

The Autumn Centre Corby
Charity Number 1110164
Report of the Directors / Trustees
April 1st 2021 – March 31st 2022

The trustees present their report, together with the financial statement of the Charity (**See Appendix I**) for the year ended 31st March 2022.

Executive Summary June 2022

The Autumn Centre first closed on 20th March 2020 owing to Covid 19 and has since reopened and closed on a number of occasions since that time in line with the ever-changing government directives. Through the good office of our Centre Manager we have continued to provide a variety of services on a number of fronts. We have had to make many changes over the past 2 years owing to the pandemic and this has forced us to completely change our traditional working practices.

This has resulted in losing some services such as: the Memory Lane Drop in Cafe, Hairdressing Salon, and for large parts suspending hiring out the centre in the evenings and weekends, all of which have had a financial impact on the charities wellbeing.

It is very sad to have to report we have lost members through Covid 19 and we can only thank the amazing scientists for creating a vaccine so quickly as most agree this was our passport back to something like normality.

We were also informed (along with many other charities / service providers) our three contracts for delivering services on behalf of Public Health would definitely terminate on 31st March 2021 (loss of £54K) as Public Health were restructuring their prioritised outputs shifting more towards Homelessness and Substance Misuse.

As a result of this we had to come up with a financial strategy that linked to our reserves and continuing support from North Northants Council would allow us the opportunity to pursue financial stability over the coming years. This is linked to the introduction of an income plan, the “3 Tier Daily Experience”, explained in detail later, in this report that the cost to members is dependent on the level of care / support required by an individual.

Trustees Report April 2021 – March 31st 2022

Structure, Governance and Management.

The Company is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. The recruitment and appointment of new trustees / directors is either through recommendation to the Board of Trustees, or proposed by members and elected at the Annual General Meeting. Owing to Covid 19 restrictions we were unable to hold an AGM in either 2020 or 2021 and all serving trustees elected at the 2019 AGM agreed to serve until the next AGM which thankfully we were able to

hold in February 2022. Unfortunately we lost one of our trustees Isabella Meldrum last year who sadly passed away through illness, and has been sadly missed by staff, members, volunteers and fellow trustees. Isabella was a real stalwart and worked tirelessly to promote the centre and seek excellent service provision for our members.

The trustees meet on the last Tuesday of the month to discuss business on behalf of the Centre and to take any decisions required by the trustees as an active and inclusive process. Owing to various lockdowns, the meetings have been affected and we have had to learn how to hold meetings in a Zoom format (not bad considering 95% of us on the board are pensioners). This we have mastered but it did impact on the number of trustees tuning in. All meetings are minuted and sent out to all trustees to be agreed at the next monthly meeting along with any matters arising / amendments before proceeding with that month's agreed agenda. Thankfully we have been able to hold face to face meetings for the past few months.

The Centre employs 8 members of staff including the Manager who runs the Centre on a day to day basis in partnership with the users, volunteers, staff and the Board of Directors (Trustees who are all members of the charity). This number will rise to 9 members of staff by May 2022 as we are in the process of appointing an additional carer for the Dementia Suite as the need is clearly developing with increasing member numbers.

Without the staff, under the excellent leadership of our manager, the charity would not be in the position we are today, coming out of the Pandemic strong and resilient. North Northants Council has continued to support us with a grant in 2022 and we are very indebted for their continued support. We are very confident we can prove the benefit of such a facility in the north of the county to the new authority and continue to be able to rely on their financial and professional support.

The town used to boast three day centres (Central Day Centre, Arran Way Day Centre and Darley Dale Day Centre) but all three were merged in 2002 into what we have today "The Autumn Centre", as it was proving difficult to fund three centres in one town, and all three were funded by Northants County Council and Corby Borough Council (now merged into North Northants Council) .

With the merger of the three facilities it greatly reduced the funding needed through the two councils and has saved the authorities many hundreds of thousands of pounds over the past 20 years with better facilities / services all under one roof.

Objectives and Activities

The Charity is very focused on its desire to improve the quality of life for the over 50's in Corby and surrounding area. We also have some slightly younger disabled members of the community. To this end the centre provides a host of activities as agreed / requested by the users to improve health / mobility / fighting loneliness / isolation / dementia impact and staying fitter longer. The activities of the centre are always aligned with key outcomes required by Public Health

through the Well Being Programme for vulnerable adults. We will continue to maintain a good and fruitful relationship with Public Health and the new North Northants Council. In March 2022 we were inspected by officers from North Northants Council and our service met their criteria for quality of services which gave the team a real boost and is a very encouraging message going forward.

Pre Covid 19 activities at the Centre included Movement with Music, Painting, Arts & Crafts, Chair Aerobics, X-Tra Energy, Foot Care, Manicures, Otago (falls prevention programme), Dementia, Life Skills and Mindfulness. Much of this was suspended during the pandemic and the various enforced closures.

We have had to realign our services since the pandemic and as a result we have had to close the Hairdressing Salon and the Memory Café but both these gaps have been filled with service provision more aligned to our current / developing services.

Special Events such as Boat Trips, Halloween Fun, Burns Night, New Year Celebrations, Summer Inclusive Programme, race days (on the big screen), Easter Celebrations, Christmas Parties, Indian Food Experience have all again resurfaced since relaxed measures faced by the Covid 19 Pandemic.

Special Visits by local dignitaries, sponsors, local councillors, health representatives, local schools and prospective clients were badly hit by the pandemic but we are thankfully rekindling those connections and will continue to develop links to support our new operating structure and service delivery.

As an organisation we encourage new ideas from within the membership and where new requests are made we try hard to deliver new and exciting activities. As can be seen from above there is normally a wide list of activities and this was expanding year on year but again devastated by the pandemic.

The Trustees of the Autumn Centre have never lost sight of the fact that we are not just a Day Centre but an all inclusive Community Centre. To this end we have a long-term objective to promote interaction between our older community and the younger community bringing them together to explore common ground where all members of the local community can utilise the centre for interactive opportunities. Outside the centre we have a Multi Activity Games Area (MUGA) that could be utilised to organise joint and mixed activities across the age spectrum This could include different activities being led by different age groups but linked to something for all.

To achieve this ambitious proposal we will look to create a future post of an Intergenerational Worker whose role will be to explore, create and deliver an interactive programme of development for all the members of the community regardless of age, gender, sexuality, ability, race or religion. Over years we have seen the demise of youth provision and it is with this in mind we want to reach out and welcome the younger generation to feel the centre has something for them and they also can have the feeling of ownership with respect for the centre,

their peers and all different generations in a positive, rewarding, and inclusive programme.

Achievements and Performance

April 2021 was the start of the implementation of our “Going Forward “ strategy with the implementation of our new “ **3 Tier Daily Experience**” pricing structure. In the past pre Covid and being paid for delivering 3 x Public Health Contracts (Value £54K per annum) which ceased in March 2021, we had to restructure our complete service delivery to give the charity any chance of survival in the coming years.

Our “**3 Tier Daily Experience**” pricing structure included for all tiers:

- Three Course Meal
- All beverages
- Health Exercises / Activities
- Bingo
- Support from staff and volunteers

Tiers 2 & 3 include more personal care with various functions such as assisting members with toileting and meals, often One to One interaction and Tier 3 being for Dementia Sufferers. The pricing structure (April 2021 – March 2022) reflects this being:

Tier 1 = £10.00 Daily Experience (more able bodied)

Tier 2 = £30.00 “ “ (some additional care required)

Tier 3 = £50.00 “ “ (members with dementia / continual additional care)

For all financial information please refer to our examined accounts (Appendix I).

As April 21 - March 22 was our first year implementing the new “3 Tier Daily Experience”. As trustees we agreed to hold the prices the same for the next financial year (April 22 – March 23) as a thank you for so many members sticking with us, as we accept it has meant a financial hike for all our members, in our quest to become financially stable in the years to come. This will also help with pressures facing our members with crippling cost of living through inflation and in particular food prices and energy prices.

The **Daily Experience** has proven to be of significant importance in various degrees to our many members and their families. In some instances it has given an element of life back to certain family members as all know their loved ones are in good hands and are treated as part of “**Our Family**” but with high levels of professional support / care linked to their individual needs.

All our meals are cooked on site by our own catering staff with individual requirements and needs built into any care packages.

We also have the facilities to ensure any member not wishing to eat all three courses at lunch time, the courses not eaten, can be taken home, packed up in catering packaging to keep fresh, for eating later.

Most of Tier 2 & Tier 3 are referred through Social Services with some Tier 1 also being referred but most Tier 1 are here because they choose to be as it supports their quest of staying healthy and making friends.

Working Groups

We have recently created 3 new working groups :

- 1. Carer**
- 2. Fundraising & Events**
- 3. Marketing & Promotion**

All of these groups will play a part in bringing another element of sustainability to the Autumn Centre Corby through their targeted efforts in their field of expertise.

Carer

The Carer Working Group includes Trustees, Staff & family members who have a vested interest in ensuring their loved ones' needs are met and indeed enhanced. This increased level of care was a new development for us from last year but the staff / trustees/ volunteers / general members and now family members have all embraced the new development with open arms.

Fundraising & Events

Members of this group will concentrate on income generating activities such as sponsored events such as the 20K walk, walking on coals, fun days, swimming with sharks etc. The group has some very experienced members in this field so it should reap dividends as we go forward. This will also be linked to grant applications. All members of the group have experience in this area.

Marketing & Promotion

This group has already played a major role in: the production of leaflets & posters, designing an advert on Corby Radio, adverts in various circulars such as The Corby Trader, NHS Newsletter and helping to shape the new website to be launched in the near future.

Transport Costs

To also help our financial sustainability we had to terminate the transport subsidy we gave to our members through subsidising their taxi costs. Our members realised why we were making this decision and have supported us. They now have an agreement where they pay the taxi company directly on a new "Pay as you Go" service thus saving us £10,000 per annum, a huge saving thus again lessening the blow from increased financial pressures.

We have achieved on so many other fronts as well as the above including:

- *Delivered activity packs to fight loneliness during the lockdown, activity books for word searches, crosswords, painting books, exercise books for adults plus many other "goodies". This ensured the most vulnerable members still had contact, seen a known friendly face and engaged in stimulating activities.*
- *Delivered exercise sessions on-line regarding Otago and Get up and Go*

- *We also delivered smoking cessation sessions online and virtual weigh-ins while the centre was closed.*
- *Trustee (ST) making “pretty facemasks” with all income going to the centre*
- *We made hundreds of companion calls to our vulnerable members who had little or no contact with family and friends*
- *New plants were purchased and planted in the courtyard along with bistro tables and chairs when the area was open to members.*
- *Produced a short film on how to stay safe in the centre*
- *Created a “Friends of The Autumn Centre” group for individuals with special skills we can call upon as and when required to support the trustees & members.*
- *Carried forward DEFRA funding to continue the Emergency Foodbank until July 2021 delivering to 35 families per week.*
- *A variety of training is undertaken by staff and trustees.*
- *Developing a new Website for launching in June 2022 to promote the centre and to keep members, supporters and sponsors up to date with all the activities, services, timetable, calendar, newsletter, fundraising events and opportunity to suggest ideas, comment, donate, sponsor and follow what is going on at the centre.*
- *Raised over £1,000 in-house by staging a Burns Supper*
- *Over £3,000 was raised by a 20 Kilometre sponsored walk undertaken by a trustee and joined on the last leg by many staff, trustees, members and well wishers.*
- *Full House for Members Christmas Lunches on 21st & 22nd of Dec 2021*
- *Developing the Dementia Suite with more members joining resulted in the need to engage a new member of staff to be in place by May 2022.*
- *Utilising a training Matrix with over 70 related courses for staff / volunteers & trustees.*
- *Creation of the 3 specialised working groups*
- *All staff other than the Manager have been Furloughed on and off from 20th March 2020 and non furloughed during times we were able to open, because of the then imposed operating numbers sometimes had to juggle the staff around the furlough scheme. The charity paid the additional 20% to ensure all staff received their full wages as all only work part time hours and this could have proven disastrous if they lost a large part of their expected income. We believe the impact of Covid 19 would have finished the charity and all our services if it had not been for the Furlough Scheme.*
- *Pauley’s continues to offer returned but edible fruit and vegetables free of charge to be collected once a week. We use as much as we can for the week’s menus and offer the rest to users for a small voluntary contribution.*
- *Fare Share offers food on a weekly basis from major supermarkets. We used what we could for meals when the centre was operating. During closure times we utilised it as part of our Food Bank Service and sold the remainder to cover administration charges, we pay £55.00 per week for this service and it has proven to be a life saver for some of our members.*

- Secured a permanent promotion space in Corby Library in the Health & WellBeing area and also on their Facebook page.
- Retaining all the trustees with all agreeing to serve until we were able to hold an AGM, which thankfully took place in February 2022.
- Retaining a “Digging for Dementia” gardening group of dementia sufferers during times we have been allowed to open. The garden was looked after by some of the trustees during lockdowns.
- Successful in a grant application to create a new herb, vegetable and flower garden through the David Cock Foundation £2K, owing to Covid 19 this is still waiting to happen with the funding ring fenced for this project.
- Delivered various training sessions for staff, volunteers, trustees and members with many of the sessions having to be delivered online.
- Dementia Awareness with more members & trustees now active and aware.
- Creation of a “quiet room” for assessments, consultations, family waiting area and occasional meetings. This is where the old hairdressing salon used to operate from.
- The launch of our in-house Dementia Suite which is offering opportunities to individuals and their families to improve their quality of life. This has proven so successful we are already looking into expanding the size of the suite.
- Manager fully qualified and continues to deliver Otago in Falls Prevention plus Get up and Go, Seated Dance & Exercise.
- All trustees DBS Checked
- Raised additional funds through various in-house activities including the “59 ers”, raffles, donations, grants, sponsorships, etc.
- We were able to come out of Covid 19 with a gradual extension of operating days / hours until we were fully up and running again with our new “ **3 Tier Daily Experience**” in full swing.
- Continue to hold regular trustees meetings by Zoom and where possible, face to face meetings to conduct business on behalf of the centre and minimise the impact of Covid 19. Making sure we adhered to the government guidelines at the time.
- Without the Furlough Scheme we would have without doubt ceased to exist as a charity with the loss of a much needed and much loved facility.

Future Plans

The centre will hopefully continue to develop services in line with the ever increasing demands on our more senior members of the community fighting social isolation, ill health, reduced mobility, onset of dementia, mental health, vulnerability to falls, various disabilities, hospitalisation and personal grief. As a charity we are totally committed to continue to grow in spite of ever increasing financial pressures from loss of contracts, increased inflation especially food and energy bills, reducing funding streams. We all accept the ageing population is growing and therefore the need for facilities such as ours are in greater demand. We are in the process of writing a 5 Year Business plan (to be reviewed annually).

Our Future Hopes:

- Through increased levels of income aligned to increased services, grant applications continue to expand the “Carer Team” to complement and grow the service. If we fail to do this and attempt to standstill we will implode and fail our client / member base and the families of those often in desperate need of such a service.
- As is the case, year on year, we will be forced to call on our reserves in the forthcoming years to balance the books. This is inevitable because of the pandemic and other financial pressures.
- A big thanks to North Northants Officer, Julie McKinnon, for seeking to secure a new lease on the same terms and conditions, hopefully this will be for a period long enough to allow us to submit substantial bids to grow the facility and services over the coming years, to meet increased demand. Ideally this would be for at least 25 years. Also for her continued support on any issues we needed guidance on during the pandemic.
- Continue to build a good working relationship with Public Health where together we can meet common needs.
- To create an Arts Programme to design murals / photographs on parts of the building to celebrate our members and local heroes.
- The Charity is looking into a future plan to engage an Intergenerational Worker to create good supportive links between the youth and elders within the community. This would allow many joint initiatives between many of the age groups to create a “One Community” displaying support, interaction and respect from all parties.
- To undertake annual reviews of all our policies and procedures to ensure best practice and continual improvement.
- We have a project under consideration with Public Health and North Northants Council to try and secure a grant to develop a number of new initiatives such as: extending our fence line to gain more outside space, extending our garden areas, convert some windows into doorways to allow greater access to outside facilities and AI fresco dining, install a new kitchen and to reconfigure all the main toilets to be unisex / disabled compliant.
- If the above becomes a reality, the next development stage could look to build a roof over the courtyard to create an orangery giving far more indoor space and therefore all year round service provision.
- One of our long term plans has been to create a mezzanine suite in the space above the false ceiling in the main hall. This would be fitted with a lift and allow additional activities /services and increased numbers as we are always struggling with existing space to meet current needs.
- Access to the centre is DDA compliant but we would love to make the centre more easily accessible to unaccompanied members in non-powered wheelchairs as the existing ramp makes this difficult for older users.

Financial Transparency

Lee McCormick leads the team and has been an excellent Manager since taking up the role nearly 5 years ago. We are all very much indebted to her and her excellent team of staff and volunteers. Lee has developed a close working relationship with an officer from CVS Northampton (Brenda Peers Ross) and produces monthly spreadsheets which are copied to our main funders and trustees. This is complimented with monthly updates by the Treasurer at Trustees meetings to ensure transparency and financial dealings are scrutinised at a number of levels.

Reserves Policy

An amount of approx. 6 months operational costs are normally kept in reserve along with a small committed capital fund for future development of the Centre (to act as match funding for future capital grant applications) and secured funding if ever a Termination Strategy had to be implemented to ensure we could meet our legal obligations towards our hard working and valued staff plus any outstanding bills / contracted services.

The reserve can also be utilised if for any reason existing funding sources are late in processing either grants or contractual payments for the wide-ranging care / activity programme currently in place.

Trustees Responsibilities

Charity law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which show a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity, and its financial activities for that period. In preparing those financial statements the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently.
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- State whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operational existence.
- The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 1993.
- They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Public Benefit

As can be seen from the report the Charity of the Autumn Centre meets a growing need for the over 50's community and various individuals with various disabilities and needs in Corby and surrounding villages. As well as the activities mentioned in the body of the report we support, within the facility, a host of other users and activity providers.

The list is long and varied including Joint Action Group, Exeter Neighbourhood Association, The African Arts and Bible Group, St.John's Church, Doggie First Aid Team, Made in Corby (Arts Organisation), Stages (Mental health Organisation), British Red Cross, Age UK, Stuart Rd Clinic, The Salvation Army, Polling Station, Groundwork.

Plus various local hirers for christenings, funerals, race nights, youth activities, childrens parties, training sessions, etc.

Most of the various hirers have been unable to utilise the facility during the Covid 19 Pandemic.

Please Note

The Autumn Centre Corby would like to pay thanks for the support given to us from the following:

- North Northants Council
- A.T.O. Corby Cabs & Sky Cabs Corby
- Corby Lions
- W Pauley
- DEFRA
- Family and Friends of the late Hubert Toner
- Family of Late Member David Davidson
- D Thompson (painter & decorator of the Quiet Room)
- Vaahnu (donation of sensory room equipment).
- Friends of Corby Woodland Project
- Seagrave Bowls Club
- Corby Rotary Club
- Corby Diagnostic Tea Bar
- Morrisons Supermarket
- RS Components
- Northamptonshire Community Foundation
- Fare Share
- Northants VCS
- ACRE
- Co-op
- Corby Library Services
- Growing Community Award Scheme (David Cock Foundation)
- And of course our very own Staff, Volunteers, Members and well-wishers.

Approved by the board of trustees and signed on their behalf.

Peter Floody MBE.....

Company Secretary

Date: Tuesday 28th June 2022