

WELSH CHURCH ACT ESTATE COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 4th October, 2021

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor M.R. Wilson (Chair); Councillors J.E. Charles, G.A. Cox and S.T. Wiliam.

419 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Assistant Democratic Services officer read the following statement:

“May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

420 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor P. Drake (Vice-Chair) and Councillor R. Crowley.

421 MINUTES –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 14th June, 2021 be approved as a correct record.

422 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor G.A. Cox declared an interest in Agenda Item 6 ‘Investment Management Strategy Review 2021/22’. The nature of the interest was that the Councillor was the Clerk of the Trustees of the Evan Jenkins Charity who were advised by Charles Stanley, listed in the report as an Alternative Investment Provider. The Councillor withdrew from the meeting prior to the commencement of debate regarding this Agenda Item.

423 APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE 2021/22 TRANCHE 2 (MD) –

The report advised that a budget of £45,000 had been set for issuing grants during 2021/22. An unallocated budget amount of £5,196 carried over from 2020/21 was also available for allocation during 2021/22. The grants allocated in Tranche 1 had totalled £9,750.00, and the grants recommended for Tranche 2 set out in Appendix A to the report totalled £30k.

An application had been received after the deadline which, at the Principal Accountant's request and with the Chair's permission, had been circulated to Members for their consideration prior to the meeting. Members confirmed that they were happy to accept the late application and consider it alongside the applications set out at Appendix A. The recommended grant for the late application was £2,354, therefore bringing the total of grants recommended to £32,354.

In response to a query from a Member the Principal Accountant confirmed that, should the recommended amount be granted, there would be a remainder of approximately £2,800 for the rest of the financial year, and while it would be possible to draw down reserves to fund subsequent applications if Members wished to do so, previously the Trust had stopped accepting further applications for the relevant financial year if there had not been sufficient funding.

Having fully considered the applications received it was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the applications for grant assistance as set out in Appendix A of the report and in the supplementary papers circulated to Members prior to the meeting be approved.

Reason for decision

In furtherance of the objectives of the Trust.

424 ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2020/21 (MD) –

The Principal Accountant presented the Annual Report and Accounts for the Trust for the year ended 31st March, 2021.

The Officer advised that the value of the fund as at 31st March, 2021 had been £5.230m, an increase of £261k when compared to the previous year. There was also an in-year surplus of £8k, with the equivalent position for 2019/20 having been a deficit of £6k.

While there had been a significant recovery on the value of investments there had been a further reduction in income received in year of £4k when compared with 2019/20, leaving the Trust £9k short of the £40k income target.

Having fully considered the report and its contents it was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21, as set out at Appendix A to the report be approved, and that the Chair be authorised to sign the same on behalf of trustees.

Reason for decision

In accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011, and the Charities (Accounts & Reports) Regulations 2008.

425 INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY REVIEW 2021/22 (MD) –

The Principal Accountant presented the report which asked Members to consider the existing approach to Welsh Church Acts Investment and consider options for further review and developing a future strategy.

The Trust currently held £1.981m (£1.857m as at 31st March, 2021) in Investments which were managed on a discretionary basis by Tilney Investment Planning Ltd. The Trust was also holding £3.231m of investment properties as at 31st March, 2021 which were last valued in 2018/19.

The report provided an analysis of the performance of Tilney, reminded Members of their discretionary and ethical approaches to investment, and outlined their charging structure. The report also demonstrated how the income of the Vale of Glamorgan's Welsh Church Act investments compared when benchmarked against those of three other Councils.

In conclusion, the strategy review proposed three options for Trustees to consider:

1. That Trustees remained in the current investment approach and avoided costs associated with selling and moving across to a new investment platform. That Trustees considered reviewing their approach to risk to increase potential income returns and also considered reducing the amount of the investment allocated on an ethical basis.
2. That Trustees went through a formal investment review process and invite submissions from all parties noted in the strategy review document.
3. That Trustees considered moving away from the discretionary investment management approach and move to an approach where the Welsh Church Act Fund was invested through two or three common investment funds.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the report and expressed that his preference would be to opt for the third approach which was also being undertaken by the Trusts of two other Councils. The Chair noted that the first approach was the status quo with not much income being generated, and the second approach would take a lot of time while yielding little progress when considering the size of the fund in question.

With Members being in agreement with the Chair's suggestion, it was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T option three as set out in paragraph 2.34 to the report for the 2021/22 Investment Strategy be agreed as the most suitable option for Welsh Church Act Investments.

Reason for decision

To ensure that Trustees have fulfilled their obligations as Trustees to regularly review the Investments of the Vale of Glamorgan Welsh Church Act.

426 GLEBE FIELDS – UPDATE (MD) –

The purpose of the report was to provide an update to Members following the last resolution of Committee in June 2021 which was to be considered in detail under Part II of the agenda.

There being no queries from Members, it was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the updated position and recommendations in Part II of the Agenda be noted.

Reason for decision

To enable a decision to be made under Part II of the Agenda.

427 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC –

RESOLVED – T H A T under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 4 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Act, the relevant paragraphs of the Schedule being referred to in brackets after the minute heading.

428 GLEBE FIELDS – UPDATE (MD) (EXEMPT INFORMATION – PARAGRAPHS 12 AND 14) –

The Operational Manager for Property presented the report which provided an update to Members on progress since the June Committee meeting.

Following the resolutions of Committee in June, the Officer had discussed next steps with the Council's Planning Officer who had advised of the requirements that the site would need to demonstrate for valid submission as a candidate site.

Discussion ensued, with Members asking Officers for guidance regarding the appropriate options available to the Trust in relation to this matter.

Having considered the contents of the report and Officers' guidance it was subsequently

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the updated position be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Operational Manager for Property and Principal Lawyer be instructed to seek advice from Planning colleagues regarding the most appropriate timing for undertaking further site investigations or surveys, with a further update report to be brought to Committee once this information is available.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) To ensure that the Trustees are updated.
- (2) In order to keep Committee updated at the appropriate time and ensure Trustees are fully informed prior to making any further resolutions regarding this matter.