

CHARITABLE TRUST COMMITTEE

Agenda

Date Tuesday 11th August 2026

Time 6.00 pm

Venue JR Clynes Building, Ground Floor Meeting Room, Cultural Quarter,
Greaves Street, Oldham, OL1 1AL

- Notes
1. Declarations of Interest - If a Member requires advice on any item involving a possible declaration of interest which could affect his/her ability to speak and/or vote he/she is advised to contact Alex Bougatef or Constitutional Services at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.
 2. Further information relating to this meeting is available from Constitutional Services, email: constitutional.services@oldham.gov.uk
 3. Public Questions - Any Member of the public wishing to ask a question at the above meeting can do so only if a written copy of the question is submitted to the contact officer by 12.00 noon on Thursday, 6th August 2026.
 4. Filming - The Council, members of the public and the press may record/film/photograph or broadcast this meeting when the public and the press are not lawfully excluded. Any member of the public who attends a meeting and objects to being filmed should advise the Constitutional Services Officer who will instruct that they are not included in the filming.

Please note that anyone using recording equipment both audio and visual will not be permitted to leave the equipment in the room where a private meeting is held.

Membership of the CHARITABLE TRUST COMMITTEE
Councillors M Ali, Z Ali, Aslam, Ball, Taleb and Wilkinson

Item No

1 Election of Chair

The Panel is asked to elect a Chair for the duration of the meeting.

2 Apologies For Absence

3 Urgent Business

Urgent business, if any, introduced by the Chair

4 Declarations of Interest

To Receive Declarations of Interest in any Contract or matter to be discussed at the meeting.

5 Public Question Time

To receive Questions from the Public, in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

6 Minutes (Pages 3 - 4)

The Minutes of the meeting of the Charitable Trust Committee held on 30th June 2026 are attached for approval.

7 Northern Roots - Accessible Boardwalk (Pages 5 - 10)

Report of the Project Director (Sportstown, Northern Roots and Oldham Coliseum)

8 Tandle Hill Café Building (Pages 11 - 18)

Report of the Corporate Estates Manager.

CHARITABLE TRUST COMMITTEE
30/06/2026 at 6.00 pm



Present: Councillor M Ali (Chair)
 Councillors Aslam, Ball and Wilkinson

Also in Attendance:

Alex Bougatef	Director of Legal (Monitoring Officer)
Rebecca Boyle	Group Solicitor (Corporate)
Matthew Bulmer	Project Director (Sportstown, Northern Roots and Oldham Coliseum)
Jack Grennan	Constitutional Services

1 **ELECTION OF CHAIR**

RESOLVED: That Councillor Mohon Ali be elected as Chair for the duration of the meeting.

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Z. Ali.

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 received for the Committee to consider.

6 **MINUTES**

It was noted that the previous chair of the Committee had approved the minutes.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17th March 2026 be approved as a correct record.

7 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it contains exempt information under paragraphs 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and it would not, on balance, be in the public interest to disclose the reports.

8 **NORTHERN ROOTS - PLOT 8 (PHASE 2 URBAN FARM) SECOND REPORT)**

The Project Director for Sportstown, Northern Roots and the Coliseum introduced the item, noting that the request was in relation to plot 8 of Northern Roots, which was charitable land. It was noted that the proposed use of the land was in line with the charitable uses of the land.

Members queried whether Northern Roots was self-funding, and it was noted that Northern Roots was a charity and so it raised its own funds through donations. It was also noted that community engagement around Northern Roots had taken place.



RESOLVED: That the recommendations in the report be approved.

The Chair asked whether other land would come before the committee in relation to Northern Roots, and it was noted that it was possible. The Committee also requested a visit to the Northern Roots site.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.15 pm

Report to CHARITABLE TRUST COMMITTEE

Northern Roots: Accessible Boardwalk

Portfolio Holder: none

Officer Contact: Emma Barton, Executive Director of Place (Deputy Chief Executive)

Report Author: Matt Bulmer, Project Director SportsTown and Northern Roots

Reason for Report

Officers are seeking 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.

Request and Recommendations

It is recommended that the CTC:

- 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.

Northern Roots: Accessible Boardwalk

1 Background

- 1.1 The Council owns approximately 160 acres of green space at Snipe Clough, known as Northern Roots ("Project Site") and the intention is 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. The Project presents a significant opportunity to further develop and establish Oldham as a green and growing town for the benefit of its residents.

2 Current Project Position

- 2.1 Work is well underway on the construction of the Visitor Centre and Forestry Hub on the land adjoining Plot 8 with works expected to be complete in the summer of 2026. To enhance the experience for residents and visitors the Council and Northern Roots have designed and are now in a position to 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.
- 2.2 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 is the creation of an Urban Farm and associated visitor experience. The accessible path will 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

- A clear, legible and accessible route that enables a wider range of visitors to move around Plot 8 and experience the Urban Farm.

Urban Farm Interpretation and Learning

- Supporting visitors, schools, families and community groups to understand food growing, horticulture, land-based activity and environmental stewardship.

Managed Public Access

- Providing a defined route that allows visitors to see and enjoy the Urban Farm while helping to manage access to operational growing areas, crops and site infrastructure.

Health, Wellbeing and Recreation

- Encouraging walking, outdoor activity, access to nature and recreational use of the wider Northern Roots site.

Inclusion and Community Benefit

- Improving access for people with different mobility needs and strengthening the public benefit delivered from Plot 8.

- 2.3 The accessible path is proposed to run around Plot 8 and to 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

- 2.4 Plot 8, Lees Recreation Ground, was gifted on 21 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 26 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 3 June 1938 that the recreation ground could be used for the said elementary and secondary schools or any other school or schools.
- 2.5 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”*
- 2.6 The Council considers 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.

3.0 Options

- 3.1 There are two options as follows.

Option 1 (Recommended)

- Agree to recommendation 1 and delegate to Council the process of approving works for the installation of the accessible path around Plot 8 as part of the Northern Roots Project.

Option 2

- Not to agree with the recommendation. If the CTC does not agree to the recommendation, the accessible path scheme will not be delivered. This would reduce the ability of visitors to see and experience the Urban Farm as part of their visit and would limit the public access and educational benefits of Plot 8.

4 Consultation

- 4.1 A great deal of community consultation and engagement has been undertaken by the Northern Roots charity ("the NR Charity"). A hybrid planning application FUL/348898/22 has followed and approved for a number of initiatives including:
- Community allotment
 - Visitor Centre
 - Events Building with meeting pods.
 - Learning Centre
 - Forestry Depot and Workshops
 - Ground Mounted Solar PV array.
 - Cycling and pedestrian access improvements

- 4.2 The path is consistent with the wider Northern Roots access, education, recreation and visitor experience objectives and will support public understanding and enjoyment of the Urban Farm.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 Dependent on the terms of any future lease or operational arrangement, any rental income from Plot 8 will be income to the charitable trust and will need to be spent in line with the charitable objectives of the trust. The Council will be required to account for any income and expenditure in relation to the trust to the Charitable Trust Committee and Charity Commission.
- 5.2 This report seeks charitable trustee consent to the proposed works on Plot 8. It does not itself approve capital funding or enter into a works contract. Any funding approval, budget allocation or contract instruction will be progressed through the Council's normal financial and governance processes.

6 Legal Services Comments

- 6.1 The charitable trust terms require the Charitable Trust Committee to promote Plot 8 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.
- 6.2 The Trustees must be satisfied that the proposed use as an accessible path around Plot 8 once the works are carried out will not interfere with the charitable objects and that the benefit of those works outweigh the interruption to the public whilst the works are being carried out.
- 6.3 The proposed accessible path is intended to improve public access, recreation, leisure and educational enjoyment of the Urban Farm and wider Northern Roots site. The Trustees may wish to take independent legal advice if they consider that the recommendation is not in accordance with the charitable objectives.

7. Procurement Implications

- 7.1 There are no known procurement implications for the use of charitable land. Any works carried out to install the accessible path and associated fencing should be in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs).
- 7.2 If this is a new sourcing requirement, the Council must comply with the relevant procurement route and threshold requirements. Where an existing contract, framework or in-house service is available to meet the Council's specific procurement requirements and offers value for money it should be used unless there are particular circumstances which justify an alternative route to market.
- 7.3 If the works are to be delivered as a continuation or modification of an existing Northern Roots construction contract, the relevant contract modification and procurement rules will need to be considered before instruction.

8 Estates Implications

- 8.1 This report sets out the details around the creation of an accessible path around Plot 8 as part of the wider Northern Roots Project. The path will be open to the public for recreation, leisure and educational use and will support managed access around the Urban Farm.

- 8.2 At this time, it is anticipated that the path will be operated and maintained as part of the wider Northern Roots site management arrangements. Should in the future there be a desire to lease the path or the relevant part of Plot 8 to a third party, then a further report will be brought forward for consideration by the Committee where required.

9 Key Decision

- 9.1 No

10 Key Decision Reference

- 10.1 N/A

11 Background Papers

- 11.1 None

12 Appendices

Appendix 1 - Northern Roots Charitable Objectives

APPENDIX 1: NORTHERN ROOTS CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES

For the public benefit, and in particular, for the benefit of the inhabitants and of visitors to the borough of oldham (oldham) and the surrounding areas to:

- (a) provide or assist in the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the conditions of life for the inhabitants of oldham and the surrounding areas, including by the provision, maintainance, protection, improvement and equipping of the gardens, landscaped areas, woodlands, open spaces, playing fields and recreational amenity spaces within the northern roots site or operating under the northern roots brand, and by the provision of allotment facilities;
- (b) advance health by promoting participation in healthy outdoor activities including horticulture and agriculture and other land based activities and recreation and amateur sport.
- (c) promote and encourage the arts, in particular within the public parks and open spaces, and
- (d) ancillary to the above objects, to advance education in particular in: (i) the conservation, protection and improvement of the natural environment including the flora and fauna, wildlife, biodiversity and natural habitats in oldham and the surrounding areas; (ii) the conduct of horticulture, agriculture and other land based businesses (iii) the history, culture, heritage and traditions of the north west.



Report for Charitable Trust Committee

Decision maker:	Charitable Trustee Committee
Decision date:	11 th August 2026
Subject:	Café Building at Tandle Hill Park,
Report author:	Alison Evans, Corporate Estates Manager
Ward (s):	Royton North

Reason for decision

The Charitable Trust Committee (CTC) are requested to approve 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 will 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 CTC, Officers of the Council have 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 is agreed and the long-term future option for the building finalised.

Recommendations for CTC:

Committee members, on behalf of the Charity Trust, are asked to note the content of this report which acts as due diligence on the proposals submitted by Tim and Louise Skeldon, and are recommended to:

- approve 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.
- endorse Officers to negotiate a long-term agreement, securing future café provision and toilets within the park and in order to do so 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.

Tandle Hill Charitable Objectives

The Park shall be used as a Public Park, Pleasure Ground, Recreation Ground, Play Ground or open space. The Trust Deed does also permit the provision of buildings on the Park provided that these are one or more of the following:

Caretaker's/Gardener's/Park Keeper's house(s)

Pavilion and/or refreshment room or other conveniences for the persons using the Park

Any monument, clock tower or meteorological observatory

A museum or house, cage, enclosure or conservatory for animals, birds, plants or flowers.

(If any such building is erected then such quantity of land as the Council (ie as charity trustee) shall think fit may be fenced off used exclusively for the purpose of any such building and as a yard or garden attached to such building).

Background

Tandle Hill is a large country park covering approx. 44 hectares of beech woodland and open grassland. It is one of Oldham's most popular parks and benefits from a large number of visitors each year. The building was constructed in 1994 and was originally operated by the Council as a Countryside Centre/Rangers Station with public toilets. The building is timber framed with timber clad elevations and a stone flag patio to the front and side of the building. Following the Council's decision to close the Countryside Centre, the building is now operated as a café with public toilets accessed externally.

The café lease has expired and come to an end and the tenant is currently 'holding over' paying a rental of £2,600 per annum with the Council covering the utility costs. The café trades at weekends and school holidays.

The Council are responsible for repairs to the exterior of the building and over the years the building has not been fully maintained and since the installation of the stone patio by the Council some years ago, there have been issues with drainage and water impacting on the timber structure of the building.

The drainage problems have caused the floor to deteriorate in the toilets and cause structural deterioration in one corner of the building. The toilets have been repaired over the years on an ad-hoc basis, but now require major works, including the irradiation of dry and wet rot and new floor structures.



The toilets are no longer safe to use and have been closed to the public for some time. Other repairs are also required to the building, including a new roof and replacement of the rainwater goods and modernisation/upgrading of the incoming electricity supply.

The Trust Deed which has been reviewed actually prohibits the grant of a lease in respect of the Park (which would mean any part of it) although as indicated above it positively allows the construction of a building for provision of refreshment and therefore in order to allow a café to be operated, at this time the only practical way of providing such a facility to the public is to grant a longer agreement (ie a lease) to those operating the café. The Council cannot provide this service itself as things are.

This is why we propose that an application is made to the Charity Commission as a matter of urgency for a Scheme to update the Trust Deed to allow leases to be granted in respect of parts of the Park where appropriate to ensure that this type of facility (which includes toilet facilities) can be provided to the users of the Park.

Proposed Service Agreement

Operator	Tim and Louise Skeldon
Agreement Term	One year service agreement
Use	Café and public toilets
Costs	Council will continue to pay the utility costs during the service agreement.

Options Considered:

- **Option 1: Approve a 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, whilst an application is made to the Charity Commission to approve a new Charitable Scheme, which would allow a long-term agreement to be put in place for the future operation of the café building.**

Installing a port-a-loo will allow the facilities to be re-opened to the public and will secure the future of the building. The provision of staff toilets is a requirement of opening the café, so without toilets the café will not be able to continue to trade. Over the next 12 months, Officers will negotiate a long-term agreement, securing future café provision and toilets within the park and in order to do so 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.

This option will secure the long-term presence of a café and public toilets in the park, enhance a valuable community facility and prevent further reputational damage to the Council following poor publicity over the closure of the toilets and will make the tenant responsible for the building costs. The long-term agreement will be presented to the Council's Charity Committee for approval.

- **Option 2: Refuse the proposal to enter into a short-term agreement with the café operator and don't install a port-a-loo.**

The closure of the toilets has caused significant concerns to visitors to the park and the local ward Cllr's. There have been items in the local press and on social media regarding the closure of the toilets which is leading to reputational damage to the Council. Staff toilets are a requirement of operating the café and without these the café will have to close.

Consultation – Environmental Services are supporting the café operator and the future plan for the café building.

Implications

Financial	The approval of a one-year service agreement with Tim and Louise Skeldon, to operate the Tandle Hill café will see the Council continue to cover utility costs and any repairs costs whilst a long-term agreement is discussed. This agreement is in-line with current 26/27 budget expectations. All income is currently received within the Investment Estates – Traded cost centre 24101 and all utility costs and repairs are incurred on Corporate Landlord cost centre 12266. This agreement does not have any additional financial implications, adverse or favourable, for the Council. (John Hoskins, Finance Manager)
-----------	---

Legal	The land in question is, as has been stated, subject to charitable trusts (“the Charity”) and is held by the Council as charity trustee the responsibilities for which are delegated to the Charitable Trust Committee (“CTC”). 1. The CTC must first approve the proposal in principle that it will be in the best interests of the Charity and the promotion of its objects. 2. As has been mentioned, the Trusts do prohibit the grant of leases or tenancies despite allowing the construction of buildings for refreshment. Therefore, before actually putting in place any new agreement it is important to seek and obtain a Scheme from the Charity Commission to allow the grant of leases or tenancies to operators of park facilities. Once such Scheme has been obtained then the following steps need to be taken where a lease is for more than 7 years. 3. As the long-term lease will be a disposal of charity land the appropriate Charities Act report must be obtained from a suitably qualified adviser who must approve the proposed lease terms. Please note that the report’s author may suggest certain changes to the terms. The CTC must authorise Oldham Estates to arrange for such report to be obtained. A designated adviser must be: • a fellow or professional associate of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors or • a fellow of the Central Association for Agricultural Valuers (CAAV) or • a fellow of the NAEA Property mark (National Association of Estate Agents) The CTC must also be satisfied that the adviser has the ability in and experience of valuing similar land within the same area. It is recommended that a designated adviser in this instance should be someone unconnected with the Council. 4. Owing to: 4.1 the land being designated land (it must be used for a specific purpose);
-------	--

	4.2 the fact that at least to a certain extent, the proposed lease will impact on the purpose for which the land is required to be used or how the charity furthers its purpose (by restricting it to use as a playing field rather than for general recreation); 4.3 the fact that the governing document does not contain the necessary express powers for the CTC to dispose of the land (including the granting of leases), and 4.4 The fact (if this is the case) that despite the proposed tenant being itself a charity, its objects are not as wide as the objects of the Charity even though its objects may not conflict with the objects of the Charity. the CTC then need to authorise Legal Services to apply to the Charity Commission for the appropriate authority for the Charity granting the lease on the terms proposed to Tim and Lousie Skeldon. If the Charity Commission require certain other steps to be taken as a condition of that authority, then such requirements must be adhered to. 5. A notice must also be published pursuant to the Charities Act requirements. The notice must: • provide details of the land in question • explain how the CTC wishes to dispose of the land • invite people to contact the CTC with any objections or comments, and • give people a minimum of one month to contact the CTC following publication. The Notice should try to reach as many of the charity's beneficiaries as is reasonably possible (basically residents of Oldham Borough). For a lease for a term of 7 years or less. Under section 120 Charities Act 2011, the position is as follows: Where the proposed disposition is the granting of a lease for a term ending not more than 7 years after it is granted (other than one granted wholly or partly in consideration of a fine), then the requirements mentioned in section 117(2)(b) are that the charity trustees must, before entering into an agreement for the lease—
--	---

	(i) obtain and consider the advice on the proposed disposition of a person who is reasonably believed by the trustees to have the requisite ability and practical experience to provide them with competent advice on the proposed disposition, and (ii) decide that they are satisfied, having considered that person's advice, that the terms on which the disposition is proposed to be made are the best that can reasonably be obtained for the charity. It is possible therefore for leases for a term of less than 7 years, for the CTC to consider and if they wish, approve such advice from the Estates Team at the Council. Prohibition of sale of alcoholic beverages Please also note that the Trust Deed prohibits the sale of alcohol from anywhere on the Park and it is to be noted that any lease granted should also therefore prohibit the sale of alcohol. (Rebecca Boyle – Corporate Group Solicitor)
--	--

Appendix 1 – Plan of Tandle Hill Park

