

Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Trust Committee Minutes

Tuesday 18 March 2025

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Alex Sanderson (Chair), Bora Kwon and Dominic Stanton

Co-opted members: Faye Thomas and Stephen Waley-Cohen

Advisors to the Trust: Osama El-Amin (Trust Manager), Simon Ingyon, Victoria Abel, Carmen Lomotey, Nick Falcone

Clerk: Tiffany Yip

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Matters arising:

Stephen Waley-Cohen (Co-opted Member) asked there was any intention to replant the hedge which was removed between the Kensington Dragon works and the children's playground, to which Osama El-Amin (Trust Manager) replied that had been budgeted for and the hedge would be replanted once the works were completed.

RESOLVED

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th December 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

4. MANAGER'S REPORT

Appointment of Auditors

Nick Falcone (Advisor to the Trust) asked the Committee to approval the appointment of MHA as the auditor for the Trust's 2024/25 accounts for a fee of £11,700 (+VAT). There was a modest increase of around 1.7% from the 2023-24 fees and the working relationship between MHA and Council staff had been good with the former being the Trust's auditor since the 2019/20 financial year. The audit

would be conducted around October and November 2025 for the audited accounts to be reported to the December 2025 meeting.

The Chair was delighted at the relatively low increase in fees.

Councillor Dominic Stanton queried about the process for the reappointment of auditors. Nick Falcone replied that retendering had to take place every ten years, and so far, MHA had been reappointed because of their satisfactory performance. The Chair added that a procurement exercise was conducted six years ago when MHA came up significantly ahead of other options. They had been offering a competitive rate, and the Committee had been happy with their work.

The Committee approved the appointment of MHA as the Trust's external auditor for the accounting year 2024/25 and approved their proposed fee of £11,700 (+VAT).

Procuring the AEM Masterplan

Victoria Abel (Advisor to the Trust) reported on the progress made on the procurement of the AEM Masterplan work. Four out of the five main tender documents had been finalised. However, two new contracts had to be drafted for each phase – a JCT contract for the capital work and a high value contract for the management and maintenance plan. As a result, not all documents were ready by 24th February 2025 when the new procurement regulations came into effect and any tenders not submitted by that date needed to be amended to reflect the new regulations. The new regulations required a new document, the Invitation to Tender (ITT), which was more comprehensive than the previous version and involved additional steps to be completed. The overall procurement timetable was likely to take longer than the nine months initially stated but the pre-market engagement could begin soon to let potential contractors know about the tender and gauge the level of interest.

Councillor Dominic Stanton asked how far the deadline had been missed by, to which Victoria Abel replied that the overall delay would be about 5 to 6 weeks.

Councillor Stanton expressed his disappointment with the delay and enquired about the updates regarding planning permission. Victoria Abel noted that planning permission was not being pursued anymore as it attracted several objections, including from Sport England. As this would mean that the application would go to the Secretary of State to determine and the timescale of that was uncertain, a decision was made to reduce the scope of the work in the masterplan so planning permission was not needed. The Chair added that the Trust was under the impression that the application would not be successful had it gone ahead. The Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) also indicated that they would like to see various improvements that were not within the remit of the scheme, such as an access route to the new HS2 station.

Councillor Stanton enquired if further decisions were made following the meeting in December. Mark Raisbeck (Advisor to the Trust) explained that the Committee at the last meeting agreed to move ahead with some elements that could be progressed but would continue to pursue the areas which remained challenging to avoid more delays of the main elements. The Committee's frustration with the reduced scope of the masterplan was noted and his team would endeavour to

explore how the rest of the masterplan could be carried out going forward. The elements subject to planning would be considered in a future stage at the right time.

Faye Thomas (Co-opted Member) asked for clarification of the advanced procurement process and if it would be opened to all existing contractors within the Council's framework. Victoria Abel explained that given that it was a high value contract, the most rigorous process of procurement would apply. There would be an open tender and pre-market engagement to make contractors aware of the tender.

Faye Thomas (Co-opted Member) then enquired when the tender would go live. Victoria Abel replied that if the new ITT was received by the end of March, the tender could go live in April.

Stephen Waley-Cohen (Co-opted Member) expressed his disappointment with the length of time it would take for the procurement process to be completed. He noted that the Friends of the Wormwood Scrubs had a formal opposition to the parts which were not being pursued at the time.

The Committee noted the update.

Wormwood Scrubs Open Space – co-producing access improvements

Osama El-Amin (Trust Manager) noted that this programme of footpath improvements would be phased. Officers were working with the Council's Inclusive Environment Disability group to identify how these improvements could speak to the needs of disabled people. They had also identified and approached 50 different groups, including regular sports bookers, the Metropolitan Police design out crime team, estate tenants and hospital staff/patient groups. A mixed range of view on the extent of the formal footpaths had been received, from fears over the rise of anti-social behaviour and creation of 'blind spots' along to more positive reception to the idea of enhancing access for less able individuals. Work was underway to develop a detailed proposal aimed at formalising some of the existing desire lines. new. Some of these routes would be of operational necessity, ensuring the successful maintenance of the new ecological features. In reference to the access audit in 2024 and the recent green flag inspection, improving accessibility in the play areas would be the highest priority in this scheme. A budget of £100k had been allocated in 2025/26 to facilitate access improvements, including the footpaths, new signage and around the Linford Christie Stadium.

The Committee noted the update.

Q4. Grounds Maintenance - contractor performance in Q4. 2024/25. Upcoming activities in Q1. 2025/26.

Osama El-Amin (Trust Manager) reported that the performance failures that had been recorded had largely been rectified since the last Committee meeting. The major outstanding item was the lack of scrub and bramble management undertaken in the first two years of the contract term and some ongoing concerns about the quality of maintenance within the Linford Christie site. It was agreed with Idverde and the on-site ecologist to increase the level of bramble clearance in the final two years of the contract term to compensate for the lack of work taken in the first two years. This would be guided by ecologists and would be done with the

utmost care for the habitats. The ongoing work on the Linford Christie site meant that the area of space to be maintained was temporarily reduced, giving Idverde more space to focus on the horticultural amenity and sports features.

In addition to the daily cleansing practices and rubbish clearance, in Q1 2025/26 the lines on the sports pitches would be marked once a week and the grass would be cut once a month. Preparations for summer sports were underway and a number of eco-volunteering activities would be happening at the same time, including dead hedging, forest school maintenance, litter picking, selective thinning of saplings in the woodland, group habitat survey sessions and bird walks. David Lindo, a broadcaster, writer and public speaker, would be conducting some guide bird watching sessions on the scrubs.

Faye Thomas (Co-opted Member) asked if there would be any advertising of the bird watching sessions from the Council. Osama El-Amin noted that some promotional materials would be put together and communicated to the Friends of the Wormwood Scrubs. Each group would have a maximum of 20 people and sign-ups would be done on a first-come-first-served basis. It might also be possible to have David Lindo host more sessions in the next year.

The Committee noted the update.

Grounds maintenance contract fee increase

Simon Ingyon (Advisor to the Trust) sought the Committee's approval of an additional contract payment for Years 3-5 on the ground's maintenance contract. Idverde deliver the grounds maintenance contract for 3 contract LOTs - Parks, Highways and Cemeteries, Housing works and maintaining Wormwood Scrubs. Due to sustained inflationary pressure felt by Idverde, the Council's senior leadership in consultation with Housing and Wormwood Scrubs Officers approved a 3.51% uplift to the value of all 3 contract LOTs for Contract Year 2. Inflation had continued since then, going beyond the risk element built into the contract, hence the need for an increase for Year 3 of 6% and 2.96% from Year 4, for the remainder of the contract. This fee increase was in line with that of the other two LOTs.

Councillor Dominic Stanton pointed out that the area managed by Idverde now was reduced. Simon Ingyon noted that the area was reduced in Linford Christie where capital works were being done, allowing Idverde to consolidate other areas of Linford Christie where they had not performed to the standards expected. The maintenance which was part of the capital works would not be carried out for another nine months, and the ecological works would not start until the capital works were finished. Idverde had to complete the specification stated in the contract. As it was a no inflation contract, the risk of hyperinflation was not sufficiently built into the contract, resulting in poor performance standards.

Councillor Stanton asked how the increase was arrived at, given inflation was about 3% now. Simon Ingyon replied that the figure had been backdated to when the request was raised in Year 2 from Idverde. During the time the Council considered the request, their performance was not up to expectations. Therefore, the Council would like to coordinate approach in all three LOTs to consolidate the increase for the final two years. The 6% was based on the inflation in Year 2 and Year 3 and 3% for the remaining two years.

Councillor Stanton noted that the Council ended up paying more because the initial contract did not account for inflation. The Chair noted that the no inflation contract was awarded when inflation was at -2%. If it had tracked inflation, the Council would still be paying more. The rise in interest rates was not something expected by anyone on the Committee. While the contractor's performance on the scrubs was not completely up to expectation, it was felt during the conversation with them that the service would continue to deteriorate and if a decline of the inflationary uptick was not agreed to.

Mark Raisbeck highlighted that the decision had to balance between maintaining parks and open spaces in the right conditions and holding Idverde to account. After considering all the options, it was concluded that retendering would be extremely disruptive and may result in a significant increase in costs given the current inflationary pressures. The best solution was thus to give Idverde some increase, calculated by looking at the actual wage inflation and other general inflationary costs and deducting from the inflation which was already assumed on the contract. Subject to an upcoming strategy report, it would be an option to not extend the contract beyond Year 5 and retendering. It was also noted that these increases would be withheld if Idverde did not perform.

Councillor Stanton expressed that this seemed to be rewarding failures. Mark Raisbeck noted that there was significant improvement from Idverde in the general parks and open spaces LOT after implementing a penalising system, which resulted in the retention of 21 green flags and a significant uplift in the park satisfaction survey. On the housing LOT, Idverde would only receive any additional benefits if they delivered on the contract. The concerning factor was that given the loss Idverde was making on this contract, service would only suffer further with a fee increase. It was acknowledged that this was a challenging balance to strike, which was exacerbated by the contract being a zero-inflation contract and hyperinflation over the past few years going beyond anyone's anticipation.

Councillor Stanton queried about how often the targets were monitored. Mark Raisbeck answered that they were being monitored monthly with a point system in place. If they exceeded a certain level of default points, payment would be withheld subject to the rectification of issues.

Councillor Bora Kwon enquired how this increase compared to that of other council contracts. Mark Raisbeck noted that Idverde was feeling much more pressure than other contractors because this was a zero-inflation contract. While there had been some uplift in other contracts, there had been none in this one. Given about 70% of the cost of this contract was labour, it was very sensitive to annual increases such as the London Living Wage increase and absorbing the National Insurance increases.

The Committee approved an additional contract payment for Years 3 – 5 on the grounds maintenance contract to ensure continued performance over the remainder of the contract term ending in January 2027.

Old Oak Family Hub – multi use games area (MUGA) re-surfacing

Osama El-Amin (Trust Manager) noted an error in the Manager's Report – the date of transfer between the Trust and the Council concerning the Old Oak Community

Centre was 18 May 2001 not 18 May 2021. The deed excluded the multi-use game area, meaning that it still belonged to the Trust. The condition of the playing surface was below standard, with multiple tears and fire damage to the carpet. To maintain it as an open access facility, it was proposed that the Committee approve a £40,000 budget to resurface the area and once the improvements were done, the facility would be kept open until 6pm in the winter, 8pm in the spring and 9pm in the summer. A padlock with a key code would be installed on the gate, with access given to the Law Enforcement Team (LET) officers, hub staff, grounds maintenance supervisor and the Chair of the Old Oak resident's association.

The Committee approved a £40K budget to re-surface the multi-use games area behind Old Oak Community Centre.

WSCT Financial performance: Year-End forecast and 2025/26 budget

Carmen Lomotey (Advisor to the Trust) presented the year-end forecast for 2024/25. The following points were highlighted:

- The Q4 2024/25 forecast was an additional income of £748,000 due to several items being deferred to 2025/26. While the 2025/26 budget was a deficit one, over two years the budget would be a surplus budget.
- The forecast net income outrun was £679,000 compared to an anticipated net expenditure outrun of £69,228.

The 2025/26 budget was also presented. The budget included all approved items discussed at this meeting.

Stephen Waley-Cohen (Co-opted Member) noted that the proposal for a dog exercise area had to be progressed carefully due to some concerns over dog walking that would be discussed later. He also wished that park ranger base be included in the options appraisal for Park Lodge.

Councillor Dominic Stanton asked if the higher income due to interest rates had been considered and what the forecast was for 2025/26. Carmen Lomotey replied that falling interest rates had been considered. The forecast for inflation was £80,000 after considering the funds of the Council. The inflation interest rate was forecasted to reduce even though the balances were rising because lowering interest rates would offset that.

Councillor Stanton asked if inflation had been considered for the deferred expenditure in the budget for 2025/26. Carmen Lomotey assured that the forecasts and quotes were taken into account before finalising the budget, especially for the Linford Christie Stadium and Kensington Dragons.

The Committee noted WSCT Financial performance (forecast to year-end) and approved the 2025/26 financial budget.

Wormwood Scrubs Meadow – Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

Osama El-Amin (Trust Manager) updated that Natural England had accepted the Local Nature Reserve (LNR) designation. The next step in the process was for the Council legal team to seal the declaration. The public notice of the declaration was due to be advertised on 28th March 2025 both online and physically. The physical notice would be displayed in Shepherds Bush library, along with all LNR documentation. This notice would be in place for a period of 4 weeks. If no major

objections were received, the final designation would be communicated to the Trust and the Council. In line with the access improvement scheme, funding to improve signage in the meadow would form part of the 2025/26 budget. The Committee was asked if they would like to have a celebration event towards the end of the summer when the capital works at Linford Christie were completed, the designation was sealed, and the masterplan works were tendered.

Faye Thomas (Co-opted Member) agreed that it would be a fun and engaging event. She asked if the event could be scheduled after bird nesting season and if there would be a budget for signage. The Chair noted that there would be a budget for signage and the event would be kept away from sensitive areas. Osama El-Amin added that the community room facility at Linford Christie would be available for community events like this and the meadows would not be disturbed. It would also be a great opportunity to reflect on how to engage with people. There was £100,000 in the budget for access improvements to be split between paths and signage. The Trust would also try to raise money next year to improve the signage on the scrubs, including those in the meadow. The mapping data from Active Exchange was helpful for now, on top of the park ranger who could enforce against non-compliant dog-walking behaviours. It was hoped that the designation combined with other measures the LET was taking could change behaviours and protect the habitat for nesting birds and migratory birds.

The Committee noted the final steps towards designating the Wormwood Scrubs Meadow – Local Nature Reserve.

WSCT strategy development and future planning

Osama El-Amin (Trust Manager) reported that officers had been engaging with a range of stakeholders to build a view of how the changes in the neighbourhood, including the 20,000 new homes in construction by the OPDC and the construction of the HS2 station, were going to affect how the scrubs was used and how the spirit of the Act could be maintained. Several different themes were highlighted, which could be a foundation for a strategic business plan. It was proposed that Committee members would work with officers to develop this plan. The Committee was asked to approve the five strategic themes:

1. Ensuring sustainable access to recreation and exercise.
2. Preserving and enhancing the ecology of Wormwood Scrubs.
3. Fostering health and educational outcomes through community engagement.
4. Improving facilities and maintaining assets.
5. Delivering financial security.

Stephen Waley-Cohen (Co-opted Member) expressed his support for long-term planning, including the themes and looked forward to working with officers on the plan. He noted that the Scrubs Act would be celebrating 150 years of the scrubs as a charitable trust in four years, which would be a good opportunity to work towards as a date for celebration and publicity.

Councillor Bora Kwon noted many people who were not local to the area knew little about the scrubs and there was much work to be done to make information about the scrubs more accessible. Osama El-Amin agreed that this was important and there were discussions with the Comms team on how to make the scrubs more external facing. There were a lot of opportunities in terms of the uniqueness of the

scrubs but communications about the space had to be careful as well. It was hoped that work on the website would begin soon, readying for fundraising and ambitions around accessibility improvements, hosting more community initiatives and being more external facing.

Faye Thomas (Co-opted Member) agreed that the scrubs would benefit from having a website. It was noted that the Friends of the Wormwood Scrubs had to be the ones distributing information about the scrubs when being contacted by the press in the past. There were some great works on the scrubs in the past 40 years and it would be a good idea to have such information on a council website.

The Committee approved a set of strategic themes for the Trust and work with officers to develop a 3–5-year strategic business plan.

Linford Christie Capital Programme

Simon Ingyon (Advisor to the Trust) updated on the three main capital elements at the Linford Christie Stadium. Regarding the changing room demolition and replacement with the temporary portacabin buildings, new changing rooms and toilet and showering facilities were now available for the users of Wormwood Scrubs, the new artificial pitches and the athletics track. The final element of the changing room scheme was the installation of the community room, which had already started and should be completed by the end of March. There were also additional spectator toilet facilities provided alongside the community room. Planning permission for these temporary units was in place for the next two years.

The artificial pitch resurfacing, a 26-week work program, commenced on 20th January. Working with Kensington Dragons Football Club, the existing artificial pitches had been stripped away, and work was taking place until mid-April to level the surface, construct new drainage channels and establish new foundations to erect a new boundary fencing. It was hoped that the athletic track floodlighting improvements could be included within this scheme as this would save cost and enable faster completion of the capital programme. This programme was due to complete towards the end of July.

Work was underway for the resurfacing of the athletics track and associated field events. Working with Alliance Leisure through the UK leisure framework, these improvements were delivered with similar contractors that were delivering the pitch improvements, such as Surfacing Standards Limited, Hunts (contractors delivering the artificial pitch scheme), and Polytan (the track surfacing supplier). Works had to be delivered at the appropriate temperatures to ensure the surface could set correctly, which would be during the main or part of the main athletics season. Officers were working in close contact with the Thames Valley Harriers Athletics Club to ensure inconvenience was minimalized. The track work was set to take 6-8 weeks, which would hopefully land within the existing 26-week programme for the artificial pitch scheme, ideally by the end of May after half term when the school sports days would take place and the main annual event for the Thames Valley Harriers in July and August.

The construction of the hoarding around the perimeter of the site would provide security for the new portacabins and changing facilities. They would remain in place for the duration of the planning period. So far, the area had not suffered from major graffiti on this area, but the Committee was asked if they would like to work

with local artists to create murals depicting the scrubs, sports activities uh and health and well-being benefits.

The Chair was pleased to hear that the area would be open before the summer.

Stephen Waley-Cohen (Co-opted Member) supported the proposal of discouraging graffiti with the creation of murals and expressed his thanks for having the unused floodlights removed.

The Committee noted the update.

Braybrook play area re-design

Victoria Abel (Advisor to the Trust) asked the Committee to approve a budget to extend the range of play equipment at Braybrook Street play area to create a high-quality destination play space. The proposal was to install one large scale dynamic and challenging piece of equipment made predominantly from wood for older children in the northeast corner of the play area that was currently open grassland. In addition, the proposal included smaller items for younger children, including another set of swings and items for imaginative play. The budget would also need to fund new safety surfacing installation and delivery costs. It was also proposed that both areas were fenced with a 1.1m high wooden fence to provide a safe dog-free play space. This was supported by a consultation that was carried out in 2024 when 68% of respondents requested a fenced play area. It was also proposed to extend the path from Braybrook Street further into the play area to improve accessibility as recommended in the access audit in 2024. The programme for tendering the work would need to be discussed with Procurement and an update would be provided at the next Committee meeting. The overall time scale for delivery might also be impacted by the need to apply for planning permission if the equipment was over 4m in height.

Faye Thomas (Co-opted Member) expressed her excitement for the plan. It was noted that if the large-scale equipment happened to be a pirate ship, suppliers could custom make them so they were under 4m, and no planning permission would be required.

The Chair thanked Faye Thomas' engagement in the planning process and highlighted that the installation would take place in two phases so that the smaller items could be installed while the Council apply for planning permission for the larger items.

The Committee approved a budget of £198,300 to implement the Braybrook play area re-design scheme.

Community Safety report

Osama El-Amin (Trust Manager) reported that between the end of November and the end of February, the Law Enforcement Team (LET) conducted 107 High Visibility Patrols, amounting to roughly 1.1 patrols a day. These were conducted across the estate with a total of 296 interactions with two instances of fly tipping that were removed and investigated and one instance of dog fouling which was recorded and removed. Since issuing a community protection notice warning to businesses, there was a reduction in Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO)

related dog offenses. Non-compliance remained a challenge and the support of local users in helping LET identify instances of a breach was very welcomed. Local residents who were keen to connect with their local ward officers were encouraged to do so directly via telephone 020 8753 1100 (option 3 then option 1) and via LET.HF@lbhf.gov.uk.

Faye Thomas (Co-opted Member) wondered why no fines were issued for dog PSPO violations and raised that there were concerns from users of the scrubs that High Visibility Patrols were not often seen. Osama El-Amin agreed to pass this concern on to the LET. The difficulty with enforcing the PSPO remained in identifying designated organisations which were not licensed and were repeat offenders. It would be helpful to the LET if they had information of the names of these companies from residents. It was also noted that for fixed penalty notices to be issued, a non-compliance had to be spotted by the LET.

Action: LET

Stephen Waley-Cohen (Co-opted Member) noted that one of the Friends' trustees were threatened by two walkers with a total of 12 dogs on the scrubs, which she had reported to the LET but had not heard any response. He also asked for clarification on which email address should be used for reporting. The Chair was sorry to hear about this incident and noted that this sort of incident should be reported to the police. This incident would be flagged to the LET.

Action: LET

Councillor Bora Kwon noted that LET officers were frequently at the scrubs but may not be very visible to users and agreed that a clarification of contact details would be helpful. Osama El-Amin suggested that LET officers could use Active Exchange, a platform which took a view over the high footfall areas and most popular access routes, to take a more proactive approach and station themselves strategically according to how busy an area was during the day. Alfie Kerrigan, the Senior Officer for the area, was very keen to connect with more residents and make people feel comfortable about reporting any non-compliance. He also repeated that any threatening issue should be reported to the police. Simon Ingyon confirmed that the contact details provided in the report were the most updated ones.

The Committee noted the update.

RESOLVED

The Committee:

1. Approved the appointment of MHA as the Trust's external auditor for the accounting year 2024/25 and approve their proposed fee of £11,700 (+VAT).
2. Noted an update on procuring the HS2 (High Speed 2) funded Alternative Ecological Mitigation (AEM) Masterplan scheme.
3. Noted progress towards co-producing access improvements on the open space.
4. Received an update on the Q4. Grounds Maintenance performance and note upcoming maintenance activities in Q1. 2025/26.

5. Approved an additional contract payment for Years 3 – 5 on the grounds maintenance contract to ensure continued performance over the remainder of the contract term ending in January 2027.
6. Approved a £40K budget to re-surface the multi-use games area behind Old Oak Community Centre.
7. Noted WSCT Financial performance (forecast to year-end) and approved the 2025/26 financial budget.
8. Noted the final steps towards designating the Wormwood Scrubs Meadow – Local Nature Reserve.
9. Approved a set of strategic themes for the Trust and work with officers to develop a 3–5-year strategic business plan.
10. Received an update on the Linford Christie sports stadium capital programme.
11. Approved a budget of £198,300 to implement the Braybrook play area re-design scheme.
12. Received an update on Community Safety.

5. **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting scheduled to be held on 18th June 2025.

Meeting started: 6:32pm

Meeting ended: 7:53pm

Chair

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