

## Minutes of the Meeting of the EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSERVATORS held on 18 January 2017

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### PRESENT -

Councillor Liz Frost (Chairman); Andrew Cooper (Epsom Downs Racecourse) (Vice-Chairman); Councillor Rekha Bansil, Simon Durrant (Epsom Downs Racecourse), Councillor Robert Foote (Items 24 - 30 only), 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 and Simon Dow (Horserace Betting Levy Board)

Officers present: Frances Rutter (Clerk to the Conservators), Kathryn Beldon (Treasurer to the Conservators), Simon Young (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Sam Beak (Downs Manager), Bob Harding (Head Downskeeper), Samantha Whitehead (Streetcare Manager) and Tim Richardson (Democratic Services Officer)

### 22 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators held on 5 October 2016 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

### 23 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). It was noted that the most recent meeting of the TGMB had been held on 17 January 2017. The following matters were considered by the Conservators:

- a) Hatched area, foot of Walton Downs. The Conservators noted that the TGMB had agreed that signs for this area would be amended to show either "open" or "closed". The TGMB had also agreed to open a marked route within the area for hack ride use when ground conditions permitted, but would not tolerate any misuse by hack riders.
- b) Downskeeper staffing levels. The TGMB had expressed concern that due to the staffing challenges currently being faced by the Downskeepers, patrols of the gallops during training hours had reduced.

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*Note: Further consideration of this issue is contained within Minute 25 of this meeting, below.*

- c) Horse margin, Langley Vale farm to Shepherds Walk. Nigel Whybrow informed the Conservators that resurfacing works were due to be completed on 19 January 2017.

## 24 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS AND OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

The following matter was considered:

- a) Hack Sand Track, foot of Walton Downs. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services corrected the information contained within the Agenda papers. The Conservators were informed that a letter had not yet been sent to the Horse Race Betting Levy Board via recorded delivery. This would be done as a priority following this meeting.

## 25 REPORT OF THE HEAD DOWNSKEEPER

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

- a) Staffing issues. The Conservators were informed that 1 member of the Downskeeper team was presently on long term sick leave, 1 member was on paternity leave, and a further member was due to resign, as they were emigrating from the country. To address concerns that this would leave the team short-handed, a recruitment process had been initiated to replace the team member who would resign, and a member of the Council's Ranger Service would be seconded to assist with duties in the interim period.

The Conservators noted the action being taken to address the pressure on the capacity of the Downskeeper team, but expressed concern that any staff seconded or appointed to the Downskeepers team would also need to be aware of the specific issues affecting the Downs, and be competent to assist in issues involving horses. The Conservators were informed that the member of staff seconded to the Downskeepers had assisted them previously, and had received appropriate training.

The concerns expressed by the TGMB with regard to patrols of the racehorse training gallops (see Minute 23 b, above) had been noted by officers, and the Streetcare Manager would meet the Chairman of the local Trainers Association (Mr Roger Ingram) to discuss the matter. The Head Downskeeper had also instructed the Downskeeper team to increase the number of gallops patrols undertaken, but this had to be balanced with their other high priority duties on the Downs. The Downskeepers would keep a record of the number and time of patrols undertaken.

The Conservators were also informed of a recent post on Facebook in which an individual had encouraged hack riders to participate in use of the racehorse training Polytrack. It was noted that such incidents could potentially be best managed by directly approaching the parties involved and informing them that such activity was not permitted.

## 26 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES FOR EVENTS ON THE DOWNS

The Conservators received a report providing a review of the Fees and Charges for events on the Downs. Following consideration, the Conservators agreed the proposed changes to the Fees and Charges Policy, detailed in Annexe 1 to the report.

## 27 BUDGET 2017-18

The Conservators received a report seeking approval to the 2017/18 budget and to the amounts to be recovered from the constituent bodies. The following matters were considered:

- a) Pension fund contribution. The Treasurer informed the Conservators that the estimated pension fund contribution within the budget had been increased from £28,000 to £30,000, but that it was uncertain whether this increase would actually be required.
- b) Fuel costs. The Conservators were informed that the budgeted amount of £9,000 for fuel costs included a buffer which would absorb an increase in fuel prices if they occurred.

Following consideration, the Conservators:

- (1) Agreed the budget as set out in Annexe 1 to the report, including a request for a 2.3% increase in precept from the constituent bodies as follows:
  - Epsom and Ewell Borough Council: £227,890
  - Epsom Downs Racecourse: £113,940
  - Epsom and Walton Downs Training Board: £37,980

## 28 PARKING ON LAND IN FRONT OF DERBY ARMS

The Conservators received a report presenting a request from Epsom Downs Racecourse for permission to park cars on land in front of the Derby Arms public house at times when events were being held at the Racecourse. The following matters were considered:

- a) Ecological matters. The Lower Mole Countryside Management Service representative informed the Conservators that he did not have any ecological concerns with regard to the proposal.

- b) Purpose of request. Simon Durrant informed the Conservators that the area identified in the proposal had been used for overflow car parking for events held at Epsom Downs Racecourse for a number of years, but that direct consent had not been sought from the Conservators. This application had been submitted to the Conservators to seek such consent, and regularise the arrangements.
- c) Level of usage of area. Simon Durrant informed the Conservators that the number of occasions on which the area had been used for parking had increased in 2016, as it had been used whilst roofing works to the Duchesses' Stand were underway. Following completion of those works, it had returned to its previous level of use. Simon Durrant informed the Conservators that he could not confirm on how many occasions the area was used for parking each year, but that this could be recorded in future.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the Conservators that if they wished to grant consent for use of the area for parking, they could also place restrictions on this consent, including a limit on the number of occasions per year.

- d) Use of alternative areas. Following questions from the Chairman and other members of the Conservators, Simon Durrant informed the meeting that Epsom Downs Racecourse utilised the area instead of alternatives (including the piece of land adjacent to Tattenham Corner Road & the race track which was referred to as car park 15 during racedays), as it had better drainage and provided a more pleasant customer experience.
- e) Visual impact. Concerns were expressed by members of the Conservators that use of the area for parking could adversely impact on the visual appearance of the area and landscape. Simon Durrant informed the Conservators that the Racecourse had no intention of turning the area into a permanent car park, but wished to continue to use it when necessary for event overflow parking.
- f) Access to the area for vehicles. Simon Durrant informed the Conservators that a barrier was located at the entrance to the area, which restricted access by vehicles. This was opened and manned during times at which parking on the area took place. The barrier did not impede access for pedestrians or horse riders.
- g) Designation as a Hack Area and Hack Ride. The area was designated as an area for hack riding by the Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984, and the Conservators noted that consultation with Hack Rider representatives should be included within any consultations undertaken with regard to the proposal.
- h) Public Consultation. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised the Conservators that public consultation on the proposal should be undertaken prior to consent being granted, should the Conservators be minded to approve it. It was suggested that this could include writing

directly to the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee (including Hack Rider Representatives), Local Residents' Associations and Ward Councillors, and placing information on the Borough Council's website and e-Borough Insight magazine.

Following consideration, the Conservators:

- (1) Agreed in principle to the request from Epsom Downs Racecourse for consent to use the area identified within the report for parking at times in addition to those already permitted.
- (2) Agreed that public consultation on the request submitted by Epsom Downs Racecourse should be undertaken prior to a full decision being taken upon it, and that the wording and scope of this consultation would be circulated to all Members of the Conservators by the Council's Head of Legal and Democratic Services prior to its publication.

## 29 EPSOM DOWNS RACING SEASON 2017

The Conservators received a report informing them of the dates of race meetings in 2017 and presenting a request from Epsom Downs Racecourse for extensions to the periods permitted for fencing. The following matter was noted:

- a) Access to Lonsdale Enclosure for hack riding. Simon Durrant informed the Conservators that fencing of the Lonsdale Enclosure would include gates to enable access for hack riders wishing to use the hack area located within it.

Following consideration of the report, the Conservators:

- (1) Noted the dates of the 2017 racing season for Epsom Downs, and granted their consent to the following meetings in accordance with section 14 of the Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984:
  - Thursday 6 July (Evening)
  - Thursday 13 July (Evening)
  - Thursday 20 July (Evening)
  - Thursday 3 August (Evening)
  - Sunday 1 October
- (2) Noted that Epsom Downs Racecourse had applied to Surrey County Council for the temporary suspension of Footpath 50 as detailed in section 3 of the report.

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- (3) Agreed to grant consent under Byelaw 2 (i) (a) to bring forward the start of the fencing period for the Upper Tattenham Enclosure and Lonsdale Enclosure for the Derby festival to 15 May 2017.
  - (4) Agreed to grant consent under Byelaw 2 (i) (a) to extend the fencing period for the Lonsdale Enclosure to enable fencing to remain in place between the dates of 14 – 21 June 2017.

### 30 OUTSTANDING REFERENCES

The Conservators received and noted the position of their outstanding references. The following matter was noted:

- a) Signposting of the Downs. The Conservators were informed that an audit of signs on the Downs had been completed by the Downskeepers, and that a report regarding it would be presented to a future meeting.

*The meeting began at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.55 pm*

COUNCILLOR LIZ FROST (CHAIRMAN)