



MINUTES OF THE BARHAM PARK TRUST COMMITTEE

Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 5 September 2022 at 10:00am

PRESENT: Councillor M. Butt (Chair), Councillor Mili Patel (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Donnelly-Jackson, Krupa Sheth and Tatler

Also Present: Councillor Lorber

1. **Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair for 2022-23**

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Muhammed Butt as Chair and Councillor Mili Patel as Vice-Chair of the Trust Committee for the 2022-23 Municipal Year.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

None.

3. **Declarations of interests**

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

4. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday 27 January 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

5. **Matters arising (if any)**

None.

6. **Public Representations**

Prior to consideration of the main agenda Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Chair) advised the Trust Committee that he had accepted a number of requests to speak at the meeting from a range of stakeholders in relation to matters due to be considered on the agenda.

Each representative was then invited to address the meeting with the following comments highlighted.

Councillor Lorber (representing the Friends of Barham Park Library) was the first to address the Trust Committee highlighting a number of property related issues relating to the current building on the estate. These included concerns in relation to out-dated signage around the complex and arrangements for the Fire Alarm test, which he advised were in addition to the points raised in a separate email submitted prior to the meeting regarding the provision of public toilet facilities, progress in a final decision being made on the use of Unit 7 and the potential use of alternative renewable energy sources.

Having thanked Councillor Lorber for his comments, Councillor Muhammed Butt advised that a written response on the various matters raised would need to be provided following the meeting. He then moved on to welcome Debbie Howe (Project Manager Dementia Hubs Brent) and invited her to address the meeting.

As well speaking on behalf of the Dementia Hubs Project, Debbie Howe advised that she was also representing Ashford Place & Community Action on Dementia in order to highlight the work being undertaken through the Dementia Memory Lounge and Café (supported by the Dementia Hub Project) in relation to community support, outreach work and private consultations for individuals suffering with Dementia and their families. In addition, the Trust were advised that the Hub were keen to explore the potential to enable temporary use of part of Unit 7 within the Barham Park Building in order to complement the support being provided through the provision of an additional dedicated space for small private advice & guidance sessions using part of the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) funding allocated to bring the Mess Room area back into use.

Councillor Muhammed Butt thanked Debbie Howe for her comments and the positive work being undertaken through the Dementia Hub Project in relation to the provision of dementia support across the borough. Whilst willing to consider the support available to address the issues highlighted, Councillor Butt advised it would not be possible to provide assurances around the unit identified at this stage, pending the outcome of the wider strategic property review of the Barham Park building.

As a final contribution, Councillor Muhammed Butt then invited Mahendra Desai (representing the Barham Park Veterans Club) to speak as one of the Trust's tenant organisations.

In addressing the Trust Committee Mahendra Desai advised he was speaking as Chair of the Veterans Club in order to outline concerns regarding the current state of repair, windows and upgrade of the boiler within Unit 2 of the Barham Park Building.

Councillor Butt thanked Mahendra Desai for his comments and attending the meeting and advised that the issues and concerns raised in relation to the current state of repair of the building had been noted. Whilst again highlighting the current strategic property review being undertaken in relation the building, he also highlighted potential use of the Carbon Offset Fund as a means of supporting the works required, which he assured the Veterans Club officers would also be considering in seeking to address the issues raised.

In noting the comments raised, Councillor Muhammed Butt thanked everyone who had spoken for their participation and advised that the issues raised would be responded to as appropriate during the remainder of the meeting.

7. Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22

Solomon Akuffo, Senior Finance Analyst, introduced the Annual Report and Accounts for the Barham Park Trust for 2021/22. In considering the report Members noted:

- The work undertaken on behalf of the Trust as detailed within the Annual Report, which had included repair and improvement works to the park and ongoing work to secure tenants for the various buildings on site.
- The accounts had been subject to an independent examination by the Head of Audit & Investigations, with the outcome attached as Appendix 3 to the report on the agenda. The audit had resulted in a minor adjustment to the Accounts in relation to property rental income, with it recommended that income related to the funfair held on the estate should be reported separately from all other property rental income. There had been no other issues regarding the accounts needing to be brought to the attention of the Trust Committee.
- The overall improvement in the Trust's Accounts for 2021/22 when compared to the previous year in terms of expenditure and income. During 2021/22 the Trust had incurred expenditure of £61,105 on maintenance of the building complex and park, which had all been comprised of unrestricted funds and was £35,178 less than the previous year. The Trust had generated £123,599 receipts from rental income and interest earned (an improvement of £23,681 from the previous year) although members were advised this also included £55,967 of cumulative rental income due but not yet paid. In terms of the Trust's overall assets this had resulted in an unrestricted cash fund balance of £141k (not including the £56k rental income due but not yet received) and a restricted cash fund balance of £353k which again represented an improved position when compared to 2020/21.
- The current position in respect of the restricted funds balance as at 31 March 22 and funding previously agreed, as detailed within sections 3.10 of the report.

The following comments and issues were highlighted by members in response to presentation of the 2021/22 Annual Report and Accounts:

- Whilst recognising the improvement in the Trust's financial position during 2021/22 details were sought on any potential risks identified in terms of the financial and operational viability and sustainability of the Trust. In response officers advised that the main risk identified had involved the arrears in relation to rental income. As mitigation, however, Members were advised of the arrangements established, following discussion with tenants, to improve collection and reduce the overall debt in an effort to clear the arrears incurred during the pandemic by March 2024.

Having noted the update provided and positive work being undertaken to manage the Trust's financial position in order to ensure the park and its facilities could be sustained over the long term as an important asset for the local community, the Trust Committee **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) Approve the annual report and the Barham Park Trust's Accounts for 2021/22.
- (2) Note the Independent Examiner's Review of the Barham Park Trust's Accounts for 2021/22.
- (3) Authorise officers to update the Charity Commission with the Annual Report and the Accounts for 2021/22 of the Barham Park Trust.

8. General Update Report

Chris Whyte, Director Environmental & Leisure, introduced the report providing an update on operational issues at Barham Park along with current progress on a range of projects. As context to the update provided, members were reminded of the decision made by the Trust on 27 January 2022 to appoint an architect to undertake an initial options appraisal of the Barham Park building as part of a strategic property review. The architect had subsequently been appointed and work was now progressing on the review with the proposals, once finalised, due to be reported back to the Trust Committee in order to consider the way forward. Pending this process being completed the position regarding the existing Units within the building would remain as previously reported.

Members were then provided with operational updates in relation to the following issues:

- Following a recent senior management restructure within the Council it was noted that delegation of the day-to-day trustee functions and decision making in relation to operational aspects of the Trust's activities would need to be updated from the Operational Director Environmental Services to the Director Environment & Leisure to reflect the change in post title.
- Security and anti-social behaviour - as detailed within section 3.2 of the report, with members noting that littering continued to be an issue alongside concerns relating to the feeding of pigeons. Members noted the work being undertaken with Veolia (as the operational grounds maintenance contractor) to maintain the cleanliness of the park working with volunteers, who were thanked for their efforts and support.
- Rough sleeping with the Park - as detailed in section 3.4 of the report, with members noting the ongoing work being undertaken with StreetLink and St Mungo's to address the issue and support those individuals sleeping rough to access accommodation and other assistance according to their needs. Members were advised that the east side recessed porch area of the Barham Park building had been used by one or more persons sleeping rough during the year. When vacated the area had received a thorough clean and jet-wash with anyone concerned about the welfare of rough sleepers being encouraged to report these via StreetLink London.
- Gated access – as detailed within section 3.5 of the report, with members advised that in response to security concerns officers had been investigating the feasibility of requests received from Unit 8 (Children Centre) and Units 3 & 5 (ACAVA) for a gate to cover the recessed porch area within each of the units. These proposals were being reviewed as part of the wider strategic property review in order to provide enhanced security to better assist with management of the Barham Park building.
- Park events – as detailed within section 3.6 – 3.7 of the report, with members having noted and welcomed the enhanced range of events successful hosted within the Park including the return of Irvin's Fun Fair, as well as Brent Let's Grow (a training event for young people organised by Young Brent Foundation) and also the Shree Gurupournima Utsav festival. In addition, members noted the resumption of the full range of many activities in the tenanted units within the Barham Park building following the pandemic.

- Thames Water works – as detailed within section 3.9 of the report. Whilst now completed, members noted the complex nature of the works which had needed to be undertaken as a result of a leak being identified with the public surface water system which had included the off-site design and manufacture of an insert replacement.
- General operational works – Members noted that operational grounds maintenance works continued to be undertaken by the Council's main contractor Veolia and welcomed the update provided on the Walled Garden having achieved a Silver Gilt award at London In Bloom in September 2021.
- Grass and meadows - with members noting the continued progress and improvements being made to the range of grasslands and associated wildlife within the park, as detailed within section 3.11 of the report.

In addition to the operational issues identified above, members also received updates in relation to the following specific property and tenancy related issues:

- Barham Park building – Pending the outcome of the strategic property review ongoing maintenance work continued across the building. This had included works to the porch area and to replace the gutters for Unit 2 (Barham Park Veterans Club) alongside work to the porch area and door for Unit 4 (Friends of Braham Park Library). Works were also underway to repair an area of the slate roof of Unit 10 (ACAVA) with the disused small lean-to in the east-side courtyard also having been removed to allow for better use of the space. Confirmation was provided that proposals were also being considered for the installation of a security gate on the east side and front of the building in order to enhance security and deter use of the area by rough sleepers.
- Fire Security System - with members noting the ongoing briefings being provided for tenant representatives on operation of the system, as detailed in section 3.13 of the report. It was noted that the annual service had now been completed with the test to be undertaken over the forthcoming weeks.
- Rent Arrears update – members noted the efforts made to significantly reduce the level of rent arrears by the Property and Debt Collection teams working with tenants of the building, as detailed within section 3.15 of the report. This has included the use of specific payment arrangements with it anticipated that the arrears accrued during the pandemic would be cleared by March 2024, which members welcomed as a positive step forward.
- 776-778 Harrow Road - Members noted the update provided in relation to the current position on the two cottages on the site. Members were reminded that whilst subject to a previous freehold sale the restrictive covenant in the sale required that the site be retained as two residential units. At its meeting on 1 September 2021, the Trust had resolved to authorise the Operational Director for Environmental Services to enter into discussions with the owners of 776-778 Harrow Road to explore the possibilities of reaching agreement to amend the restricting covenants on that property for the benefit of the Trust. These discussions were ongoing with the owner of the site, which the Trust would continue to be kept updated on moving forward. It was noted that a final decision on whether to amend the restrictive covenant and on what terms (in order for any application to be submitted to the Upper Tribunal Lands Chamber) would need to be made by the Trust Committee or delegated by the Trust Committee for officers to decide with an application in respect of

- planning permission being a matter for the Planning Department or Planning Committee rather than the Trust.
- The progress being made in relation to works previously approved through the Trust's Restricted Funds, as detailed within section 3.17 – 3.22 of the report. Members welcomed the works it had been possible to progress utilising grant funding through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) on the interior of the Barham Park building including the addition of roof insulation and attic repairs, where accessible, to the various Units together with the addition of new LED lighting and controls. Whilst works to replace the windows and upgrade the exterior of the building had also been included within the original PSDS bid, based on the potential for energy / Carbon Dioxide emission savings, further assessment had been required given the criteria needing to be met in relation to the carbon savings required and material to be used in the frames. As a result, it had not been possible to meet the timescales required for the allocation of funding for this element of the work under the previous grant scheme however the PSDS were considering bids for the next stage of the scheme with the potential identified to include some of the Barham Pak Building in that bid, subject to the revised criteria introduced.
 - The progress in relation to the funding of other works associated with tree planting and replacement, the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Garden and Walled Garden Pool as detailed within section 3.23 – 3.26 of the report.

In summing up, Chris Whyte (Director Environment & Leisure) took the opportunity to highlight the progress made in moving forward with management of the park and estate since the pandemic. This was not only in relation to the financial position of the Trust but also the ongoing maintenance and works to the building and park alongside a welcomed expansion in the programme of events and work progressing in relation to the wider strategic property review.

Having thanked officers for the updates provided the Chair then invited comments and questions from members of the Trust Committee, with the following issues raised:

- Given concerns relating to rising energy costs details were sought on the potential impact in terms of increased energy bills for tenants within the Barham Park building. In response Amin Soorma (Property Services) advised that tenants, under their existing agreements, would be required to meet the costs of the individual energy bills incurred for use of their respective units although officers remained aware and would continue to monitor the potential impact.

As no further issues were raised, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Chair) thanked officers, along with Veolia, for their efforts in maintaining and managing the park and facilities given their importance as a community asset. The need to focus on the wider strategic property issues and works identified in relation to the Barham Park building, particularly in relation to the security issues highlighted, were also recognised in view of the need to ensure a co-ordinated approach was maintained in seeking to secure the long-term use of the Trust's assets for the benefit of the local community.

As no further issues were raised it was **RESOLVED** on the basis of the discussion at the meeting:

- (1) To note the issues set out in the report.
- (2) To authorise that the day to day Trustee functions and decision making of the Barham Park Trust be delegated to the Council's Director of Environment & Leisure following the Council's senior management restructure process and to authorise any previous decisions of the Trust Committee to delegate authority to the Operational Director of Environmental Services that have yet to be exercised to be delegated to the Council's Director of Environment & Leisure.

9. **Any other urgent business**

No items of urgent business were raised at the meeting, with members noting that should any further meetings of the Trust Committee be required during the year these would be arranged as needed.

The meeting was declared closed at 10:33am

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT
Chair