

NORTH BALLYMENA COMMUNITY CLUSTER

TRUSTEES' REPORT

The Trustees present their Annual Report with the Financial Statements of the Association for the period ended 31 March 2020. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice for Charities (SORP), accounting and reporting under UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in preparing the Financial Statements.

In setting our objectives and planning for the year the trustees have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission NI's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities have helped to achieve the charity's purpose and provide a benefit to the beneficiaries. The following report reflects the work of North Ballymena Community Cluster during the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.

Principal Activities

The North Ballymena Community Cluster encourages and promotes working together of the residents, community groups, local authorities and statutory bodies within the North Ballymena area in order to:

- Advance community growth
- Develop a sustainable community infrastructure
- Develop and support community services
- Improve information flow and networking opportunities

As the name suggest the cluster is based within the north Ballymena area.

The member groups are:

Ballymena North Partnership
Doury Road Development Group
Dunclug Partnership

Public benefits

The benefits include increased local knowledge, access to information and education and the opportunity to utilise a local community hub. These benefits are evidenced through attendance at training events, feedback from beneficiaries, and requests for information or signposting. Other benefits include support for the development of programmes which reduced social isolation, improved community infrastructures and improved community life for local people accessing projects and events. These benefits are evidenced through attendance at activities such as our luncheon club, feedback from beneficiaries, interest in programs run, independent evaluations of our activities by monitoring and support services such as Supporting Communities NI. There is also increased community participation, motivation and experience leading to a confident and sustainable community. The organisation develops the capacity and skills of the members of the community in such a way that they are better able to identify, and help meet, their needs and to participate more fully in society. The organisation provides opportunities for people to learn through experience - opportunities that would not otherwise be available to them; and involves people in collective effort so that they gain confidence in their own abilities and their ability to influence decisions that affect them. These benefits are evidenced through increase in volunteer numbers and opportunities, for example, at the luncheon club, interest in information sessions and events. There is increased confidence for local people in their elected community representatives and more local people benefiting from an effective community infrastructure. These benefits are evidenced through shared learning between groups, increased interest in community matters and increasing participants both at group and cluster level leading to an overall increase in community spirit. There is an increase partnership working, developing best practice and ensuring maximised participation and co-operation. These benefits are evidenced through increased successful joint programmes between groups, shared experiences and learning from one another. The increased understanding of good governance and partnership working, effective community representation, influence on policy making and the building of relationships between the community and statutory bodies and local authorities are evidenced through increased successful joint programmes between groups, shared experiences and learning from one another and collective applications for the funding of joint programmes. There is an increased social cohesion within the North Ballymena Area, reduced anti-social behaviour and sectarianism and an increase in community confidence, wellbeing and community safety. These benefits are evidenced through feedback from the local community, beneficiaries attending courses, evaluation of projects by tutors and awarding bodies.

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Achievement and Performance

Action Planning - The cluster community come together annually to produce an action plan which reflects the needs of its member groups. Below is a summary of the main achievements of the charity during the year.

The charity:

- Produced and delivered a number of community engagement events throughout the year.
- The OpportuniDAY event - with more than 30 groups presenting to the public and other groups
- Community Cluster Awards - with more than 120 attendees the awards highlighted and celebrated the hard work of the community and voluntary sector in the area to the wider community.
- Community Cluster Awards - with more than 100 attendees, sharing information about community group work across the whole of Ballymena, encouraging networking and partnership working.

These events provided an opportunity for local groups to engage with each other, to raise awareness of the work being undertaken with the wider public, to start the networking and partnership process to allow for reduction in duplication of services and maximisation of output locally.

Organised a Schools Fun Challenge Day engaging with four local primary schools in the North Ballymena area. One of the few events that brings standard and special needs schools together targeting P7 children this event provides an engagement opportunity for children who are approaching a move to secondary education and allows for them to build upon the interaction process that takes place between the schools as part of the shared education programme. It also brings a range of partners such as the Police Service for Northern Ireland, Council Good Relations, Active Community Coaches into direct contact with local children and encourages the development of positive relationships between young people and support agencies. However the UK Government announced on 23 March 2020 the lockdown of all non-essential businesses and that the public must all stay at home to prevent the spread of the virus. The School Fun Challenge thus had to be cancelled.

- Provided best practice visits to other community groups to increase awareness and knowledge of work that could be undertaken.
- Provided direct community development support to the groups that make up the cluster. This work includes supporting community development initiatives, working to improve on good governance, development of policies and support for estate based community events.
- Worked to improve access to local facilities for community and voluntary organisations
- Encouraged and developed Volunteering in the North Ballymena area.
- Encouraged uptake of volunteering x 20 people.
- Continued to circulate the "Volunteering in North Ballymena" booklet, distributed to local shops, agencies, organisations, doctors surgeries and individuals at events in the area of Ballymena North.
- Supported the provision of travel expenses relating to voluntary work carried out.
- Delivered a monthly seniors luncheon club, Forever Young, with an average attendance of 35-40 per month. In excess of 400 seniors attended. Activities included:
- The provision of a meal and in addition educational talks, reminiscence work, brain fit sessions, musical sessions, workshops to improve physical activity and trips out to both recreational and educational venues.

isolation; they provide them with information on other services available to them and encourage them to improve both their physical and mental health. Our project has made a great difference to the older people in the North Ballymena area as they had a monthly event to look forward to and they really appreciated the chance to get out and meet up whilst enjoying a speaker/activity and a warm meal. Some attendees say they wouldn't be out in the month if it wasn't for the Forever Young session. The senior communities from the three estates in the area mix well together now and there is always laughter and fun at the events. Before the establishment of this monthly club, these older people had limited opportunities to socialise together.

Whilst we are content that we are delivering against the key objectives of our organisation there is still much work to be done to encourage engagement, increase volunteering, to encourage collaboration and partnership working.

We will continue in our efforts to work with other groups to minimise duplication of community services and increase the impact that we can all have collectively in our area of work.

Policy on reserves

The trustees feel that it is necessary to hold an amount in unrestricted funds to enable them to cover expenditure for a period of three months to enable the company to continue at its current level of activity

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Review of the Business

The trustees were satisfied with the results for the year.

No taxation is payable as the association is a registered charity, charity number NI00203

Future Strategy

The Association plans to continue the activities as outlined above.

Their aims are as follows :

1. To further develop a sustainable community infrastructure in North Ballymena by developing the North Ballymena Community Cluster in order to strengthen the voluntary and community sector within the defined area; ensuring that Cluster needs are serviced through an operational office providing advice and support to local groups in the area including those of emerging groups.
2. To improve information, networking and funding advice to and among groups in the North Ballymena Area by improving information flow on relevant community based social, economic, community and physical infrastructure issues; networking, sharing and collaborative opportunities for all and funding advice to the area in order to improve the quality of life for those who live within the North Ballymena Cluster area
3. To improve community services by developing and supporting services in the Cluster area which address community needs, helping to build better community relations and support community cohesion

Risk Assessment

The Board has conducted a review of major risks to which the charity is exposed and systems have been established to minimise these risks. The findings were low risk.

Important non-adjusting events after the financial period

The Covid-19 health crisis was declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organisation on 11 March 2020 and subsequent to this, the UK Government announced on 23 March 2020 the lockdown of all non-essential businesses and that the public must all stay at home to prevent the spread of the virus. crisis. However MEABC has continued to support the work of North Ballymena Community Cluster. In accordance with government guidelines The Schools fun Challenge was cancelled and the lunch club was cancelled from 31March2020. . The Cluster continued its work by offering online support and advice, keeping users up to date with restrictions and help available including digital help for those struggling and free teaching resources

Given that the Covid-19 situation had not become an issue and had not had any measurable impact on the business operations at the financial year end point of 31 March 2020; the events that have occurred since the company's financial year end relating to the spread of the crisis are considered by the trustees to be non-adjusting post balance sheet events. Accordingly, the financial position and results of operations as of and for the year ended 31 March 2020 have not been adjusted to reflect their impact.

It is currently not possible to reliably estimate the duration and economic severity of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis coupled with the uncertainty of the duration of the measures imposed by the Northern Ireland Executive to try to deal with the health crisis. At the time of approving these financial statements it is difficult for the trustees to accurately determine how the company's financial position and results will be impacted by the Corona virus pandemic and as a result a reliable estimate of its financial effect cannot be made at this juncture. However after April, and given the unprecedented government stimulus, companies have generally noted that the Impact of COVID19 hasn't been as great as feared.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable organisation's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable organisation and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with applicable law and generally accepted accounting practice. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable organisation and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

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Trustees

The trustees of the board during the year were :

Mr David McGuckin-Resigned 4th November 2019

Mr P J McAvoy- Chairman

Mr Robert McCahon-Resigned 9th March 2020

Mr Barry Gordon-Treasurer

Mr Patrick Kevin McCrudden

Mrs Catherine Patricia McQuillan

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice for Charities.

Approved by the Board and signed on its behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry Gordon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Mr Barry Gordon
On Behalf of North Ballymena Community Cluster
Secretary

Date: 11th January 2021