

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSERVATORS held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 23 June 2025**

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### **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), Councillor Kim Spickett (the Council) and Councillor Clive Woodbridge (the Council)

Absent: Simon Durrant (Jockey Club Racecourses (the Company))

Officers present: Jackie King (Chief Executive), Sue Emmons (Chief Accountant), Samantha Whitehead (Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare), Sarah Clift (Senior Countryside Officer) (for agenda items 5 to 9) and Phoebe Batchelor (Democratic Services Officer)

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### **1 APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR**

It was resolved that the Conservators appointed Councillor Steven McCormick as Chair to hold office until the first meeting of the Conservators held after the Annual meeting of the Borough Council in May 2026.

### **2 APPOINTMENT OF THE VICE CHAIR**

It was resolved that the Conservators appointed Jim Allen as Vice-Chair to hold office until the first meeting of the Conservators held after the Annual meeting of the Borough Council in May 2026.

### **3 TOILETS ON THE DOWNS**

The Chair made a verbal update to the Committee regarding toilets on the Downs.

The Chair declared that they had received a letter from the College Ward Residents' Association regarding reinstating toilets on the Downs.

The Chair confirmed that the item remained on the Epsom and Walton Downs Action Tracker and would be progressed and discussed in more detail if funding could be identified.

The Chair reiterated that it was not merely cost that resulted in the toilets being removed from the Downs, but it was also prevalent anti-social behaviour which contributed to the decision to demolish the toilet block.

A Member of the Conservators raised that when the old block was demolished, there were costed proposals that were considered by Conservators, but were significantly out of budget. The Member stated that unless significant funding can be identified, the project would need to remain as something the Conservators would like to do, rather than something they are able to do.

#### 4 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators held on 27 January 2025 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

#### 5 MINUTES OF THE EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE, 24 MARCH 2025

The Conservators received the Minutes of the meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee held on 24 March 2025.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Receive and note the Minutes of the meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee held on the 24 March 2025.**

#### 6 DERBY UPDATE 2025

The Conservators received an update on this year's Derby Festival.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Derby Update.** The Vice Chair commented that operationally the Derby Festival was successful. He explained that the weather was unfortunate over the festival period, but he had observed everything from the build-up the de-rig and is hoping to try and streamline these processes next year. The Vice Chair reported that the travellers camp caused very few issues. He acknowledged the issue prior to the festival, regarding arriving early and parking on Old London Road and steps have been taken to ensure the same does not happen next year. The Vice Chair highlighted that there were only four arrests across the 34,000 attendees. He informed the Conservators that there had sadly been no royal attendance this year, which does affect the event, however the racing was brilliant. The Vice Chair explained that Epsom Racecourse are currently undergoing an extensive strategy review, of almost every aspect of the Derby, and will be creating a 5-year strategy to revive to Epsom Derby Festival.
- b) **Thanks.** The Chair acknowledged that there were several meetings with residents in Langley Vale and significant efforts by several stakeholders, notably the PSPO that came through Crime and Disorder committee, so

huge thanks to that Committee and the Police as their efforts did make a difference. The Chair continued to thank the Council's Public Protection Manager and team for the CCTV installation. that went on – thanks to Oliver and team. The Chair expressed thanks to the Police, the Downskeepers, and Sam Whitehead for all the work in ensuring the event ran smoothly. The Chair also thanked the Jockey Club for all the effort they put in to make the Derby a successful and safe event. Several Conservators echoed the thanks of the Chair and highlighted how smooth and wonderful an experience it was attending the Derby Festival.

- c) **Security risks.** A Member of the Conservators raised an issue that a resident had mentioned about security around the roundabout behind the Grandstand and if the Jockey Club have considered the potential security risks if someone tried to attack the event. The Vice Chair responded to explain that all potential security risks are considered and discussions take place with the police about potential incidents prior to the Derby event. The Vice Chair acknowledged that this was a major concern during this year's security briefings and the police advised the racecourse all the way through. The Vice Chair thanked the Member for raising the concern.
- d) **Trespass Incident.** A Member of the Conservators S Dow asked if the trespass incident that occurred the week before the Derby has been attributed to the presence of travellers in the area. The Vice Chair stated that to his knowledge the unauthorised encampment that arrived were purely people who wanted to come early to move onto the travellers' camp on the Downs and as soon as the camp opened, they moved straight on there. The Vice Chair explained they tried to avoid this situation of early arrivals on the Downs but acknowledged there wasn't a lot that could be done. He explained that the Jockey Club will be banking the edges of the area to try and ensure that the same situation does not happen again next year. The Vice Chair also expressed a wish to have a better relationship with the people that organise the travellers camp on the day. The Member expressed that they were concerned about the track trespass incident and highlighted a specific concern about damage to the track prior to the Derby event. The Vice Chair explained that when the incident happened, it was quickly stopped, and that it is suspected to have been locals, not those staying in the travellers' camp. The Vice Chair informed Conservators that they were aware of what needed to be done to avoid a similar incident happening next year.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the update on the 2025 Derby from the Epsom Downs Racecourse**

## 7 FINAL ACCOUNTS 2024/25

The Conservators received a report seeking approval of the Conservators' final accounts for the financial year 2024/25.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Receive the final accounts for 2024/25, subject to external audit.**
- (2) **Consider and 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) **Nominate and authorise the Chair and Clerk to sign the Annual Governance Statement and the Accounting Statements on behalf of the Conservators.**

8 EPSOM DOWNS MODEL AIRCRAFT CLUB (EDMAC) MOBILITY IMPAIRED PARKING - ANNUAL REVIEW

The Conservators received an annual review of the Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club (EDMAC) Mobility Impaired Parking Scheme on Epsom and Walton Downs and a request for permission for the scheme to be granted on a permanent basis.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Model Aircraft development.** A Member of the Conservators raised concerns about the potential evolution of Model Aircrafts, to become more drone-like, and potentially interfere with the training of racehorses. This concern made them hesitant to give permanent permission to EDMAC. The Chair informed Conservators that the recommendation could be amended if needed. The Chair suggested that a question could be raised to EDMAC at Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee.
- b) **Report recommendation.** A Member of the Conservators raised that the recommendation could be amended to say, 'subject to there being no serious concerns raised with the Council', as this adds a helpful proviso if issues are raised and allows Conservators to deal with them quickly. The Chair raised that the recommendation could be changed to give permission for another year but not permanently, so the report comes again to Conservators next June.
- c) **No issues.** A Member of the Conservators pointed out that this parking arrangement has been proposed to be granted permanently because there have been no issues or complaints since the inception of the scheme. Another Member echoed this comment.
- d) **Suspend.** A Member of the Conservators asked if an issue did arise, do the Conservators have the power to suspend without notice. The Chair

informed the Committee he would take the question away and ask legal officers. The Chair explained that EDMAC have been very positive users of the Downs and have not caused any problems but always work productively with other users of the Downs.

- e) **Report.** A Member of the Conservators highlighted that paragraph 1.4 of the report sets out that 'it is proposed the scheme is granted on a permanent basis, with the caveat that it will return to be reviewed by Conservators if any issues arise,' which covers the Conservators if any problems do arise and need addressing. The Assistant Head of Service – Streetcare assured Conservators that if any issue was to arise with any stakeholders, they would be informed and the problem addressed immediately.
- Councillor Frost proposed that the wording in paragraph 1.4 was added to the end of recommendation 2. This would mean recommendation 2 would read as ***'Grant permission for the Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club Mobility Impaired Parking Scheme on a permanent basis, with the caveat that it will return to be reviewed by Conservators if any issues arise.'***

Councillor Spickett seconded the motion.

Conservators agreed (7 for and 1 abstention) in favour of the amendment to the recommendation.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the success of the scheme.**
- (2) **Grant permission for the Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club Mobility Impaired Parking Scheme on a permanent basis, with the caveat that it will return to be reviewed by Conservators if any issues arise.**

## 9 VENDING ON THE DOWNS - UPDATE

The Conservators received a report on the Vending on the Downs pilot scheme.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Trading Hours.** A Member of Conservators asked for clarification as to what the trading hours will be for the catering van in the Mile Post Car Park. The Assistant Head of Service – Streetcare explained that the vendor was planning on starting from 8am. The Member explained they were interested in knowing the closure time, due to the location, closure of London Road, and security risks. The Assistant Head of Service – Streetcare explained that the catering van would close in line with the London Road gate and wouldn't be trading any later than that. The Member raised that this could mean the catering van is trading as late as 9pm on a summers evening. The Assistant Head of Service – Streetcare confirmed that as true. The Member expressed that this was of concern to

the security of the racecourse. This concern was echoed by another Member. The Chair and Assistant Head of Service – Streetcare informed Conservators that this is a pilot scheme and if any changes need to be made, they can be quickly.

- b) **Concern.** A Member of Conservators expressed that they are hesitant to encourage people onto the Downs, into and around the Mile Post Car Park, towards the closing time of the London Road Gate. The Chair noted the comments and assured Members that these concerns would be raised with the vendor. The Assistant Head of Service – Streetcare explained that a risk assessment has also been conducted, to ensure the vendors safety, due to the remote location and chance of anti-social behaviour.
- c) **Licenced Trading Hours.** A Member of the Conservators queried if the licence would have maximum hours of trading and specify and earliest and latest time the vendor would be permitted to trade. The Member raised that if the licence does not currently include this, then perhaps it could be included that the licence timing will be subject to discussion with Conservators involved in the training industry. The Assistant Head of Service – Streetcare explained that so far, the hours had been flexible and the vendor in the viewpoint car park conducts her trade purely in the morning and early afternoon.
- Councillor Frost proposed that an additional sentence was added to recommendation two.

‘(2) Receive an update on the proposed start date of the Tiger Lily Bus Company at the Mile Post Car Park. ***The licence for the Tiger Lily Bus Company at the Mile Post Car Park should include and give consideration to the hours of trading, following discussions with the Jockey Club and Training Grounds Management Board and the final decision and recommendation should be made in consultation with the Chair, Clerk to the Conservators and Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare.***’

Simon Dow seconded the amendment to recommendation two.

The Conservators agreed (7 FOR, 1 ABSTAINING) in favour of the proposed addition.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the success of the Chill and Grill Mobile Catering Unit stationed at the View Point Car Park and agree to extend the licence for a further twelve-month period.**
- (2) **Receive an update on the proposed start date of the Tiger Lily Bus Company at the Mile Post Car Park. The licence for the Tiger Lily Bus Company at the Mile Post Car Park should include and give consideration to the hours of trading, following discussions with the Jockey Club and Training Grounds Management Board and the final**

**decision and recommendation should be made in consultation with the Chair, Clerk to the Conservators and Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare.**

**(3) Note the new position of the Ice Cream Van.**

**10 FEASIBILITY STUDY TO REINTRODUCE GRAZING TO JUNIPER HILL**

The Conservators received a report exploring the feasibility of reintroducing grazing to Juniper Hill.

The grassland of Juniper Hill bears special attention as it has been considered to be the best of its type in Surrey. It is regarded by the Epsom and Ewell Local Biodiversity Action Plan working group as a top priority to conserve and enhance.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Animal welfare.** A Member of the Conservators asked who would look after the animals. The Senior Countryside Officer explained that this can be explored if Conservators agree they are happy, in principle, for grazing to be reintroduced on the downs. The Senior Countryside Officer stated that she would be looking for volunteers to help and is hoping to drum up support from local people. She explained that Epsom Common is very successful grazed, and volunteers check on the livestock every day. She acknowledged that there would be a need for some staff to overlook the site and organise, support, and manage volunteers and explained that further discussions regarding staff resource need to take place. She highlighted that staff would need to be on hand to react in case of vandalism or other issues.
- b) **Number of sheep.** A Member of the Conservators asked how many sheep would be used for grazing. The Senior Countryside Officer explained that there are two options, either two or three sheep grazing constantly or you have more sheep over a shorter period of time, grazing for specific period.
- c) **Sheep rustling.** A Member of the Conservators raised concerns about sheep rustling. The Member highlighted that there is a concern with having predominantly volunteers dealing with the site in case of emergencies. The Senior Countryside Officer explained that the volunteers would walk the fence line every day and check it is electrified and check the condition of the animals, the water supply etc. and raise any issues for a member of staff to deal with. The Senior Countryside Officer informed the Conservators that they had discussed sheep grazing with Jenny Price, who runs the Langley Vale Woodland Trust. The Langley Vale Woodland Trust use Michael Jelly's sheep for grazing. They have not experienced issues of sheep rustling. The Senior Countryside Officer explained that Michael Jelly's sheep could also be used for grazing on Juniper Hill, and then as part of that arrangement, Michael would be on

hand straight away if there are any issues and he would also support the day-to-day jobs and maintenance.

- d) **Hiring Sheep.** A Member of the Conservators queried why sheep would be hired rather than bought and asked what the cost difference is. The Senior Countryside Officer explained that the sheep can be bought but that brings in another level of responsibility and things to consider. She also explained that she would be look at and costing different options to compare and bring back to Conservators for their comments and approval.
- e) **Biodiversity benefits.** A Member of the Conservators expressed their support for the project and explained the importance of yellow ants in further benefitting the plants and how the sheep help to aid the yellow ants. The Chair noted the comments.
- f) **Site Visit.** A Member of the Conservators raised that a site visit would be helpful to understand the site and be shown how it would impact that area. The Chair confirmed that a site visit will be arranged for Conservators.
- g) **CIL funding.** A Member of the Conservators suggested that CIL funding might be an option for the project and particularly to fund the fencing. The Member highlighted that the most robust fencing possible within the funding constraints, would be best.
- h) **Local Government Reorganisation.** A Member of the Conservators raised that it would be prudent to start discussions with relevant groups and stakeholders regarding the transitions that will take place over the next few years as Local Government in Surrey changes substantially. The Clerk to the Conservators explained that the current arrangement and any agreements will need to be revisited with the new authority, and it is assumed that any new authority will step in where Epsom and Ewell Borough Council currently sit on the Conservators. The Clerk made clear that we do not currently know what will happen and await further direction and input from Central Government. The Chair commented that hopefully a new authority would also take over the Council's Habitat Management Plan for the Downs.
- i) **Previous grazing.** A Member of the Conservators asked why grazing on the Downs was stopped in the past. The Assistant Head of Service – Streetcare explained that it was due to an outbreak of blue tongue which affected the sheep. She explained that the project was never picked back up after the sheep were removed from the Downs.
- j) **Geology.** A Member of the Conservators raised that if Epsom and Ewell become part of a unitary, under the three unitary option, the districts involved share a geology, which is important to understand and acknowledge.
- k) **Sheep escaping.** The Vice Chair expressed that the most important concern from a racecourse and training ground perspective is sheep



escaping and getting onto the gallop, so the more robust the fencing is, the better.

- l) **Fencing options.** The Senior Countryside Officer explained that permanent fencing would be the most robust option and set out that it would be best to add a permanent fence on either side of the footpath and bridlepath that goes through the middle of the site, so there is no issue with horse gates or people getting into the livestock enclosure. The Senior Countryside Officer explained that if Conservators agree down the line that grazing will not be constant and instead will only take place for a specific period, then the central fencing could be temporary and could be removed when there are no sheep grazing. She explained that permanent fencing is more expensive than temporary fencing.
- The Chair proposed that the Conservators agree that permanent fencing should be used to secure the livestock, as a decision is requested in recommendation 2.

Simon Dow seconded the proposal.

The Conservators unanimously agreed to decide that permanent fencing should be used to secure the livestock.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Agree in principle to reintroduce grazing to Juniper Hill, subject to a further report presented to the Conservators at their January 2026 meeting which will include detailed capital and revenue expenditure requirements and funding options.**
- (2) **Decide if permanent or temporary fencing should be used to secure livestock.**

*The meeting began at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.14 pm*

COUNCILLOR STEVEN MCCORMICK (CHAIR)

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