

Annual Report for 2020-2021

Since the last annual report, the steady progress that had been made in previous years has been significantly impacted by the Covid pandemic which closed the centre in the spring of 2020. We were very fortunate to have been able to build up significant reserves over the previous two years through a combination of cost saving measures and increasing use of the building. During the course of the financial period 2020-21, apart from a couple of one-off uses, the only group to use the centre was Slimming World, and this was for a limited period between lockdowns. The main concern now is that several of our user groups have either ceased operations or are likely to, in the near future. Some of these groups were providing an important community benefit, and we will have to consider how this can be addressed. We are fortunate that we still have a reasonable level of reserves which we didn't have when we started out with the new board of trustees, but it will take some time to build back our activities to pre-covid levels and bring the level of added value which we would all like to see for the community. One of the trustees' key objectives was to gain full charitable status to enable us to apply for a wider variety of grants in the future, and this was finally achieved after a lot of work and delays which were caused by the impact of Covid on the Charity Commission and other organisations from whom we required input. This will stand us in good stead as we move forwards and we look forward to getting back to some kind of normality.

Financial situation

Overall, our cash balance in the bank started the year at £8954.24 which was a 172% increase over the prior year, but finished the year at £6038.22 as a result of the pandemic. Our fixed costs with no occupancy include insurance, standing charges for gas and electricity, telephone/internet costs, TV licence and our water bills which were almost £100 per month even when no water was being consumed. This is because the biggest part of our charge is for surface water and drainage which is fixed and is charged based on the surface area. On gaining Charitable status, we were able to apply for a 50% reduction in this charge which involved much more work than it should have needed, but which was finally granted. This will save us approx. £400 per year. Other fixed costs include the servicing of the fire extinguishers and fire alarm system, which are statutory requirements. During the financial year, WBC bin service was stopped as a means of saving money. For the 12 months our

total income was £1255, all of which came from hall hire. Hall hire for the previous year was £7461
Expenditure for the year was £4171.02.

Buildings, Facilities and improvements

The original strategic plan focused on several main areas as follows: –

1. ensuring that the buildings were safe, protected and renovated
2. Clearing old materials no longer needed
3. Improving the financial viability by reducing operating costs and increasing income
4. Making the centre work more effectively for the community
5. Widening the number of trustees and volunteers involved

During the course of the 12 months, it was difficult to progress most of these due to the pandemic, but, a number of relevant actions were taken;

A comprehensive Covid risk assessment was carried out and added to the centre's risk assessment document. This was done alongside Slimming World to help them restart their activities during the summer of 2020. The centre was registered as a venue for Covid tracking purposes and has a QR code that people can scan.

The fire alarm and extinguishers were serviced/checked and several extinguishers replaced which had reached their expiry date.

During the pandemic, the number of people using the centre at any one time was limited to 25. For this reason, we had excessive chairs and these have been stored for the time being in the office, which has been kept locked.

We were donated some metal cupboards during the year and three of these have been added to the potential storage in the centre. Sadly, two others had to be disposed of as the mechanisms fell apart.

Cost reduction

The installation of the smart WiFi controller for the central heating during the previous year greatly facilitated keeping our heating costs down during the year, with the heating only being used to keep the temperature at a minimum of 10 degrees C to ensure that building was kept at a temperature where damp would not occur, and only heating to normal temperature for those days and hours when the building was in use. A potential reduction of around 20% -25% in gas usage could still be achievable with a modern condensing boiler. However, in line with local declarations of a climate emergency, the centre is considering other potential options such as an air source heat pump, so

that mains gas could be eliminated. Warrington Community Energy have looked at the building with a view to making recommendations on heat pumps, insulation and PV panel/battery installation.

We have also had a visit from a contractor from City Electrical Factors with recommendations for changing our lighting to LED across the whole building, and our next objective would be to seek possible grant money to enable us to carry out this change which would reduce electricity usage by about 50%.

Activities

As mentioned previously, there has been little activity in the centre apart from Slimming World during the summer of 2020. We are also aware of several groups which are no longer viable or may not be able to restart. These include: Tae Kwondo which has ceased operating locally, and the two older people's groups may well not start again. 18 months is a long time for groups like this to be out of operation, and most of the committee members are unwell or unable to continue with the organisation needed. As these were so important to the community, we will have to consider if there is some way that the centre can organise something that might take their place. Warrington Photographic will probably restart in January 2022, and Birchwood Acts will restart in the autumn of 2021. Other activities may start in the autumn as well.

We look forward to being able to welcome further community activities to help us get back to some sort of normality during the course of the coming year.

Other

As we finish the financial year, the challenges ahead will be to continue to keep the centre's costs down to a minimum while we have limited income due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

I would like to thank all our trustees (both present and past) and volunteers who have made an important contribution to what we do for the community of Birchwood. We would also like to express our thanks to Birchwood Town Council who continue to provide support on a number of fronts including general advice and in helping to maintain and improve the grounds on which the centre stands both in terms of safety and appearance .

The town council has been looking at the possibility of passing the ownership of the land on which the centre sits to the trustees. We were able to confirm that the lottery no longer has any interest in the building.

Dr David Ellis – Chair of Trustees

Birchwood Youth & Community Centre - Accounts

	2019-2020	2020-2021	Var. %
Expenses	£	£	
Buildings/Equipment	808.30	0	-100.0
Furniture etc.	0.00	0	
Fire alarm contract/repairs	350.04	263.4	-24.8
Water	1142.88	885.29	-22.5
Gas/electricity	1798.53	1198	-33.4
Central heating contract/repairs	75.00	0	-100.0
Telephone/Internet	314.37	324.84	3.3
Cleaning/Caretaking	1076.00	622.7	-42.1
TV Licence	153.39	156.99	2.3
Insurance	711.09	719.8	1.2
To petty cash	50.00	0	-100.0
Waste removal	205.25	0	-100.0
Total expenses	6684.85	4171.02	-37.6
Income			
Rentals	7461.10	1255.00	-83.2
Fundraising/Donations	575.00	0.00	-100.0
Grants	3330.00	0.00	-100.0
Other - Refund Daisy	382.01	0.00	-100.0
Total Income	11748.11	1255.00	-89.3
 Balance brought forward	 2501.56	 -2916.02	 -216.6
 Petty Cash	 11.61	 -30.77	 -365.0
Cash funds in bank at year start	3292.79	8954.24	171.9
Cash funds in bank at year end	8954.24	6038.22	-32.6
Savings accounts	6.83	6.83	0.0
Total funds carried forward	8972.68	6014.28	-33.0

