

Minutes of the Meeting of the EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 16 October 2023

PRESENT -

Councillor Steven McCormick (Chair); Simon Durrant (Epsom Downs Racecourse), Councillor Bernice Froud, Sarah Rayfield (British Horse Society) and Nigel Whybrow (Training Grounds Management Board)

In Attendance: Caroline Baldock (Epsom Equestrian Conservation Team), Richard Balsdon (College Ward Residents' Association), Nick Harrison (Tattenham & Preston Residents' Association), Nick Lock (Epsom Civic Society), Roger Marples (Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club) and James Vincenti (Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club)

Absent: Alex Stewart (Epsom Downs Riders Protection Society), Jane Clarke (Woodcote Epsom Residents' Society (WERS)), Bob Eberhard (Epsom and Ewell Cycle Action Group), Tom Sammes (Epsom Downs Racecourse) and Stuart Walker (Epsom Golf Club)

Officers present: Jackie King (Chief Executive), Samantha Whitehead (Streetcare Manager) and Phoebe Batchelor (Democratic Services Officer)

6 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee held on 14 December 2022 were agreed as a true record and the Chair was authorised to sign them.

7 MATTERS RAISED BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Committee considered matters raised by Members.

The following matters raised by the Epsom Downs Riders' Protection Association Member were considered:

- a) **Condition of Hack Canter Ride at the top of Six Mile Hill.** The Committee were informed by the Council's Streetcare Manager that this will be added to the Winter Workplan for this year. The Chair informed the Committee that an update would be fed back to the Training Grounds Management Board.

- b) Protection from Damage to large noticeboards around the Downs.** The Committee were informed by the Streetcare Manager that the protective covering for the boards will be put up over the winter months and the old signs will be removed, to avoid any confusion and add clarity. The Streetcare Manager and Downskeepers are working with Surrey County Council Rights of Way to ensure that all signs for bridleways are in the right place. The Chair informed the committee that the byelaws will be put up on the noticeboards. This was confirmed by the Streetcare Manager, who also shared that maps and interpretation boards will be put up on the noticeboards over the winter.

The Committee received a comment from an invited representative regarding the inclusion of the Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club site on the noticeboards. This was noted by the Council's Streetcare Manager for inclusion.

An additional item raised by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Member was considered:

- c) Overgrown Vegetation.** The EEBC Member raised that residents in Roseberry Road had complained about vegetation encroaching into their back gardens from the Downs. The EEBC Member informed the Committee that the vegetation was cut back within 3 days of letting the Streetcare Manager know and queried whether that is the best route to proceed with when the vegetation needs to be cut back again. The Streetcare Manager confirmed that they should be told when it needs to be done again and explained that workplans are being created for the Lead Downskeeper to cover this in future.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved:

- (1) That it had considered the matters raised by members of the Committee as set out in the report.**

8 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:

Woodcote Epsom Residents' Society (WERS), Councillor Bernice Froud on behalf of Jane Clarke;

- a) Maintenance of the Downs.** The Committee were informed by the Council's Streetcare Manager that the Downs Habitat Management Plan is very prescriptive in what areas should stay long and what areas should be cut short. The Streetcare Manager informed the Committee that the Habitat Management Plan has been written, by the Council's Countryside team, with the need to balance biodiversity with the racing industry in

mind and explained that the plan can be found on the EEBC website. The Committee were informed that the Habitat Management Plan is a live document which can change. The Chair highlighted that the TGMB had raised the issue that pollen poses for horses, and that this is going to be taken into consideration going forward.

Epsom Civic Society, Nick Lock and Epsom Equestrian Conservation Team,
Caroline Baldock;

- b) **Noticeboards Content.** The Committee noted that this item was covered during Agenda item 2, issue number 2.
- c) **Spoil heaps of training track material.** The Training Grounds Management Board Member informed the Committee that there is a plan to make a start on recirculating the track material by the end of October 2023 and confirmed that it will be reused on the Downs, with whatever isn't used being disposed of. The TGMB Member explained that there is no finish date identified as of yet, but that the spoil heaps will begin to be dealt with soon and in close collaboration with the Streetcare Manager and Council Team. The Streetcare Manager highlighted that all the materials will be recycled. The Chair asked the TGMB Member if some of the items are recycled to/from other Jockey Club courses. The TGMB confirmed that is correct.

The Committee received a comment from an invited representative that the recycling of the material that came off the gallops is full of rocks and the rocks need to be removed or crushed in order to protect the horses. The TGMB Member confirmed to the Committee that the surface being used on the horse walks doesn't have any stones in, it's off the Polytrack and the bottom track and is a different surface.

- d) **Incorrect Signage.** The Streetcare Manager explained that there will be less confusion once the old signs are taken down over the winter months.

The Committee received a comment from an invited representative that it is important to highlight the official and accurate training days and times on the signs so that dog walkers are aware when they should have their dogs on leads and are not keeping them unnecessarily on the lead when they do not need to be. The Streetcare Manager explained that it was simpler and more consistent to keep 'before 12 o'clock Monday – Sunday' on the signs. The Committee were informed by the Streetcare Manager that the byelaws state that dogs must be under proper control at all times and the signs requiring dogs to be on a lead before 12 o'clock are a polite request that is followed by most visitors to the Downs, therefore, due to the under-control byelaw and another byelaw stating that nothing must interfere with the training of racehorses, there is sufficient room for the Downskeepers to enforce the byelaws and prosecute if necessary.

The Committee received a comment from an invited representative regarding the process of updating or changing the byelaws. The Chair

responded to explain that it is an item that would have to go to Conservators and legal work would need to be commissioned prior to a public consultation before being sent to the Secretary of State and then the byelaws being updated. The Streetcare Manager confirmed that it is a long and costly process but if dogs not being kept under control becomes a big problem, then it will go to Conservators.

Epsom Equestrian Conservation Team, Caroline Baldock;

- e) **Lark Nest.** It was noted that the Streetcare Manager would take this up with the Countryside team and feed back to the invited representative concerned.
- f) **Oak Trees.** The Streetcare Manager confirmed that the replanting of Oak Trees couldn't all be done in one year due to budgetary constraints but that it could be done over a succession of years, with one Oak Tree being planted over the next four years and managed within the existing budget.
- g) **Misplaced Signs for Bridleways.** The Streetcare Manager confirmed that they would be meeting the SCC Rights of Way Officer up on the Downs where they would be ensuring that all signs are in the correct place.
- h) **Crossing Lights for Farm Lane.** The Chair informed the Committee that they would follow up on this with SCC.
- i) **Dustbins.** The Streetcare Manager informed the Committee that they have not received any complaints regarding the bins since this was first looked into and rectified and confirmed that they would check with Downskeepers regarding any new issues with the bins.
- j) **Fencing on Tattenham Corner Road.** The Jockey Club Member informed the Committee that vandals had caused the gaps in the fence and that the Racecourse would be dealing with it in 2024.

Tattenham & Preston Residents' Association, Nick Harrison;

- k) **Public Toilets.** The Chair informed the Committee that if funding could be found then options could be explored for reinstating public toilets on the Downs. The Chair explained that it is not a current work item of the Conservators but could be looked at next year as a possibility.
- l) **Location of Ice Cream Van.** The Streetcare Manager informed the Committee that they would look into and start a conversation with the Vendor about looking at alternative sites.

The Committee received a comment from an invited representative pointing out that EEBC licence the Ice Cream Van so there is an onus on the Council to ensure no unnecessary risks are being taken. The

Streetcare Manager informed the Committee that a risk assessment will be done.

The Committee received a comment from an invited representative regarding Electric Vehicles and the fact that they are quieter and are more likely to not be heard by children and adults so could potentially cause an incident if the site was not moved to a more appropriate and safer setting.

College Ward Residents' Association, Richard Balsdon;

- m) **Sycamore Trees.** The Streetcare Manager agreed to consult with the Council's Tree Officer and the Countryside team to see what can be done regarding the Sycamore Trees in question.
- n) **Volunteer cleaning of Grandstand Road Carpark.** The Clerk to the Conservators suggested that the volunteer could be invited to have tea with the Mayor and receive a certificate or award for their continued hard work and contribution to the Downs.

The Committee received a comment from an invited representative regarding the anti-social behaviour which occurs in the Grandstand Road Car Park and whether it is allowed to continue there in a semi-contained environment in order to take pressure off of other areas in the borough where this kind of behaviour could occur. The Chair responded to state that there is no agreement or understanding that allows the anti-social in Grandstand Road Car Park to focus there and continued to explain that if it becomes a growing issue, then it can be raised with the Crime & Disorder Committee and the Police to deal with further.

The Streetcare Manager explained to the Committee that the Police rely on the number of reports they receive, so people have to keep reporting the issue until it appears on their radar and efforts will go into targeting the behaviour that occurs in and around the Grandstand Road Car Park. The Committee were informed that there is a Public Space Protection order for Psychoactive Substances, which means that they can be confiscated, by the Police and certain Council officers.

An invited representative raised an additional matter that was considered;

- o) **EDMAC Blue Badge Parking.** An invited representative queried if the approved disabled parking spaces for EDMAC would continue to be voted through every year when they come up for consideration again by the Conservators. The Chair agreed to look at the June 2023 Conservators decision and come back to the representative.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved:

- (1) **That it had considered the matters raised by invited representatives as set out in this report.**

9 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 Agenda Item 2, issues 1 and 2 and Agenda Item 3, issues 3, 6, 12 and 13 would be followed up on before the next Consultative Committee Meeting.

The meeting began at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.54 pm

COUNCILLOR STEVEN MCCORMICK (CHAIR)