

**Trustee Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 9th May, 2024.**

**Present:-** Councillors Dauti (Chair), Stedmond (Vice-Chair), Ajaib, Mohammad, Muvvala and W. Sabah

**Also present under Rule 30:-** Councillors Ahmed, Dhillon and Iftakhar.

**PART 1**

**13. Declarations of Interest**

All Councillors declared a non-registerable Interest, stating that they were residents of Slough.

**14. Minutes of the meeting held on 8th February 2023**

**Resolved** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2023 be approved as a correct record.

**15. Ongoing funding of maintenance of parks and open spaces in Slough held in Trust**

The Group Manager, Environmental Services introduced the report which set out details of ongoing funding of maintenance of parks and open spaces in Slough which were held in Trust. Trustees were reminded that historically the Council had funded elements of general and specialist grounds maintenance works on Trust land and this had formed part of the environmental services revenue budget, essentially providing a subsidy to the Trusts. This issue was raised by Commissioners in reviewing the 2020/21 accounts to the Committee and in commenting on the 2021/22 Trust accounts as reported to the Committee in February 2023.

Details of the gap between income and expenditure for each Trust, in regard to core maintenance, were highlighted and a summary of options outlined as to how each Trust could operate moving forward to minimise the council subsidising what was primarily Trustee responsibilities; while acknowledging both the wider responsibilities of the Council and its financial position and sustainability of the trusts.

A number of points were raised in the ensuing discussion, which included:

- A Member asked what measures were in place, in relation to Langley War Memorial Field and Baylis War Memorial Garden, to ensure that there was no requirement for future subsidy from the Council. It was explained that current reserves and income for both Langley and Baylis meant that, based on current forecasts, there were sufficient funds to cover the core maintenance costs for approximately ten years. Several Members highlighted that consideration would need to be given to unforeseen expenses and how these would be accommodated.

**Trustee Committee - 09.05.24**

- It was noted that a strategy would be required to secure the long term sustainability of the Trusts to avoid and minimise subsidy from the Council. It was critical that income streams to the Trusts were explored, linking to community engagement work already planned by the Council, which included building on existing event and other income, reviewing management of income development as well as reviewing existing leases on buildings and facilities.
- The Chair expressed disappointment that the report did not contain a detailed breakdown of income and expenditure for the respective Trusts and referred specifically to Langley Pavilion. Officers agreed that income figures for Langley Pavilion would be provided to the Chair.
- Referring to Salt Hill Park (SHP), a Member queried why the income stream was minimal, relative to the size of the park and what measures could be taken to increase revenue. Income for SHP was received from rent received from two buildings within the park – The Barn Restaurant (Kashmiri Karahi) and Slough Refugee Centre. It was brought to Members attention that the trust deed clause included subsidy as part of the original arrangement and the terms of any leases would need to be reviewed and reported to the Committee in due course.
- Whilst discussing potential income streams, it was suggested as an alternative to minimising costs, that community groups be approached to assist towards the maintenance of parks. Members were informed that the Council would continue to seek support from volunteers to carry out works and where successful this would reduce expenditure needed to fund council officers to undertake this. Officers referred to the success of the volunteer group for SHP, which met every Thursday and assisted with grounds maintenance works.
- Clarification was sought as to where revenue received for the Trusts was held and if the Trusts had their own bank accounts and in turn whether the Council or the Trusts paid for maintenance charges. It was noted that there was no separate bank account for Trusts and that there would likely be cost implications for the Trusts should this be established. Further details would be included in a future report to the Committee, which would also examine greater accounting transparency.
- Members requested that a breakdown of accounts for each of the Trusts held be provided and that returns to the Charity Commission be submitted as soon as possible. It was agreed that an extraordinary meeting would be convened in July 2024 to consider the Trusts accounts.

Councillor Iftakhar, speaking under Rule 30, stated that Langley War Memorial (LWM) was established to benefit the residents of Langley and in his opinion that had not happened. Concern was expressed that the Committee had not received Trust accounts and that there was no strategy in place to manage the trusts effectively. Furthermore, figures referred to for the annual maintenance costs for LWM did not include contingency funds for any unforeseen or emergency costs. It was noted that a long term strategy paper, examining the sustainability of the trusts and any changes in the overall

**Trustee Committee - 09.05.24**

management and structure would be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

**Resolved -**

- a) The trustees noted the issues with the Salt Hill Playing Fields Trust which continued to receive a level of council subsidy towards the scheduled grounds maintenance of the parks detailed in sections 2.4 and the tables 1 and 2 in that section of the report. Agreed that there will be an additional trustee report for Summer 2024 on the Salt Hill Playing Fields Trust informed by the final accounts information to consider these issues in more depth.
- b) Agreed that Langley War Memorial Field Trust continues to be maintained to existing standards for an extended period (estimated as up to 10 years while funds available), using commuted sums allocated to the Trust from recent highways improvement works and existing income.
- c) Agreed that Baylis War Memorial Gardens Trust continues to be maintained to existing standards using Trust funding held in reserves while that funding lasts.
- d) That Council officers on behalf of the Trusts and as discussed in the report seek to further increase income and minimise costs for the Trusts and build in future sustainability to the position where possible.
- e) Agreed that for Trusts a full cost recovery model will operated as a core principle from 2024/25. Further information is in section 3. This may require loan or other arrangements for some of the trusts that do not have sufficient funds to meet obligations, this issue will be dealt with in more detail in later reports to the trustees.
- f) Agreed that the further trustee report for Summer 2024 will deal with other costs including overhead charges for all the trusts where Slough Borough Council is a trustee.
- g) A long-term strategy paper informed by the financials and stakeholders will be presented during 2024 including any changes in overall management and structure of the trusts.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.38 pm)