

**Minutes of the Meeting of the EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSERVATORS
held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 4 November 2024**

PRESENT -

Councillor Steven McCormick (the Council) (Chair); Jim Allen (Jockey Club Racecourses (the Company)) (Vice-Chair); Councillor Christine Cleveland (the Council), Andrew Cooper (Jockey Club Racecourses (the Company)), Simon Dow (Horserace Betting Levy Board (the Levy Board)), Councillor Liz Frost (the Council), Councillor Bernice Froud (the Council) and Councillor Kim Spickett (the Council)

Absent: Simon Durrant (Jockey Club Racecourses (the Company)) and Councillor Clive Woodbridge (the Council)

Officers present: Kevin Hanlon (Interim Chief Finance Officer), Samantha Whitehead (Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare), Sarah Clift (Senior Countryside Officer) and Phoebe Batchelor (Democratic Services Officer)

9 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators held on 17 June 2024 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

10 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 departure of Tom Sammes and requesting the Conservators to note the appointment.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Thanks.** The Chair expressed thanks to Tom Sammes 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): Jim Allen in place of Tom Sammes**

11 APPOINTMENT OF A VICE CHAIR

The Conservators received a report requesting the appointment of a Vice Chair.

- Andrew Cooper proposed Jim Allen be appointed as Vice Chair to hold office until the first meeting of the Conservators held after the Annual meeting of the Council held in May 2025.

Cllr Steven McCormick seconded the motion.

The Conservators unanimously agreed to appoint Jim Allen as Vice Chair to hold office until the first meeting of the Conservators held after the Annual meeting of the Council held in May 2025.

- a) **Introduction.** The Chair invited Jim Allen to introduce himself to the Conservators. Jim Allen provided an introduction to the Conservators.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Appoint a Vice Chair to hold office until the first meeting of the Conservators held after the Annual meeting of the Borough Council in May 2025.**

12 DATES OF MEETINGS IN 2025

The Conservators received a report requesting them to agree the dates of their normal meetings to be held in 2025.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Derby Meeting.** The Chair raised that historically there had been a meeting of the Conservators and other relevant stakeholders after the January meeting of the Conservators, but prior to the Derby. The Chair informed the Committee that they would receive an email update on preparations for the Derby in April, with the help of the Jockey Club in providing the information to be shared.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Agree to hold their normal meetings in 2025 on the following dates:**

(a) Monday 27 January 2025 at 18.00 hours

(b) Monday 23 June 2025 at 18.00 hours

(c) Monday 3 November 2025 at 18.00 hours

13 MID-YEAR BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Conservators received a report on the income and expenditure position as at 31 August 2024 and seeking guidance on the preparation of the budget and precept for 2025/26.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Metal Detector Licenses.** A Member of the Conservators asked if there was an explanation as to why less metal detector permits had been purchased compared to previous years, and if the trend was expected to continue. The Streetcare Manager informed the Conservators that this was the first year that metal detector permits did not sell out, which was unusual, as normally they are oversubscribed. The Streetcare Manager did not have an explanation as to why this was the case and informed the Conservators that if the trend continues next year, the budget will need to be looked at and reduced accordingly. The Chair requested the Streetcare Manager to look into this further, to ascertain why there has been a decrease and to compare the numbers from last year to this year.
- b) **Precepts.** The Chair asked Conservators if they had any questions or comments regarding the 3% increase in precepts. The Conservators did not have questions or comments regarding the precepts.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the mid-year income and expenditure position;**
- (2) **Provide guidance on the preparation of the budget for 2025/26;**
- (3) **Note the conclusion of the 2023/24 external audit of the accounts.**

14 COMMERCIAL DOG WALKING

The Conservators received a report about the Pilot Commercial Dog Walking Licensing Scheme which launches in Nonsuch Park in April 2025. The report invited Conservators to discuss the impact and options for dog control on Epsom and Walton Downs.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Local Dog Walkers.** A Member of the Conservators proposed that Local dog walkers are consulted, along with other parties listed in paragraph 4.3, and included in discussions when developing a new code of conduct for Dog Walking on the Downs. The Streetcare Manager stated that there is not currently a dog walking representative on the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee, but confirmed that once the relevant people are identified, they will be engaged with.

- b) **Joint effort.** A Member of the Conservators raised that it must be a joint effort and two-way street, when it comes to dog walkers and hack riders on the Downs, meaning the onus must not always be on the dog walkers to take the evasive action. The Chair noted the comment and explained to the Conservators that there is a balance to be found between all different users of the Downs. The Chair reminded the Conservators that hack riders are only allowed to go in certain areas of the Downs, so they are more constrained as to where they can go.
- c) **The Kennel Club.** A Member of the Conservators raised that there are lots of free resources available from the Kennel Club, including a code of conduct, which could be helpful. The Member informed the Conservators of a Kennel Club scheme, called Good Citizen Dog, which focuses on training. The Member also raised that the book, Total Recall, which is about training dogs to improve their recall skills, could be beneficial. The Member stated that these free resources should be recommended to dog walkers on the Downs. The Chair thanked the Member for highlighting relevant and helpful resources.
- d) **Awareness and Communication.** A Member of the Conservators commented that they have seen a rise in Commercial Dog Walking in the borough. The Member highlighted the importance of accommodating people's passion for dogs, with people's passion for horses. The Member stated that they are shocked by how many dog walkers do not know the rules about walking their dogs on the Downs. The Member stated that the primary issue is communication, and dog walkers need to be reminded of the rules of the Downs.
- e) **Race Horses.** A Member of the Conservators raised that the Parliamentary Act states that nothing must interfere with the training of racehorses. The Member highlighted that a dog 200m away on a lead, still has the power to scare racehorses, and although some horses are comfortable around dogs, there are many that aren't, and it is of the utmost importance that horses need to be able to be trained safely, without fear and anxiety.
- f) **Nonsuch Trial Scheme.** A Member of the Conservators asked how the Nonsuch Park Licensing Scheme will be enforced and policed, and how the trial scheme work in practice. The Streetcare Manager informed Conservators that other people operating business in the park, such as fitness groups, are charged, so it makes sense to licence and charge commercial dog walkers, so they are on the same footing as other commercial users of the space. The Streetcare Manager explained that the Dog Walking Code of Conduct will apply to everyone walking their dog in Nonsuch Park, not just commercial dog walkers. The Streetcare Manager stated that an armband or lanyard will be introduced and given to those who have signed up to the licensing scheme, and then the hope is that it will begin self-policing, like the fitness groups do. The Streetcare Manager acknowledged that there is not unlimited resource to enforce the

scheme, but that targeted enforcement would be the route taken, where information regarding an individual or group of people can be shared, and then they can be dealt with accordingly. The Streetcare Manager highlighted that it is a pilot scheme for 12 months, and will enable relationships to be built, on the shared aim of making the space safer for everybody. The Chair informed Conservators that further information regarding the pilot scheme would be shared.

- g) **Legal advice.** A Member of the Conservators raised that specialised legal advice would be needed to ensure that people are informed of their rights without any restrictions being placed on racehorse trainers. The Streetcare Manager confirmed that if Conservators wish to explore and pursue a licensing scheme, then it would require specialist legal advice and support, as it is more complicated than Nonsuch Park, due to the Downs being governed by an Act of Parliament, and the Council not being the Landowners.
- h) **Horse education.** A Member of the Conservators raised that some horse education for the general public would be helpful, as horses are complex creatures and a raising of awareness of that would be useful for all types of users of the downs. The Chair noted the comments and raised that community engagement will be key to finding the correct balance between all users of the Downs, and a horse awareness session, in collaboration with Langley Vale primary school and one of the racing yards, to help spread horse awareness with parents and children, would be hugely beneficial. The Chair raised that Conservators could visit one of the new racing yards. The Chair highlighted that education, and awareness is key to making a difference going forwards.
- i) **Previous Communication.** A Member of the Conservators raised that they had been sceptical of the previous communication campaign but had been pleasantly surprised by the effectiveness and noted an improvement of behaviour of dog walkers on the Downs as a result. The Streetcare Manager agreed that the previous communication plan had been well received. The Streetcare Manager explained that due to rise in dog ownership, since the pandemic, there is a need now for another communication campaign, to remind old users, and make new users aware of the rules and restrictions. The Streetcare Manager stated that tapping into new resources that have been raised and periodically pushing out the message, will ensure that it is not forgotten.
- j) **Race horses on the downs.** The Chair highlighted the important of the communication plan for dog walkers, due to the increasing number of racehorses now on the Downs.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the pilot Commercial Dog Walking Licensing Scheme in Nonsuch Park**

(2) Agree to the proposed actions set out in Section 4 of this report.

The meeting began at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.50 pm

COUNCILLOR STEVEN MCCORMICK (CHAIR)