**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting November 2023**

Held on 23rd November 2023 in the Victoria Hall at 18.00

**Trustees/Committee present**:

Allison Rogers, Philip Palmer, Maureen Moorman, David Wisden, Liz Hopkins, Malcolm Watson, Frances Bourn, Julia Pillips, Janice Douse

**Apologies received**: Helen McComb, Adrain Johnson, Carolyn McCormack.

**Members present:** Twenty

**Members of English Heritage:** David Bailey

**Proxy Votes recorded:** Thirty seven

Allison opened the meeting by welcoming all those present and apologised for the late change of venue and then thanked David Bailey for providing a much warmer room for our meeting.

The AGM was changed to November to make it more relevant with the financial accounts, which are published at the end of September. However, it was decided on by a show of hands, to change the timing in the future to a lunchtime to avoid the darker nights and encourage more attendees.

Allison thanked the Committee for a successful year of events, talks and walks, which all help in the social side of being a Friend of Osborne, as well as generating much needed funds for Osborne.

Special thanks were given to the Treasurer, Philip Palmer, who is stepping back from that role, but will continue to guide Adrain Johnson as he takes up his new position of Treasurer. Also, thanks were given to John Bourn who provided an excellent slide show of the Osborne Estate as a precursor to the meeting.

The formal business of the meeting was announced and commenced with the agenda items.

1. **Minutes of AGM on 23rd February 2023.**

There were no matters arising and the Minutes were approved unanimously by the floor.

1. **To receive and consider the Trustees’ Annual Report and Financial Statements for the period from 1st October 2022 to 30th September 2023.**

Philip presented the accounts. See Enclosure.

There were no matters arising and the Treasurer’s Accounts were approved unanimously by the floor.

Philip explained that while he was stepping down from his role, he together with his business associate Steven Wade would continue to support and update the Sage system which is currently used as the main financial tool.

* Michael Douse ask if there would be any financial cost for this service, to which Philip replied there would be none.

1. **To re-** **elect as a Trustee on rotation**

Maureen Morman was re-elected as a Trustee unanimously.

Helen McComb was re-elected as a Trustee unanimously.

* **Proposed Constitution Amendments.**

Allison explained that as Adrain Johnson, one of the main contributors to the proposed amendments, was not present, the Committee had agreed to postpone this non urgent item until the next AGM,

* **To receive and respond to any questions raised by members.**

Michael Douse asked what projects were currently in the pipeline which could be supported by FoOs.

David Bailey responded to this saying that because of the number of stakeholders from EH involved in the development of projects this was becoming very time consuming. Currently, Christopher Warleigh-Lack (Curator), Toby Breasley (Head Gardener) and Amanda Pickard (General Manager) were working on a ‘wish list ‘hopefully to be produced within the next 6 months.

**There then followed a presentation from Mr. David Bailey, Head of Historic Properties of the Isle of Wight, and Hampshire.**

David produced a very informative Power-point presentation outlining some of the events that have taken placeover the past year at Osborne.

David thanked FoOs for the donation of the cost of the costumes used by staff on the guided tours and the continued support we provide.

He explained that this year was the first year that visitor numbers were back up to their pre lockdown times with 239,000 visitors generating an income of £4.2 million. However, as Osborne is part of English Heritage not all of this revenue will be allocated directly to the House and as EH is a charity it receives no government funding.

Over 10,000 school children were welcomed to the House last year, slightly down on previous years partly due to a downturn in school groups visiting the island. The policy of inviting all island school children to visit free of charge would be maintained.

The excellent Channel 4 production ‘Osborne House a Royal Retreat’ film produced much good publicity for the house and has made ‘stars’ of some of those who took part.

Unfortunately, the free, open air, Coronation Celebration Event, planned in May, was badly affected by the weather and, therefore, was not the success hoped for.

The full scale ‘Salvage Event’ involving the members of the IOW and Hampshire Fire brigade was a real success. Royal Collection items from the Durbar Room were safely removed and stored and 3 staff were rescued from the upper floor. This mock event provided much information and experience to the organisers should a real fire actually take place.

The October storms caused a great deal of damage to the estate. The Beach Café was flooded with sewage and has had to be closed, hopefully with an April opening time. Many of the paths going down the valley towards the beach have been washed away, again, leading to the closure of the lower estate to the public.

David explained that the 15 year ‘long term’ plan for Osborne seems never ending, like painting the Fourth Road Bridge, with £40 million needed for conservation work to keep the outstanding problems under control. In the short term the priorities are the reopening of the Beach Café, the refurbishment of Swiss Cottage play area together with Swiss Cottage roof repair. In the House, work is needed to stabilise the movement of the carpets in the corridors, to repair the erosion of many of the external high level cornices and to improve the energy efficiency of the property.

To help fund some of this work Osborne are engaged in seeking help in the form of corporate partnerships and sponsors, lottery funding, public donations and of course funds from Friends of Osborne.

David then invited any questions from the floor.

* June Darling asked about the possibility of ‘timed tickets’ to alleviate crowding in the house. David replied that they were looking at the possibility of splitting the house into 4 zones to spread the visitors to improve their experience.
* Allison Rogers asked if our members could prebook the Guided Tours which take place when the house is not in free flow. David said he would check with Amanda to see if it was possible.
* John Bourn asked if there were any plans to improve the sale of food and drink on the site? David replied that all catering was now in house, and that the catering department was looking at using local, seasonal and Osborne produce.
* Frances Bourn asked if the upper terrace could still be used for social events? The answer was that because the upper terrace contains items of the Royal Collection, a security presence would need to be in place for an out of hours event.
* Malcolm Watson enquired if a credit was given to Osborne for EH members visiting the site. David explained that a credit was given for new members only and not for existing members.
* Mike Priddle enquired if the Victorian Christmas Event was going to reinstated. The answer was that as previous events had made a lost this was unlikely.

**The meeting closed after Allison had thanked all for attending with additional thanks to David for his excellent presentation and his responses to questions from the floor.**

David Wisden 24th November 2023 on behalf of Helen McComb.

**Enclosure.**

**To receive and consider the Trustees’ annual report and Financial Statements for the period from 1st October 2022 to 30th September 2023.**

Financial Statement – Treasurers Report.