

BENENDEN VILLAGE TRUST
Annual General Meeting
Monday 11th October 2021, 7pm Iden Green Pavilion

Present : Kent Barker, Olivia Collier, Athena Cripps, Tom Dawlings, Martin Dickson, Julie Lewis, Sally Ann Marks, Jonathan Strong (Chair), Richard Stubbings. Caroline Levett (Trust Manager). Holly Clayson (Hall Manager). 3 Members.

1. Apologies Received from Ann and David Barnes, and Janet Beattie.
2. Minutes of AGM Business 2020 The Minutes of the AGM Business for 2020 were unanimously approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
3. Chairman's Report (Jonathan Strong)

Jonathan welcomed those present and thanked them for attending. He explained his reasons for becoming involved with the Trust and his long-standing association with and love of Benenden.

Resting the Harmsworth Memorial Trust assets from the Parish Councillors acting as Trustees and creating Benenden Village Trust was wholly the right move and it is hoped the professionalism that the Trustees have brought to the operation over the last 3 years is beginning to shine through. Between the Trustees, there is an excellent range of skills needed to make the most of the property and investments under the Trust's control. As a property-owning organisation the Trust is keen to recruit a property management expert and someone else with a legal background.

Jonathan paid tribute to all Trustees and thanked them for everything they have done and are doing.

It was acknowledged that the last 18 months have not been easy, but the Trust has weathered the pandemic. The Trust Manager, Caroline Levett, was thanked for her input over this period. In January Trustees took the decision to furlough the Village Hall staff whilst Caroline continued to play a role managing an array of activities which despite the lockdown needed to be seen through to a conclusion. During this period Trustees also continued much work behind the scenes and continued to get the Trust's affairs in order.

The highlight of the year was completion of the renewed playground at Iden Green, masterminded by Julie Lewis with the help of Naomi Featherstone and Georgina Russell. Great thanks from Members and Trustees was given to them for all that they did to bring this project to fruition. Over £125,000 was raised in donations to pay for the two playgrounds in two years and thanks was given to everyone who gave so generously.

The Village Hall is the Trust's major asset and to have no alternative but to mothball it was quite devastating. However, Holly Clayson, Karen Saunders and Jen Gurr have picked up where they left off and the Hall is becoming busy again. Thanks was given to Holly, Karen and Jen for everything they have done in managing and preparing the Hall for hirers.

Ideas for the future of the Trust had been put on the back burner during the pandemic because Trustees deemed it appropriate to conserve the Trust's resources. However, thoughts and plans are being dusted off. They include the future of St George's Hall, possible extension of the Village Hall and reprovision of the public lavatories and potential reconfiguration of the Benenden Recreation ground.

Graham Beveridge asked why change the provision of the current public toilets as they are generally viewed as a good facility.

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Kent Barker explained that the Trust is exploring the possibilities for the current public toilets building and the relocation of the toilets and that the village will be widely consulted in due course. Previous comments regarding the cost to the village of the current toilet facilities and the lack of suitable archive storage space and office space for the Parish and Trust staff had prompted consideration of the idea.

4. Approval of Year-End Report and Financial Statements 31st March 2021

The Trust Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31st March 2021 were Independently Examined by Manningtons, Chartered Accountants and had been circulated to members and published on the Trust's website.

With the benefit of £28,000 government grants from TWBC and the furlough scheme, the Trust's operating loss for the year was limited to £9,131 but this was more than compensated for by a gain of £153,571 on the investment portfolio managed by CCLA Managers Ltd. At 11th October 2021, the value of those investments is £837,893 (an increase of £52,912 or 6.75% since 31st March 2021) after allowing for the £20,000 which had been drawn down from the portfolio in June to improve the Trust's cash flow whilst the financial performance of the Village Hall builds up again.

Since the year end Trustees have reviewed its reserves policy and keeping to the 3 months' operating cost model means that there should always be liquid assets of about £20,000. As the Trust can access funds from its investments at short notice there is an argument that it can afford to reduce the liquid reserves. However, Trustees decided in these uncertain times to keep to the 3 months' figure.

There were no questions regarding the Report and Accounts, and Hilary Wilce proposed the adoption of the Accounts. This was seconded by John Clarke, and unanimously agreed.

5. Election of Trustees

Under the Trust's Constitution, a third of Trustees must retire each year. The longest serving Trustees are Kent Barker, Tom Dawlings and Jonathan Strong, and they duly stood down and offered themselves for re-election. Julie Lewis was co-opted as Trustee at the Trust meeting on 27th September 2021 and in accordance with the Constitution she too stood for election.

Graham Beveridge proposed a single vote to appoint Kent Barker, Tom Dawlings, Julie Lewis and Jonathan Strong as Trustees. This was seconded by John Clarke, and unanimously agreed.

6. Any Other Business

- i. It was noted that it was disappointing that not more members had attended the AGM. This may have been due to the fact that people are still anxious about Covid-19 and other winter illnesses. It was agreed though that the Trust needs to be more proactive in involving members and increasing membership across the village. The AGM for 2022 will revert to a summer meeting and this may also encourage greater attendance.
- ii. Kent Barker gave a vote of thanks to the Chairman, who has moved the Trust forward in a very positive and active way.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.45pm

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