
The Reddings & District Community Association

The Community Centre, North Road West, The Reddings, Cheltenham. Glos. GL51 6RF
(Charity Registration No. 266092)

Secretaries Annual Report 2019 - Paul Barnes

This report refers to the annual report as set out in the Independent Financial Statement prepared for the AGM arranged for 9th April. It has been amended to cover the implications of the Covid-19 Pandemic emerging at that date which resulted in postponement on the AGM.

The AGM report has itself been updated with a supplementary report prepared to present at a new AGM to be called under the 2.00m Social Distance rules.

A further Supplementary Report has been included following the Rule Of Six changes which effects the ability for meetings.

Secretaries Report Intended for the 51st AGM on 9th April 2020

In the light of the Coronavirus Pandemic the report in the Independent Financial Statement has been amended to reflect how it affects the Community Centre and its Users. It deals solely with the interests of the Reddings & District Community Centre and its Users and not wider issues that may affect the Reddings Area, except where it has a bearing on this Centre.

Formed in May 1969, The Community Association has now provided 51 years of service to this community. Its unique management structure, comprised solely of local volunteers, who's selflessly manage and administer the centre on a daily basis, ensures that this community has a meeting place to pursue the various activities popular in the community and from which the community benefits greatly.

The centre has been built up from humble beginnings; from in a second hand WW2 RAF accommodation block, to what it is today, a purpose built facility.

Past and past and present Trustees can be proud of what has been achieved, which is testament to that effort.

As in previous years, the core "Regular User Groups" still continue to be Playgroup, Mother and Toddlers, Brownie & Guide Groups, the NHS Cardiac Rehabilitation Classes and other NHS courses, Heart 2 Heart, Reddings Drama and three distinctly different dance style groups; Street style, Ballroom and Scottish with the timber floors and hall sizes being major the attraction for this activity.

Available to all residents are also Marshall Arts, Pilates and Yoga who continue their long association with the centre as do less regular but still valuable craft groups.

The location, outside space and ample parking provide users with a truly remarkable unrivalled facility.

Similarly to last year, taking account present usage and that of previous years, there is little change in the activity level which has now settled to become the normal pattern for the centre. Taking all the timeslots available within the popular times the overall activity level remains at approximately 80%.

This takes account of limiting the last time on a Saturday to 6.00pm to avoid the need to police the facility late at night otherwise Trustees would be on call all of the time.

Private children's parties continue to be popular and generally fill most timeslots available at weekends and, because of the limits we impose to allow servicing of the halls, this means there is little potential to increase income in this area.

During the year we have accommodated 183 private bookings of 3 hrs and over, for children's and other parties and 915 Regular User bookings of 1 hour and over (averaging out at around 2 hrs).

This follows a similar pattern to previous years.

We continue to receive enquiries for other activities but as these are for the most popular timeslots we cannot always accommodate all of these.

Taking into account all of the activities using the centre we consider that we provide sufficient variety of activities to more than satisfy our Charity Objectives.

As reported last year, the Web based Booking system continues to be our main reference point to check bookings, arrange maintenance and for planning Community Centre sponsored events, and this continues to work well and is an invaluable tool in reducing the time spent in administration.

However despite all the information our Web Site contains we still receive general enquiries which can usually be answered on the website. This increases the time the volunteer trustees have to dedicate to running the centre but feel there is little more to be done in this respect and we will have to continue to respond as required.

We have recorded before that it is clear the public assume this Community Centre to be a fully staffed facility. Enquiries come at all times of the day and night, outside what would be considered normal contact hours and whereas on the one hand we accept this as a compliment, it never the less remains a volunteer commitment with all the limitations this brings.

Steps have been taken to attract new members to join the management team, but although there was one response at last year's AGM, it did not result in a permanent interest.

As reported before, we limit our own events to The Horticultural Show and Fete and Quiz nights being the only events that are supported enough to warrant continuation. The annual fete and flower show was again successful and brought in receipts equivalent to 2018 although numbers attending were down on 2018.

Other than the Drama shows twice a year other User Group's events are not normally open to outside inclusion.

The Association raises around £33,000 annually from hire of the halls but running costs vary, dependant on maintenance levels during a particular year. This year maintenance costs have been higher due to the heating problems but we have sustained a consistent income level over the years and stand in good shape for this to continue into the future. (Subject to the Forecast below). The full picture of the financial position for 2019 can be seen in this Independent Financial Statement.

The installation of a Broadband service was completed this year but only after our own initiative to install a cable duct from the main road service termination point, the cost of which was previously a major stumbling block with the provider. The service is now proving useful and we hope to take advantage of this installation to see if it can be further used to allow digital access control to avoid the issue of keys and would be another task lifted off the Trustees and will be looked at during this next year.

Following a failure of one of the built in fan coil heater motors in the main hall, a source for replacement motors was found which avoided the need to replace the whole unit which is now out of production.

The fan motor has been replaced along with its controlling wall mounted thermostat and the unit cleaned thoroughly which has returned the unit to full performance.

Following this, it was agreed to have standbys available and further motors and controllers for the other heaters have been purchased whilst still available. This action should save us a considerable amount of money.

Some of the costs are included in this year's accounts but the costs for the standby motors, will be included in the 2020 accounts.

The installation of a second central heating boiler, at the beginning of the year, has not only given us the comfort of having a stand-by boiler it also provides the safeguard to avoid closing the centre should the single boiler fail.

Since installation it has not been necessary, so far, to call on both boilers to meet an outside temperature drop, but again we have the reassurance that if necessary we can do so to maintain the internal comfort levels which have been a problem in the past. (Subject to the Forecast below).

We have re-negotiated the fuel charges with British Gas as supplier for the next two years (Until Dec 2021) and this move should reduce our costs by between a half and a third over this coming year subject of course to unknown seasonal changes.

For the record we would take this opportunity of thanking The Reddings Residents Association for donating the balance of their funds following dissolution of that Association in April 2019. This was due to the failure to find residents willing to take on the role following the resignation of the team which tried to prevent the retail element of the development land opposite this centre. The fund was created by donation of local residents to fight the planning application but this was not successful. The sum of £130.83 was passed over to R&DCA at their final AGM on 2nd April 2019.

We would again like to thank Playgroup for decorating the building for the benefit of all users over the Christmas period and for their diligence on our behalf on a daily basis by reporting back any problems that arise.

We are again grateful to Bridget Sansom for organising the Horticultural Show and to all the helpers who made this a successful event.

The trophies were this year presented by our local MP Alex Chalk to whom we also give our thanks.

At the Flower Show and Fete we took the opportunity to advertise for people interested in becoming Trustees but unfortunately no offers of interest were received.

We should also take this opportunity to thank Drama Group for being the source for so many of the Trustees over the last 11 years and more. Without them this centre would not have survived.

Trustees joining from Playgroup have increased the number of Trustees and helped in the daily running of the centre being on the spot.

The Trustees are pleased that users continue to be complimentary about the venue, its' location, it's setting and the standard to which it is maintained but this is not without the dedication of its Trustees who have freely given their time to preserve the sense of community upon which this Association was first formed.

Forecast for 2020/21

The date for the AGM, where the finances for the operating year 2019/20 were to be presented, was set for 9th April 2020 but due to the Coronavirus Global Pandemic this has had to be postponed to a later date in the year.

The date will depend on when Government guidance says it is safe to resume Group Social Contact.

Prior to the date of our financial year end there was no knowledge of Coronavirus or of the impact it would have on so many aspects of Health, Business and Social activities, and whereas the outlook of this report would have in normal circumstances presented a stable and upbeat picture for 2021 much in line with 2020 and 2019, it is necessary to review this to establish the possible effect it will have on this centre for the coming year which will be closed for the duration of the pandemic which according to the latest information could be up to 6 months for those in the vulnerable groups many of whom are served by this community centre.

The events leading up to the closure of the centre and the impact of that action are outlined below.

After the 2019 Christmas/New Year break, the normal occupancy of the centre picked up and was running at expected capacity until the worldwide news of Coronavirus in China began to break.

Cancellations of some Regular Users and Ad Hoc hirers were first notified in late February although others continued with their events. but being a fast moving situation we began to see the implication to the centre and subsequent extent of the cancellations from regular and ad hoc hirers from early March.

During this period we were making our own assessment of the impact on the centre and had thought that closing from Easter would meet the timescale indicated by the Government.

The speed in which the situation was changing prompted ourselves to want to close the centre immediately but were mindful of the important NHS Cardiac Rehabilitation classes at the centre and the Playgroup who were waiting for directives from Government due to the importance of continued education for children of Key Workers.

NHS advised us their nurses were being redeployed elsewhere on 19th March so stopping cardiac courses.

Playgroup checked but did not have any Key Worker parents so closed their group on 20th March.

All Regular Users were notified of complete closure on 20th March and those with affected weekend bookings were notified and refunded.

The whole period from first indication on the 10th to centre closure on 20th March was 10 days.

We were unable to get hand sanitiser or cleaning wipes at any time during this period.

As a safeguard we will carry out a deep clean at an appropriate date when cleaning supplies become available but for now have stopped anyone from using the centre with notices on the gate and building.

Apart from the obvious disruption to important services provided at the centre, the financial aspect to the centre itself is not as bad as it might at first appear.

Although there will be no income for say three months at least, there should be minimal outgoings for Utilities during this period. The heating, internal appliances and external lighting have all been turned off and because of recently negotiated utility contracts there are no standing charges for either Gas or Electric expected, so the cost for these two supplies will be limited to energy use before the closure only.

The Government has also said it will cancel any Non-domestic rate charges so our rates bill although discounted for charity should be recoverable.

Other charges for refuse collection should also be lower as they are charged per collection and this service has been suspended.

Also there are no urgent maintenance requirements and any other works can be deferred for a year if necessary.

Subject to the possible imitations on vulnerable groups, the possibly exists that these groups may not return for a further three months. If this does become the case, our outgoings will rise but should be offset by those groups able to use the centre,(if the centre re-opens after 3 months), so the situation should not be any worse than the three month shut down with no income.

Comments have already been received from some Regular Users that they will return and continue their activities as soon as possible, so, provided they themselves can continue, it is encouraging that we will quickly return to a normal activity level but will reserve vulnerable groups timeslots until they are able to restart.

Our main fund raising event of the year is the Annual Horticultural Show and Fete set to be held in 2020 on Saturday 29th August. Whether this goes ahead will be dependent not only on how quickly the Coronavirus pandemic comes under control and events can safely be held, but also on the availability of those booked to provide services and entertainment if they have been affected themselves.

Regarding the Fete, decisions will need to be made by the end of July but we would hope to put on some kind of event albeit of a much lower key than normal.

Regarding the Horticultural Show, the event is not only dependant on the coronavirus situation and availability of members and helpers but also whether contributors and contestants have been able to obtain plants etc. in order to make it a worthwhile competition/event.

Provided the situation with the coronavirus pandemic is coming to an end and it is safe to do so, it is intended to put on some kind of event where aspects that make a flower show popular other than plants (if not viable) are still exhibited which itself should give a welcomed break from the social isolation imposed by coronavirus.

We will monitor the situation and determine how we intend to proceed at the end of June as it may not be viable to run the Fete on its own if the Horticultural show is not viable.

In conclusion;

Provided no other factors arise to alter the expected outgoings, the financial outlook and loss of income seems to be adequately covered by our reserves and we will not be affected to find ourselves in an unrecoverable position.

Also Users will quickly return once the all clear is given.

End of Report as at 9th April 2020

Supplementary report 1st September 2020 to record the effect Covid-19 pandemic has had on the Community Centre and prepared for a revised date AGM in September to be held under 2.00m Social Distancing Rules with limited attendees.

The 51st AGM originally scheduled for 9th April was not able to take place being arranged at what turned out to be the most uncertain time in the year as the implications and impact of Covid-19 were just emerging.

The continuing Coronavirus Pandemic has meant that the Trustees have not met together since March but have conducted business via email and telephone contact throughout and no matters relating to management or safety of the centre have suffered as a result. The AGM is only now taking place with some relaxation of social distancing measures and the wearing of face masks which allows contact which have with lockdown have prevented us meeting before this time.

Since lockdown the centre has been mothballed with mains utilities reduced to a minimum and waste collections stopped resulting in our outgoings being reduced to a minimum.

Utility services were restarted when Playgroup reformed in order to look after key workers children but this was over the hot summer period when demands on the utilities were negligible.

We have kept up the maintenance of the outside areas during this period but no other maintenance has been carried out in order to preserve our reserves in case closure if the centre was prolonged beyond the anticipated Government Guideline review published on 14th August.

The Government guidelines of the 14th August allowed Multi-functional buildings to re-open maintaining social distancing of 2.00m.

As many of the regular user groups were in the vulnerable group, many cancelled all bookings as far out as to January 2021 and our booking secretary was cancelling bookings for private parties on a month to month basis as it was uncertain when restrictions would be lifted.

Following a questionnaire the R&DCA circulated to its Users Groups about restarting after the 14th August guidelines, many Regular Users were reluctant to commit to giving a return date as there was still great uncertainty over what was and what was not allowed for each particular activity.

Some of our user groups relating to young adults and children are/have restarted after risk assessing their own activity specifically in relation to this centre and the space available.

The R&DCA has set out its own requirements for User Groups to follow in order to ensure that there is common policy across all of the users for as long as it takes to get this pandemic beaten.

A copy of these conditions is set out at the end. It looks daunting but basically requires users to use commonly accepted practices and work with us to overcome the pinch point in the building which is the Entrance Foyer and Toilets so that we can have differing risk groups safely use the centre and get the centre open again.

This set of rules has been circulated and, as User Groups return, they will have to provide us with their own risk assessments for us to be satisfied that they have incorporated the fundamental requirements for health and safety.

The same will apply to Ad hoc private users and those who have already booked but have had their bookings cancelled or deferred to a later date.

Although we now have some regular users wanting to restart and we expect that once users realise that some have already restarted then there will be a swift return for the rest. This will still need to be controlled and some may be disappointed if they cannot be accommodated.

We are going to trial a restart of Children's parties based on the new rules but this will be limited to one party on Saturday and Sunday. We have made this a condition to allow sufficient time for cleaning between but this will affect the numbers waiting to use the centre.

Therefore taking all of this into account we can expect our income for the year 202/21 to be significantly down so we will continue to be watchful of our maintenance and running costs for the rest of this year.

I would like to take this opportunity to personally thanking Laura for sticking with the task of dealing with all of the changes to the way we needed to alter policy and to address and readdress the ever changing situation regarding Cov-d-19 rule which was a huge task.

Rachael Daniel has tendered her resignation as she feels as she no longer has any dealings with the activity for which she was previously involved. She did agree to come to the AGM in September but circumstances have prevented that.

Our thanks goes to Rachael for her contribution to the management of the centre as in her role with Playgroup she was also able to deal with minor problems at the centre on a daily basis.

Further Measures Implemented as a result of changing Government Guidelines 11th September 2020

Following a further change in Government guidelines introduce to be operational on 14th September the **Rule of Six** again made it necessary to readdress all of the arrangements made to have a phased restart of those Groups and Activities that were permitted under the 2.00m social distancing rules including a further postponement of the AGM which has been on hold since the proposed AGM date of 9th April 2020 as it was not possible to achieve a representational cross section of Users and local residents to verify proceedings.

A trial AGM was arranged using Zoom conferencing software but proved unsuccessful as some of the selected invited attendees were not able to join the meeting and the reasons for this were not obvious.

This result and not knowing when the Rule of Six would last the Trustees have agreed to postpone the AGM until a later date probably pushing the date out to the natural AGM timescale, (which relates to the end of our Financial Year End of 31st December 2020) which would make the AGM in March /April 2021.

The new restrictions were conveyed to our users and many were able to meet the criteria for them to operate under these rules being classified as Educational, Health or Exercise.

During the whole of lock-down and restart phase, private parties have been cancelled and prepaid booking fees have been refunded. Some of these bookings were paid for in 2019, to secure the timeslot, so will have a considerable effect on our 2020 accounts. We have sufficient reserves to cover our outgoings for Utilities etc. for the rest of the year but at this stage it impossible to predict how long this can continue if further refunds have to be made and our regular Users do not return in sufficient numbers for income to cover expenditure.

These reports have been left as long as possible to submit to the Charity Commission but as the reporting deadline is fast approaching the situation as it currently stands may not be the end of the changes that we have to make to see this pandemic through.

End of Report as at 15th September 2020