

Thornbury and District Community Association

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 9th November 2022 - 7:30 pm in the Stuart Room at The Chantry

Members and guests present

Members

Dave Derham
Graham Morris
Chris Roberts
Carl Lapworth
Chris Davies
Stan Goodwin
Ros Goodwin
Kevin Carter
Rob Mills
Chris Willmore
Yvonne Oddy
Pete Oddy
Matt Albury

Guests

Jennifer Darton (Employee)
Sarah John (Employee)
Mark Norman (Employee)

1. Apologies for absence

Tracey Bees – Jo Jingles
John Watt

Dave Derham welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced himself as Chairman, Graham Morris as Vice-Chairman and Chris Roberts as Treasurer.

2. Minutes of 2021 AGM

The entire minutes from the 2021 AGM were not read out as these had been sent out in advance and also previous AGM attendees had been given a link to them after the last meeting.

Dave Derham read out a summary of key points from these minutes to remind everyone the situation at that point and to set the scene for this AGM meeting.

The AGM meeting covered two years as no meeting was held in 2020 due to Covid.

There were lots of challenges faced in 2019 which collectively threatened the viability of the Chantry, this included poor facilities, inefficient admin systems and a lack of business development focus. There was a strong probability of a downward spiral for the Chantry.

There were two strategy meetings held during the period covered by the report to determine the key priorities and action plans.

Based on the key priorities and plans determined the following improvement projects were carried out:

New, efficient systems: -

- New website
- On-line ticketing
- Online room availability and booking (Hallmaster)
- Cloud-based accounting system (Xero)
- New office computers and software

Examined and simplified many administration practices.

Major improvements to facilities:-

- Renovation of the Slymbridge Room
- Restoration of the Main building windows
- Attics cleared and heavily insulated
- Re-marked the car park to make parking easier and also better for disabled drivers
- Fully updated the Main building toilet facilities
- Renovated the main building entrance lobby
- Fitted new signs to the entrance and lobby
- Repaired render and painted the main building
- Installed a fire detection and alarm system in the Coach House
- Designed and installed central heating systems in both buildings

As was shown in the Treasurer's report we have been able to achieve all of the improvements whilst maintaining a very strong financial position.

Main outstanding challenges:-

1. We need to increase the usage level of the facilities to increase income. Grant funding is limited.
2. Shortage of trustees and volunteers.
3. The constitution of the Association is unfit for the current purposes and the legal structure of the charity needs to be changed.

Those of you who attended this meeting will have been given access to the minutes after the meeting and Dave Derham also emailed a copy prior to this meeting.

The minutes were approved as being an accurate reflection of the previous AGM meeting and no objections raised.

3. Matters arising from previous minutes

Questions / issues raised

- Tracy Bees from Jo Jingles asked about baby changing facilities in the Coach Hall toilets renovations – **This was done as part of the toilet renovation work**
- Tracy Bees from Jo Jingles raised a concern about the hot pipes in the Buckingham room when the heating system is in operation. – **Sorted with insulation within a week.**
- Tracy Bees from Jo Jingles raised a concern about loose flooring by the fire exit in Buckingham room. – **Sorted soon after AGM**
- A reminder to report any issues or concerns to the admin / caretaking team.
- Treasurer post was not filled after John Snowden resigned and Dave Derham took on the role on a temporary basis. The position was filled during 2022 after Chris Roberts kindly volunteered for the role.
- Conversion to a CIO - Following the resolution passed at the last meeting, Chris Davies and Chris Willmore have been working on the conversion process. Meetings have taken place with all Trustees to agree specific points in the new constitution, which has now been finalised.

We are now at the stage where an application is being made to the Charity Commission.

Once that is all approved, we will hold an extraordinary general meeting to present the new constitution and gain approval for final transfer of assets from the existing charity.

As we stated last year, this conversion will not affect in any way our relationships with the users of the Chantry and all lease agreements will simply be assigned to the new Charity.

4. Chairman's report

Dave Derham presented the following report:

It has clearly been a challenging couple of years trying to manage things as well as possible through the COVID pandemic. Fortunately, with a combination of tight control over expenditure and government support grants, we kept finances in a strong position despite these challenges. Chris Roberts will provide details in his report.

We have not escaped completely from damage by COVID however. We lost our biggest customer, Red Cross directly as a result of the pandemic and it is highly likely that they will not return.

There are a number of other groups which ceased their activities during the pandemic and have not re-formed and returned to the Chantry. NYTC, was a significant customer which had to close during the pandemic and their position was made worse by the closure of the Armstrong Hall. They may not return at all.

In total our income from room rentals has reduced by around £9,000 per year compared with pre-pandemic levels (approximately 20% drop).

This presents us with a significant challenge but one which we are working hard to address and we have taken a number of steps.

1. We have increasingly been carrying out work to promote the Chantry facilities, making much better use of social media, and have been pro-actively approaching people who run classes and activities in other towns. This effort will be ramped up over the next few months. Unfortunately, it is going to take time to build the business this way.
2. Early this year we set up a working party to look at ways in which we can hold private functions and parties in a safe and profitable way. Such events were stopped a few years ago due to extremely the management overhead, safety issues and very low profitability. As a result of the working group discussions, we started taking bookings for certain types of private function in the spring and a total of 16 events were held at the Chantry during the year – despite us doing no advertising at all.

Experience to date has been very positive and we plan to promote the Chantry for such use and increase the scale of functions which we can host.

Having said this, private functions are a secondary priority for us and a way to shore up the finances and subsidise our core activity. This is definitely to grow the use of the Chantry by community groups and for us to provide economic space for them.

Over the longer term I would expect to see a comfortable balance achieved between the two types of activity.

3. We will continue to be creative with applications for grants and to extract as much help as we can from external sources. Since the beginning of 2019 we have managed to secure over £114,000 in grants specifically for improving the facilities. There is a considerable amount of work involved in completing these grant applications.
4. We are managing operating expenditure very carefully as well as having extremely tight control over debt management in getting people to pay their bills on time.

5. One thing which has helped us massively is the installation of the central heating systems. Before they were installed, our electricity costs for the storage heaters were heading towards £12,000 per year. Last year we spent £4,100 on gas. With current increases in energy costs, the Chantry would quite possibly have been forced to close if we were still running the storage heaters.

Despite the economic challenges, we were determined to continue to invest effort and money into improving the facilities.

We carried out the following projects since the last AGM in November 2021.

- Complete updating of Coach House toilet facilities
- Renovation of the conservatory
- Completed replacement of car park lighting with LED lights on detectors and new efficient garden lighting
- Completed repairing and painting the road-side windows in the Coach Hall
- Renovation of the Coach Hall including new lighting
- Replaced all of the chairs and many of the tables. Each room can now have its own compliment of smart furniture.

I am confident now that we have addressed all of the potential “life threatening” issues with the facilities and our systems. The bulk of the work that remains is interior decoration and making sure that the facilities are maintained to a high standard.

Some other good things have happened in the last twelve months.

Two new people have joined the Trustees (Chris Willmore and Chris Roberts) and both of them have brought much-needed skills, effort and enthusiasm, to our team.

The Trustees board as a whole is functioning very well. We have a good team spirit, and every single one of the members has been contributing – for which I am extremely grateful. Having said that, we definitely need more new blood with appropriate skills. As well as needing additional help now, I am very mindful of the need to have a people who can take over the roles when the rest of us are burned out!

I would like to finish once again by thanking the Chantry staff who have been incredibly supportive and flexible during these last few years. They have had to deal with all kinds of challenges but have done so with smiling faces and have managed to keep our customers happy.

Questions/feedback/issues: - None raised

5. Treasurer's report

The 2021 accounts were emailed out prior to the meeting.

Chris Roberts as Treasurer gave the following summary:

The financial position of the TDCA continued to be challenged by the Covid-19 pandemic with users prohibited again from meeting in groups.

Total income in 2021:- £55,785 - most of the TDCA income is from the room rentals and leases which amounted to £30,715. Further income by way of unrestricted grants was received totalling £21,358 including £17,258 to support the charity to manage the impact of the pandemic (including the Job Retention Scheme).

The "direct charity costs" cover staff costs, operational running costs, maintenance and facility improvement projects. These amounted to £57,322, a reduction of £9,465 (circa 14%) from 2020. This reflects the very strict cost management which was in place in response to the pandemic.

An effective operational surplus of £6,503 was realised during the year. However, in order to continue to develop the facilities, £11,903 was spent from reserves on improvement projects. The result was a deficit of £5,400.

Grants

Grants were received during the year totalling £32,790.

Unrestricted grants

Unrestricted grants of £17,258 were received to support the charity to manage the impact of the pandemic. A further revenue grant of £4,100 was received from Thornbury Town Council.

Restricted grants

Grants were received totalling £11,440 for specific projects as follows:

Coach House toilet refurbishment - S. Glos. Council / FOC £2,940

Conservatory renovation - S. Glos Council, Section 106 £6,000

New Garden Furniture - B&Q / South Glos. Council £2,500

Total £11,440

Reserves policy

The current assets held at the end of the financial year remained healthy at £41,191.

Unrestricted free reserves are needed to provide resources which can be designated to essential projects in order to enable work to be undertaken at short notice or for which

third party funding is unlikely and to cover the costs of administration and support without which TDCA could not function.

The Trustees have again agreed that the reserves should be sufficient to cover the loss of all income from the top 3 customers and failure to replace this income within 12 months. In addition to this, emergency funds should also be available to pay for unplanned maintenance work costing £5,000. As a result of these guidelines the target level of free reserves has been set at £18,000.

The level of free reserves is monitored and formally reviewed by the Trustees annually.

Free reserves at the end of 2021 stood at £34,924.95, which with a target of £18,000 gives an excess of £23,254. This surplus will be necessary to fund the next phase of facilities improvement projects.

Currently £10,000 of these funds has been allocated for future renovations projects.

It seems likely that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is behind us for the time being, although other challenges may arise, such as cost of living increases. Therefore, caution will be taken in expending the excess.

Risk Management

The Trustees continue to monitor the potential risks to future income associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. The current significant margin on reserves will allow timely consideration of options for best management of income and expenditure going forward.

Future

The impact of the current economic conditions is under regular ongoing review on the finances.

Increased forecasting of future income and expenditure has been developed to monitor changes. If we can increase income, we do not have a proportional increase in costs.

Thornbury population is growing with new housing developments being build – need to promote the Chantry within these communities.

Questions, feedback or issues raised: -

- Rob Mills asked on how the financial position for the end of 2022 was looking as the year is nearly completed. Chris R did not have current figures available but he had no concern for the end of the year.
- Matt Albury mentioned that COVID is still having an impact on attendees to his sessions as people have got into the habit of not going out.
- Stan Goodwin – U3A Photo Group – the group had the highest attendance at their November meeting – there has been a room change during 2022.

6. Approval of Accounts

The accounts for 2021 were approved unanimously – proposed by Chris Davies and seconded by Stan Goodwin.

An independent examination of the 2021 Accounts was carried out by Michael Bowles (recommended by CVS South Gloucestershire)

7. Election of Trustees

The following people were willing to stand again as Trustees:

Graham Morris, Dave Derham, Pete Oddy, Yvonne Oddy, Chris Davies, Chris Roberts, Chris Willmore and Stan Goodwin.

Their re-election was unanimously supported by the members present. Graham Morris, Chris Davies, Chris Roberts and Stan Goodwin were re-elected. Since Dave Derham, Chris Willmore, Pete Oddy and Yvonne Oddy live outside the "area of benefit" designated in the current TDCA constitution, they need to be co-opted at the next Trustees meeting.

Dave Derham said that he would be willing to continue his role as Chairman.

Graham Morris said that he would be willing to continue his role as Vice-Chairman.

These two roles will be confirmed at the next Trustees meeting in accordance with the TDCA constitution.

New Trustees – Dave Derham asked if there was anyone present at the meeting who would like to join the trustees of the charity. There were no volunteers offered.

8. Election of Treasurer

Chris Roberts said he would continue in the role of Treasurer.

Pete Oddy proposed that Chris Roberts continue in the role as treasurer. This was seconded by Stan Goodwin. The motion was unanimously agreed.

9. Appointment of Financial Examiners

Dave Derham proposed the continued use of Michael Bowles as the independent examiner for the 2022 Accounts. This was seconded by Pete Oddy. The motion was unanimously agreed.

10. Any other business

- Stan Goodwin raised a question on if the charity paid business rates. Yes the charity pay reduced business rates.

There were no more points raised and the meeting was closed.