



MEDWAY TOWNS SOROPTIMIST TRUST
TRUSTEES REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2024

Registered charity number 1175474

Report of the Trustees

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Report of the Trustees

The Trustees present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31st March 2024. The Trustees confirm that the annual report and financial statements comply with the current statutory requirements, the requirements of the trust's governing document and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (SORP FRS 102).

Administrative details

Registered Charity Number:	1175474
Registered Office:	Medway Towns Soroptimist Trust 328 Lunsford Lane Larkfield Aylesford Kent ME20 6HX
Trustees:	Elizabeth Duckworth Barbara Fisher Lillian Gould Janet Garnons-Williams Wanda Wright Angela Howe (recruited 09/05/2024) Carol McKeough (recruited 09/05/2024)
Staff:	No staff are employed by the Trust
Independent Examiner:	No independent examiner is named here, as the trust's low income currently precludes examination or audit.

Governance

The Trust is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (Foundation model), registered charity number 1175474.

The Charity's constitution is the primary governing document of the Charity.

The Medway Towns Soroptimist Trust was registered with the Charity Commission on 31st October 2017.

Purpose

The purpose of the trust is to ensure the responsible management of a small financial endowment and to occasionally award modest grants.

Background

The original investment was generated by members of Soroptimist International of the Medway Towns in the 1960s and we are influenced by their Soroptimist philosophy of actively supporting the community locally, nationally and internationally, through service and through funding.

The Trust is managed by a Board of Trustees, all of whom are (but do not have to be) members of Soroptimist International.

Soroptimist International is a recognised Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) representing women from all over the world. The world-wide organisation, Soroptimist International (SI), and our Federation, Soroptimist International Great Britain & Ireland (SIGBI), both have consultative status at the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) at the United Nations (UN), which gives a voice on important discussion papers, and allows members to attend the Commission on the Status of Women in New York each March, and contribute to the “Agreed Conclusions”. This status would not be possible without the fantastic work being done by, and facilitated by, Soroptimists at local level.

There are around 66,000 Soroptimists in 118 countries, the majority of whom belong to their local Club, where they can make friends with like-minded women, have fun and work on projects that help improve lives.

Objectives and activities

Charitable objectives

The object of the charity as set out in its governing document is:

To further such charitable purposes (charitable under English law) as the Trustees see fit from time to time.

Activities

The trust exists to manage a small endowment and provide modest grants for projects which fit within the areas of work listed in the guidelines.

The Trust has an obligation to:

- manage the investment in a responsible way to ensure the proceeds deliver community benefit;
- discharge the duty to gain maximum growth of the fund.

The Trustees consider applications quarterly.

Public benefit

The Charity’s Trustees have complied with their duties under the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission. Medway Towns Soroptimist Trust’s particular public benefit activities are included under Achievements and Performance, illustrating the commitment of the Charity to supporting charitable causes locally, nationally and internationally.

Policy on grant making

In recent years the Trustees have strengthened their focus on the Soroptimist mission: *Soroptimists transform the lives and status of women and girls through education, empowerment and enabling opportunities.*

They also recognise that, as an organisation which is in touch with the local community, the Trust can often offer a nimble response to local causes which larger charities cannot.

The grant making priorities are therefore to:

- better reflect the Soroptimist Mission, particularly support for women and girls;
- favour local causes;
- continue our policy of supporting individuals, but only through established organisations, not through grants directly to individuals;
- be responsive and react to urgent requests between board meetings if necessary;
- continue to meet the Charity Commission requirement that we remain separate from the Soroptimist Club;
- not fund projects retrospectively;
- support only one grant per organisation at any one time.

The grant application form and guidance reflect these priorities.

The Trust conducts quarterly minuted Board meetings at which grant decisions are made. The decision to award a grant must be a majority decision of a quorum of Trustees. The quorum is two charity Trustees. If an urgent application is received, it may be discussed and voted upon by email between Board meetings.

A Trustee may declare an interest in an applicant organisation, in which case they will withdraw from the vote. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chair has a second or casting vote.

The Trustees gather sufficient information, primarily through the application form, to give assurance that the applicant is genuine, reliable and competent, and suitable for us to support in terms of meeting our charitable purposes. Occasionally a vote will not be held until we have requested and secured more information about the applicant or their project.

The Trustees insist on appropriate monitoring of the grant spend in terms of progress reports and invoice evidence, to give Trustees oversight and scrutiny. Our level of monitoring and scrutiny will be proportionate to the size of the grant.

Achievements and performance

Activities to 31st March 2024

We have made a little more progress this year in increasing the number of grants awarded, although our grants were modest and the grant total relatively low. Our investment grew well this year following the post-Covid market challenges.

Managing our investment

Our financial assets continue to sit with Atomos Investments Limited, an investment house who provide the level of financial monitoring and management we need to give us control and accountability.

In terms of growth, our investment's journey has echoed the International Monetary Fund's predictions over the last few years, including their forecast increase in the rate of growth between 2023 and 2024.

Our original capital investment with Sanlam in April 2018 was £120,000 and it grew well over the first 3 years, despite fluctuating during Covid, reaching £141,640 by 31st March 2021. By 31st March 2022 it had grown by £6,967 but a withdrawal of £10,000 left the balance at £138,607.05. At the end of this financial year, 31st March 2024, it stood at £156,699.62, an increase of £18,092.57 after fees and other costs.

The full value of the investment will only be realised if the assets are encashed, so the value recorded remains at £110,000, which is the original £120,000 endowment minus the £10,000 drawdown in 2021.

The Trustees continue to be very grateful to Leon Payne of S & P Wealth Management for his independent financial advice. Leon continues to offer advice and guidance without charge, as he wishes to support the valuable work of the Soroptimist movement.

Operational account

Our operational account with Lloyds Bank covers the cost of grants and incidental costs. £10,886.18 was brought forward at the start of this year. Grants of £2,260 were awarded. There were no bank charges to pay. A balance of £8,639.59 was carried forward.

Grants awarded

Our aim has always been to allocate around £4,500 per annum to donations and bank charges. This year we made 6 grants totalling £2,260:

- **April 2023: £500 to Maidstone Women's Refuge**

The Trust is very keen to support our local women's refuges. The Maidstone Refuge is keen to make the front and back garden areas at the refuge more inviting and encourage the children and women to use the garden space more often. The Trust awarded a grant towards the cost of plants and equipment for pots, hanging baskets and raised vegetable beds.

The aim is to help improve the residents' mental health by being outside and to encourage them to take up gardening as a hobby. The vegetable patch will enable the children to have fun outside, learn more about gardening and also improve their mental health.

- **November 2023: £350 to Blythwood Care**

Every Christmas, Blythwood Care co-ordinates the filling, collection and distribution of shoe boxes, the "Shoe Box Appeal", to bring some happiness to people in need. People across the country fill boxes, many of which will go to the collection centre in Gillingham. Whilst all the boxes are donated voluntarily, there is a cost incurred by Blythwood in transporting them to their destination. In 2023, Blythwood delivered shoe boxes to vulnerable people in Ukraine and seven other eastern European countries.

The Trust awarded a grant of £350 to contribute to Blythwood Care's transportation costs.

- **November 2023: £500 to Dandelion Time**

Dandelion Time is an excellent Maidstone charity that supports struggling children and families throughout Kent. This year they have supported 160 of the 200 families referred to them and want to raise the £40,000 required to reach the additional families on their waiting list.

Dandelion Time was nominated to be part of the 2023 Big Give scheme. They aimed to raise £20,000 matched by the Big Give to £40,000.

Our grant of £500 was matched by £500 from the Big Give and also attracted £125 of gift aid, resulting in a total benefit of £1,125.

- **November 2023: £500 to the Shannon Trust**

We are interested in the work that the Shannon Trust does with women prisoners at East Sutton Park. The Shannon Trust is raising money to support people in the criminal justice system, and the wider community, to learn to read and improve other basic skills, so they can transform their lives.

The Shannon Trust also benefitted from being a 2023 Big Give nominated charity. So our £500 grant was also matched with £500 and attracted £125 of gift aid, giving a total value of £1,125.

- **November 2023: £200 to SI Medway and Maidstone**

Our grant to SI Medway and Maidstone contributed to providing Christmas hampers to the women's refuges in Medway and Maidstone.

Women often arrive at the refuges with very few possessions or nothing at all. Children escaping domestic abuse often have to leave all their toys behind. After years of financial abuse, many women have no money at all – which is especially hard at Christmas.

SI Medway and Maidstone assembled hampers of festive foods, gifts and toys, along with more essential supplies such as nappies and toiletries. These went to the two women's refuges in Medway and the women's refuge in Maidstone.

- **January 2024: £210 to Carer's First**

Carers First runs an annual programme of activities for Young Carers in Medway, with the aim that each Young Carer has the opportunity to have at least one treat per year.

For a number of years we have facilitated a trip to Diggerland. It gives young carers the opportunity to meet up with other children in similar circumstances and develop friendships.

Our grant of £210 contributed to the cost of 13 young people and 4 adults having a day trip there during the half term holiday.

Publicity

We have not advertised our grant scheme and recipients tend to come to us through charities or other organisations by word of mouth. We did not support the many unsolicited requests for funding from large national charities and small London charities.

Website

In the past, the Trust had a page on the website of the Soroptimist International Medway club, where applicants could find the application form and guidance. We plan to develop our own internet presence which will be independent of the Club webpages.

Financial review

Principal funding source

Our sole funding source when the charity was formed was the financial investment endowed by Medway Soroptimists, as described on page 2. This continues to be the case.

Total funds

At the end of this period our total funds were £120,886.18.

Of this, we continue to record our investment of £110,000 in the Sanlam investment account. Its value of course fluctuates over time and the current value will only be realised if and when we release the asset. We will monitor closely.

The remaining £8,639.59.18 is in our bank account, to give cash reserves for operational costs and awarding grants.

All funds are unrestricted.

Reserves policy

The Trust employs no staff and is operated entirely by the Trustees, who are volunteers. Our running costs are minimal, so we will ensure that a balance of £500 will always remain in our cash account to meet the Charity Commission guideline of reserves of 3 - 6 months of running costs.

Our main reserves are our capital investment. We aim to maintain an investment of at least £120,000 to ensure we generate some growth which can be accessed every three years to top up the bank cash account. This will ensure we can continue to make modest grants to meet our charitable objects.

Risks

The Trustees have a duty to identify and review the risks to which the Charity is exposed and to ensure appropriate controls are in place to provide reasonable assurance against fraud and error. Quarterly formal Trustee meetings are held to review progress towards achieving the Charity's objectives and to promote strategic direction within the Trust.

The Trustees regularly address risks and uncertainties and put in place procedures and controls to ensure those risks are adequately managed. The principal risks in 2024 are:

- poor performance of our capital investment;
- a grant recipient not using the funds to benefit the community;
- Trustees retiring so we are no longer quorate.

The first will be mitigated by close monitoring of our investment, consulting our advisor at S & P Wealth Management as necessary.

The second is mitigated by robust due diligence when assessing a grant application and good decision making.

The third is a very low probability risk and we continue to generate interest in the Trust by communicating our work to colleagues and supporters, a potential source of new Trustees.

Plans for the future

Although we awarded more grants this year than last, the Trustees recognise that in most years the charity has fallen below its donation target and subsequent contribution to public benefit.

We are a very small charity and will continue to operate in a cautious way over the next 3 years, aiming to award total grants of up to £4,600 per annum. We will maintain our policy of not advertising and will continue to rely on the number of applications growing by word of mouth. To achieve our target we will more pro-actively seek out causes which meet our objectives.

We look forward to seeing our modest donations continue to make a real difference to people's lives locally, nationally and internationally.

Structure, governance and management

Board of Trustees

The Medway Towns Soroptimist Trust is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (Foundation model), registered charity number 1175474, set up in 2017 in response to the need to manage the Soroptimist endowment. The founding Board of Trustees was Liz Duckworth (Chair), Barbara Fisher (Treasurer), Lillian Gould, Janet Garnons-Williams and Sue Daykin, skilled and committed volunteers with strong backgrounds in finance, law, fundraising and the VCSE (Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise) sector.

Sue stepped down at the 2020 AGM and we were delighted to welcome Wanda Wright to the Board as a new Trustee that year.

We are very pleased to have recruited two new trustees this year, bringing the total number to seven, making a quorum at meetings much easier to achieve. The new trustees also bring different skills and experiences to the Trust.

The Board is responsible for the strategic direction of the organisation and meets regularly to manage the investment, to assess any applications for funding which have been received, and ensure that the Trust is on track to meet its objectives. The Board met four times during the last financial year as well as convening the Annual General Meeting in May 2023. All our meetings were via Zoom.

The Trustees have complied with the duties described under the Charities Act 2011, and with proper regard to the guidance published by the Charity Commission.

Each year we submit the annual report of the Trustees and accounts to the Charity Commission for the financial year ending 31st March. Our report to 31st March 2023 was completed and submitted before the due date and was accepted.

Thank you



I would like to thank my fellow Trustees for their ongoing conscientious work for the Trust this year, and to Leon Payne for his continued support and advice. We look forward to growing our donations over the coming year and to continuing to make a real difference to people's lives locally, nationally and internationally.

Liz Duckworth
Chair
30/05/2024

Declarations

The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustees

Signature(s)		
Full name(s)	Elizabeth Duckworth	Barbara Fisher
Position	Chair	Treasurer
Date	17/09/2024	17/09/2024

Financial report



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Medway Towns Soroptimist Trust

Registered charity no. 1175474

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Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	to the nearest £ Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
A1 Receipts					
Bank account	10,886	-	-	10,886	13,564
Donations	13			13	350
Drawdown from capital account					-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	10,899	-	-	10,899	13,914
A2 Asset and investment sales					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	10,899	-	-	10,899	13,914
A3 Payments					
Bank charges					28
Medway Youth Council					
Water Aid					
Meru Women's Garden Project					
Meru Teen Mums project					
Ovarian Cancer Action					
School uniform appeal					
Blythwood Care	350			350	350
Zisize Feeding Project		-	-		
Family Kitchen Project		-	-		
Abbey Court's Farm Project		-	-		
'Love Me, Love Me Not' project		-	-		
Lalibela Children's Library					
Medway Domestic Abuse Service					
Medway Street Angels					
Hospital Radio Medway					
Clarion Housing (Medway Refuges)					1,000
3rd Walderslade Guides					1,000
Carers First (Young Carers)	210			210	150
The Hygiene Bank Medway					500
Maidstone Women's Refuge	500			500	
Dandelion Time	500			500	
The Shannon Trust	500			500	
Women's Refuges Christmas Hampers	200			200	
Sub total	2,260	-	-	2,260	3,028
A4 Asset and investment purchases					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	2,260	-	-	2,260	3,028
Net of receipts/(payments)	8,639	-	-	8,639	10,886
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	-	-	-	-	-
Cash funds this year end	8,639	-	-	8,639	10,886

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period


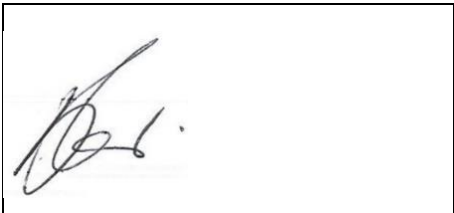
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank account	8,639	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	8,639	-	-

		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-

		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets	Atomos investment	Capital investment		110,000
			-	-

		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			-	-
			-	-

		Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities			-	
			-	

	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
Signed by one or two Trustees on behalf of all the Trustees		Elizabeth Duckworth	17/09/2024
		Barbara Fisher	17/09/2024