

Highfield Park Trust

Minutes of 21st Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 26 September 2017 at 7.30 pm
Trestle Arts Base

Present

Trustees

Tim Abbott (Chair), Kevin Barnes (CHPC), Ben Coates, Mike Curtis (Treasurer), Jamie Day (SADC), Sue Gaylard, Sarah Graham, Andy Grant, Austin Guest, Roger Thomas, Hannah Turner.

In attendance

Richard Bull (Park Manager & Company Secretary), Ian Carter (Gowers / Auditor), Lisa Dunstan (LKP Accountants), Lizzie Grant, Steven Wittich, Elizabeth Wittich, Sue Hawkins, Carol Prowse.

1 Welcome

Tim Abbott opened by welcoming everyone to the meeting. He thanked Trestle Arts Base for allowing use of their facilities.

2 Apologies for absence

Juliet Crisp, Muriel Johnson

3 Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting

The Minutes of the AGM held on 27 September 2016 were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

4 Matters arising

None

5 Presentation of Annual Report - Chairman

The Chairman presented his annual report to the meeting.

- 5.1 He started by presenting the aims and objectives of the Trust, a brief overview of the finances and a review of the events and activities undertaken during 2016-17.
- 5.2 The financial position of the Trust has continued to improve with an increase in income greater than the increase in expenses which have continued to be tightly controlled. A number of projects have been possible due to grants. There are still a number of projects that the Trust would like to undertake and it will seek funding for them.
- 5.3 The following grants have been received during the last year: English Woodland Grant, S106 funding; Big Lottery Celebration Award; Tesco's 'Bags of Help' grant, Locality Budget; Colney Heath Parish Council. The application to Tarmac for the Village Green enhancement project was unsuccessful.
- 5.4 A number of projects have been completed including: replacement of the workshop door due to vandalism, installation of the Trestle play area, new fencing in two areas of the park and installation of several replacement benches.
- 5.5 The Trust has run a number of successful events since the last AGM including: two Bat Nights, Apple Day, Bug Hunt, 20th Anniversary Celebration, History Event 'What Lies Beneath' (part 2), Bunny Hunt, History walk, Minibeast Safari and a photography walk. Other events included screenings by Luna Cinema and the St Albans Country Show. Two more events are planned for 2017 another history talk and the bug hunt. He thanked all those who had taken part and assisted with the organisation and running of the events.
- 5.6 He explained the engagement with the local community that has occurred and highlighted the continued links with Cunningham Hill Junior School, Hope & Homes

- triathlon, walk for well-being, small-sided football competitions, archery tournaments, two 10K runs and talks to local clubs.
- 5.7 Collaboration with other groups continues including the Hertfordshire Health Walks, St Albans City Youth Community Football Club, Elswood Bowmen (Archers), St Albans Boot Camp, allotment holders, the Petanque club and the Community Development Association (CDA).
- 5.8 The Trust has continued to research the history of the hospitals, many interesting facts and photographs have been gathered. With support from UH, the Trust has applied for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to help with the digitisation of our growing archive. We are waiting to hear if we have been successful.
- 5.9 The Trust has continued to work with a number of volunteer groups including the regular 'Highfield Helpers' and corporate volunteers. There were volunteers from the IT staff of the University of Hertfordshire, AON Hewitt, NFU Health & Safety team, Virgin Media and PriceWaterhouseCoopers. Tim thanked all for their efforts on behalf of the Trust.
- 5.10 He went on to thank all the trustees for their hard work, enthusiasm and dedication to the work of the Trust and outlined the current staffing structure including the addition of a new part time member of staff, who has joined us from the 'Shaw Trust'.
- 5.11 The Trust has a number of projects planned for the future. The main one being the new visitor centre. A lot of effort has gone in to the project over the past year and it finally started this morning. Once complete West Lodge will be refurbished as a residential let. The Trust has also been working on a new website, this will go live in the next few weeks. Other projects include the maintenance of the new woodland, research in to the Park's history, permanent history trail markers and digitalisation of the history archive. Major projects under discussion include resurfacing of the paths and refurbishment of the basketball area for which a 'Sport England' grant application is being written.
- 5.12 He concluded by publicising the forthcoming events planned for the rest of this and next year.
- 5.13 He invited questions and comments.
- 5.13.1 A question was asked as to whether the events cover their costs. The answer was yes and some make a reasonable profit for the Trust. The exception was the outdoor theatre last year; this was due to poor weather, the Brexit vote and very limited advertising by the theatre company.
- 5.13.2 There was a comment that the website is looking very impressive and that the original brief has probably been exceeded.
- 5.13.3 In response to a question about the use of the park's apples it was explained that although the trees are fruiting well, the orchards are managed mainly for wildlife and not production. In the past it has proved difficult to sell a large volume of apple juice and where commercial organisations have been involved the profit margin for the Trust has been too small to make it worthwhile. Apples are sold at Apple Day but left on the trees as late as possible as we are unable to store them properly.

6 Presentation of Accounts year ending 31 March 2017

- 6.1 Full copies of the accounts were made available, Ian Carter commented that it had been a good year in terms of cost control and stability. He specifically highlighted the following aspects where there had been a significant change since 2016.
- 6.2 Rent receivable has increased in the year, from £73,458 to 79,794 resulting from two rent reviews having taken place. Also income from insurance (re billed) has increased (as insurance costs have increased).
- 6.3 Sports income has increased from £18,720 to £38,593 as a result of the football club paying for the renovations that have been undertaken.
- 6.4 Events income is down by £3,536 as no summer fete took place. Last year the Trust ran both a fete and St Albans Town & Country Show, however, this year due to the amount of work it took to organise the fete, it is no longer being organised.
- 6.5 Grants Receivable have increased by £9,525 from £7,533 to £17,058. This was spent on the Trestle play area and other projects.

- 6.6 Salaries and Pension Costs have increased from £94,279 to £96,465 as a result of an additional part time member of staff.
- 6.7 Park maintenance costs have increased significantly during the year from £21,143 to £44,009, this was due to the costs incurred for pitch renovation (£14k) and track way refurbishment (£10k).
- 6.8 Play area costs (£8,540) included one of the projects undertaken, with grant help, during the year.
- 6.9 There has been less expenditure (£1,884) on legal and professional fees as the majority of the planning and professional fees costs for the new visitor centre were incurred last year.
- 6.10 Building maintenance and repair increased from £1,071 to £3,266, this is self-explanatory, as more repair work was needed this year.
- 6.11 There were no fete costs as no fete was organised.
- 6.12 Insurance costs increased from £20,430 to £22,761 due to increases in insurance premium tax and property values, which has increased the costs.
- 6.13 There was a profit on disposal of fixed asset. A tractor was sold giving a profit of £15,540 on the book value carried in the accounts, this highlights how well the Trust looks after its assets.
- 6.14 Investments performed poorly last year, they were much better this year giving an increase of £245,546 over last year.
- 6.15 Fixed asset investments have increased by £40,451 from £6,992,289 to £7,032,741 as a result of increases in property values and the new tractor purchased in the year.
- 6.16 Listed investments performed poorly last year and have improved from £1,520,951 to £1,712,577.
- 6.17 In summary the Trust continues to work hard to diversify income streams and control costs, resulting in a consistent surplus (before investment income and depreciation). It has been especially cautious as the new visitor centre project is likely to absorb resources in 2017.
- 6.18 The Chairman thanked the LK Partnership for their work over the year and Ian Carter and Gowers for the audit of accounts.

7 Adoption of Accounts

- 7.1 A motion that the annual accounts for the year ended 31 March 2017 be adopted was proposed by Mike Curtis and seconded by Kevin Barnes. **This was passed.**

8 Appointment of Auditors

- 8.1 A motion that Gowers Ltd. be re-appointed as the Highfield Park Trust auditor for the year 2017/18 financial year was proposed by Roger Thomas and seconded by Hannah Turner. **This was passed.**

9 Questions & Discussion

There were no further questions.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and invited attendees to remain for refreshments. The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.