

MEETING OF THE MCDONALD PUBLIC PARK ENDOWMENT TRUSTEES

ELLON PRIMARY SCHOOL, MODLEY PLACE, ELLON, AN41 9BB, 29 OCTOBER 2018

Present: Trustees, I Davidson, A Forsyth, A Kloppert, A Stirling and R Thomson

Apologies: Trustees K Adam, S Duncan, J Gifford, A Hassan, P Johnston, G Owen and I Taylor.

Officers: K Bond (Head of Customer Communication & Improvement), K Balina (Committee Officer, Formartine), M Ingram (Senior Solicitor, Legal and Governance), B Shand (Principal Landscape Officer, Infrastructure Services)

1. MINUTE OF MEETING HELD ON 19 MARCH 2018

The Trustees had before them, and **approved** as a correct record, the minute of the meeting of 19 March 2018, subject to the following amendment:
Item 5, paragraph 4: "There was no financial gain to Landscape Services from the removal of trees and, due to the biodiversity and risks involved, it was not possible to allow other groups to remove the dead wood."

2. INTERIM UPDATE ON ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

The Head of Customer Communication & Improvement advised that the annual accounts were administered by Aberdeenshire Council officers and were signed off by the Councillor of the Formartine Area Committee who was a local member.

If there were any calls for spend, the Trustees would be asked to consider these requests and decide whether they agreed to release any funds.

The Trustees **noted** the current balances available, as detailed within the accounts that had been circulated.

3. GOVERNANCE – UPDATE ON TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

There had been circulated a report dated 10 September 2018 by the Director of Business Services which provided the update on the Trustees' responsibilities in respect of the McDonald Public Park Endowment Trust.

The Senior Solicitor briefly introduced a report and summarised Trustees' responsibilities. It was **highlighted** that one of the Trustees' responsibility was to spend any income (but excluding all revenue derived from the golf course) on the maintaining, repairing or beautifying McDonald Park (with the exception of the section thereof utilised by the golf club). Trustees were also reminded that the Council were bound to frame and properly promulgate byelaws to regulate the use of the McDonald Park; the destruction of woodlands and plantations, fire-raising, picnicking and grazing of animals should have been prohibited. Trustees **noted** the byelaws should have been reviewed and updated in the future.

It was also **confirmed** that the Council must keep buildings, fences, walls and other structures in thorough order and repair.

Thereafter, the Trustees **noted** the information provided.

4. PROGRESS OF WOODLAND MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN (VERBAL REPORT)

The Principal Landscape Officer was in attendance to give an update on the Winter Tree programme prepared for 2018/2019. It was **noted** that the Landscape Services worked very closely with community groups and received a lot of help from the Friends of McDonald Park.

Trustees were informed on works being planned in the McDonald Park. It was **confirmed** that the main areas of work were clearing felled areas, planting and supporting off established trees. The Trustees sought clarification on staff involved in the works carried out in the Park and on the type of works carried out.

Thereafter, the Trustees **noted** the information provided.

5. UPDATE FROM MCDONALD GOLF CLUB (VERBAL REPORT)

Mike Morris, Club Secretary of McDonald Golf Club was in attendance to provide a history of McDonald Golf Club. The Trustees were informed that land on which the golf course sat had been purchased in 1919. The golf club had been founded in 1927 by James G McDonald (later Sir James G. McDonald). The main reason why the Ellon Golf Club had been established so late was Ellon was an area of rich agricultural land and the cost of buying land to form a golf course had been prohibitive.

Mr Morris presented a history of the ownership and major events in the life of the golf club which was opened on 1 June 1927. It was **noted** that Sir James continued a lifelong connection to the golf club as its Honorary President, a role which he held for the remainder of his life. In addition, the club was titled McDonald Ellon Golf Club, in recognition of his role in establishing the club.

Mr Morris mentioned also about the history of the liaison between the local Council and the golf club. From 1990 until June 2007 a long and protracted negotiation process between Gordon District Council, and subsequently, Aberdeenshire Council and McDonald Golf Club finally resulted in agreement being reached and registered on 7 June 2007 which clearly set out the responsibilities of both parties. He highlighted that the golf club worked often with staff from Aberdeenshire Council; the main area of work is maintaining the woodlands.

The club also cooperates with the Friends of McDonald Park and regularly attends and hosts the meetings of that group. The golf club is also actively involved in local joint ventures such as the Ythan Community Sports Hub and the Local Green Spaces Forum.

The Trustees were also informed that the golf club spent around £150,000 per annum in the maintenance of the course split between staff costs, materials and equipment. That represented around 46 percent. of the club's total income. A group of three full-time staff looked after the golf course. They were supported by additional staff during summer period. The club also employed a gardener to

maintain and plant the areas surrounding the clubhouse. Around 50 percent. of the golf club expenditure went into the McDonald Park area of the course otherwise known as the “back nine”. Some of that expenditure went on specialists such as the employment of a Tree Surgeon to trim and maintain the trees in the areas for which the club was responsible. The golf club and Aberdeenshire Council both employed the same Tree Surgeon and often arranged to work together. They had also discussed drainage projects and kept each other informed whenever any damage or vandalism occurred within the park. Their greenkeeping staff worked in McDonald Park every day on some task to maintain and improve the golf course and surrounding woodlands.

The Trustees were also reminded that the club was a sport facility and was available for social events such as quizzes, dances/discos and presentation dinners for other local clubs. It had also accommodated a wedding party.

The Trustees welcomed the report and commended the golf club for their commitment.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Trustees **agreed** to hold two meeting per year, one in March and one in September. It was proposed that the next meeting would be held at the end of March 2019 in Ellon Golf Club. The Trustees requested a walk through Ellon Golf Club before the next meeting.