

## Ditchling.com Society

First General Meeting Wednesday April 18<sup>th</sup> 2007

### Minutes

**Present:** Tom Dufty (Ditchling Soc & Village Hall), Graham Sharpless, Mike Felton, Peter Kirk, Annie Vail (Morris), Daphne Cave (Wine Soc), Kay Smith (Morris), Godfrey (Rugby & Pavilion Clubs) & Ena Harker (W.I.), Eva Hudson (Ditchling Antiques), Chris Roberts (Ridgeview), Roy Burnam (Film Soc), Shirley Crowther (Jointure Studios), Brian Clutterbuck (DVA)

**Background:** Tom explained that Mike Felton had approached him five years ago suggesting that they buy the domain names Ditchling.com and Ditchling.co.uk and start a website. They had employed Image Creation (Steve Hey) to design the website on the basis that it should be extremely user friendly and require minimum central administration. However the site had remained dormant over the following five years until it had been re-launched with the invaluable help and initiative of Graham Sharpless, in the role of administrator, at the start of the current year. A Society had now been formed and individuals and organisations were being invited to join.

**Constitution:** A proposed Society constitution was presented for approval. Proposer: Mike Felton: Secunder: Kay Smith. All present approved it.

**Election of Officers under the new constitution:** Graham Sharpless and Mike Felton nominated Peter Kirk for the post of Treasurer and Tom Dufty, Graham and Peter nominated Mike Felton for the post of Local Resident Representative. Tom Dufty asked for nominations for the post of Chairman and offered himself in the absence of any others to stand. No others came forward. Nominations were invited for the Local Voluntary Organisation Representative. Annie Vail & Kay Smith, representing Ditchling Morris, offered to stand. No one came forward for Local Business Representative. It was suggested that Chesterton's be approached.

The following were unanimously elected to the Committee:

Chairman: Tom Dufty

Treasurer: Peter Kirk

Local Resident Rep: Mike Felton

Local Voluntary Organisation Rep: Ditchling Morris (Annie Vail & Kay Smith)

Local Business Rep: Vacant

Site Administrator/Membership Sec.: Graham Sharpless (ex officio)

**Finance:** Peter Kirk said that an account had been opened with HSBC and that the current balance stood at £170. The only revenue so far was for advertisements. Members would not start paying their annual subscriptions until after June 30<sup>th</sup>. The officers of the Society would not be remunerated or take any share of future profits. Properly accounted-for and approved expenses incurred by them on behalf of the society would be reimbursed as

circumstances allowed. This would include some expenses incurred over the last five years to maintain the domain names and server. Graham Sharpless would be employed by the Society as site administrator at the rate of £25 per hour. It was the intention, if possible, to pay Graham out of revenue starting with effect from July 1<sup>st</sup> and to repay hours worked up to that date when funds were available.

Graham presented a tentative forecast of revenue over the next twelve months. He was hoping for revenue of circa £2,000 in the current financial year but acknowledged this could be over ambitious.

**Current Status:** Graham said that there were currently circa 8 prospective Full members and circa 18 Associate members. This assumed that some who had been represented on the site from its inception would confirm membership when July 1<sup>st</sup> arrived. The site was currently receiving circa 500 hits a day. It was noticeable that Chesterton's, which had taken out an annual advertisement, was receiving up to 25% more hits on its page than other non-advertising members.

**Site Development:** It was agreed that the following additions/changes should be carried out as soon as possible:

- A disclaimer statement
- A village map
- A search facility
- Additional public service information: Schools; Recycling facilities; Parish Councillors; Visiting Library
- Consider a 'This month in Ditchling' column

It was suggested that a 'buddy' system, linked to a member organisation, should be considered for organisations that really could not afford membership, but that this should not be a top priority at present.

**Promotion & Publicity:** It was suggested that information about the site should be available in Tourist Board offices and that articles should be sought after June 30<sup>th</sup> in the Middy & 'South Downs Living'. An interview on Southern Counties Radio should also be considered. Meanwhile use should be made whenever possible of publicity in 'freebie' journals.