

## Policy & Resources Committee

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**Title:** Report - External Organisations

**Date:** 27 February 2024

**a) Barns Centre** (Cllrs Baines and Dodds)

The next couple of years could be crucial for the Barn Centre. Turnover has been on a steady downward path for a decade, with fewer weddings and more meetings held on Zoom. The booking fees were raised in June last year, but as regular users often book a year in advance it takes a while to see the full benefit.

This financial year it looks as though the Centre will be making a small turnover loss of a few thousand, but the prognosis for next year is much more serious. The Trustees have responded by agreeing extra help for the managers so that they can devote more time to drumming up fresh business. We'll be keeping a close eye on this.

Tom Haley, one of the Church appointees, is standing down as a Trustee after serving for some six years; his contributions were always sensible and often witty, and he will be missed. The PCC will appoint a replacement for the next meeting.

The forthcoming change to CIO structure is progressing with surveys and valuations now carried out. The Centre will need two new 'independent' trustees, so if you know any public-spirited citizens who could manage four meetings a year, please let Cllr Baines or Mandy (Town Clerk) know.

**b) Citizens Advice** (vacancy)

*Nothing received as at 22/02/2024*

**c) Thame Business Forum** (Cllr Dyer)

At the latest meeting on 13th February, and at the request of members, Julia Blackwell from Oxfordshire MIND joined us for a short presentation and subsequent discussion on the subject of mental health in the workplace. Becky Reid also attended and introduced the Council's plans to implement a Hopper Bus, seeking representatives of the local business community to contribute their thoughts at the public session on Thursday.

**d) 21st Century Thame** (Cllr Fickling)

*Nothing received as at 22/02/2024*

**e) Welfare Trust** (Cllr Champken-Woods)

Nothing to report.

**f) Red Kite Family Centre** (Cllr Emery)

**Historical Context:**

The Red Kite Family Centre was established as a community run charity in 2017 the annual running costs were about £70k. These rose annually in line with inflation up until 2021.

Our aim is to 'be there for every family' with children under 5. Our reach in the local community is wide and targeted. Our main site is based in Thame, and we have a satellite site in Chinnor, with

outreach taking place in surrounding villages with poor accessibility and proximity to services. We support families' mental and physical wellbeing long term and target our services at families most in need. Our partnerships with local statutory services, charities and community groups are key to reaching these families. We work in close partnership with Oxfordshire Social Services and NHS health professionals, with Health Visitors and Midwives running sessions and surgeries at the Family Centre. We also link with other Early Years professionals in the town and other agencies such as Sharing Life Trust and Citizens Advice. We supported the setting up of the Community Larder that runs at Christchurch each Thursday afternoon.

**Update on financial position:**

- As the New Year starts, we look back at how far we have come in the space of 12 months. Our local businesses, professional partners, community groups and families rallied round us last year and avoided our potential closure in the summer.
- We have received the good news that OCC have re-reviewed their decision to end the rent holiday that we have been receiving and will continue this for another year.
- We continue with our current funding strategy, devised by the Trustees last year. We are in the process of revisiting and revising this along with our development strategy for the coming years.
- Grants have covered the largest portion of our income shortfall, yielding £70k for 2023/24.
- Business Sponsorship also offers a little over £10k towards our annual running costs for this year.
- Our membership scheme has raised almost £16k this fiscal year and is a credit to the families and individuals of Thame and their continued support of the family centre.

**Key financial figures:**

2022/23 Income - £64.5k

Budget for 2023-24 income £103k – total raised so far £135K

The annual running costs for the Family Centre remain just over £100k.

Current bank balances: revenue account £5.5k, contingency reserve £99k.

**Attendance:**

Between July 2023 and January 2024, we have welcomed 268 individual families to our sessions. We currently have 389 families registered with the centre as well. This is 84 new families registered for 2023 vs. 63 new families for 2022.

**Services & Events:**

We continue to offer our universal services to all families of children under 5. Since the last report we have also offered a number of additional events such as our Big Quiz fundraiser, our regular cinema sessions at the Players Theatre, our Christmas Messy Play in the Scout Hut and our Children’s Christmas Party at the Barns Centre. We participated with a group of artists for an event during the Thame Art Crawl also. We strive to continue to offer these free at the point of use.

**Community Engagement:**

Over the last few months, we have had a lot of engagement, particularly in the run up to Christmas, from several local groups including Thame & District Round Table, Thame Rotary, Christchurch, The Barns Centre and Carols around the Tree with the Thame Concert Band. We also continue to work closely with local professional teams and have received several referrals for new families from Midwifery team, Health Visitors and School early year teams.

**Grant Award:**

<b>Awarded Amount</b>	£10,000 – Lump Sum – Annual Award
<b>Intended Use</b>	Staffing Costs: £10,000 covers 15.85% of our annual staffing costs from 2022-2023.

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Total Staffing costs for 2022-23 were £63,085.  
Total Staffing Costs for 2021-22 were £59,465 (16.82% covered by the TTC award)  
Total Staffing Costs for 2020-2021 were £57,270 (17.46% covered by the TTC award)

Increase in staffing costs due to inflationary pay rises. Following our recent plea for more funding, and as part of the subsequent cost saving exercises, pay has been frozen at current levels for the next year.

Over the last 5 years its value in real terms has dropped because of inflationary pressures.

**g) Thame Senior Friendship Centre (Cllr Champken-Woods)**

Thame Senior Friendship Centre continues to experience various challenges since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our membership at TSFC has increased however, a number of daycentres/groups/cafes have either not re-opened or are struggling in relation to funding and rising costs. These are also issues pertinent to TSFC.

Last year, the Board of Trustees agreed to maintain the status quo with no increase in fees but I'm afraid this will have to be reviewed at the next Trustees meeting in March.

Since the last report we have had difficulty in recruiting a new deputy but as of 1st January we have a new Deputy Manager at TSFC who is a qualified nurse with many years of experience in the NHS.

Over the last financial year TSFC has been operating at a significant loss due to a 50% increase in rent, increased costs in utilities and food. The other factor which will have an impact is the rise in the National Living Wage as of 1st April. As of March 2023, all funding ceased from Oxfordshire County Council.

The "Memories" dementia café which operates out of the Snooker Club on a Monday morning secured a grant for 2022/23 from The Connected Communities Fund distributed by OCVA. However, just recently we have seen a fall in the number of members attending which is causing some concern. It has become apparent just recently that there is some misinformation circulating in that the dementia café is no longer open on a Monday and has changed to a Friday morning. If anyone should hear rumours circulating the Board of Trustees would appreciate it if you could quash the rumours as they are untrue. Unfortunately, this is not our first encounter of interference. The monthly webinars with the Oxfordshire Association of Care Providers which allowed us all to keep abreast of a constantly changing situation has now ceased due to lack of numbers attending but TSFC continues to receive regular updates including those on safeguarding.

TSFC continues to take part in the "Ageing Well" subgroup of BOB VCSE which meets quarterly. We have also taken part in BOB qualitative research on VCSE workforce which indicates that within Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and West Berkshire there are approximately 7,500 registered charities, 44,500 employees, 162,300 volunteers and is worth around 2.1 billion.

We are currently in the process of updating our website for TSFC and Dementia café plus revising our leaflets.

Undoubtedly, TSFC will have some hard times ahead and we are looking for new trustees to join with innovative ideas. TSFC continues to be a friendly and welcoming environment for all concerned and will continue to work closely with other agencies and facilities, so we continue to address the issues facing the older person within our communities.

If TSFC fails to engage and secure funding going forward from the local community, businesses, grants and fundraising, then it is entirely possible that it will not be a viable charitable organisation in approximately 3 years.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Trustees for their support during some difficult and challenging times, but most importantly Kate our Manager and Karen our new Deputy Manager, and all our volunteers for their tireless efforts during these difficult times.

I would also like to thank the cricket club for their continued support, the Snooker Club for allowing the dementia café to expand to support an increasing number of individuals, families/carers. Thank you also to Thame Town Council and Oxfordshire County Council for their continued support.

I would like to ask if anyone hears of misinformation about TSFC/Dementia Café or inflammatory comments to please let us know or at least direct people to those who can answer any questions.

**h) Thame Youth Memorial Trust (Cllr Dyer)**

All focus is now on the renovations to the Youth Memorial Garden, which is scheduled to commence in mid-April and for which funding is essentially in place with just one small grant application awaiting resolution.

**i) Thame Youth Projects Group (Cllr Bretherton)**

There is little to say about the Youth Projects group. There has not been a meeting with the Architects and everything regarding the new building is in the hands of TTC.