

Report to Charlbury Town Council by The Thomas Gifford Trust

April 2023

1. Recent activities at the Community Centre

Bookings for classes from Jason's circuits and line dancing to Pilates and yoga continue to be high, and new classes have started up, including weight resistance classes, and some specifically aimed at Seniors. The Sports Hall is continuously busy, with pickleball sessions now every weekday as well as badminton, table tennis, walking football and volleyball. Our block bookings for cricket nets and indoor football training have ensured the hall is virtually fully booked throughout the winter months.

The Community Centre was registered as a Warm Hub over the winter months, and we are now extending this with our Warm Welcome initiative, supported by West Oxfordshire District Council. A social prescribing event was held in the centre in March and Friday Coffee Club is consistently well-attended and creates a buzzing and welcoming atmosphere for seniors – and anyone else coming into the centre.

For the younger community members, the under 5s activities are also going strong, with Songbirds and Toddler gym still very popular. Jason held a special family-oriented circuits class with the involvement of Charlbury Pre-school and there is another fundraising event in collaboration with the pre-school planned in July. For primary-aged children, the Easter holidays saw the return of the popular kids' runaround in the Sports Hall and the after-school basketball club for older children has become so well-attended thanks to our teenage employee leading it that it is now being extended to accommodate older and younger teens. Finally, the Youth Club has become extremely popular once again, thanks to our Youth Co-ordinator, Bryanna Bone. Disappointingly, she is struggling to get parent volunteers to help out, necessary given the large number attending, so we will be actively recruiting at The Big Help Out event in May.

It is worth mentioning that volunteering in our community *generally* is not flagging. In February, the centre hosted over 100 volunteers who give at least 100 hours a year, and the Oxfordshire Lieutenancy celebrated them by inviting and toasting them at this Big Thank You event.

2. Finances and Energy Costs

Recent hikes in energy costs have hit the Community Centre's budget, but due to this the building committee is undertaking a detailed survey of electricity usage across the centre, and a recent investigation into the air handling system has already resulted in a huge overhaul of how it's used. We've received a quote on the cost of increasing the array of solar panels on the roof, and together with the results of the survey, trustees will decide whether this is an action that will be valuable in terms of energy efficiency. In the meantime, we have made many smaller changes throughout the centre to save energy and money.



THOMAS GIFFORD TRUST

3. Update on the Gym Project

Excitingly, after many months of meetings and negotiations, the planning proposal for the gym extension to the community centre has now been submitted. Trustees will await the decision before progressing the project, but it is hoped that local contractors and builders can be employed. Meanwhile trustees will start looking at fundraising possibilities to help cover project costs. We are confident that the long-term health and well-being of our community will benefit from having this facility, and that the reclaimed space in the rest of the centre can then be used for more social, creative and special interest events to bring an even wider range of community members together.

4. Update on the Community Workshop

And also excitingly, the foundation for the new Community Workshop has now been laid and in a matter of days the new building will be installed. Donations of tools as well as fittings have been requested and are steadily coming in, confirming that there is much interest in such an asset within our community. The workshop has now got its own Charitable Incorporated Organisation status, so going forward it will be independent, yet initially supported by TG Trust. The plan is that users will pay a small annual membership and regular training events will be held so that ultimately the workshop will have its own income and be distinct from the community centre. A barbecue will take place on the 20th of May in front of the community centre to mark the 'soft opening' of the workshop and allow everyone to come and have a look.

Catherine Ball

Trustee, Thomas Gifford Trust, 19.04.23

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