Good evening everyone, I’m delighted to deliver my Chair’s report for 2023, there have been a lot of changes in the centre over the last 12 months, too many to discuss here but I’m going to attempt to give you a brief summary of the year.

We have had changes in staff, trustees and some fantastic updates to the building so let’s start with that.

Tony Dandy is on a mission, to single handedly update, rewire, replumb and generally modernise the building! Anyone who has been to an event recently will hopefully have seen that both bars have been given a refresh, there is more space for storage and for multiple members of staff to work behind the bar without getting in each other’s way. Not stopping there, he has now worked his magic on the downstairs kitchen giving much needed storage space for the pre-school and he’s now moved onto the upstairs kitchen and has his sights set on the upstairs toilet! We’re all very grateful, thank you to Tony for all his hard work.

Our bar staff also now have very smart Polo shirts, thank you to Lydia for designing those and for creating our new updated logo which will be coming to a website near you very soon. Unfortunately, Lydia has a new job and is unable to carry on as a trustee and we also lost Geoff Cox earlier in the year also due to work commitments so we must record our thanks to them for their work on the board of trustees. We are all volunteers and sometimes other things have to be prioritised.

We have also had staff changes, we welcomed Claire to the office this time last year, since then we have welcomed Beata as Centre manager and Cees as Events manager to the team. They both bring a wealth of experience from previous jobs and charity work. Under Bea’s direction we’ve recently had a 5 star rating from the environmental health for Food Hygiene and Cees has already made us aware of a variety of grants available for events that we can tap into and has made a start applying for these.

We would like to record our thanks to our outgoing centre manager Tom who had been with us since the start of the centre as a CIO and made CBC what it is today and our outgoing events manager Carole who revolutionised our bar and wedding offering in her time at the centre. We wish them both well in their future endeavours. We also must thank Mike Statham, who despite retiring as a trustee last year has continued to look after the gardens for us. Mike has reluctantly decided that his knees need a rest so he has now retired again from the gardening so if anyone knows anyone local who is fit and able and likes gardening do send them our way

It’s been an exciting year, we held a jubilee street party and attempted to officially open the lift with Geoff and Pauline Walker, which was an entertaining and slightly embarrassing experience for me with the entire of Thringstone in the car park waiting for us to be carried up to the first floor. It was a warm few minutes in the lift before we abandoned the ride and just went with cutting the ribbon instead!

We’ve held several weddings, hosted boxing classes for local children and had successful grant applications to buy a floor cleaner and a projector for the upstairs hall. We do need to continue to apply for grants. We are fortunate to still have some funds in reserve that were a legacy from the days when the centre was council run and we earmarked some of that money to recent major projects such as the knock through and the lift. But it’s not a bottomless pit and needs using wisely. This is an old building and it needs some TLC! We are currently in the final stages of a lottery grant which we are hoping will be successful and will enable us to replace the windows and the boiler.

The accounts that you will see today are from April 2021 to March 2022 which was the first full year of trading after the disruption of the pandemic. A lot of our user groups only returned in January of 2021 and bookings were slow at the start of the year but we finished the year in a good situation with regular users and lots of children’s parties.

Last year I mentioned that the fundraising income for the lift was included in the accounts for 2020-2021 so the balance at the end of the year looked artificially in credit by around £20,000. We spent the £30,000 on the lift in August of 2021 so we envisaged that the accounts for 2021-22 would look quite poor but since the latter part of 2021 was very busy with events and parties we actually made up this apparent loss so we look to have broken even on the year even with the large outgoing for the lift so it actually represents a very positive balance. At this point I must thank Andy Brown, our treasurer for his endless patience and accurate adding up. We’re very grateful to him for keeping our money balanced and our records up to date.

And so to 2023. Our new staff are full of enthusiasm and great ideas, its very exciting. We have a large variety of regular users in the building; pre-school are here every weekday plus there are weekly or fortnightly meetings of Curling, language classes, art group, yoga, badminton, slimming world, Bobbin lace, TPADS, cheerleaders, meditation, Zumba, the WI and the Royal British Legion. We host our own quiz nights, open mic night, and our regular coffee mornings that have raised hundreds of pounds for a variety of charities and we have opened our doors over the winter to the people in the village who are struggling with their heating bills to provide a warm drink, warm clothes and a friendly welcome.

Beata is building good relationships with the other community facilities in the village to ensure we don’t overlap and we all use our resources effectively. We have plenty of bookings for birthday parties, weddings and other celebrations and we can now offer a bouncy castle to people wanting to book a party. We are planning a Coronation street party and this summer will see the much awaited return of the music festival.

We’re not perfect, this old building has its faults and the people that use it are only human and sometimes forget to turn off the lights. We can’t afford to employ someone 24 hours a day to police the grounds and building so we do rely on our users to treat the building and our neighbours with courtesy.

We are hopefully improving, the trustees are all volunteers, and I must thank them for the endless hours that they dedicate to ensuring this charity is well governed and the building is fit for purpose for the next generation.

Thank you and here’s to a successful 2023.

Dr Amanda Berry

Chair of Trustees, Charles Booth Centre, April 2023