

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

DRAFT

Members:

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

Officers:

Ben Skuse (Parks Supervisor)
Harriet Shannon (City Events & Festivals Manager)
Steve Hunt (Events Officer)
Kevin Jay (Finance Officer)
Jonathan James (Head of Natural and Marine Environment Parks)
Greg Want (Commercial Analyst)
Steve Gregory (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies:

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 30 August 2023

Members were informed that the Minute regarding the Downs north car park was incorrect, and this had led to a degree of misunderstanding namely that the points relating to the North car park were a suggestion, not a formal proposal, pending full and transparent discussion with all interested parties.

Members of the Downs Committee had acknowledged the implications of the associated Court Order and noted also that Bristol City Council had not yet instructed a KC regarding this matter.

Resolved – That, subject to the amendment above, the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 August 2023 be approved as a correct record.

Matters arising

Downs North car park - Mike Bothamley said he had recently met the new Commercial Director for Bristol Zoo. Councillor O'Rourke and Robert Bourns would be meeting Downs for People on 1 November 2023 for further discussions.

Downs Manager post – there had been a poor response from the advertising of the post with only one application being received so far. The closing date had therefore been extended until 25 October 2023.

2. Finance Update

The Finance Officer summarised the key points in the financial update paper including reference to the Draft Budget for 2024/25. Members attention was also drawn to the Concession Tender – Improvement Plan 4 October 2023.

The report provided a forecast of the financial performance of the Downs for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

The budgeted and actual income and expenditure up to period 6, April to September 2023, had been analysed and projections had been made resulting in some potential variances.

A summary of the forecast income and expenditure for 2023-24, the change from the budget and prior year comparators, were set out in Table 1 of the report.

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

1. It was noted that although there was no defined requirement in the Downs Act 1861 for a balanced budget it was imperative that this was achieved as any financial deficit had to be picked up by Bristol City Council Parks and Estates department.
2. Any overspend was included in the budget forecast for the following financial year and currently this had resulted in a net deficit of £146k.
3. The Downs Manager post was proposed to be self-funded by securing income streams and total costs of the post were to be shared between Bristol City Council (not Parks & Estates) and the Society of Merchant Venturers.

Concession Tender – Improvement Plan

Members welcomed the report and noted that the concessions in both Parks and Harbourside were set to undergo a tendering process in the near future (November) to determine the allocation of pitches in various parks and harbour locations. The process would encompass around 30 sites, 3 of which are located on the Downs.

Arising from discussion the issue of charging personal trainers businesses using the Downs was considered. It was noted that regard had to be given to several factors to pursue this including competition laws, street trading laws, insurance, and certification. Further points raised related to widening the scope of provision from food outlets and greater flexibility in respect of three-year leases granted to operate on the Downs.

The Head of Natural and Marine Environment Parks agreed to investigate this further and to provide a preliminary feasibility report to the next Downs Committee on 13 November 2023. It was acknowledged that going forward this matter would come under the remit of the Downs Manager. **Action: Jonathan James**

4. Events Update

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

Forwards

Complaints had been received about noise from residents across other side of the Downs, due to changed position of East Stage. These residents would now be included in any event consultation in future years.

Circus

One complaint received about noise from the motorbikes which had been responded to, no further actions.

There was a failing on the last show, the organisers had taken down some of the fencing whilst the show was still on, and this was not something that site permissions would have advised. This would be addressed in the debrief with Safety advisory group and site permission will ensure this doesn't happen in future years.

SU Welcome Fair

The event went well, no complaints to date.

Safe Haven

The event went well, no complaints to date.

Outstanding debts

Forwards Festival had paid.

Remaining Events

No further events were planned for the Downs for 2023.

Planned 2024 Events

Members noted both returning events and proposed events for 2024 as set out in the report.

- Noted that Funderworld dates had changed slightly.
- Circus waiting for tender to go live, so no dates fixed yet.
- Forward figures showed a deficit from last year, this was consistent with national trends as attendance has declined for outdoor events in 2023. For future event there will be discussions on which days would be held for the event with the possibility to include the entire weekend.
- Funderworld fee. **This was Agreed.**
- Race for Life would be for 2 days. **This was Agreed.**
- Pride event no change to fee, a second day event might be held, fee's to be negotiated. **This was Agreed.**
- Student Fair fee. **This was Agreed.**

New Proposals for 2024

Members decided on new events as set out in the report and fees agreed, this would be progressed with the city events team and events would remain confidential until applications had been confirmed and could be publicly announced.

Any Other Business

Downs League update

Members noted that design proposals had been drawn up for the changing rooms and that the focus was on quality rather than quantity to comply with FA Regulations, this meant twelve changing rooms were planned.

Funding had yet to be secured and measures to find this could include a grant from the Football Foundation and possibly accessing the CIL Strategic fund as the facility would have a city-wide appeal. This would be considered at the next Downs Committee on 13 November 2023.

Regarding a financial deficit, members were advised that the Treasurer had passed away and this had led to a delay in payment being made. The money would be paid in the near future.

Sea Walls Toilets

A new scheme had been sketched out to include a café which would pay for the ongoing maintenance of the facility. It was understood that if the proposal remained within the

existing footprint of the property planning permission would not be required but this would need to be confirmed.

Meeting ended at 3.55 pm