CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

INTRODUCTION

We are an organisation of many parts, and many stakeholders. As a company limited by guarantee we have members instead of shareholders. We also have volunteers, many of whom are also members. We also have our customers and service users.

This AGM is a public meeting of the company. Where there are resolutions, the members of the company vote. The only resolution before the meeting is the acceptance of last year's minutes, which we will take the format vote on later. It is also an opportunity for us to address questions raised by you the members. We have had a number of questions this year, and while some of these will be addressed in the course of delivering this report, there will be a section at the end where those that were not, will be answered directly.

As a CIC we operate for the benefit of the community. This is our largest stakeholder. We provide these benefits through our various enterprises, which I will discuss shortly.

Our greatest asset is our volunteers. It is they who make all of the work of the enterprises possible. It is important to realise that my fellow directors count amongst the numbers of our volunteers. They too give of their time freely and carry considerable responsibility for ensuring the company continues to run.

ECONOMIC CLIMATE

Last year I noted that the year had been a hard one for everyone. This year has not been any better. Prices are rising, and everyone is feeling the effects. I will address the finances of the company later, but as the difficult economic climate persists, it compounds the effects. Everyone is tightening their belt, so there is a little less money left to donate to good causes, there is a little less time available to volunteer. So, we feel this with rising costs, reduced income and pressure on the volunteer time we have available to expand our services.

MEMORY BOX

One area we have continued to have success with is Memory Box. Rose and Pauline have strengthened this already marvellous service. The Memory Box Singers have continued to meet at the Wesley Church, but also gone out and sung a number of other venues by invitation. The Thursday morning Memory Box café has become so successful that they have had to seek larger accommodation to run their meetings and to enable further growth in the activities they offer. Cognitive Stimulation Therapy is a further service, which helps people with mild to moderate memory or cognitive impairments. The nearest service offered is Liskeard, which for those in need of such a service is quite a journey, and not ideal by public transport. It is therefore something we plan to offer locally. In addition, they are looking to widen the offering, having consulted with Mandy, the Social Prescriber and MacMillan, we are looking to start a Cancer Support Group, something which has been identified as lacking from the area.

SHOP

The shop continues to provide service to local traders offering a range of art and craft products, as well as retailing many other items, wherever possible sourced as close to Saltash as possible.

The shop is also now the main focus of our green initiatives. It provides a location for recycling ink cartridges, glasses, and bags. And, of course, it is now where the Fridge is based.

FRIDGE

The fridge continues with its long-standing purpose, which is diversion of food which would otherwise go to landfill. Unlike the food banks, this is not means tested food provision. This is about making food that would otherwise be destroyed being made available for people to use. The philosophy is that anyone who can use it can take what they can use, and because there is cost in providing this service, donate what they can afford. As a secondary benefit, this makes food available at minimal cost, to those that need it.

KITCHEN

At this point, I will hand over to Peter.

PROPERTY

We have a total of four properties. The Kitchen and the Shop, plus Belle Vue and the old toilet block. Belle Vue is an office block which we hold on a lease from Cornwall Council, negotiated to give a long-term home to Citizens Advice Cornwall, who would have otherwise become homeless when Cornwall disposed of the building. The remainder of the space is let to a mixture of charities and commercial tenants. One of the charities is FoodBank, who also rent the old toilet block from us for additional storage.

CHARITABLE STATUS

Last year, I mentioned we were exploring the idea of converting CEPL12 to a charity, although a straight conversion did not seem to be a likely option for us. We have had discussion with our accountants and been advised of the kind of corporate structure we would be looking at. They also advised we should seek legal advice. We approached a local firm, but as their corporate law partners quickly came to different ideas, they recommended we seek advice from a specialist charity law practice. Given the likely costs of such an approach and weighing these against the potential benefits, it was decided to defer this until other issues have been resolved.

VOLUNTEERS

Without our volunteers, there would be nothing to show. They are responsible for all we do. The company also recognises the importance of volunteering as part of its offering. We take steps to provide opportunities for our volunteers to acquire skills and when things settle down somewhat, we intend to explore further options. We offer opportunities to Duke of Edinburgh entrants for their service element, and we can see that the kitchen and the shop provide an opportunity to work in food or retail environments to get experience of such environments.

We subscribe to schemes which allow us to recognise our volunteers and a few each year are rewarded through the "Rooms for Reward" scheme.

While we have a great many volunteers on the books, we are still looking for more. In particular we have the option to open the Kitchen on Thursdays, and need volunteers for this. Most of you here are involved in some way already, but if you know people who would be interested in volunteering in any capacity, please let them know we are always looking for people and more than happy to provide opportunities.

FINANCES

This year has not been as good to us as last year. As you will see from the accounts we made a loss, and although this is larger than last year's, this is in part a result of the disposal of assets last year, as well as the late delivery of a grant, falling into 26/7 FY instead of that year as was expected.

The loss arises because we continue to subsidise the Kitchen, as we have since it opened. We have benefited from an uplift in income from our VAT deregistration.

The overall reduction in assets arises from the spending of restricted funding received in the previous year being spent in this year. This was primarily funding received to make some improvements to the Kitchen.

The area of grants has been a particular problem this year. There appears to be fewer grants available, a higher proportion are only available to charities, and where they are available to CICs, they are only for new projects and not to cover core costs. We have been able to explore some of these in relation to the new ideas we have for Memory Box, but as we are not in a position to start new projects in the area we have been most focussed on for the year, the Kitchen, most of these have not been applicable.

For the coming year, we are forecasting a further loss arising from our continued subsidy of the Kitchen. We have explored changing the business model, and some changes have now been implemented. As we are a volunteer led organisation, the opinions of our volunteers are important, and it has taken time and much consultation to get us to the current position of charging in the Kitchen. There will be further changes, because without these we will not be able to continue with this beyond the end of the 26/7 financial year. What these changes will be will only be known once we have consulted with our volunteers. As the year progresses, the finances will be reviewed and appropriate changes made.

We continue to seek other opportunities to add to the portfolio of enterprises, to replace previous ones we have had to close as their costs exceeded their revenue, and to improve the efficiency of our existing enterprises. The Kitchen has started to show some promise, but there is still more to do, and there appear to be opportunities with the shop that we can start to look at as we get more time.

One of the biggest constraints currently is the small size of the Board. We need more directors. If you know of anyone who is interested, or if any of you are interested, please come and speak to any of us.

CELEBRATIONS

We celebrated the 6th Anniversary of Memory Box Singers, and the 10th Anniversary of the Memory Box Café. Given the financial position and the diversion of the Board's resources to addressing this, it was felt inappropriate to expend money or effort on the 20th Anniversary celebrations of the company. It was decided that 21st celebrations would be better. As we have also been nominated for a Kings Award for Voluntary Service, by that stage we will know the outcome of the process and the celebrations can be combined, should this be appropriate.

SUMMARY

I said last year, that people are often surprised when they come to realise the breadth of services offered by the company, often not knowing that the parts are related. We try to get the message out on social media and in newsletters to our volunteers and members of the company. We are not always able to do this as regularly or as well as we would like. In part it is the problem with a large and diverse voluntary organisation. Most of the efforts are focussed on doing it, and we sometimes forget, or just don't have the time to tell people. So, please forgive us if we don't shout about is loudly enough, but if you want to join in and spread the message, please do come and volunteer. Our website and our social media would benefit from additional help, and if you have other skills, we can put those to good use for the benefit of the community.