

CHARITABLE TRUST COMMITTEE
11/08/2026 at 6.00 pm



Present: Councillors Z Ali, Ball and Wilkinson

Also in Attendance:

Matt Bulmer – Project Director (Sportstown, Northern Roots and Coliseum)

Alison Evan – Assistant Director (Estates)

Gareth Chilton – Solicitor, Legal Services

Peter Thompson – Constitutional Services

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR

Resolved:

That Councillor Wilkinson be elected as Chair for the duration of the meeting.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mohon Ali and Aslam.

3 URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business received.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

5 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions for this meeting of the Charitable Trust Committee to consider.

6 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Charitable Trust Committee, held on 30th June 2026, be approved as a correct record.

7 NORTHERN ROOTS - ACCESSIBLE BOARDWALK

The Committee considered a report of the Project Director (Sportstown, Northern Roots and Coliseum) that sought the consent of the Charitable Trust Committee ("CTC") for authorisation to delegate to Council the process of approving works for the installation of an accessible path around Plot 8 as part of the Northern Roots Project.

The Council owned approximately 160 acres of green space at Snipe Clough, known as Northern Roots ("Project Site") and the intention was for the Council, working with the Northern Roots charity, to regenerate the site for the benefit of people by improving their health, wellbeing and livelihoods by means of creating opportunities for learning, leisure and growing. The Northern Roots project ("the Project") is a scheme with an ambition to develop the UK's largest urban farm and eco-park at the Project Site, which is in the heart of Oldham.

Work was well underway on the construction of the Visitor Centre and Forestry Hub on the land adjoining Plot 8 with works expected to be completed during the summer of 2026. To enhance the experience for residents and visitors, the Council and Northern Roots have designed and could now approve works for an accessible path around Plot 8, enabling visitors to see and experience the Urban Farm as part of their visit to Northern Roots.

The Northern Roots scheme has various components being delivered to realise its Vision. A key element of the offer to local communities, Oldham residents and visitors from outside Oldham was the creation of an Urban Farm and associated visitor experience. The accessible path would provide a clear and inclusive route around Plot 8 so that visitors can view the growing areas, understand the purpose of the Urban Farm and experience the farm as part of the wider Northern Roots site.

The accessible path will enable the following objectives to be realised:

- Accessible Visitor Experience
- Urban Farm Interpretation and Learning
- Managed Public Access
- Health, Wellbeing and Recreation
- Inclusion and Community Benefit

The accessible path was proposed to run around Plot 8, on the Northern Roots site and would form part of the wider access and visitor infrastructure for the Phase 2 Urban Farm. The current proposal includes footpath and associated fencing works to support managed access around the farm area. Plot 8, Lees Recreation Ground, was gifted on 21st February 1911 to the Corporation to use the ground exclusively for the Municipal School in Greengate Street Oldham or for any additional secondary school or schools of a like character. The Charity Commission made an Order on 26th May 1911 that the land be used exclusively for any secondary or other school or schools, the whole of the endowment to be applied to educational purposes. An amendment followed on 3rd June 1938 that the recreation ground could be used for the said elementary and secondary schools or any other school or schools.

In respect to Plot 8, the CTC obtained a Scheme on 10 November 2020 from the Charity Commission to amend the objects of the charitable trusts relating to Plot 8 as follows: “to promote for the benefit of the inhabitants of in the borough of Oldham and the surrounding area the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disablement, financial hardship or social and economic circumstances or for the public at large in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the condition of life of the said inhabitants”

The Council considers that the creation of an accessible path around Plot 8 for use by the public and community will enhance

the use of the land for recreational, leisure, educational, health and wellbeing purposes and will enable residents and visitors to experience the Urban Farm in a managed and inclusive way.

Resolved:

That the Charitable Trust Committee authorises the delegation to the Council, the process of approving works for the installation of an accessible path around Plot 8, as part of the Northern Roots Project.

8

TANDLE HILL CAFÉ BUILDING

The Charitable Trust Committee considered a report of the Assistant Director of Estates, which sought approval of a request from Tim and Louise Skeldon to enter into a one-year service agreement to operate the café at Tandle Hill Park and install a port-a-loo for use by café staff and the public, as a short-term measure. This would allow time for an application to be made to the Charity Commission for a new Charitable Scheme to facilitate a long-term lease to be granted on the café building.

On behalf of the Charitable Trust Committee, Officers of the Council had investigated this request and are seeking to endorse the request from Tim and Louise Skeldon for a short-term service agreement, whilst a new Charitable Scheme was agreed and the long-term future option for the building finalised.

Resolved:

1. The Committee notes the report, which acts as due diligence on the proposals submitted by Tim and Louise Skeldon.
2. The Charitable Trust Committee approves the proposed one-year service agreement to Tim and Louise Skeldon to operate the café and install a port-a-loo for use by café staff and the public.
3. That the Charitable Trust Committee endorses work by Council Officers to negotiate a long-term agreement, securing future café provision and toilets within the park, in order to apply to the Charity Commission for a Scheme allowing the grant of leases or tenancies to café operators to facilitate the future of the café for use and enjoyment by the public who frequent the park.

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 6.18pm