

Minutes of the Meeting of the EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSERVATORS held on 15 June 2016

PRESENT -

Councillor Liz Frost (Chairman); Andrew Cooper (Epsom Downs Racecourse) (Vice-Chairman); Councillor Rekha Bansil, Simon Dow (Horserace Betting Levy Board), Simon Durrant (Epsom Downs Racecourse), Councillor Robert Foote, Councillor Jan Mason, Nigel Whybrow (Epsom Downs Racecourse) and Councillor Clive Woodbridge

In Attendance: Conor Morrow (Lower Mole Countryside Management Service)

Absent: Councillor Lucie Dallen

Officers present: Sam Beak (Downs Manager), Bob Harding (Head Downskeeper), Tim Richardson (Democratic Services Officer), Michael Smith (Chief Accountant), Samantha Whitehead (Streetcare Manager) and Simon Young (Head of Legal and Democratic Services)

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

It was resolved that Councillor Liz Frost be appointed Chairman of the Conservators to hold office until the first meeting of the Conservators held after the Annual Meeting of the Borough Council in May 2017.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

It was resolved that Mr Andrew Cooper be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Conservators to hold office until the first meeting of the Conservators held after the Annual Meeting of the Borough Council in May 2017.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators held on 13 April 2016 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment (highlighted in **bold and underline**) to the first sentence of Minute 37 a) of that meeting.

“The Conservators noted that the introduction of the **request** that dogs be held on a lead whilst on the Downs before noon daily had been highly successful.”

4 ITEMS OF INTEREST DISCUSSED BY THE TRAINING GROUNDS MANAGEMENT BOARD (TGMB)

The Conservators received a report providing updates on items considered by the Epsom and Walton Downs Training Grounds Management Board (TGMB). The following matters were considered:

- a) Number of horses in training on the Downs. The Conservators were informed that there were currently around 150 horses in training on the Downs, but that in the view of the TGMB a total of 200 were required for long-term sustainability of the training facilities. A steering group had been created by the TGMB to consider the issues surrounding the use of the Downs for racehorse training, and to identify actions to address them.
- b) Hatched area at the foot of Walton Downs. The Conservators noted that the TGMB had found no reason to change its view that the hatched area was not currently suitable for hack riding, but had set up a small group to further look at the matter.
- c) Cars on the roadway outside the Rubbing House. Cars parked on the road outside the Rubbing House were creating difficulties for some racehorse trainers using the Downs. The Conservators noted that a previous planning application by the Rubbing House to alter the parking arrangements in the area had been refused by the Borough Council. It was noted that Epsom Downs Racecourse would contact the Borough Council's Planning department to discuss the issue further.

5 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS AND OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

- a) Dog control on the Downs. The Conservators received a written update on dog control on the Downs, and considered a proposal to provide custom printed dog waste bags to dog walkers on the Downs, to further strengthen the request that dogs be held on a lead prior to noon daily.

Following consideration, the Conservators approved the purchase of 10,000 custom printed dog waste bags, at a cost of £300.

- b) Hack sand track, foot of Walton Downs. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the Conservators that further contact with the Horserace Betting Levy Board (HBLB) had not been received. The Vice Chairman informed the Conservators that following the discussion of the matter at the last meeting, he had not been able to locate a copy of the map which accompanied the HBLB grant for renovations to horse walks on the Downs. It was noted that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services would continue correspondence with the HBLB with regard to the track.

6 REPORT OF THE HEAD DOWNSKEEPER

The Conservators received and noted the report of the Head Downskeeper. The following matters were considered:

- a) Post Derby clean-up. The Conservators were informed that the post-Derby clean-up had been very successful, and an improvement on previous years. A new contractor had been used by the Racecourse to manage glass collection, and had been very effective.
- b) Anti-social behaviour in the woods adjacent to the Derby gypsy site and other anti-social activity reported during the Derby festival. The Conservators expressed significant concern at the reported anti-social behaviour which had occurred during the Derby Festival. The woods adjacent to the Derby gypsy site had again been used as a toilet during the Derby period by some members of the gypsy and traveller community. Racehorse trainers had reported that dogs had been tied to the fencing of the gypsy site adjacent to a main access route onto the Downs for racehorses, which created a significant health and safety risk for riders. Other issues had also been reported by local residents, including 3 abandoned/burnt-out cars.

The Council's Streetcare Manager and Head of Operational Services had met with the Gypsy and Traveller Site Manager with regard to these issues as soon as they became apparent. This had resulted in the dogs being moved from where they were being held, and some other matters being resolved.

It was noted that a full review of the arrangements for the 2016 Derby festival and Gypsy site would be held by the Chairman and Clerk of the Conservators with Surrey Police and Epsom Downs Racecourse. This would consider the issues reported, and a report would be presented to a future meeting of the Conservators regarding actions for future years.

7 FINAL ACCOUNTS 2015/16

The Conservators received a report providing the final accounts for the financial year 2015/16.

The Conservators were informed that expenditure exceeded income by £8,595, leading to a reduction in the working balance of the same amount. Gross expenditure for the year had been £10,233 below the original budget, with the main savings being reduced grounds maintenance charges and no expenditure being incurred against ecological surveys. A working balance of £56,259 had been carried forward to the 2016/17 financial year.

Following consideration of the report, the Conservators:

- (1) agreed the final accounts for 2015/16 subject to external audit;

- (2) accepted the Statement of Accounts and the Annual Governance Statement as set out in sections 1 and 2 of Annexe 3 to the report;
- (3) confirmed that the arrangements for internal audit as set out in the report were effective for auditing purposes;
- (4) authorised the Chairman and Clerk to sign the Statement of Assurance on their behalf.

8 ISSUES ARISING FROM THE DERBY RACE MEETING

The Conservators received a verbal report from Simon Durrant on matters arising from the 2016 Derby festival. The Conservators received an update on the following matters:

- a) Early arrival of contractor to build marquee near Tattenham Enclosure. It was noted that a third party contractor had arrived at the Tattenham Enclosure prior to the approved date to deliver and erect a marquee. Epsom Downs Racecourse had sought permission for the materials to remain on site until the approved date for construction, and this had been granted by the Conservators. However, the contractor had commenced construction of the marquee without consent.

Following intervention by the Conservators and the Race Course, construction halted and the site was secured until the agreed construction date. Simon Durrant thanked the Conservators for their understanding with regard to this matter and informed the meeting that the contractor had been strongly reprimanded regarding the issue.

- b) Success of the Derby. The Conservators were informed that Epsom Downs Racecourse viewed the Derby Festival as having been successful, and that most arrangements had gone very well. Simon Durrant informed the Conservators that a public disorder incident had occurred on the Hill, and that this would be reviewed with the Police. Epsom Downs Racecourse had also created a steering group to consider the future arrangements for the Hill, including ways to increase its use by families.

The Conservators received the update from Simon Durrant and requested that in future years, this item of business be renamed as "Matters of interest arising from the Derby Race Meeting".

Note: further matters relating to the Derby Race Festival 2016 are detailed in Minute number 6 above.

9 OUTSTANDING REFERENCES

The Conservators received and noted the position of their outstanding references.

The following matters were considered:

- a) Habitat Management Plan. Conor Morrow informed the Conservators that soil scrapes to increase the habitats suitable for Small Blue Butterflies on the Downs had been successful in increasing their numbers. A recent survey by Sarah Jeffcote from Butterfly Conservation had recorded 50 Small Blue Butterflies on the Golf Course and 70 on the other parts of the Downs.
- b) Surface material of Golf Course pathways. The Streetcare Manager informed the Conservators that Epsom Golf Club had reported that the surface of the new pathways created near the 1st and 11th holes of the Golf Course had suffered during the continued heavy rain.

The Golf Course was considering alternative surface materials for the paths, and the Conservators agreed that the Streetcare Manager be authorised to agree a new material if a suitable proposal was submitted by the Golf Course.

- c) Memorial Policy. The Conservators noted that a report presenting a Memorial Policy for the Downs would be presented to their October meeting. This would present a Policy with regard to memorial benches and other items on the Downs for consideration. It was noted that the report would not present a full review of benches and seats on the Downs, but that if the Conservators considered that such a review should be undertaken, it could be done for a future meeting. It was agreed to consider the Memorial Policy at the next meeting prior to deciding whether a wider review of seating should also be undertaken.

The meeting began at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.07 pm

COUNCILLOR LIZ FROST (CHAIRMAN)

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