

Runnymede Pleasure Grounds Draft Estimates 2023/2024 (Financial Services, Susan Faure)

Synopsis of report:

To recommend the draft annual estimates under this Committee's remit for the next financial year (2023/2024).

Recommendation(s) that:

the proposed financial projection set out in Appendix 'A' be approved

1. Context of report

- 1.2 Runnymede Pleasure Grounds (RPG) is a public open space on the banks of The River Thames, mid-way between Egham and Old Windsor. It is held by the Council as Trustee and the Trustee function is delegated to this Committee. It therefore falls upon Members of this Committee to exercise that function in accordance with the terms of the Trust and in the best interests of the Trust.
- 1.3 The Council manages the Trust land using the same staff and resources as the Council's own parks and open spaces.
- 1.4 Members are asked to consider the probable budget for 2022/2023 and the proposed budget for 2023/2024.

2. Report

Budget Setting

- 2.1 The budget is the expression in financial terms of the Trust's policies over the next year and is a statement of intention against which achievement can be compared.
- 2.2 In preparing the budget for the Trust the same assumptions have been made as those used to prepare the Council's own budgets.
- 2.3 The 2022/2023 budget was agreed by this Committee in February 2022. The revised 2022/2023 and proposed 2023/2024 budget for the Trust is set out in Appendix 'A'.
- 2.4 Year on year, budgets change very little at the site with the exception of parking income which is highly dependent on a hot summer.
- 2.5 To maximise the income received from car parking at the pleasure ground, a new Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system was installed in March 2021. This was to ensure that all users of the car park were charged appropriately for their stay. Problems encountered during the summer have meant that the income has been lower than predicted in the current year. However, it is estimated that income will return to anticipated levels next year.
- 2.6 The Council is part of a Surrey-wide cash security collection contract which means it benefits from economies of scale. During last year, the existing

supplier went into administration and a new contract was procured by Surrey County Council on behalf of the County and districts. Unfortunately, the costs of the new contract have increased substantially, reflecting market conditions at the time, the increased costs of collecting and processing cash (particularly coins). Being predominantly coin based, car parks in general have been hit the hardest, due to the number of collections and volumes of cash collected. This has seen a sharp rise in fees anticipated in both the current and next financial year.

Reserves

- 2.7 The Trust currently runs at a surplus as a result of the car parking and other income producing activities located on the land. All surpluses are held in reserves to cover for any unexpected expenditure requirements.
- 2.8 At its meeting in January 2011, the former Leisure and Environment Committee was informed that it was unlikely to be necessary to carry a reserve in excess of £20,000, but there was some flexibility provided the Council did not allow reserves to simply accrue, whilst legitimate needs of the charity are going unmet.
- 2.9 Following a major flooding incident in 2014, the Trustees agreed that £40,000 of the existing reserve be set aside in a restricted reserve in case of future flooding.
- 2.10 During November 2017 it was agreed that Runnymede Magna Carta Legacy would pay £25,000 to the Runnymede Pleasure Ground Trust to cover the cost of maintaining and insuring the statute of Queen Elizabeth II for a period of five years. £12,500 was received on the 7 December 2017 which has been included within the restricted funds. The remaining £12,500 is still outstanding. Discussions regarding the legal agreement associated with the loan of the statute to the Trust remain ongoing.

Fees and Charges

- 2.11 The Trust generates most of its income from Car Parking. Car parking charges were frozen in 2022/2023 and are in line with other local charges. It is proposed once again to freeze the charges in 2023/2024.

3. Legal Considerations

- 3.1 The Council must clearly differentiate between its role as a local authority and its role as charitable Trustee. In managing a charitable Trust, it must act in the best interests of the charity and must not allow its aspirations as a local authority to result in decisions which are not in the charity's best interests.

4. Equality implications

- 4.1 There are no direct Equality implications resulting from this report.

5. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 5.1 There are no Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications.

(To resolve)

Background Papers

None stated.