

Minutes of the Meeting of the EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 25 March 2024

PRESENT -

Councillor Steven McCormick (Chair); Simon Durrant (Epsom Downs Racecourse), Councillor Bernice Froud, Alex Stewart (Epsom Downs Riders Protection Society) and Nigel Whybrow (Training Grounds Management Board)

In Attendance: Richard Balsdon (College Ward Residents' Association), Jane Clarke (Woodcote and Langley Vale Residents' Association), Philippa Ingleby (Local Hack Rider), Nick Lock (Epsom Civic Society) and James Vincenti (Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club)

Absent: Sarah Rayfield (British Horse Society) Caroline Baldock (Epsom Equestrian Conservation Team), Bob Eberhard (Epsom and Ewell Cycle Action Group), Nick Harrison (Tattenham & Preston Residents' Association), Tom Sammes (Epsom Downs Racecourse), Stuart Walker (Epsom Golf Club), Roger Marples (Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club), Samantha Whitehead and Sarah Clift (Countryside Officer)

Officers present: Jackie King (Chief Executive) and Phoebe Batchelor (Democratic Services Officer)

10 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee held on **16 October 2023** were agreed as a true record and the Chair was authorised to sign them.

11 MATTERS RAISED BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Committee considered matters raised by Members.

The following matters raised by Members were considered:

- (1) Condition of Hack Canter Ride at the top of Six Mile Hill.** The Chair informed the Committee that extensive scrub clearance will need to be undertaken in the area and the work is scheduled to take place at the end of September 2024. The Chair continued to explain that a Flail Mower has been purchased by EEBC and will be used to complete the works.

- (2) **Noticeboards.** The Chair informed the Committee that works would be taking place to clean and further protect the boards from damage. The Chair suggested that Consultative Committee Members and their relevant groups could help in completing the task.
- (3) **Fibre Sand Gallop.** The Member from the Epsom Downs Riders Protection Society asked if the layout could be improved. The Member from the Training Grounds Management agreed to meet with the Member from the Epsom Downs Riders Protection Society to gain more information regarding the unfriendly horse crossing and then to feedback at the next Consultative Committee Meeting.
- (4) **Resurfacing of Hack Track from Langley Vale behind Downs House.** The Member from the Training Grounds Management informed the Committee that said now the weather is drier, it will be something the team will focus on, and an update will be brought back to next meeting.
- (5) **Signage.** The Chair shared an update from the Streetcare Manager, that the Warning Signage is on track to be completed by the end of April 2024.
- (6) **Racehorses exercising in the mornings up the hack area gallop.** The Chair shared that the relevant team has been alerted and will challenge any riders, if it transpires that riders are from the limes. The Chair informed the Committee that this should not be an issue going forward but will continue to monitor the situation.
- (7) **Vegetation and Tree Issues.** A Member raised an issue regarding a listed wall which is suffering damage due to vegetation roots and damp and two large trees which have died and are swaying precariously over the nearby properties. The Member from the Jockey Club agreed to speak to the other Member after the meeting to determine the location and then help with any relevant actions needed.
- (8) **Surrey Union Hunt.** The Member from the Epsom Downs Riders Protection Society asked what authority the Surrey Union Hunt organisers had to carry out their event. The Chair informed the Committee that the event was not a formally approved by the Conservators. The Chair continued to explain that there is action being taken to firm up information sharing regarding what people need to do to get events arranged, coordinated and approved to be held on the Downs.

12 MATTERS RAISED FOR CONSIDERATION BY INVITED REPRESENTATIVES

The Committee considered issues raised by representatives invited to attend the meeting.

The following issues raised by the invited representatives were considered:

- (1) **Habitat Management Plan.** A message from the Lower Mole Partnership Representative was passed on by the Chair, informing the Committee that

steps are being taken to tackle the three main objectives of the Habitat Management Plan. The Chair continued to share that the Flail Mower will help deliver vast improvement to Habitat Management and a feasibility study will be carried out regarding the reintroduction of sheep grazing on the Downs.

- (2) **Vegetation Dump near Rifle Butts Alley.** The Chair informed the Committee that the Downskeepers will investigate and take any action necessary, and an update will be provided at the next Committee Meeting.
- (3) **Noticeboards.** The Chair informed the Committee that there has been a slight delay in getting the artwork for the inlay completed and agreed and that is something that has been progressing with the Streetcare Manager. The Chair acknowledge the work is significantly behind, but reassured the Committee that work is being carried out to get this job completed as soon as possible and an update will be provided once the works are complete.
- (4) **Content on Noticeboards.** An invited representative asked about unauthorised content on the noticeboards and who would be responsible for dealing with this issue. The Chair responded to say that the content mentioned is not sanctioned or approved and will be taken down promptly. The Chair also shared hopes that when the new content is fixed in place, this will stop people from sticking up signs that should not be on the noticeboards. The Chair directed people to approach EEBC Comms department if people want adverts displayed on the borough boards.
- (5) **Educate Users of the Downs.** An invited representative asked how the Conservators further people's education can on how to use the Downs properly and safely. The Chair responded to say the primary objectives is to maintain the safety of users on the Downs and where there is a safety issue, additional or updated signage will be considered. The Chair invited Members and invited representatives to raise anything they believe is missing from the Downs signage in regard to safety of users.
- (6) **Front of the Noticeboards.** An invited representative asked what is planned for the front of the notice boards. The Chair responded to say the finalised draft for the noticeboard can be shared with Members and invited representatives via email. The Chief Executive highlighted that only items approved by EARFD can go on the front of the noticeboards as they were acquired through that programme with the grant money provided.
- (7) **Drones and small aircrafts.** The Chair shared an update on behalf of the Streetcare manager, that the Downskeepers and Rangers will check those flying on the downs have EDMAC issued membership passes and have been instructed to conduct more regular license checks. The invited representative from EDMAC asked for Rangers to be more proactive asking for member cards and be more present on the Downs after 12 noon. The Chair noted the comments.

- (8) **Byelaws.** An invited representative suggested a QR code, that links to the byelaws, be added to the noticeboards to increase the chance of people engaging with and reading the byelaws. The Chair noted the comments.
- (9) **Notice from EDMAC.** The invited representative from EDMAC gave notice of a small fire, caused by a model aircraft hitting the ground, that was quickly and easily put out. The representative continued to explain that EDMAC are implementing a rule that Members who fly large electric aircrafts have to bring a fire extinguisher with them. The Chair noted the comments and agreed to raise it at TGMB.
- (10) **Volunteers.** The invited representative from the Epsom Civic Society mentioned that members of the civic society might be willing to volunteer to help with appropriate tasks and jobs on the Downs. The Chair thanked the representative for their comments and stated that a group could be created for all willing friends of the Downs to bring all user groups together and coordinate potential volunteers to help when the Council does not have the resource to carry out some tasks.

13 COMMITTEE ACTION TRACKER

The Committee noted the status of the actions listed on the Action Tracker.

The Chair provided an update on:

- a) **Spoil Heaps.** The Member from TBMG shared an update that the works had begun in November, the rain had hampered progress, but the drier weather would enable the works to continue. The Member highlighted that this is an ongoing project with not current end date, but updates could be provided down the line as progress is made.
- b) **Oak Trees.** The Chair shared that the Streetcare Manager is in conversation with the Member from the TBGM to locate where the new trees should be planted and then the Council's Tree Officer will be providing assistance on procuring the new trees.
- c) **Ice Cream Van.** The Chair informed the Committee that this item is currently in progress, with the Streetcare Manager and the Licensing Team looking into the concerns that have been raised. The Chair agreed to provide an update on this item at the next Committee Meeting.
- d) **Sycamore Trees.** The Chair shared that this item is current in progress and there are conversations happening with the Countryside Team to understand the potential risk before further action is taken. The Chair shared that an update will be brought back to the Committee and this action will continue to be tracked.
- e) **Grandstand Volunteers.** The Chair confirmed that both volunteers had politely declined any recognition. The Chair expressed thanks to both volunteers for their continued efforts.

- f) **Toilets on the Downs.** The Chair informed the Committee that there is currently no budget provision for this project so it will be worth looking at different forms of additional funding. The Chair confirmed this was a long-term project that will be looked into further.

14 ITEMS FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE CONSERVATORS

The Committee did not identify any items from the meeting which would require verbal representation to the Conservators.

The Chair informed the Committee that Minute Item 11, issues 3 and 4 and Minute Item 12, issues 2 and 3 would be added to the Committee Action Tracker.

The meeting began at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.50 pm

COUNCILLOR STEVEN MCCORMICK (CHAIR)