

The Ashington Community Centre

Ashington Community Centre Trust Foster Lane • Ashington • West Sussex • RH20 3PG

Registered Charity: The Ashington Community Centre Trust

Reg No: 305340 Registered Office: 19 The Sands, Ashington, WestSussex RH20 3LQ

info@ashingtoncc.org.uk



Chair Report for May 2024 AGM

Welcome to the 76th AGM of the Ashington Community Centre Trust.

As you know, I took over the Chair of the Trust at very short notice in November 2022 and, whilst I did manage to get to grips with a number of aspects of the job, there was a good deal to cover off before the 2023 AGM. There were, thereby, a fair amount of elements of the role which I was only really able to get to grips with over the course of the remainder of 2023.

As I said last year, the ACCT was already in a degree of transition with a number of relatively new Trustees and a number of initiatives underway following the engagement of a strategy specialist and the implementation of a number of his recommendations by which we were going to build for the future.

The after effects of the pandemic were still being felt by the Trust at the start of 2023 and one of the key directives was to try to get us back onto an even keel, restoring the finances and moving us on from what was a fairly perilous position given the loss of custom, income and impetus. Obviously, we were not alone in this, there were many such charitable operations in the same position, so it was most useful to have the input and support of various bodies such as AirS and the VCSE as we began the task of tackling the financial issues and securing the future of the Trust.

Last year, as part of the plan which was agreed following the strategy sessions, I outlined the major steps that the Trust had taken to realign itself to provide a more focused operation. Four subgroups were created to take responsibility for the four vertical areas of business operations.

These comprised the following each managed by one of the Trustees:-

The Partnerships and Communications Group – Martin Jenkins

The Operations Group – Carl Smart

The Governance and Process Group – Linda Myles

The Business Performance Group – Michelle Simpson

This initiative has proved to be very successful and enabled us to focus on specific tasks and deliverables as we continue to rebuild and enhance the operations which the Trust undertakes. It has required a considerable commitment by all concerned and I thank them for all their efforts on behalf of the Trust.

Unfortunately, Linda Myles left us during the course of the year and Adey Cope who joined us in her stead has found that he cannot continue in his role due to work commitments. We thank them both for the time and effort which they put into their work for the Trust.

As part of the strategy to place the Trust in a stronger position and ensure this requisite financial stability, it was agreed by the trustees the priority was to evaluate by what means we could immediately increase the income of the Trust. We were determined to start to revive the use of the Trust's facilities by some of those regular users who had sadly stopped operating during the pandemic such that we might reinstate the types of local services and facilities which had been on offer. However, it was abundantly clear that there were two or three major users comprising the likes of WSCC, HDC and various arms of the NHS who could provide an immediate injection of dependable and regular funding through the hire of the Main Hall. Most importantly, they have been hiring the Hall in the day when there has been very little call for its use.

Bookings by these parties had already been growing and they have remained steady throughout the year, also enhanced by the NHS Blood Donation Sessions which are a most useful facility for those who regularly donate in the village. They have been most grateful for the use of such a unique hall given its size, geographical location and the availability of a large car park. These bodies have observed that it has saved them a good deal of money which is very much to the benefit of the residents of West Sussex as a whole.

They have also commented that Derek, our Caretaker, and Katie, our cleaner have continued to deliver a high level of service offerings to our customers which is reflected in the level of repeat bookings for which we extend our gratitude. Derek does an excellent job in ensuring that the Halls are available whenever required and mans the car park quite admirably, despite the occasional belligerent user who doesn't seem to realise that it is not a public car park and that it is made available at our discretion (which is as much as possible). Katie just continues to be a star.

Having undertaken a review of the whole booking system in late 2022 into 2023, the next stage in the process was to fully implement it which was done before the AGM last year. Since then, it has really come into its own and, together with updates to the main website, has enabled us to streamline the booking process and offer a quality service to users during the course of 2023. Martin Jenkins and the team are to be congratulated on a great job here.

As I said last year, the financial situation precluded us from doing as much as we might have liked in terms of capital expenditure with two notable exceptions. One of these was the extension to the car park which has provided us with valuable additional space for users of the Halls and recreational facilities.

This work was completed in June 2023 and was largely covered by the funds which have been set aside by Horsham District Council when the 2nd phase of the development of the Community buildings failed to materialize a good many years earlier. Unfortunately, the

ACCT had to the balance of the cost and cover the £5,000 VAT as the basis of our turnover is not enough for us to register for VAT.

To allay some concerns of which I have become aware, I should perhaps point out that the Trust had no choice but to use these monies on the extension to the car park under the terms of the Section 106 funding. In fact, we would have lost all these monies had we not completed the car park extension by the end of June 2023, some £27,371.68. The real bonus was that we were able to reorganize the existing car park and actually gained a further 6 spaces to add to the 9 new spaces built by JC Allfrey.

In addition, following the installation of the dual EV charging system which was placed on the end wall of the main building, these have finally been fully commissioned after a considerable amount of teething problems, and are fully operational. Our charge rate is highly competitive at £0.52 kWh and our MP, Andrew Griffith, has kindly accepted an invitation to formally open the Unit.

The ongoing requirement for the capital expenditure, much of which was deferred during the pandemic, has continued to build with some very pressing needs which we have been trying to contain. Urgent maintenance work in the kitchen of the Main Hall is required for health and safety reasons, whilst remedial work is required on various other aspects of the building including the external soffits and fascias, and parts of the internal lighting. We also have work to conduct on the sports pavilion roof and ongoing maintenance requirements for the recreational area. This will enable us to continue to provide viable facilities and grounds for the ever growing amount of football teams in the village. Robin Botting and Mark Adsett continue to do an excellent job here on a very limited budget.

The Chanctonbury Storehouse had a great deal of calls upon it this winter and it continues to provide an excellent service to residents of the village from the office allocated to it by the Trust at the end of the Main Hall. The Wardens continue to operate out of the other small office and provide a commendable service to the village for which we thank them. In recognition of the Parish Council's considerable contribution to the construction of the Main Hall and the Works loan that it continues to pay for, it has been agreed by the Trustees that the facilities and the costs of all utilities for the Wardens shall be continue to be covered by the ACCT for the foreseeable future. It has also been agreed that the Parish Clerk should have access to the Upstairs office when she requires it.

The state of the Youth Club presents us with the largest challenge as the building is in dire need of works on the roof, the windows and the heating. We are working closely with the Chair of the Youth Club, Steve May, to evaluate the types of grants and funding which are available to enable us to tackle the issues and this is very much work in progress. The concerns surrounding capital expenditure thereby remain high on our list of priorities.

As part of this process, we have also approached WSCC to help us deal with the flooding issues in the Youth Club car park and a survey is now scheduled by their works engineering department to try and address the problems. There is an urgent need to remedy this issue as the flooding directly affects access to the Youth Club, who often have to use duckboards to even reach the front door, the access to Willards, where its entrance can be quite wet and muddy and access via the vehicular route into the Recreation Ground, which can become quite boggy.

In the long term, one ambition is to resurface both the Youth Club and the Sports Pavilion car parks as their condition is becoming quite a cause for concern. Again, this will require further capital expenditure over the course of time.

In order, therefore, to support the ongoing requirement for funding, we had to evaluate the fashion by which we might realise further revenue streams. With the very sad demise of the Scout Group and, after discussion with the Area Scout organization over the course of a year, they determined that unless there were volunteers amongst the parents who wished to see their children partake in the Scouts, they had no requirement for the Scout Hall.

Furthermore, we learnt that the Beavers were also going to close down, so given the considerable overhead of running the building and the rising costs of utilities, the ACCT accepted an offer from RH20 to move its gym from Willards to the Scout Hall. A licence was granted to RH20 who undertook a very impressive refurbishment of the building and established their new gym. This has provided the ACCT with a valuable source of income, whilst creating a very useful facility within the village where they have also provided the Youth Club training and fitness classes without charge. Moreover, RH20 has enabled access to the building when we have events in the Recreation Ground.

Following the move by RH20, the Trust worked with Helen Lee who nobly volunteered to see if she could run a kitchen facility for residents of the village, but it turned out to be a very onerous task. We were faced with the building lying vacant, but it was in need of a considerable amount of refurbishment work which, whilst RH20 had been able to operate in such an environment, was not viable for another tenant.

The ACCT is in a rather unusual and unique position of having so many buildings, essentially six in total. Whilst this is a fine proposition in principle, it carries a considerable overhead in practice from the aspect of maintenance, management, insurance and, after the winter we have just experienced, very considerable heating costs. Despite three promising approaches from individuals in the village to set up and run a coffee shop, with or without a business running in conjunction with it, the ventures all came to naught.

It was decided, therefore, to find a tenant for Willards who could establish a viable business there. As part of this endeavour, we were keen to see whether that business, or any associated service offering, could also be of benefit to the village. In the event, we have identified a tenant who will not only run a small business making soft furnishings, but she will also create a coffee shop. This is exceedingly good news for the village as this has been a long stated intention by the ACCT when possible. It is also another reason why the access thereto needs to be improved.

These initiatives all provide the ACCT with the means of cementing a sound revenue stream, as part of our overall strategy to regenerate the whole Trust where it is incumbent upon the trustees to ensure the viability thereof. It enables us to continue to widen the events, services and facilities that we can provide to the residents of the village.

Moving on to such events, the Village Festival last year was perhaps even more successful than it has been for a while, with Margaret and her team once again undertaking the challenge of organising and running this event in their normal inimitable fashion. Sadly, though, we understand that the carnival procession will not take place this year as it is proving very hard to find enough volunteers to make floats and provide the manpower needed to run it all.

Last year, the other big success was the Coronation Picnic on the Rec. It was a bit of a shot in the dark in setting it up, and running it, as we were unsure of the weather, the numbers and the state of the ground. It was, however, such a success that it was agreed that there would be another event this year, run under the auspices of the ACCT. Carl Smart very kindly volunteered to set up an 'Events Club' comprising a bunch of 'willing' volunteers who have worked like trojans to put this event together.

It will take place on Saturday, 1st June, and we are praying that the weather gods produce a fine sunny day as both the bank holidays this year have been pretty dismal. In conjunction with the sponsorship and support from the ACCT, we are grateful to KW-Martin Lundy-Estate Agents for their donation towards the event. We really hope that we have the same sort of cracking turnout from the residents of the village and their friends and family as we did last year.

I am pleased to say that the booking of the Halls is beginning to turn around and we now have Fitness classes, Short Mat Bowls, Judo Classes and the Music Society each taking an evening in the week, whilst we have just seen a new fitness class for seniors start in the Small Hall. The weekend booking have continued to increase and the special offers for family events for residents of the village appear to have been well received.

The Ashington Football Club is going from strength to strength, having combined forces with the Rovers, so there is a high utilization of the recreational grounds, and we should be able to raise the level of maintenance of the grounds with the increased revenues from the club.

In summary, the primary objective during the past year of focusing on creating a structure that could target more on business development to secure our financial viability has proved to be very successful. This has enabled us to introduce our services to a wider audience by extolling the outstanding facilities we have to offer, and, thereby, consolidating our commitment to the local community.

We lost Sam Ball as the Parish Council Representative last year, but she was replaced by Nikki Carter who has been a very engaged observer. In fact, a good deal of effort has gone into improving the working relationship with the Parish Council after some issues and confusion surrounding our position and interaction with Bellway. As a result, we have now established a Working Group with the Parish Council and we are already starting to see the benefits of this initiative resulting in a review of what is now termed as the ACCT/PC Facilities and Services Agreement. We also welcome Graham MacPherson and Phil Kerrey in their new positions in the PC and look forward to working with them.

My final words are directed to the Trustees themselves. It has been a very challenging year with a great deal of work and commitment to the roles which each occupies. Their continued support and positivity is very much appreciated and the fine condition of our buildings and open spaces is a reflection and credit to them all.

Margaret Alford has suffered some degree of ill health, but she has continued to do a sterling job as Secretary. She has, however, handed over the reins of the booking system to Shirley Piper who is doing a great job on this. Michelle Simpson continues to operate as a fine Treasurer, whilst Carl Smart, Martin Jenkins and Mark Jones have taken up their roles within the subgroups with a great deal of enthusiasm and energy, moving the Trust forward accordingly.

Very sadly, in addition to Adey Cope, Robin Botting is stepping down as a Trustee. He has done a magnificent job throughout the years, and we will sorely miss him. I am delighted to hear that he will still be out there on Wednesday, working away with Mark on the grounds and buildings, but it won't be the same without his advice and experience as a Trustee.

Laura White continues in her role as the Trust Administrative Clerk, taking on more all the administration to assist Margaret, and Sarah Mansfield-Osborne continues as our accounts Bookkeeper.

As a result of the loss of two of our Trustees, we would very much like to see if there are residents in the village or outlying areas who would be interested in taking a position as a Trustee. Now that we have put a good deal of the new processes and procedures in place, the Trust is running pretty smoothly, so it is not a hugely time consuming commitment but it does require people who are dedicated to supporting the Trust in its aim to continue to enhance the services and facilities that can be provided to the village.

As we move forward into the 2024/2025 year, there continue to be other initiatives that the groups are working with. These will be targeted on increasing the amenities and facilities that are available to the village and will remain the focus of the Trust in its day-to-day operations, enhancing the charitable aims of the Trust.

Christopher Wood

Chair, Ashington Community Trust

27th May 2024

Income Statement

Ashington Community Centre Trust
For the year ended 31 March 2024

Account	2024	2023
Turnover		
Admin fee	0.00	680.00
Alcohol permit	0.00	10.00
Christmas fayre and tables	345.00	2,414.43
Cleaning fee	40.00	405.00
Full stage	0.00	125.00
Hire of large hall	33,952.92	32,684.34
Interest Income	153.49	29.37
License fees	0.00	83.34
Non invoiced receipts	0.00	204.00
Other Revenue	28,105.69	1,740.00
Pitch and outdoor court hire	4,853.50	3,357.25
Sales	130.02	585.96
Scout hut hire	7,934.35	9,079.11
Small hall hire	11,868.30	4,101.10
Sports Court hire	9.00	0.00
Sports pavillion	8,114.94	11,042.10
Tea Towel sales	10.00	160.00
Total Turnover	95,517.21	66,701.00
Other Income		
Donations	603.00	71.75
Gain on investment	2,557.26	(1,777.99)
Total Other Income	3,160.26	(1,706.24)
Total Income	98,677.47	64,994.76
Cost of Sales		
Direct Expenses	500.00	1,242.67
Total Cost of Sales	500.00	1,242.67
Gross Surplus	98,177.47	63,752.09
Administrative Costs		
Advertising & Marketing	662.00	163.00
Audit & Accountancy fees	1,863.44	2,026.30
Bank Fees	42.59	20.00
Cleaning	8,789.04	6,697.84
Computer	28.78	0.00
Depreciation Expense	3,167.80	2,655.60
Donations made	1,200.00	2,677.27
General Expenses	187.10	404.48
Grounds maintenance	6,299.42	6,107.99
Interest Paid	4.82	0.00
Licences and insurance	3,970.35	2,675.96
Light, Power, Heating	8,528.79	21,070.89
Paypal fees	45.80	0.00
Postage, Freight & Courier	21.39	141.82
Printing & Stationery	129.50	514.25
Rates	2,728.93	2,276.34
Repairs & Maintenance	42,954.71	12,319.01
Salaries	11,432.25	11,866.59
Staff Training	105.60	72.00
Subscriptions	563.00	758.00
Subsistence and travel	17.69	107.78
Telephone & Internet	807.08	1,017.79
Water	1,143.75	1,058.56
Total Administrative Costs	94,693.83	74,631.47
Operating surplus/(deficit)	3,483.64	(10,879.38)

Surplus b/fwd	114,789.18	125668.56
Surplus /(deficit) for year	3,483.64	(10,879.38)
Surplus c/fwd	<u>118,272.82</u>	<u>114,789.18</u>

Represented by:

Bank	4,119.03	21,142.37
Savings	30,591.25	11,632.24
Cash	-	-
Investment	73,015.11	70,457.85
Fixed assets	11,587.10	8,815.90
Debtors	6,749.85	7,063.62
Rounding on above	1.00	1.00
Creditors	(7,790.52)	(4,323.80)
	<u>118,272.82</u>	<u>114,789.18</u>

I am satisfied the Trust accounts are in accordance with the books and records and explanations given to me



Nicholas Belton FCCA MA (Hons)
34 Rectory Close
Ashington
West Sussex
RH20 3LP

23/05/2024

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23/05/2024