

**MALVERN HILLS CONSERVATORS
FINANCE, ADMINISTRATION & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**Manor House, Grange Road, Malvern
Thursday 26 February, 7:00pm**

Present: Rev'd Attwood, Mr M Cordey, Mr R Cousins, Mr R Madden, Mr R Morton, Prof J Raine, Ms H Stace (ex officio), Mr D Street (Chairman), Mr P Tuthill, Mr P Watson.

In Attendance: Director, Finance and Administration Manager, Secretary to the Board, Finance Assistant, Conservation Officer, Mr A Golightly, Mr C Rouse, Mr T Yapp.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr S Ginn.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

There had been one nomination and Mr Street was elected unopposed.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

There had been one nomination and Mr Cordey was elected unopposed.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

**6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON THE 13
NOVEMBER 2014**

There were none.

**7. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS FOR 9 MONTHS ENDING 31
DECEMBER 2014**

The Finance and Administration Manager went through Paper A. At present MHC were significantly ahead of budget. Parking fees in particular were £8,500 ahead of budget.

However, there would be significant expenditure in the last quarter - on land management, work on the wardens' vehicles and administration costs, in particular in connection with the pensions review. She anticipated that at the year end, the budget would be at break even.

In response to a question from Mr Madden, the Finance and Administration Manager clarified that the budget showed a loss after transfers of about £20,000. She thought that the favourable variance at the end of the year would be in the region of £20 – 25,000. There was a discussion about the vehicles. The Director said that at present there was not a replacement schedule for them, and this was being considered. The Management Accounts were **NOTED**.

8. REVIEW FEES AND CHARGES FOR FAIRS AND CIRCUSES

The Director went through Paper B. A review of the fees was well overdue. The Director was conscious that the current fairs and circuses were fairly small and MHC did not want to put the organisers off holding the events in Malvern. Mr Watson suggested a staged increase in fees. Mr Tuthill asked about having different rates of charge on operating and non-operating days and was in favour of making the increase in one go. The Director felt that having operating and non-operating days would make administration of the events more time consuming for staff. Other comments included ascertaining the rates paid by the organisers at other sites which they visited and the impact of the percentage increase that the proposed rise would represent.

On the proposal of Mr Cordey, seconded by Mr Cousins it was **RESOLVED** by a majority of 7 votes to 2 with one abstention that the Committee recommend to the Board (with effect from 1st April 2015) (a) an increase in fees for use of Link Common by fairs and circuses to £150 per day (b) an increase in the returnable bond to £500 and (c) an increase in the non-returnable bond to £100 **AND** that fees for circuses and fairs be reviewed annually.

The Committee asked whether the Director could find more information about other sites visited by the fairs and circuses that came to Malvern.

9. APPROVAL OF TERMS OF REFERENCE AND BUDGET FOR PENSIONS WORKING GROUP

A meeting had been arranged at County Hall with the actuary and the manager of the pension fund. The Actuary would charge for this meeting as well as preparation time. Mr Tuthill felt that this was a significant issue for MHC and referred to the consequences of MHC being a separate group within the main Worcestershire County Council pension scheme. Mr Street said this could be raised by the Working Group at their meeting. The Group would also take advice on whether MHC should move to a defined contribution scheme. Mr Tuthill pointed out that there was relevant information on the Worcestershire County Council web site. The Working Group still hoped to report back to the Committee in May. Mr Madden thought it might be necessary to create a provision

at the year end to cover additional costs if the pension arrangements were to be changed.

On the proposal of Mr Street, seconded by Mr Watson it was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Committee approve the terms of reference set out in Paper C and a budget of £5,000 (plus VAT) for the Pensions Working Group.

10. PROVIDING LIVESTOCK FOR GRAZING CASTLEMORTON COMMON

The Conservation Officer went through Paper D. In response to questions he made the following points: The prices for purchase of stock set out in the paper were approximate, as they varied from day to day. The difference between the purchase price and the sale price of the animals would be paid to the grazier on sale to recompense him for the time taken and expense incurred looking after the cattle. This payment together with the livestock unit payments under the HLS scheme was needed to make the arrangement viable for the grazier. MHC was looking to manage around 180ha of Castlemorton Common under this arrangement, and the remainder of the total area of 275ha was currently being grazed by sheep. The cattle could keep on top of around 60 ha of land for the three years of the agreement. It would cost around £10,000 to mechanically cut 60ha once. There were currently reserves in the HLS fund of around £100,000 less any salary re-charges. Once the stock was sold, the money would be re-paid into the HLS reserve.

The Conservation Officer confirmed that there were 20 cattle (plus calves) being grazed under the HLS scheme on Castlemorton Common at the moment. Anyone with commoners' rights could also put cattle out on the common. They would not have to participate in the HLS scheme. At present there were a total of around 45 cattle on the common. Only one grazier had expressed interest in the proposed management arrangement at present. It was a one-off trial and it would be assessed at the end of the 3 year period in the light of the circumstances at that time.

Mr Golightly said that some of the existing graziers were complaining and also that 13 livestock units would only have a very limited effect on the grass. Mr Cordey asked if there was a risk of alienating the other graziers? In response to a question from Mr Madden, the Secretary to the Board pointed out that the arrangement was not intended to be a commercial one, and the Conservation Officer explained that if MHC were to seek to retain a larger percentage of the sale price, the arrangement would not be worthwhile for the grazier. Mr Tuthill asked what would happen if the other grazier asked for the same arrangement. The Director replied that the other grazier was not in the HLS grazing scheme and their situation

in relation to grazing cattle in future was uncertain. This arrangement was a one off trial and there was no plan to extend the scheme. The Chairman reported that the Land Management Committee had approved the principle of the proposed arrangement but the details were referred to this committee for consideration and approval.

On the proposal of Mr Street, seconded by Rev'd Attwood it was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Committee recommend to the Board that they approve the drawing up and enacting of a 3 year trial Livestock Management Agreement as described in Paper D and the associated expenditure.

The Committee commended the Conservation Officer on the paper which he had presented to the meeting.

11.34 WYCHE ROAD

On the proposal of Mr Cousins, seconded by Mr Madden it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to exclude the public for the discussion of item 11 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)

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MINUTES RELEASED

The Director presented Paper E to the meeting. Consideration of the Acts by the Charity Commission Scheme Working Group had revealed provisions enabling MHC to sell or let the property. It could be sold in its current state or refurbished. Ms Stace pointed out that there was no member of staff available to oversee work on the property other than the Director. Views had been sought from 2 estate agents, and if the property was sold as it was, one had suggested selling at auction and the other by private treaty using sealed bids. Selling with an “embarrassment clause” in the contract was discussed by the Committee but the idea was dismissed. It was agreed that the Director should look into the possibility of selling the garage owned by MHC with the house. The garage was located approximately 100 yards from the house at Earnslaw car park. On the proposal of Mr Madden, seconded by Mr Watson it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to recommend to the Board that 34 Wyche Road be sold in its present condition on the open market.

The meeting was re-opened to the public.

12. UPDATE ON INVESTMENTS

The Finance and Administration Manager reported that Brewin Dolphin had invested about 70% of the fund which had been remitted to them, and the value as at 24 February had increased by about £18,000. She agreed to send a copy of the investment policy to Mr Madden.

13. UPDATE ST ANN'S WELL

There had been a delay in applying for listed building consent as the architect had applied before Christmas for pre-planning advice, but nothing had been heard. The Director had now asked him to go ahead with the formal application without further delay. Mr Tuthill suggested speaking to Mr Hall-Jones both as the local member and also because of his particular interest in listed buildings in Malvern.

The meeting closed at 8.44pm