

Runnymede Borough Council

Cabrera Trust Management Committee AGM

Thursday 13 July 2023 at 2.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillor C Howorth (Chairman), P Beasley, M Owen and P Grobien.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillor D Coen, Councillor J Hulley, T Ashby, H Lane, P Thomas

1. Minutes

The minutes of the last AGM held on Thursday 14th July 2022 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor D Coen, Councillor J Hulley, T Ashby and P Thomas.

3. Chairman's opening remarks

Councillor Howorth welcomed members of the public to the 2023 Annual General Meeting of the Cabrera Trust.

The Cabrera Trust was constituted by Deed of Trust, as amended by a scheme made by the Secretary of State for Education and Science, dated 24 March 1972, and was a registered charity. Runnymede Borough Council was the Trustee.

The Trust was responsible for the management of the open space playing area on Cabrera Avenue and approximately 52 acres of land alongside the River Bourne, known as the Riverside Walk. It was also responsible for the administration and use of the Trust funds.

The Trust Deed required that the Riverside Walk was maintained for the exercise, recreation and benefit of the inhabitants of Virginia Water and the neighbourhood, and the open space on Cabrera Avenue was to be used as a public recreation for the benefit of the same area.

The Management Committee had been set up by the Trustee to provide a clear local focus for the management of the Trust land. The Management Committee comprised of the three Virginia Water Councillors, together with two Council Officers, acting in the capacity of Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Secretary. In addition to this, the Committee had four co-opted members: Mr Ashby, Dr Beesley, Mr Grobien and Mrs Lane. The Chairman thanked the co-opted members for all their help and support over the past year.

4. Annual Report

Honorary Treasurer's Annual Report

The Honorary Treasurer reported that during the last financial year the Trust had seen its investments fall because of the current financial climate, with funds predicted to last for a maximum of ten years. An Honorary Warden asked where the current rate of expenditure was occurring, and the Honorary Treasurer replied that around £4,000 was spent on tree care alone, although there was not a breakdown for the cost of these works.

The Honorary Treasurer reported on the last financial year for the Trust. It was noted that interest in internal investments had contributed £203 to the Trust's income, giving it a total income of £7,114 when added to the dividends from the Trust's external investments, which was an increase on last year's £6,358. This was seen to be a positive change. It was noted that expenditure had increased from £15,932 in 2021/22 to £20,813 in 2022/23 mainly due to the £3,900 of one-off coppicing works agreed at a previous meeting. It was also noted that the Trust's investments had decreased in value by £7,990. The fund balance as of 31st March 2023 was £125,389.

It was agreed that the newly-established Friends of Cabrera Trust Group would therefore be vital in establishing an alternative income stream for the Trust. Discussion then centred around the current financial strategy around the Friends' Group. It was established that the Group had already raised just over £2,000, with £500 coming from the Virginia Water Community Trail. It was clarified that this money was made up of both subscriptions and donations.

The Friends' Group had a current target to raise £5,000 for the current financial year ending March 2024, and it was hoped that if fifty families could be persuaded to donate £100 per annum, then this target would be achieved.

A member of the public stressed the importance of building an income stream through encouraging local businesses to contribute regularly to the Trust's work. Councillor Howorth expressed his support for this and was happy to lobby local businesses for the cause. The Green Spaces Manager also wondered if the Council's Communications department could support in this venture.

The Honorary Treasurer clarified that money raised could be used in any form – as cash or investments - and it was agreed that establishing a scheme of works would make it more desirable for local businesses to invest. The Green Spaces Manager would come up with a scheme of works, stating that there was a plethora of tree work and coppicing to carry out.

A member of the public also stated that it may encourage further public donations if those who donated were invited to the AGM and be given a vote on how the money was spent.

Action: The Green Spaces Manager to come up with a scheme of works and liaise with the Council's Communications department to see what links could be made with local businesses

Action: Councillor Howorth to lobby local businesses to support the Friends Group

5. Annual Inspection of Trust Land

Councillor Howorth apologised for all three councillors being unable to attend the annual inspection.

Officers reported on several actions that had taken place since the annual inspection.

- The graffiti had been cleared
- It was assumed that the mattress and bedding had been cleared as they could no longer be located
- The nettles obscuring a sign had been dealt with on the day by the Tree Officer

It was agreed to discuss the trees in the waterways in the second part of the meeting.

An Honorary Warden wished for it to be minuted that special thanks should be given to Pam Thomas for organising the clearing of the area, and to the Tree Officer for carrying out the work. He noted that a lot of the holly and the Himalayan balsam had now been cleared, and that the remaining holly would be cleared in the near future.

The Green Spaces Manager noted the difficulty in removing items from the water. Whilst the Environment Agency would remove items from the water, it would not remove it from the land. It was down to the Council to arrange for its disposal, either through agreements with other councils, or the depot.

6. Discussion Forum

Discussion centred around maintenance of the grass. Councillor Howorth noted that the Council's move from outsourcing the cutting of the grass to completing it in-house had experienced some teething problems in sourcing the correct equipment. However, the Green Spaces Manager now confirmed that the Council now had a WAM (wide angled mower) and that such delays should lessen over time. Councillor Howorth also clarified that Surrey County Council was now responsible for verge cutting, so they should be the first point of contact for such concerns, not Runnymede Borough Council.

There was some debate over whether to continue filling in holes that were believed to be created from placing football goals on the land. Whilst some Members felt that it may be more sustainable to leave the holes, Councillor Howorth reminded members that the Council would be liable if their continued presence resulted in an injury.

Members also considered the playground that is on Trust land. Some Members felt that maintenance of a playground was no longer within the Trust's original intentions or financial capabilities, especially considering its dwindling reserves. It was asked whether it would be possible for the playground to be placed under Council jurisdiction. However, Councillor Howorth reminded the Trust that the Council's Assets and Legal Teams would need to be consulted to clarify the Trust's responsibility towards the playground, and the Honorary Treasurer reminded members that the Council may be unwilling to take on the responsibility of playground maintenance for similar financial reasons. It was agreed that Councillor Howorth would look into the playground's position in relation to the Trust and further discussion around the playground would occur at the next meeting.

Action: Councillor Howorth to clarify the playground's position with the Council's Legal/ Assets Teams for further discussion next meeting.

Chairman

Meeting finished at 15:32pm