

## Chair's Report to the AGM

Welcome everybody

As some of you know, I stepped up to acting as Chair of the Board of Trustees of OCC when Derek Ridpath stood down at the end of July 2023, as he found that he did not have the capacity to lead organising the Luncheon Club and act as Chair of the Board of Trustees. I need to stand for election at this meeting (unless anyone else wants the job!), as does Andy Openshaw who stepped up to the post of Deputy Chair to fill my original position. More on these matters later in the meeting.

Strictly speaking this meeting should be a review of the previous year's operations and activities, that is since the last AGM. However, as the last AGM was in May this year and there was a complete change in Trustees at that time and the previous AGM was in 2019, I am mostly going to focus on this board's activities since May.

Since our formation in May this year, this Board of Trustees has spent a great deal of time discussing the way forward for the Community Centre and the challenges presented to us, and at the same time dealing with as many immediate, mainly maintenance, issues as we can. Whilst progress may seem slow, we are now moving forward as fast as we can.

This Board of Trustees has developed a broad set of priorities

### 1. Ensuring the safety of all users of community Centre

- a. Ensuring the centre is up to date with Fire/Gas and Electrical Regulations, which have changed a lot since the Grenfell disaster
  - i. We have installed a new fire alarm system that covers the whole building (costing £14k) and have developed and implemented a new Fire Evacuation Procedure
  - ii. Emergency lighting – the existing system has faults and several parts of the building need additional emergency lights or lacks them altogether – it has been a challenge to find a suitably qualified electrician to do this work, but we have found a company now and this work will commence shortly this will cost Ca £8k
  - iii. Fire doors – a full fire door survey has been undertaken and the works required to rectify all internal doors could cost as much as £20k. However, further work is underway to determine the need for all internal doors to be classed as Fire Doors as we have ample Emergency Exit Doors in the building to negate the need for this.
  - iv. Electrical Safety. We have undertaken PAT testing of all OCC owned portable appliances and have commissioned our 5 yearly Electrical Installation Review for February 2024- the bad news is that new regulations for buildings such as this need new "Spark detecting" safety devices on all power circuits, costing about £150 each and we need 10 or more of these devices and the job hasn't even been done yet!
  - v. Gas safety – all three of our boilers have been serviced. However, a Gas Safe Survey needs to be done, we're struggling to find a suitably qualified engineer to do this work.
- b. Making the centre a safe place to work and use, firstly a few principles we have set out
  - i. All users of OCC should expect the building to be safe to use
  - ii. Volunteers are volunteer workers, subject to H&S, fire and other safety regulations, just like an employed person and have commensurate

- responsibility to look after their own safety and the safety of others (using the community at the same time and at other times
- iii. Businesses, charities and other organisations that use OCC should expect the building to be fit for purpose and should comply with safety regulations themselves and they and their employees have the same responsibility to look after their own safety and the safety of others
  - iv. Private hirers, such as for birthday parties should expect the building to be safe to use and to use the facilities responsibly

To that end, beyond the fire safety issues discussed already, we have been trying to deal with materials inappropriately stored in the building, specifically in the attic rooms and the boiler room in the West Wing. A Safety Audit carried out in June 2022 highlighted these two areas as being hazardous, owing to the amount of potentially flammable materials haphazardly & loosely stored and also creating trip/fall hazards to people entering these areas.

The boiler room is where the gas comes into the building, houses the gas meter and boiler for the West Wing and houses cupboards belonging to the one of our hiring groups and is cluttered with loose boxes, bags and materials that make the room virtually impossible to enter safely.

We have requested that the relevant group relocate their cupboards to the smaller room next to the boiler and remove all loose materials from the room to make it a safer place. This has been resisted by the relevant group to date, though we believe that an agreement has been reached at a recent meeting with the Group Leadership.

The attic spaces were occupied with canoes, beds/mattresses and tents that have now been removed by the Scout Group. However, a considerable amount of Scout Group materials remain in the attic. This needs sorting and redundant materials disposed of or at the very least stored in suitable containers.

The attic spaces are also unsafe to enter at this time, lighting is inadequate for safe working, there is no emergency lighting (there are now smoke detectors and alarms), the head height to access part of the space is too low and the unfinished state of the building works carried out nearly 15 years ago means there is inadequate smoke/fire barriers between the lower floor and up the stairwell into the attic spaces. At this time access to the attic spaces is strictly limited to authorised persons only under a permit to work. Even with adequate and emergency lighting, until further works can be funded and completed the attic spaces will only be fit for storage of materials.

To this end, once the lighting works are completed, we intend to relocate all storage of regular users' materials (with very few exceptions) to the attic spaces. All such materials will be stored in cupboards or other suitable containers. Commensurate fees will be charged to recoup the investment and maintenance of this space as a storage facility.

## 2. **Fixing Priority issues**, such as, things we have done

- a. Heating & heating controls to save energy and costs and to make the heating system more controllable for users – the West Wing now has a smart heating control system
- b. Replacing a section of lead water main found when looking for the water meter
- c. Replacing two broken inspection covers on the approach road and car park
- d. External lighting (partial success, more to do)
- e. Dealing with rats that we now know are living in at least one part of the walls of the centre
- f. Cleaning the gutters
- g. Installing Wi-Fi that existing and potential hirers have requested
- h. We have developed a new website and now have dedicated email addresses for the Trustees and a general contact address
- i. We have a working phone line to allow users and potential hirers to call us
- j. We have social media presence to improve the visibility of the centre and it's activities

There is a long and growing list of things that need to be done...

## **2. Building maintenance / improvements**

These are the bigger ticket items that need addressing to ensure the building is preserved and improved, such as

- a. Replacing cracked/missing tiles on the roof
- b. Repairing some of the gutters
- c. Repairing some of the chimneys
- d. Repointing brickwork on external walls and filling holes where vermin can enter
- e. Covering Victorian air bricks with grills to prevent vermin entering the building
- f. Repairing or replacing the remaining wooden window frames in the building
- g. Repairing or replacing some external doors
- h. Renovating the hall floor
- i. Replacing the carpets in the West Wing
- j. Decorating throughout the building
- k. Developing the attic rooms (as and when we can justify doing so and get the funding to do it)

## **3. Reduce & then stop the financial loss**

OCC has for the past few years made and continues to make a financial loss of around £5k per annum, our Treasurer's report will explain more. As Trustees we have a strategy to address this problem

- a. Increase utilisation – We are launching an online booking system that will make our availability transparent and make it easier for people to enquire and make bookings
- b. We are undertaking a review of our hire charges to ensure they are fair & transparent - the underlying principle being that all users should pay fair rates and that all Users to pay for what they use including additional rooms and storage space in the centre
- c. Controlling and reducing operating costs where possible, we have very few variable costs such as utilities and we already have plans in place to reduce energy costs.

## **4. Maintaining the Luncheon Club**

The Luncheon Club has been a successful community service of OCC for nearly 40 years, run by a wonderfully dedicated team of volunteers, providing a valuable social activity and warm meal for elderly residents of Oughtrington and Lymm. In addition, the Luncheon Club has provided valuable respite for relatives and carers of the Luncheon Club members for a few hours, twice a week.

The constitution of the founding of the Luncheon Club is lost in the past. However, the reason for OCC's existence is to "oversee the ongoing maintenance and improvement of Oughtrington Community Centre and a programme of activities for delivery in the Community Centre". To that end we believe that the Luncheon Club has always been and should remain, where possible and practical, a charitable activity of the Community Centre.

Sadly, the Luncheon Club's lead volunteers, Derek Ridpath and Phyllis Greenough, after many years' service (34 years for Phyllis!), have decided to retire from their roles in December. In addition, a few of the volunteer team have decided that it is time to retire at the same time. This leaves huge gaps in the capability of the team, in particular in terms of leadership, administration and cooking.

This comes at a time of change for the Luncheon Club, as it needs to formalise and document its operational policies and procedures to meet current legislative requirements in relation to the health, safety, welfare and safeguarding of the volunteers and members of the Luncheon Club.

With great sadness, the Trustees of Oughtrington Community Centre are suspending our Luncheon Club activity from December 14th 2023, Luncheon Club will not resume after the Christmas break until further notice.

The Trustees want the Luncheon Club to continue delivering this valuable service to the local community and are actively seeking new volunteers to fill roles such as

- Strengthening the existing volunteer team
- Developing operational policies and procedures for the Luncheon Club and ensuring compliance
- Leading the volunteer team
- Leading day to day administration
- Book keeping
- Provide catering/cooking leadership for the team

We are hoping to recruit a number of new volunteers to work together, with the remaining volunteer team, specialising in or sharing roles/responsibilities to deliver a Luncheon Club fit for now and the future. We hope to resume Luncheon Club activities as soon as possible.

## **5. Updating Governance**

The Governance documents of OCC need reviewing and updating in line with current charity regulations.

## **6. Finally**

A plea for help!

The majority of the Trustees have full time work commitments, family commitments and other charitable commitments.

As you will see, our secretary is standing down as she does not have the capacity to volunteer with us and cover all her other commitments – we need a new Trustee to cover this role.

We also need volunteers to work with us in areas such as volunteer recruitment, building/grounds maintenance and fund raising.

Every little bit of time you can give us will help us improve the Community Centre.