

## **Malvern Hills Trust**

Finance Administration and Resources Committee

Manor House, Grange Road, Malvern WR14 3EY

Thursday 14 February 2019 7.00pm

**Present:** Mr R Bartholomew, Mr D. Bryer, Mr M Cordey, Mr M Davies (Chair), Mr S Freeman, Mrs L Hodgson (arrived during item 6.1), Mr C Penn, Ms S Rouse, Mr D Street, Mr P Watson.

**In attendance:** Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Finance and Administration Manager, Secretary to the Board, Financial Assistant, Mr C Rouse, 2 members of the public.

**Did not attend:** Prof J Raine

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Mr S Braim.

2. **Chair's communications**

The Chair confirmed that the Special Board meeting provisionally set for 28 February had had to be postponed.

3. **Declarations of interest**

There were none.

4. **Matters arising from the previous meeting 13 December 2018**

The CEO confirmed that the draft contract for the installation and maintenance of new car park ticket machines was being checked. The successful bidder was unable to install the new machines until late April and had agreed to change the charge rate on the old machines from 1 April free of charge, because of the delay.

The Finance and Administration Officer said that the tax base had been received from Malvern Hills District Council and the percentage rate of increase of the precept for householders would be 2.7%.

5. **Red flag items off the risk schedule**

The main risk remained the future of the Agri-environment Schemes after Brexit. Mr Penn asked about the proposals for the future of Natural England. The CEO confirmed that there was a threat of a large reduction in staffing levels which was a cause for grave concern and MHT had written to DEFRA about this.

6. **Reports**

6.1 **Management accounts for the year ended 30<sup>st</sup> December 2018**

The Finance & Administration Manager presented her report. The accounts to 31 December showed a surplus of £27,000. This was less than budgeted but given that an additional £45,000 had been transferred to the Charity Commission Scheme designated fund, she was content with the position. The reserves were in excess of the target figures.

Since 31 December, £25,380 had been received towards the arrears of payments due under Higher Level Stewardship Scheme, and the outstanding payments were as shown in the paper. Payments falling due in July 2018 were still outstanding in relation to the Schemes for the Southern Hills and Castlemorton.

(Mrs Hodgson arrived).

The CEO confirmed that the IT budget would be spent by the year end.

## **6.2 Review of major projects**

The CEO went through the report. He pointed out that this list was of major projects, not of ongoing maintenance.

Mountain bike campaign - Once all the routes had signs in place, the emphasis of the Trust would be on enforcement on selected sites. The Community and Conservation Officer was looking for volunteers to help clear paths.

Visitor survey – This had been circulated to the Board. It would be an agenda item for the Land Management Committee. A count of the numbers of visitors still needed to be carried out.

Bridleway Link Common – A specification for the work had now been prepared, and would be paid for out of the gift aid fund. It was hoped that the County Council would make a contribution.

## **6.3 Charity Commission Scheme costs**

Invoiced costs to date were £108,654. Mr Davies said that MHT had asked for a breakdown of the solicitor's January invoice to enable the costs to be allocated to the work programme set out by their E-mail of October 2018.

## **6.4 Fund Raising**

There had been no meeting, but the Working Group would reconvene shortly.

## **6.5 Investments**

It had been agreed that Brewin Dolphin would attend the May FAR meeting and the September Board meeting. In the intervening quarters, the Chair of FAR, the CEO and the Finance and Administration Manager would meet with Ian Burrows to go through the portfolios and would then report back to FAR. It was also agreed that Mr Burrows would submit a monthly written report until the current political uncertainties were resolved.

MHT representatives met Mr Burrows on 28 January. The portfolio performance benchmark was +1.46%. The Lands Acquisition portfolio had achieved +2.07% and the Parliamentary and Lands Maintenance Funds +4.52% (year to date). The strategic view was unchanged. Mr Burrows felt the UK element in the portfolio was small and Brexit itself should not have a major effect. There was also uncertainty in Italy and Greece and he

reassured them that the portfolio was not vulnerable to risks in those countries. The interim reports would be provided to trustees on request.

#### **6.6 Exercise of CEO's delegated expenditure powers**

The CEO had authorized £1,600 expenditure for urgent repairs to the drainage field for British Camp toilets. The total delegated expenditure to date (from a maximum of £10,000) was £6,553.

#### **6.7 Manor House refurbishment**

MHT was awaiting a valuation of Manor House. The person engaged to carry this out had been ill, and the Finance and Administration Manager was awaiting further news.

### **7. Urgent Business**

There was a talk for Board members and staff on Malvern Water on 21 March.

### **8. Date and time of next meeting**

9 May 2019 7pm

### **9. Confidential items**

On the proposal of Mr Davies, seconded by Ms Rouse, it was **RESOLVED** to exclude the public for discussion of items 10,11,12 & 13 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 matter).

**The meeting closed at 8.10pm**