

# **BUXTED COMMUNITY HALL TRUST 1<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**8<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2013 at 7.30pm**

**The Reading Room, Church Road, Buxted**

1. Nick Tricker, Chairman, welcomed 25 members of the community to the First Annual General Meeting of the Buxted Community Hall Trust. Apologies had been received from Homer Cox, Carol Ann Slater, Geoffrey Sheard and Valerie Banks.

## **2. Report on history, administrative arrangements and planning**

a) Sheila Bartholomew, board secretary, reported that the Parish Council invited all stakeholders of the Reading Room and parties interested in using a new facility to a meeting in July 2009. The Ionides Trust had agreed, in accordance with the Charity Commission deeds, that land on the Ionides site would be allocated for a new parish hall. Subsequent to this, the Parish community agreed through a public meeting that a new health centre should also be situated on the Ionides land.

The Parish Council wanted to step back and encourage the community to get involved and lead the project forward with the continued involvement, support and assistance of the Parish Council. One reason for the PC stepping back was that there are many grant opportunities available which the PC would not be eligible to apply for and therefore the formation of a Community Trust Charity would be the better option, which would also allow the PC to pursue funding from routes where the PC has influence and opportunity. The steering group was known as the Heart of Buxted Initiative, HOBI for short. The steering group included representatives from several organisations who would use the hall, the Ionides Trust and parish councillors. It had been hoped that the surgery and community hall could be built at the same time but unfortunately this was not to be. The Buxted Community Hall Trust was finally established in April 2011 thanks to George Claydon coming on board, who had experience in setting up charitable organisations.

b) George Claydon, treasurer, reported that much administrative work was undertaken to form the company, register it as a charity with the Charity Commissioners, decide on a set of operating rules for the board, to obtain current and deposit banking facilities with the Charities Aid Foundation bank and to register with HMRC to enable us to operate without paying income or corporation tax and to be eligible to claim Gift

Aid on relevant donations etc. Eight members of the HOBI Steering group became the directors/trustees of the BCHT. With various donations etc plus the moneys held for the HOBI group by the Parish Council (£4338), less a couple of minor items of expenditure, the Trust had £5498 in the bank at the end of its first financial year. A balance sheet was circulated. The Trustees explored fundraising possibilities and a policy decided. With the invaluable assistance of Carol Ann Slater, a comprehensive appeal and information pack was prepared to distribute to Charitable Trusts and potential donors. The Trust undertook one fundraising and publicity event in the Reading Room. This was quite well attended and had a window display – courtesy of Andy Patel – over the 2011 Christmas period in the shop window adjacent to the refurbished Buxted Stores. Links were established with local press etc and a major launch of the Charity was planned for early 2012 when it was confidently anticipated that planning consent would be given for the proposed new hall on the Ionides Trust land site – sadly this has not yet come to fruition.

c) Nick Tricker, Chairman, said that he had been invited to chair the Trust back in the spring of 2011. At that time the Parish Council's chosen architect was employed to develop plans for the new hall on behalf of HOBI, and with the view of submitting a planning application to Wealden District Council. It was financially advantageous for the architect's fees and the fees for the planning application to be met by the PC from funds they had set aside. An application for a new hall, incorporating space for a nursery school, was submitted in August 2011. Nick said that the scheme at that time was quite elaborate, and the Trustees were doubtful that it could have been afforded. The Trustees anticipated having to prune the scheme but felt it unlikely that Wealden District Council would object to a reduced scheme once they had given it planning approval.

Unfortunately Wealden took a long time to respond to the application. Early in March last year a new EU Directive had come into effect. This immediately affected Wealden's planning policy; The Parish Council had asked for a meeting with the District Council to address Planners' detailed concerns about the planning application. The meeting, attended by the Trust and Parish Council representatives, was advised that the EU Directive meant there could be no developments within 7km of Ashdown forest. The Parish Council was invited to withdraw its application. Surprisingly, at the same meeting, WDC officers informed those present that they wanted to help and began to discuss ways of working **within the** Directive. In early summer last year, two Trust Members joined the PC chairman at two further meetings with WDC officers and members. These have proved to be positive affairs. They considered how, given the 7km

exclusion zone, a new hall could be built that meets Buxted's needs, without increasing traffic movements in the area, and therefore raising nitrogen levels.

Nick felt that a replacement for the Reading Room on the Ionides site is possible. This would need to be kept at roughly the same size as the existing hall so as not to attract more car journeys in the area. There could be only a few associated car parking spaces to replace those at the Reading Room site in Church Road. It is thought that the new Surgery and Railway station car parks could be utilised in the evenings by people using the new facility. The Parish Council has now withdrawn the application, but the trustees are hopeful that an acceptable solution can be found. In terms of raising money for the project, the Trust has put fund-raising activity on hold, feeling that villagers needed to see that an acceptable solution was possible, that is, one which had planning permission.

### **3. Presentation of 'audited' accounts                      Treasurer**

The meeting had been provided with copies of the 'audited' balance sheet for the Trust's first year of operation ending on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012. The Trustees are most grateful to Councillor Michelle Warner FCCA for her voluntary work in conducting the audit and completing the requisite returns to HMRC and Companies House. The Trust's accounts have been posted on the Charity Commission website as required. It can be seen that our final carried forward figure was a credit of £5498. Due to the uncertainty about the Hall's planning consent/future, our fundraising efforts this year have rather been put on hold and our current financial position is a credit total of £5739. The Treasurer invited questions from the floor regarding the accounts.

### **4. The Next Year – Plans and Developments                      Chairman**

Recently the architect was asked to agree with WDC the amount of Permitted Development attached to the Reading Room. Permitted development does not need Planning Permission. The trustees and Parish Council are hopeful it can be argued that the area of the new community hall should be equal to the actual area of the Reading Room now, plus the amount of permitted development which would be allowed by WDC if we were to seek to enlarge it before replacing it. In this way the Parish Council is seeking to maximise the size of a new hall within the new planning constraints. Nick said that he anticipates that this line of argument could well provide a hall that is acceptable to the people of Buxted, affordable, and approvable by WDC.

Nick said that the Trust's future role is to assist the Parish Council in obtaining planning permission for a new Community Hall on the Ionides site. Its particular role includes offering opinion on behalf of the village to the Parish Council on the design, size and contents of the building. The Trust will take part in the process of discussion with WDC and the architect, offering judgements on the value of what is proposed and whether it meets the needs of the village, and is cost effective.

Raising the funding needed for the project is a role that should not be underestimated. In taking it on, **the Trust needs to be assured that the new hall will provide considerable and worthwhile benefits when compared with continuing to use the existing Reading Room.**

Once planning permission is realised, hopefully in the next few months, the Trust will take over the project from the Parish Council, organise a programme of fundraising, and progress the detailed design process with our architect and other construction professionals.

To deliver a completed building we are going to require real practical support from the village. We shall need more people to be actively involved in fundraising, in giving both money and time, especially younger people with families, who will benefit from the new hall in the future. The Trust, as it is at present, simply cannot deliver such a major challenge on its own. Nick summed up by saying the Trust is looking for a project that meets the four As' It must be:

**Acceptable** to all locally with its facilities, design and position etc,

**Affordable** with reasonable prospects of achieving the requisite building costs,

**Approvable** by WDC under the various planning regulations and constraints, and

**Achievable** with the committed support of local persons giving their time and help as well as money.

## **5. Resignation and appointment of Directors    Company Secretary**

George Claydon stated that the Trust's Company Articles require all directors to resign at the AGM but they may, if willing to stand, be re-elected for a further year. This is intended to provide potential representatives of new groups in the area the opportunity to put themselves forward as Director/Trustees and have a say in how the Trust operates. Currently the Trust has SEVEN trustees:

Nick Tricker  
Sheila Bartholomew,  
Eileen Claydon,  
Pauline Bonner,

Councillor Maggie Dopson,  
George Claydon and  
Councillor Geoffrey Sheard.

All are willing to stand for re-election EXCEPT Geoffrey Sheard who wishes to retire. The Trustees are grateful to Geoffrey for his wise counsel particularly in the early 'setting up' days. (Valerie Banks originally was a director/trustee but resigned with effect from 11<sup>th</sup> January 2012.)

George asked for any proposals concerning re-election of these SIX Directors and any other potential Directors. Chris Hitchins, seconded by Cathy Hemmings, proposed that the six directors be re-elected en bloc, this was carried without opposition. No other persons put themselves forwarded or were proposed as prospective directors.

## **6. Appointment of Auditor 2012/13.                      Company Secretary**

It was proposed that Michelle Warner FCCA be re-appointed as the Trust's accountant for 2012/13. This was AGREED unanimously.

## **7. AOB – Main points of discussion**

What monies were still pledged for the building of the new hall? Monies from the sale of the Reading Room are no longer available due to the restrictions on development within 7km of the Ashdown Forest. There is still £100,000 deposited with WDC under a 'Section 106 Agreement' from the Ashdown Place developers for the 'New Buxted Village Hall'. This has to be used within 10 years.

Vivienne Blandford, Parish Council Chairman who was in the audience, confirmed that the Parish Council is in consultation with WDC on what options would be available to parishes who find themselves with redundant buildings that cannot be sold for redevelopment.

There was concern at the time it took WDC to consider our planning application. Had the application been dealt with in the time allotted such applications we would not have fallen foul of the new directive.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm.

Sheila Bartholomew - Board Secretary                      George Claydon – Treasurer

Nick Tricker - Chairman