

Downs Committee
Events & Finance Sub-Group Meeting Minutes
25 May 2023 @ 2pm

Members:

Patrick Despard (Chair)
Jonathon Baker
Mike Bothamley
Councillor Jos Clark
Councillor Katy Grant
Councillor Steve Smith

Officers:

Steve Hunt (Events Officer)
Kevin Jay (Finance Officer)
Steve Gregory (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies:

Ben Skuse (Parks Supervisor)

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting on 22 February 2023

Resolved – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2023 be approved as a correct record.

Matters arising

Downs North car Park

1. Noted that pay and display on street parking on the Downs was the preferred option as a long stay car park for benefit of Downs.
2. Private sector national pay and display providers were considered best option as they would provide the capital funding.
3. Bristol City Council was currently seeking legal advice regarding both practical and political issues.
4. Noted that the process was lengthy particularly having regard to the Zoo ceasing operations in about six months' time.
5. There were three options being considered regarding a supplier.
6. Important that this process be transparent having regard to the various interests in relation to the Downs. The written paper to next Downs Committee would outline preferred option.
7. The newly formed Downs Advisory Panel could look at this when it meets in second week of June.

It was agreed -

- **That the process be expedited as quickly as possible.**

- That it be done independently of the wider BCC car park review,
- That Counsel's advice be sought as soon as possible.
- That a clear recommendation be given to the Downs Committee on 12 June 2023.
- That in the meantime the Chair liaise with Downs for People to ensure full inclusivity.

Action PD

8. Finance Update

The Finance Officer summarised the key points in the financial update paper.

- It was noted that the Outturn for 2022/23 showed an outturn of £75k deficit for 2022-23, resulting from Gross income for 2022-23 showed a surplus of £35k, expenditure overspent by (£110k), resulting in a net deficit of (£75k).
- The deficit was a result of pressures across the service including, employees, for an agreed pay award and overtime, support services, as well as higher premises costs in relation to buildings R&M, cleaning, and energy costs.

Arising from discussion/questions the following key points were raised/clarified –

- There was a £145k deficit pressure for the 2023/24 financial year.
- The figure of £48,850 highlighted in red in the paper related to loss of income due to lost events. This would need to be mitigated by either a reduction in costs or sourcing new income streams. Costs remained high overall.
- The estimated income from parking was shown as £20,500 rather than the predicted £41,000. This was shown as the Zoo's position was not clear, if it was 'business as usual', as expected, the figure would be adjusted accordingly. A meeting to be set up with the Zoo's Commercial Director to clarify the position. **Action MB**
- Costs associated with clearing operations for multiple uses of the Downs remained high. Important to explore a wide range of options to increase income.
- The new Downs Manager post would have a particular focus on income opportunities as well as cost reduction. In the meantime, the Chair would explore options with the Parks Supervisor. **Action PD**

9. Events Update

The Events Officer summarised the key points in the events update paper.

Arising from discussion/questions the following key points were raised/clarified –

- A number of events had been lost due to providers finding alternative venues 2 events moved to Queen Square Comedy Garden and Adventure cinema due to operational reasons for the organisers.
- It was anticipated that there would be an increase in events for 2024 including new proposals from several large events.
- For 2023 there were Race for Life, Forwards, Pride, Student Union Welcome and Circus Extreme.

The paper requested a steer from the Downs Committee about which of the events should proceed and what fees they would like to propose.

Members of the Group had differing views but, regarding charges broadly, thought that the Site Permission fee for 200 people attending a charity event should be increased from the current £375 site permission fee to £500 and that the possibility of raising fees for larger events be further considered.

The Event Officer was asked to explore this further with the Parks Supervisor. **Action SH**

10. Any Other Business

There was none.

Meeting ended at 15:10