

Iden Village Annual Assembly Draft Minutes

23rd April 2024, 7pm Iden Village Hall

Welcome

The Chairman of the Parish Council Michael Miller thanked residents for attending. There were 27 people in attendance. Apologies had been sent ahead by Jill Wood, Suzannah Miller and Zoe Strangeways.

Minutes of 24th April 2023 were reviewed and agreed.

Parish Council Report Michael Miller Chairman

As you will know we had 4 Parish Councillors who were elected unopposed last May and Bet Edwards was seconded at the subsequent meeting after the fifth councillor we needed was filled after the usual consultation process.

I have often said in the past that, with due respect to my colleagues I regard the way Parish Councillors are elected needs serious reform. There is something very wrong with a system that results in so many parish Councils both in Rother and nationally not having by far sufficient nominations and discourages young people from standing. Out of 51 parishes in Rother last year, only 4 had contested elections and many had to second people at their first meeting.

May I again thank Rya Griffen who retired as councillor and the Chairman at last year's election. During the past year the village very sadly lost Jane Whittenshaw, Michael Coulman, Jack Slater, John Harrison, Jenny Chater Robinson and lately Rod Stuart.

The Parish Council has had a very busy year. We considered 16 planning applications, the majority of which were routine but of course the main one was for Conkers where 17 dwellings have been applied for, although the planning inspectorate scheduled only 12. This has certainly been controversial, and we had a special meeting specifically to consider the Council's view and to hear comments from interested parties. The council was unable to support this application for many reasons, and we are now advised that the development has been scaled down to 15 dwellings and this will be the subject of a fresh application. Residents will have 21 days to submit their comments to Planning once the appropriate notices have gone up.

The council has always recognised that Iden needs new housing, particularly affordable for younger people. To have just 4 houses in 55 years cannot be good for the community. However, the Council has always taken the view expressed to Planning that Conkers is the wrong site.

A feature of the planning considerations now is the need to have environmental reviews as part of the process. Protected species particularly need special reports from qualified consultants, and these can often seriously delay the decision making process.

The Parish Council's Financial situation is sound. We managed to hold the amount we take from your council tax bill for the second year in succession. Each Band D council tax payer contributes just £68 towards looking after our playing field, play area, churchyard and burial ground, paying our excellent clerk, general administration and other small jobs that fall outside of the responsibilities of the District and County Councils. In all we receive £16,000 from the council tax together with fees received from the burial ground and playing field hire, notably from Iden Cricket Team.

Our accounts will be posted on the noticeboard very shortly for your inspection.

Last year at a public meeting, it was unanimously agreed that the sports pavilion in the playing fields should be saved. Over the years income from its hire has gradually reduced to such an extent that the costs of maintaining it, insurance, health and safety checks, etc are not being covered and this responsibility has fallen on the council tax payers.

We are very grateful that Bruce Luckhurst and Debbie Chalet have stepped forward to see what can be done to make the building more attractive for potential users and to raise grants. We will be hearing from them shortly. Clearly any plans take time and to hold the current situation the Parish Council has spent considerable sums on making the building watertight, removing the moss on the roof and clearing trees behind the building. We also replaced the roof over the scoreboard and replaced guttering. Towards these costs, the Parish Council drew upon the balances left by the former Pavilion Sports association who until recently had responsibility for caring for the Pavilion. Another issue has been the closure of The Bell last summer and after a public meeting called by the Parish Council, a Save the Bell Committee has been formed and we will also be hearing from them later shortly. I can again confirm that their task has the fullest support of the Parish Council. When I was last the Council's Chairman, I spoke of the value of community and Iden continues to show that this remains a lovely community.

Village Hall Report – Nick Padgham (Chairman of the Village Hall Committee)

It has been my pleasure to be the Chairman of Iden Village Hall Committee for the last two years.

I would like to start off by thanking everyone that has supported the Village Hall this year by attending any one of our events and for your generosity in supporting our numerous raffles. It is really appreciated and it has enabled us to maintain the hall to the standard that it has become accustomed to.

I'd like to think that the hall offers something for everyone in the village, so let me just remind you of some of the regular events held here;

The Pop-In, an opportunity to meet up for tea, cake and a chat every second Monday.

Short Mat Bowls on Wednesdays.

Bingo on Thursdays.

Yoga, now two classes a week.

The WI meet here regularly, as do the Parish Council and Iden Natural History Society.

Next month, The Rye Photographic Club also plan to move their regular meetings to Iden.

The Annual events here include the very popular Cream Tea (this year it'll be held on the 20th July -so put the date in your diary and do come along).

We've also held quiz nights, an evening of Iden Times Past through old photographs and post cards, the Remembrance Sunday gathering, and re-fresher training in the use of De-Fib machines.

The two large notice boards at the back of the hall were donated to us, and we've used these to illustrate both Iden and the events in the hall. We've also given a home to the Iden quilt, produced by the ladies of the village during the lockdown of 2021.

Like everyone else, the cost of our water, electricity and insurance has gone up, but we've still managed to find money to replace the projector when the old one failed, we've had the

red chairs re-upholstered and we've fitted new window blinds in the kitchen.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Morris and Yvonne who very generously held an open garden event back in July in aid of the village hall. We had a lovely afternoon, and raised almost £250.

The Hall has also been able to be charitable this year by providing the venue free of charge to the start of the 'Save the Bell Pub' campaign, and to the two lunches organised by Jan Hook in aid of Cancer Research.

This year Rother District Council have been running a project help improve the energy efficiency of local village halls. We were successful in getting a grant of almost £3,000 to totally replace all the lighting with more efficient LED lighting. The installation should start to take place soon.

Hopefully, by now, you will have noticed that the Hall now holds a regular bi-monthly indoor boot fair/table top sale, and these have gone from strength to strength. If you've got any clutter in the attic or in the shed that you'd like to get rid of why not book a table for the next one, and who knows, you might make a few pounds for yourself. The dates are on the noticeboard.

I do hope that you've enjoyed at least one of our bi-monthly 'Lunch' events. These have proved to be very popular, and so far we've enjoyed Soup & Jacket Potato, Pancakes, Thai Curry, and most recently some Italian Lasagne. We are very lucky to have some very good cooks on the village hall committee and that has enabled us to run these events and we look forward to your continued support.

In case you're not aware, the village hall has recently received a grant of £5,000 from the Wind Farm towards the cost of installing Solar Panels on the roof. This, together with the money raised recently from the boot fairs and lunches has enabled us to instruct a local contractor to begin the Solar panel installation in the next few months, so watch this space. Finally, I would like to thank everyone on the committee for all their hard work and support this year. I will be standing down as Chairman next week at the village hall AGM in order to spend more time with my young son. If you would like to join the committee, or have any ideas for future events here, then do please make yourself known.

Iden Stores Report – Debbie Chalet (Chairman of the Iden Stores Committee)

When Morris Metcalfe stepped down as Chairman, Debbie took on the role. Debbie thanked Christopher Strangeway who is not only the largest percentage owner but also the Treasurer. The Stores Holding Group is in a sound financial position. Liz ??? who has been secretary since the start (the last 20 years) has stepped down and so a new secretary is sought.

Following Covid the shop needs some refurbishment. The group's funds can easily cover their share of the cost. The group is glad that Kamal and his new wife have settled in and have become part of the community.

'Save the Bell' – Ralph Sperring (Treasurer of Save the Bell Group)

The Bell Inn closed 10 months ago leading to a public meeting being held in August 2023. A survey went out in November, and 120 responses were received. Ninety-five percent of respondents were very supportive so a management group was formed to look into the viability of the community taking on running the pub. The group has formed a Community

Benefit Society which means all profits will be ploughed back into it. They are currently registering with the Financial Conduct Authority. The valuation has revealed that some work is needed on the property and approx. £600,000 will be needed to acquire the property and get it up and running. The group has a current working capital of £10,000 and is producing a business plan including how the pub will be managed. A tenant is the preferred option. There are sources of funding available to help with buying the pub. Governments Community Ownership Fund offers match funding and there are smaller grants as well as the option of crowd funding. A share offer to the community will be launched at a public meeting on the 1st May. They hope promises will reach £250,000.

The parish council will support the group when and where possible and the Chair thanked all those helping and supporting the group.

Bowls Club – Ray Griffin

The Club's finances were in good health and new members were always welcome. Residents were welcome to come and try out at their next Open Day on the 10th May. Tea and Coffee are enjoyed at half time. The car accident which knocked down the Grove Lane Road Sign beside the War Memorial had also knocked out the club electricity but all was back up and running fairly quickly.

Women's Institute

Although a small group of 26 members its meetings were regularly well attended. The institute had been busy with outings (Hole Park to see the Bluebells), monthly lunches and regular talks and craft demonstrations. Every year, they hold a Christmas and Birthday Party as well as a Garden Party. This year had been its 100th Birthday. The group always helped at any village event and would again for the Open Gardens on 16th June this year. New members will be welcomed.

Bell Ringing Group

Anyone interested in learning how to pull the bells would be welcomed. Training is local. Currently they had four new members enjoying ringing bell.

Games Night

A new venture, from last September, meeting fortnightly in the hall, to play crib, dominoes even darts. All welcome.

Footpath Team

The recent weather had kept the team indoors, but they had dealt with two styles at Bosney. The landowner had covered the cost. Additionally, they had repaired a style on footpath 20 and footpath 8. The team will continue to walk the footpath reporting any works needed to the team coordinator. They had those who provided an extra hand on heavy duty jobs.

Open Session

A resident brought up the continued delapidated condition of the War Memorial Bungalow since it had been bought in 2011. In 13 years no plans had been submitted, as promised and required. The roof had gone at one end and was now covered plastic and ivy appeared to be holding up the remaining structure. The roof sagging demonstrated how the property is soon to collapse. In the early years, Rother District Council enforcement officers had brought about a slight improvement by the owner but nothing since. The property had become invested with vermin and Rother District Council and East Sussex County Council showed no concern of the danger presented to pedestrians using the public footpath directly adjacent to the building itself.

A resident thanked the parish council for making the village a lovely place to live.