

**Downs Committee**  
**Events & Finance Sub-Group Meeting Minutes**  
**30 August 2023 @ 2pm**

**Members:**

Patrick Despard (Chair)  
Jonathon Baker  
Mike Bothamley  
David Freed  
Councillor Kye Dudd  
Councillor Paula O'Rourke  
Councillor Steve Smith

**Officers:**

Harriet Shannon (City Events & Festivals Manager)  
Steve Hunt (Events Officer)  
Ben Skuse (Parks Supervisor)  
Steve Gregory (Democratic Services Officer)

**Apologies:**

Kevin Jay (Finance Officer)

**1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting on 25 May 2023**

**Resolved – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2023 be approved as a correct record.**

Matters arising

Downs North car Park

- i. Noted that Bristol City Council had instructed a KC to give legal advice, but none had been received to date.
- ii. It was suggested that the car park continue in use for contractors to park there as it brought in an important source of income of around £40k pa.
- iii. There was concern that remaining open would be a breach of contract however this would only apply if there was disagreement between the parties.

**It was agreed -**

- 1) That Counsel's advice be sought as soon as possible.**

- 2) That in the meantime Councillor O'Rourke and Michael Bottomley liaise with Downs for People to ensure full inclusivity with the proposal to remain open. Action POR/MB**
- 3) That an update be provided to the Downs Committee on 18 September 2023.**

## **2. Finance Update**

Members noted the key points in the financial update paper.

- i. The 2023-24 income budget was currently £49k less than last financial year. Pressures were forecast to occur from changes to several income generating events and lost parking income. Events team to discuss with Finance Officer.
- ii. The events team were working with current and new providers to improve the situation. In the meantime, a temporary income budget of £49k had been added to maintain the same budgets as prior years.
- iii. It was recommended that a review of the service be implemented to mitigate the income losses and reduce expenditure.

**It was agreed -**

- 1) That a current update of figures be checked and circulated to members asap. Action HS**
- 2) That Events Team further consider options about fees and relocations having regard to the Downs having higher costs for event users. Explore option of one or two high earning events rather than a number of low earning events.**
- 3) That a report be brought to Downs Committee as soon as possible setting out a new finance structure to give confidence to users and wider public, that the budget issue was being addressed.**
- 4) The advertising of the new Downs Manager post be chased up as a matter of urgency. Action POR**

## **3. Events Update**

The Events Officer summarised the key points in the events update paper. In particular the report emphasised disruption that had been experienced regarding the Cancer Research UK's Race for Life event from some travellers being on the downs, causing them to move to a new location. In addition, the event suffered from some anti-social behaviour.

The Pride event went well despite difficult weather conditions. The event also experienced some homophobic and threatening behaviour to security and staff, the police would be approached regarding consideration of mitigation measures for the future.

**It was agreed –**

**That a letter be sent to the Chief Constable, copying in Pride, about how best the homophobic disruption could be better mitigated at future Pride events.**

**Action: Parks Team**

Members noted that there had been no new complaints through the official council complaints system relating to events on the downs since the last main committee meeting. An informal complaint from Pride had been resolved.

Problems with Bristol Waste not clearing rubbish was noted, Councillor Kye Dudd asked to be kept informed of further occurrences as appropriate.

A proposal to install electric vehicle charging points on the Downs was considered, Steve Hunt offered to pass on power teams contact details if required.

#### **4. Concessions, contracts, and licensing activities on the Downs**

Concessions contracts had been extended until 31st March 2024 in order to put correct administrative processes in place and gain the necessary agreements to proceed.

Licensing activities in parks, to date there had been a failure to gain agreement regarding the charging for these activities so the parks operations team were working to put in place a process which would enable the licensing of activities.

One main contract related to the selling of ice cream on the Downs and was a good income source for the Downs. There was an outstanding issue relating to use of diesel vehicles v electric vehicles. BCC new commercial analyst Greg Want to be invited to comment to/attend the next Downs Committee meeting to update members.

#### **5. Any Other Business**

Downs Manager post, when appointed could lead on a Strategy Review regarding future use of the Downs. Interviews were expected to take place soon and it was suggested that POR/PD/BS could be on the interview panel. Human Resources advice would be sought on this.

**Meeting ended at 15:25**