

Wimbledon and Putney Commons: Election of Conservators 2018



Jonathan Callaway

Why do you want to be a Conservator?

I have been a Putney resident since 1988 and have always enjoyed walking and cycling on both Wimbledon and Putney Commons. I love these open spaces and greatly value the feeling of the open countryside they bring close to the heart of London, especially as I am a keen birdwatcher.

The independence of the Commons was established by the 1871 Act to ensure they remain free of local government and political control. I will work tirelessly and collaboratively with fellow trustees and management to maintain this independence and preserve the Commons in their natural state.

Like many residents I was concerned when the Charity Commission opened a Statutory Inquiry in August 2016 and appointed an Interim Manager in May 2017. While we must let the Commission complete its work there remains much that trustees can do to steady the ship and stabilise finances. I am keen to contribute to this.

What experience and skills do you feel you could bring to the role?

After a career in international and investment banking I have undertaken a number of roles in the voluntary sector. I am currently Deputy Chairman of the Putney Society, a trustee of the Battersea Arts Centre and a member of the Board of the British Library (a ministerial appointment). I was formerly a trustee of Wandsworth Museum and I have been a Magistrate (JP) since 2005.

My experience in the charity sector enables me to bring management experience, governance expertise, knowledge of the benefits of collegial working and fundraising experience.

My professional banking career enables me to bring a good understanding of financial matters including business plan preparation, cashflow planning and budgetary control.

While my strong preference is to work collaboratively I will not shy away from tough decisions if they are needed. I believe it is important to build closer relationships with all stakeholders, including local residents and Commons users.

How will you support implementation of the Commons' Vision and Strategy?

I fully support the principal elements of the Strategy, especially:

- **Safeguarding the Commons** as open, unenclosed and unbuilt-on spaces free from intrusive commercialisation while protecting the rich wildlife and maintaining SSSI status
- **Engaging with local communities**, especially through the Stakeholder Group (on which the Putney Society is well represented). Improving communications with all levy-payers is crucial, including consultation on any new measures.

I believe the Strategy needs to be underpinned by a rigorous business plan based on close control of costs and optimisation of new revenue sources, given the persistent operating deficit and the possibility of yet more expenditure on professional fees.

I accept that the charity's constitution and the 1871 Act need updating but see this as a longer term issue. The Conservators need to operate as openly and transparently as possible and the publication of the Strategy is a welcome step in the right direction.