

Welcome

Welcome to our 19th AGM, in what is now our 20th year, something I will return to later. I would like to thank you all for your support, not just in attending this evening, but also throughout the years.

First, I have a few items of housekeeping. We are not expecting the fire alarm to be tested, so if it sounds, then it is for real and we need to evacuate. The exits are as marked (indicate).

We have to finish this meeting by 6.30 pm as the room is booked out to someone else from 7pm.

Before I start, I'd like to welcome the Mayor, Rachel Bullock, and invite her to say a few words.

— Mayor —

Introduction

We are an organisation built on the efforts of our volunteers, and they, you, are central to it and all it does. The volunteering which keeps us running and serving the people of Saltash takes many forms and should be celebrated.

The last 12 months have been hard for everyone. The effects of the increase in cost of living and the stagnation of pay over recent years are starting to take their toll. The effects of reduced expenditure on public services have placed an increased burden on households and third sector providers, such as us. The effects are double-edged, making it harder to provide the support just when it is most needed.

Kitchen & Fridge

This has been especially felt in the running of the Kitchen. The food is provided to the Kitchen and Fridge mostly for free, although we pay a subscription of £1000 a year to FairShare to cover their costs and we have to buy milk and other sundries for the Kitchen. So while the cost of the food is very little, we have to pay for electricity, rent, and rates.

The kitchen and fridge receive around 990kg of food each month - which would otherwise go to landfill. This is equivalent to 2382 meals worth of food.

The Fridge is open on three days a week and sees 42 people each day. In August, it served a total of 637 people. The Kitchen is open four days a week and serves an average of 26 people each day. In August, we had 479 customers in the kitchen and served 253 meals.

Over the last twelve months, the kitchen has just about broken even. However, this has been achieved through crowdfunding and some generous donations, including the successful open day at Pentillie Castle. We have already had to make some hard decisions, so we are now in better shape, but further work is going to be necessary to build on this.

Some Community Kitchens, such as those in Launceston and Callington, have had to move to a model of charging rather than relying entirely on donations, and it has been decided, with some reluctance, that we should try this approach. The level of these charges should not be unaffordable, and while some people may be put off by them, there are options to ensure those most in need will continue to be supported.

The lease for the kitchen is up for renewal in October 2026. We have the automatic right to renew the lease and will start negotiations early over the new year.

Hopper Bus Service

Some years back, there was a desperate need for community transport in Saltash, which resulted in us setting up the Hopper service. Since then, the Red Bus has been established and grown, providing both contracted local bus services as well as community transport. This had led to a decline in the demand for the Hopper service to the point that it became no longer economically viable. In consequence, we have wound it up, the last remaining asset being sold earlier this year.

Our thanks must go to all of the volunteers who contributed many hours to take members of our community to a host of interesting, and sometime challenging, places. And to the Directors who tirelessly organised trips, drivers and buses, and to remember those no longer with us.

Belle Vue

18 Belle Vue Road is owned by Cornwall Council and has been home to the Citizens Advice Bureau for a long time. Cornwall Council has decided that they no longer need the building, but this would have led to the exit of the CAB from Saltash. Negotiations to rent the building were started, and finally, this financial year, a long lease has been agreed. This gives us security of tenure and, in turn, gives similar security to our tenants and secures the organisation a steady income too.

We continue to provide a home for CAB, securing their presence in Saltash. We also rent space to two further charities, and we rent the remaining space to commercial tenants. The profits made from this enterprise subsidise the running of the company and the other enterprises.

MemoryBox

Memory Box continues to go from strength to strength. We continue to run the café once a week, averaging 15 attendees. The singing group now meets once a week at the Wesley Church, averaging 22 singers. At the beginning of the year, we successfully bid for a grant for three years to cover the costs of holding this every week instead of fortnightly.

The singing group has showcased their talents in the library locally, and after Rose was invited to speak at the Regional Dementia conference at the County Show Ground, the group also sang on stage there. It was so well received that they were invited to appear next year. They have also appeared at the May Day festival.

Veterans

The veterans group was set up a while ago and was originally part of Memory Box. Carol, who used to organise it, has had to move away for personal reasons. It took some time to find some new organisers to lead this group, with it being relaunched after a break earlier this year. It now meets at the Ashtorre Centre. It has been a great success, and they are looking to expand the group.

Their activities have been supported for some time by Greenwich Hospital, but they have now decided that this is the last year that they will support local groups. In future, they will only fund national organisations.

After a series of discussions about the advantages to the group of becoming a charity, the decision was made to separate them from the start of this financial year. This will give them a better identity, making it easier to gain grants from military charities, and as they move to become a charity, this will create further advantages in income from gift aid and access to grants only available to charities.

Shop

The shop is one of the two parts of the organisation that are very much of service to the community, but would not fit the Charity Commission definition of charity. The shop sells products on behalf of some 45 local artisans, ranging from art, crafts and woodwork through to baked goods. It also sells some local produce and some not-so-local. The primary focus is the service to local artisans. Some of the past traders in the shop have gone on to establish their own businesses. The aim really being to support the local economy. This last financial year has been their busiest year so far. The shop also provides a place to recycle ink cartridges and glasses, as well as a hub of useful information.

Volunteering

We have a fantastic group of 130 volunteers on whom we depend for all we do. Recently, we have started to see some younger volunteers, in the shape of Duke of Edinburgh candidates, many of whom stay on after completing their award.

In itself, our volunteering opportunities are another part of the picture; it not only provides service to our community but provides the opportunity for our volunteers to acquire skills, such as food hygiene certificates or skills with websites and social media. It is also a social opportunity in its own right. We would like to expand these opportunities and will look at whether we could support some relevant qualifications, such as NVQs, and the possibility of collaborating with educational organisations to this end.

It is hard to express how much we depend on our volunteers. We are a part of a national scheme which provides recognition, called Hidden Heroes. We can nominate three volunteers each year. They receive a

voucher for 2 nights in a hotel, at no cost to us. This year's nominees are indeed hidden, as they did not wish to be publicly recognised.

Lead Volunteers

Our enterprises are led by lead volunteers who oversee the day-to-day operation, setting the content and organising the volunteers. They bring enthusiasm and focus to their teams. Without these leaders, we could not function, and Saltash would be all the poorer for it. We know that we lean too heavily on these people, and whilst we are immensely grateful for their efforts, we owe it to them to actively recruit others to spread the load. We also need volunteers to lead some administrative functions like marketing, social media, and the website, as well as client-facing activities.

Board - function, composition

Just like a stage production, there is much that goes on behind the scenes. In our case, part of this falls to the Board of Directors. We currently have six directors from a maximum of twelve. They are all volunteers and are unpaid. The board meets at least once a month to monitor the activities of the company and ensure that the finances remain healthy and that everything is running smoothly. The directors are legally responsible for the company.

Overall

It is not always recognised what a wide and diverse company this is. Even people who have used services of one enterprise for a time are surprised to discover that the other parts belong to us too.

However, the impact we have on the lives of the people of Saltash is considerable. As an example of the impression we create and an endorsement of the work that we do, let me tell you of a visit from Cornwall Community Foundation. They administer grants on behalf of many organisations through a series of panels who award the grants. In this case, we had one of the panels visit, who wanted to see what we did and where their grant had gone.

We started in the shop, explaining to them how it worked. We then went on to explain the Fridge, which was taking place outside the shop at the time of their visit. Already, they were expressing satisfaction that their grant had gone to support something worthwhile. Next, we dropped into the kitchen and stopped for a cup of tea and a cake, where we explained how the kitchen worked, the social prescriber, and the other uses the kitchen was put to. We then walked up to the Wesley Church, where the singing group was meeting. At the end, the panel were telling us we should be proud of all we do and were encouraging us to apply for further grants, clearly both impressed by what they had seen and moved by the impact of the singing. Indeed, CCF were so impressed they are nominating us for a King's Award for Volunteering.

Charitable Status

As I mentioned earlier, we have once more looked at charitable status. The primary advantages would be the access to Gift Aid, which as a CIC is unavailable to us, and access to some grants which are solely available to charities.

In the coming year, we intend to explore the possibilities of establishing a charity. It is unlikely that a simple conversion is a viable approach. Instead, it is likely we would look at a charity where the CIC is the sole trustee. This would retain the identity of the organisation and its accountability to you, our membership. If we include the Kitchen, for example, we would immediately save on our rates as well as potentially uplifting the value of the donations by 25% - enough to bring the Kitchen above the break-even point.

Finances

As I said before, the last 12 months have been difficult, and some hard decisions have had to be made. The net result is shown in the accounts which are available here, and having been submitted to Companies House, are publicly available. Through a combination of some grants and other good fortune, plus the disposal of a minibus and the ceasing of the associated costs, we made a small surplus.

The figures show that our income was reduced last year compared with the year before. This reflects a reduction in grant income, and this is the result of the grant for the Kitchen manager ceasing. In turn, our expenses have dropped slightly. As we can no longer claim as much VAT back as we used to when we ran

transport, we have de-registered. This allows us to keep all of the price we charge for items in the shop. It has also allowed us to consider setting minimum donations or charging for items in the kitchen.

The forecast for next year is that we will make a small shortfall. The forecast does not include any grant income not already secured. As mentioned earlier, we will be applying to the grant panel that visited, and there is another grant that we are reasonably likely to be awarded. Even if these are not forthcoming, we have plans in place to improve the position of the kitchen, and we have the reserves to see these to fruition if necessary.

In the meantime, we are actively looking at opportunities to make the whole operation more self-sufficient and reduce our dependency on getting grants each year. Charitable status for part of the organisation is just one such opportunity.

20-year celebrations

As I said at the start, we are 20 years old this year, so we are going to celebrate. In particular, we are going to celebrate our volunteers and our achievements. We are going to celebrate our collaboration with all the organisations we have worked with and supported for the last 20 years.

There will be a garden party at the Core on the 5th July 2026, Sunday afternoon. There will be tea, cake, and some speeches, but mainly there will be tea and cake. More importantly, in the run-up to the 20th party, we intend to publicise what we do and who we are. We also intend to celebrate parts of the organisation that have significant dates; in particular, the MemoryBox singing group has their 6th anniversary on the 21st January 2026; their normal Wednesday slot will take place, as usual at the Wesley Church, but will be held in the main room. Refreshments will be served in the side room. I would commend this event to everyone, and if you've not yet seen them at their weekly practice, I would especially recommend going. And there'll be tea and cake.