



Avenue House Estate Trust

Appointment of Chair

January 2017

1. Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chair of Trustees of Avenue House Estate Trust (AHET), the Trust that manages Finchley's Stephens House & Gardens.

This is an exciting time for the Trust. We are in the final stages of delivering a £3m improvement to the gardens, funded mainly from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery.

- The improvement has covered every corner of the gardens, restoring major landscape features such as the pond, rockery and bog garden will be sympathetically restored to their former nineteenth century glory.
- We have re-established many original views, and undertaken vital repairs to structures, footpaths, gates and railings. We have also expanded and upgraded the playground, which was opened, to popular acclaim, in September.
- We have built a new depot for our gardeners and volunteers, and as a result are now converting the garage into a community resource room for events and educational activities, and also converting the stable block into a new café/restaurant. These two new facilities will be ready to open by early 2017.
- We have let the Bothy, a major listed structure in the gardens, to the charity Terapia, and have supported them in raising a further £2m to restore the 'at risk' building. This work is now in hand.
- Once the upgrade to the gardens and other buildings is complete, we plan to embark on a much-needed refurbishment of the magnificent Stephens House.

The Trust itself is in a stable and healthy position. It has excellent management and staff; a strong Board of Trustees, with a broad set of skills and a strong and growing network of local volunteers. It is financially stable, and has a good track record of fundraising and of generating trading income.

We have been very well served by our current chair, Andy Savage, who has brought tremendous skill, dedication and energy to the role for the past five years. Andy's current term of office ends in late 2017, by when he wishes to retire. The Trustees are therefore seeking a successor to take over at a mutually agreeable date.

2. About AHET

“Little hidden gem - the best secret in Finchley”

Trip Advisor reviews

AHET is the registered charity that manages Stephens House & Gardens - the former home of ink magnate Henry 'Inky' Stephens - for the enjoyment of the public.

When Henry Stephens died in 1918 he left Avenue House, his London home, and its gardens to Finchley Urban District Council 'for the use and enjoyment always of the people'. It was a decade before the gardens were opened to the public, and then only after a court case between Stephens' executors and the local people on one side, and the Council, which wished to sell the estate for development, on the other.

In the late 1990s, a group of local people became concerned that the Council (now the London Borough of Barnet) might once more wish to sell the estate. They agreed with the Council that they should form a charity to lease the whole estate and manage it for the community's benefit. Avenue House Estate Trust took a 125-year lease out from October 2002. A decade later, the whole of Stephens House & Gardens is operating profitably under the direction of the Trust and the grounds are newly restored.

The Trust has a Board of nine Trustees. Seven are elected by the membership for three year terms, one is co-opted by the Board after being nominated by the Friends, and the ninth post is available for co-option by the Trustees. The Trustees have a wide range of skills to assist in the direction and management of the estate.

Day to day management is in the hands of a General Manager, who is assisted by both paid staff and volunteers.

Stephens House is a wonderful Victorian Grade II-listed mansion that today trades as an events venue, as well as housing the Stephens Collection of artefacts and memorabilia from the life and times of Henry 'Inky' Stephens. The gardens include hundreds of trees - some of which are unique in London - a children's playground, a pond, a rockery, a bog garden, large park with areas to play in and wooded areas to walk. They are freely available for public use, providing a much-loved green oasis for the local community.

3. Role and responsibilities of the Chair

PURPOSE

The role of the Chair is to deliver leadership and a first-class Board to AHET. This requires the support of the Trustees and thus the Chairman acts as both servant to and leader of the Board.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Governance

- Trustees - ensure that Trustees fulfil their roles; that missing skills in the Board are identified; and that suitable new Trustees are recruited and properly inducted
- Strategy - ensure that the Board has an agreed strategy for the business
- Risks - review major risks for AHET regularly with Trustees, ensuring due priority is given to health and safety risk management in particular
- Finances - oversee the Trust's finances.

Chairing

- Board meetings – ensure that the Board has agreed a programme of meetings; and that agendas, minutes and support papers are produced to a professional standard and distributed in a timely fashion
- Chairing – chair the meetings of the Board, and General Meetings of the Trust
- Monitoring - ensure that decisions made by the Board are implemented.

Relationship with General Manager

- Relationship - establish a strong, open and supportive working relationship with the General Manager
- Accountability - ensure that the General Manager is held to account for achieving agreed objectives and targets
- Appraisal and remuneration - conduct an annual appraisal and remuneration review for the General Manager in consultation with other Trustees.

External relations

- Ambassador - act as an ambassador for AHET within the wider community
- Stakeholders - ensure strong relationships are fostered with major funding bodies, Barnet Council and other key stakeholders.

It is anticipated that the Chair, who is formally elected annually at the AGM, will serve for a minimum period of three years.

4. Person specification

- Experience of operating at a senior leadership level within an organisation, including significant experience of chairing meetings
- Successful track record of achievement through their career
- Collaborative style of leadership with the ability to listen and engage effectively with a wide range of stakeholders
- Strong and visible commitment to the Trust and its objectives
- Personal gravitas to lead a board of trustees
- Strong interpersonal skills and ability to be comfortable in an ambassadorial role
- Financially literate
- Ability to commit time to perform the role effectively.