

Birchwood Youth & Community Centre
Delenty Drive, Birchwood, Warrington WA3 6AN
Annual Report for 2024-2025

Introduction

Since our last annual report, we have been able to build further on our solid financial position for the community centre. This has allowed us to carry out further improvement work in the centre using our own internal funds. We were also successful in obtaining income from a variety of grants from different sources which have enabled us to further replace old furniture and to acquire materials 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, two of our trustees, Mr Stewart Lever and Jennifer Lyons stepped down due to pressure of other commitments which was making it difficult for them to attend Trustee meetings. At year end there were 6 trustees in total. Both of the trustees who stepped down have continued to be active volunteers at the centre both at Repair Café and other activities. The trustees have carried out a skills and personal strengths audit of all the current trustees with a view to identifying any obvious gaps that would provide better insight into seeking a possible new member. A start has been made on looking at potential sources of new trustees.

Financial situation

For the 12 months from April 2024 to March 2025, our total income was £36,154, a small increase over the prior year figure of £32,525 and sustaining the large increase we saw in the prior year. Of this, £8734 came from hall hire, and £22,035 in the form of a series of grants. This was a small increase over the previous year. A significant proportion of the grants received were for the purchase of specific items or to pay for the operational costs of in-house operated groups. Our year

end balance increased from £24,624 to £32,363. This is a very positive and reassuring situation given that it is envisaged that grant monies may be more difficult to find in the coming year.

As well as income from grants, we were very grateful to receive a donation from The Friends of Birchwood Forest Park to help us continue to offer Little Lunch Club at the very low charge we make for a further period.

Towards the end of the financial year, we were approached by Lagan Airport Maintenance showing an interest in having the centre as their charity of the year. This was subsequently agreed and as well as direct financial support, the company is looking to support us in other ways as well. A number of possibilities have been discussed and are in planning.

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.

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 and PAT testing of all electrical equipment carried out.

Following the award of grants and increased income from hall hire, 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:

An outdoor shed was purchased during the year which was assembled by some of our volunteers. This is being used as a store for the outside toys used for our Little Lunch Club Mums and Tots group, as our garage storage area was becoming congested.

We were able to erect some very attractive ranch-style fencing at the back of the property to make it completely safe for young children to play.

At the end of the year, we purchased a large aluminium lean-to gazebo with a polycarbonate roof. This was to replace the old canvas awning which was at the end of its life. This area means that the outside patio can be used more effectively for our tots group and is an excellent area for repairing bikes at Repair Café during the summer months.

As planned in the previous year, we were able to find funding to replace the furniture in our lounge, which dates back to when the centre was opened in 1999 and was no longer fit for purpose as we require it to be more easily cleanable as young children use the room. The furniture purchased is in a bright turquoise and really changed the appearance of the room. We also purchased a new rug and plan to put up some artwork generated in house to finish it off.

At the very end of the financial year we suffered a major problem with our main foul sewer as a result of the collapse of the pipework resulting from tree roots. This was not allowing proper drainage and the system was backing up to the top of the manhole cover and was in danger of shutting the centre down. The repair required a substantial amount of digging and the laying of new pipework and ended up costing £6000. Birchwood Town Council took the view that the problem was caused by trees on their land and very kindly paid for the repair.

Cost reduction

In our report for 2023-24 we reported on the installation of our new lowered ceiling and insulation and the impact it had had on how quickly the hall could be heated. We now have more than 12 months of operational experience behind us and we are very pleased to report that our gas usage has reduced to less than 50% of what it was previously. This exceeds our expectations and has reduced our running costs by around £1000 per year, helping our sustainability, both environmentally and economically.

Activities

During the financial year we saw further increases 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. The extra funding allowed us to add new exercise activities for both older and young people.

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 and have included sessions aimed at helping individuals save energy at home. Film days have continued to be popular with showings of

recent films. The centre is very grateful to our trustees Jackie Whitby and Sue Clark for all the work they put in as well as several other volunteers who help make sure that the sessions run smoothly.

The “Flying Pin Cushions” have continued to operate very successfully from the centre on Mondays and have increasing numbers of members. While we charge a special community rate for hall hire, they still provide a source of valuable income to the centre while providing a low cost activity which has high demand.

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 some new members. Sessions are charged at £3 for two hours, but the income isn't quite sufficient to cover costs and a new model of payment is being examined. The issue lies partly in the fact that although there is a significant number of attendees in total, attendance by some, and therefore income, is somewhat erratic.

Repair Café continued to operate during the year and continued to grow. Visitor numbers have consistently been around 50 to 60 per session. Following visits by interested parties from other areas of Warrington who were interested in setting up similar repair cafes in their areas, there are now two more – one in Lymm and another in Fairfield and Howley. Donations continue to more than cover running costs, and a decision made to purchase further PAT testing meters so that all electrical repairers could have access to one rather than a single person being responsible. All electrical repairers now complete PAT training. The turnover of repairers is exceptionally low as they all just love the atmosphere and the feel good factor of carrying out their role. Only a couple have moved on but were quickly replaced with new ones. We continue to have a total of 28 volunteers for Repair Café who act as repairers, work on reception, in the café etc.

The bicycle repair section of Repair Café has continued to repair old donated machines to provide to asylum seekers and refugees locally. One of these continues to be a valued member of our volunteer repair team. The number of bicycles received has reduced somewhat from the initial level.

In the previous financial year, we were able to set up a Mums and Tots group called “Little Lunch Club”. This continues to be run on Tuesdays from 12.00 to 13.30 and is highly successful. It is very busy and 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.

Our men's social group on a Monday morning continues to operate throughout the year and 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 up to about 8-10 guests. Attendance is free but donations are always welcomed and the group covers its costs.

The new third party knitting group which started up during the previous year continues to operate on a regular basis. This is a good sized group which uses our newly furnished lounge.

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

During the year, we started a chair pilates session for older adults which has been very popular and has run at capacity of around 20 people. This is excellent, as many of those taking part will have benefitted greatly from increased muscle strength and mobility. We also had a special session of pilates for parent and child, but this didn't attract many people.

A tots football session was started up and continues to operate.

Finally, Slimming World continue to use the hall but with significantly reduced hours. The numbers attending were badly affected by Covid and never recovered. Slimming World income was very critical to the centre some years ago, but the significant increase in activities in the centre has changed this situation.

Other

The centre has almost reached the limits of what the current volunteer group can run itself, although one of the trustees is looking at running some events in the centre where local people who have outstanding achievements would be interviewed and audiences would have the opportunity to ask questions. The idea is to not only entertain, but to inspire people as well.

As always, I would like to thank all our trustees as well as our many volunteers who have made such an important contribution to what we do for the community of Birchwood and surrounding areas. 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, and who generously paid for major sewer repairs that were needed.

Dr David Ellis – Chair of Trustees



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name
Birchwood Youth & Community Centre

On accounts for the year
ended

31 March 2025

Charity no
(if any)

1190206

Set out on pages

3

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31/03/2025**.

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, 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 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:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

Signed:

Date:

15/07/2025

Name:

Stuart Barr MAAT

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

AAT

Address:

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

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight 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.

N/A

BIRCHWOOD YOUTH & COMMUNITY CENTRE
ACCOUNTS 01/04/2024 - 31/03/2025

Opening balance 01/04/2024 **24624**

Income **36154**

Grants	22035
Donation	875
Room Hire	8734
Community Lottery	214
Sessions/Workshops	4149
Interest	147

Expenditure **28415**

Subcontractors	7769
Office costs	842
Equipment	1693
Fixtures/fittings	9755
Insurance	771
Accountancy	270
Software	106
Internet	457
Gas/electric	2302
Water	470
Waste removal	840
Printing/stationery	145
Licensing/legal	470
Training	512
Travel	83
Materials	1374
Meals	150
Miscellaneous	406

Closing balance 31/03/2025 **32363**

Barclays Bank as at 31/03/2025 32080

Cash as at 31/03/2025 283

Total funds held as at 31/03/2025

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



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