

Background and History of the Blindcraft Trust Fund

1. Background

- 1.1 The Blindcraft Trust was established in order to carry out the testamentary wishes of John Leitch by a private Act of Parliament in 1825 which established an Asylum for the Blind in the City of Glasgow - Act George IV CAD44 (private).
- 1.2 The Blind Persons Act 1920 imposed a duty on local authorities to make arrangements for the promotion of the welfare of blind person's resident within their area, a responsibility which was carried out in combination with other Councils. Pursuant to this, a scheme was set up by the county councils of Argyll, Ayr, Dumbarton, Lanark, Renfrew and Stirling and the town councils of the Burghs of Airdrie, Ayr, Coatbridge, Dumbarton, Falkirk, Glasgow, Greenock, Hamilton, Johnstone, Kilmarnock, Motherwell and Wishaw, Paisley, Port Glasgow, Renfrew, Rothesay and Stirling to provide for the housing, education and training of blind persons. At a later date the County Council of Bute and the Town Council of Dumfries also joined the Scheme. Glasgow City Council appears to have been the lead authority at that time.
- 1.3 In order to facilitate the joint scheme a private Act of Parliament (The South West of Scotland Blind Asylum Order Confirmation Act 1923) was passed transferring the Royal Asylum for the Blind from its then managers to the Corporation of the City of Glasgow which held the property on behalf of all the other Council's in the Scheme.
- 1.4 The Blind Persons Act 1920 was eventually repealed and the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 imposed a general welfare function on the Councils. Since then the Social Work responsibility which includes welfare of the blind, was transferred to the Regional Councils in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and then to the unitary authorities in 1994.
- 1.5 Since that time various legislation has imposed general welfare obligations on Councils including welfare of the Blind although this is subject to financial restraints.
- 1.6 Glasgow City Council do not have details of how long the joint scheme ran or when it was wound up nor do we have any details of how the funds were administered between 1937 and 1973. Post 1973 Strathclyde Regional Council ran workshops for the blind through Social Work Department (known as "Blindcraft"). The workshop and the Blindcraft Trust's funds were administered by a management committee and it appears that monies were paid out of the funds either to individuals in the workshops who were blind or visually impaired, or to the workshop itself.

- 1.7 At local government re-organisation in 1994 the Management Committee was discontinued.
- 1.8 In 2012 Glasgow City Council applied to the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) to obtain charitable status to formalise the arrangements in relation to the Funds. This application was made as part of a Council wide review of Sundry Trusts and Funds held by the Council. A list of the historic funds, which have been transferred into the Blindcraft Charitable Trust, and their original purposes are attached as part of the Trustee Induction Pack.

2. The Blindcraft Trust purposes and participating authorities

- 2.1 A copy of the original Blindcraft Trust deed and a summary of the Trust deed are attached.
- 2.2 The charitable purposes of the Blindcraft Trust are:-
 - (a) The prevention or relief of poverty, the advancement of education, the relief of those in need by reason of age, ill health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage.

The specific Trust purposes of the Blindcraft Trust as outlined in the Trust Deed are:-

- (1) to advance the education of individuals of all ages who are blind or visually impaired with particular support being given to children from birth to 19 years of age who have a right to statutory education, declaring that no support shall be given in respect of any matters for which a local authority has a statutory duty;
 - (2) to relieve poverty amongst individuals who are blind or visually impaired and in particular unemployed person through the promotion and/or provision of training and skills of all kinds and particularly such skills as will assist such residents in obtaining paid employment within the mainstream working environment, declaring that particular support will be given to the Blindcraft Factory run by Glasgow City Council for those who are blind or visually impaired;
 - (3) to promote, establish and/or support other projects and programmes of a charitable nature for the benefit of individuals who are blind or visually impaired, including the advancement of the education of the public in general in relation to individuals who are blind or visually impaired, providing such other projects are ancillary to the activities carried on by the Trust in pursuit of the objects (1) and (2) above.
- 2.3 The Trust was activated in 2012 as part of a review of the Council's Sundry Trusts and Funds carried out by the Council's Legal and Financial Services Departments. The Trust is a charitable Trust and therefore must comply with the requirements of the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) and Trust legislation. The Trustees in this case hold the funds in trust for the purposes set out in the Trust Deed.

- 2.4 The Council areas covered by the Blindcraft Trust are the following: Argyll & Bute Council, West Dunbartonshire Council, South Lanarkshire Council, North Lanarkshire Council, South Ayrshire Council, Glasgow City Council, Inverclyde Council, East Ayrshire Council, Renfrewshire Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Stirling Council and Falkirk Council. Each of these areas will have an opportunity to nominate a councillor to service as an ex officio Trustee to the Trust.
- 2.5 When the Blindcraft Trust was activated, the Blindcraft Trustees agreed that certain changes to the Trust deed should be made to comply with Trust legislation and OSCR Guidance. These changes are included in the Deed of Variation which is attached as part of the Trustee Induction Pack.

3. Financial Position of the Trust

- 3.1 The provisional closing balance of the Blindcraft Trust Fund as at 13th October 2023 is £196,116.
- 3.2 The Blindcraft funds are currently held as part of the Council's Sundry Trusts and Funds portfolio. The Council's Sundry Trusts and Funds portfolio is managed by Ruffer Limited Liability Partnership, an investment management firm, appointed by the Council. The investment objectives of the Fund is to preserve the capital over rolling 12 month periods, and secondly to grow the portfolio at a higher rate (after fees) than could reasonably be expected from depositing the cash in a UK bank. The Fund is invested in a variety of different asset classes, including fixed interest stocks and equities (both UK and international), and an allocation of other risk investments designed to improve the overall return, but never to the extent of risking serious capital loss.
- 3.3 The Council's Financial Services department prepares the Blindcraft Annual Accounts, which are approved by the Trustees at the Blindcraft Annual General Meeting and thereafter sent to OSCR.

4. Administration of the Blindcraft Trust

The Blindcraft Trustees have agreed the following:

- 4.1 **Meeting frequency:** Twice per annum. Meetings take place in spring and in winter.
- 4.2 **Spending restrictions:** There are no spending restrictions in the Trust Deed however the Trustees have agreed to limit grant expenditure to a pre-determined amount which is reviewed annually.
- 4.3 **Trust Meetings and Award Process:**

Trustees will approve the Trust accounts prepared by the Council's Financial Services Department and audit report prepared by external auditors.

Trustees also agree the level of Trust expenditure for that particular financial year and confirm the organisations they wish to invite to make an application to the Trust. It is recommended that one of these organisations is RSBi in order to comply with the terms of the Trust Deed.

The Trustees may wish to give the organisations an idea of the type of projects which the Trustees would like to consider.

The Trustees receive an update from the Council's Customer & Business Services as to the status of the applications made in the previous year.

A small number of suitable organisations previously invited by the Trustees put forward suggested proposals to the Trustees which would fit in with the Trust purposes. The Council's Financial Services Departments (Corporate Finance and CBS) will have carried out financial and governance checks on these organisations and will report their findings to the Trustees. The Trustees then give consideration as to whether to award a grant to the organisations, to what value and over what period.

The values of grants from the Trust are currently agreed by the Trustees as the following:

Large grant - over £50,000

Medium grant - between £5000 and £50,000

Small grant - up to £5,000

If the Trustees wish to fund any of the proposals put forward by the organisation, the Trustees will then authorise the Council's Financial Services Department (CBS) to put in place monitoring arrangements to monitor the use of the donations.