

Becoming A Trustee – The Parks Trust, Milton Keynes



The Parks Trust is one of Milton Keynes' great success stories. With stewardship of over 20 percent of the land in the new city area and as one of the largest commercial property owners in MK, its success and that of Milton Keynes are inextricably linked. As Milton Keynes enters a pivotal moment in its history, so too does the Trust.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for setting the strategic direction of the Trust and ensuring it performs well. Because of the Trust's significant role in the city's future, being a Trustee is a position of influence and great responsibility, now and for future generations.

Trustees are people who care passionately about Milton Keynes and who recognise the vital contribution the parks and landscape make to the city's prosperity, and the quality of life of everyone living and working here. If you support our aims and are prepared to give some of your time to this important role, we would like to hear from you. The role of Trustee is interesting and rewarding and one in which your knowledge and skills will be harnessed to make a really positive contribution.

We positively welcome people from diverse backgrounds and with disabilities.

The Role of the Trustee

The Board of Trustees is the governing body of The Parks Trust. Its main purpose is:

- To set and monitor the strategic direction of the charity and to ensure that our strategy is aligned with the values and mission of the Trust;
- To ensure the Trust is properly managed and complies with all relevant law and has the resources, policies and structures necessary to be effective and ensure the highest standards of corporate governance;
- To set the way the Trust is governed and monitor, guide and authorise the work of its sub-committees;
- To approve all major decisions and policies and the annual accounts;
- To ensure that appropriate protection, systems, and checks remain in place to mitigate exposure of the Trust to major risks.

In addition the Trustees should be powerful advocates of the Trust and its interests.

The Board meets four times a year. Most meetings take place at the Trust's offices in Campbell Park, Milton Keynes.

Depending upon particular interests and expertise, Trustees are normally appointed to one of the Board's sub-committees which also meet around four times a year. These are:

- **Executive Management Committee:** guides the Chief Executive on matters to do with business management, policy, investment, income and expenditure. It also formulates strategies and policies prior to them being submitted to the Board.
- **Audit Committee:** oversees financial regulations and systems, policies and procedures; ensures appropriate financial information is presented and monitored by the Board; monitors the risk register and the Trust's procedures for managing risk and scrutinises expenditure.
- **Operations Committee:** takes an overview of the management, enhancement, promotion and presentation of the Trust's parks and green spaces.

From time to time small working groups are formed to undertake specific tasks and reviews.

Being a Trustee requires an involvement of around 10 – 20 days per annum. Trustees are unpaid, but expenses may be reclaimed.

Trustees are normally appointed for a three year period of office and may be reappointed for a further three years.

Nominated Trustees

Some Trustees are nominated to the Board by the Trust's partners. For example, the Trust works closely with the Council and other local partners but is staunchly apolitical and is

independent of the Government, local authority or any other organisation or business. The Trust's sole interest is the stewardship of the new city's parks and green spaces. Nominated Trustees have the same responsibilities as all other Trustees and their overriding interest has to be the well being of the Trust.

Trustees' Legal Responsibilities

All Trustees have to administer their charity in accordance with the terms of its governing document. In our case this is the Memorandum and Articles of Association which set out the Trust's objects and powers that the Trustees can exercise in pursuing those objects.

As a charity Trustee you will be taking on significant responsibility but the law protects trustees who have acted reasonable and it is extremely rare for a Trustee to be made personally liable.

Charities are no different to other organisations in the duty of care owed to their employees and members of the public using their premises. With 4,500 acres and 100 buildings all publicly accessible the Trust has significant responsibility here. Trustees must satisfy themselves that we have in place proper management systems and processes and appropriate insurance cover.

Since the Trust is also an incorporated company it is the Trust, not individual Trustees, which has contractual liability for any contract the Trust enters into. The Trustees are further protected by the fact that the Trust employs professional staff and advisors and the Board seeks their advice on all matters. The Trust also takes out Trustee indemnity insurance to provide further protection.

Trustee Training

New Trustees receive an induction which includes a briefing by the Chief Executive and other senior managers. Trustees are also given an induction pack containing the core documents such as the Memorandum and Articles of Association, Charity Commission booklets setting out legal responsibilities of Trustees, and the Trustee Handbook.

Who Can Be A Trustee?

You generally need to be 18 years or over to be a Trustee. Certain people are legally disqualified but this only affects a small number of people such as undischarged bankrupts, those disqualified from being company directors, and those who have been convicted of any offence involving deception or dishonesty.

Conflicts Of Interest

We want Trustees who are actively involved in Milton Keynes' society. Given that the Trust owns around 20 percent of the land in the new city there will inevitably be occasions when there might be conflicts of interest. In these situations he or she should declare an interest and not seek to influence the discussion and decision. We do not want potential conflicts of interest to put off good people from becoming Trustees.

How To Apply To Be A Trustee

If you would like to be considered then, in the first instance, please contact David Foster, Chief Executive at the address below, setting out your interest and background.

Applications will be considered from time to time as and when vacancies occur on the Board, usually once a year. The Executive Committee will want to meet potential Trustees before making recommendations to the full Board on any new Trustee appointments.

Decisions on who to invite onto the Board are always made with a view to filling any skills gaps and assembling a board with an appropriate mix of knowledge and experience. Therefore if there is not a space immediately we like to retain the details of those applying as we need to regularly renew and refresh the Board and vacancies will arise in the future.

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