

LONG BUCKBY COMMUNITY CENTRE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 27 NOVEMBER 2024

Chairman's Annual Report

By way of background, the Community Centre building was gifted to the Parish Council by the Northampton Co-operative Society and shortly afterwards, in 1976, our Charitable Trust was established to operate the premises on behalf the parishioners of Long Buckby, whilst the Parish Council maintained the freehold. The primary purpose of the trust is to operate the Community Centre for the benefit of the parishioners of Long Buckby, which effectively means to let the facilities and maintain the fabric of the building.

I was elected chairman at the last AGM with David Bostrom, the outgoing Chairman, as our Vice Chair. We were fortunate to be joined quickly by several new trustees with essential skills in strategic planning, business management, communication, IT, finance, HR and fundraising. We started a new financial year with an agreed strategic plan and a resolve to deliver it.

However, our first major setback was a significant and costly lift failure, which caused the recently elected Treasurer to stand down from day-to-day involvement. Initially funds were tight, and so we were unable to fund the lift repair, a resource vital to the life of the centre. Fortunately, an application to the Parish Council was successful and with their financial support, plus an element of insurance cover, we were able to continue operating. The Trustees are indebted to the Parish Council for their support.

We are grateful to The Buckby Feast for a grant to install a digital autodialler in the lift, to The William Joseph Haynes Charity for a grant to install thermal blinds for parts of the top floor exposed to strong sun and Buckby Angels for their kind donation.

Our initial work involved close analysis of the financial basis of the business, which identified a small customer base and high running costs. We identified our strategic objectives which were threefold;- to double our occupancy levels by the 2025 AGM, to become financially stable by the 2025 AGM through a combination of business efficiency, fund raising and grants from appropriate funding bodies and to operate at the highest level of governance.

We have made significant progress.

To achieve our objectives we set about a complete analysis of the booking system and a detailed review of every cost element, which identified where we needed to make changes. To harness the benefits from these changes we quickly realised we needed a communication mechanism and so a social media presence was quickly put in place and the existing website, which was deemed adequate but tired, was improved with a new logo and registration on Google to be found by search engines. We were able to lift the websites reach quite quickly, with minimal outlay, as it became more appealing and informative when accessed. The Facebook page was started in January and at the end of this year, we now have 464 followers. It doubles as a communication medium for the Centre and Trustees and a platform for our users.

Trustees and volunteers have spent considerable time making improvements to the building, including the installation of a disabled toilet on the upper floor, and completing the upgrade of lighting to LED's to finish off work budgeted for previously but stalled by Covid.

According to the trust set up in 1976, the centre is to operate for all the village community groups, but to maintain its sustainability we realised we have to widen our target market, firstly to support small businesses such as fitness groups within the village, which offer important services to our community, secondly to community services such as the blood transfusion service, to local authorities for their outreach programs, public activities such as polling stations and thirdly to village families seeking facilities to celebrate birthdays, weddings and other family events. Last but not least we realised we had to promote our facility far and wide to bring new hirers from the county and beyond. A strong

selling point is our central location. In recognition of all these factors, we have fixed our room hire prices accordingly.

Turning to cost reductions, we launched a new online booking system, Lemon Booking, in May 2024, which has significantly streamlined our operation, allowing us to handle increased business efficiently. To support this we are now operating on a Google platform across the business for communication and data storage, which is secure but very accessible to meet the needs of Trustees and staff. Our existing bank account was deemed unsuitable for our charitable status, which necessitated a long protracted process to ensure the Trustees, who were to operate the account, had the necessary clearances. Frustrating but necessary and we are grateful to those who assisted us. And finally, we have renegotiated energy contracts, waste contracts and IT suppliers reducing our costs by upwards by 30% in some key areas.

A key element in any business is the staff. At the start of the year we had three hard working and loyal staff, who had worked tirelessly for the Trustees for many years. Through consultation, discussion and careful management over this period of change, two staff members have retired. A third third has relocated from the village for family reasons. We have carefully assessed the need for recruitment and then advertised to fill the gaps. We have been extremely fortunate to recruit a new caretaker and cleaner, and at the time of writing this report we are in the process of recruiting a new administrator, a completely new post, to meet the needs of our refreshed IT and finance systems.

At the end of September I can report that the moves to increase footfall and reduce costs have played dividends as we have seen a 43% increase in our annual turnover, and a growth in our financial reserves, despite increased expenditure on energy efficient savings, such as smart thermostats in our main rooms, new IT equipment and various cosmetic improvements. We would not have been able to do all this without a series of lively events run by our fundraising group of volunteers led by one of our trustees.

We are pleased that our local community have supported us along the way, making our fundraising events buzz, welcoming the IT upgrades and given positive feedback and messages of support.

All in all I can report an excellent year. This is my first report and I can say it would not have been such an upbeat one if it had not been for such a proactive, creative and supportive team of Trustees, the enthusiastic background support of retiring Treasurer David Cadd, the ongoing support of our previous chairman David Bostrom and most of all our staff team of Alan Gautrey Clive Dunkley Chris Culbert. Above all we are indebted to all the work of our extensive group of volunteers, which included our Trustees, without whom, we would not have had such a successful year.

Everyone has given me their total support and it is a great honour to represent my fellow Trustees in presenting this, my first annual report.

David Croston
Chair of Trustees
chairman@longbuckbycc.org.uk

Bank (Current) @ 1 OCT 2023	£	801.65
Bank (Project Fund) @ 1 OCT 2023	£	14,182.41
TOTAL AT BANK	£	14,984.06

HIRE INCOME		
ROOM HIRE	£	35,671.11
SCHOOL WRAP	£	6,960.00
THE STABLES	£	710.00
STORAGE RENT	£	772.00

TOTAL MONTHLY HIRE INCOME	£	44,113.11
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NON-HIRE INCOME		
LOTTO	£	41.60
PC GRANT	£	16,020.00
DONATIONS	£	4,031.78
BUCKBY FEAST GRANT	£	2,960.00
W J HAYNES GRANT	£	1,000.00
BARCLAYCARD	£	860.00
BARCLAYCARD (ENHANCE) DONATION TO HUB	-£	430.00
200 CLUB	£	61.00
BANK INTEREST	£	26.42

LBCC - EOY2024

OUTGOINGS		
General Maintenance	£	5,434.48
Stationery	£	210.63
Electricity	£	6,031.56
Water	£	1,235.57
Gas	£	6,117.28
Insurance	£	2,004.48
BT	£	1,703.37
Waste & Cleaning	£	2,818.23
Wages	£	16,436.80
PAYE/NIC	£	2,274.80
Staff Expenses	£	1,690.69
Project	£	3,714.46
Lift	£	17,008.27
Equipment	£	359.86
FEAST	£	933.78
HIRE REFUNDS	£	450.00
Furniture & Fittings	£	1,130.01
Publicity	£	-
Licences and Subs	£	767.49
LEMON	£	390.20
SAGE	£	114.00
MISC - Go Cardless Test/PAYPAL	£	14.28

RUNNING COSTS IN ABOVE	£	70,840.24	£	156.04	%
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Balances		
BANK (OLD CURRENT ACCOUNT)	£	2,504.60
BANK (NEW CURRENT ACCOUNT)	£	583.49
BANK RESERVE ACCOUNT	£	9,797.89
200 CLUB ACCOUNT	£	561.00

GIFT AID	£	619.25
TOTAL NON- HIRE INCOME	£	25,190.05
TOTAL	£	84,287.22

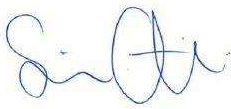
TOTAL	£	84,287.22	£	-
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Review notes -

I can confirm that I have reviewed the accounts platform with access approved by Helen Thompson and conducted the annual review (2023/2024) of the LBCC financial information.

A random sample of specific transactions has been examined to identify the appropriate records, and an audit trail was evident via the system.

The income total for the year shows £69,303.16 of which, £25,122.03 is from Grants and donations to aid maintenance, repairs and replacements which is reflected in the outgoings. The main increases to the figures are the lift repair, project expenditure and standard utility expenditure increases.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Simon Edginton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Simon Edginton