



Report to Audit & Governance Committee

Date:	25 January 2022
Title:	The Higginson Park Charity Annual Report and Financial Statements 2020/21
Relevant councillor(s):	Cllr Clive Harriss
Authors:	Richard Ambrose (S151), Fiorella Mugari (HoF Communities)
Contact Officers:	Sue Drummond, Sophie Payne
Ward(s) affected:	Marlow

Recommendations: Members are requested to:

- (i) Review the Higginson Park Charity audited Annual Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31 March 2021 attached at Appendix 1 and raise any issues which may provide assurance needed to approve the Annual Report and Financial Statement.
- (ii) Subject to above, approve the Annual Report and Financial Statement for 2020/21.
- (iii) Authorise the Service Director – Corporate Finance & S151 Officer, following consultation with the Chairman, to make any final amendments to the Accounts arising from outstanding audit work prior to the approval of the accounts by the auditor. A verbal update will be given at the meeting to update Members around any outstanding audit work remaining.

Content of report

1.1 The draft Annual Report and the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2021 have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 and have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommended Practice and Financial Reporting Standards.

1.2 The Higginson Park Charity accounts have been audited by Seymour Taylor Audit Limited. The auditors' report included within Appendix 1 is draft and may change once the outstanding audit work is completed and finalised.

1.3 The net worth of Higginson Park Charity has decreased by £306k from £7,534k in 2020 to £7,228k in 2021, of which £190k was depreciation of assets. The net operating expenditure for the year was a net loss of £269k compared to net income £1,892k in 2019/20, the difference being mainly due to the £2m grant received in 2020.

1.4 COVID-19 restrictions had a significant negative impact on the Charity during FY 2020/21, with leisure centre facilities at Court Garden required to close and events cancelled as a result of the national lockdowns and social distancing restrictions in place.

1.5 Places Leisure, along with all the other national leisure operators, saw facilities in Buckinghamshire required to close for more than eight months of the financial year. During the short periods of reopening, levels of attendance at Court Garden Leisure Centre were minimal due to the mandated social distancing requirements which meant significant reductions in capacity and type of activity allowed or on offer. There were also additional costs, such as increased cleaning regimes to ensure a COVID-secure environment.

1.6 The impact of this was a loss of income of £117k from the closure of the leisure centre as well as a loss of income from events. There was mitigation of £105k for some of these income losses through the Government's Support Scheme – currently the accounts do not reflect this amount as a debtor at year end as the treatment in line with Charity Commission rules first needs to be agreed with the auditors. If not included in this year's SoFA, the amount is expected to be reflected in the next financial year's SoFA.

1.7 With the gradual easing of restrictions during the current financial year in line with the government roadmap, recovery is underway; we have seen a positive trajectory in terms of people returning to the leisure facilities thus far, as well as outdoor events starting to return. However, the pace of recovery remains subject to the evolving position on the pandemic.

Other options considered

1.8 N/A



Legal and financial implications

1.9 All the financial implications are included in the main body of the report and Appendix 1.

1.10 Legal Implications: The report addresses the statutory obligations placed on the Council as Trustee of the Higginson Park Charity, pursuant to section 132 of the Charities Act 2011.

Corporate Implications

1.11 None.

Consultation and communication

1.12 None.

Next steps and review

1.13 Any outstanding work on audit will be finalised over the coming week along with the audit report and any amendments resulting from this work will be actioned before the accounts are signed by the Chair of the Committee and S151 Officer.

Background papers

Appendix 1: Annual Report and Financial Statement

