

Minutes of the Meeting of the EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE held on 13 March 2017

PRESENT -

Councillor Liz Frost (Chairman); Councillor Jean Steer, Hugh Craddock (British Horse Society), Simon Durrant (Epsom Downs Racecourse), Alex Stewart (Epsom Downs Riders Protection Society) and Nigel Whybrow (Training Grounds Management Board).

In Attendance: Richard Balsdon (College Ward Residents' Association), Angela Clifford (Epsom Civic Society), Bob Eberhard (Epsom and Ewell Cycle Action Group), David Lambert (Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club) and Conor Morrow (Lower Mole Countryside Management Service)

Absent: Caroline Baldock (Epsom Equestrian Conservation Group), Andrew Cooper (Epsom Downs Racecourse), Nick Harrison (Tattenhams Residents' Association), Mark Harvey (Epsom Golf Club), Roger Marples (Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club) and Steven McCormick (Woodcote Residents' Association)

Officers present: Kathryn Beldon (Director of Finance and Resources), Simon Young (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Sam Beak (Leisure Development Manager), Bob Harding (Head Downskeeper), Samantha Whitehead (Streetcare Manager) and Tim Richardson (Democratic Services Officer)

10 CLERK TO THE CONSERVATORS

The Chairman informed the Committee that Frances Rutter, current Chief Executive and Clerk to the Conservators was leaving Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to take up a new post. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council had appointed Kathryn Beldon as its new Chief Executive, and Clerk to the Conservators. Kathryn would take up her position at the start of April 2017. The Committee welcomed Kathryn to the meeting.

11 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee held on 26 September 2016 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman. The following matters were noted:

- a) Minute 4 b) Cars on the roadway outside the Rubbing House. The Committee noted that it would be consulted on improvements to the parking at the Rubbing House if the Racecourse wished to proceed with a proposal.

- b) Minute 6 c) – Access to Lonsdale Enclosure hack area on non-race days. The Hack Rider Representatives expressed their thanks to Epsom Downs Racecourse for its procurement of gates which would be installed in the Lonsdale Enclosure fencing from this year.

12 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MEETING

The Committee received and noted a report providing updates on matters raised previously. The following item was noted:

- a) Hack Sand Track, foot of Walton Downs. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the Committee that a letter setting out the Conservator's position with regard to the track would be sent to the Horse Race Betting Levy Board again via recorded delivery in the near future.

Please note: further consideration of matters relating to this item are recorded within Minute 15 a) of this meeting.

13 REPORT OF THE HEAD DOWNSKEEPER

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

- a) Afternoon Patrols. The Committee noted that as the Downskeepers were now nearer a full complement of staff, additional patrols of the gallops would be undertaken in the afternoons and at weekends to address concerns expressed by racehorse trainers that hack riders were travelling outside of their designated areas. The Streetcare Manager informed the Committee that these would not be at the detriment to the other afternoon duties undertaken by the Downskeepers, such as bin emptying and the management of other users of the Downs, including kite flyers and dog walkers.
- b) Hack riding map and information event for Downs users. It was noted that the Head Downskeeper was in the process of producing a revised hack riding map which could be provided to local livery stables to inform Downs users of the areas available to them.

The Hack Rider Representatives suggested that a public information event could be held on the Downs for hack riders to show them where they were and were not permitted to ride. The Hack Rider Representatives offered to provide assistance in holding the event if it would be helpful. The Representatives were thanked for this suggestion and offer, and the Committee noted that the Streetcare Manager would look into arranging such an event. The Epsom Downs Racecourse Representative offered to host the event, if a venue was required.

14 ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE CONSERVATORS

The Committee received and noted a report providing a summary of items of interest considered at the meetings of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators held on 5 October 2016 and 18 January 2017. The following matters were considered:

- a) Parking on land in front of the Derby Arms public house – public consultation. The Committee noted that the public consultation for the proposal submitted to the Conservators by Epsom Downs Racecourse (for permission to use the land in front of the Derby Arms public house for event overflow parking) had not yet started. There were several matters to be clarified prior to such a consultation being launched, but all representatives on the Consultative Committee would be informed once it was, and invited to submit their views on the proposal.

Please note: further consideration of matters relating to this item are recorded within Minute 15 b) of this meeting.

- b) Vision for Epsom and Walton Downs Training. The Epsom Downs Racecourse representative informed the Committee that the purpose of the vision document produced by the Training Grounds Management Board (TGMB) was to reaffirm the importance of the racehorse training community to the local area, and to build on the history and facilities already in place. The number of horses in training on Epsom and Walton Downs had reduced significantly over the past 10-15 years, and one of the objectives of the vision was to address this. Working groups had been formed by the TGMB to consider how best to take proposals forward, and the Committee was informed that involving the local community would be central to much of this work.
- c) Ice cream vending on the Downs. The Committee noted that the ice cream vendor using the Downs had now applied for, and received a licence.
- d) Closing time for car park gates. The Committee noted that the Streetcare Manager would look into the potential to alter the closing time of the car park gates on the Downs. If any significant amendments were proposed, it would be reported to the Conservators.
- e) Memorial plaques for benches. The Committee was informed that memorial plaques* were not permitted on benches under the Conservators' policy.
- *Post script: following the meeting, officers confirmed that dedications inscribed directly onto the benches were also not permitted under the policy.
- f) Parking in Derby Stables Road. The British Horse Society Representative informed the Committee that he had chosen not to pursue stronger

waiting restrictions in Derby Stables Road, as it may have also inhibited the use of the area for parking horse boxes. It was noted the Surrey County Council Local Committee for Epsom and Ewell had recently approved minor changes to the area.

- g) Horse Margin, Langley Vale farm to Shepherds Walk – condition of hedge. The British Horse Society Representative informed the Committee that the condition of the hedge in this location was patchy and poor. It was noted that whilst this area was outside the Downs as defined by the Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984, the Chairman would raise the matter with Surrey County Council.

15 ISSUES RAISED BY THE HACK RIDERS REPRESENTATIVES

The following matters were raised by the Hack Rider Representatives:

- a) Hack Sand Track, foot of Walton Downs. The Hack Riders Representatives informed the Committee that no maintenance work had been undertaken to the track in the past 18 months and enquired whether any could be undertaken whilst the matter was being considered by the Conservators and Horse Race Betting Levy Board. The Committee was informed that legal advice to the Conservators was that it was not their responsibility to maintain the track, and that by doing so they would be opening themselves to liability should an incident occur on it.

Please note: further consideration of matters relating to this item are recorded within Minute 12 a) of this meeting.

- b) Parking on land in front of Derby Arms public house. The Hack Riders Representatives informed the Committee that the perimeter of this area was marked as being open to pedestrian traffic on the Deposited Map for the Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984, and asked whether it was intended to maintain this if the proposal to utilise it for event overflow parking (see Minute 13 a) above) was approved. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the meeting that this was a matter for consideration during the public consultation.

Please note: further consideration of matters relating to this item are recorded within Minute 14 a) of this meeting.

- c) Use of hatched area for hack riding. The Committee was informed that the Training Grounds Management Board would consider at its next meeting the likely timescale for opening the hatched area to hack riding use.
- d) Hack marker post update. The Committee was informed that the Downskeepers had completed an audit of hack marker posts on the Downs, to identify those which required maintenance or replacement during the winter work programme. This had been provided to the Hack Rider Representatives prior to the meeting, for their information. It was

noted that areas in which markings were ambiguous or unclear would be discussed with the Hack Rider Representatives to identify improvements.

- e) Scrub clearance along hack ride in vicinity of top of Rifle Butts Alley. The Committee noted that some clearance work had already been undertaken in this area, but that further would be done.
- f) Signs on the Downs. The Committee was informed that an audit of signs on the Downs had been completed by the Downskeepers and would be presented to the next meeting of the Conservators.
- g) Reinstatement of afternoon hack ride on Six Mile Hill. The Committee was informed that extensive scrub clearance had been undertaken in this area, and that a flail-mower would be used to complete the works once the weather permitted. The Hack Rider Representatives highlighted that railings adjacent to the polytrack at the up-hill end of the area had been removed during works to extend the polytrack. The representatives expressed that these railings had previously assisted in directing hack riders away from trespassing onto the gallops.
- h) Maintenance of triangular hack area east of Downs House – procurement of specialist cut and collect machinery. The Committee was informed that it had not been possible to procure specialist machinery to enable grass in this area to be cut and collected, due to its prohibitive cost.

16 ISSUES RAISED FOR CONSIDERATION

The following items were raised by representatives to the Committee:

- a) Condition of path near fibresand track. As the representative who had requested that this item be included on the agenda was not present, the Committee felt it had insufficient information to consider it.
- b) 'No Horses' notice at entrance to Warren Recreation Ground – damage to posts. It was noted that the condition of these signs would be looked into by the Downskeepers.
- c) Condition of the Warren Wall and surrounding woodland. The Epsom Civic Society Representative informed the Committee that it had been reported to her that the Warren Wall and its surrounding woodland was in poor condition and required maintenance. The Streetcare Manager informed the meeting that the Wall was owned by Epsom Downs Racecourse. The Maintenance Downskeeper had visited the location and only identified one area of concern. It was noted that the issue would be further looked into and reported back if appropriate.

17 ITEMS FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE CONSERVATORS

The Committee felt that no items from the meeting would require verbal representation to the Conservators.

The meeting began at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.53 pm

COUNCILLOR LIZ FROST (CHAIRMAN)