

Runnymede Borough CouncilCabrera Trust Management CommitteeThursday, 4 January 2024 at 2.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors C Howorth (Chair), J Hulley (Vice-Chair), Dr P Beesley, P Grobien and M Owen.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillor D Coen.

9 Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on Thursday 13th July 2023 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

10 Apologies for Absence

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor D Coen.

11 Actions taken since the AGM

Prior to the discussion on the actions taken since the AGM. It was confirmed that the Friends of Cabrera Trust Woods were responsible for fundraising only. The volunteer group undertook the work on the site.

The Committee received a schedule of works recommended over a five year period. Officers would liaise with the Council's communication department to see what links could be made with local businesses in due course. The majority of the work could be undertaken by the volunteer group with the exception of 3 tasks which would need to be done by external contractors.

Officers confirmed that the play area in Cabrera Avenue also belonged to the Trust and therefore maintenance and any future replacement play equipment would need to be funded by the Trust. The Committee discussed the possibility of the Council purchasing the play area. Officers were asked to consult with legal/assets in this regard as it was felt that this was a drain on the trust's resources.

It was noted that more funding avenues would be available to the Trust for play area improvements than would be available to Council.

Officers highlighted to the Committee that due to the Council's own financial situation purchase of the play area by them may not be possible at this time.

Action: Paul French to in consultation with Legal/Assets Team review the Trust documentation and bring a report on the possibility of the Trust selling the playground to the Council to the next Committee meeting in July.

12 Actions taken since the last meeting in July 2023

Pond

Councillor Howorth confirmed that planning enforcement had advised him that their action relating to the pond had been concluded.

Incursions and depositing of Green Waste

A survey had been carried out and two properties were encroaching onto Trust land. Officers confirmed that due to a change in personal and a major reorganisation to the Green Spaces team no letters had been sent to the residents to date. The Committee asked Officers to expedite the sending of the letters, after consultation with legal officers to agree content. Officers to copy in all Wardens and Trustees for information.

The Committee requested that whilst not so urgent letters should also be sent to those depositing green waste and the potential incursions followed up in conjunction with the Wardens. Officers to copy in all Wardens and Trustees for information.

It was noted that boundary inspections should be carried out at least on a decadal basis. This would give the Committee time to enforce any encroachments before 10 years had lapsed.

Winter inspection of the river

As agreed at the last meeting a water inspection of the river had recently been carried out. 3 blockages in the river were noted.

The Committee discussed the option of removing the blockages, but also noted that leaving the current blockages would stop flooding further down the river. It was also noted that flooding was good for biodiversity.

It was agreed that Council Officers with specialisms in this area would meet and report back to the Committee the risks involved in both suggested actions.

Action: Helen Wilson to write to residents who are encroaching on Trust land as a matter of urgency after consulting with legal officers regarding the content of the letters.

Helen Wilson to write to residents depositing green waste on Trust land and the potential incursions followed up in conjunction with the Wardens.

Matthew Godfrey (Parks and Arboriculture Manager), Prince Frank (Principal Engineer) and Andy Roy (Biodiversity Officer) to meet to discuss current river blockages and report back to the Committee risks for both options

13 **Draft Annual Estimates**

The Committee was asked to approve the draft estimates 2024/25 as submitted.

The estimates included the estimated cost of between £4,000 and £4,500 for essential tree works. The following report would detail the works.

The day-to-day running costs of the site remained relatively static year on year. Based on current estimates an additional £12,860 would be required to be drawn down from the Trusts investment holdings in 2024/25 to offset the costs of running and managing the site. If this practice continued into the future the Charifund investment would only last

another 7 years. Fundraising was therefore vital.

The Committee queried the substantial rise in costs associated with Legal and Administrative Services. Officers advised the Committee this could be due to several factors; no increases had been applied in the last couple of years due to Covid and staffing issues, legal services may have undertaken additional work, some legal work was being undertaken outside of the Council due to the legal team also having staff shortages which could also increase costs.

The Committee felt this increase was not acceptable and Officers were asked to go back the Corporate Head of Law and Governance to seek clarification on this increase and report back to the next meeting.

The Committee was also concerned regarding the cost of maintenance and felt in future a more formal agreement on what work should be done would be beneficial.

Action: Paul French to discuss increase in legal and administrative services increase and report back to the next meeting.

To note: *Investigation subsequent to the meeting highlighted that a figure had been double counted and the charge should have been £3,500 rather than the £5,200 shown in the budget. This will be updated in the figures presented to the next meeting.*

RESOLVED THAT: The draft estimates for 2024/25 be approved

14 Essential Tree Works

The Committee was advised that as a result of an inspection on the north and west boundaries undertaken in the Summer of 2023 essential tree works needed to be carried out.

A total of seven trees had been found to require the services of a tree surgeon. Two of the trees were at risk of falling into Wellington Avenue, four were endangering the rear boundaries of properties on the northern boundary and one was in danger of damaging a building to the rear of Christ Church Hall.

The Committee was advised that Officers appreciated the funding implications to the Trust and Officers would endeavour to seek the best price possible.

Given the essential nature of the work required the Committee supported the Officers recommendation.

RESOLVED THAT: Proposed essential tree works at an estimated cost of £4,000 to £4,500 to be funded from Cabrera Trust reserves be approved.

15 Honorary Wardens

Officers reported that due to ill health Mrs H Lane had had to regretfully resign as Honorary Warden. Mrs Lane had been involved in the Cabrera Trust for many years and prior to

being a member of the Cabrera Trust Committee was a member of the former Riverside Walk Advisory Committee until it disbanded in 2010.

Throughout her time on the Committee Mrs Lane provided both knowledge and significant interest to the site and was delighted when the site received Local Nature Reserve Status in September 2009.

The Committee wished to pass their heartfelt thanks and recognition to Mrs Lane for her many years of service to the Committee and the locality in general.

Along with the resignation of Mr Ashby last year the Committee was asked if they wished to consider recruiting more Honorary Wardens.

Whilst the Committee felt that 3 Honorary Wardens may be enough another warden could add resilience. Officers were asked to review the Trust's constitution to see if they was a requirement for a certain number of wardens and advise the Committee accordingly.

Dr Beesley suggested he may have someone who would be interested in becoming Honorary Warden. Dr Beesley would speak to them and ask them to make contact with Mrs Holehouse if they were interested in the role.

At the last meeting of the Committee in July 2023 the Committee had asked if a member of The Friends of Cabrera Woods (FCTW) could be co-opted onto the Committee. This would enable them to vote on decisions affecting the group.

In order for this change to take place the Constitution of the Cabrera Trust Management Committee needed to be amended and agreed by the Council's Community Services Committee.

Officers had prepared a report for the Community Services Committee and the item was considered in November 2023. The Committee agreed the following;

the Constitution of the Cabrera Trust Management Committee be changed to allow the addition of one person identified by the Friends of Cabrera Trust Woods (FCTW) to become a member of the Committee and, in the event that person is unable to attend the meeting, a further person identified by the Friends of Cabrera Trust Woods be entitled to substitute for the person who cannot attend.

Additionally, the Committee requested clarification on the internal processes used by the FCTW for selecting and nominating named persons being co-opted onto the main representative and deputy member of the Committee.

The Committee were content with this arrangement and would revert back to Officers with the proposed process for selection in due course.

Action: Mrs Holehouse to consult the Trust's constitution to see if there is a requirement for a minimum or maximum number of wardens. *(To note: Trust's constitution been checked and there is no specification within it regarding the number of wardens needed/required)*

RESOLVED THAT: Dr P Beesley to notify Mrs Holehouse on the process of members of the Friends of Cabrera Woods being co-opted

onto the Committee; and

When clarification on process received Mrs Holehouse to prepare a report for the next available Community Services Committee to seek their approval on the process suggested by FCTW – (To note: Subsequent to the meeting the Corporate Head of Law and Governance (CHLG) advised Officers that there was no need for the Community Services Committee to approve the process of co-opting onto the Committee, this could be approved by CHLG).

16 **Any other business**

Prior to AOB being discussed. Dr Beesley wished to pass on this thanks to Matthew Godfrey for the exceptional support he gave to the Trust. Thanks were also given to Carol Holehouse regarding her swift responses to any queries raised.

Dr Beesley reported that the Friends of Cabrera Trust Woods (FCTW) was now up and running and had to date raised £3,200. The FCTW would like the first tranche of money to be used for a significant project as this would help encourage further donations.

The FCTW would like to meet with Officers of the Council to discuss the mechanism for allocating funds for the maintenance of the woods and Riverside walk. Agreement on how the first tranche of money should be used also needed to be discussed. It was vital this was agreed prior to the AGM. Dr Beesley would ask the secretary of the FCTW to contact Helen Wilson in this regard.

The AGM had been arranged for Friday 8th March at 7.30pm in the Virginia Water Community Centre. Councillors Howorth and Hulley were asked to attend and briefly address the meeting. Dr Beesley also asked Matthew Godfrey to attend.

The FCTW would like to look at 'donations' rather than sponsorship from local businesses. It was agreed that a draft letter would be prepared for approval by this Committee prior to being sent out.

It was noted that larger amounts from donations could be invested by the Council on behalf of the Trust once they have passed it over from the FCTW.

QR codes for the trial markers had been designed. Jeff Turner would contact Helen Wilson in this regards. Previous problems with signal on the site was noted.

17 **Dates of future meetings**

The dates of the future meetings were noted.

(The meeting ended at 4.37 pm.)

Chairman