

Highfield Park Trust

Minutes of 23rd Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 24 September 2019 at 7.30 pm
Highfield Park Visitor Centre

Present

Trustees

Tim Abbott (Chair), Kevin Barnes (CHPC), Juliet Crisp, Mike Curtis (Treasurer), Jamie Day (SADC), Sue Gaylard, Sarah Graham, Muriel Johnson, Rory Percival, Roger Thomas.

In attendance

Richard Bull (Park Manager & Company Secretary), Ian Carter (Auditor - Gowers)
Mary Anne Bonney, Julie Garner, Sue Hawkins, Tim Hawkins, Penny Jones, William Keen, Chris Knowles, Ann Price, Carol Prowse, Hugh Redgrave, Elizabeth Wittich, Steven Wittich.

1 Welcome

Tim Abbott opened by welcoming everyone to the meeting.

2 Apologies for absence

Dreda Gordon, Joe Gray, John Merritt, James Prowse

3 Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting

The Minutes of the AGM held on 25 September 2018 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 2018-19.
- 5.2 The financial position of the Trust is stable and we continue to maintain effective financial management, controlling costs and developing income streams. Having completed the Visitor Centre and refurbishment of West Lodge, they are now contributing to our income and we are working to maximise potential from our other properties. The new legislation relating to telecommunication masts has affected us; the income we receive has been dramatically reduced, although we did receive a one off payment this year future payments will be far lower. There are many plans for capital projects around the park, the main concern is to resurface the park's paths, however, other projects include re-surfacing the basketball area, new play area equipment, replacement van, new tractor mounted mower.
- 5.3 Grants have been received during the last year from: English Woodland Grant, St Albans District Council; HCC Locality Budget; Colney Heath Parish Council. We have also been successful in two Heritage Lottery grants one to catalogue the history archive and one for an exhibition relating to WW1 centenary commemorations. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in an application to Tarmac landfill fund for a grant towards financing the resurfacing of the footpaths. Work on cataloguing and digitising the history archive is well underway and has been supported by UH history students and a local volunteer.
- 5.4 The Trust has continued to work with a number of volunteer groups including the regular 'Highfield Helpers' and corporate volunteers. There were volunteers from AON Hewitt, PWC, Premier Foods and AECOM. Tim thanked all for their efforts on behalf of the Trust.

- 5.5 He went on to thank all the trustees for their hard work, enthusiasm and dedication to the work of the Trust. He outlined the recent changes to staffing and the current staffing structure. He thanked Rob Allen and Dave Williams for their service and welcomed James Prowse as the new Park Supervisor. Recruitment for the Gardener / Grounds person is underway.
- 5.6 The main focus this year was to start the process of renewing the network of paths around the Park. Having been unsuccessful in our grant application to Tarmac, we were only able to complete one section adjacent to the Village Green. We have changed the mowing regime to increase the biodiversity within the Park and have more ideas planned for next year. The majority of our time has been taken up with general maintenance activities including mowing, care of football pitches, trimming trees, hedge cutting and clearing rubbish.
- 5.7 The Trust has a number of projects planned for the future. The immediate ones are the fulfilment of the Heritage Lottery funded projects and the requirements of the Woodland grant. Other projects which are partly dependant on funding include resurfacing of the paths, refurbishment of the basketball area and replacement of machinery. A survey of the ponds was undertaken by 'Froglife' and the Trust is investigating grant opportunities to improve them.
- 5.8 The Chairman explained the engagement with the local community that has occurred and highlighted the continued links with a number of organisations including 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), Cunningham Hill Junior School, Hope & Homes triathlon, small-sided football competitions, archery and tournaments and 10K runs. Additionally, this year the park was the venue for two Ultimate Frisbee competitions.
- 5.9 The Trust has run a number of successful events since the last AGM including: Apple Day, Bug Hunt, History Event – A Nation's Tribute, a second year for Wassailing. So far in 2019 we have run the Bunny Hunt, History walk, Minibeast Safari and several bat nights. New for this year was a series of Nature Talks and Walks and build a bug hotel. The Trust also hosted Opera Anywhere performing The Pirates of Penzance. Other events included screenings by Luna Cinema.
- 5.10 Future events for 2019 include Apple Day, Bug Hunt and the History event 'Barts in Herts'. Two new events for this year are 'Where the Wild Things Are' and 'Lost Skills for the Outdoors.' Planned events for 2020 include Easter Bunny Hunt, History Walk, Minibeast Safari, Luna Cinema, Bat Nights and Nature Talks & Walks. The Chairman thanked all those who had taken part and assisted with the organisation and running of the events.

6 Presentation of Accounts year ending 31 March 2019

Full copies of the accounts were made available. Ian Carter highlighted the following points.

- 6.1 The statement of financial activities is a record of the incomes and expenses the trust had for a year- the year ended 31st March 2019. Income increased in the year to £240,247 from £205,308. This was due to: grant income increasing from £9,519 to £31,013, resulting from a Heritage grant of £8.3k and £10.8k S106 resurfacing grant. Investment income is down, but it is still very good, given the withdrawal of funds to pay for the new visitor centre. The rental income has significantly increased to £107.3k from £90.4k as a result of the new rental income stream of West Lodge. The other income streams are broadly comparable to last year.
- 6.2 The overall expenditure of the Trust went down from £241.9k to £272.8k. The fundraising account went up from £7.1k to £2k. This is not a big change but this is in part due to the costs of the very successful and moving solidier silhouettes which cost £2.8k. Legal costs are usually one off in nature and there were costs associated with West Lodge, which is why these are higher than last year.
- 6.3 The accounts are required to show property that is held for rental as 'investment property' and property held for the use of the trust has to be depreciated. This year

there was a reclassification of the West Lodge to 'Investment properties', this also resulted in an adjustment to depreciation in the year, resulting in a large difference from £75,064 to £35,093 this year.

- 6.4 Expenditure on charitable activities was broadly in line with last year – and appears to have been well controlled by the trust.
- 6.5 Unrealised gains: During the year, there have been several large increases in the values of the Investment Properties and also in the Listed Investments. These are unrealised gains – they cannot be spent as they are only 'paper' gains and could only be realised if either the property or the investments were sold. The Listed Investment gain is particularly impressive, given the changes in the previous year to build the visitor centre.
- 6.6 Overall there has been a net increase in the Trust's funds amounting to £244,672.
- 6.7 The Balance Sheet is a snapshot of the assets and liabilities of the Trust on 31 March 2019. The investment properties have been revalued at insurance rebuild cost (£135k increase). Costs in relation to the Visitor Centre & West Lodge have been capitalised (£112k), FF&E have been capitalised (£4k).
- 6.8 The unit value of the listed investments has increased, with no disposal during the year. Movements have been verified against CCLA reports (providing a much more detailed analysis of global financial issues which affect the investment funds).
- 6.9 Cash has decreased compared to last year, but not something to be too concerned with. It continues to be an area well controlled by the Trust, although the cost of the visitor centre has had an impact on the cash reserves. The decrease in Trade creditors resulted from payment of the majority of invoices before the year-end.
- 6.10 Overall there has been a net increase in the Trust's funds amounting to £244,672.
- 6.11 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 2019 be adopted was proposed by Kevin Barnes and seconded by Mike Curtis. **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 2019/20 financial year was proposed by Sarah Graham and seconded by Sue Gaylard. **This was passed.**

9 Questions & Discussion

- 9.1 A question was raised concerning lighting bonfires at the allotments. Richard Bull stated that there had been concern raised by several allotment holders in the past and he had sent an email to all allotment holders. The current position is that bonfires are permitted under the rules stated in the allotment agreement, he is undertaking some research to determine the current best practice guidance and will share this with allotment holders before a decision is made. **Action: Richard Bull**
- 9.2 There was concern about untended plots at the allotments. Richard Bull explained that all allotments had been let but understood the frustration when they are not subsequently cared for. He has been working with the allotment holders to try to minimise this issue. The Trust has also used several volunteer days to remove vegetation particularly self-set trees from the allotments. This work will continue. **Action Richard Bull**
- 9.3 A comment was made about the wildflowers at Heartwood forest and whether the Trust could encourage more wildflowers in the park. Richard Bull explained that the Trust would like to encourage more wildflowers and changing the mowing regime is a movement in that direction. However, wildflowers are very sensitive to different soil types and nutrient levels and so not all areas are suitable and the existing vegetation needs to be removed before sowing seeds. The Trust will continue to try to encourage more. **Action: Park Management**
- 9.4 A question was asked about the water source for the ponds. The source for the Rotary pond is runoff from surrounding areas which makes it very reliant on rainfall.

The source for the Cell Barnes pond is unclear and this will be investigated as part of any Heritage Lottery bid.

- 9.5 Dog bins: There was discussion about the dog bins and whether more or larger bins could be installed. The Trust will consider the options at a future board meeting.

Action: HPT board

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