

THE CINQUE COTTAGES CHARITY, WIMBLEDON

Appointment of Clerk to the Charity

After nearly fifteen years of outstanding service our Clerk, Mr Anthony Gubbins, will be retiring from the post in the course of 2017. The Trustees wish to appoint a successor in good time to ensure a smooth transfer of responsibilities.

Background to the Charity

The Cinque Cottages Charity administers a small unit of social housing best understood as eight almshouse flats. The unit is situated at Crooked Billet, Wimbledon, London SW19 4RQ.

It is a registered charity (231798) established by deed of grant in November 1872 and administered in accordance with subsequent Charity Commission schemes. The object of the charity, as founded, is to provide accommodation for “poor men of good character, aged not less than 55” who live within a defined area with Wimbledon as its hub. This definition was later broadened to include married couples and surviving widows. The property originally comprised five three-storey cottages (hence the name) and is situated on a detached green plot on the south-west corner of Wimbledon Common. In 1988-89 the property was completely rebuilt with the help of a grant from the Housing Corporation and converted into a block of eight one bedroom flats. These have been well-maintained and are currently being upgraded. The Charity is now classed as a Registered Provider of Social Housing and is a member of the National Almshouses Association.

The Charity is managed by a body of Trustees. In accordance with the Trust Deed they are required to maintain the property in good order, to adopt appropriate accounting policies and apply them consistently, to prepare budgets and financial statements, to make arrangements for the selection of appropriate candidates to occupy the flats and to undertake all measures necessary for the health and safety of residents which are housing-related. There is no warden and no on-site help in assisted living. Residents are expected – and happy – to look after themselves in matters of everyday care.

The Charity has recently entered into an agreement and financial arrangements with Harrison Housing (which is also an almshouse charity), to act as its Managing Agent to provide a full property and maintenance service for the almshouses. In addition to all routine maintenance this will include the completion of the upgrading of the flats and compliance with all relevant current and future property-related health and safety regulations. The Trustees will retain their duties according to the Trust Deed, with a simpler emphasis on local contacts and individual relationships. In such matters the immediate link will usually continue to be through the Clerk. At present all the flats are occupied.

There are up to eight Trustees including the Chairman and the Hon Treasurer. They are locally appointed according to the Trust Deed and usually meet twice yearly.

The Post of Clerk

Trustees are substantially assisted by a specially appointed Clerk whose main functions have by tradition been to provide the necessary secretarial services, to be responsible for keeping the books of account and to issue licences to the occupants of the flats. Over time this job description had mushroomed into a much more hands-on workload for the well-being of the Cottages and their residents. The agreement with Harrison Housing will ensure that the Clerk’s duties recede to a less strenuous level which is closer to the original requirement.

The new Clerk is likely to have a successful background in some form of business administration. He or she will have appropriate secretarial and computing skills to prepare agendas and supplementary papers, to take and distribute minutes and to maintain efficient email communication with Trustees. He or she will have sufficient book keeping know-how to provide our supportive auditors with the financial information they need in order to prepare the annual accounts. He or she will be the recognised agent of the Trustees vis-a-vis outside bodies and our key link with Harrison Housing. This will demand an ease with online communication and confidence in drawing on IT resources. Some experience in dealing with legal matters will be an advantage. More important is a sympathetic interest in local welfare, the voluntary sector and relevant provision for those of pensionable age.

It is likely that the Clerk will work from home and live within easy travelling distance of the Cottages to enable the postholder to keep in touch with both Residents and Trustees.

The workload is variable but, given the new agreement with Harrison Housing, it should acquire a pattern of timely attention rather than immediate response. There are some busy times such as when a vacancy in residency occurs or when accounts are being prepared for audit. The bulk of the secretarial work is in connection with Trustee meetings and regular communication with Harrison Housing. The book keeping side is relatively straightforward, keeping track of incoming payments by Residents and outgoing payments to the Managing Agents and others. The Clerk will also liaise with the Hon. Treasurer who prepares and monitors the annual Budget.

The Clerk is also required to perform similar (but much less time consuming) duties for The Cuthbert Gift Charity which operates in parallel under the same Trustees. It is a very small charity which simply makes payments to a very small number of pensioners.

The Clerk will be paid an honorarium, plus reasonable expenses. This is negotiable and will reflect the hours and responsibilities of the post as restated.

Summary of Duties

- **Acting as secretary to the Trustees and preparing and circulating agendas for meetings, attending meetings to take notes and subsequently preparing and circulating minutes; helping to compile information about the Charity and monitoring statutory and recommended policies and procedures.**
- **Being the Charity's point of contact and recognised correspondent with outside organisations, government agencies, suppliers etc (via the Clerk's home address, telephone number and email address).**
- **Responding to enquiries from residents (other than in relation to property maintenance matters as these are now for Harrison Housing to deal with) and dealing with any complaints in accordance with the Charity's statement of Policies and Procedures.**
- **Acting as book keeper for the Charity; providing the auditors with financial information and records required to enable the auditors to prepare the annual accounts and liaising with them during the accounts preparation and audit process.**
- **Managing and arranging for the making of payments from/transfers between the Charity's various bank accounts (in consultation with the Hon Treasurer and other Trustees to the extent required).**
- **Dealing with the annual renewals of insurance, association memberships and TV licences and the preparation and submission of annual returns required by the Charity Commission and Home & Communities Agency.**
- **Maintaining an up-to-date register of residents' personal details; holding a set of**

- duplicate keys to enable emergency access to any of the flats if required.**
- Dealing with the Charity's utility bills.**
- Maintaining the Charity's documentary and financial records.**
- Assisting the Chairman and other Trustees in identifying suitable applicants to fill vacancies in the flats, scrutinising their financial and personal circumstances, making available notes of guidance and other information which the applicants might require, issuing licences to occupy and making arrangements for entry.**

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