

BENENDEN VILLAGE TRUST
Annual General Meeting
Tuesday 19th July 2022, 6pm, Benenden Memorial Hall

Present : Kent Barker (Chair), Simon Brown, Tom Dawlings, Julie Lewis, Sally Ann Marks. Caroline Levett (Trust Manager). 12 Members. Rowena Walsh, Manningtons Chartered Accountants.

1. Apologies Received from Olivia Collier, Athena Cripps, Martin Dickson, Richard Stubbings, Holly Clayson. Clare and David Harmsworth; Brian and Cobi Holmes; John Marshall; Sarah and Simon Pain.
2. Minutes of AGM 11th October 2021 The Minutes of the AGM held on 11th October 2021 were unanimously approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman of the meeting.
3. Trustees' Report

Kent Barker welcomed those present and thanked them for attending. Kent explained that Jonathan Strong had recently resigned from the role of Chairman and from the Trust, and that he was Acting Chairman until a new one was appointed by Trustees.

A full Trustees' Report is included within the Reports and Statements to year-end 31st March 2022 which had been circulated to all Members.

As Covid restrictions eased the Trust's activities gradually increased, although there was still a degree of catch up to take place.

VILLAGE HALL

Village Hall use recovered to pre-pandemic levels and continues to be well used, and on the whole runs smoothly. Kent encouraged "ownership" of the Hall by the various groups of users but asked that comments made to staff are respectful and to be aware that the staff work hard to achieve the best outcomes for everyone. Any matters concerning the Hall should in the first instance be raised with the Hall Manager, Holly Clayson, and not Trustees. If necessary, these matters will then be referred to the Trust Manager, Caroline Levett. If any issues are not satisfactorily resolved these will be referred to Trustees.

Nancy Tolhurst also suggested that feedback to users would be useful and welcome. This was noted and will be fed back to the Hall Manager.

New wi-fi and a new face recognition entry system to ensure improved security have been installed at the Hall and there is an ongoing programme of general maintenance and improvements. The Trust has commissioned a survey on the Hall's energy systems, consumption, use, sustainability and alternatives, including heat pump technology and solar panels.

John Clark advised that consideration was given to solar panels previously and considered not to be worthwhile. Kent acknowledged there may be obstacles, but the Trust would like to aim to achieve net zero emissions by 2030 in a cost-effective manner as well as addressing increasing energy costs.

There is currently a vacancy for the Caretaker role at the Hall.

ST GEORGE'S BUILDING

Chairman..... Date..... Page 1

These minutes are not a verbatim record of the meeting, but a summary of discussion and decisions taken at the meeting.

In financial terms the building is an underperforming charitable asset for the Trust, and the facilities not ideal for either the Club or the Pre-School. The Trust has met the cost of various items of maintenance and installed a new fire alarm system. Energy performance reviews were carried out for each area of the building

The Trust has had discussions with the Pre-School and offered help and support to find more appropriate accommodation, along with other village organisations including the Parish Council and Gibbon and Buckland Trustees. Most are of the view and support that the Primary School is the most appropriate setting for the Pre-School and is ultimately a decision for Pre-School and School Governors.

The Club has relatively few active members and the Trust would like to see this increased and look at alternative and increased facilities.

Janet Beattie advised that the recent Ofsted inspection rated Pre-School outstanding, and Kent gave the Trust's congratulations on this achievement. The inspector commented that the advantage of a staircase encouraged awareness and safe use of stairs.

RECREATION GROUNDS

The Trust is actively maintaining and improving the recreation grounds and has increased expenditure to achieve this. A number of old trees have found to be diseased and reaching the end of life, and the Trust and the Parish Council have been involved in recent projects of extensive tree planting.

A new path has been laid to Benenden Playground and a number of benches acquired. The Trust welcomes donations of memorial trees and memorial benches.

The Trust feels that sports facilities in the village are sparse. A previous questionnaire and a specific appeal regarding use of the football pitch brought no decisive views. The Trust will carry out another consultation.

FUTURE PROJECTS

Trustees have carried out a review of its property assets and prepared a draft strategy for each one, and Trustees will consider opportunities to generate income and capital.

Paul Tolhurst suggested, for transparency, that details of these strategies be set out in future. Kent Barker agreed, but advised that any ideas are very much draft and need further formulation, and that sharing any "blue sky thinking" without proper consideration is a risk. As and when Trustees decide to progress any projects they will consult with and seek the approval of Members and with the village.

One project might be to convert the existing public toilet block into a community hub space and move the public toilets to the current office space in the Village Hall.

Nancy Tolhurst asked how this might impact on the current layout at the Hall. Kent assured her that there would be no impact and the views of users of the Hall would be sought as part of any consultation.

BOWLS CLUB

William Lewis asked about the Bowls Club. The ground is let to them on a renewing lease and no issues have been raised between the Trust and the Club. Peter Ellis advised that the Bowls Club is thriving.

Chairman..... Date..... Page 2

These minutes are not a verbatim record of the meeting, but a summary of discussion and decisions taken at the meeting.

LAND OFF WOODCOCK LANE

It was asked if the land off Woodcock Lane is to be used for allotments. The issue has not been raised with the Trust. An area of land in Walkhurst Lane has been bequeathed to the Parish Council for the specific purpose of allotments. The Parish Council is working with solicitors to transfer the land.

THANKS

Kent Barker proposed a vote of thanks for Jonathan Strong who had worked tirelessly for the Trust.

He also thanked the Trust's staff, Holly Clayson, Karen Saunders, Jen Gurr and Caroline Levett, for their hard work.

4. Approval of Year-End Report and Financial Statements 31st March 2022

The Trust Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31st March 2022 were Independently Examined by Manningtons, Chartered Accountants and had been circulated to members and published on the Trust's website.

There were no questions regarding the Report and Accounts, and Nancy Tolhurst proposed the adoption of the Accounts. This was seconded by William Lewis, and unanimously agreed.

5. Election of Trustees

Under the Trust's Constitution, one third of the Trustees are required to stand down at each AGM and, if nominated, can stand for re-election. The Trustees to retire by rotation are those who have been longest in office since their last appointment or reappointment. The longest serving Trustees are Sally Ann Marks, Richard Stubbings and Olivia Collier. Sally Ann and Richard duly stood down and offered themselves for re-election.

Jonathan Strong has resigned as Trustee, and the other existing Trustees (Kent Barker, Athena Cripps, Martin Dickson, Tom Dawlings, Julie Lewis and co-opted Trustee Simon Brown) wish to remain in post.

Kent Barker proposed a single vote to appoint Sally Ann Marks and Richard Stubbings as Trustees and for Simon Brown to be co-opted again for the forthcoming year. This was seconded by Nancy Tolhurst and unanimously agreed.

6. Any Other Business

The Trust is looking to fill the vacant Trustee positions. The Trust does have existing financial, property and legal skills amongst Trustees and these skills are most valuable. Just as important is an enthusiasm for the work of the Trust and the village.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 6.45pm.

Chairman..... Date..... Page 3

These minutes are not a verbatim record of the meeting, but a summary of discussion and decisions taken at the meeting.