

CHAIR REPORT - ACCT AGM 23rd JUNE 2021

Welcome to the 73rd AGM of the Ashington Community Centre Trust. At our last AGM in September 2020, I don't think any of us would expect to still be dealing with the covid pandemic 9 months later. This year's AGM was put back by one month, hoping to have cleared the magical date in June whereby restrictions would have eased further to allow us to meet with more confidence, but with a further delay in that date and with uncertainty around rising rates of infection and variants of the illness, we have again decided to use Zoom to hold our AGM.

The last 9 months have really been a task in maintaining the premises, ensuring we are covid compliant and reacting to the latest government guidelines. Like the proverbial duck, our premises may have looked closed and quiet from the outside, but I can assure you that there has been a lot of activity going on in the background.

We have had to constantly monitor the government position and follow the guidelines pertinent to our facilities. We are incredibly grateful to Action in rural Sussex (AirS) who after every announcement about a change in restrictions, have soon after provided us with their guidelines to help us understand what we can and can't do. As we are currently on AirS version 10 guidelines, with many smaller updates in between, it shows the level of complexity involved in knowing which hirers could come back at which date. It highlighted the challenge that many village halls and community centres have faced, due to the great variety of activities that go on in their halls.

With 2 country wide lockdowns since the last AGM, there are times when we have had to make difficult decisions and chosen to close our facilities ahead of the official announcements; these decisions are never taken lightly, but of paramount importance is the health and safety of our staff, our trustees and all our hirers. We have maintained contact with all our hirers over the months, and as soon as they have been able to, we have invited them to return. Sadly, we have also lost hirers over the months due to a change in their own circumstances.

We have at all times maintained our "Covid secure" status and done our utmost to work with our hirers to ensure they feel as safe as they can in our facilities. This was reinforced by the trust gaining a new long term booking from the NHS Blood Donation service at the end of December 2020. After an initial one off booking due to another hall being closed, they were so impressed by our facilities that we have now gained them as a long term booking, which is a great asset to the village. I use this as an example to highlight that we have managed to fair better than many halls and centres, due to the dedication and time invested by our board of trustees, our staff and other volunteers.

We have also again been asked to have a representative on the Sussex Community Buildings Advisory Group (SCBAG) for AirS which consists of approx.

a dozen halls from across East and West Sussex. This allows us to not only provide our knowledge and experience to other hall committees, but also gives us a voice to be influential in lobbying for improvements in legislation for halls and trustees.

What has been evident since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 is just how much it costs for us just to have and maintain the ACCT facilities, even if they have not been open. Maintenance, insurance, inspections – all still carry on at a significant cost to the trust. This of course provides us with the tricky balance of bringing in enough money to secure the future of the trust and maintain its facilities, whilst helping those in the community that we are holding the assets in trust for. We have been fortunate enough to secure some government grants and have tried our best to support other village organisations that use our facilities. We were able to wave the fees for some months for the Cougars when they were unable to use our facilities, and have also helped hirers who are starting with us as new ventures. We also voted not to raise the general hire fees for the 2nd year in a row, so we are still at 2019 rates.

We also now have a 4 strong team of trustees who cover the area of facilities and who diligently ensure the inside and outside facilities are maintained to a high standard and that we are compliant with all relevant legislation. This is indeed one aspect of the trust that requires a large investment of time, and is often the area that will require a quick response to should a situation arise. We are indebted to our trustees that drop everything at a moment's notice to attend to emergencies and other urgent situations.

One aspect of everyday life that has been evident since the beginning of the pandemic is community spirit. A decision was made several years ago to give the community centre the working title of "The Ashington Centre". We have found this slightly problematic over time as it clashes with the name of the shopping parade in the village, does not seem to be easily found on Internet searches and like any pub that has changed its name, will always be called by its original name. Therefore the board voted unanimously in January 2021 to revert back to "Ashington Community Centre" which is in line with our Charities Commission working name also.

In conjunction with this, the website has moved to a new user friendly platform, has been updated and had a refresh, and has relaunched with the updated name. Our Facebook page continues to grow from 75 followers 2 years ago to over 350 at the current time.

We continue to improve our relationships with other village organisations and now have good channels of communications in place. We recently held a successful review with the Parish Council with regards to our existing "working agreement", and agreed to remove some items, and simplify or standardize other areas of cross over. This meant that we reduced the items on the agreement from 12 down to 4 – namely that the PC continue to pay for the emptying of bins on the public access ACCT land, that they have full responsibility for the skate park, youth shelter and over 12s play area on ACCT

land and that ACCT continue to provide free use of the Scout Hall for monthly PC meetings. We would also like to extend our thanks to the PC for the use of their Zoom account for our ACCT meetings.

With the approval of the Cougars football club, we have for some months allowed Chanctonbury Churches free use of the Sports Pavilion main hall to store foodbank items. We will look to how we can support this vital venture in the future when the Cougars return to using the Pavilion later in the year.

One of our biggest challenges has been running the trust remotely, and although minimal staff and trustees have been in the premises undertaking necessary tasks, the vast majority of our decisions, working and communications have been via email or Zoom. I don't think there is one of us that hasn't found this difficult, and at times very challenging and we have all learnt how easily our words can be misinterpreted. I don't think blood has been spilt yet, but there has certainly been sweat and tears and definitely a few sleepless nights. We all look forward to face to face working again.

I won't lie – this has been an incredibly tough time for all of us involved in running the trust, especially as this is just one aspect of our lives and we all have families, jobs and other issues to deal with. I am not sure that many residents of the village will know the vast amount of hours that are spent maintaining the facilities. It is hard enough in “normal” times, but the covid pandemic has added another layer of responsibility that none of us have ever dealt with before.

These last few months have been dominated by dealing with the pandemic restrictions and helping our hirers as much as we can. The trust now need to move into the next phase of reopening and looking to how we support and encourage users back to the halls and how we engage with a community that like many has been affected on many levels. We need to revisit our constitution and core aims as an organisation and ensure that we fulfill our obligations as a trust to the residents of Ashington. It may be that we need to think “outside the box” and find new and innovative ways of working, but I am confident that as the trust has evolved over the last 73 years, it will continue to adapt and move forward in an ever changing world.

Thanks go to the trust Officers Margaret, Tony and Neil who have overseen the large areas of work that are bookings, governance and finance, and to all of the trustees who put in such a lot of their time and energy to ensuring the trust is run properly and continuously moving forward and adapting to change. Every single trustee brings something to the table, by way of their knowledge, expertise, and enthusiasm, and even just giving their time to be part of the trust. Thanks also go to all our staff and other volunteers who Margaret will mention in her report. My personal thanks to all of you for what you do for and on behalf of the village.

We are sorry to see Valerie and Pat standing down from their role as trustees; our sincere thanks to you both for your work and support over the years and of course your excellent culinary skills! We don't doubt we will still see you involved

in village life in some capacity in the future. Thank you also to Tony who is standing down as Vice Chair, but who will continue to stay on as a trustee.

So I will say it once more - thank you to all the trustees who give an incredible amount of personal time to the trust, to ensure that not only are we able to run for the benefit of the community now, but for the future also.

Thank you,

Lee English

Chair, Ashington Community Centre Trust

23rd June 2021

Ashington Community Centre Trust Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

				2021		2020	
Receipts							
Actual sales (before deduction of grants)				£20,057		£56,853	
Sales receipts to be returned				-£2,616		£0	
Non-sales receipts				£0		£8,701	
Asset sale proceeds				£0		£0	
HDC				£0		£0	
Fund raising				£0		£0	
Donations received				£0		£0	
Grants received				£42,595		£0	
Bank interest				£1		£4	
Total receipts					£60,037		£65,558
Payments							
Energy				£5,203		£10,440	
Insurance & security				£4,875		£5,729	
Rates				£0		£2,265	
Water				£759		£1,692	
Communications				£1,598		£640	
Stationery				£334		£239	
Consumables				£83		£1,632	
Maintenance				£11,953		£13,718	
General Administration				£1,885		£836	
Grounds maintenance				£5,283		£6,303	
Sensory Garden				£0		£0	
Renovation of Scout Hall				£0		£61,371	
New Tractor shed				£0		£611	
Salary & Income Tax				£4,703		£4,876	
Professional fees				£513		£3,333	
				£37,190		£113,685	
Asset Purchases				£0		£786	
Additional events				£0		£1,632	
Payments to be refunded				£0		£490	
Gifts				£0		£147	
Unknowns				£0		£0	
Grants given				£0		£2,348	
				£0		£5,403	
				£37,190		£119,088	
Net surplus					£22,847		-£53,530
LESS							
To Charifund investment				£0		£8,000	
Loss on Charifund Units				£0		£11,150	
Depreciation on Fixed Assets				£3,079		£4,299	
				£3,079		£23,449	
PLUS							
Gain on Charifund Units					£14,707		£0
Net total					£34,476		-£76,979
RETAINED							
Gains on Charifund Units						£0	
Assets purchased						£786	
Add Charifund Units purchased						£8,000	
					£0	£8,786	
Net total					£34,476		-£68,193
Grand Total					£121,467		£86,992
Represented by:							
Current Assets:							
Petty cash				£1		£28	
Lloyds Current Account				£31,727		£19,355	
Lloyds Deposit Account				£11,602		£1,100	
Investments				£64,144		£49,437	
Assets				£13,993		£17,071	
Grand Total					£121,467		£86,992
I am satisfied that the Trust Accounts are in accordance with the books and records and explanations given to me.							
Nicholas Belton F.CCA MA (Hons)							
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Ashington							
West Sussex							
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