



## Recruitment of Trustees to The Parks Trust Board

### Introduction

Like most charities The Parks Trust, is governed by a Board of Trustees. The Trustees all live locally, are volunteers and are usually appointed to the board for a three-year term. They have ultimate responsibility for the sound professional, legal and financial management of the Trust and they set and monitor the strategic direction of the Trust.

We particularly welcome applications from groups in society that are underrepresented on the current Board, including female and black, Asian and minority ethnic applicants. For an informal discussion about the role please contact David Foster Chief Executive on 01908 255390 or email [d.foster@theparkstrust.com](mailto:d.foster@theparkstrust.com)

And if you would like to apply please see 'How Trustees Are Appointed', below.

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.

Our 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.

### Skills and experience needed on the Board

**Following a review of our governance arrangements in 2018 the Board agreed the following attributes were needed by all Trustees:**

- An appreciation of the greenspace in MK
- Appreciation of the benefits of the greenspace being managed by the Parks Trust
- A good understanding of our business model
- The ability to read and understand papers on a wide range of topics including financial investment, long term financial planning and consider recommendations
- Preparedness to make unpopular recommendations to the board or committee and willingness to speak their mind
- Good independent judgement and the ability to think strategically and long term and not to always focus on the detail
- An understanding and acceptance of the legal duties responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship
- An ability to work effectively as a member of a team
- The time to commit to carrying out the role of trustee
- An understanding of how committees and boards work and how to make constructive input and play a full part in making the board/committee effective and enjoyable

- An understanding of the need to be impartial and objective and always act in the best interest of the Trust
- An understanding of the need for the Trust to engage with the whole community
- A willingness to make the effort to get to know the Trust's land and attend events

In addition, the Board needs to have people with the following skills and experience:

- Business management
- Financial Management
- Investment management
- Charity governance
- Community Engagement
- Commercial Property
- Outdoor learning
- Marketing and communications
- Land Management and or Farming
- Forestry
- Ecology/biodiversity
- Outdoor Sport and Leisure

From time to time we review the skills and experience on the Board and aim to recruit people with specific skills and experience to ensure gaps do not occur as trustees retire.

### **The role of the Trustee**

The main purpose of the Board of Trustees 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;
- To appoint and appraise the Chief Executive.

The Parks Trust is a Company and a Charity and therefore its Trustees are also Company Directors. The Board meets four times a year. Most meetings take place in the early evenings 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 three sub-committees which also meet around four times a year.

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, Milton Keynes Council nominates three Trustees to the board and The Association of Parish Councils nominate one. The Trust 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 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 reasonably, 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 5,000 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 Articles of Association and Charity Commission guidance.

## **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 25 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 new Trustees are appointed**

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

Applications will be considered from time to time, initially by the Board's Executive Committee. 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.

### **David Foster**

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