

Minutes of the Meeting of the EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 12 October 2026

Present:

Councillor Steven McCormick (Chair); Councillor Bernice Froud, Sarah Rayfield (British Horse Society), Alex Stewart (Epsom Downs Riders Protection Society) and Nigel Whybrow (Training Grounds Management Board)

In Attendance:

Jim Allen (Epsom Downs Racecourse), Richard Balsdon (College Ward Residents' Association), Eleanor Bland (Epsom Civic Society), Jane Clarke (Woodcote (Epsom) Residents' Society), Roger Marples (Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club (EDMAC)), James Vincenti (Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club (EDMAC)), and Brian Burke (Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club (EDMAC))

Absent:

Simon Durrant (Epsom Downs Racecourse) Caroline Baldock (Epsom Equestrian Conservation Team), Nick Lock (Epsom Civic Society) (Substituted by Eleanor Bland), Nick Harrison (Tattenham & Preston Residents' Association) and Simon Laughton (Epsom Golf Club)

Officers present:

Samantha Whitehead (Interim Assistant Head of Service & Streetcare Manager), Sarah Clift (Senior Countryside Officer) and Phoebe Batchelor (Democratic Services Officer)

9 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee confirmed as a true record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on **16 March 2026** and authorised the Chair to sign them, subject to the following amendment italicised below;

“Minute 6

- e) **Dog Walking.** The Chair informed the Committee that they are currently in the process of organising a pilot training and awareness scheme for dog walking on the downs, for Langley Vale residents, with a look to offer the scheme to a wider audience following the pilot scheme. Councillor Froud declared that she is a licensed dog walker and home ~~boarded~~ *boarder*. The Chair noted the comment. The Chair raised that the relevant stakeholders will be consulted whilst the scheme is being planned.”

10 ACTION TRACKER

The Committee received a report presenting an update on the Committee Action Tracker.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Noticeboards.** The Assistant Head of Service – Streetcare informed the Committee that the new noticeboard content will be put up the week commencing the 9th of November 2026. She explained they are currently out to print. The Chair stated there are 24 prints to go out on noticeboards and lecterns. The Chair asked for volunteers and community engagement to assist in getting the content installed.
- b) **Spoil Heaps.** The Chair informed the Committee that progress has been made regarding the spoil heaps across the Downs. The Member from the Jockey Club explained that the largest spoil heap, on Ebbisham Lane, has now been cleared, with the materials repurposed for the old hack ride. He explained that a lot of the stone at the back of the Derby start has been used and the heaps will continue to be worked through.
- c) **Bunds.** The Chair informed the Committee that there are collaborative efforts and work taking place over the next few months to implement reinforcements along the fence line of the Jockey Club and the Golf Club using bunds. This should result in the spoil heaps decreasing in size as the work progresses.
- d) **Toilets on the Downs.** The Chair explained that the item will remain on the action tracker but there is no money currently to progress the project. The representative from the College Ward Residents Association asked why the Conservators are spending £75,000 on resurfacing the View Point Car Park instead of reinstating toilet facilities. The representative also highlighted the repeated anti-social behaviour (ASB) that occurs in the View Point Car Park and queried why other car parks are not also being resurfaced. The Chair stated that ASB is not being encouraged. He explained that the main reason for the resurfacing is for insurance risk purposes. He went on to explain that all the car parks cost a considerable amount to maintain so the resurfacing will save money in the long term due to no longer needing to pay for regular new scalplings. He stated that the ASB in the car park has been raised at the Community Safety Partnership and with the Borough Commander and alternate ideas are being explored to discourage ASB, such as gates or ramp posts. The Committee were encouraged to report any anti-social behaviour to the police.
- e) **Events on the Downs.** The Chair explained that whilst progress had been made to publicise events on the Downs, suggestions are welcome from the Committee to improve the process further. The representative from EDMAC highlighted the 'What's On?' in my town group and website. The Chair stated that he works closely with the owner of the What's On in Epsom site and also with Go Epsom, run by the Business Improvement District. He also highlighted the importance of involving local residents' association groups.

- f) **Chalk Lane.** The Chair explained that the gate at the bottom of Chalk Lane could not be locked. He encouraged the Committee to report incidents to the police as it should be access only down the road. He stated that the fences at the top of the road have been refurbished out of his County Council allowance. He has requested that signs that have been removed should be reinstated.
- g) **Dog Walking on the Downs.** The Chair informed the Committee that he will talk to a resident about running a pilot training session.
- h) **Local Government Organisation.** The Chair informed the Committee that a document had been submitted to Central Government regarding changes to the Act necessary to continue the Conservators and governance of the Downs. He explained that there has not been a response yet regarding the proposals set out in the document.

11 ISSUES RAISED FOR CONSIDERATION BY INVITED REPRESENTATIVES

The Committee discussed issues raised by invited representatives.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **El Niño.** The representative from Woodcote Residents Society raised the risks of the super El Niño, from extremely hot and dry summers to an extremely wet and windy winter expected. She asked what residents can be told regarding concerns about trees close to where they are living. The Chair shared that there were preparations taken by the Jockey Club in regard to heat waves and wildfire risks, such as steps set out to deal with incidents on the Downs and signs to discourage barbecue use. The Chair informed the Committee to call 999 if an incident on the Downs is observed and let the trained professionals deal with it. The Chair raised that residents should raise questions or concerns with the Council's Tree Officer, who can then visit the trees in question, log the concern, and take action where necessary. The Member from the Council echoed concerns with the condition of the trees in the Warren Woods. The Chair noted the comment.
- b) **Signage.** The representative from EDMAC asked for an update on the map and content shown at the October 2025 Consultative Committee Meeting. The Assistant Head of Service – Streetcare explained that the map and content are currently being printed to be put on noticeboards wc 9th November.
- c) **Temporary Shade Structures.** The representative from EDMAC highlighted the request for temporary shade structures (gazebos) for use by EDMAC Members when flying during the very hot summer months. The Chair raised that he does not currently have any objections, as long as structures are correctly pinned down and not being used during training times. He explained that a report could go to the next Conservators meeting to discuss the issue and seek approval. The Assistant Head of

Service – Streetcare invited the representative from EDMAC to email their request in, and a report would be written.

- d) **Car Parking – Derby Arms.** The representative from the Epsom Civic Society raised that there are cars being parked on the grass area, in front of the Derby Arms, that are not associated with the racecourse and are not supposed to be parked there. The representative from the racecourse agreed that there are more cars regularly parking there and stated that there is a padlocked gate, which on occasion has not been locked, which can be locked going forwards to try and dissuade cars from parking there. He acknowledged that cars can just drive onto the grass there so perhaps bunding would be a better way of stopping unauthorised parking. The Assistant Head of Service – Streetcare supported the bunding suggestion. The Chair noted the comments.

12 GRAZING ON THE DOWNS - UPDATE

The Senior Countryside Manager provided a verbal update on the Grazing on the Downs project.

The Senior Countryside Manager stated:

- Grant Funding for Your Fund Surrey was confirmed in mid-July.
- Posters to let people know about the project have gone up so people are made aware of what is happening.
- Comms will be circulated regarding volunteering and helping with the sheep once they are in place. Volunteers would be involved in a rota schedule, with people checking everyday on the fenceline, water supply, mineral licks, and animals. This would take roughly 20 to 30 minutes each visit and full training will be provided. The Committee were encouraged to share the comms widely to help finding volunteers willing to help.
- Robust metal fencing will be put in place over Winter 2026/27. The fencing does not impact any access on the main hack ride and footpath. The fencing will ensure sheep are not able to get out of the fenced in site and interfere with the gallops.
- The Downlands partnership will be providing the sheep.
- A tour can be arranged from Consultative Committee members to show them the site and talk them through the project plans.

The following matters were raised:

- **Education.** The representative from EDMAC asked if the grazing project has been considered as part of an education programme for local schools. The Senior Countryside Manager raised that they would be supportive of getting local schools involved and using it as an educational opportunity.

The Chair stated they could put forward the idea to the Langley Vale School. He raised he is working with the school currently on transport and engagement with racing yards in the area.

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Event proposal

The Chair raised that an organisation has approached the Conservators in regard to holding a large, two-day, live-aid style, concert event on the Downs in September 2027. He asked the Committee for comments on the idea. He acknowledged more information would be needed to provide a full view on the proposal and agreed to share an event summary and any information currently held on the proposed event. He explained the event would raise funds for charity work, with some funds marked to be reinvested in the local area.

The Member from the Council raised that they, alongside other Conservators, had received a presentation from event organisers. She explained that event organisers were told that a more detailed plan and full application would need to be provided before Conservators could fully consider the proposal. She stated that because of the fundraising element of the proposal and success of the Derby festival each year, she would be minded to support the event.

The representative from the College Ward Residents' Association asked what kind of music the concert would have. The Chair explained that the kind of music and specific acts are not known at this stage.

The representative from the Woodcote Residents' Society asked about the cut off time for music, as the sound travels far across the Downs for local residents. The Chair said the event would likely follow the guidelines that the Jockey Club adhere to for music events, which cut off music at 11pm. The Chair assured the Committee that local groups and residents would be kept up to date with relevant information. The Chair suggested writing an article for the next Epsom Civic Society Newsletter. The representative from Epsom Civic Society stated the next newsletter will be published in December.

The Member from the British Horse Society queried if there is any intention for the proposed event to have fireworks. She highlighted that any decision to have fireworks would not be popular with many users of the Downs. The Chair explained that there is no intention at the moment to have fireworks and the impact of them is fully realised in the context of the Downs. He stated he plans to bring a motion to Full Council to restrict firework usage on Council land to no noise or low noise. The representative from EDMAC highlighted the fire risk and environmental impact of fireworks. The Chair noted the comments.

EDMAC Family Day

The representative from EDMAC raised that their September Family Day was not as well attended as the May event. They have decided to focus on just holding a

May event in 2027. He explained that it will be held on a Sunday in 2027 and will not affect racehorse training.

Dog Walking

The Member from the Council asked if the signage on the Downs can be updated to say that racehorse training ends at 9.30am on a Sunday, not 12 noon. The Chair explained that the new signage, going up on 9 November, has the correct timings on re dogs being on leads.

Drones

The Member from the British Horse Society raised the issue with people flying drones on the Downs without permission. She spoke about a specific incident with an individual flying a drone with headphones on. The Assistant Head of Service – Streetcare asked if people can share any specific details about the individual and the incident so the Downskeepers can look into the situation. She spoke about the rise in requests to film with drones on the Downs and explained that drones could not be flown on the Downs without written permission from the Conservators. The representative from EDMAC highlighted that drones should not be flown alone and anyone flying an unmanned aircraft on the Downs should have a spotter and should be a member of EDMAC. He encouraged people to call the police. The Chair explained that some organisations have been given permission to fly a drone on the Downs for commercial or film-making purposes and they should be able to provide evidence of that permission if challenged.

The meeting began at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.56 pm

COUNCILLOR STEVEN MCCORMICK (CHAIR)