

MALVERN HILLS CONSERVATORS ORDINARY MEETING OF THE BOARD

**Council Chamber, Avenue Road, Malvern
Thursday 10th December 2015, 7:00 pm**

Present: Mr R Bartholomew, Ms C Bovey, Mr S Braim, Mr D Bryer, Mr M Cordey, Mr M Davies, Dr P Forster, Mr S Freeman (Vice Chairman), Mr A Golightly, Mr R Hall-Jones (Chairman), Mr D Hawkins, Mr R Madden, Mrs C O'Donnell, Mr J O'Donnell, Mr C Penn, Mrs G Rees, Ms S Rouse, Mr C Rouse, Ms H Stace, Mr D Street, Mr P Watson, Mr T Yapp.

In attendance: Director, Community and Conservation Officer (CCO), Conservation Officer, Finance and Administration Manager, Secretary to the Board, Operations Manager, Warden (Mr R Vale), 3 members of the public.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr D Baldwin, Mrs P Cumming, Professor J Raine, Mrs S Stewart, Mr J Michael.

2. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

2.1 The Chairman introduced Hazel Robinson who would take the minutes of the meeting.

2.2 The Chairman informed the meeting that Nicky Quinn was leaving MHC in January and wished her well in her new job.

2.3 At the Chairman's Briefing it had been felt that more investigation was needed before item 18 on the agenda could be brought to the Board and he asked for the agreement of the meeting to withdraw that item.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A question from Dr Crisp had been dealt with prior to the meeting.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5. MINUTES OF THE LAST BOARD MEETING

Mr Street suggested a correction to item 8 of the minutes to clarify that whilst Board members could attend any committee meetings, they could only vote at meetings where they had been appointed a member of the committee. Mr Bartholomew said that he had been present at the last meeting and asked for the minutes be amended to reflect that. Subject to the above amendments, on the proposal of Mr Street, seconded by Mrs Rees, it was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the minutes of the meeting of 12 November 2015 be signed as a **TRUE** and **ACCURATE** record.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE BOARD MEETING

In response to a question from Mr Madden, the Chairman reported that a decision on the St Ann's Well planning application was expected imminently.

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS

7.1 FINANCE, ADMINISTRATION AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 26th NOVEMBER 2015

7.1.1 Mr Madden presented the minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2015. He suggested amendments to paragraphs 15 and 17 of the draft minutes. The Secretary to the Board confirmed that following his suggestion, she had amended the last sentence in minute 15 to read "Mr Madden said that he would like a business case prepared for F A & R Committee once the tendering exercise had been carried out." and the final words of minute 17 to read "Mr Madden said that the Committee needed to see a business case for the work, taking into account the rental. Mr Freeman said that MHC should ascertain what needed to be spent to comply with MHC's obligations as lessors". Subject to these amendments, on the proposal of Mr Madden, seconded by Mr Freeman, the **ACCURACY** of the minutes was **AGREED** by the members of the committee.

7.1.2 Matters arising

34 Wyche Road – The Secretary to the Board said that the sale had fallen through. She intended to review the appointment of the agents as she was disappointed that she had not been alerted sooner about the sale falling through. She would ask Connells to approach the other potential purchasers who had previously made offers, in case any were still willing to proceed. Mr Freeman said it would be useful to find out from the agent as to why the sale had fallen through. Mr Madden asked whether the property would deteriorate over the winter as it had no heating. The Operations Manager had checked the property recently and the Secretary to the Board confirmed the water had been turned off. She needed to take further advice on the current value of the property.

7.1.3 The resolutions passed at the meeting were approved by the Board item by item.

On the proposal of Mr Madden, seconded by Mr O'Donnell, it was **RESOLVED** (with one vote against) to adopt the resolution contained in minute 8 (rebranding).

On the proposal of Mr Madden, seconded by Ms Stace, it was **RESOLVED** (with one abstention) to adopt the resolution contained in minute 12 (staff handbook).

On the proposal of Mr Madden, seconded by Mr Cordey, it was **RESOLVED** (with one abstention) to adopt the resolution contained in minute 14 (business plan).

On the proposal of Mr Madden, seconded by Mr Freeman, it was **RESOLVED** (with two votes against) to adopt the resolution contained in minute 21 (Linking the Director's salary to Local Authority pay scales). Mr Street asked that before the matter was reconsidered, a proper case should be made for not linking the Director's salary to Local Authority pay scales.

In relation to minute 10, Mr R Madden went through the 2015/6 figures. It appeared at this stage that income and expenditure for the year would be within £1,000.

Two changes had been proposed to the draft budget presented to the F A & R meeting - an increase in car parking charges from £3.00 to £4.00 and an increase in precept to 5% per household.

Mr Madden drew attention to the figures for salaries, which accounted for around 70% of expenditure (which was not uncommon in a service type organisation). Mr Madden reported that Employers' pension contributions for 2016/7 (including funding the deficit) would be 41.9% of salary. The PR budget would increase by £13,000. He said it was important for the Board to adopt priorities in order to be as close to a balanced budget as possible.

Ms Bovey asked if, when parking charges were reviewed, consideration could be given to introducing hourly rates.

On the proposal of Mr Madden, seconded by Mr Cordey, it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to adopt the resolution contained in minute 10 (General Fund budget)

Mr Madden thanked the Finance and Administration Manager for all the work she had put into the preparation of the budget.

On the proposal of Mr Madden, seconded by Mr Cordey, it was **RESOLVED** (with one abstention) to adopt the minutes of the Finance Administration and Resources Committee meeting of 26 November 2015.

8. TO SET THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET AND LEVY FOR 2016/17

In response to a question from Mr Braim, the Finance and Administration Manager confirmed that a 5% increase (on the basis of the 2015/6 tax base) would equate to an increase of £1.58 for a band D household. It was agreed that it would be a good idea to provide a briefing paper setting out these detail for members. The Conservation Officer confirmed that the budget for work at Thirds Wood had been transferred from 2015/6 to the next financial year.

On the proposal of Mr Madden, seconded by Mr Cordey it was unanimously **RESOLVED:**

- a) to approve the General Fund budget for 2016/7 as presented to the meeting
- b) to set the levy for 2016/7 at £442,500

9. APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE TO MALVERN SPA ASSOCIATION

On the proposal of Mr Watson, seconded by Mr Freeman it was unanimously **RESOLVED** that Mrs O'Donnell be appointed as MHC representative to Malvern Spa Association.

10. TRAMPER UPDATE

The CCO reported that there had been an issue with insurance. It was now proposed to lease a Trumper for a year from a company who would also provide insurance cover.

So far £610 had been raised towards a total annual cost of around £1,000 and the AONB would provide additional funding through the SDF Fund. The Lessor needed to carry out a site assessment which would take place on 6th January 2016. The Director confirmed that although no unauthorised vehicles were allowed on the hills, MHC would authorise this use. He felt that MHC should encourage the disabled to enjoy access to the hills.

11. UPDATE ON APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR

Mr S Freeman informed the meeting that MHC had received a signed letter of acceptance of the post of Director from Mr Bridges. His start date was 1st February 2016. The Chairman planned to meet with Mr Bridges when he visited Malvern at Christmas.

12. MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Secretary to the Board said that she did not propose to go through the written report in detail. Mr Hall- Jones said that he hoped members would read the reports before the meeting and get in touch with staff in advance of the meeting if they had any queries. The Director asked for new Board members to give feedback to the Secretary to the Board on their experience of the induction process.

13. PROVISIONAL TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2016

The Chairman was not convinced that 4 Board meetings per year was enough. He hoped that the Governance Committee would look at that. It would be up to Committees to revise their meeting schedule and start times. The draft timetable was **NOTED**.

14. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

15. INFORMATION

- 12.1 Malvern Spa Association A written report had been submitted.
- 12.2 AONB Joint Advisory Committee A written report had been submitted.
- 12.3 Wildlife Panel No report as no meeting had taken place.
- 12.4 Recreation Advisory Panel A written report had been submitted.

Mr Braim suggested that names should not be reduced to initials in reports without a key as it made the report difficult to understand.

16. ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

The Land Management Plan and the report of the Pensions Working Group. It was hoped that a report on the pension scheme would be available at the next F A & R meeting.

The meeting closed at 7.55pm