



Minutes of the

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

of The Friends of Cannizaro Park

Sunday 19th May 2024 at 7pm at the Hotel du Vin

Present: Trustees Catherine Nelson (Chair), Simon Ingall (Treasurer), Pit Rink (Secretary), Liza Llewellyn, Caroline Newsholme, Sam Pedder, Jane Watkins and further members including: Richard Angus, Rosie Boom, Sue Bucknall, Victoria Carew Hunt, Maggie Cochrane, Jane Healy, Clive Hilton, Sherrill Ingall, Stephen Llewellyn, David & Lesley Jenkins, John & Jessica Lawrence, Belinda Leathes, Asif & Frances Malik, Robert & Caroline McGowen, Stephen Nelson, Asha Newsum, Michael Norman Smith, Colin Price, Joe Ruston, Richard & Marguerite Vaughan Payne, Liz Walker, Garth Watkins, Sarah Weir, Juliette Willis. Also in Attendance: James Cochrane.

The meeting was declared quorate.

The Chair welcomed all to the AGM and thanked everyone for attending and for their continued support.

1. **Apologies for Absence** Apologies were received from Anne Cantrell, Adam Clark, Anne Peacock, Patty Robertson, David Scott, Cathy Townsend, Aleksis Vilkinskas, Anna Watkin.
2. The Minutes of the AGM held on 11th June 2023 which had been circulated and which are on our website were approved (proposed by Colin Price, seconded by Belinda Leathes, and approved unanimously).
3. **Trustees' Report and the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2024.**

The Chair reminded the meeting that members had been made aware of the papers on the website. The Treasurer introduced himself and briefly discussed the good results outlined in the Financial Statements for the year. The deficit of £15K is due to timing of a generous donation and the expenditure on the drainage survey. He thanked Colin Price for examining and approving our accounts. There were no questions on the report or Financial Statements.
4. **Election of Trustees.**
 - I. All the Trustees have indicated that they are happy to stand again. John Lawrence proposed and Maggie Cochrane seconded that Simon Ingall, Liza Llewellyn, Catherine Nelson, Caroline Newsholme, Anne Peacock, (Elizabeth) Pit Rink, Cathy Townsend, Anna Watkin, and Jane Watkins all be re-elected to serve as Trustees until the conclusion of the next AGM.
 - II. John Rink proposed, and Jane Watkins seconded the election of Sam Pedder to be Trustee until the conclusion of the next AGM.

These proposals were agreed unanimously.

5. Re-appointment of Independent Examiner

Colin Price was thanked for his work as the Independent Examiner of the Financial Statements. He has indicated that he is willing to continue in this role. Lesley Jenkins proposed and Clive Hilton seconded his re-appointment to serve until the conclusion of the next AGM, and this was unanimously approved.

6. Review of Activities 2023/4

The Chair first of all commented on the collegiate and productive Trustee team; the dedicated team of gardening volunteers who regularly do more than their normal day; and the Instagram and Newsletter team for their publications and photographs, keeping Friends and the public up to date with our activities. They have all helped us, in conjunction with London Borough of Merton, to gain our first Green Flag Award, an international benchmark for publicly accessible parks awarded for where a clear improvement has been made to the site. This not only brings prestige but meaningful extra funding of £20k from London Borough of Merton, who have repaired the azalea platform, are supplying new noticeboards and have co funded with us estate fencing.

Thanks to a generous donation we were able to commission a drainage report which has helped us win a £20k grant from the Environment Agency to transform the pond area and from Merton Council Civic Partnership scheme funding for work between the pond and the cascade. With credit to Jane Watkins, our horticultural Trustee, we have re-designed and replanted the Hotel du Vin Orangery Bed and funded by a grant from The Tree Council planted hundreds of new native hedge saplings along the rear park boundary.

There is regular refreshment and weekly maintenance in the rose garden, the front entrance and regular watering of new planting including of donated trees. In liaison with Merton and with particular help from Joe Ruston we have upgraded waste management, with wildlife-resistant and better sited bins. We have instigated a more sustainable mowing regime, both delaying and decreasing the frequency of mowing.

Since the birds had to be removed from the decaying aviary, we have had Art in the Aviary installations provided by local schools and groups, who all want to repeat their involvement in the next year. Thanks to Liza Llewellyn our events programme has focussed on nature in the park with Forest Bathing, Tree walks and Bat Walks. We were partners with the successful second Art in the Park, and with the Wimbledon Village Walk & Talk Group.

We continued our strong communications via e-newsletter & Instagram presence with almost 3000 followers. Recently we have been short listed as Merton Civic Pride Volunteer Team of the Year.

7. Cannizaro at 80: Our 5 Year Renovation Masterplan to 2029

Thinking about the future, the Chair pointed out that in 2029 it will be 80 years since the park was transferred from private ownership to a green space open to all. We recognise that Cannizaro matters due to its historic landscape features, its notable tree and plant collections and that it is a much-loved community space, and why renovation is needed. The infrastructure is ageing, and we must consider changing climate conditions. We have started with the renovation of the Valley Path gaining Community Infrastructure Funding providing improved drainage and increased accessibility.

We are in the process of redesigning the Sunken Garden and surrounding area. The current planting is wasteful of both manpower and plants, and we are looking for a more sustainable but still colourful design. The pond area needs desilting and is part of a programme to work on improving the drainage through the bog garden and cascade pipeline.

In line with the previous public consultation, the new Aviary building will be designed to provide both a display space for community art and also nature education spaces. The Italian Garden and its envelope are the subject of longer-term plans during 2027-9.

We believe that the Friends of Cannizaro Park can deliver these plans. We have a track record of delivering Major Projects, for example: the Front Entrance Re-Design & Planting, 2020; the Rose Garden Re-Design & Planting, 2021-22, the Jubilee Cherry Walk 2022, the Hotel Bed Re-Design & Re-Planting 2023 and as a result have in partnership with Merton Council Green Flag Award for good management of a green space.

We have had multiple successes in local and national grant applications and have an experienced and proficient team of Trustees.

To conclude the Chair gave huge thanks to the skilled and committed team of Trustees our outstanding and enthusiastic volunteers, and our external partners, particularly Hotel du Vin Cannizaro House, Landform UK, Robert Holmes, and Merton Council Greenspaces.

8. Any other business including Ideas & Comments from the floor.

Maggie Cochrane thanked the Chair, Catherine Nelson, for her hard work and dedication.

Clive Hilton pointed out that the Italian Garden was a comparatively recent name and that as part of the longer-term plans for that area different nomenclature should be considered. The Chair agreed that this would be happen in due course. It is an important revenue generating space for Merton, and so is unlikely to revert to its original Kitchen Garden.

Clive Hilton also asked if there were any plans to include a children's play area, particularly sheltered from dogs. The Chair pointed out that this has been a regular discussion point amongst Trustees, but that Health and Safety Issues could be challenging. Any plans would be made in conjunction with Merton.

David Jenkins asked if there are any plans for the Belvedere and Retreat. The Chair responded that the infrastructure in these areas is complex and work there would be very time consuming and expensive. We are currently concentrating on the central core of the park, and moving as fast as we can, given our totally volunteer manpower.

As there were no more questions the Chair thanked all for their attendance and closed the meeting at 7:40pm inviting all to join the Trustees for drinks.