

## **Chair's Report AGM Feb 2025**

Good evening.

This is my second AGM as Chair of OCC, the last was in November 2023, and I apologise for the delay in holding this AGM.

Owing to the resignation of our treasurer last summer, it has taken us some time to find a new treasurer (Susan Allanson) and to complete the accounts for the year ending February 2024.

We're now up to speed with our accounts and will be holding a second AGM this year in late May or early June to review the accounts for the year ending 2025 – this gets us back to the traditional timetable for OCC AGMs and gives you the opportunity to scrutinise the accounts before they are submitted to our regulators.

It's certainly been a challenging year or so since our last AGM.

If you remember we were facing the suspension of the Luncheon Club at Christmas 2023, owing to the resignation of the long serving volunteer leaders.

The great news is that one of our Trustees, Iain Penlington, stepped into the void and got the Luncheon Club up and running again in Spring 2024.

Current registered members is 31, however "active" members is more like 23.

We currently have a great team of 11 volunteers running the luncheon club. However, we are always looking for additional volunteers to join the team, and if you are interested in helping please get in touch with us.

Warrington Borough Council awarded the Luncheon Club and our kitchen a 5-star rating in November 2024.

Iain is actively seeking grant funding from a variety of sources to improve the kitchen and dining facilities, with some promising progress, to fund a new fridge, dishwashing machine and new tables for the hall.

The Co-op have adopted Luncheon Club as one of their causes for this year - If you are a Co-Op member please vote for us on the Co-Op funding website, if you're not a member please sign up and vote for us.

The Luncheon Club operates on a break-even basis, with a small financial surplus to date this year.

I want to thank Iain, and his team of volunteers, for all their hard work in getting Luncheon Club back up and running.

As I reported at the last AGM, the building needed a great deal of maintenance and repairs, with a long list of urgent requirements to bring the building up to modern fire and safety standards, alongside a host of issues from minor to major repairs and improvements.

This list has changed over the year as we got a lot of work done and found more issues and they keep coming up

The list here on the projector covers repairs and improvements undertaken this year, but doesn't include all the odd jobs, quick repairs, nor the time and effort taken to plan, procure and execute repairs that we (big thanks to Andy for his efforts) and other volunteers have done ourselves.

Highlights of works done include

- Installation of emergency lighting and repairs and improvement of internal fire doors and external fire exit doors throughout the building
- Replacement of the hall/kitchen boiler that gave up the ghost last summer

- Replacement of the Preschool car park side room floor and replacement of the 50 year old electricity supply to this part of the building
- Installation of a new water supply to Preschool that fixed a long-standing water leak in a pipe under the car park that has cost the community centre thousands of pounds over the years
- Painting of the West Wing (a big thanks to Sarah Barber, my wife, and our friends who volunteered to carry this work out)
- Painting of the kitchen (Grant from Lymm PC)
- Replacement of the kitchen store roof tiles that were at end of life and a safety hazard owing to tiles falling off
- Renovation of the hall floor

The list goes on as you can see.

As I said the list has changed, we now have a pretty clear list of repairs and improvements that we need and would like to do. Some of these items are big spend items, such as

- In the light of the tragic Southport murders last year we are acutely aware that we current main entrance door is not sufficient. The door itself is on its last legs, not compliant with Fire Regulations and the current keyed lock is often left open during children's activities. We are actively looking at replacing the door and installing an access control system that will be practical for all hirers.
- Repairs to the car park side of the roof – back in 2010/11 when the roof was renovated a decision was made to re-use some of the existing tiles at that time, these are now deteriorating. Simple replacement of broken tiles does not work as we found tiles around them break during repairs making problems worse. Most of the roof tiles need

replacement, though we believe the membrane and battens will not need replacing. Cost unknown at this time

- At the same time the original gutters were mostly repaired and re-used. These repairs have not stood the test of time and are leaking. We suspect that gutter leaks are a major contributor to the damp problems here in the hall, kitchen and preschool parts of the building. Cost unknown at this time.
- Talking of damp, we have to investigate the damp problems further to identify and fix this problem, unknown costs at this time
- Repainting the hall is on the list, but efforts will be spoilt by the damp problems if we don't fix them (the repainted kitchen is already showing signs of damp damage in places). We have a quotation for repainting at around £7,000, we hope to utilise our volunteers can do some of the work to reduce costs.
- To make the West Wing more attractive to existing and potential hirers we want to replace the 15 year old, worn out and stinky carpet tiles, estimated cost is £8,000
- The boiler in the West Wing is at end of life and will need replacing very soon. Cost will be £3,500 or more
- The windows on the road side of the building needs repair and painting or ideally replacement with double glazing to improve ventilation in the building in particular.
- We are trying to work with preschool to address their playground security needs, the existing fence does not meet industry recommendations – this could be an expensive and time consuming issue.

As you might imagine, all these repairs and improvements have cost a lot of money and the needed works even more money. To

add to this the cost of ongoing maintenance of these repairs and improvements adds to the bill.

At this time, we have no firm grip on what could be a “normal” annual repairs and renewals budget for OCC. Many of you know that you have to spend a certain amount of money on your home to maintain it. This is just the same for the community centre, Trustees need to ensure that the building is maintained in order to be safe, functional and, as best we can, fit for the future. If we don't the building will continue to deteriorate and will eventually become unusable. Our feel for an annual repairs and renewals budget is something like £15-20,000 per year going forward, excluding major cost items.

Most of the money funding the repairs and improvements carried out to date have come from our bank reserves – these are not limitless as Susan will explain. We have had some success in winning grants this year, funding the installation of the ceiling fans (to help reduce our heating costs) and for the painting of the kitchen (thanks to Lymm Community Energy and Lymm Parish Council for these grants). A minor part of the money has come from the income OCC makes from hires, both regular and occasional, parties, etc.).

Early last year the Trustees realised that the income from hires wasn't really covering the operating costs of OCC – that is insurance, energy, cleaning and so on (much of which has increased owing to the spike in inflation we have all experienced), let alone contributing to maintenance costs.

We looked at hire fees of similar facilities around Lymm and decided to increase our base hire fees by 10%, in line with similar facilities, for example the hall going from £20 to £22 per hour.

We also realised that there was a wide disparity in the hire fees paid by our regular hirers – the Scout group had a patently unfair

hire rate of about £3.50 per hour, in comparison to other regular hirers, the Art Group paying £16.50 per hour for example.

So, we decided attempt to regularise our hire fees for regular hirers, discounting our base hire fees in recognition of whether the hirer was a charity or commercial and whether they booked throughout the year and multiple time a week. See the formula on the screen

if charity / social		20%	discount	
if 38+ weeks/year		5.0%	discount	
and if more than 1 / week	2	5.0%	extra discount	
	3	10%	extra discount	
	4	15%	extra discount	
	5+	25%	extra discount	

These discounts are additive

Needless to say, some of our regular hirers were unhappy with our desired changes to hire rates.

Some hirers were understanding and either accepted the rate change or negotiated a tapered approach to the hire rate change.

It took a long, hard and time/energy consuming negotiation from January to June last year to agree a hire rate with Scouts that comes somewhere close to what the Trustees desired. However, I do have to point out that the Scout group have yet to pay their invoices for this financial year.

Implementation of an increased hire rate for the Dance Academy has been delayed, owing to miscommunication between us. We expect this to be sorted before the end of this financial year (even so , the Dance Academy has been paying regularly throughout the year).

We negotiated a new rental agreement with Pre school at the same time, doubling their contribution to the running costs of the centre and in particular the parts of the building they occupy.

In the meantime, we are striving to increase the number of hirers – for example over the school summer holidays we hosted a children’s summer camp and our party hire has grown over the year – but the quality of our décor and facilities is a barrier to some, as is our location outside the village centre. Finding time to promote the centre has been hard given all the challenges we have faced. We do have one of the largest halls and the largest and best equipped kitchen for hire in the village – things we need to capitalise on.

So! Challenges abound!

We’re not deterred and are looking forward to getting closer to “Normal” operations this coming year.

Finally, I have to say that the Trustees are struggling here, Andy, Iain and I do the vast majority of the practical running of the centre and maintenance. A great deal of maintenance work has been done by volunteers and saved us a huge amount of money (contractors are expensive and maintenance costs would be a lot higher if people hadn’t given us their time)

Susan, newly on board is concentrating on our accounts and cost management, as she should, though has given time to help with decorating too.

Our other Trustees have work and family obligations that make it hard for them to help on the practical side of running the centre.

We need help – in particular on

- bookings processing & invoicing
- practical management of occasional bookings (checking them in and out of hires, particularly on busy weekends)

- seeking grants and applications
- developing community fundraising events
- marketing the centres facilities and
- helping with maintenance tasks.

If you would like to volunteer to help or know someone who might, however little time you or they can give, please speak to any of the Trustees after this evening's meeting or get in touch with us – you can find out contact details on our website