



Birchwood Youth & Community Centre
Delenty Drive, Birchwood, Warrington WA3 6AN
Annual Report for 2023-2024

Introduction

Since our last annual report, we have continued to build a very solid financial position for the community centre and accessed funding to enable us to add a number of new activities. A series of grants from different sources have enabled us to replace old furniture and to acquire materials and toys etc. to support our highly successful internally-run groups as well as providing the funding to be able to run these groups for a further 12 months. The activities we run are allowing residents to participate in our activities at very low or zero cost which means that, at a time of financial hardship for many families, cost is not a barrier to attending sessions. We have also been able to establish an excellent level of reserves which can now be kept in a sinking fund to pay for future building maintenance such as replacement of the gutters.

Trustees

During the year, one of our trustees, Mrs Sandra Gregory stepped down for personal reasons. The trustees decided that we would not immediately take on a new board member to replace her, but rather carry out a skills audit of all the current members with a view to identifying any obvious gaps that would provide better insight into seeking a possible new member.

Financial situation

Overall, our cash balance in the bank started the year at £15208 (including cash and balance in savings account), but we were able to finish the year at £24,623, an increase of 61.9 %. Our basic operating costs include insurance, standing charges for gas and electricity, telephone/internet costs, TV licence, water bills and waste removal services. Other costs include the servicing of the fire extinguishers and fire alarm system and the annual check on our gas boiler with issue of a gas

certificate, both of which are statutory requirements. With the continued increase in sessions being run at the centre, we changed our waste services to include both general waste and recycling.

For the 12 months from April 2023 to March 2024, our total income was £32,525, a substantial increase over the prior year figure of £18,542. Of this, £8335 came from hall hire, and £20,129 in the form of a series of grants. The latter represented almost double the figure for the prior year. A significant proportion of the grants received were for the purchase of specific items or to pay for the operational costs of our in-house operated groups.

Buildings, Facilities and improvements

The centre's updated strategic plan continues to focus on the main areas below: –

1. ensuring that the buildings are safe, protected and renovated
2. Clearing old materials no longer needed as required
3. Improving the financial viability by reducing operating costs and increasing income
4. Making the centre work more effectively for the community

As required, the fire alarm and extinguishers are serviced/checked and any faults rectified. We continued to carry out optimisation of our storage to improve safety and to make way for the new groups started in the centre. Old furniture was either disposed of or offered to the public on a local “before the tip” Facebook page. An old pool table base was disposed of as it was very heavy and deemed to be a health and safety risk.

Following the award of grants mentioned previously we were able to purchase a range of new equipment for the centre as well as making improvements to the building, which has made a real difference to our activities. We were able to buy the following new items:

A very wide range of toys for both indoor and outdoor use, to support our new Mums and Tots group. To store this, we were able to purchase and assemble some high quality steel shelving in the garage and an outdoor shed is planned. Trustee Paul Keny assembled this for us.

We were able to replace our main hall seating which had become very tatty. The chairs were originally donated to us by the local business park canteen, but were already quite old and showing signs of wear and tear. We now have bright modern chairs which are “wipe clean” and are a strong turquoise colour with chromes frames. These have really brightened up the appearance of the hall and are widely admired by our user groups. Our next objective will be to try to find funding to replace the furniture in our lounge, which dates back to when the centre was opened in 1999 and is

no longer fit for purpose as we require it to be more easily cleanable as young children use the room.

Last year we reported that we wanted to replace our gas boiler which was 24 years old and for which spares were no longer available. As reported below under “cost reduction”, we were able to do this.

During the year, we purchased a SumUp card reader to facilitate payments, especially in our café area and for Repair Café donations

Cost reduction

Following our application to Warrington Community Energy to install a new lowered ceiling and insulation, we were awarded the full cost of carrying out the work (£6K). Calculations suggested that we could save around 35% of our previous heating costs as well as making the hall much better from an acoustics point of view. It would also be much quicker to heat up as the system struggled in very cold weather. In the winter months it can take as long as 8 hours to heat the hall up to temperature. We were further awarded a grant to purchase a new higher efficiency gas boiler. Both projects were carried out around December 2023, and started to make a dramatic difference to our gas consumption which was reduced to a little under half, as well as dramatically improving the acoustics in the building. The typical time taken to heat the Hall reduced dramatically to one to two hours. As part of the new lowered ceiling, new LED panels were installed which had the effect of dramatically improving the light quality in the hall, making it easier for our users groups to see what they are doing, especially activities such as sewing, repair café and Arts and Crafts.

We have made a number of small improvements around the buildings, including the installation of a baby changing facility in the disabled toilet which trustee Paul Kenny put in for us.

Activities

The financial year saw a further significant increase in the activities at the centre mainly as a result of funding obtained through bids submitted. A large part of this success lies in the excellent relationship built up with Warrington Voluntary Action by trustee Jackie Whitby. They have also been able to see how effectively we have been able to use the funds received and have full confidence in the way we operate and, above all that we achieve excellent outcomes.

Birchwood Chats, continued to run very successfully throughout the year. These sessions are run at zero cost and provide free hot drinks, cakes and once a month, a hot soup and sandwich. As well as this, the sessions offer a range of activities from crafts to bingo. As well as this, we have now been

able to add a film day, with a showing of a recent film by joining a scheme (Lifetime) which supplies us with a new film each month. These have been very popular, with those attending being provided with free popcorn! There is a fair amount of work in running these and special thanks go to trustees Jackie Whitby and Sue Clark for all their efforts.

We reported last year that at the end of March 2023, we had a new third party group start up a sewing activity, which we were very pleased to be able to include in our programme. We had previously identified through a survey on local social media that there could be a considerable interest in such a group, as the only other one was in Warrington town centre and was very expensive. The group run a continuous session on Mondays from 12pm to 9pm, and it has proved to be very successful, attracting many new members and over the past year has continued to grow.

Our in-house activity, Birchwood Creates has continued to operate successful sessions run by trustee Julia Ellis, who has continued to cover mainly linocut techniques and Gelli printing but several weekend workshops were also organised and were very popular, bringing in new members. Several asylum seekers have also attended the sessions and find them very therapeutic – many have had very harrowing experiences in their countries of origin.

Repair Café continued to operate during the year and grow. Visitor numbers were substantial and additional services such as garden tool sharpening added to the range of things that could be looked at by our team of repairers. Social media posts prior to each session were critical to ensuring that we could get plenty of customers through the door and achieve our key objective of reducing items going to landfill. Our repair success rate continues to be typically around 60-70% . During the year, we had a number of visitors from other areas of Warrington and beyond who were interested in setting up similar repair cafes in their areas, and we look forward to seeing these progress.

Donations always cover running costs, and we were able to purchase a PAT testing meter. We have a total of 28 volunteers for this activity now who act as repairers, work on reception, in the café etc. It is very rewarding to see that our repairers are able to get a lot from it volunteering too – they all love the positive atmosphere of working together to solve repair problems.

The bicycle repair section of Repair Café has been expanded to repair old donated machines to provide to asylum seekers and refugees locally. The contacts established have led to a couple of these individuals becoming highly valued volunteers.

During the financial year, we were able to set up a Mums and Tots group as planned which is called “Little Lunch Club”. This is run on Tuesdays from 12.00 to 13.30 and was highly successful from the first day it opened, the new toys and lovely environment helping to make it very popular with those

attending. It is very busy and again trustees Jackie Whitby and Sue Clark are always very busy setting up and running the group together with a couple of new and excellent volunteers.

We started up a men's social group on a Monday morning which gives an opportunity for debate and to have a hot crumpet and a cup of tea. This is held in our lounge and typically attracts about 10 guests.

A new third party knitting group started up during the year and we hope that this will be successful.

We also host Warrington North Cavy Club which has guinea pig shows several times a year.

Finally, we expect to start up several groups involving exercise both for older people and for parents and toys during the coming year.

Other

As we move forwards, we will continue to increase the activities which we run ourselves for the benefit of the community. These have the benefit of being more stable, although it is always dependent on having sufficient volunteers and we are very conscious that we don't want them to end up burnt out. Third party activities often cease to exist, putting pressure on the centre's finances, so we believe we are in an exceptionally strong position to deliver our core objectives to our local community.

I would like to thank our trustees (both present and past) and significantly increased number of volunteers who have made such an important contribution to what we do for the community of Birchwood. I would like to give special thanks to our trustees who are involved with running and promoting our in-house community groups. They work tirelessly for the benefit of others. We would also like to express our thanks to Birchwood Town Council who continue to provide support on a number of fronts, including general advice and in helping to maintain and improve the grounds on which the centre stands, both in terms of safety and appearance .

Dr David Ellis – Chair of Trustees



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

Birchwood Youth & Community Centre

**On accounts for the year
ended**

31st March 2024

**Charity no
(if any)**

1190206

Set out on pages

3

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/03/2024.

**Responsibilities and
basis of report**

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Date:

11/10/2024

Name:

Thomas Coyne FMAAT

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):**

AAT

Address:

1st Floor, 264 Manchester Road, Warrington, Cheshire, WA1 3RB

Section B	Disclosure
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Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

Not Applicable.

BIRCHWOOD YOUTH & COMMUNITY CENTRE ACCOUNTS 2023/2024

Opening balance 01/04/23

Barclays	15174.59
Cash	27.27
Savings	6.83
	15208.69

Expenses

Buildings/Equipment/Consumables	13057.50
Gas/electricity	2763.69
Water	524.58
Central heating contract/repairs/new boiler	2492.00
Internet	412.20
Cleaning/caretaking	469.00
Licensing (TV, PRS)	313.80
Insurance	677.00
Waste removal	275.68
PAT testing	30.60
Ground rent	1.00
Maintenance (gutters, drains, electrics)	974.00
Road signage	707.64
Workshop	350.00
DBS checks	62.40
	23111.09

Income

Room rental	8335.00
Grants	20129.00
Donations (inc Repair Café)	3151.87
Community Lottery	218.50
Workshop's	430.00
Interest	.08
Refund (water)	261.49
	32525.94

	15208.69
-	23111.09
+	32525.94
	<u>24623.54</u>

As at 31/03/24:-

Barclays	24270.46
Cash	346.17
Savings	6.91

Closing balance 31/03/24

24623.54

WatkinsonBlack
1st Floor, 264 Manchester Road
Warrington
Cheshire, WA1 3RB
Tel: 01925 413210
Email: info@warringtonaccountants.co.uk



CHARITY COMMISSION
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Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

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Date:

11/10/2024

Name:

Thomas Coyne FMAAT

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):**

AAT

Address:

1st Floor, 264 Manchester Road, Warrington, Cheshire, WA1 3RB

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