

Item 4

Report from the Chair 2023-24

This report covers Westerham Food Bank's tenth year of operation, November 2023 – October 2024. It was noted at last year's AGM that as no nominations had been received for the position of Chair, the new Trustee Group would determine how it would work. In the event the roles of Chair and Secretary have alternated between two Trustees, an arrangement which has worked effectively for the group and for the Foodbank.

It has been a year of great change for the Foodbank, in clients, in donations, in finances and its journey along the route of becoming a grown up Charity.

So the first mention must be to the Trustee Group. The Foodbank is fortunate to have an enthusiastic, dedicated and flexible group of Trustees guiding the charity through these times. Between them they bring a mix of experience and capabilities of which many a commercial organisation would be proud. As volunteers the time and talent they bring exceed any expectations. Thanks go to all of them.

Clients

Overall changes in numbers supported during the year are shown below:

No of households	No of families	No of couples	No of singles	No of Adults	No of children
As reported to 2022-23 AGM: numbers as at end October 2023					
58	30	5	21	75	62

As at end of October 2024					
48	22	4	22	57	43

Turnover during the year

Nos leaving					
55	24	5	26	73	52
New referrals					
45	18	3	24	49	36

It is important that the Foodbank is assured that those using it are truly in need of such support. It does not have the competence to make this assessment itself, and has from the start of its operation only accepted clients referred by recognised external agencies.

Referrals Our preferred referrer is Citizens Advice (Edenbridge and Westerham) which has the expertise to make this determination. Although occurring outside the period of this report, the Foodbank was shocked and greatly saddened to learn of the sudden death of the Chief Operating Officer, Sian Hiller. Her contribution to the extension of its operation into Westerham was critical as was

her commitment to building relationships with Trustees.

Over the past year referrals have also been accepted from School Family Liaison Officers, Social Prescribers attached to Doctors Surgeries, Outreach Workers from churches, Housing Associations and Social Workers in a variety of fields.

Rereferrals: The review process, delayed during and immediately after the pandemic was resumed: an exercise which was undertaken with great patience and persistence by two Trustees. This concluded with support to a number of clients being withdrawn.

Those who have not used the Foodbank for a period of 13 weeks are asked to obtain a rereferral to confirm continued need. All clients are asked to obtain a rereferral regularly and at least annually.

The Foodbank does not lightly remove its support and always leaves a door open for clients to return if need returns. It treads the often unclear path between helping those with real needs and avoiding long term reliance on food support.

The main reasons for referral are as ever, underlying debt, income insufficiency, inability to find or undertake work and health issues. It has been instructive to discover that almost half of the households supported have one household member in receipt of a disability benefit, several of them children. Equally some clients are unable to work (or work enough) due the pressure of caring for elderly parents or small children.

Volunteers

Without the dedicated team of volunteers, operation of the Foodbank would be impossible.

There are currently almost 50 volunteers (including Trustees) who between them carry out with the greatest of good humour and flexibility all the tasks needed to keep the Foodbank's operations going. The list is long:

- Collecting donations from collection baskets in and around Westerham and delivering them to the Scout Hut
- Collecting fresh food from Morrisons on a Thursday morning
- Doing the weekly shop at Morrisons enabled by their 'Green bag' programme
- Meeting and greeting clients, sorting and dating donated stock, packing clients' bags, restocking the store sheds on a Thursday morning,
- Very special mention to the team of Delivery Drivers who brave all weathers to take bags to clients who are unable to come to the Scout Hut.
- Coping with the increasing levels of behind the scenes management and administration which come with being a Registered Charity

Turnover of volunteers is encouragingly low at less than 10% and it is heartening to see a steady if small stream of new volunteers come forward. Some volunteers step back for a time due to health, family or work issues, yet most return.

Donations

Donations In Kind

- **Collection baskets** have remained at Waitrose Biggin Hill, the Westerham Co-op, Wolfe Garage, Westerham Library and St. Marys Church. Westerham Town Council offices have also continued to accept food donations.
- **Deliveries to the Scout Hut** are made regularly by the Catholic Parishes of Westerham and Biggin Hill and from the businesses of the Old Yard, Brasted.
- Sizeable donations of hygiene and household products are received through the Foodbank's partnership with **Oxted & Edenbridge Hygiene Bank**
- **Harvest, Christmas and Easter donations** have been as generous as ever. Churchill School, Holy Trinity Crockham Hill, Radnor House School, St Mark's Biggin Hill, St Mary's Tatsfield, Tatsfield School, St Mary's Westerham and Aquaflame of Biggin Hill all donated generously.
These donations enabled the distribution of the now traditional Christmas hampers to all clients to be made. Thanks are due to St James' Place, who made their Board Room and a number of their staff available for the packing exercise and to Steve Grange and Paul Robertson who delivered all 60 of them! Additional bags were delivered at Easter and at the start of the summer holidays to those clients with children.
- A special mention must be made of the donations from **Morrisons of Oxted** each week. The Foodbank benefits each week from their Green Bag programme which harnesses the generosity of their customers and the organisation of their Community Champion and enables the purchase of needed items.

Financial Donations

Fuller details of financial donations are contained in the Treasurer's Report.

The Foodbank has been fortunate to receive several tranches of the government Household Support Fund via Sevenoaks District Council, a fund whose demise has been announced several times but is continuing for the current year.

There have been several other financial donations, the importance of which to the Foodbank is explained in the Treasurer's report. All are much valued and the donors have received the Foodbank's thanks.

The 'Back Office'

Last year's report noted that one of the challenges facing the Foodbank in the coming year was 'adapting and growing as an organisation.' This has certainly proved to be the case. The key areas have been:

Digitisation:

The move to online accounts (Xero) and online client requests (Jotform) has considerably increased efficiency both of operation and record keeping. Initial concerns about how clients would adapt to this new system proved unfounded and the benefits are outlined in the Treasurer's report.

The same Jotform application has been used to gather volunteers' availabilities for the production of the rota. Again it has resulted in a more efficient process.

Thanks are due to Robert and Liz Wicks who have worked with the applications to tailor them to the Foodbank's needs. The time, energy and patience they have devoted and continue to devote, have enabled great strides to be made in increasing the Foodbank's effectiveness and efficiency.

Use of the shared drive and its information continues to be work in progress.

Policy formulation

Following the publication of the Charity Commissions' requirements for Charities with an income exceeding £10,000 effective for financial years ending on or after 1 January 2023, the Trustees reviewed necessary action for the Foodbank. As a result policies covering Safeguarding, Health and Safety, Financial matters and a Volunteer handbook were drawn up. This work is ongoing, with the application of GDPR to the Foodbank a priority for the new Trustee Group.

Publicity, social media and PR

Facebook postings have continued and have resulted in a raised profile and increased interest in the work of the Foodbank

Work has begun on a website with a Duke of Edinburgh student working with two Trustees to produce a dedicated site.

Record keeping, on boarding and reporting

The need for all of these has increased during the year. Necessary for any well run organisation, they are required for grant applications, reports to Trustees and others and for new clients and volunteers. This applies equally to financial record keeping and management.

Signposting to other areas of help

It is important that the clients do not become unnecessarily dependent on the Foodbank's support. To this end Citizens Advice attend once a month to make clients who come in to collect aware of the services they can offer and to encourage them to make face to face appointments with the Advisor who is in Westerham every Wednesday. Additionally, Sevenoaks District Council HERO team attend once a month, again to make clients aware of the services offered.

Looking forward

In an uncertain world:

- Increasing costs
- Referrals increasing: clients with increasingly complex lives needing support for longer periods of time: ensuring validity of referrals.

- Maintaining levels of donations both financial and in kind
- Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of all internal systems and processes
- Volunteer and Trustee recruitment and succession
- The Foodbank's ultimate aim is to become redundant and it sincerely hopes that one day that situation will be a reality. It does not look achievable in the foreseeable future.

In conclusion, a huge debt of thanks is due to all who give time, talents, funding or food to make the continuation of support to those in need in and around Westerham. Special thanks are due to the Trustee Group in their role of steering the Foodbank through an ever changing landscape. It is reassuring that this Group is more than equal to the task.

Fiona Owen

Helen Ogden

Alternate Chairs 2023-4

Item 5: Summary Examined accounts for the year 2023-24

Westerham Foodbank Summary of Income & Expenditure													
Account	Nov 2023	Dec 2023	Jan 2024	Feb 2024	Mar 2024	Apr 2024	May 2024	Jun 2024	Jul 2024	Aug 2024	Sep 2024	Oct 2024	Share of 2023/24 Total Income
Income													
Donations	2,755.00	1,930.00	670.00	600.00	700.00	842.00	372.02	345.00	804.09	540.00	780.00	495.00	10,833.11 43.0%
HMRC Gift Aid	0.00	0.00	927.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	927.67 3.7%
Westerham Town Council	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	400.00	1,500.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,900.00 7.5%
Sevenoaks Distinct Council	0.00	3,333.00	0.00	0.00	3,333.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,666.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	11,332.00 45.0%
Bank interest income	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	48.53	78.47	80.90	207.90 0.8%
Total Income	2,755.00	5,263.00	1,597.67	600.00	4,433.00	2,342.00	372.02	345.00	3,470.09	588.53	858.47	2,575.90	25,200.68 100.0%
Cost of Goods Purchased													
Cost of Goods Purchased	424.84	1,625.88	651.09	250.86	1,330.12	1,434.86	860.18	1,323.90	1,166.00	1,030.43	825.71	1,140.15	12,064.02 47.9%
Total Cost of Goods Purchased	424.84	1,625.88	651.09	250.86	1,330.12	1,434.86	860.18	1,323.90	1,166.00	1,030.43	825.71	1,140.15	12,064.02 47.9%
Administrative Costs													
Equipment	55.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	315.60	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	370.65 1.5%
Insurance	144.80	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	615.60	760.40 3.0%
Printing & Stationery	0.00	2.50	0.00	0.00	10.99	0.00	36.53	0.00	0.00	13.98	0.00	0.00	64.00 0.3%
Telephone & Internet	75.51	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	151.70	257.21 1.0%
IT	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00 0.0%
Joffform annual subscription	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	191.67	0.00	191.67 0.8%
General Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	36.00	0.00	0.00	74.17	110.17 0.4%
Total Administrative Costs	275.36	2.50	0.00	0.00	10.99	0.00	36.53	315.60	46.00	23.98	201.67	841.47	1,754.10 7.0%
Net Income	2,054.80	3,634.62	946.58	349.14	3,091.89	907.14	(524.69)	(1,294.50)	2,258.09	(465.88)	(168.91)	594.28	11,382.56 45.2%
Balance carried forward	28,818.10	32,452.72	33,399.30	33,748.44	36,840.33	37,747.47	37,222.78	35,928.28	38,186.37	37,720.49	37,551.58	38,145.86	

Treasurers Report 2023-2024

Westerham Foodbank started the financial year with a healthy bank balance. In light of this, a review of our banking needs, spending patterns and policies led to a number of positive changes which I'm pleased to outline below.

Banking

NatWest advised us that as a newly registered charity our original Community Bank Account would no longer be acceptable and a new Business Current Account, suitable for small charities, was duly opened in May 2024. Donors have been notified of the new bank details over the following months and the Community Account will close completely this month.

Additionally, an interest-bearing 90-day savings account was opened in order for the reserves to generate income. As of 31st January, it is earning 3.44% gross, 3.49% AER which is competitive, but this is kept under regular review.

Digitisation

Xero Cashbook accounting software has streamlined our accounts and reduced the amount of administrative time spent on bookkeeping. Xero stores copies of invoices and receipts securely and can produce reports. The subscription is currently paid by Westerham Brewery Co Ltd.

Jotform is a web-based tool that allows users to create bespoke forms. The Foodbank's recipients have all adapted well to the new 'ordering' system and the weekly administrative burden has been greatly reduced. The Foodbank qualified for a 50% charity discount, reducing the subscription cost to £191.67.

The forms, which are needed in hard copy for packing bags on a Thursday morning, are printed at Westerham Brewery, saving the trustees the personal cost of paper and ink.

Jotform is GDPR compliant and has been a huge boon to our weekly operation.

Spending

We have reviewed our spending, surveyed recipients about their food preferences and given consideration to healthier choices. As a result, we now offer fresh eggs and fruit and have recently extended this to fresh vegetables and bread.

The digital Jotform allows instant editing so items can be added or removed according to stock levels, physical donations received and seasonal variations e.g. brussels sprouts at Christmas. It also ensures that fresh goods go only to those requesting them, avoiding waste.

Healthier options

In addition to the items donated via Morrisons and at the various collection points, stock items are purchased and delivered to the Scout Hut every Thursday. This has allowed us to take positive steps in ensuring healthier options are available on a regular basis, whilst being mindful of our recipients' food preferences, kitchen facilities and varying cooking skills (some clients only have a microwave).

We are grateful for the information made public by The Trussell Trust in their nutritional analysis of a typical 3-day emergency food parcel which helped inform our decisions. Some examples are shown below: -

- Choosing healthier snacks such as dried fruit and nut mix
- Always offering orange juice as an important source of Vitamin C
- Selecting good quality tinned meats with a higher protein content

Grants, Donations & Fundraising

This year our shed maintenance costs, both materials and labour, were generously covered by St James Place and their team of volunteers. This saved us an estimated £750.00.

We are hugely grateful for grants received from Sevenoaks District Council's Household Support Fund and The Barley Trust and for donations from individuals, local businesses and community events.

Morrisons' weekly allowance sustains us with an average weekly sum of £115 to be spent in store. This is thanks in large part to the work of Mike Bull at the Oxted store who oversees their Green Bag Scheme and regular Foodbank Drives which publicise this important community outreach and encourage new support.

Unfortunately, despite this support, it looks likely that going forwards donations will not cover the cost of additional goods that are needed each week so we will be spending reserves.

We are monitoring this closely and will initiate fundraising activities when necessary.

Risks

The board of trustees has determined that our unrestricted reserves should be maintained at a minimum of 6 months of operating expenses. This level will allow us to cover essential costs during unforeseen circumstances, such as: -

- Withdrawal of support by Morrisons Supermarket – (approx. £6000 in 2023/4)
- Withdrawal of free use of the Scout Hall by 17th Sevenoaks (Westerham) Scout Group
- Withdrawal of Sevenoaks District Council's Household Support Fund (£11,332 in 2023/4)
- Drops in income (donations, grants)
- Emergency expenditures such as weather damage to storage sheds

Our Reserves Policy is available upon request.

Liz Wicks

Treasurer

I attach the Treasurer's Report and Accounts submitted by Liz which I have independently examined.

Jenny Smith, Independent Examiner

