

Chair's Notes
Trustee Residential OWD
9th-11th Feb 2024

Trustees gathered at Othona West Dorset in lovely sunshine after a long period of rain. Clare Gough was unable to attend until Sunday morning because of health reasons (nothing too serious) and Jane Pearse the new vice-chair stepped up at short notice to chair the weekend, alongside Michael Hunt the Community Treasurer.

The evening worship was led by the West Dorset team. We were pleased to welcome Mark Ringrose as a new Trustee/Director. Mark will be a Link Trustee for Othona Bradwell and brings a wealth of knowledge about financial business modeling, as well as being a long time and frequent visitor to Othona Bradwell.

The business of Saturday started with reports from both centres. On this occasion centre managers were invited to submit their reports in the form of a draft strategic planning document, outlining the developments that they would like to see in the short to medium term.

Financial sustainability, care of the land, maintenance of the buildings and improvements to staff accommodation were high on the agenda for both centres. Othona Bradwell will be fundraising to recover the yurts (£25,000) and Othona West Dorset will be fundraising (£80,000) to extend into the roof of the Lodge to make another unit of self contained accommodation, this project will also improve fire safety of the accommodation and replace the gas bottle heating system with an air source heat pump.

Michael Hunt presented a lot of information about the financial performance of the centres, in brief Bradwell are making a profit, OWD are set to break even and the Trust will return a deficit due to less income from investments and the depreciation of the recent investments in the buildings and plant at both centres.

Much of the afternoon was spent on strategic analysis of the Charity. Thinking about the values of The Othona Community and what in very high level, general terms, we want to achieve. We did a quick SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) and started to make a strategic plan for the short and medium term. The priorities for this year are to continue with the programme of maintenance and improvements to the buildings and land and to look for ways to improve the staff accommodation on both sites. It is felt that a lack of self contained accommodation is hampering the recruitment of resident, core, staff.

We heard about the continued progress being made in fire safety at both centres and received the safeguarding report. John Smith presented his final report on the built assets at both centres. He completed the work for which he was recruited to the Board and stood down as a Trustee at the end of the weekend. We thanked him for his contributions and wished him well with his ongoing work for Hostage International in the US and UK.

Following the Membership survey that Phil Martin undertook last year, Jane Pearse is heading up a working group looking at membership of Othona, an initial meeting has taken place & it is hoped recommendations will be made in due course.

The website rebuild project continues led by Warren Douglas. Mark Ringrose has joined this working group.

The Sunday morning Chapel service was led by Chris Jones. We were pleased that Clare Gough was able to join us.

We agreed that the key priorities for the year are to: finish the website rebuild, support the centres as they fund raise for recovering the yurts and improve staff accommodation and to investigate ways of modernising and streamlining the governance structure of the charity.

There will also be a small working group considering how to grow and develop our sense of community, belonging and involvement.

CG 12.02.2024