

AGM Secretary's Report 2013

Introduction:

We have had an eventful period since the last AGM and feel we have turned a corner. The future looks more certain though we can never become complacent especially in these difficult times when money is hard to come by.

A huge amount of credit is due to our staff for all their support which has allowed us to put the business on a more secure footing.

We have come through a period of transition, particularly with our Childcare staff. This period was challenging but we are grateful to our staff for soldiering on and doing their best. We are at last in a stable position and are pleased to say that all wage cuts and reduced hours have been reversed.

A number of very positive things have happened since the last AGM, particularly the renovation of our Childcare Service. We also had a very successful Christmas Variety Show and a fabulous Valentine's Tea Dance. Mary and Anna Marie will talk to you about these.

Membership: This year we decided to waive the fee for renewal of membership of Ardfert Community Council Ltd. as it was less than a year since those members joined up. New membership for this year was €5 and that is likely to be the case next year. Our plan for the future is that membership will be open in January and our AGM will be in February.

Childcare:

Renovations: Last Spring we received a government grant of €29,800 which allowed us to renovate and improve our childcare service. Our engineer, Jim Fitzgerald, managed the tendering process on our behalf and he selected David McElligott who came in with the lowest quote. The work took place in August of last year. We are delighted with all that was accomplished with that grant and feel we got excellent value for money. When POBAL came to inspect the work carried out they were very impressed and remarked on how much we had achieved with the money we received. In an effort to stretch the money to the last we did all the painting ourselves. We must particularly thank Bernie Slattery for allowing us to create a fire escape into the garden of her mother's home which allowed us to remove the fire escape route through the crèche thereby creating more space for the children.

Our staff continue to work hard at constantly improving our childcare service so as to make it the best it can be. With the help and guidance of Kerry County Childcare Committee we recruited a new childcare manager. Tara O'Halloran was appointed manager and started in her new role last month.

A major difficulty for us at the moment is filling the C.E. vacancies in the crèche. Due to changes introduced by the Government regarding payments for people working on these schemes many individuals find that they cannot afford to go on the schemes. This has resulted in us finding it extremely difficult to fill these positions. We're not sure what we can do about this but if this continues to be a problem it will impact our service.

At the AGM in June I mentioned we were exploring the possibility of operating an After School Club in Fenit. In the end there was insufficient demand to go ahead with that project.

Centre: The Centre continues to be a busy place with a wide range of groups using our facilities. A number of new groups have started since Sept like Weight Watchers, Fit Kids, Dancing with Joe Burkett. I'm happy to say that our more established users remain with us.

We are constantly under pressure with regard to adequate storage space and would welcome any ideas you might have that could help us address this problem.

The Village Green: Last year Trevor Giles made contact with us saying he wanted to hand over his part of the Village Green to the Community Council for the people of Ardfert. We are making progress, though very slowly. Our engineer, Jim Fitzgerald, carried out a survey of the Green to establish which areas were held by Mr Giles. That survey is with our solicitor now. We feel it's in the best interests of the community that we acquire the Green but there will be professional costs relating to the transfer of the Green to the community Council.

Collaborations/Forging Community Links: We have been working together with different groups in what we believe to be the best interests of the community. Last Spring we took part in the National Spring Clean with the Tidy Towns Committee and we plan to do that again next month. We have been collaborating with a group which plans to re-varnish the equipment in the Playground. This group was able to access Kerry County Council funds using our company structures.

As you probably know a new group was formed to implement the action plan of the Ardfert Village Design Plan, this group is called the Ardfert Development Association. The community council is willing to assist this group in any way we can. We will be working with the ADA on the planned Mass at the Cathedral for St Brendan's Day, Thursday May 16th.

Michael Connolly, KCC archaeologist is co-ordinating a project for the erection of signs in historic graveyards. Local groups or committees need to pay €100 towards each sign in order to unlock Leader funding for the project. The Community Council will pay the “huge” sum of €100 and the ADA are going to take on this project.

Tightening structures: Though financially we are in a better position than we were last year we continue to carefully monitor spending and, thanks to Angela, we have much tighter structures in place to track all income and spending. Angela will give you greater details on our financial position.

We have also worked at having the proper policies and procedures in place. We developed a parents’ handbook for last Sept which includes all the childcare policies and procedures and more recently employed a consultant to update the Health and Safety document for the Centre.

Deeds: While doing some house-keeping we discovered that the Deeds for the Community Centre were missing. Our solicitor, Katie McCarthy, has explored many avenues in an effort to locate them. She checked with the former solicitor, the banks and wrote to the previous Secretary, Eileen Comerford who suggested Tadgh Kennedy may have had them. I made contact with Mr Kennedy’s family and they were very kind and helpful but we have failed to find the deeds. So, it’s back to Katie now to explore further avenues. All this will most likely mean that we will have higher professional fees for this year.

Grants: We applied for and got a grant to carry out an energy audit as the cost of heating and lighting the Centre is huge. We received the energy audit report 2 weeks ago and will be working on the recommendations in the coming months.

We also were successful in our application to the Sports Capital Grant. We have provisionally been awarded €7057 and will use this grant to buy new treadmills for the gym. We also received a grant of €2000 from Community Foundation Ireland.

We continue to receive on-going grants from Pobal and the HSE. The Pobal funding supports us in running the childcare service and the HSE funding supports the running of the Senior’s Group who meet here every Tuesday.

Conclusion: By and large we are happy with what has been achieved in the last year and will continue to do our best for the Community Centre and the Community as a whole.

I can e-mail a copy of my report to anyone who may like one.

Thank you for your attention.

Barbara O’Grady