

Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators

17 June 2024

FINAL ACCOUNTS 2023-24

Head of Service:	Brendan Bradley, Chief Finance Officer
Report Author	Oana Merla, Accountant
Wards affected:	College Ward; Town Ward; Woodcote and Langley Vale Ward;
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 – 2023/24 Revenue Account Appendix 2 – Financial Statements 2023/24 Appendix 3 – Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24

Summary

This report seeks approval of the Conservators' final accounts for the financial year 2023/24.

Recommendation (s)

The Conservators are asked to:

- (1) Receive the final accounts for 2023/24, subject to external audit.**
- (2) Approve the Annual Governance Statements as set out in section 1 of Appendix 3 to this report.**
- (3) Consider and approve the Accounting Statements as set out in section 2 of Appendix 3 to this report.**
- (4) Confirm that the arrangements for the internal audit as set out in this report are effective for auditing purposes.**
- (5) Authorise the Chair and Clerk to sign the Annual Governance Statement and the Accounting Statements on behalf of the Conservators.**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 To meet the statutory requirement for the Conservators to consider and approve the financial statements by 30 June 2024.

2 Background

- 2.1 This report represents the Conservators' final accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024.

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- 2.2 The revenue account, attached at Appendix 1, details income and expenditure for the year compared to the budget.
- 2.3 The financial statements are attached at Appendix 2 and the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, which requires approval of the Conservators, is attached at Appendix 3.
- 2.4 The Annual Governance and Accountability Return will be subject to external audit between July and September 2024

3 Revenue Account for 2023/24

- 3.1 Overall, net expenditure for the year was £471,482 compared to the original budget of £458,650 resulting in a deficit for the year and a decrease in the working balance of £12,832.
- 3.2 At Q3, a deficit of £21,812 had been forecast. The year-end £12,832 deficit is mainly due to the following items:

Explanation of significant variances	Adverse/(Favourable) Variance £
Grounds Maintenance – Additional tree maintenance costs to tackle Ash Dieback as reported in Nov 2023.	21,032
Net increase of vehicle running costs due to additional spot hire to complete the Wayfinder Trails installation (£6.7k over), partially offset by reduced fuel and vehicles costs (£3.5k under)	3,214
Reduced Grounds maintenance costs mainly due to car park repairs (£3.2k under), waste disposal (£3.3k under), along with net reduction in Keeper’s hut running costs (£4.7k under)	(12,209)
Central Expenses- increased VAT costs offset by reduced contribution to R&R Fund and savings in running costs	2,832
Income – net increased income from events and interest received, partially offset by reduced miscellaneous income recognised in 2023/24. Miscellaneous income relates to metal detector licenses and annual billing for this service has transitioned from January to April.	(2,037)

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4 Repairs and Renewals Fund

4.1 The balance of the fund at 31 March 2024 was £20,191, as show in the following table:

	£
Balance brought forward 1 April 2023	28,879
Contribution from R&R Fund to Working Balance (as agreed by the Conservators in November 2023)	-10,000
Interest on balance (5.07% average interest)	1,312
Balance carried forward (uncommitted) 31 March 2024	20,191

5 Internal Audit

- 5.1 Since 1 April 2019, the Southern Internal Audit Partnership (SIAP) has provided internal audit services to the Council and the Conservators, which includes completion of the internal Audit Report within the Conservator's Annual Governance and Accountability Return. The role and scope of SIAP is detailed with the Internal Audit Charter which was presented to the Council's Audit & Scrutiny Committee on 28 March 2024.
- 5.2 The 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan was submitted in March 2024 to the same Committee who act as an Audit Committee under the Council's constitution. The Audit & Scrutiny Committee receive quarterly audit progress reports and a year-end Annual Report & Opinion.
- 5.3 All financial transactions for the Conservators are processed through Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's financial systems and transactions recorded on the Council's financial management system.
- 5.4 SIAP makes the appropriate arrangements for the Annual Internal Audit Report section of the Annual Return to be checked and signed off, which was completed on 26/05/2024.

6 Annual Governance and Accountability Return

- 6.1 Smaller Bodies in England must complete an annual return, known as the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) to the appointed External Auditor. PKF Littlejohn LLP have been appointed as the auditor to all relevant smaller authorities in Surrey for 5 years from 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2027. The AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2024 is attached at Appendix 3.

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- 6.2 Any significant changes to the AGAR following external audit will be reported back to the Conservators.
- 6.3 Each smaller authority is now required by law to:
 - 6.3.1 Prepare Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 in the form required by proper practices (the relevant AGAR, Form 1, 2 or 3);
 - 6.3.2 Approve and publish the unaudited AGAR including Accounting Statements by 30 June 2024;
 - 6.3.3 Provide for the exercise of public rights;
 - 6.3.4 Publish the audited AGAR, including the signed external auditor report by 30 September 2024.
- 6.4 With regard to the AGAR, the Conservators will note that:
 - 6.4.1 The detailed budget is submitted to the Conservators each year prior to contributions being levied from constituent bodies.
 - 6.4.2 Officers monitor the account as part of the Council's budget monitoring arrangements.
 - 6.4.3 The Treasurer presents a mid-year monitoring report to the Conservators.
 - 6.4.4 The Treasurer presents a year-end report to the Conservators (this report).
 - 6.4.5 All transactions are subject to the Council's financial management and internal control arrangements.
 - 6.4.6 The Council's financial processes and operational activity are subject to risk profile as part of the audit needs assessment.

7 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

- 7.1 A risk register is reported at least annually to the Conservators, most recently in January 2024.
- 7.2 The working balance stands at £44,310 at year-end. The 2024/25 budget includes provision for an annual contribution of £7,000 back to the working balance, to replenish this reserve over time. Together with the Repairs and Renewals fund, the working balance reserve provides sufficient financial cover to manage unexpected expenditure and risks.

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7.3 Equality Impact Assessment

7.3.1 None arising from the contents of this report.

7.4 Crime & Disorder

7.4.1 None arising from the contents of this report.

7.5 Safeguarding

7.5.1 None arising from the contents of this report.

7.6 Dependencies

7.6.1 None arising from the contents of this report.

7.7 Other

7.7.1 None arising from the contents of this report.

8 Financial Implications

8.1 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** Financial implications are set out in the body of the report. If members have a detailed question(s) on the appended accounts, it is requested that these be submitted in advance where possible, to enable officers to investigate with the relevant budget manager. The next scheduled budget report to Conservators will be the 2024/25 mid-year monitoring report at November's meeting.

9 Legal Implications

9.1 There are no legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

9.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

10 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

10.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged: Effective Council, Green & Vibrant.

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10.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

10.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None arising from the contents of this report.

10.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** None arising from the contents of this report.

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10.5 **Partnerships:** The Jockey Club, Training Grounds Management Board and Epsom and Ewell Borough Council are represented by Members on the Conservators committee.

11 Background papers

11.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- Budget 2024/25 – (22 January 2024)

Other papers:

- None.