

**Minutes of the Meeting of the EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSERVATORS
held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 6 November 2023**

PRESENT -

Councillor Steven McCormick (the Council) (Chair); Simon Durrant (Jockey Club Racecourses (the Company) (Vice-Chair); Councillor Christine Cleveland (the Council), Andrew Cooper (Jockey Club Racecourses (the Company), Councillor Liz Frost (the Council), Councillor Bernice Froud (the Council) and Tom Sammes (Jockey Club Racecourse (the Company)

Absent: Simon Dow (Horserace Betting Levy Board (the Levy Board) and Councillor Clive Woodbridge (the Council)

Officers present: Andrew Bircher (Interim Director of Corporate Services), Brendan Bradley (Head of Finance), Justin Turvey (Interim Head of Place Development), Sarah Clift (Senior Countryside Officer) and Phoebe Batchelor (Democratic Services Officer)

42 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the previous meetings of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators held on 30 May 2023 and 19 June 2023 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

43 MINUTES OF THE EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE, 14 DECEMBER 2022, AND 16 OCTOBER 2023

The Conservators received the Minutes of the meetings of the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee held on 14 December 2022 and the 16 October 2023.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Receive and note the Minutes of the meetings of the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee held on 14 December 2022 and the 16 October 2023.**

44 NEW APPOINTMENT TO THE CONSERVATORS

The Conservators received a report confirming the appointment of a new member of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators by Jockey Club

Racecourses following the retirement of Stephen Wallis and requesting the Conservators to note the appointment.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Thanks.** The Chair and Clerk to the Conservators expressed thanks to Stephen Wallis for his work and time spent as a Conservator.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved:

(1) That the following appointment to the Membership of the Conservators by the constituent body be noted:

- **Jockey Club Racecourses (the Company): Tom Sammes in place of Stephen Wallis**

45 MID-YEAR BUDGET MONITORING

The Conservators received a report on the income and expenditure position as of 31 August 2023 and seeking guidance on the preparation of the budget and precept for 2024/25.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Weather effects.** A Conservator asked if the unseasonably warm and wet winter will have a worsening effect on the progression of the Ash Dieback disease on the affected trees. The Interim Head of Place Development responded to explain that the progress of the disease generally and in specific trees is not weather dependent. The Chair explained that the previous Ash Dieback report presented to the Conservators in June, set out the risk-based approach that is currently being taken by the Council.
- b) **Additional Ash Dieback costs.** A Conservator raised concerns about the costs of dealing with Ash Dieback and expressed a steer towards the higher (6%) precept in order to cover funds. The Chair informed the Conservators that the Ash Dieback report presented to the Conservators at the meeting sets out the funding required and impact on the reserves, which is also reflected in the Mid-Year Budget report. The Chair continued to explain that the increase in precepts will be to replenish the reserves.
- c) **Precept Increase.** The Conservators were asked to vote on a 4% or a 6% increase in precepts to help provide guidance on the preparation of the Budget 2024/25 as set out in Recommendation 2.

Following consideration, the Conservators;

Resolved (6 for, 1 abstaining and the Chair not voting) to;

(1) Note the mid-year income and expenditure position;

Resolved (4 for 6% increase, 3 for 4% increase and 1 abstaining) to;

(2) Provide guidance on the preparation of the budget for 2024/25;

Resolved (6 for, 1 abstaining and the Chair not voting) to;

(3) Note the conclusion of the 2022/23 external audit of the accounts;

(4) Agree the £10,000 reserve transfer between the Repairs & Renewals Fund and the working balance.

46 ASH DIEBACK

The Conservators received a report advising on the progress of Ash Dieback works to trees that are affected by the disease which have taken place to date, the programme of works that will be undertaken going forwards, and asking the Conservators to note the increased costs associated with tree works.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

(1) Note the progress of Ash Dieback works to trees affected by the disease which have taken place to date, and the programme of works that will be undertaken.

(2) Note that an 82% increase in the annual tree maintenance budget, from £7,300 to £13,300 has been factored into the Conservators' indicative 2024/25 budget setting for consideration to fund the programme of works.

47 DATES OF MEETINGS IN 2024

The Conservators received a report requesting them to agree the dates of their normal meetings to be held in 2024.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

(1) Agree to hold their normal meetings in 2024 on the following dates:

a) Monday 22 January 2024 at 18.00 hours

b) Monday 17 June 2024 18.00 hours

c) Monday 4 November 2024 18.00 hours

The meeting began at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.16 pm

COUNCILLOR STEVEN MCCORMICK (CHAIR)