

Secretary's report for AGM 2015 on 12/03/15

INTRODUCTION

I am reporting on the period 1st Oct 2013-30th Sept 2014. For the Board our continued emphasis is on improving the Centre and the services we provide for the community. In the previous financial year we made a profit so we decided to prioritise investment in the Centre during this period, the details of which I'll outline in a moment. A huge amount of credit is due to our staff their on-going support which has allowed us to improve the Centre and the services we provide to the Community.

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.

IMPROVING THE CENTRE

I mentioned earlier that we prioritised investing in the Centre and improving it during 2013/2014.

RENOVATIONS

Our ESB bill in the Centre had been very high and a source of concern so in spring of 2013 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 2013 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.

Painting of Centre: The whole Centre was painted starting with the painting of the hall. We then went on to paint the entrance hall, crèche and the outside of the Centre. We employed a contractor to do this job rather than do it in-house to minimise disruption to the Centre as a lot of the work was done in the evenings and weekends. Also our C.E. staff are not insured to do work up high and therefore would not have been allowed to do much of the work.

Tiling of entrance hall: The entrance hall was tiled during the Easter holidays last year.

Kitchenette presses: We had presses installed in the kitchenette upstairs so as to provide adequate storage for the pre-school.

Curtain to divide hall: We made a decision to purchase a curtain (which will appear in next year's accounts). The curtain allows the hall to be divided in two. The benefits are two-fold; 2 groups can use the hall at the same time and the hall is made cosier for the Seniors when they use it each

Tuesday. They have reported that they feel warmer and have a greater sense of privacy since the curtain was erected.

New board table: We bought a new board table second-hand from Walter Lyons. It has been very useful for groups meeting in the Centre and for the children doing their homework in our after school club. We had hoped to buy some nice, new chairs bought have since decided not to given our current budgetary constraints.

STORAGE

Adequate storage space has always been an issue for us. After painting the hall were struck by how nice it looked when the stage wasn't stored against the walls in the hall. We approached Ardfert Furniture to see if they would allow us store our stage in their premises and they very kindly said yes. We also approached Willy Moore to see would he allow us store furniture/equipment we require infrequently in a shed of his. This freed up a lot of storage space in the Centre which makes it easier to keep the place looking well. We'd like to express our thanks to Ardfert Furniture and Willy Moore.

RECYCLING

In an effort to become more environmentally friendly and to minimise our refuse bill we decided to put in place measures to improve the amount recycled in the Centre. We recognized that recycling in the Centre had been very haphazard. With the support of our staff we established a proper recycling system with separate bins and signage to indicate to Centre users which bin to use.

MONITORING COSTS

We have also put in place a number of systems to monitor energy and water usage. Pat takes meter readings weekly and sends this information to the Board. This allows us to identify potential problems early and put in place remedial measures. As a result of this monitoring and the work undertaken to improve the insulation, heating and lighting in the Centre our energy costs have been reduced greatly.

IMPROVING SERVICE

As well as improving the Centre for the community we are very conscious of the need to provide a good quality service to all. We particularly focused on our lawn cutting and DIY service with a view to increasing our customers by improving and marketing the service and were successful in this and hope to improve on this during the coming months. We continue to focus on this area to ensure we deliver a quality service that pleases our customers and that we can be proud of.

Use of toilets by tourists: The toilets in the Centre are used by tourists, particularly those on bus tours visiting the cathedral. This raises child protection issues for us problems. Ideally the village would have public toilets and it is something we'd like to see progressed.

GREEN SPACES

Village Green: Last year I mentioned that we were in the process of the village green being transferred by Trevor Giles to Ardfert Community Council Ltd. Progress has been very slow. The

current position is that maps have been drawn up and we are corresponding with Kerry Co. Council re: transferring all areas outside the Green (eg footpaths etc.) to them.

CHILDCARE

Outdoor play area: As I mentioned at last year's AGM 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 in the Summer of 2013. 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. They granted us approval. It isn't ideal having this space across the road but it is better than nothing and is a lovely play area on a fine day.

New uniform: The staff expressed a desire to change their uniform so that everyone would wear the same colour and the Little Voyagers logo would be on it. It was felt this would improve the professional look of the staff. We agreed to this and financially supported the purchase of new uniforms.

CE workers: 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 though there is also talk of CE childcare participants no longer being counted as staff members as they will be unqualified staff. If this is the case then are staffing cost will remain high.

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. A number of tea-dances were organised and have proved to be very popular. Great credit is due to the Seniors' committee who give of their time so generously.

WEBSITE

During the past year we did significant work under the expertise of Angela Stack to revamp our websites and create Facebook pages. We had been in discussions with the ADA with a view to having just one website for the village but ultimately decided to have separate websites and facebook pages. We have 2 websites and 2 FB pages; one for the Centre and one for little Voyagers Childcare. We changed the domain name for the Centre from Ardfert.com to ardfertcommunitycentre.com. We held on to Ardfert.com but don't use it. There is a separate website for the village at Ardfert.ie.

COLLABORATIONS/FORGING COMMUNITY LINKS

We as a board feel it's very important that groups and organisations in Ardfert support one another so we do our best to help where we can.

Harvest Cycle: Last September Ardfert National School held a cycle as a fundraiser. We supported them by giving them Walnut Grove Field for parking. Also a number of our staff were very involved helping out on the day.

Variety show: A new group in the area is Ardfert Community First Responders. They held a concert at Christmas here in the Centre as a fundraiser. We did our best to support this fundraiser.

These events were a huge success and shows what can be achieved when a community works together.

Thank you for your attention.

Barbara O'Grady

Secretary

Ardfert Community Council Ltd.