

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

**TRUST AND CHARITIES
COMMITTEE
13 NOVEMBER 2023**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
TRUSTS AND CHARITIES COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2023
AT 1130 HOURS IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, COUNCIL HOUSE, VICTORIA
SQUARE, BIRMINGHAM**

PRESENT: - Councillor Marcus Bernasconi in the Chair.

Councillors Kath Scott, David Pears, Phil Davis, Zafar Iqbal and Basharat Mahmood.

ALSO, PRESENT: -

Paul Ruffle – Senior Travel Demand Officer
Rajesh Parmar – Legal Services
Alison Jarrett – Director of Group and Capital Finance
Nigel Oliver – Operational Property Manager
Sofia Mirza – Committee Services

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NOTICE OF RECORDING

1109 It was noted that the meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Public-I microsite ([please click this link](#)) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1110 Councillor Phil Davis declared an interest in matters relating to Chamberlain Highbury Trust although it was not on the agenda as he sits as a Councillor's trustee.

APOLOGIES

1111 Councillor Maureen Cornish.

CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair announced that there had been changes to membership of the committee. It was noted that Councillors Phil Davis and Zafar Iqbal joined the Committee. Councillor Lisa Trickett was removed from the committee.

5073

MINUTES

1112 The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 June 2023, having been circulated, were confirmed by the Committee, and signed by the Chair with amendments to the typo on page 2.

REPORT NO. 6 – YOUNG ACTIVE TRAVEL TRUST GRANTS

The Senior Travel Demand officer presented the report to members on behalf of the Assistant Director of Transport and Connectivity. The officer explained that it was his role to promote safe and sustainable travel to school, to see less congestion outside the school gates, and have less people coming to school in the car whilst promoting a sustainable means of travelling to school.

The school that wished to apply for funding of the grant must have registered to Mode shift stars, which is a national programme funded by the Department of Transport. The programme promotes sustainable travel to school. The school must have completed a school travel survey within 12 months starting from September 2022. The Travel Survey asked two questions of the staff and the pupils: How do you currently travel to school and how would you prefer to travel to school? From the answers of the Travel Survey, the school must have started to write their school travel plan, which shows how they will make changes to the school journeys. Applications were invited from schools during the summer term between the 17th of April to 30th June 2023.

The applications were examined by the assessment panel on 4th July 2023. Members of the panel included Paul Ruffle and Mandy Slater from the Travel Demand Team. The applications were presented to the Transport Highways Group on the 13th of July and the Transport Highways Board on the 21st of July. They were presented to the spending board for approval on 30th October and to the contracts team and the legal services team at the beginning of November before being presented to the Committee.

There are two wards affected with these applications, Grestone Academy in Handsworth Wood and St John and Monica Primary School in Moseley. Both schools have registered for Motive Stars and have both started their school travel plans and therefore meet the criteria. Both schools requested £1000 from the funding. Grestone wanted to use the funding towards school parking and cycle racks. St John and Monica they wanted the funding to go towards child dollies outside the school and bike and scooter parking racks. It was emphasised that if they were to have child dollies, they are intended to be used on the pavement without causing obstruction and are not intended to be used on the highway.

If both applications were successful, it would cost £2000 and it will leave a balance of the fund of £35,836.35 available for future disbursement.

Councillor Davis asked if there are many applications to look at in the next meeting as the number of applications is beginning to fall off. The Senior Travel

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Demand Officer stated that there was one further application for the next meeting.

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RESOLVED: -

The report and funding were agreed by members.

REPORT NO. 7 – BIRMINGHAM MUNICIPAL TRUST – OVERVIEW AND UPDATE

A report was provided by the Director of Group and Capital Finance.

The Director stated that the report gives the figures for the charity the year ended 31st March 2022. Those accounts are closed, and it gives the expected amount for 31st March 2023. The Council's accounts are not closed for 2023, but there is no expectation of there being any material difference, therefore both of the years are being presented.

As the Council's accounts were not closed and the audits incomplete, the accounts were not in the format that will be submitted to the Commissioners.

The recommendation asked for by the Commission to the Chair is to sign the accounts off once the Council's audits have been completed and in the correct format. This will then ensure that there is nothing coming from the Council audit that impacts upon the charity accounts. It was not expected for there to be anything but processed and need the accounts to be closed.

The report sets out the figures for 2022 and shows that there is just over £750,000 of the funds and the draft figures. For 31st March 2023 shows just over £760,000 available for the Committee to distribute.

It was stated that the form and the way in which the charity is known to the citizens of Birmingham has not changed in seven years and should be advertised. The committee has set a limit of £10,000 as an award. Once the applications come in, the finance and legal team will audit the application. The applicant will then be checked, ask for sets of accounts and write to them for more information and explain how the process works. The Director recommended that the committee raises awareness of the charity as at present it is currently by word of mouth.

The Committee noted the amount within the accounts at present which was £760,000 and gave authority to the Chair to sign the account off once they are in the correct format and have been audited.

Councillor Pears agreed with the Directors recommendation of advertising the charity. He raised the question of whether the Charities Commission know that we were going to be delayed in submitting the account. The second question that was asked was on page 36.1 there is a figure that says 76,000 and is missing another zero. Furthermore, on page 28 the current assets in March 2022 stood at £640,205 and seem to be the same figure in March 2023. The Director responded and confirmed there was a typo in the figure on page 36.1 which should read £760,000 which will be amended. Furthermore,

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the net asset amount is correct, the bulk of the funds on the deposit is held, so there is a better income than if they were held in the Council accounts. This year there was £12,000 income on interest which goes into an unrestricted account and is held until the accounts are closed. Once the accounts are closed there is an option to move more into the investment fund and look to see what interest rates are available. The Director further stated that if we were to advertise the fund more often and look for some more applicants there may be a further need for more money. The director stated that she will speak to Treasury colleagues and look at the best way to get the best level of interest.

The Director stated that there are a number of charities that are in exactly the same position and were contacted to explain that the closure of last years accounts was a nation audit issue which has had ramifications for Birmingham. The charities commission was contacted and explained that a number of our charity's funds needed audit but were not able to as the auditors wanted the Council's accounts closed, therefore the accounts show as late. As soon as the Council's accounts are closed the funds will be ready to put in.

Councillor Davis commented on the speed of which the money is being taken out to benefit the citizens of Birmingham. Having a low access by the citizens of Birmingham and the absence of a website is an issue as people find out about it through members of the committee. Councillor Davis stated that a healthier position would be to reduce the funds to be able to access the prime funds and transfer money across. He further stated that he would like to see an active process of communicating the fact that the fund exists to all Council members and the wider networks in the community, interest companies and non-profits and those are the people that should be regularly reminded that this fund exists.

The Chair echoed the comments made by Councillor Davis and said that there should be a plan or target for dispensing the funds and ensuring they are well advertised. The Chair was interested in seeing a report in January committee meeting that outlines how the fund is better advertised and how those funds are dispensed which may include having a website.

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RESOLVED: -

It was agreed by the Committee that the figure on 6.1 was amended to reflect the true balance in the accounts. The Committee noted the balance of the accounts and agreed to give the Chair authority to sign off the accounts following Council audit process.

REPORT NO. 8 – BIRMINGHAM MUNICIPAL CHARITY - APPLICATIONS FOR GRANT FUNDING

The Director stated that there was an application from an organisation charity called Make them Smile and are based in Grimsby. They act for children in special educational needs across the country. They have requested a donation of any amount to provide learning stations and achieve what is

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effectively a chair bed that enables children with autism, down syndrome and spinal cord injuries to function in a classroom type setting. They are adjustable and mobile therapy beds, and it means the child can have a functional position with their arms free to see what they are doing and participate more and become more integrated in classroom activities.

The learning station costs £8229 which includes the VAT. We cannot fund VAT so we would go back to the organisation and reminded to support and check how they were purchasing it. They want to provide the therapy bed for the school. They have 229 pupils from the ages of 2 to 25. This would not be a bed dedicated to one person; it would be used by a number of pupils during the day.

The Chair noted that for future committee meetings an invitation was to be extended to the organisational charity requesting the grant so they could speak and answer and particular questions or concerns regarding the application.

Councillor Pears raised that it doesn't state in the report how much money the charity has themselves. Providing the information would allow the committee to see how long the charity has to sustain themselves. Councillor Pears asked the Director to comment on what they have to sustain themselves. The Director replied that they raise funds around the country so they will raise funds in a local area and don't necessarily use their own funds for large purchases. Effectively they are a fundraising charity that then spends either schools or for individuals who might need a specialist piece of equipment. It is within the committee's discretion of making the full amount as a donation or a percentage of it.

Councillor Scott raised the question of why a Birmingham School is going outside of Birmingham to apply for funds within Birmingham. Secondly if the charity is based in Grimsby and are a fund-based organisation where they apply for funds on behalf of other people, are part of the funds that are going to be given to them paying for them to deliver this service and if so, what would be that percentage of the funding. The Director replied and stated that the entire amount would go for the piece of equipment, we would require them to purchase through the school and the school would submit the invoice and once that has been checked the exact amount of funds would be released not including any VAT. The school is also required to demonstrate that they can fully maintain the equipment, they would be expected to service and maintain it and we would only pay out on invoices.

Councillor Pears asked if there are any further applications, can the committee have the financial information in future as well as people's wages so a clearer picture can be formed. The Chair agreed with Councillor Pears comments and asked the Director if this could be looked at when putting together a business plan for the Birmingham Municipal Charity.

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RESOLVED: -

It was agreed by members to approve the funding in full.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The committee noted the date of the next meeting is 15 January 2023
11:30AM in Committee Room 2.

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None submitted.

AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS

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RESOLVED: -

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant
Chief Officer has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

The meeting ended 1044 hours.

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CHAIR