

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of The Broomfield House Trust

Held over the internet via Zoom on March 21st, 2022, starting 6.30 pm

Present: Ray Collet, Ivor Evans (Secretary, T), Henry Jacobs, Kim Lumley (T), David March (Deputy Chair, and Treasurer, T), Ron Tabor, Colin Younger (Chairman, T), Sue Younger

Note: current trustees are indicated by (T).

AGM Formal Business

Apologies for Absence: Roger Blows, John Cullen, Keith Maxwell, Bill Yates (T, ill with Covid)

Minutes of the previous AGM held 13th January, 2021 – The Minutes had previously been circulated to all participants, and were agreed.

Treasurer’s Report for the last financial year (1st February 2021 to 31st March 2022): David March (Treasurer) had previously circulated his report, which was very brief. There were only four transactions last year, including two Amazon donations. David made the point that HSBC now operate a service charge for charities - £5 per month. Given our paucity of funds (the current balance is £587.38) and limited fundraising, this is a significant cost, but there’s no banking alternative at this time.

The report was agreed.

Chairman’s Report from the last AGM to date and ensuing discussion: Colin Younger’s report had previously been circulated to all participants.

Colin spoke to some key points – most significantly, those emerging from the meeting held on November 15th, 2021, between the Trust and – for the Council – Adrian Smallwood (Head of Strategic Property Service) and Dr Alix Slater (Heritage Consultant). In essence, Dr Slater – commissioned by the Council to report on the House and its future – concluded there was no hope of restoration, primarily because the National Lottery Heritage Fund will not now consider projects involving substantial “new build” restoration. Much new build would be needed in any restoration because of the structural losses from the successive fires. There was mention of “memorialisation” of the House, and the possibility of securing some funding for the wider park and some public use facility in the stable yard – probably involving profit from housing in the stable yard. There was no detailed plan for any of these possibilities.

It’s notable that there was no further discussion of the Regeneration Practice’s scheme for a “shell” restoration financed by a stable yard development – dismissed previously (late 2019 – see last AGM’s minutes) on the basis of arguably unsound and prejudicial costings.

We still await Dr Slater's report (surely long since completed). Colin emphasized the frustration of trying to communicate with the Council. It seems there is no political will in the Council for any kind of restoration, and they hope time and further deterioration will result in HE giving permission for demolition. We will press to receive Dr Slater's report.

David March has gathered from Claire Brady (who works for HE) that HE has made some comments to Enfield regarding the House, but we don't know what they are. It was suggested we might formally write to HE asking about their position - though they might find it difficult to reply. Colin, as Chair, will undertake this.

Council elections are due in May, and the Council will soon be entering "purdah", when no decisions are made and communication is even more difficult! Apparently, Broomfield Park/House will be in a ward with two new councillors: it was felt we should try to meet with these two when they've "settled in", and discuss the BH issue, and try to lobby them – perhaps early June (?). We note that some of our erstwhile councillor supporters of BH restoration will not be standing again.

There was discussion of the state of the gazebo/summer house, a listed structure, which stands against the west-facing wall, behind the House. The structure is in a poor state, with indications of rot at the base of the timber columns. David March reported that the Council visited the site on March the 1st, and we've just heard from Harriet Bell (Principal Heritage Officer for Enfield) that a surveyor has been asked to prepare a repair specification.

We note that at there has been some defacing of the hoarding round the House by graffiti.

Ron Tabor again drew our attention to the Council's mishandling of the insurance claim regarding the first fire, and the success made of historic house restorations in Gunnersbury Park. Colin reminded us that in previous years Trustees have visited several thriving examples of houses in parks, and produced and issued reports on these: sadly, nothing has been able to persuade Enfield Council to seriously consider restoring and investing in Broomfield House.

Appointment of trustees to serve for 2022. The trustees present at the meeting, Ivor Evans, Kim Lumley, David March, and Colin Younger, all agreed to stand again, with the meeting's approval. We will check with Bill Yates whether he wishes to be a trustee for next year.

Appointment of officers to serve for 2022. The following reappointed: Colin Younger (Chairman); Ivor Evans (Secretary); David March (Treasurer and Deputy Chairman).

Other Business

Peter Brown

It's fitting to record our debt to local historian Peter Brown who died aged 91 shortly after our last AGM. Peter was, among other things, a champion of the history of Broomfield House and Park about which he produced a notable collection of handwritten and self-illustrated leaflets and booklets. These have been essential reference material for the Trust, notably in the creation of the major exhibition we put on in the Dugdale centre in 2018-19.

In 2010 Peter planted a white mulberry tree in front of the toilet block close to the House in commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the death of Sir John Spencer, Lord Mayor of London and owner of Broomfield House (1599-1610). His fortune was based on exporting English cloth, importing luxuries like silks and spices, and moneylending, and he was nicknamed "Rich" Spencer, one of the richest men in England. In 2020 the Friends of Broomfield Park marked the planting of this tree by unveiling a small plaque recording this and Peter's contribution to the study of local history.

Date and venue of next meeting

It was suggested that an Extraordinary General Meeting might be held at some time after the forthcoming Council elections – when the Council's policy and plans for the House might be clearer. The date and venue will be circulated in advance.