

Chairman's Welcome : Presentation to Residents 13 May 2022

Welcome to those of you who are attending tonight to hear this presentation of EVRT's explanation of why it has decided upon a particular form of governance for the Trust that will take effect in due course.

We have here tonight myself, Chris Hogger as Hon. Chair of the Trust, and Trustee Paula Moss who acts as our Hon. Secretary and as the host of tonight's meeting. Our other Trustee Charles Thorne is away for the week and cannot be with us tonight.

We have here in attendance a modest number of residents, a small percentage of the adult residents of Effingham, and I doubt there would have been many more even had we blitzed the parish with intense publicity for many months. My belief is that the vast majority of residents are not much concerned, if at all, with the technical nature of the Trust's governance and are simply content to see that the facilities are in good order and available to them for their recreational pursuits.

A little about the background to our Trusteeship and to this meeting. The three of us became Trustees in November, and by January we were the only Trustees. We had a fairly narrow window in which to acquaint ourselves with the ongoing issues and to get into our stride with the day to day management. I would like to thank the former Trustees and the staff for assisting us in that process. I was the only one of the three new Trustees with experience of running this particular charity, having previously been a trustee for over 3 years and then an unpaid administrator for a further 2 years.

It was not until early January that we felt able to give consideration to the possibility of moving to a different governance model. Currently we bear individual and unlimited personal liability for all aspects of the Trust, as has been the case for previous Trustees over many decades. We wanted to eliminate this liability in a future model, and our predecessors had likewise intended to do the same.

Our research and analysis has led us to choose as our preferred model that in which the Parish Council will act as the sole Trustee, assisted by an Executive Committee. The significance and rationale for that will shortly be laid out in tonight's presentation.

One of our correspondents has alleged that this outcome has been a deliberate takeover by the Parish Council (I am diluting the language here). Nothing could be further from the truth. Both when and after I and the others were appointed as Trustees, the Parish Council did not express or exert a single atom of influence upon us about preferred models, or even about governance at all. It has been our own decision entirely, as indeed it should be in accordance with the expected decision-making procedures of charity trustees.

So tonight's meeting is not a forum in which all we assembled together make or ratify a collective decision on this. This decision has already been made, months ago, and has been clearly articulated on the EVRT and Parish Council websites for over three months. Tonight is instead an opportunity for residents to hear why the decision is what it is, and to raise questions specifically about that and about the Revised Scheme.

That said, in my position as Chair, I will not permit the meeting to stray significantly from this topic. In particular we will not be raking over the past, as to what particular persons or bodies did or did not do, or should or should not have done. That is all water under the bridge as far as this meeting is concerned.

The KGV facility is dear to the hearts of many Effingham people. I count myself there, for why otherwise would I have given over six years of my life to it? And others have given even more. All Trustees past and present have made huge sacrifices, for no personal gain, on behalf of this parish. And apart from Trustees, very many residents and their parents or grandparents have made immense contributions to it. So it is understandable that some will have strong feelings about how it is managed. Inevitably there will be honestly held differences of opinion and there will be some dissent from what we are doing. It is the nature of the beast.

Nevertheless, let us tonight conduct ourselves with good grace and mutual respect, as we all want the best for our village and are surely all of fundamentally good intent. Please understand that discourteous behaviour will not be accommodated.

That's enough from me and I now invite my colleague Paula Moss to deliver our presentation.