

### **ITEM 3 Chairman's Report**

The year started badly, with the third lockdown beginning in the first week. Thanks to government funding and the furlough scheme we managed to cover our basic expenses despite the pandemic. We were able partially to reopen at times during the summer and early autumn but the only user able to operate throughout the year, albeit at times only to care for the children of key workers, was the Stepping Stones Preschool.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Chris Calder, who held the fort at Avonway for the first four months of the year and did further cleaning, decorating and refurbishment throughout the building. We also appreciated the commitment of our staff, who accepted being on furlough but came in as required.

Chris Calder had indicated that she did not intend to stand for re-election at the 2021 AGM., and Richard Kelly, the Treasurer and Trustee Lorraine Thompson had also indicated that they would retire at that time, thus reducing us to only five Trustees, four of whom were members of the Executive Committee. At the 2021 AGM I agreed to stand for election as Chairman and Iain Kidson as Treasurer on the strict understanding that we would only serve for a single year. General appeals for more people to come forward from the user groups had failed, as had personal approaches to individuals. At the end of the year it was decided drastic action had to be taken and it was announced that unless potential Trustees came forward Avonway would have to close immediately after the 23 May 2021 AGM. I am pleased to report that subsequently there were positive responses to this appeal and Avonway's future has been secured.

The main building project in 2021 was the replacement of the roof of the original school building. We received funding from Fordingbridge Town Council and New Forest District Council as well as generous donations from users and local residents so we were able to give the go-ahead to the roofers in the summer and now Avonway is watertight and funding will no longer have to be spent on repairing water damage.

Since the last AGM the organisations' financial procedures. have been reviewed and streamlined and the capacity for online booking has been introduced. For this I thank Iain Kidson. At the same time the organisations' computer software has been reorganised to allow staff and Trustees to access it remotely.

We have closed down our Hundred Club, on the grounds that it involved a great deal of administration for a minimal amount of income.

The Community Minibus was off the road for most of the year as the organisations it serves - principally Luncheon Clubs, Stroke Club and Carer Hub - were first unable to function owing to Covid restrictions and from last September only able to operate at a reduced level as the vulnerable clients of these groups were slow to return. The minibus committee reviewed the situation at the end of the year and came to the conclusion that running the minibus was no longer viable; there were not enough passengers to justify its existence; there were not enough committee members to run it and not enough drivers to operate in the unlikely event that more users could be found. Subsequently the Minibus Committee's recommendation that the minibus be sold was accepted by the Executive Committee and this has now happened.

Finally, I wish to thank current Trustees, in particular Iain Kidson, who has done a great deal more to support me than demanded of his brief as Treasurer, prospective Trustees for their enthusiasm, members of Fordingbridge Rotary who have continued to deal with minor repairs and refurbishments of the building and took down two chimneys prior to the reroofing, our manager Sara Winteridge for coping single-handed for much of the year and our users who have been most cooperative in difficult times.

Janet Brown  
12 May 2022

## Treasurer's report to Fordingbridge and District Community Association Annual General Meeting

### 1) Annual report and accounts

This record of the Association's activities has been made available on the Avonway website and has also been lodged as required by law with the Charity Commission. The focus of the report is on the activities of the year but it is important that members are aware of the thinking behind the Trustees approach to mitigating the consequences of the Covid pandemic. Some of these decisions have consequences for the future. At first sight the operating surplus of over £18K (after depreciation nearly £14K) is very satisfactory but members should note that this is a very distorted situation.

### 2) Steps taken to reduce expenditure

During the pandemic planned maintenance was postponed. The use of rooms apart from the pre-school fell to almost nothing so we took steps to minimise our expenditure by reducing cleaning, reducing maintenance, reducing staffing and taking full advantage of the furlough arrangements. The assistant manager book-keeper left at Easter and responsibility for book-keeping was taken by the Treasurer, reducing costs. As use of Avonway increases it has now become necessary to increase staffing with inevitable cost consequence. We were able to continue with the re-roofing project because this was covered by separate grants and generous donations from members of the local community and volunteer help from Rotary. Planned maintenance was delayed. This included woodwork repairs in the South Room and the Annex, the latter also designed to increase ventilation. We had reached the last year of an external painting program but decided not to paint the East end windows of the Annex. Replacement of the last stretch of cast iron guttering on the South side of the 1834 building was planned but has been deferred.

On the positive side it has been possible at relatively low cost (around £600) to replace the lighting in all the rentable rooms with LEDs which should reduce electricity consumption by around 40%. Our contract for electricity runs out in October and at that point we will almost certainly be faced with a substantial price increase which will exceed the saving in consumption and this cost will need to be met from the underspend last year. Considerable work has been done on the heating controls and it is now possible to keep very tight control over temperatures in E, W, N and Taylor Rooms and to monitor and control these remotely. Considerable work has been done to understand the dynamics of the heating to take full advantage of the new controls. It is difficult to compare years because of weather fluctuations but first indications are that we can save between 10 and 15% of our gas consumption. Our gas contract runs out in summer 2023 and unless the world becomes a happier place by then it seems likely that our unit costs of gas will rise substantially so any reduction we can make in consumption is important.

### 3) Steps taken to increase income

The long-standing policy of the Trustees has been to try and anticipate likely expenses and room rental income and to set room hire rates which balance the two. In 2020 we decided in the face of the pandemic that we should not increase room rentals for 2021. In Autumn 2021 when we came to set room rentals we were faced with considerable uncertainty about the extent to which use of our premises would recover and we are still in this situation. While some major users have returned we have lost two luncheon clubs, the stroke club and a number of other groups. Inflation was already expected to be higher than normal but it was decided that we should set aside the usual policy and increase rentals by 5% to recognise the two years of inflation. In setting this level we recognised that we might not cover our costs in accordance with policy but we felt it appropriate to regard the unexpectedly generous "business support grants" which we received during Covid with the resulting surplus as shown in the year end accounts as a reserve we should draw on to balance the books. This was a

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judgement call made at a time when we knew inflation this year would probably exceed the 2.5% increase and members will be only too aware that we are now faced with inflation which may well exceed 10% and much more than this in energy costs.

In setting room rentals we made adjustments to remove some anomalies which had crept in during the 12 years since they were last reviewed and current room rentals are now very tightly linked to room size. We also abolished some special rates that had been offered and modified the discounts allowed for large bookings so that these reflected the total duration of such booking rather than the number of sessions booked without any reference to duration. It became clear that some users had historically been somewhat imprecise in their booking of set up and clear down times and these are now much more tightly controlled. This is important in terms of fairness between users as users who do not book correct times are in effect subsidised by those who do.

The net result of the adjustments and changes in practice has been that room rentals have held up well and this is reflected in the current position set out below.

#### 4) Depreciation

The move towards treating most expenditure as expenses and avoiding capitalising relatively minor assets has been continued. Because the roof project was fully funded by grants and donations and came in below budget and on time there has been no increase in the fixed assets arising from it. The sale of the minibus has removed a further depreciating asset. Historically the depreciation on the minibuses has been ignored in assessing whether they were operating in a viable way and has only appeared as a charge on the main F&DCA accounts.

#### 5) Current financial position

The mid year financial position is always difficult to assess as the pattern of income and expenditure is far from linear. In particular costs largely continue through the summer period while room rentals fall off so a surplus of income over expenditure is required at this stage of the year. However, even with this caveat it appears that F&DCA is well placed to weather the coming financial storms with a surplus on the year to date of £15K.

The bank balances are currently healthy with a trading account balance of £35 K, We currently have £38K in the fund-raising account, reflecting successful past fund-raising (including by The Gate magazine, now closed) mainly without defined projects planned to expend the income. It should be noted that there remain within this balance £7.6K of grants to the Carer's hub which could not be spent because of Covid which it is anticipated will be committed in the coming year under the supervision of the F&DCA Trustees. The funds previously held in minibus accounts are now available to the Association. These funds arise mainly because minibus depreciation has never been fully accounted for and has been met by general association funds. The funds available amount to £46K and Trustees will need to consider how to allocate these monies in the future.

#### 6) Personnel

I retire as Treasurer at the AGM at which this report is presented and arrangements are in place to ensure a smooth handover to a new Treasurer to be elected at that meeting. I would like to record my thanks to our retiring Chairman, Janet Brown for her support and encouragement during my tenure. I must record my admiration for her commitment to F&DCA over the last 20 years, but particularly over the last 17 months. It is entirely fitting that in recognition of her efforts at Avonway and elsewhere the Rotary Club has named her as this year's Citizen of the Year.

Iain G Kidson 16 May 2022

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### **YOUR ELECTION CANDIDATES**

Janet Brown, Iain Kidson and Emma Blake will be retiring at the end of the AGM. The following candidates will be standing for election at the meeting.

#### **Derek Brooks - Chairman**

I live in Alderholt but spend a great deal of time in Fordingbridge at the Bowls Club, where I have been treasurer for six years, and by volunteering at the vaccination clinic on over 100 occasions.

There are various reasons why I am standing as a potential trustee and chair of Avonway. I am a firm believer in giving something to the community in which one lives and I dislike apathy with a vengeance. To witness the potential loss of the institution through lack of volunteers would be inexcusable as it is a valuable facility for future generations. (And, perhaps selfishly, I want to keep my brain in good working order by having a challenge!)

Since retirement from leading a middle school in Wimborne in 2015, I have been chair of governors at a local middle school. I am experienced in establishing an institution's direction, devising a development plan, and ensuring the written objectives are rigorously pursued, albeit with some adaptation if necessary, and as treasurer of the bowls club, I am experienced in locating and applying for potential grant funding.

#### **Karen Williets - Treasurer**

I am a mum of three grown boys and Nanna to a beautiful Granddaughter.

I live in Alderholt, where I've been for the last 21 years.

I worked at the local primary school in Alderholt for 10 years as the Finance Officer.

Over the last few years I have started volunteering for a few organisations such as Alderholt Rainbows, Fordingbridge Community Fridge, Green Gram.

I am also a Rotarian in Fordingbridge.

I wish to volunteer at the Avonway because I didn't want to see such a community asset close for lack of trustees, and I'm therefore offering to take over as treasurer.

#### **Claire Godson – Secretary**

Hello, my name is Claire. I have many roles including "mum"! But having volunteered, worked and lived in Fordingbridge for nearly 8 years now, I love being part of this fantastic community. I believe that especially after the recent pandemic Avonway has a pivotal role to play in the physical and mental wellbeing of its members and I would like to bring my work and volunteer experience to be part of the team that takes Avonway forward. Always happy to stop and chat, ask me about my love of history and working for English Heritage, my art journey especially now that I am a member of the Fordingbridge Art Club, the mental health benefits of belly dancing or, if you are brave, the trials and tribulations of being a mum of 5!

#### **Carole Gannon- Trustee**

I have lived in Fordingbridge for 12 years and became an Avonway Trustee last year. I am interested in communities and how Fordingbridge can prosper as a town for the benefit of all local residents. As people use town centres less for shopping, they need to be a social focus and bring communities together. Avonway is such a great resource for the town and it needs more people to promote what goes on here and to get involved so that it will thrive and help develop community spirit in Fordingbridge. In a Trustee role, I hope to bring some skills learned through my career in surveying and property, and more recently, online retail and social media.

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### **Paul Harding - Trustee**

I have lived in the area since 1996. Initially, we lived in Frogham and our children attended Hyde Primary School. We moved into Fordingbridge in 2016.

During our time in Frogham, I became quite involved in the school and village life. Since moving to Fordingbridge, I can now walk into town and this, coupled with retirement, has allowed me to become more active in the local community.

I am the Treasurer of the Fordingbridge Art Club and we use Avonway for our twice-monthly Saturday Art Together sessions. I also attend a number of club and activity classes in both Avonway and Roundhill. These involvements have made me very keen on helping create and maintain local community enterprises.

Recently, I have become involved in The Green Gram Refill Shop - a new community-owned and community-run shop which opened in early May in Roman Quay.

I am fairly up-to-date on technology and have created and maintain websites for Art Club and The Green Gram.

### **Julia Harley - Trustee**

I have lived in Fordingbridge for over 30 years, and have great affection for Avonway given the support and care it gave my mother-in-law in her later years.

I've recently retired from a long and successful career in secondary education and am now in a position to give something back to my local community. I consider myself a teacher at heart and have a strong belief in the power of lifelong learning. I spent the final ten years of my career as the Head teacher of a large comprehensive school, and continue to derive great pleasure from learning and from seeing others grow and develop.

I relish the opportunity to use my skills, energy and enthusiasm in helping Avonway to continue to develop and thrive.

### **Adrian Ings – Trustee**

Ade needs very little introduction as he has been involved with Avonway since he started playing skittles here in 1985 and has been a Trustee since the previous millennium. Ade runs our bar which operates for Skittles groups and is an important selling point for attracting bookings of functions.

### **David Sanders – Trustee**

I've lived in Fordingbridge since 1997 having returned to the UK from Malaysia. I Joined Rotary whilst in Malaysia and really like to help people and give back to the community. I joined the Rotary Club of Fordingbridge and have been involved in many local projects. One of those was the refurbishment of the Avonway Annex and a few Avonway work parties since. I was on the committee for the Fordingbridge Show that was held at Godshill, and continued as the Fordingbridge Summer Festival at the recreation ground.

I have been a trustee of the Victoria rooms, and am a founding member of Fordingbridge Greener Living and Fordingbridge Events Group who now put on the Fordingbridge Festival each year (Covid permitting) and other events such as Christmas in Fordingbridge.

For relaxation I am a member of Fordingbridge Bowling Club, Five Rivers Indoor Bowling Club and I like to cook. As an electrician I'm a practical person and intend to try and match the incredible job Iain Kidson has done over the years with Avonway maintenance.