Malvern Hills Trust

Ordinary Meeting of Staffing Committee
Colwall Park Hotel, Malvern WR13 6QG
Thursday 9 October 2025 at 4.30 pm

Present: Frances Victory (Chair), David Baldwin, David Core (non-voting), Lucy Hodgson, Sheila Wren.

In attendance: CEO, Secretary to the Board.

1. **Apologies for absence**
   Richard Bartholomew, John Michael, John Raine.

2. **Chair's announcements**
   None.

3. **Declaration of interests**
   None.

4. **Public Comments**
   There were none, no members of the public being present.

5. **Matters arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2025**
   5.1. Staff Survey
   The CEO acknowledged with thanks the input from the Staff Trustee Protocol Working Group (PWG) and the Staffing Committee with taking forward actions from the Staff Survey. There had been a series of meetings over the summer and various, mainly operational, opportunities identified to take account of staff feedback. The CEO highlighted some priorities of particular interest to the committee and relevance to trustees:
   - Disciplinary Procedure for trustees to be updated;
   - Training to be provided on being an effective trustee;
   - Reception area at Manor House to be improved;
   - Training of frontline staff;
   - Resourcing of staff to service the now large Board.
   - Trustee induction to include a 'meet the team' session, including an introduction to outdoor staff to understand what they do, and explanation of the Staff Trustee Protocol.

   The CEO intended to report back to Staffing Committee on progress after six months. She advised that Senior Management Team (SMT) wished to see a full cycle of the survey, including implementation of actions, before there was a further survey. A trustee queried how long a 'full cycle' might be. It was suggested that two years would be sensible, since this gave sufficient time for implementation of actions from the previous survey. This did not affect the timeline for six month review. It was noted that there had been some staff turnover since the survey had been conducted and it was therefore possible that some needs identified pertained to former staff and might no longer exist. It was confirmed that all staff were encouraged to raise any issues with their line manager as they occurred. The CEO pointed out that there was a variety of opportunities for staff to speak up, for example at appraisal meetings (just completed), SMT meetings, and all staff meetings. She stressed that providing these opportunities was a priority for her.

The CEO shared feedback received from one manager that the Staffing Committee's visit to Top Shed had been much appreciated by staff; this represented a good outcome to the staff engagement survey. It was noted that it was planned to hold the April 2026 meeting at Top Shed.

6. **Staffing Matters**

6.1. Staff well-being

- It was noted that the Board had signed off the revised Safeguarding Policy at its meeting on 11 September.
- The Secretary to the Board reported that she had attended a two day Mental Health First Aid course with St John Ambulance and had returned to work with lots of ideas for promoting good mental health for staff.
- The Secretary to the Board noted that the Board had agreed to the Staffing Committee's recommendation that the CEO should not automatically be one of the Staff Points of Contact under the Prevention of Bullying & Harassment Policy. As Mental Health First Aider, she volunteered to take on this role herself, and this was agreed.

7. **Changes to Staff Handbook**

There were none.

8. **Volunteering**

The Committee received a paper prepared by the CEO on the contribution of volunteers to the work of the Trust in a variety of areas. Trustees recorded their thanks to volunteers for their excellent work and noted their major contribution to the Trust's work on keeping the hills beautiful. A trustee referred to a recent drop-in session at Malvern Theatres, when there had been good discussions on volunteering opportunities with people attending. A trustee complimented the CEO on a good report and asked whether there had been any interest in the volunteer communications post. The CEO said that the Community and Conservation Officer was in discussions with someone about this opportunity.

The CEO shared pictures of drop-in sessions and volunteer activities with committee members. She was pleased to report that Howden's Insurance had expressed interest in supporting the work on volunteers. In answer to a question about whether pictures were shared with the press, the CEO said that the Trust put out regular posts about its activities.

The CEO noted that volunteer levels were still lower than before the pandemic. There was no manager dedicated to recruiting volunteer support; this was normally done via the Rangers or the Conservation Team. The new Land Management Plan might provide an opportunity for increasing volunteering; there was an opportunity to identify larger research projects in Citizen Science, one of the focus areas identified for the new Plan. A trustee asked about expanding opportunities for corporate volunteering beyond Malvern, but the CEO said that currently corporate volunteering took place following an approach by a company; the Trust did not have the resources to run a corporate programme. A trustee suggested that the creation of a volunteering and fundraising manager post, perhaps part-time, might be included in the Trust's forward planning. The CEO though that this would be a natural fit to a 'head ranger' post, if the Trust had one. A trustee agreed that corporate volunteering was a missed opportunity for the Trust, pointing out that currently the Trust did not request donations from participants and suggesting that it needed to move to facilitating an opportunity for donation at the point of arrangement, in order to increase non-standard income.

A trustee asked whether the Trust's Health and Safety Advisor had taken a bespoke view of volunteer activities and existing procedures. The CEO drew attention to new advice on this quoted in the Health and Safety Report (item 10). Designated key volunteer leaders should consider the operational health and safety of key volunteers on the volunteer record. General volunteers on the hills completed a 'day sheet', which was a bespoke risk assessment. When a volunteer started work, they were shown a risk assessment appropriate to their role, which they were asked to sign; the signed copy was retained as a record.

In answer to a question as to whether the report should be published on the Trust's web site, the CEO pointed out there was already core information and role profiles available on the site. It was however agreed that this was an informative and accessible document and that it should be retained for future reference.

9. **Policies**

It was noted that a revised Health and Safety Statement and Policy was under review with the Health and Safety Working Group, pending presentation to the Board.

10. **Health and Safety Update**

The Committee received the CEO's health and safety report. She highlighted the following points:

- New orange PPE had been introduced for roadside working. A statement on roadside working was to be incorporated into the new Health and Safety Policy.
- The review of bin emptying continued; a paper would be going to the Land Management Committee meeting on 16 October. Trust staff had reported having to collect much more waste than previously, especially dog, domestic and motorhome waste; they had even had to deal with excrement from unauthorised encampments. The CEO was sorry to report there had been a

couple of staff absences from work following contact with bin contents; all staff had been advised to check that their tetanus vaccinations were up to date. It appeared that the current design of bins was inviting to people wanting to dump stuff; the design was under review, and the Sponsored Events policy would be amended to direct that events organisers must remove their own waste.

- The recent unauthorised encampments had prompted a number of written comments and phone calls to Manor House, causing much pressure to the front office team. The CEO confirmed that the Trust was entitled to remove camps but usually did so after dialogue. A trustee asked whether staff had experienced threatening behaviour from this. The CEO said there was more of a passive refusal to depart, with children used as a screen on one occasion, and delicate safeguarding conversations with Maggs Day Centre and the police proving necessary on another. A trustee asked whether this was done in conjunction with the district and county councils, especially the Gypsy/Roma/Traveller (GRT) team at the County Council. The CEO said this happened when appropriate; the authorities were always informed. She added that there were new powers for the police to move on encampments via a Section 61 notice, but those on the Trust's land had not met the threshold. There were therefore plans to create a clear Trust procedure for removing encampments.
- There had been nine reported incidents since the previous period, which the CEO acknowledged felt high. She highlighted problems with wasp stings, following an exceptional summer for wasp nests, and bin waste. In highlighting that the Trust was not responsible for injuries sustained on the hills, the CEO drew attention to a problem of some participants in the Malvern Hills Challenge in September having been inappropriately dressed for the conditions. A Ranger had been asked to transport one to safety.
- Four near misses had been reported during the period, which the Committee felt was more realistic than before. In noting that the Health and Safety Working Group would go through these, it was suggested that the Group might compare the near miss reports for the last two or three quarters.
- A trustee asked for assurance that staff had the necessary equipment and resources available, noting particularly the problem of two tractors being impounded. The CEO confirmed that this had been checked with staff. There had been one comment that a member of staff had felt obliged to buy non-standard first aid supplies. The CEO acknowledged that time was a resource and a challenge for staff to manage, but she was confident that all staff had the materials they needed to do their jobs. One of the rangers had passed on their thanks to the Board for agreeing to the purchase of the Suzuki truck. A trustee noted that another trustee had expressed concern in the Board meeting that the Trust did not know enough about the reliability of the Suzuki. It was confirmed that the Operations Manager had circulated a statement on this to trustees, to which there had been no response. The Operations Manager and his team would look carefully into when the truck might and might not be used, and the Health and Safety Advisor would be informed of the purchase.

- The CEO asked trustees to note training undertaken during the period and training that was planned, as listed in the paper.

11. **Training Update**
    - The Secretary to the Board reported that she had undertaken training in Conflict Management and Presentation Skills during the quieter summer period, and had registered for training on Microsoft Teams for Professionals, which she hoped would help to improve online meetings.
    - The CEO had undertaken training with ACEVO (Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations).
    - Appraisal training had been provided for all line managers.
    - The Secretary to the Board and Sheila Wren were due to meet with representatives from the Chartered Governance Institute to discuss bespoke training around ‘trustees steer, staff row’.

12. **Urgent Business**
    - The CEO was pleased to report that 10 members of staff had received long service certificates from the Chair of the Board at the All Staff meeting on 10 September, together with a modest one-off payment in their pay packets.
    - In answer to a question about a joint trustee/staff Christmas celebration, it was confirmed that there were no plans for such an event this year. The staff celebration would involve tree planting, followed by pub refreshments.
    - David Baldwin reported that he was going to assist the Trust on the management of wild fires. There was a new project to liaise between the Trust and the fire service.

13. **Date of next meeting**
    Date to be confirmed in January 2026

The meeting closed at 6.25 pm