

The Charles Booth Centre CIO

Annual General Meeting

11th June 2024 at 7.30pm

Present: Amanda Berry (chair), Pauline Pollard (mins), Tony Dandy, Markas Marriot, Hywel Tidley, Katy Reddington, Josh Allen, Joe Smith, Andy Brown (treasurer), Beata Buczynska, John Simpson, Alison Simpson, Paula Foulds, Tracy Foulds, Nita Pearson, Ann Statham, Janet Stephenson, Councillor David Everitt, Ann Petty, Lou Carter, Nick Carter		Action
1.	Welcome by Chair Amanda Berry welcomed everyone and introduced herself.	
2.	Apologies for Absence None	
3.	Minutes of AGM held on 18th April 2023 The minutes of the previous AGM had been published on the CBC website and Amanda assumed that all had read them prior to this meeting. Amanda asked if they could be accepted as a correct record of the meeting. Acceptance proposed by Katy Reddington, seconded by Tony Dandy – all Trustees in favour therefore the minutes were accepted.	Amanda to send a signed copy to Pauline
4.	Report by the Chair for 2024 The Chair's report had been published on the website. Amanda read through the report.	
5.	Trustees Annual Report The Annual Report to the Charity Commission from March 2022 to March 2023 had been published on the CBC website and copies were available to the meeting. No comments had been received, and the report was duly accepted.	
6.	Accounts for the preceding financial year The Accounts for the financial year March 2022 to March 2023 had been published on the CBC website. They had been independently examined by Scott Brownlow and submitted to the Charity Commission. Amanda asked if there were any queries regarding the accounts, there were no comments, and the accounts were duly accepted.	
7.	Election of Trustees It was suggested that the Trustees who were standing could be re-elected en-masse. Proposed by Alison Simpson and seconded by Nita Pearson – all present in favour and all Trustees were therefore re-elected.	
8.	Appointment of Auditor	

	Amanda reported that she had contacted Scott Brownlow by email asking if he was willing to continue as Auditor and had received an affirmative reply. Amanda therefore proposed that Scott be retained as Auditor, all present were in favour.	
9	Any Other Business of which due notice has been received 7 questions had been received in writing in advance of the meeting which Amanda answered. See below for full text of questions and answers. Additional questions raised in the meeting Nita Pearson asked about the CCLA investment in terms of the current stock market fluctuations and were they invested in the right place. Markas explained that Trustees regularly review the fund, we are happy with the return on investment, and we regularly review other ethical funds and funds specifically for charities. Further questions raised in the meeting were on similar themes to the submitted questions, with centre communication and promotion of events being the main concern of attendees. Trustees reiterated the lack of budget for expensive promotional material but understood the frustration of attendees and agreed to look at our practices. We do not have an email distribution list, but FoT do and regularly list centre events on their newsletters. Trustees agreed that the centre website needed a revamp. Attendees also mentioned a lack of events in comparison to previous years when the centre was council run, those present recalled tea dances, comedies and other shows. Trustees and the centre manager described our frustration putting on events that suffer from lack of support. Beata said that we would welcome anyone coming in to volunteer their time. It was agreed moving forward to ensure that the current user groups are aware of centre events and can internally promote to their members.	
	The AGM was formerly closed at 20.34 pm	

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Q&A text - Questions in bold, answers un-bold

Janet Stephenson - I am concerned that I do not know what is going on at the centre these days. There used to be banners outside, A-boards, posters and newsletters as well as emails sent out to a large database of residents. Now I rely on the Friends of Thringstone emails and newsletters and sometimes hear of things after they have happened.

I would like to ask how the centre feels it is communicating with potential users in the village especially those who do not use social media. Do the Trustees think that the communication strategy needs reviewing. Assuming that there is a strategy. If not why not?

Answer - We do rely heavily on social media as it is an easy and cost effective way of getting a message out to a lot of people. We need to bring more younger people into the building and these people are on social media and whilst we realise that a lot of the older generation are not on Facebook, the regular events that

are targeted at that generation are regular events such as coffee mornings and warm hub which happen on fixed Fridays in the month and fixed days in the week so can be communicated by other means.

We haven't got an email distribution list for the whole village, changes in data protection laws mean that any previous email distribution list would have to be recreated, with us sending out a communication to everyone and asking for their permission to store their details. We just haven't got the woman power in the office to maintain that kind of administration. Friends of Thringstone create monthly newsletters in which centre events are shared so regular events such as coffee mornings and warm hub etc are advertised in that way. Clearly any last minute changes have to be done on social media and we do rely on people to pass on messages.

We still put posters up around the building and outside and the A board is still there but banners are very expensive to create for single one off events. They are also very wasteful as they only have a limited lifespan and end up thrown away after the event which is not environmentally friendly. So in answer to your question, no we don't that we need to review our communication policy, we are doing what we can with limited resources.

We know that John Reddington prints the copies of the bauble for FoT that need a paper copy and out of 168 of your members only 28 need a print-out, the rest are on email receiving the bauble so do have access to the internet. In comparison we have 1300 followers on Facebook.

Sarah Baxter

How is the centre sustaining itself for the next 5 years?

We have two goals at the current time, one is to reduce our costs (mainly utility bills and repairs/engineer visits) and the other to increase our regular reliable income. We are not far off breaking even, but the increase in energy over the last couple of years has meant we are not quite reaching that. We are hopefully now in the final stages of lottery grant to replace the heating system and the windows plus add further insulation to the roof and replace the hall curtains with thermal lined material. This should reduce the bills and the engineer visits. Our most sustainable income comes from regular rental of rooms by pre-school and the rental of the bedrooms upstairs which are used as offices and we are looking at creating an extra space that can be similarly rented to a local small business owner. In terms of other income we also need to increase the number of private parties, these bring in good income and don't need much staff time. A children's party with bouncy castle is very good easy income.

We cannot predict 5 years into the future, there is too much volatility in the economy and energy prices to budget more than a year in advance. The original group of trustees had a 3 year plan which predicted £10K losses for first 3 years. That bit was accurate, but that plan said that a lift was unfeasible and we've delivered that and we've kept the centre open.

What is the centre's outlook/plan for the next 3-5 years?

Finish our programme of improvement, we've done the downstairs 3 rooms so that the partitions can be open and it looks like one room. We've done both bars, both kitchens, the upstairs toilet and the office. Next on the list is the area behind the stage and the downstairs toilets and we need to work on outside, the shed/garage area needs sorting and the look of the building from the carpark isn't great. And of course the heating/windows/curtains if we get lottery grant. We need to get ourselves to a position where we are breaking even and the staff are not firefighting on a daily basis dealing with user groups because the essential services are breaking down. The centre manager's time for almost the whole of January was spent on the phone to either Wessex lifts and the boiler maintenance company or rushing out to buy temporary heaters. We need to get to a point where things are working smoothly, the office runs like clockwork with

Claire just dealing with invoicing and bookings, Caitlyn planning and running events and Bea applying for grants for future projects. Then trustee meetings can be strategic.

How many people access the centre on a regular bases and how can this improve?

During the week we are pretty full in terms of regular bookings. Pre-school are in every day 8-6 and there is something most evenings. We need a gap between user groups to allow changeover so we can't ever get to 100% capacity. There is something in the hall most weekday evenings. We need more weekend events, private parties, weekend bookings etc when spending at the bar is guaranteed.

What is being done to ensure everyone in the village, including those who are socially isolated, are aware of what is going on?

See previous answer about communication

Has the centre maximised use of grant funding to its best advantage?

Yes, we have been successful in getting several smaller grants for the warm hub and the kids movie mornings and bouncy castle and we're hopefully about to receive just shy of £100K from the national lottery which sounds amazing but this has taken hours and hours of Beata and the trustees time. Smaller grants are out there but its finding the right project for the right grant and they are really time consuming. I would love to be able to give Beata an office upstairs to give her headspace to work on grants but she is always in the office dealing with people popping in. We've had to give Claire a day working from home just to keep on top of the finances without interruption. We want the office to be welcoming to people who want to come for a look around if they want to book the hall for a party etc but we do need to minimise the number of people who just pop in for random other reasons.

What will happen to the centre if funds dry up and there comes a point where it is unsustainable?

We inherited a very old, creaking building. A lot of the questions this evening have been along the lines of 'there used to be this and there used to be that' and I presume you're referring to the days when the place was run by the council. Those days are behind us. The council used to fund the repairs and maintenance etc and now we have to balance the books and make the income match the outgoings and it's not easy with energy costs rising. We're a long way from funds drying up which is fortunate, but the reserves are not a bottomless pit and we need to use them carefully. The centre has massive potential and I hope you can all see that we are all working really hard to keep it going. We are slowly working our way round renovating each room. We're applying for money to do big projects and we're budgeting for the smaller renovations from our reserves and at the moment the future looks positive. The important thing is that the centre is still here. If the management committee hadn't made the decision to take over running the centre and turn it into a CIO 7 years ago, it would have closed, so every year it stays open is a bonus. Every year it provides employment for local people is a bonus. Every year a small business owner has a place with reasonable rent from which to run their business is a bonus. Every year that local groups such as T pads carry on entertaining the village is a bonus. We have a free music event next Saturday, please come and support it.