

**Buxted Community Hall Trust SIXTH Annual General Meeting held at
The Reading Room, Buxted on
Tuesday 16th January 2018 commencing at 7-30pm**

Trustees present: Sheila Bartholomew (Chair), Pauline Bonner, Chris Hitchins, Eileen Claydon Councillor Vivienne Blandford and George Claydon (Treasurer) plus about 45+ members of the public

Item 1. Introduction, welcome to visitors and apologies received. (Chairman)

Sheila Bartholomew welcomed all those present. Apologies had been received from Sue Hitchins, Nick Foskett, Hillary Quinn, Geoff Bartholomew and Lis Edwards.

Item 2. Minutes of 5th AGM on 17th January 2017 and Matters Arising. (Treasurer)

Minutes of the previous AGM had been widely publicised and copies were available in the room. These minutes had no matters arising and were taken as read.

Item 3. Presentation of Examined Accounts (Treasurer – George Claydon)

Copies of our ‘verified’ Income & Expenditure account’s balance sheet for the Trust’s financial year ending **30th April 2017**, are available around the room. To summarise the accounts:

(a) Income totalled £7104 This income came from a number of varying sized donations that were frequently subject to the addition of Gift Aid, a substantial donation from a local company, two substantial donations from the Buxted Ball and Quiz committee, two modest fundraising events and a HMRC refund of £303 Gift Aid.

(b) Expenditure totalled £6151 Administration expenses totalled £346 but were largely offset by a supporter who made a gift aided donation totalling £187.50. These administrative expenses are the inescapable costs of running a company, a web site, the fee for running a business bank current account and funding some publicity items that indirectly produce donations. £5806 was expended on WDC Building Regulations matters from BCHT charitable funds. This was prior to us being able to access, (from 19th December 2016), the Section 106 (T&C Planning Act 1990) grant of about £109,000 held for our new village hall purposes by Buxted Parish Council. From this date to the end of the financial year (30th April 2017) a further £7554.00 was paid by the PC from the grant funds to progress our Building Regulations conditions compliance and taking necessary legal advice regarding our lease of the new hall site.

(c) End of year balance. The surplus for the year was **£953**, the **Brought Forward** figure from 2015/16 was **£21,391** thereby producing a **TOTAL of £22,344 to carry forward to the current financial year – 2017/18**.

(d) No Trustee claimed any expenses whatsoever during the year.

I would like to record the Trustee’s gratitude to Robin Farmer (FCCA) for his invaluable advice and voluntary work in verifying our accounts and for submitting the associated annual returns to the Charity Commissioners, Companies House and HRMC, **to Lis Edwards** for her help in note taking at our board meetings - not the easiest of jobs - and to all those other people who have helped and supported us in numerous ways.

Item 4. Report on 6th year of operation – to 30th April 2017 (Chairman)

The Trustees continued to raise funds through local events, a Bridge afternoon, a summer concert at St. Margaret’s Church and Carols on the Footings. It was essential that substantial work was started on the project by 17th December 2017 under WDC planning permission conditions, in order to secure the planning permission for the new hall in perpetuity. To this end the Trustees have worked with our Architect and Quantity Surveyor to discharge the Building Regulation Conditions and prepare tenders for the Phase 1 building work. These initial works included constructing a new vehicular crossover in Framfield Road, improving the access to the Scout hut and the Ionides Trust land and laying part of the hall foundations, etc. The programme of work has been structured into four consecutive phases to allow the Scouts safe access to the Scout Hut during the works. Work started on 11th December 2017 with an anticipated completion date of 26th February 2018. Once the Phase 1 works are completed the Ionides land will be fully restored and accessible as it is essential that it can still be used by the community while fundraising continues to reach the financial target required to undertake further phases of work.

Item 5. Report on the ongoing operations and plans. (Treasurer – George Claydon)

We look forward to continuing to work closely with the Ionides Trustees, the Parish Council and ANYONE or GROUP interested in the New Hall Project. EVERYTHING controlled by Wealden District Planning and Building Regulations concerning the project has been satisfied and secured for the future by our Phase 1 works that are in progress NOW! We have our original architect still on board, a quantity surveyor and several firms interested in tendering for the work. We will need about £1M to build and equip the hall. Some local tradesmen have offered to provide equipment, help, advice, equipment and services when necessary.

Our current financial position is that, after payment of the Phase 1 building works and associated professional fees and expenses, we have about £24,000 in the BCHT accounts and some £30,000 remaining of the Section 106 grant deposited with the Parish Council.

We envisage that the remaining work can be completed in two stages:

1. Complete foundations, services and erect the building and,
2. Equip hall for intended usage.

We need to:

- a) Expand the board membership to bring new energy and experience to the various tasks,
- b) Decide on employing a fundraising professional,
- c) Run local fundraising events to raise funds and maintain local interest and support,
- d) Make application to charitable trusts, foundations and the lottery (?) for grants,
- e) Develop a portfolio of local benefactors,
- f) Recruit a local high profile patron, and
- g) Take on any other ideas that are put forward for consideration?

In summary – we need your support locally and we need your involvement by **supporting** and **organising** local fundraising events to raise awareness and funds to prove to outside potential funders that we are a viable, much needed and worthwhile project.

Item 6. Appointment of Directors. (Company Secretary – George Claydon)

Our Company Articles require all directors to resign at the AGM but they may, if they are willing to stand, be re-elected for a further year. This is intended to provide potential representatives of new and existing groups in the area the opportunity to put themselves forward as Director/Trustees and have a say in how the Trust operates. Currently we have a couple of co-opted members and **SIX** trustees. We also have interest from a villager who has expressed a wish to be involved – but cannot be here tonight. The retiring trustees are:

Sheila Bartholomew,
Councillor Vivienne Blandford,
Pauline Bonner,
Eileen Claydon,
Chris Hitchins, and
Myself, George Claydon.

All the existing trustees except Councillor Blandford are willing to stand for re-election. Are there any other persons who wish to put themselves or others forward for consideration? Debbie Elliott offered to consider joining the board as a representative of the Buxted Bonfire Society. GC asked that she speak with him after the meeting. GC stated that Dr Nick Foskett had responded to our recent Buxted Messenger article and had similarly offered to help as a local resident and this offer will be pursued. In the absence of any other offers, Fiona McQuarrie proposed that the five retiring trustees be re-elected and this was agreed nem con. GC will further the offers of interest in becoming a board member by the persons concerned at our next board meeting on 30th January.

7. Appointment of Auditor 2017/8 (George Claydon)

Robin Farmer (FCCA) has indicated his willingness undertake this work for the period 2017/8. The proposal that he be reappointed was agreed – nem Acon.

Item 8. Any other Business.

GC I am certain that I speak for all the board when I thank Councillor Blandford for her support and involvement in our trust. He said that we were pleased to see so many people at the meeting which has enabled the trustees to clarify the facts concerning the new hall and reminded the audience that the BCHT website - buxtedvillagehall.co.uk - contains a lot of information about the project including our recently updated Business Plan. He then asked if there were any questions - The questions raised by the audience and the trustee's responses were as follows:

1. A member of the public asked what plans were in place to raise the phenomenal amount of money and have we considered who would use a new hall? She also had difficulty accessing the business plan on the website. The Chair offered to email her the business plan, which is a sizeable document, if she left her email at the end of the meeting as the business plan would answer her questions. The Chair gave a brief explanation of the ways in which money could be raised.
2. Have the various groups that might use the new hall helped to raise funds? Yes, the WI and Art Club as an example have made donations from their fundraising activities.
3. The cost of the hall at £1.3m was queried by several members of the public expressing an opinion that it seemed an enormous target to reach and whether any comparable costs from other new village halls had been sought? The Chair then said that Barcombe Village Hall built in 2011 had cost in the region of £800,000.) Both Punnets Town (built 2011 and Barcombe are similar in size to that of the proposed hall in Buxted.
4. Several members of the public again suggested that the price was too high and one member, who runs a local Groundwork Construction Company agreed to look at the plans and give an estimated cost of the groundworks on the undulating site. The hall costings had been calculated by a QS from information produced by the hall architect. It was suggested that if the costs were less the public might view the proposal to build the new hall to be more attainable.
5. A member of the public asked whether any of the funds from developing the site of the current Reading Room would be put towards the costs of the new hall. A Parish Councillor explained that any funds raised from selling the Reading Room site would be put towards the costs of the new hall. This had always been the case from the inception of the project. The general feeling within the meeting changed when it realised that this money would help the fundraising efforts considerably. It was then asked how much the sale of the Reading Room site would generate and some speculation given as to the amount involved. No figure was given officially as it was unwise to speculate.
6. A member of the public asked whether the village would then be without a hall for a considerable time if it was sold off to raise funds. It was stated that the parish council's stance was that the current hall would not be sold on until the new hall was nearing practical completion., thus minimising the time groups would be left without a place to meet. A loan could possibly be sought to cover cost in the interim. The parish council had previously said it would do all it could to help find alternative places to meet in the interim as there would be a point in time when there was a gap in provision.
7. A member of the public then suggested that the Reading Room site be sold on as soon as possible as then there would be a substantial sum towards the costs up front.
8. Another member of the public said that there are other halls within the village but these too are not fit for the purpose of the groups seeking hall space in the long term, although could fill a short term solution. One member of the public said the costs of hiring High Hurstwood Village hall were prohibitive and few booking slots available. A member of the public asked how groups used the current hall and the chair replied these details were available in the Business Plan.
9. A member of the public, who had lived in the village for many years said the village had increased considerably in size and there was a real need for a new hall.

10. Although a plea from the current Trustees had already been put forward only one member of the audience present had offered to join the current hall Trustees. Another member of the public stated that the Trustees needed to put together a more cohesive plan of how they could move forward technically with the project but most of this would require specialist help. It was again stated by the Trustees that they would welcome help to put this in place.
11. A member of the public offered some help with the current BCHT website to make it more attractive and user friendly to encourage further funding.
12. A member of the public had earlier in the meeting expressed surprise at the negativity and recent opposition to the new hall project and posed the question as why there had been no real or concerted opposition over the last 10 years when there had been ample opportunity to question any of the proposals. She surmised that the commencement of the ground works may have precipitated some opposition. Several members of the public expressed gratitude towards those who had worked so hard to bring the project to the current stage.
13. The Treasurer asked for a show of hands from those present as to whom might be in opposition to the building of the new hall. Out of an audience of around 45 no-one responded. Therefore, it was assumed all those still present at this meeting were in favour. A few people had left the meeting before this unofficial response was acquired.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.

G. Claydon (MBE) Company Secretary/Treasurer