

**BENENDEN VILLAGE TRUST**  
**Annual General Meeting**  
**Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019, 7.30pm, Iden Green Pavilion**

Present : Beth Astridge, Kent Barker, Tom Dawlings, Robin Dalton Holmes, David Harmsworth (Chairman), Barrie Jones, Jonathan Strong, Caroline Levett (Clerk). 29 members.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Tobin Bird, John Marshall and Judy Williams.

2. Chairman's Report (David Harmsworth)

David Harmsworth introduced the current Trustees and Clerk and thanked them all for their extensive contribution in expertise and time, and to members for registering and their interest in the Trust. There are currently 57 members.

Benenden Village Trust started with 6 trustees, all of whom had spent some months previously working on the Constitution, registration and assets of the proposed charity in cooperation with the Trustee of the Harmsworth Memorial Trust, the Parish Council. Beth Astridge was co-opted as a Trustee during the course of the year.

David paid tribute to the work of successive Parish Councils acting as Sole Trustee of HMT; it became apparent how demanding the task is and confirmed the good sense of separating out the responsibilities of the Parish Council from those of the trusteeship.

A list of activities over the past year is included in the official Trust Report (available to those at the meeting and on the Trust website) and include the transfer of employees of the HMT to BVT; setting up bank accounts; drafting and agreeing policies; insurance valuations; asbestos surveys; fire alarms.

The first issue for attention was the annual safety report of the playgrounds which led to the immediate closure of the Benenden playground and determination that its replacement was a high priority. The Trust was grateful that Play Benenden had already done so much thinking and planning and that Beth Astridge joined Trustees to help in a collaborative effort with the Parish Council to bring the dream of a new area to reality, and which has just begun. The Village Hall is a major asset and the Trust has benefited from all that Lorraine Jones has done as Hall Administrator. Another early issue was the need to rethink, in the light of increased usage of the Hall, how best to cover both issues of maintenance – an issue also arising at the St George's Club building, and solved by the appointment of Steve Hockney as part-time Site Manager - and also the flexible hours required for caretaking and cleaning, and the Hall now has in place a successful team in Karen Saunders and Jen Gurr. There was also the existing plan to enhance the small room at the Village Hall, which has been successfully carried through. There have been discussions with the Benenden Players over upgrading the lighting systems and over storage arrangements.

Trustees have a responsibility to make the best use of the resources which have accrued from the original benefactions of Lord Rothermere as well as ensuring adherence to the aims of the charity. Hire charges for the Village Hall are being reviewed with the intention that within a few years the revenue will cover not just running costs but will also fund renewals and enhancements. The other significant building owned by the Trust is the St George's Club, where some work has been undertaken and surveys indicate that significant expenditure will be needed.

Thanks to the voluntary help of Rohan Barnett a Trust website has been set up.

3. Year-End Report and Financial Statements

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

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The Report and Financial Statements were available to those at the meeting and on the Trust website. This was further explained by Jonathan Strong and questions from members were responded to.

- The fixed assets were transferred from the Harmsworth Memorial Trust to the Benenden Village Trust and it is difficult to place an open market value on them as they have to be used for the purpose for which they were built. For this reason the fixed assets are shown at nil value, and the value for insurance purposes shown separately.
- In addition to its fixed assets the Trust has investments in COIF currently valued at £650,000.
- The total income to 31<sup>st</sup> March was £61,000 and expenditure £65,000. This small loss was due to additional expenditure during the year. Previously HMT had taken income from its investment with COIF and part way through the year Trustees took the decision that there was no need to take this income and all investment would remain within the Fund.
- COIF was the 5<sup>th</sup> best performing investment fund in the UK during the previous year.
- The Trust's finances are restricted as it can only use funds to manage its assets and is restricted because of its permanent endowment.
- A fuller breakdown of larger items of expenditure will be provided in future.
- As the Trust operates under Charity Rules it does not have to give a breakdown of individual staff costs.
- The Trust financially supports the StreetCruizer which provides youth facilities.

Brian Holmes proposed members' approval of the Trust Report and Financial Statements. This was seconded by Robin Dalton Holmes and agreed by members.

#### 4. Election of Trustees

Robin Dalton Holmes proposed that David Harmsworth continue as Chair of the meeting. This was seconded by Nancy Tolhurst.

All existing Trustees stood down.

David Harmsworth read the names of those wishing to stand as Trustees. Kent Barker, Tom Dawlings, David Harmsworth, Barrie Jones, Sally Anne Marks, Jonathan Strong, Richard Stubbings.

Bill Lewis proposed their appointment en bloc. This was seconded by Brian Holmes. This was unanimously agreed by all members.

#### 5. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

It was agreed that the election of the Chair and Vice Chair would be undertaken at the next meeting of the Trustees.

#### 6. Trustee Roles and Responsibilities

It was agreed that this would be discussed further at the next meeting of the Trustees.

#### 7. Any Other Business

- David Harmsworth advised that the Trust's Constitution is on the website and members should read to find out what they can do. Trustees ultimately make any decisions but welcome ideas from members.
- There was some discussion about publication of the minutes and this will be agreed by Trustees.
- Jonathan Strong proposed a vote of thanks from David Harmsworth and this was enthusiastically supported by all.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm

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

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