

Runnymede Borough Council

CABRERA TRUST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

6 January 2022 at 2.30pm via MS Teams

Members of the Committee present: Councillors C Howorth (Chairman), J Hulley (Vice-Chairman), and Mr D Williams (Honorary Secretary)

Mr P French (Corporate Head of Finance) attended on behalf of the Honorary Treasurer Ms A Fahey

The following attended in an advisory capacity;

Mr M Godfrey (Parks and Arboriculture Manager), Mr S Woods (Senior Green Space Officer), Mr B Miller (Green Spaces Officer)

Honorary Wardens: Mrs H Lane, Mr P Beesley and Mr P Grobien

**ACTION**

1. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 September 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

2. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor D Coen, Ms A Fahey and Mr T Ashby

3. **Honorary Wardens**

The Committee was advised that Mr Andrew Saunders had resigned from his role as Honorary Warden. The Committee wished to record their thanks to Andrew who had been involved in the Trust land for over 30 years and had provided valuable input. The Committee requested that the Head of Green Spaces write a thank you letter to Andrew to express the Committees thanks and appreciation for all Andrews work.

Chris  
Dulley

The Committee discussed the need to find a replacement Honorary Warden. It was hoped that the volunteers group may have someone who would be interested in taking on the role. Mr Beesley would liaise with Chris Dulley in this regard.

Mr P  
Beesley/  
Chris  
Dulley

4. **Actions taken since the last meeting**

The Committee was informed on various actions taken since the last meeting

**Footbridge repair**

One of the treads on the eastern footbridge had been replaced as it had been damaged beyond repair.

**Treehouse and den removal**

Officers had been alerted to the presence of an unauthorised treehouse and den structure by volunteer warden, Mr Grobien. The unauthorised structures were safely dismantled and removed from the site. As the location was fairly inaccessible and off the beaten track Officers were very grateful for the report as it may have been some time before it came to light otherwise.

**Boardwalks**

Boardwalks and bridges had been regularly swept during the leaf fall season to try and minimise slippage on the surfaces

**Ditches**

At the last meeting Officers were asked to confirm that ditch clearance works had taken place next to the town path leading down from the station towards the small bridge over the Bourne. The purpose of the work was to try and prevent overspilling from the ditch on to the town path during periods of heavy rain. The Committee was advised the work had been completed in August.

**Forest School**

Due to the pandemic activities had not re-started. The Forest School leader, believed families had used the woods more of their own accord during Covid. It had, however, been difficult to plan for official Forest School sessions due to fears of spreading the virus. She was hopeful that 2022 would see a return to the after-school clubs that had been running so successfully prior to 2020.

**Tree Works**

An order had recently been issued to fell two Alders to the rear of 28 Cabrera Avenue following an inspection showed them to have serious defects. This work had now been completed.

**Litter**

At the AGM in September, it was agreed that Officers would report back to the Committee on the levels of litter. Since that meeting it had not been necessary to submit any requests to the Council's Streetcare team for clearance of litter on site for either the Cabrera Trust Riverside Walk or Cabrera Avenue recreation ground. Monthly inspections had not flagged excessive litter on the site. Green Space Officers were expected, as part of the site inspection, to carry out a litter pick as necessary.

Officers were asked if the issue of brambles and nettles going through the wire fencing into the Preschool had been resolved. Officers present did not have this information but would ascertain this from Chris Dulley (Assistant Head of Green Space) when he returned from leave. Officers would then advise the Committee via email.

Matthew  
Godfrey/  
Chris  
Dulley

## 5. **Tree Management**

The Committee's view was sought on undertaking woodland management work on the site.

Officers advised the Committee that a management plan had been written for the Cabrera woodland in 2001. The purpose of the plan was to maintain the woodland as a marshland and to preserve the species found within in it. Wetlands such as this provided habitat for species that were unlikely to thrive elsewhere and were becoming increasingly rare.

Within the management plan six operation objectives were set:

- To maintain species variety
- To maintain woodland vegetation
- To maintain existing water table and raise it where feasible and desirable
- To keep some areas remote and wild
- To maintain safe access to some of the features of the site
- To open up glades along the riverbank

To date the works carried out within the woodland were predominantly undertaken by volunteer groups and contractors. Work undertaken included control of invasive species, maintaining and improving access, way marking, maps and information.

One outstanding objective of the management plan was the re-coppicing of Hazel, Alder, and other species along the riverbank, this would encourage the re-establishment of understorey species and improve the riverbank. It was understood that there was some re-coppicing work carried out in the early 2000's but none since. Mrs Lane reported that previous re-coppicing work had been very successful and was very beneficial to the flora on the site. The proposed work would also protect the habitat and biodiversity of the area. Officers reported that if the trees were left when the trees reached maturity some ongoing maintenance work would be required.

Whilst the Committee supported the proposed work, given the Trust's financial position at this time, they did not feel they could currently commit to a long-term program of re-coppicing. It was therefore suggested that a budget for a one-year block be agreed. This would enable a small amount of the work to be done and thereby give the Friends Group once established an indication of the benefits of re-coppicing.

The Honorary Secretary suggested that there may be other external funding sources to the Council, including potentially the Your Fund Surrey grant scheme. He would arrange to meet separately with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to discuss.

Darren  
Williams

**RESOLVED that –**

- i) A one-year program of re-coppicing be re-established along the banks of the river in order to create a diverse habitat in that area and;**
- ii) A budget of no more than £4,000 be set for the re-coppicing of the trees along the riverbank and:**
- iii) The Committee review the re-coppicing works on an annual basis**

**6. Draft Annual Estimates for 2022/23**

The Committee was asked to approve the probable budget for 2021/22 and the draft estimates for 2022/23.

Mr French reported that the day to day running costs of the site remained relatively static year on year with the biggest cost relating to the supervision of the site by Council staff.

It was estimated that an additional £10,000 would be required to be drawn down from the Trusts investment holdings in 2022/23 to offset the net costs of running and managing the site. Assuming the net cost of £10,000 continued, the Charifund investments would only last another 8-10 years as each withdrawal reduced the investment income available thus increasing the net cost of the service. However, it was worth noting that values of investments would go up and down in response to market fluctuations. This could potentially extend the lifespan of the investments if markets increased but equally values and investment income could fall. It was therefore crucial that the Friends group was established to assist with income generation.

It was noted that the estimates for 2022/23 did not include any budget for the re-coppicing works agreed in the previous item. Now that the decision to proceed with a one-year budget of £4,000 had been agreed, the estimates would be amended accordingly.

**ACTION**

**RESOLVED that –**

**The probable budget for 2021/22 and draft estimates for 2022/23 be approved**

Paul  
French

**7. Any other business**

The Committee discussed when the best time was to launch the Friends Group. It was felt that Spring/Summer was the most appropriate time of year but given the economic effects of the pandemic whether this year was viable or whether to wait another year. It was agreed that the most sensible approach would be to wait until March this year to decide. Officers would liaise with Phillip Beesley at that time to discuss.

Mr  
Beesley/  
Chris  
Dulley

It was also suggested that if the Friends Group went ahead that the Launch Meeting was combined with the AGM. However, as the AGM was now held in the Civic Centre, it would be beneficial for any combined meeting to be held in the evening this year in Virginia Water in order to recruit local people. It was noted that the Virginia Water Community Hall had previously offered the Friends Group complimentary use of their hall.

Councillor Hulley suggested the Committee having a table/stall at the Jumble Trail being held in May. This event was being held in the Memorial Gardens and would be an opportunity to raise the profile of the trust land and possibly get people to sign up to the Friends Group. Councillor Hulley would raise this with the organiser and advise Officers accordingly.

Cllr J  
Hulley

The Honorary Secretary suggested there may be grant funding opportunities available to the trust which should also be considered. He would include Cabrera Trust in future discussions with the Council's new bid writing Officer.

Darren  
Williams

As the Honorary Secretary was new to the role and not familiar with the trust land he would arrange to visit along with Councillors and Honorary Wardens to familiarise himself with the area.

Darren  
Williams

The Committee noted the importance of getting the Friends Group established along with any other grants/donations.

Mr Beesley reported that the Neighbourhood Planning Group Committee had been liaising with him regarding the trust land. The land was now 'flagged up' as part of the neighbourhood.

A wildflower expert had offered to do a walk on the trust land in the Spring. Mr Beesley would liaise with Chris Dulley when this had been arranged. Councillors would also be invited to attend.

Mr  
Beesley

**ACTION**

Mr Beesley would liaise with Green Space Officers regarding the volunteer groups activities for the forthcoming year

Mr  
Beesley

8. **Dates for meetings in 2022/2023**

The AGM and the July meeting of the Cabrera Trust Management Committee is scheduled to be held on **Thursday 14 July 2022 at 2.30pm.**  
(Subject to change)

The January 2023 meeting is scheduled to be held on **Thursday 5 January 2023 at 2.30pm.**

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 3.27 pm)