

Malvern Hills Trust

Finance Administration and Resources Committee

By Video/telephone conference

Thursday 06 May 2021 7.00pm

Present: Mr R Bartholomew, Mr Core (Chair), Mr M Davies, Mr M Dyde, Mr J Michael, Mr C Penn, Prof J Raine, Ms S Rouse.

In attendance: Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Finance and Administration Manager, Secretary to the Board, Community and Conservation Officer, Financial Assistant, Mr C Atkins, Dr S Braim, Mr R Fowler, Mr T Parsons, Mr C Rouse.

Mr Core welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence

Mr D Fellows, Mrs L Hodgson.

2. Chair's communications

- Pensions workshop - this was to be scheduled for Autumn
- A Tree Safety Working Group meeting would be held on 13th May 2021

3. Declarations of interest

There were none.

4. Public comments

There were none.

5. Matters arising from the previous meetings not otherwise on the agenda

The Finance and Administration Manager reported that in 2019/20, 201 parking charge notices had been issued, and in 2020/1, the Trust issued 497. The public counter re-opened on 4 May 2021 for the sale of parking passes only. The majority of the renewals were taking place online.

6. Restricted and Designated Fund budgets 2021/22

The CEO reported that the Trust was not going to be able to take up an offer of Countryside Stewardship (CS) for Castlemorton in 2021. Castlemorton Common was part of Common Land Unit 9. The CS system was now structured so that applications had to be submitted for the whole of the Common Land Unit and all landowners had to agree to the scheme. The agreement of the owner of the other part of the common (Coombegreen Common) had not been forthcoming. A successful CS application for Castlemorton would have brought in around £52,000pa. The graziers had been made aware of the situation and discussions were ongoing.

Another application had been submitted to start January 2022 as a precaution. The Trust had lodged an appeal with Natural England's review panel which was due to sit week commencing 10 May.¹

7. Wording of Trustees' report for the year ended 31st March 2021

The Committee went through the wording of the draft report and noted a number of minor changes which needed to be made. The CEO was asked whether the Business Plan been blown off course by Covid? He confirmed that some projects had not happened as planned and the Finance and Administration Manager suggested adding wording to the effect that some elements of the Plan had been disrupted by Covid.

8. Letter from Charity Commission February 2021

The Committee did not identify any further actions which needed to be taken.

9. Audit Plan

This had been provided by the Auditors for information. The "going concern" procedures required as part of the audit had been strengthened because of Covid and as a result there would need to be a formal "going concern" review at the August meeting. The audit would be carried out remotely this year.

10. GDPR

There had been no reported data breaches.

11. Reports - for information

11.1 Management accounts for the 12 months ended 31.03.21

The Finance and Administration Manager reported that the car park takings had been £129,000 over budget at the year end. The Trust would need to consider how best to make use of these funds – it was clear that the cost of tree works was likely to increase significantly as a result of ash dieback, and a budget would also be needed if the Board agreed to go ahead with Governance Reform. The FRS102 pension figure had increased. This was an accounting figure and was not the figure on which the Trust's pension contributions were based. These were currently fixed until 2022/23.

In relation to the 2018 CS Scheme for North and Central Hills, the RPA had reclassified some of the Trust's land mid scheme and this was affecting payments. The Conservation Manager had challenged the reclassification but it was not clear what the eventual settlement would be. The CEO added that if a satisfactory outcome was not achieved the Trust would have to raise a formal complaint.

The Finance and Administration Manager asked whether the Committee was happy with the format of the Management Accounts and whether any

¹ The application submitted for an agreement to start in January 2022 was for a part common. The review panel hearing is to decide whether this application for a part common can proceed or not.

additional information would be helpful. Amalgamating two of the columns in relation to the CS Scheme for the Central and Northern Hills was suggested.

Mr Core thanked the CEO and the Finance and Administration Manager for achieving a very good outcome in a challenging financial year.

Mr Davies said he hoped to see the “windfall” from car park income ring-fenced for specific purposes. The Finance and Administration Manager agreed that it would be appropriate to create a designated fund once the Tree Safety Working Group had reported and similarly for the governance reforms.

The car park meter takings in April 2021 were once again £16,000 over budget.

The Finance and Administration Manager explained that some car park repairs had been commissioned before the year end but took place after the year end and she requested that the allocated cost be transferred to a designated fund. On the proposal of Mr Bartholomew, seconded by Mr Davies it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to transfer £5,000 budgeted for car park repairs to a designated fund to be spent in 2021/22.

11.2 Review of major projects (including land management)

The CEO went through the paper. Since the report was written the seating had been installed at the Community Woodland.

The repairs at British Camp were still being evaluated.

Some work had been undertaken at Manor House in order to accommodate the fourth warden due to start work later in May.

The track past the British Camp toilets needed to be upgraded in order to carry out the replacement of the sewage system. A quote for carrying out the work had been obtained totaling £6,200.

A requirement (not set out on the schedule) to carry out further patch filling to the Beacon Track and other places had been identified and the CEO would refer these back to the committee for authorization the cost if it became clear they could not be accommodated from the car park maintenance budget.

11.3 Governance Review costs – report from monitoring team

No further costs had been incurred.

11.4 Report of CEO’s exercise of delegated expenditure powers

The CEO had not authorized any extra expenditure.

11.5 Fundraising and Legacy –working group

There had been no meeting.

11.6 Red flag items off the risk schedule

The CEO confirmed that there had been no change identified in risk levels.

12. Urgent Business

On the proposal of Mr Bartholomew seconded by Prof Raine it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve expenditure of £6,200 under the Committee's delegated authority to fund improvements to the track past the toilets at British Camp.

13. Date and time of next meeting

12 August 2021 7pm

14. Confidential business

On the proposal of Mr Davies, seconded by Mr Michael it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to exclude the public for discussion of items 15 and 16 on the agenda on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the exempt or confidential nature of the business to be transacted (commercially sensitive/legal matter)

The meeting closed at 8.56pm