

Secretary's report for AGM 2014 on 06/02/14

Introduction

The current board are now 2 and ½ years in position and feel the Community Centre is in a stable position. Our continued emphasis is on improving the Centre for the community and staff. A huge amount of credit is due to our staff their on-going support which has allowed us to improve the Centre and put the business on a more secure footing.

Volunteers

On behalf of the board I must acknowledge the support we receive from those who have volunteered their time and talents to the Centre to run events such as the tea dances and our weekly bingo. It would be very difficult to run these events without their help. Thank you very much to those individuals, we really do appreciate your assistance.

Childcare

Almost exactly one year ago we appointed a new childcare manager, Tara O'Halloran. Prior to her appointment there had been a considerable amount of upheaval. Great credit is due to Tara for all she has achieved in a year. The childcare facility has been transformed beyond recognition in the last few years. We changed the name of our service in June of last year from Ardfert Community Childcare to Little Voyagers Childcare. On the 2nd of June 2013 we held an open day to celebrate the launch of our newly named service as well as a new website and Facebook page for Little Voyagers. We also received a €3000 grant from the Childcare Capital Programme 2013 which was spent on furniture and equipment for the crèche, pre-school and ASC. We carried out work on the meeting room to make it a warmer, brighter and more pleasant space. Our After School Club takes place in this room and the children really like it.

The outdoor play area in Little Voyagers is small so with assistance from Minister Jimmy Deenihan we approached the OPW seeking access to the enclosed green area across the road from the Centre. The OPW gave us permission to use this space last summer. We are inspected annually by the HSE so we met with them to seek approval to use this space as an outdoor play area for the children in our service. We are still awaiting a response from them.

A continuing major difficulty for us is filling the C.E. vacancies in the crèche. Failure to fill these positions has resulted in an increase in our staffing costs. Filling these positions is a big problem for all community childcare services. Significant changes have been made to the scheme recently in an effort to attract more applicants. We hope these changes result in us being able to fill these vacancies.

Renovations

Our ESB bill in the Centre has been very high and a source of concern so in spring of last year we applied to NEKD for a grant to carry out an energy audit. Having received the report of the energy audit we then applied again to NEKD in September for a grant to improve the insulation, heating and lighting in the Centre using the energy audit report to support our grant application. We were successful in our application and carried out work to improve the insulation, heating and lighting in the Centre. The offices and meeting room were dry-lined and consequently needed to be re-decorated. We took this opportunity to completely re-vamp both areas and are very pleased with the result.

Grants

We also received a sports capital grant of €7000 from the Dept. of Transport, tourism and sport which allowed us to buy new equipment for the gym.

Seniors

Ardfert/Kilmoyley Senior Citizens Group continues to meet every Tuesday in the Community centre and is open to all and happy to see new people join. The group is going strong and have increased their male members in the last year. An open day was held in Oct with a view to increasing members. Mass was held in the Centre that day and a free dinner served to all who attended. Great credit is due to the Seniors' committee who give of their time so generously.

Village Green

At last year's AGM I mentioned that Trevor Giles wanted to hand over his part of the Village Green to the Community Council for the people of Ardfert. We are in the final stages of this process but there remain a few issues that need to be ironed out.

Collaborations/Forging Community Links: We have been working together with different groups in what we believe to be the best interests of the community. For the second year in a row we took part in the National Spring Clean with the Tidy Towns Committee last April and we hope that this is an annual event. During last summer we collaborated with a group to facilitate the re-varnishing of the equipment in the Playground.

The highlight of last year was the Mass at the Cathedral for St Brendan's Day, Thursday May 16th. We were glad to support this event. The Community Centre was opened to all after the Mass where refreshments were served. There was also an exhibition in the hall. This event was a huge success and shows what can be achieved when a community works together.

Website

During the past year we did significant work under the expertise of Angela Stack to revamp our website and create a Facebook page. We have been in discussions with the ADA with a view to having just one website for the village. These discussions are on-going.

Thank you for your attention.

Barbara O'Grady

Secretary

Ardfert Community Council Ltd.