

BENENDEN VILLAGE TRUST

Trustee Meeting of Benenden Village Trust Monday 13th February 2023, 7pm, Iden Green Pavilion

MINUTES

Item		Action
PRESENT	Kent Barker, Simon Brown, Athena Cripps, Tom Dawlings, Martin Dickson (Chairman) Julie Lewis, Sally Ann Marks, Chris Parkinson, Richard Stubbings. Caroline Levett (Trust Manager).	
1. APOLOGIES	Apologies were received from Richard Stubbings and Paul Tolhurst.	
2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS	<p>The minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 19th October 2022 were unanimously approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.</p> <p>Matters arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAM asked that a review of insurance values and reinstatement costs are carried out as soon as possible. 	SB/FINANCE GROUP
3. HR	<p>Staffing Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HR Group had carried out its review of staffing and the findings and recommendations had been shared with all Trustees and agreement reached on a combined manager/caretaker role with support from a technical adviser. • In addition to the job description a full list of tasks and checks will be drawn up, particularly in relation to the caretaking element of the role. • As far as possible, the HR Group will be taking a flexible approach to the recruitment process and will gauge the response to the advert and the quality of candidates. • It may be that jobholder will not necessarily be expected to attend the hall late at night. • The proposed job description and advert were unanimously approved. • The job will be advertised widely locally and in the Wealden Advertiser. • It is anticipated that initially there will be little difference to present in staffing costs. • The interview panel will be JL, MD and CL. • CL will work closely with the new Hall Manager once in post to ensure that Trustees receive relevant and timely reports. 	CL
4. PROPERTY	<p>Full report circulated.</p> <p>Group Members : Kent Barker, Richard Stubbings, Simon Brown, Chris Parkinson, Paul Tolhurst</p> <p>a) The Group CP leads on St George's; PT - Relationships with Neighbours and will help with Future Projects; RS - Grounds Maintenance and Carbon Reduction issues. KB - Village Hall.</p> <p>b) St Georges – Maintenance Issues A number of issues have been identified, some of which have been dealt with.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The priority is to ensure that the building is waterproof, from the roof down, and a report and quote from a roofing contractor is awaited. • A very old water heater in Pre-School, with an open top allowing water vapour into the atmosphere, may be adding considerably to the internal damp and humidity. A quote to repair or replace the heater has been sought. Once this has been done consideration may be given to a dehumidifier or extractor fan if the level of humidity continues. • Some windows are rotten or broken, with one or two requiring urgent repair/replacement in Pre-School. Quotes have been sought. A longer-term, rolling programme to replace all windows will be considered. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One quote, £5,500, to replace the flooring in Pre-School had been received. Trustees agreed that this should be put on hold for now as the existing flooring is a cosmetic rather than a health and safety concern. <p>c) St George's – The Future</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives of BVT, Pre-School and the Parish Council met to discuss the search for alternative premises for Pre-School. One suggested site at the top of the village hall car park is within the protected designated Local Green Space, with a very strong presumption against any development. The Parish Council will require good reason why the Primary School site cannot be used if an application is made. Nicola Thomas will raise with the diocese and KCC. • It may be that BVT's constitution will not allow the use of the land to build for a Pre-School. • Other suggestions (moving the bowls club, using the area where the public toilets are, extending the village hall) would cost too much or are not desirable. • Trustees were keen to follow up an idea to develop the Bowls Club accommodation and facilities to incorporate St George's Club. KB to organise a meeting with BVT, St George's and Bowls Clubs representatives. <p>d) Village Hall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Trustees noted and acknowledged the excellent job which Chris Heath has been doing as stand-in caretaker. • KB and RS are meeting with Chris Reading in March to discuss further the report which he gave regarding heating at the hall. The suggestion for back up heating and the 3-phase electricity supply at the hall will also be raised with him as well as trying to establish how much life is left in the existing boiler. • Concerns were raised about costs, but this should be balanced against the risk of having no heating should anything fail. • It was suggested that Chris Heath could join this meeting. KB to follow up. • The fixed wiring test has been completed. • Following recent ice and snow issues a grit bin and shovel have been ordered for hall use. <p>e) Grounds Maintenance Mowing and Hedge Cutting :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The specification and contract for 2023/24 had been considered, and quotes sought. • The contract has been awarded to Tompsett Landscaping. • PT to look into the responsibility for the hedge between school and recreation ground, and approach the school for a contribution towards costs. • The fencing along the roadside car park is damaged and some posts around the recreation ground are not secure. CL to speak to Chris Heath. <p>Trees :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current agreed tree maintenance programme has been completed and a new review will be made. • Advanced Tree Solutions carry out a condition report and numbering of the trees at St George's. <p>f) Community Office Repurposing/Public Toilets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees are reluctant for BVT to provide public toilets at the Village Hall. • The Parish Council is looking to provide an improved facility and is in the process of seeking quotes and looking at funding sources. 	<p>KB</p> <p>KB</p> <p>PT</p> <p>CL</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The land is owned by BVT. The building is owned by and the responsibility of the PC. The Community Office will be available to the new Hall Manager. CL to prepare a report of what will be required so that the Parish Clerk, Trust Manager and Hall Manager can share the office space. <p>g) Playgrounds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The gates and fencing have been repaired at both Benenden and Iden Green. A picnic bench at Benenden had been moved to an area close to equipment. This poses a safety risk and will be moved. If this happens regularly the benches will have to be fixed into the ground. 	CL
5. FINANCE	<p>a) Meeting 17th January 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes of the meeting had been circulated. <p>b) Cashflow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bank account balances at 31st January : Trust £19,504.76; Hall £2,651.10. Total £22,155.86. Projected closing bank balances at 31st March are £17,500. <p>c) Review of Financial Health and Budgetary Caution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Finance Group is concerned about the current drain of funds from COIF to support the Trust's activities. This is not sustainable in the longer term and Trustees need to be clear where money is being spent. MD will carry out a review of the Trust's finances over the last few years to try to understand if and how this can be halted and reversed, and at what rate the Trust is now spending compared to previous spending. The Trust needs to be mindful of its spending until this has been done. BVT is carrying out far more work, upgrading and maintenance than HMT did. Trustees need to understand what the gaps are between income and expenditure and where assets are underperforming and Trustees feel that this information should be shared with the village. <p>d) Iden Green Tennis Club Rent Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KB, SB, AC declared an interest as members of IGTC. A letter has been sent to IGTC advising that a rent review will be taking place later this year and likely to include a contribution to the car park and hedge maintenance. SB pointed out that there is no mention of the car park in the lease. MD advised that the starting point for any rent increase would be the RPI. SB suggested that professional advice is sought to establish a correct rental figure. <p>e) Property and Finance Groups Relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KB noted that a number of property related items were minuted at the Finance Group meeting and requested clearer definition between the two groups. The Property Group remains responsible for repairs, maintenance and building structures. AC had asked, as a new member of the Finance Group, a number of questions relevant to both groups and the Finance Group is trying to get a handle on all expenditure. The group also needs a good indication of likely upcoming spending. In the short term, the authority for the Property Group to spend up to £1,000 without reference back to trustees is rescinded. 	MD
6. REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SB has been carrying out an extremely thorough review and his investigations are ongoing. He was thanked for the incredible amount of work he is undertaking. 	

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<p>OBJECTS AND EXPENDITURE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SB, KB, MD and TD to meet on 20th February to consider the Trust's next steps. • The review of the Trust's constitution has been relatively straightforward and some changes need to be made. These do not need to be agreed by the Charity Commission but will need to be approved by Members. • The issues raised are manageable and SB will produce a report for all in due course. <p>• Points to note thus far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The original gifts which were made by Lord Rothermere were limited and specified and these restrictions still apply. ○ BVT can only spend income and cannot spend capital assets unless the Charity Commission gives permission to do so. ○ Of the current COIF value it is not clear what is capital and what is income. ○ If the Trust can show that funds are unspent income from previous years it would still be possible to spend on maintenance etc. ○ Other investments and proceeds from previous sales are likely to have been spent. ○ The Trust's objects need clarifying and it needs to be cautious in what it helps to fund. ○ Trustees have an obligation to uphold the objects and this includes receiving appropriate rates of rent. <p>Trustees unanimously agreed that a surveyor should be employed to look at existing lease agreements, rent, insurance values and reinstatement costs. SB to follow up.</p> <p>Communication with all tenants and organisations must be handled carefully and in a supportive manner.</p>	<p>SB</p> <p>SB</p>
<p>7. AOB</p>	<p>a) Publication of Minutes SAM asked for confirmation that confidential items are not made public. CL confirmed that the minutes are published on the BVT website but confidential items are not.</p> <p>b) Type of Meeting SB suggested that meetings of all Trustees are referred to as Trustee Meetings rather than Ordinary Meetings.</p> <p>c) Iden Green Sign A new Iden Green sign had been commissioned by the Iden Green Pavilion Trust and matching picture hung in the pavilion. Trustees commended this.</p> <p>d) Memorial Hall AGM TD attended the meeting. Ideas for the Church were discussed including the creation of a meeting room, but it was pointed out that the village is well provided for in terms of meeting rooms.</p>	
	<p>Meeting closed at 9.25 pm</p>	