

Report to:	TRUSTS AND CHARITIES COMMITTEE
Report of: Date of Decision:	Assistant Director of Property 18th March 2020
SUBJECT:	HIGHBURY TRUST – AWARD OF FUNDS TO CHAMBERLAIN HIGHBURY TRUST
Wards affected:	Moseley

1. Purpose of report:

To seek the Committee's approval to award a further grant to Chamberlain Highbury Trust from the unrestricted funds of the Highbury Estate

2. Decisions recommended:

That the Committee

- 2.1 notes the report submitted by Chamberlain Highbury Trust to update the Committee on recent activity; to account for the allocations to the Chamberlain Highbury Trust from the Highbury Trust in 2019/20; and to seek approval for allocations to cover operating costs in 2020/21 as set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Award a grant of £42,000 to Chamberlain Highbury Trust from the unrestricted funds of the Highbury Estate to offset the costs identified in the report in Appendix 1 subject to the completion of a further Condition of Grant Agreement to be submitted in due course.
- 2.3 To instruct officers in Finance and Legal Services to take all necessary steps to facilitate the award of the grant to Chamberlain Highbury Trust and report back to a future Committee meeting, once the grant application project has been completed.

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3. Compliance:

3.1 Consultations:

No additional separate consultation is envisaged at this stage. Ward Members have not been specifically consulted as this is not usually undertaken for Trust matters and this matter is not considered controversial.

3.2 Are there any relevant legal powers, personnel, equalities, procurement, regeneration and other relevant implications?

The City Council acts as Sole Corporate Trustee for a number of charitable and non-charitable Trusts and has delegated day to day decision making to the Trusts and Charities Committee. Charitable trust activity is regulated by the Charity Commission and any proposals relating to the Estate will be governed by the charity's Trust document as amended by any Scheme approved by the Charity Commission. Trustees can also rely on the provisions of the Section 6(1) Trusts of Land and Appointment of Trustee Act 1996 which provides an implied statutory power for the trustees to manage the assets of the Trust as absolute owner. The objects of the charity as set out in paragraph 4.4 are necessarily limited but will enable the future management of the estate without hindrance. Actions proposed by the Trustees are required to be in the best interests of the trust and are intended to safeguard the trust estate for the future.

The Highbury Trust holds the freehold interest of the land in trust as Sole Trustee and is empowered to undertake actions to properly manage the assets of the Trust including effecting repairs. Chamberlain Highbury Trust have been appointed to act as managing trustees for the Highbury Estate and have had grant awards to assist in funding their operations in previous years.

3.3 How will decisions be carried out within existing finances and resources?

The Committee has responsibility for ensuring the proper governance of the Trust in accordance with the objects and purposes of the trust and charity law and as Trustees to ensure that actions are undertaken within financial resources.

Highbury Trust's only income resources are the annual rent from the letting to Civic Catering of £65,950. This income would be sufficient to cover the request if approved. The continuation of Chamberlain Highbury Trust is very desirable at this stage and they cannot continue without financial support.

3.4 Main Risk Management and Equality Impact Assessment Issues (if any):

N/A. The statutory functions discharged by the Council as Trustee are subject to a separate and distinct statutory regime underpinned (principally) by the Charities Act 2011, Trustee Act 2000 and relevant Charity Commission guidance. These are non-executive functions and are therefore not subject to the Equalities Act 2010 provisions.

4. Relevant background/chronology of key events:

4.1 The Highbury Estate comprises approximately 13.03 hectares (32.2 acres) of park land including Highbury Hall and Chamberlain House and three lodges. It now accommodates part of Uffculme Special School in Chamberlain House and at 92 Queensbridge Road the Four Seasons Gardeners, an Adult Services enterprise.

4.2 The Estate was gifted by the heirs of the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain on 31st March 1932 and is held in trust as Registered Charity no 1039194 since 1994. Chamberlain Highbury Trust registered charity no. 1169845 has been set in place to best resolve the governance issues and to manage the Estate and seek external grants to enable the refurbishment of Highbury. Chamberlain Highbury Trust is actively progressing its bid to the NLHF in August 2018.

4.3 It has now submitted a report to update the Committee about their recent activity, to account for the allocations to the Chamberlain Highbury Trust from the Highbury Trust in 2019/20, and to seek approval for allocations to cover operating costs in 2020/21.

4.4 Aims and Objectives of the Charity

Each charitable asset is held as a separate trust and decisions need to be in the best interests of that trust. The terms of the gift at Highbury simply provided that the Trustees should hold them “in the first instance for use as a hospital for the treatment of limbless and other soldiers, sailors or pensioners” and “if and when the Trustees should consider that they were no longer needed for those purposes the Trustees should hold the property for such public purposes as they with the consent of the Corporation of Birmingham might determine or might at the request of the Corporation transfer it to them for the general benefit of the Citizens of Birmingham”. The Objects of the Charity remain as originally set “for the general benefit of the Citizens of Birmingham”. The Trust secured additional powers through the Charity Commission Scheme to effect disposals.

4.5 Trustee Powers

The charity’s constitution is set out within the executed Trust Deed, principally the acquisition deeds or as amended by any Scheme agreed with the Charity Commission. All decisions will be mindful of the original intention set out in the governing documents however subject to compliance with Charity law and Part 7 Charities Act 2011 sufficient powers exist for the Trustees to make decisions on the future of the assets.

4.6 Charity Finances

Formal accounts are required to be prepared for the Charity Commission returns where appropriate. The Highbury Trust has a revenue stream principally from the letting of Highbury to Civic Catering for the continuing use of the property as a wedding/conference centre but the cost of on-going repairs continually outstrips the resources available. However, the continuation of Chamberlain Highbury Trust and their proposed activities on the Estate are beneficial to the Trust and are to be welcomed and necessarily at this stage they require continuing financial support. If successful in their bids for NLHF and other monies, they would progress the refurbishment and take over the management of the Estate and over time end any need for the trust to directly support them.

5. Evaluation of alternative option:

5.1 There is currently no alternative to progressing matters via Chamberlain Highbury Trust as they resolve the former governance issues and represent the best opportunity to win new monies for the Estate. To properly support them financially in the meantime is an appropriate use of Trust funds. To do nothing is not an option.

6. Reasons for Decision(s):

6.1 To best safeguard the asset long term it is appropriate to continue to support Chamberlain Highbury Trust in the financial year 2020/21.

Date

Signatures

Chairman of the Trusts & Charities Committee

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Chief Officer
Assistant Director of Property (Interim)

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List of Background Documents used to compile this Report:

1. None.

List of Appendices accompanying this Report (if any):

1. Appendix 1 Report of Chamberlain Highbury Trust.