

Downs Advisory Panel {DAP}

Report to Downs Committee.

15th January 2024

Since the November meeting of the Downs committee DAP has not received sufficient significant enquiries to justify convening a full meeting of the Panel. Enquiries are often about subjects that the Panel has already discussed and reported on. In particular' anti-social behavior and the caravan and van dwelling community.

However, that does not mean that there have been no enquiries. Several telephone calls and emails from the public reporting minor issues have been quickly resolved. This includes, for example, clearing a blocked drain and removing shrubbery impeding the highway. These types of small incidents although relatively minor are still important to the enquirer and dealing with them promptly and efficiently demonstrates the value of the Panel as a conduit and by default reflects well on the Downs operational team and the Downs committee itself.

The DAP although still in its infancy has commented and made recommendations to the Downs committee on several topics, including, charging for fitness training, the escalation of vehicle dwelling on the Downs, reinstating out of hours security patrols and the impact of certain events on Downs neighbors.

These and other topics were reported to Downs committee in September and November last year and it is important that going forward the Advisory Panel can demonstrate its effectiveness by receiving regular updates and feedback from the Downs committee about progress on any of the recommendations made by DAP.

For example, the DAP made nine recommendations about managing the escalating van dwelling situation which are being considered by the Traffic Task and Finish group. For the DAP to have credibility we need to know if the recommendations have been {a} considered, {b} are relevant, {c} have been adopted or discounted.

In addition, a timeline as to when the Task & Finish Group will conclude its deliberations and report its findings to the Downs committee would be of considerable help.

The Panel has been made aware that a Downs resident has now lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman against Bristol City Council for de facto over-riding planning for the encampment on the Downs based upon its permanence.

The DAP came into being just last September and has enjoyed success in raising the profile of the group. DAP recommendations regarding the van dwelling community and charging for commercial fitness training reached the front page of the Bristol Post and picked up by national newspapers and internet news outlets, including the BBC. At the end of last year, the chair gave an interview on issues around van dwelling to LBC Radio.

Future DAP Considerations.

The Panel are currently fielding enquiries about:

- 1 The back-to-back music events planned for later in the year and concerns raised about the impact on Neighbours and biodiversity.
- 2 The future of the North Car Park.
- 3 Remarking of downs footpaths.