

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

MAPLEDURHAM PLAYING FIELDS TRUSTEES SUB-COMMITTEE

9 JANUARY 2018

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 1

Bryce Gibson to ask the Chair of the Mapledurham Playing Fields Trustees Sub-Committee:

With reference to agenda Item 7, will you please respond to the following question:

Where is the expenditure shown in the Charity accounts for RBC officers' time spent on reporting and advising the Trustees, Trustees expenses, third party legal etc costs, and income from ESFA, for matters related to the Trustee/Charity consideration of proposals from the ESFA and Fit4all?

REPLY by Councillor D Edwards (Chair of the Mapledurham Playing Fields Trustees Sub-Committee):

Mr Gibson will be aware that the Leisure and Recreation Manager submits the Mapledurham Playing Fields income and expenditure account to this Sub-Committee each year, for the previous financial year. The income and expenditure account for the financial year ended 31 March 2017 is included in his management update report to tonight's meeting, at agenda item 7.

The account follows the format of previous years, and shows the headings under which expenditure was incurred and income generated by the Council to support the day-to-day operation of the playing fields, for example Grounds Maintenance and Cleaning Services. It does not include, and never has included, the employee or accommodation costs of Council staff involved in the operation of the playing fields. For example the costs of Mr Stanesby and other officers in Leisure Services, for whom the operation of the playing fields is an integral part of their responsibilities to manage and maintain recreational amenities across the Borough of Reading for the use and benefit of local residents, are excluded.

The accounts also do not show the staff and accommodation costs of officers in other Council services which support the Leisure service in its day-to-day operation. Nor do they include the costs of officers in the Committee Service, Accountancy, Asset Management, and the Legal Service who spend some part of their time supporting the Leisure Service, the Mapledurham Playing Fields Management Committee and this Sub-Committee as part of the Council's commitment to its role as Trustee.

Mr Gibson is correct in considering that the ESFA proposal to locate The Heights School at Mapledurham Playing Fields has led to the Council incurring additional costs in responding to this proposal. Some of these costs would have arisen in relation to any of the sites for the school initially proposed by the ESFA in which the Council has an interest, some are specific to this site, but all can be associated with the role of the Council as Charity Trustee. In this connection, Mr Gibson will also be aware that it was reported that the EFSA have agreed to meet the costs incurred by the Council as Charity trustee, up to £35,000 plus VAT in respect of legal advice and £7500 plus VAT in respect of property/valuation advice. This was reported to the Sub-Committee meeting on 20 December 2016: Minute 11(5) refers.

The Council, as Charity Trustee, will be submitting an account to the ESFA at the completion of this process itemising all costs that it has incurred as Charity Trustee a part of its consideration of the ESFA proposal for The Heights School. It would be premature at this stage to anticipate what the total sum may be, other than to say that the Council will expect to be fully reimbursed in the sum of £35,000 offered by the EFSA.

It is also worth noting that any costs the Council may incur in the future in defending any legal challenges on the EFSA or any other proposal will be costs directly associated with its role as Charity Trustee.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 2

George Allen to ask the Chair of the Mapledurham Playing Fields Trustees Sub-Committee:

I see no evidence in the minutes of this Sub-Committee of discussion of the Draft Lease submitted. This appears to be a tenant's Wish List. A formal Lease is created by the Landlord and contains the do's and don'ts for the Tenant.

Can you indicate when this discussion will take place?

REPLY by Councillor D Edwards (Chair of the Mapledurham Playing Fields Trustees Sub-Committee):

Thank you for your question.

The Draft heads of terms in respect of the leasehold acquisition of the 1.231 acres of land at Mapledurham Playing Fields for a term of 125 years at a peppercorn rent were taken to the Mapledurham Playing Fields Trustees Sub-Committee of 20 December 2016. The draft heads of terms reflected the relevant matters contained in the revised ESFA proposal. In addition a specimen EFA Model School Lease was attached to the heads of terms for information purposes.

The final form of lease will be considered and agreed by both parties if the ESFA proposal is agreed by the Mapledurham Playing Fields Sub-Committee.