

## Report to Charlbury Town Council by The Thomas Gifford Trust

October 2023

### 1. Recent activities at the Community Centre

Exercise and well-being classes continue to be well-attended, and in addition to Jason's circuits classes, the most popular currently are his Line Dancing classes - an additional session and longer sessions are now available due to demand. Block bookings of the TG Room by providers of Pilates, Yoga, and Seniors Fitness have continued into the autumn, the Sports Hall is still busy and in demand, organised and walk-in pickleball sessions take place daily, badminton, table tennis, walking football and volleyball still take place in the evenings and our block bookings for cricket nets and indoor football training have re-started after the summer, ensuring steady income for the coming months.

The pre-school community and their parents and carers are regular users of the centre, thanks to the very popular under 5s activities – on Wednesday mornings Songbirds is a block booking and Jason's Toddler gym both attract excellent and happy participation weekly. Our youngest users perhaps make best use of all the facilities in the centre on a regular basis, playing our board games and doing puzzles, using the library and having snacks from the café. For primary-age children, the centre continues to draw the after-school crowd, parents and grandparents socializing and using the café while children play in Nineacres, sometimes borrowing our sports equipment. Coming up, a local parent will be offering Art Club sessions in the TG Room during half-term. Finally, we can report that we have a steady stream of weekend bookings for birthday parties in both the Sports Hall and TG Room.

For older children and teens, the after-school basketball club on Thursdays continues to be very popular, still being led by one of our teenage employees. Unfortunately, last year's Youth Club leader has stepped down after struggling to get parent volunteers and we are currently advertising for her replacement. Engaging some of our community's youth in productive and sociable activities will continue to be an aim of the centre.

For our oldest community members, Friday Coffee Club continues to be consistently well-attended, creating a happy and welcoming atmosphere for seniors. A 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration was recently held for Lynette Murphy, one of the original and a key fundraising organizer of the Community Centre Appeal and project.

Finally, in September we hosted both a CPR training course (provided by local Russel Ingham) and a First Aid course at the centre, in an effort to increase the number of trained and able community members in these necessary skills.

### 2. Health & Safety update

Related to the above, following an incident in the centre car park that resulted in injury to one of our users, trustees held a review of current incident reporting mechanisms and policies. An updated policy was approved, in particular adding a system for club leaders to report incidents outside staffed hours at the centre. We will be encouraging not only our own staff and volunteers, but these club leaders to undertake

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the First Aid 'appointed person' courses offered regularly at the centre. Also following the incident above, we will be block paving the car park area, and are investigating the costs and scheduling given the planned gym extension (see below).

### **3. Finances and Energy Costs**

We are delighted to report a huge success in this area. Last spring, we reported that the significant increases in energy costs had a significant negative impact on the Community Centre's budget. Our Building Committee undertook a detailed survey of electricity usage across the centre, and this resulted in a massive overhaul of how we use the air handling system and recommendations to employees and volunteers about how to further save energy during daily running of the centre. Comparing energy use in July 2022 with July 2023, it has fallen 23% - we are very happy with this. Energy costs are still negatively impacting our income, despite a WODC grant, and our surplus is half what it was last year, but we are confident that we can balance the budget while still providing all our services to the community in the coming year. We have approved slight increases to fees such as the food vendors which were historically very low, Sports Hall block bookings for adult classes and sessions, and café prices. We have ensured we still have the lowest prices on cakes and coffees in town, also helped significantly by our local bakers who charge us very reasonable costs.

### **4. Update on the Gym Project**

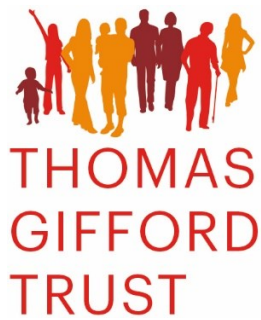
After meeting with and listening to various community stakeholders, including the Charlbury Town Football & Sports Club, we incorporated some changes to the gym plans, and are very happy to report that we were granted planning approval in the summer. Trustees are now exploring contractor options and investigating costs, which will be carefully assessed and compared to get the best balance for us. We are looking at funding options for both the development and design and for the build itself. A bid for funding from the Oxfordshire Community Capacity Grant has been submitted. We continue to feel strongly 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.

### **5. Update on the Community Workshop**

The workshop held its first AGM in September which nearly 30 people attended, and is putting finishing touches on the building's electrical and flooring works. It is forecast to be operational later this month! The workshop has been successful in its application to Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action for funding to cover rent, which will be paid to the TGT. The plan going forward is that users will pay £25 annual membership and £1 for each session so that the workshop will have its own regular income.

### **6. Update on the Playing Close**

Maintenance of the Playing Close has been aided recently by a new tree maintenance company which has removed dead wood, and by a local blacksmith who has repaired access railings. Trustees have discussed



the long standing rules outlining no dogs on the Playing Close at any time, and how this can be enforced, including during the Farmer's Market as this has become an increasing problem.

## **7. Engaging the community**

Trustees have been exploring the idea of a 'Friends of Charlbury Community Centre' group, which would exist to aid funding, expand our base of volunteers, and create more of a sense of ownership of the centre. While the concept has full support in principle, we are thinking about how such a scheme would work and how to help it succeed. We are consulting with a local resident, John Grain, who is experienced in helping charities generate and retain supporters.

We are also looking into a proposal by some local residents to initiate a Junior Park Run in Nineacres, with some benefits to the centre by proximity. This 2 km run around the park would require volunteer commitment and an initial licence cost but would bring long-term benefits to both the community and the centre. Trustees have discussed contributing towards the licence cost and will be helping with grant applications to both The Beer Festival and The Town Council.

Catherine Ball

Trustee, Thomas Gifford Trust, 12.10.23

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