

**Buxted Community Hall Trust SEVENTH Annual General Meeting held at
The Reading Room, Buxted on
Tuesday 5th February 2019 commencing at 7-30pm**

Trustees present: George Claydon (Chairman)), Pauline Bonner, Chris Hitchins (Treasurer) and Eileen Claydon plus 17 members of the public that included the Chair of the Ionides Trust, three former BCHT trustees, two co-opted board members and representatives of some existing hall user groups. Apologies received from Mrs Sue Hitchins

1 Welcome to visitors – Chairman (GC) welcomed those present.

2 Minutes of 6th AGM

These had been circulated on the BPC and BCHT web sites and widely advertised – there are copies around the room. Chairman asked if the minutes are acceptable as a true record and whether the minutes be accepted as they are or does the majority want them read - agreed to accept as circulated. There were no matters arising.

3 Treasurer's Report – CHH - Circulated copies of the following reports:

(i) Examined accounts May-2017 to April-2018

(ii) Trustees Annual Financial Statement for year ending 30th April 2018

I am the current treasurer for BCHT having taken over the role from GC in May 2018. The 'examined' Income and Expenditure statement has been available on our WEB site for months and is tabled tonight together with a statement of account for the current financial year to date. As will be advised by the chair, this financial year was dominated by the requirement to ensure that the Planning Permission granted in December 2014 was confirmed by December 2017. The account statement reflects this showing that £56.5K was spent in this financial year by BCHT (most of which was reimbursed by BPC from the S106 money held by them) to achieve this aim. Fund raising efforts during the year produced an income of £1.4K. Thus, by the end of the financial year the BCHT accounts held some £24K, and this figure is little changed to date.

Chris Hitchins Treasurer BCHT There were no questions about the accounts.

4 Report on 7th year of operation to 30th April 2018 – Chairman.

This was a very difficult year for the trustees. Our planning consent was due to expire on 17th December 2017 and we still had several WDC Building Regulations consent requirements to meet before we could get any estimates and tenders for the work to commence before then to secure the planning consent.

Failure to achieve these targets would mean that the planning consent would lapse and could only be revived by another full application that would involve more expenditure with no guarantee that a new application would be approved. Additionally, the freeholders of the site for the new hall (the Ionides Trustees) still were not able to offer us a lease for our whole plot as a small part of it was already the subject of a lease to the Scout Association. Negotiations through solicitors were – and still are – in hand to remedy this situation by a 'land swap' in the existing Scout's lease. Anticipating a quick solution to the lease 'problem' (and having the stated goodwill of the involved parties) the trustees decided to complete the Building Regulations items and to obtain estimates and tenders for the phase 1 building works which would be enough to ensure planning consent in perpetuity. This done, we selected and appointed a contractor who started the phase 1 works in December 2017, completing the work in February 2018, thus preserving the planning consent.

However, this lease difficulty has prevented the trustees from applying for funding from some identified sources for the next phases of the building works because Foundations and Trust managers require ALL relevant parts of any application to be completed; a promise of a lease just will not suffice. A further difficulty has been the need for additional trustees to help with the work involved in the new hall project. Those people who expressed an interest in possibly joining the board at the last year's AGM did not materialise and we actually lost a further two trustees from the existing board following that meeting – leaving us with just 4 members. The depleted board of trustees did not consider it appropriate, in all the circumstances, to continue with its planned programme of small, local fundraising events without the lease situation being resolved. Thus, BCHT is currently in a state of stagnation!

5 Proposals for the next year – Chairman.

If our Trust was able to continue, our aims and objectives for next year would be largely unchanged from those set out for the year under review at our last AGM. But we are NOT ABLE to continue UNLESS several persons are willing to commit to taking on the role of a BCHT director/trustee IMMEDIATELY. If this does not happen – as seems most likely to be the case – the trustees will continue to take steps to dissolve and liquidate the SOLVENT BCHT Charitable Company and dispose of its assets in accordance with its Articles of Association and the Charity Commissioners' rules.

The Ionides Trust is a long-established charity in the village and has aims and objectives broadly similar to those of BCHT, accordingly, the trustees propose to transfer the balance of the BCHT assets upon dissolution to the Ionides trustees – ring fenced for use in developing a new village hall for Buxted.

As these matters are legally somewhat complex, the trustees will use the services of a professional firm of insolvency practitioners to undertake the BCHT company's dissolution - unless we get a pro-bono offer to do the work from any source. No offers to undertake this work were put forward from those present.

6 Appointment of Directors – Chairman (as Company Secretary).

Our company Articles require all directors to resign at the AGM, but they may, if they are willing to do so, stand for re-election. Are there any other persons present who wish to put themselves forward for election to the charity board? In the absence of any offers, all the existing directors are willing to stand for re-election purely for the purpose of dissolving the company and disposing of its assets as previously outlined.

Existing board members are: Pauline Bonner, Eileen Claydon, Chris Hitchins and George Claydon.

In response to a direct and repeated question to the audience about filling board seats, there were no offers at all to undertake the essential posts. GC stated that despite widespread advertising over the last few months the board had not had a single indication of interest. Accordingly, he proposed that the retiring board members be re-elected en-block simply for the purpose of dissolving the charitable company and disposing of the residual assets as set out in paragraph 5 above. This was accepted nem-con.

7 Appointment of an 'Auditor'.

The trustees are most grateful for the pro-bono help of Buxted resident Robin Farmer (FCCA) who has indicated his willingness to continue to undertake, as necessary, his professional work for us.

8. Any Other Business and Questions

Chairman expressed the gratitude of the board to all those who had assisted in so many ways for almost 8 years to try to make the project come to fruition, and expressed his regret that the scheme had lost impetus when various delays were met from a variety of sources starting with the 'Ashdown Forest Seven kilometre' building ban introduced just as we were setting up BCHT. Our previous steering group HOB (Heart of Buxted Initiative) also deserved recognition for all their efforts.

The board was asked whether the balances should be donated to the Ionides Trust (IT) or – for example, to the Reading Room and Football Club which were in need of funds. GC reiterated the requirements of the Charity Commissioners in this respect and said that donating to the IT is our only real option to ensure that the intentions of the donors of our funds were honoured. We were asked whether our BCHT administrative records would be available to any group that may be set out in the future to 'resurrect' the project – GC stated that he would discuss the matter with the IT Secretary and Chair. Most information was on a memory stick. Several persons complimented the board members for getting as far as we had with the project, acknowledging how hard it was to get people to stand to run groups and organisations in communities such as ours. It was also said that the value of completing Phase 1 of the Building works should not be underestimated as it preserves planning consent in perpetuity and has created a decent, durable entrance from Framfield Road to the Ionides recreational land.

What would now happen about the lease for the planned new hall? IT Chair Vivienne Blandford stated that as there would be no BCHT board to sign a lease one would be available, in effect on the shelf, on similar terms as the leases for the Rifle Club and Scouts premises to be available if and when the project was resumed.

The board was asked whether we were too ambitious in trying to raise about £1million for a village hall in Buxted. GC replied that when we started, we had widespread support and were confident that with fundraising events and grant applications this was achievable. Other local villages had been successful in their efforts – why not Buxted? The National Lottery Fund refused our approach stating that we were 'too affluent an area! Unfortunately, the deadening effect of the various hurdles that appeared as time went on proved to be too much for us.

GC closed the meeting at 8-15pm by thanking the audience for attending and for their involvement. He said that steps would be made to dissolve the BCHT charitable company without delay. Details of our progress would be reported in the Messenger and to the BPC for inclusion on their website.

G. Claydon (MBE)

Company Secretary/Treasurer