

Downs Committee
Events & Finance Sub-Group Meeting Minutes
30 January 2024 @ 2pm

DRAFT

Members:

Mike Bothamley (Chair)
Robert Bourns
Councillor Paul Goggin
Councillor Kye Dudd
Councillor Paula O'Rourke
Councillor Steve Smith
Councillor Christine Townsend

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)
Steve Gregory (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies: David Freed, Bevis Watts, David Powell, Patsy Mellor.

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2023

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

Matters arising

None.

2. Parking and old Zoo Car Park - update

The Downs Committee had received an offer from a commercial operator to run the car park. The details of the proposal were set out in a paper circulated to E&F members prior to the meeting.

The proposal did not include work to tarmac surface or indicative lining of car park spaces, as the existing surfaces and markings were deemed to be fit for purpose.

Members noted that Bristol City Council could not make a comparable offer to run the car park, as being a local authority, it was bound by different legislation which did not give it legal powers to enforce non-payment of car park fees using ANPR.

There were a number of important legal, commercial, and technical issues to clarify before the offer could be accepted, however if these could be finalised the proposal would be submitted to the Downs Committee for final decision.

Members were in agreement with the proposal and authorised SMV and BCC to further engage with the operator and seek professional advice from JLL Bristol who had particular expertise in this area. When completed the finalised deal to be brought to the full Downs Committee for approval.

Members then considered two requests that had been received in respect of the car park, namely –

1. The Bristol Film Office (BCC) had asked if it could use the space to base film units on the site. Members agreed that such use would not be consistent with the terms of the Consent Order which settled Mrs Carter's litigation so the request could not be granted.
2. The Head Teacher and a parent from Clifton College had requested that the Downs Committee open the zoo car park at the school end for pick up and drop off of children attending the college, in the interests of safety. Again, members agreed that such use would not be consistent with the terms of the Court Order so the request could not be granted.

3. Events Update

The Events Officer summarised the key points in the events update paper regarding Events in 2024 comprising new events and returning events. Outstanding debts relating to the Forward Festival 2023 were also considered.

Main points to note were –

- a) There had not been any events on the Downs since the last meeting.
- b) Forwards Festival 2023 had paid some money in advance of the event, the balance based on ticket sales was outstanding.
- c) Feast on It dates were now a week earlier than previously advised, changed from 4 August to 28 July 2024.
- d) A proposal had been submitted regarding the power source for the Massive Attack concert. This was subject to approval. The Ecotricity team would be meeting with the council's power team to discuss the proposal and the events team had already met with the council's sustainable team and parks team to discuss the viability of locations for the electrical pillar.

The Downs Committee, SMV and Bristol City Council would need to sign a land owner agreement so that Ecotricity would have permission to consult on the proposal with the relevant parties, this would be need to signed even if the proposal was rejected.

The proposal was agreed in principle and documents to sign would be circulated as soon as possible after the meeting.

4. Finance Update

The Finance Officer summarised the key points in the financial update paper regarding the Forecast for 2023/24 (Table 1) and the budget analysis for 2024/25 (Table 4).

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 9, April to December 2023, had been analysed and projections had been made resulting in some potential variances.

The budget for 2024-25 would remain the same as 2023-24. However, this was forecast to result in a deficit of around (£178k) if current expenditure continued. Lost income from the north car park should be mitigated from new events if the fees were as expected.

Ongoing expenditure and income pressures continued to be a cause for concern which could potentially lead to cuts in parks services. Further discussions to take place with the CIL/S106 officer to explore potential funding options from this source.

It was emphasised that a cost/benefit analysis would be required for any possible cuts in services, and this would be one of the primary tasks for the Downs Manager once appointed. It was noted that interviews for the position were taking place on 12 February 2024.

5. Dates of future meetings for 2024

24 April @ 11 am

21 August @ 11am

23 October @ 11 am

Any Other Business

None.

Meeting ended at 3.20 pm