



Eastcott Community Organisation Annual Report 2019/20

Covering the period April 2019-March 2020

Our Mission:

To enhance the life of the Eastcott Community through the provision of events, activities and opportunities.

Our Vision:

To be a successful and innovative organisation, managing a vibrant and inclusive community resource.

Our story: Since Eastcott Community Organisation became a constituted group in February 2013, we have organised hundreds of community events and activities, to bring the community together and increase opportunities for residents.

In May 2014 we took over community management of Savernake Street Social Hall, with the vision to create a community hub for us all to enjoy. We are a registered charity and Charitable Incorporated Organisation (Registered Charity number 1160538).

Public benefit

We are mindful of our responsibility to run our charity in a way that is beneficial to the public; and to demonstrate this is accordance with the Charities Act 2011.

1. There must be an identifiable benefit or benefits
2. The benefit must be to the public – or a section of the public

Our mission and aims support our constitutional objectives to increase opportunities for people in our area of benefit, and this is a constant reference point for all our activities.

There are two aspects to our activity;

1. Managing a community resource
2. Organising community events and activities.

We believe that our activities this year have enabled us to follow our **mission**, by increasing opportunities for local residents to:

- hire out the hall at reasonable rates for children's parties and other activities
- attend a range of classes and activities close to home
- experience new and innovative events and activities, often at low cost to participants due to grants or other funds.

MANAGING A COMMUNITY RESOURCE:

The number of hire groups have varied throughout the year but was at 38 groups in March 2020, the highest ever. There is a varied programme of activity offered by charities and individuals including Tai Chi, Reading Group, Eastcott Writers Group, U3A Art, Guitar, Ukulele, Current Affairs and Welsh Language, Jack and Jill Toddlers, Tae Kwon Do, prenatal yoga, Birth Preparation Classes, parent and baby yoga, Bollywood dancing, Zumba, Sing and Sign, Sling Swing, a self-help group, and a faith group. The centre is hired for children's birthday parties, musical afternoons, ad-hoc groups, meetings and fundraisers.

We have made some improvements this year including sensor lighting, replacing part of the flooring, and creating a doorway through to a garden space. This was funded by South Swindon Parish Council.

ORGANISING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES:

We have maintained a busy programme of community events throughout the year. Our events have been consistently well-attended, involving hundreds of residents.

Highlights of 2019/20 have included:

- The second Eastcott Window Wanderland held in March 2020 – involving over 200 window makers creating a magical illuminated walking trail for all the community to enjoy. Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and South Swindon Parish Council, this was a huge success, with overwhelming support for it to happen again.
- The Eco Fest held in April 2019 with Swindon Climate Action Network, attracting 700+ visitors over the 6 hour event
- The Big Lunch and Neighbourhood Party in June 2019, which had live music, a circus act and circus skills.
- The incredibly popular Repair Café & Free Shops, which have included live music thanks to the generosity of local musicians, and 'Art for all' activity.
- The unveiling of a plaque commemorating the gift of land on which the community centre sits from James 'Raggy' Powell in 1918. The plaque, created from recycled metal by local stonemason Toby Robson, was formally unveiled by Kevin Parry, the Mayor of Swindon, at our Repair Café and Free Shop in March 2020.

FINANCE:

Funding and support

We have two main income streams – **grant funding/fundraising** for events, activities, training and running costs; and **revenue from hiring** out the community centre.

Grant funding:

We would like to thank our funders for 2019/20 activity: Swindon South Central Parish, Wiltshire Community Foundation and National Lottery Community Fund. We would also like to thank the Midcounties Cooperative for funds provided through Swindon Climate Action Network to enable the Eco Fest 2019 to take place and be free to attend.

Revenue from hirers:

We would like to thank all our hirers for supporting a community resource and ensuring that the project is viable and has a sustainable future.

Our accounts for 2019/20 show a £3113 (11%) decrease on hire income against the previous year 2018/19. The previous year was an exceptional year showing an increase of £7136 (34%) on 2017/18. Against the year 2017/18 the hire income for 2019/20 shows an increase of £4023 (19%)

The net deficit for 2019/20 of £7121 is due to the increased costs in cleaning and maintenance/repairs. We agreed not to increase hire prices this year, though our costs continue to increase, and this may be a consideration for the future.

Reserves policy

- six months running costs for the centre (£1250 x 6), plus
- £1000 unrestricted funds for events/activities

Our reserves were affected by the need for asbestos removal while renovation work was undertaken in autumn 2019.

COMMITTEE AND STAFFING

At our AGM in October 2019, seven trustees joined the volunteer board. Six were re-appointments, one trustee resigned and there was one new trustee appointment. We conclude our current reporting period with seven trustees.

Our trustees' experience includes finance, charity work, social work, catering, marketing, administration, environmental issues and engineering.

Chair: Caroline Davies-Khan

Vice-Chair: Anna Smart

Secretary: Rebecca Campbell

Treasurer: Anne Stone

Health and Safety Officer: Steve Russell

Trustees:

Brian Davidson (until December 2019)

Laura Holmes

Lauren Wallis

Mutsai Hove-Bird (to May 2019).

Our committee is appointed in line with our constitution and has met monthly on Mondays 7.30 – 9pm.

We have retained two part time positions: A Community Centre Administrator and Events Coordinator.

We use a cleaning company to clean the building.

We have continued to engage a gardening company to tidy up the flower beds around the site monthly.

Our biggest identified risk continues to be not having enough trustees – with the right skills – to manage the project. We recognise that the project is broad and requires a variety of skills. Building on best practice documents, we continue to advertise for new trustees with skills in GDPR/IT, fundraising, and organisational sustainability, and hope that this will lead to interest.

VOLUNTEERS

There are a steady number of volunteers involved with the centre.

Around 10 residents deliver our newsletters every 2 months, and others help at events or with specific activities.

Volunteers open and close the centre. We are very grateful to all our volunteers – without them, the project would not be possible.

Our challenge for the future year continues to be to recruit and retain further volunteers, especially those who can help with the operational activity of an increasingly busy community facility.

FINDING OUT WHAT OUR COMMUNITY WANTS

This year we have conducted three surveys which have directly influenced our plans for 2020 and beyond:

- Eastcott Window Wanderland – nearly 200 survey responses to the 2020 event, with an overwhelming support for the event to happen again.
- A general feedback survey in 2019 – 46 responses to postcards and online survey. We are incorporating these responses into future planning, and have worked with other organisations to fulfil the interests of our community including a litterpick.

PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION

We produce 2500 newsletters every two months and these are delivered by residents to local households and distributed via libraries and other venues such as the local post office. To lessen workload for our trustees and volunteers, the newsletter is now designed by a graphic designer, and some newsletters are delivered by a distributor.

We have been fortunate that our news has appeared regularly in the Swindon Advertiser and Link magazine. We maintain a Facebook page with over 1900 followers and our hirers use a joint bookings/ promotional website thanks to funding from Wiltshire and Swindon Community Foundation. We have a Twitter account.

CHANGE OF NAME

We have changed the name of the community centre from Savernake Street Social Hall to Eastcott Community Centre, as we believe this represents our area better.

INCREASE IN STREETS IN AREA OF BENEFIT

We have added 14 streets to our area of benefit in recognition that they are within 'Eastcott Ward'.

THE IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS

Our community centre closed on 18 March 2020 due to the impact of and government guidance around coronavirus. We will focus on pausing contracts and considering our financial position to ensure that we have sufficient monies to re-open when it is safe to do so.

THE FUTURE

We continue to learn, grow, and respond to interest within the community.

In the year ahead we plan to:

- Take all possible measures to ensure that we are able to **re-open when the Coronavirus restrictions are lifted.**
- **Continue to proceed towards a lease** to improve our organisational security and ability to access funding.
- Continue discussions about **improvements to the building**
- Offer **innovative community activities** when it is safe to do so, and within relevant Coronavirus guidelines.
- Continue to **advertise for trustees and volunteers** as appropriate during a period of reduced activity
- **Buy-in specialist help** where appropriate

Thank you to the following for help this year :

The **members of our community** who have delivered newsletters, helped at events, taken amazing photos, attended events, hired the centre, and supported us.

Our staff: Jo and Anish

Our centre and event volunteers

Our funders: National Lottery Community Fund, Wiltshire Community Foundation and Swindon Central Parish for grants received.

Swindon Climate Action Network for collaborating with us to run an amazing Eco Fest.

All who organise and volunteer at the Repair Café and Free Shop, including the musicians who have contributed their time and talent.

Annual report approved by committee at a meeting held on 14 September 2020, revisions agreed 12 October 2020 and 30 November 2020