

# BENENDEN VILLAGE TRUST

Following Covid-19 guidance Trustees have not met, and business and decision making has been conducted through email communication. Any decisions made require majority or unanimous agreement.

This report forms a set of minutes and will be retrospectively signed at the next full meeting.

## REPORT OF ACTIVITIES

### **1. PROPERTY GROUP**

The Group met on 18<sup>th</sup> June and were joined by the Village Hall Manager and the Trust Manager.

### **2. BENENDEN VILLAGE HALL**

- Benenden Village Hall closed to hirers on March 16th 2020. The Hall was staffed by three people classed as “Vulnerable” to the virus. The Hall Cleaner, in the late stages of pregnancy, elected to begin her maternity leave, while the Hall Caretaker and Hall Manager chose to continue working, in the knowledge that their respective jobs would require little contact with other people or risk factors.
- Initially there was a lot of administrative work to be done as events and classes were cancelled and we navigated refunds, postponements, carrying over deposits etc, as well as compiling reports for the financial year-end.
- The Hall lost 100% of its income, but was still paying wages and bills. The Hall applied for and was granted a £10,000 business rates relief grant.
- A new accounting system online was trialled, allowing the rationalisation of all bank transactions with invoices and bills, and provides reports and snapshots of the financial position of the Hall. It was agreed at the end of this trial that it was worth continuing with for a small monthly fee.
- A considerable amount of maintenance work took place during the months of closure.
- In July the all-clear to reopen the Hall was given, and some extensive preparation was done to ensure everyone’s safety (including the staff). An exhaustive risk-assessment was written, and all regular hirers were contacted. Several policies were changed relating to the use of the Hall, notably the maximum number of people allowed in a space at any given time, signage, sanitation stations, face-masks etc.
- A deep clean of the whole Hall was carried before reopening, and a contract cleaning company will conduct regular cleaning of the Hall while the Hall Cleaner is on maternity leave.
- Several of the Hall’s hirers have given their storage spaces a major over-haul.
- The first hirers returned on July 25th, and since then a number of regular hirers have returned, in addition to a couple of new regular hirers, and others booking for future dates. All wedding bookings for this summer have re-booked for next year. Unfortunately the Hall has lost some of its regular hirers, who simply couldn’t keep things going sustainably, and sadly the Benenden Panto has been cancelled this year, which usually makes up a large part of the Hall’s winter bookings schedule.
- The Hall was recently broken into. Luckily not much was taken, but some doors and locks will need to be replaced.
- There is still much to be done and works continue to improve the Hall’s appearance, functionality, security and profitability.
- The Village Hall Team views the coming months optimistically.
- In the longer term Trustees are looking at the energy efficiency of the Hall.

### **3. PARISH OFFICE**

- Work was commissioned to carry out a refurbishment of the office and this is underway.
- Initial thoughts have been given to new public toilet facilities and a community hub.

### **4. ST GEORGE’S**

- The cellar ceiling of the Club has been fireproofed in line with the requirements from the Fire Risk Assessment.
- Concerns were raised about the copper beech tree. A profession report found nothing wrong with the tree. Work was commissioned and carried out to remove dead wood and a minimal crown lift.

- The Pre-School re-opened when it was given the go-ahead to do so, following Government guidelines (now closed for summer holidays).
- The Club has re-opened and is serving bottled beers and spirits on limited days.

## **5. PLAYGROUNDS**

- COVID-19 risk assessments were carried out and user guidance put in place in line with Government advice. Benenden Playground re-opened Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July.
- A small committee of local residents is considering the refurbishment of Iden Green Playground, and met with a representative of Natural Playscapes to explore possibilities for play equipment and layout. A first design has been received and the committee is looking at this.
- The Iden Green RoSPA inspection which was scheduled for July has been delayed as the inspector is running behind and will attend the site as soon as he can.

## **6. RECREATION GROUND TREES/MAINTENANCE**

### **❖ Benenden**

- In July a large branch of horse chestnut came down at the east boundary of the recreation ground. In-depth examination/drilling of the tree was carried out. Density graphs were consistent throughout and no signs of decay found.
- Hazards were also identified in the playground 2x oak trees were deadwooded. Further work to reduce some of the weight on the lower limbs will be carried out before the winter.

### **❖ Iden Green**

- Following concerns raised by local residents, work was commissioned and carried out to reduce the holly tree by 50% and to straighten the hawthorn.
- Work was commissioned and carried out to mow off a large area of bramble regrowth, rotavate and rake out roots and sow new grass.

## **7. YEAR-END MATTERS**

- The planned June AGM was not held because of the ongoing Covid-19 situation. Trustees took the decision to conduct the business of the AGM electronically.
- The Draft Report and Financial Statement for the year-end 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 was unanimously agreed by Trustees and circulated to all members on 3<sup>rd</sup> August. Members have been asked to raise any questions regarding the accounts and any other question on activities by 28<sup>th</sup> August.
- Any Member wishing to stand as a Trustee has been asked to complete the Skills Audit Form and return it by 28<sup>th</sup> August.
- Responses to questions and comments received by 28<sup>th</sup> August will be sent to Members, along with voting papers, during the week commencing 7<sup>th</sup> September.
- Members will be asked to vote on AGM items and election of Trustees electronically by 25<sup>th</sup> September. This will be followed by a validation exercise with a view to having the new Board in place by 1<sup>st</sup> October.
- The result of the AGM votes and the election of Trustees and new Chair and Vice Chair will be announced to Members by email.
- Trustees will meet on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> September, 7pm, and Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October, 7pm. The meetings will be held via Zoom if necessary.

## **8. TRUSTEES**

Trustees unanimously agreed to co-opt Olivia Collier, Athena Cripps and Martin Dickson.

24<sup>th</sup> August 2020