

**INGATESTONE & FRYERNING COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION CIO**

**REGISTERED CHARITY No.1161482**

**DRAFT MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2023-24**

**Friday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025 at 7.30pm**

**PRESENT:**

Peter Batchelor OBE	(PB)	Trustee on behalf of Bowls Club
Adrian Bonnett	(AB)	Trustee on behalf of Tennis Club
Jim Donnell	(JD)	Trustee on behalf of IMOG
Jenny Fowle	(JF)	Trustee & Treasurer
John Galvin MBE	(JG)	Trustee & Hon. Secretary
Helen Hodey	(HH)	Trustee on behalf of Young Expressions
Lilian Hunter BEM	(LH)	Trustee & Chairman
Tom O'Connor	(TOC)	Trustee
Teresa Ravenscroft	(TR)	Trustee
Claire Staples	(CS)	Centre Co-ordinator

and 25 additional members

**1. Apologies:**

Apologies were received from the following:

Billy Smith  
Barry Ward  
Paul Wisbey (Trustee)

**2. Minutes of last AGM**

The minutes of the 2022/23 AGM held on Friday 16 February 2024 were agreed.

**Proposal to accept**

*Proposed:* John Cloke *Seconded:* Kate Evans

**3. Matters arising**

LH invited JG to report back on the two actions under AOB from last year's meeting:

**(a) IFCA to investigate and report back on improvements for access to and from the raised area of the bar.**

There have been lengthy deliberations on the best solution as we want to keep the raised area of the bar near the windows free from obstructions as it is used as a stage for live music.

However, we will be replacing all the fixed banquette seating in the bar during the course of next month. As part of the refurbishment, we will be extending the banquette seat that runs between the bar and the raised area. The effect of this work will be to remove the 90-degree corner area that is the most risky part in negotiating access to and from the raised area. There will also be a side arm to the new banquette seat to help manage the steps. We hope

that this work along with a short rail on the panel at the other end of the raised area will make negotiating the steps easier.

**(b) IFCA to investigate systems in the Hall for the hard of hearing**

The Trustees think this would be a worthwhile enhancement and are in the process of investigating the installation of a 'Hearing Loop' system in the main hall suitable for the varied uses, e.g. stage shows and film screenings, private hire. Due to the nature of the hall structure and the different types of hearing aids available a simple set up would not be suitable. We are also investigating upgrades to the whole sound system in the Hall. Therefore, we have reached out to a number of providers to gather expert opinion and costings but can't yet state what type of system will be installed to help the hard of hearing.

#### **4. Annual Report of the General Committee**

##### **Chairman's report**

The report follows, in full.

I am pleased to welcome you all this evening – some long-standing supporters and some new faces.

Firstly, I would like to thank our team of Trustees who work so hard to continue to progress the success of our very important village asset – team members work hard to find the answers to problems as they crop up and each is able to make a contribution. John as Secretary produces minutes, reports, reviews and summaries with great speed and accuracy and Jenny, our Treasurer never fails to amaze us with her successful searches for better deals for the C C.

Our office is efficiently run by Claire, our Centre Co-ordinator, who tackles all kinds of situations with great skill and aplomb and is ably assisted by Jacky, who is well known for organising our parties and entertainment and Karen who uses her chartered accountant skills to keep our financial affairs well in order. We have Steve and Ken who make sure everything is checked for safety and kept in good working order. We also have kind volunteers on hand who step in when they are needed.

The bar continues to be very popular, and Peter, Billy and all the staff provide a very valuable service – a welcoming atmosphere, good food and entertainment. Football and music events are well attended, with the Euro Final screened in the hall. We have recently replaced a number of chairs in the bar and in February expect new banquette seating to be installed to help make the bar even more comfortable. One banquette has been specially designed to help to make it easier to get up onto the raised area at the bar side and a handrail is to be fitted at the other end near the bookshelf. The raised area is used as a stage for music nights so any other rail in the middle would not be practical. Peter's coffee kiosk continues to be well used – one good outcome of the Covid restrictions.

The snooker room is still being well used with players from Blackmore visiting from time to time. Our coffee mornings are very well attended often by around 50 or more and are very happy occasions with Liz, who organises them and her wonderful team of volunteers, who have added so much to the atmosphere with their friendly approach

while serving drinks and homemade cakes. A group of Anglo European pupils have started coming to help those who could do with some digital assistance and help. They are coming fortnightly at 12.30, after the coffee mornings. You can bring your own equipment or discuss problems with the students. This seems a very valuable link for all concerned. So if you have any problems just come along – it is free, no need to book or attend the coffee morning and chat with young people , who seem to find it all so easy!

Liz also runs Bingo sessions each month on a Thursday with Ken who organises a quiz – real fun afternoons, which are growing in popularity. Again, the coffee morning volunteers help out. Tea and cake is included in the price of the Bingo cards £8.00 for members and £10.00 for non-members.

The Film Club is very popular and shows a wide variety of films each month and regularly has an audience of around 40 /50. The Blue Ray has been replaced and there has been an improvement in the quality of the presentations. The seats are still as hard so a cushion might be a good idea. Our next two films will be What's love got to do with it? on Feb 20<sup>th</sup> and Official Secrets on March 20<sup>th</sup>.

We have had Tribute Nights, which again are very popular, with tickets sold out quickly and a waiting list! We had A George Michael tribute in March, A Night at the Musicals in July and Abba Revival in October. In March this year it is time to dust off your Blue Suede shoes as Elvis is coming to Ingatstone. Tickets available? I am sure we are in for a good evening.

IMOG put on Dick Whittington in January 24 and has just performed Nativity this month and Young Expressions put on Frozen and Snow White. Unfortunately, the fire alarm went off several times during one of the Y E shows. This has been closely investigated, and it seems likely that the haze machine was the cause of the problem, but a very careful check is being kept on the whole system.

We have hosted two Artisan markets in conjunction with the Parish Council – one in March, despite high winds which caused problems for some of the outside stall holders and another in November. Both were well attended and brought visitors into the village. We also had a representation at the Summer Horticultural Show and in December we held our Xmas Market. Sadly because of the weather the outside activities had to be cancelled but our indoor event went ahead, with many local people displaying a great variety of their products and Father Xmas being in attendance. We also hosted one of the three large Xmas village trees – replacements for our usual small trees throughout the village. Our Xmas tea was well attended and was a very happy affair with many ending up dancing to the music provided again by Billy Blue Rondo.

Our usual keep fit, and exercise classes continued including Zumba, seated yoga and Aerobics and there is a dance class on a Saturday morning for 4–16-year-olds. The Arts Society meet here regularly and various other groups a such as the Fryerning W I.

The Bowls Club continues to enjoy the little haven, hidden away behind the tennis Club. They are always keen to welcome new members and provide coaching.

This week the Tennis Club erected heavy duty fencing next to the car park to support screening to reduce glare. They also propose to install additional lighting later on court 3 , next to the car park, to enable more members and non-members to enjoy this healthy exercise and further improve our Community Centre facilities. The Trustees

agreed to a short-term loan so that this work could be carried out sooner than originally planned. There are Tennis Club representatives here tonight. If you would like to have more details, you can speak to them after the meeting.

A building survey advised us on work needing to be done to keep the C C in good condition. Parts of the building are about 150 years old. Fortunately, there were no really urgent items flagged up, but our front roof and cupola were mentioned as requiring attention. We have been seeking quotes all year from many builders – some not interested in the work – but eventually it came down to four and our final decision is to go with B C Cook Roofing Limited, and they will be starting early in the Spring. This will cost over £50,000 and take about six weeks to complete. We have also had repairs done to the car park surface near the Boys Club and replaced some fencing nearby. We are waiting for quotes for repainting lines in the car park. The car park is well used and is a very valuable source of income for the Community Centre. Again, we have managed to keep most of our prices the same as last year.

We have been monitoring our electrical equipment to see if we can pinpoint areas where we can cut down consumption. We have bought some new kitchen equipment, including fridges and Jenny and Claire have been carefully monitoring where most electricity is being used, and Jenny has switched suppliers to get us a better deal. She has also managed to get a very good deal for our waste disposal. In the office Claire has organised a new deal with Fibre Broadband, which is quicker and more efficient –now people are able to phone the bar direct instead of through the office - for example.

I am delighted to say this has been another successful year. We have ended this year with 923 members and have been able to keep our subscriptions the same as last year. With the loan paid off we are earning interest each month and we have great plans and hopes for more improvements over the years to come with such as new heating and cooling systems and sound and lighting improvements. We have a wonderful amenity here. We must continue to look after it and support it whenever we can. If you have any suggestions or would like to help, please speak to one of our Trustees who will pass it on to the committee. I hope you will all continue to enjoy what is here for you.

I have another success story to read to you now from Fryerning Parish Rooms, which IFCA owns but it is run by an FPR committee. Their new Chair Yana Merritt has kindly sent this to me.

2024 was a good year for FPR. The bookings were up from 508 used hours in 2023 to 605 in 2024, an increase of 19%. We have regular bookings for fitness classes and for music classes of varying descriptions. It also continues to be a very popular venue for children's parties and this year we have also attracted retreat type, full day events for pilates and wellness. Fund raising has also been successful due to sell out events. We have our annual BBQ which is a great event for families and our Xmas party and this year the two additional events were a wine tasting and Race Night. Both were very popular and sold out almost immediately. We have also introduced TicketSource which enables people to buy event tickets online making the whole process much easier and it also has the option of giving donations.

The hall is maintained to a high standard and last year the new entrance was completed making it look much more attractive as well as being more secure. Inside we have had the stage carpet replaced, which looks clean, bright and attractive. The heating is controlled by an App and automatically comes on an hour or so before any booking. This ensures the hall is warm but also does not waste energy when the hall is not in use.

We are most grateful to the Lounge Wine Bar for handling the keys. This process works well but we are exploring other ways of providing access to renters out of hours with IFCA and our insurers.

As expected after all costs there was a cash deficit of £438 and after depreciation a deficit of £2,411. The deficit was due to the cost of the entrance at £11,946. Regular rental income has been strong at £12,557 with donations and fundraising a further £7,857. We continue to have a robust balance sheet.

Finally a big thanks to the IFCA office for the efficient handling of our bookings and managing our income and expenditure. There is a good working relationship for which we are most grateful.

## **5. Accounts of the IFCA CIO 2023/24 (report presented by Jenny Fowle)**

### **Report follows in full**

You should all have a copy of the accounts in front of you. I'm going to spend a few minutes talking you through the main financial highlights this year. I will also say a bit about what has happened since September 2024 and I'm happy to answer any questions at the end.

We prepared the accounts in house, as we have done for several years now. It's now a very slick operation, with Karen producing a first draft of the accounts within just a few weeks of year end. John, Lilian and I then add all the "wordy bits" for the Trustees' Report, and we are then in a position to ask the independent examiner, Jan Stobart from RCCE, to come in and check the accounts against the underlying records. The independent examination took place on 11th December and Jan commented that "The underlying records, internal controls, audit trails and processes" are all excellent. My thanks as always to Karen, and to Claire and Jacky for all their hard work keeping everything in the office in such good order.

If we now look at the accounts, pages 1 to 4 of the report contain the Trustees Report, where there is a lot of information about the activities, achievements and finances of IFCA. Lilian's report has already mentioned the main highlights, so I am just going to focus on the financial side of things, to give you some more background about the numbers.

On page 3 of the report, you will see the "financial review" heading, which has the main headline numbers:

Overall, the surplus for the year, £63,572, is almost identical to the surplus for last year, which was £63,170. Within this year's figure there is a small loss for Fryerning Parish Room with the Ingatestone premises generating a surplus of over £66,000, which is our strongest ever result. At 30th September 2024 the organisation as a whole had

accumulated charity funds of nearly £594k, of which £36k is for FPR and £558k is for Ingatestone. In accordance with our reserves policy we have calculated that our residual free reserves at 30th September 2024 are £122,000, split £97,000 Ingatestone, and £25,000 Fryerning. These amounts are freely available to spend on our charity's purposes, and to calculate this we deduct fixed assets and three months' expenditure from our total charity funds.

Page 5 shows the Independent Examiner's Report, signed by Jan Stobart, where, as I already mentioned, we have been given a clean bill of health.

If we now dig deeper into some of the figures, you can see on page 6 that all income streams generated more than in the previous year, giving a grand total for income of £221,841 compared to £197,772. Our expenditure rose by a similar amount, resulting in an overall surplus similar to last year, as already mentioned.

If you go to page 10 note 3 you can see a breakdown of this income where it shows that there are several different sources of income, most of which have increased this year, reflecting how busy the halls are. The only income category that is lower this year is subscriptions (which is membership fees), which has gone down by £6,000. Although membership numbers are similar year on year, there are two reasons for the decreased income, firstly we made the decision to lower membership fees last year, and secondly for renewing members there is an optional £5 donation included in the fee, so this element is shown under donations rather than under subscriptions. If you look at donations you will see that this has increased by £2,700 this year. For the new membership year which started on 1st January 2025 we have kept all membership subs the same as last year.

Note 4 on page 10 shows the fundraising surplus for the year. There are a number of events included in this category, such as the monthly film showings and the bingo, as well as tribute nights and the weekly coffee morning.

If we now look at expenditure on page 11 there is a detailed breakdown of our costs. Just a few things to point out here:

Staff costs are higher due to inflation-linked pay rises for all staff, and one additional part-time employee, being Liz Clark who runs the coffee morning and the bingo

The cost of light heat and water is higher due to a rise in the unit price of our electricity. We were shielded last year from gas price rises as we were on a historical fixed rate contract, but that has now ended so we expect these costs to increase in 2025, and we are also anticipating a significant rise in our water bills

Repairs and maintenance this has gone up significantly mainly due to money spent on car park resurfacing, and the re-covering of the snooker tables

Finally, Fryerning expenses were significantly higher as just under £12,000 was spent on a new entrance to the hall which has made the venue much more attractive and also more secure

You will note that we paid no bank loan interest this year as we paid off our long-term loan in February 2023. Instead, if you go back to page 6 you can see that we actually earned over £3,000 in interest this year on our cash deposits – quite a turnaround.

If you now go to page 7 you will see the statement of financial position, otherwise known as our balance sheet. I only want to highlight one thing here which is the fact that at 30th September we were holding a significant amount of cash in the bank (£164,865 compared to £103,494 last year). Although this may seem a lot, I mentioned earlier that we have calculated our residual free reserves to be less than this at £122,000. This is a lot of money, but rest assured it's not just languishing in the bank – in fact it's nowhere near enough to do everything on our “to do” list.

A few words on what has happened financially since 30th September. At the monthly trustee meeting we always review the cash we are holding in the bank, and each quarter we look at our income and expenditure. This shows that since the year end, we have continued to generate a surplus in line with last year, and our cash balance has increased further. We have already committed to spending some of this money in 2025, notably around £50,000 on the front roof including repairs to the cupola, and £8,000 on new banquette seating in the bar. Other significant projects in the pipeline include investing in new sound and lighting for the main hall, upgrading the heating system, replacing the main roof over the hall including the potential for solar panels, as well as the usual periodic decorating and general maintenance of the building. These larger projects do take a long time to happen as there are multiple quotes to source, and extensive due diligence is undertaken before a decision can be made to spend such large sums of money. The really good news is that there is a lot of stability now in terms of being able to generate a reliable surplus so in time we should all see some real improvements in the facilities that we offer here.

That's all I want to say about the finances - does anyone have any questions on the annual report?

### **Questions**

Jon Cloke asked in relation to the roofing works, whether the plan was to repair or replace the Cupola. JG confirmed that all works would be discussed in detail with the chosen contractor, but the general plan is to repair the existing, not to completely replace old with new.

In summary it has been another successful year for the Association, and I propose the accounts are now adopted by the members.

### **Proposal to accept**

*Proposed:* Helen Batchelor *Seconded:* Kate Evans

## **6. Election/Appointment of Members to the General Committee to serve as Trustees**

JG indicated the trustees who served in 2023-24 financial year were; Adrian Bonnett, Pete Batchelor, Jim Donnell, Jenny Fowle, Helen Hodey, Lilian Hunter, John Galvin, Tom O'Connor, Teresa Ravenscroft and Paul Wisbey.

Then followed an explanation that there are two types of trustees; those who stand as individuals and those nominated by one the affiliated groups.

### **Appointment of new representatives of full members**

No nominations received

### **Re-appointments**

One –third of trustees are required to stand down by rotation but are eligible to be re-appointed. I'm pleased to say the following are all willing to continue as trustees:

- Jim Donnell – nominated by Ingatestone Musical & Operetta Group – an affiliated group and as such his reappointment is automatic
- Tom O'Connor – *Proposed: Liz Bown Secoded: Jessica Bonnett Followed by a majority show of hands*
- Teresa Ravenscroft – *Proposed: Jennifer Godwin Secoded: Jessica Bonnett Followed by a majority show of hands*

JG confirmed that we again have a total of 10 trustees including reps from all four affiliated groups.

## **7. Election of Honorary Officers**

7.1 LH read out the nominations for the position of Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Secretary.

7.2 Hon. Treasurer

Nominee: **Jenny Fowle**

- *Proposed: Jon Cloke Secoded: Maggie Galvin Followed by a majority show of hands*

7.3 Hon. Secretary

Nominee: **John Galvin**

- *Proposed: Noelle Hones-Cloke Secoded: Kate Evans Followed by a majority show of hands*

## **8. Appointment of Independent Examiner:**

Following the successful Independent Examination carried out by Jan Stobart from RCCE, JF proposed that RCCE be reappointed as our Independent Examiner.

- *Proposed: Kate Evans Secoded: Jennifer Godwin Followed by a majority show of hands*  
The reappointment was agreed.

## **9. Update on events and activities**

JG followed up the statements made earlier in the meeting and showed a series of slides of the poor state of the original tiled roof and cupola. The building dates back to 1888 and was designed by renowned local architect George Sherrin and the

refurbishment will be carried out in situ to restore it as close as possible to the original.

JG remarked that the building survey conducted in 2023 identified repairs and improvements totalling an estimated £250,000 of which the roof and cupola were the priority. There are also other improvements we have heard about such as to the stage sound and lighting we want to carry out

JG commented that the weekly coffee mornings, monthly Bingo and Community Cinema are ways in which members can contribute to fundraising for these improvements.

#### **10. Any Other Business (for which due notice had been given)**

No formal AOB had been notified to IFCA in advance of the meeting.

##### **Other questions/comments:**

Kevin Condren commented that the car park was often completely full during Tuesday coffee mornings and asked whether anything could be done about it. There followed several contributions noting that more use of the car park followed parking restrictions along the High Street. The IFCA has limited the number of parking permits issued and would like more spaces to be available to visitors to the Community Centre and village shops. It was also commented that the car park fills up early in the morning which suggests use by commuters using the railway station. It was suggested that raising the cost of all-day parking might discourage commuters.

Linked to the above Sheri Cavill commented that the disabled parking spaces were sometimes not available and being used by vehicles not displaying a disability badge or by delivery vehicles blocking access. It was recognised that while wrong it is difficult to tackle unauthorised parking and doing so can lead to abuse.

Liz Bown spoke to urge members to spread the word to friends and neighbours about the Community Centre to encourage them to make more use of its facilities and activities.

Finally, Kate Evans offered a vote of thanks to the IFCA trustees and staff for their time and effort over many years to make a success of the Community Centre.

##### **Close**

Lilian thanked so many members for their support in turning out on a Friday evening in January.

**The meeting closed at 8.25pm.**