

Malvern Hills Trust
Covid-19 Contingency Committee
By telephone conference call
Meeting 7 May 2020 4.00pm

Present: Mr R Bartholomew, Dr S Braim, Mr M Cordey, Mr M Davies, Mrs C Palmer, Prof J Raine, Mrs G Rees, Ms S Rouse

In attendance: CEO, Finance and Administration Manager, Secretary to the Board

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Apologies for absence**

The Conservation Manager.

2. **Declarations of interest**

There were none.

3. **Chair's announcements**

No comments had been received. The Chair had responded to the letter from 4 trustees which had been discussed last week (see schedule).

4. **To approve the minutes of the last meeting**

On the proposal of Mr Bartholomew, seconded by Mrs Palmer, it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2020.

5. **Summary of actions taken in the last week**

The CEO reported that it had been a relatively quiet week on the Hills. The 3 Field Staff on duty and the Operations Manager were fully occupied with maintenance and grass cutting. Two wardens would be on duty each day over the bank holiday weekend. The office staff had been very busy making contingency plans should the Prime Minister announce changes to the lockdown on Monday which would result in the need to re-open the car parks. Once the car parks were open, the Trust would need to re-start sale of passes and the libraries were not expected to open in the near future. This meant all sales would have to be dealt with by the Trust. He was looking into setting up renewal of residents' passes only on the web site. He estimated about 5,000 renewals were due. New pass applications and non-resident passes would have to be dealt with over the phone or by E-mail (there were no plans to open the office to the public). Before pass sales started, the Administrative Assistant would have to be brought back off furlough. If the libraries were not open, additional help would be required for a short period whilst the bulk of the renewals were taking place. He was looking into employing a temporary member of staff for a month or thereabouts. If that person dealt with the sale of 2,500 passes, the cost of employing them would be cost neutral, compared with the commission charged for selling those passes through the libraries. It was agreed that the CEO should make provision for a rush of car pass applications when the car parks opened.

The CEO was looking at the health and safety aspects of re-opening the car parks and PPE.

6. Financial update

The Finance and Administration Manager reported that she had chased up the application for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants.

She had circulated the second draft of the year end management accounts. She drew the committee's attention to the adjustment for annual leave carried over. This year, the figure was twice the normal level as a result of the Covid 19 crisis falling at the end of the holiday year. This figure did not include over-time carried over.

The CEO had not needed to exercise his delegated power to authorise additional expenditure.

7. Car Parks

The CEO had been making plans so that car parks could be opened when appropriate. He had been in touch with other national organisations to get what information he could on their intentions. Inaparc were visiting on Monday to check the car park ticket machines, set them up to function without the need to input the vehicle registration numbers and to make the machines card payments only. There were other arrangements to finalise (eg queueing). He was concerned that there could be an increased number of people travelling and parking where they should not, unless the Government gave clear guidance. The car parks might need to be open to avoid damage to Trust land.

It was agreed that the Trust should wait for a further Government announcement and be aware of what other organisations were doing. When the car parks were opened the public would have to take their own precautions to reduce any infection risk. The Trust needed to make that clear by publicity and notices where appropriate.

8. Any other matters for discussion

There were no items.

9. Date of next meeting

Next meeting 11 May 2020 at 9.30am (by telephone conference).

The meeting closed at 4.45pm

Schedule

Gentlemen,

Thank you for your letter of Thursday 30th April 2020 sent by email which was distributed to Contingency Committee members and discussed at Friday's meeting.

The Covid Contingency Committee was mandated by a unanimous vote of the board, in which you participated, with: "A temporary delegation of the exercise of Board powers to a sub group comprising the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Board, Land Management Committee, Finance Administration and Resources Committee, Staffing Committee and Governance Committees for the 'emergency period', the exercise of such powers to be limited to making any urgent decisions including authorising unbudgeted expenditure (in addition to the CEO's authority) of up to £40k in total."

I am and the other members of the Committee are content that its administrative arrangements, including the timing of its meetings are currently fit for its purposes and that the reporting of its deliberations and decisions is timely and is sufficiently detailed given the scope of the delegated powers. All decisions taken by the Committee and the information on which those decisions are taken are recorded in the minutes which are subject to amendment and approval by the participants. Individual trustees may disagree with the conclusions but of course, those decisions taken by the delegated group acting within its mandate are valid decisions, nevertheless.

Meanwhile, the staff continue to be engaged with operational matters and continue to make operational decisions that are reported in outline to the Committee at each of its meetings. Those reports are intended to inform the members view about the 'normal' tasks to be done and the capacity of the staff to do them and about the additional work being done to adapt to the short and longer term exigencies of the C-19 situation. That work includes planning for and implementing solutions for long term remote working, dealing with the public and maintaining good governance.

The minutes of the meeting of 1 May will record that there was discussion about measures designed to restore wider trustee engagement. The staff are continuing to work as they have been for more than two months, with our IT support contractors, on the implementation of measures including the use of remote attendance at meetings to enable the non-urgent but nevertheless important work of the Trust to proceed. The experience of some of your number in deploying video technology in other contexts is noted and is shared by the Committee members who, apart from its use from the start for our weekly meetings, are all regularly engaged with its use in several forms by other bodies.

Finally, as I am sure you appreciate, it is not within my gift to "ensure that the full programme of MHT meetings are resumed before the end of May 2020 ". It would be inappropriate that anyone should be able to direct trustees or drive decisions through with insufficient consideration by all trustees and other stakeholders.

Suffice to say that I will be working to ensure that we all have an equal opportunity to work in the best interests of the Trust in these uncertain times and that I value the support of everyone that takes that opportunity, not least the staff whose personal investment in and selfless commitment to our cause is quite admirable.

Best regards

Mick Davies