on the Downs for a maximum of 2 hours with first 30 minutes free. Also, to create conditions on the North Car Park as a long stay car park for benefit of Downs.
- They had been in touch with large national pay and display providers and have a particular operator who could offer funding for the car park and pay 90% gross revenue, with a right to retain penalties.
- KD suggested that the Service Director might be able to speak to the Committee about the Traffic Regulation Order process as this could take 12 to 18 months to get started.
- It was noted that the roads were under the control of the Highways Authority so on street parking would be a matter for them however the North Car Park was not.
- Members raised cautions around the need for competitive procurement.
- The provider in question would not enter into a contract with a local authority but as Society of Merchant Ventures is a landowner, they could potentially enter into a contract on behalf of the Downs Committee providing there was a way to ensure any income could be passed on to the Downs Committee tax free.

- MB advised that they need to take some internal accountancy advice to explore this possibility. **ACTION MB.**
- KD suggested that the Committee also consider the Council's own parking department for this initiative and would raise this with the Service Director. **KD ACTION.** Also, share detail on the potential provider's offer with the Service Director. **MB ACTION.**

Resolved; The minutes of the previous meeting on 7th December 2022 be approved as a correct record.

2. Finance Update

Kevin Jay briefly introduced the item noting that the report shows spend up to the middle of January 2023. Discussion points were as follows:

- KJ highlighted that there had been a slight surplus of £3k since the last meeting which meant the current forecasted overspend has now changed from £106k reducing to £103k.
- The deficit was mainly due to increased employee costs and increased premises costs for cleaning and energy.
- There was a suggestion around reviewing the funding for the Education Manager post to reduce costs which was currently part funded by the Downs Committee and Bristol Zoological Society, but Members agreed that the role was critical in delivering an excellent wildlife education programme for Bristol schools.
- There was a discussion around budget cuts in the Parks service which would have an effect of the Committee. Members wanted a better understanding of the expectation from the Parks service on the contribution that the Committee needed to make to the savings. PD noted that he would raise this with the Lord Mayor. **PD ACTION.**
- It was noted that the biggest expenditure to the Committee was for employees and cleaning costs and PD suggested that this be reviewed. KJ advised that he would be able to provide a redacted list of posts and costs for review. **KJ ACTION.**
- Parks colleagues had not yet reviewed employee and cleaning costs, but this was up for discussion. BS/KJ to raise with the Head of Service for Parks and ask colleagues to bring an update to the next meeting. **BS/KJ ACTION.**

3. Events Update

Jo Bryon introduced the item and noted that Stefan Edwards was unable to attend the meeting to present the events report. Jo briefly introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- Most outstanding debt had been cleared but the team were still waiting on a final payment from one event.
- Foodies Festival would not be returning to the Downs in 2023.
- Adventure Cinema would not be returning to the Downs in 2023 as they were planning to use the Queen Square site instead.
- The team were working with site permissions to bring more events to the Downs, but nothing has coming through at present.
- Conversations had been progressing with the organisers of Pub in the Park, but they would not be launching the event until 2024.

- There was a possible new event called Magic of Thailand who proposed a lower fee as they were a community event which was yet to be agreed.
- Circus Extreme to host their event on the Downs and the fee of was still to be agreed by the Committee.

There was a discussion around the Circus on the Downs as the current provider had initially indicated they were unable to return in 2023. The council had begun looking at other circus options and another event organiser had expressed an interest. Since then, the previous provider has also expressed an interest in returning. There was a suggestion of having both events on the Downs, but the Parks Supervisor advised that both event organisers were looking at similar dates which would not be feasible and there could be a saturation point in the market. Also, even though the calendar seemed empty for August, the land would be in used by Forwards Festival in the second half of the month in preparation for their event so was not available to hold an event like this.

It was noted that Forwards Festival had adjusted the event dates from Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd September to Friday 1st and Saturday 2nd September and confirmed that they would not be holding a 3 day festival this year.

There was a discussion around the Magic of Thailand event fee which had not yet been agreed. The Parks Supervisor noted that given the event was scheduled for May, the ground could still be quite wet which could result in high ground maintenance costs afterwards. Members were advised that Site Permissions were currently reviewing and that the Events Officer would be able to provide more information after the meeting. **ACTION JB/SE.**

Members asked that the Events Officer provides more detail around the thinking behind the fees that were tabled in the report. **ACTION JB/SE.**

4. Any Other Business

There was none.

Close 14:45.