

Report title	RUNNYMEDE PLEASURE GROUNDS DRAFT ESTIMATES 2024/25
Report author	Paul French – Corporate Head of Finance
Department	Financial Services
Exempt	No

Purpose of report:
To Resolve

Synopsis of report:
To recommend the draft annual estimates for the Runnymede Pleasure Ground Trust for the next financial year

Recommendation that:

- i) the proposed financial projection set out in Appendix ‘A’ be approved; and**
- ii) the proposed fees and charges set out in paragraph 2.14 be approved to take effect from 1 April 2024**

1. Context of report

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 The Council manages the Trust land using the same staff and resources as the Council's own parks and open spaces.
- 1.3 Members are asked to consider the probable budget for 2023/24 and the proposed budget for 2024/25.

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 2023/24 budget was agreed by the Community Services Committee in January 2023. The revised 2023/24 and proposed 2024/25 budget for the Trust is set out in Appendix ‘A’.

- 2.4 In a normal year, budgets change very little at the site except for parking income which is highly dependent on weather conditions. However, in the current financial year four requests for additional budgets have been approved:

Paddling Pool:

To have the paddling pool operational for the summer season, work needed to be undertaken to bring it up to standard and a supplementary estimate in the sum of £45,500 was approved via SO42. £27,000 of this was anticipated to be an ongoing cost and has been included in the budgets for next year accordingly. These works were completed in May 2023.

Car Park Improvements:

In addition to the work undertaken to refurbish the paddling pool, funding for ongoing car park maintenance was also approved via a second SO42. These costs were estimated to come to £7,200 in the current year, £4,700 a year thereafter. The blue badge car park work was completed in December 2023, and the improved signage is estimated to be completed in January/February 2024.

Repairs to Toilets and Pavilion:

The Community Services Committee received a report in September requesting funds for immediate works to the onsite café toilets due to wear and tear, flooding and drainage and works to the pavilion roof due to brittle tiles posing a danger to the public. The budget sum for these works was approved by this Committee in September 2023. Due to their value these works will be subject to a procurement exercise in line with Council procedures.

Play Area Repairs:

Whilst there are plans in the Play Area Programme for refurbishment of the play area, there was a requirement due to health and safety implications to undertake urgent repair works to the play area. Works identified were estimated to cost £25,000 and this was also agreed at the Community Services meeting in September 2023. Two sets of remedial works were completed in June 2023 and November 2023 to rectify some immediate health and safety concerns. The play area is subject to the wider Council Play Area Programme (as mentioned above) and further works will be forthcoming depending on budget availability in the next financial year as tender submissions are not due in until mid-January 2024.

- 2.5 All four of these additional works have had a dramatic effect on the look of the current year's budgets. Work is still ongoing on some of these items, and budgets will be carried over into the new financial year to complete the works if necessary.
- 2.6 The report to this Committee in September 2023 also set out the need for future works and projects. The work undertaken to bring the paddling pool and play area up to a standard was a short term solution, and the site has been identified as one where further investment will be needed in the future. Estimates of £110k for the paddling pool and £150k for the play area have been identified as the potential budgets required to be funded by the Trust. No time frame has been given, as the scope and costs of the works are subject to further consultancy and are dependent on sufficient revenue from parking fees being generated to cover the costs.

Income

- 2.7 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, to

ensure all users of the car park were charged appropriately for their stay. Set out below is the income recovered prior and since the implementation of the new ANPR system.

Description	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023 Projected
Parking Income	£92,081	£138,776	£103,566	£123,544	£156,000

- 2.8 The higher income seen in 2020 is principally due to COVID lockdowns with people using the site as a base for their daily exercise. During 2022 and 2023 there were operation issues with the barrier and pay machines which impacted revenue.

Reserves

- 2.9 The Trust currently runs at a surplus as a result of both the car parking income and other income producing activities located on the land. All surpluses are held in reserves to cover for any unexpected expenditure requirements.
- 2.10 At its meeting in January 2011, the former Leisure and Environment Committee were 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.
- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 During November of 2017 it was agreed that Runnymede Magna Carta Legacy would pay £25,000 to Runnymede pleasure ground to cover the cost of maintaining and insuring the statue 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

- 2.13 The Trust generates most of its income from Car Parking. Responsibility for managing this car park was transferred to the Corporate Head of Customer, Digital & Collection Services in August 2022 to ensure all Council car parks were being managed efficiently. Whilst car park fees are managed by the Environment & Sustainability Committee, fees and charges for the RPG car park are set by the Community Services Committee acting in its role as Trustees on behalf of the Runnymede Pleasure Ground Trust.
- 2.14 Car Parking fees have remained the same at the Pleasure Grounds since 2009/10. It is now proposed to increase the charges to ensure that the future plans and aspirations of the Trustees for the site can be met in the future. The proposed fees to take affect from 1 April 2024 are as follows:

	2023/24 £	2024/25 £	% Increase
Car Parking at Runnymede Pleasure Grounds (Includes VAT)			
<u>Per Hour</u>			
Cars	1.50	1.70	13.33%
Coaches	2.00	4.00	100.00%
<u>Per Day</u>			
Motor Cars	6.00	7.50	25.00%
<u>Per Season (Residents Only)</u>			
Monday to Friday Only, excl. Bank Holidays	50.00	70.00	40.00%

- 2.15 The proposed increases have been arrived at by benchmarking against other local attractions such as Windsor Great Park and Savill Gardens.

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 local authority to result in decisions which are not in the best interests of the charity.

4. Equality implications

- 4.1 There are no equality implications resulting from this report.

5. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 5.1 Whilst there are no specific Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications associated with this budget, this does not preclude further funding from being incorporated into the Trust's plans as specific environmental, sustainability or biodiversity actions are developed, and business cases are brought forward for consideration.

6. Risk Implications

- 6.1 The budget sets out the resources required to deliver the Trust's objectives for the year ahead. Whilst there is always the risk that income may not match targets, particularly as it is so weather dependant, and that additional unforeseen costs may crop up, the Trust's current reserve levels should be more than adequate to offset these should the need arise.

7. Timetable for Implementation

- 7.1 The proposed budget for 2024/25 will come into effect on 1 April 2024.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The proposed estimate set out at Appendix 'A' takes into account all the changes made to the budget in the current year and shows that based on current projections the Trust will make a surplus of £41,030, in 2024/25, which can then be reinvested in the service to fund future works and projects as set out in paragraph 2.6.

9. Background papers

Community Services Committee – 15 June 2023 and 21 September 2023

10. Appendices

Appendix 'A' - The revised 2023/24 and proposed 2024/25 budget for the Trust