FPCA AGM Chair’s report.

March 2021

Our last AGM was belatedly held in November due to the initial Covid-19 wave a year ago. For this year we felt that we should go ahead with our normal AGM in March.

The period of time from November until now has been a relatively quiet one for the FPCA. As the situation with the pandemic continued to change and deteriorate we took a cautious approach to what we could and couldn’t put on.

Our biggest project has been the over-60s lunch club on Fridays, where Sara and Rachel provide meals for anyone in need. Meals are prepared on-site, and delivered to those who request it by a group of volunteers. Around 36 meals are prepared each week, making this one of out most important ventures to support our community during these times. Funding has been most recently provided by The Oxford Charity, with support from The Oxford Food Hub and Oxford City Farm who provide ingredients, as well as regular much-appreciated donations from Hamblin Bread (and we’ve even had desserts from Trinity College).

Although the Centre has been closed for the majority of the time since our last AGM, we were able to put on events when we were able to.

In November there was a live benefit performance over Zoom by famous folk singer and Oxford resident Peggy Seeger. The event raised over £600 for the FPCA.

Before Christmas there was an evening of Christmas songs. Making full use of the garden at the back of the Centre, we held a night of socially-distanced festive music and food, which provided a much-needed social gathering and bringing together of the community, with full safety in mind.

We also held an online Cheese and Wine tasting evening, where 36 people joined Jon Flint for an informative and hilarious evening of drink and cheese over Zoom.

The Community Centre has also been open once a week for Community Acupuncture, a regular service offered to the community by a local Florence Park resident. This service provides vital and affordable treatment for members of our community, and although we did pause this service during the peak of the pandemic, we felt that it should continue as soon as possible.

Earlier this year saw the launch of the Florence Park Gardening Club. Currently held online, it has proven to be a popular event that is attended by members from within and outside our community. The seed swap outside the Community Centre has been a big success. I would like to thank Rob for his work on this.

We continue to be hugely appreciative and grateful to our local community for their generous donations. This is higher than it ever has been, with over £500 raised from membership renewal alone. We have been able to survive the last year because of the support shown to us.

We would also like to thank Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council for their support grants. This week we were very excited to find out that both councils have provided funding for wooden gazebos to be used in our garden space. These will allow us to put on outdoor events and activities, regardless of the weather. We do need people to help us put it up though– if you would like to help or know people who could, please do get in touch.

Like many organisations we are looking forward to the future with huge excitement as the day when we are able to open again gets closer. Current government guidelines set out dates for when various types of activities are allowed to happen. We are being cautious and have not made any plans yet, bearing in mind that the situation could change. For that reason we haven’t outlined a timetable yet, but we will be doing this very shortly. The addition of our gazebo offers up exciting opportunities for outdoor events, allowing us to use the fantastic garden space to its full potential.

This year the annual pantomime has been replaced by upcoming Winter Show: Sleeping Beauty Dream Project – a collaboration between the FPCA and Tangled Webb productions. As part of this we have just had a fundraising Storytelling event run by Jackie Singer, Adele Moss, & Juliet Rayment which saw participation from 18 households, over 40 people including lots of children, and raised over £110.

Another event coming soon is the Connect OX4 venture - a new opportunity for people who live alone or feel alone sometimes to get together at the Community centre. We are working hard at reaching parts of our community who we may not have reached before.

Last of all, I would like extend thank yous to the following for their support: to our local councillor David Henwood, to our county councillor John Sanders. To Sara Reevell, our Centre Manager whose hard work and creative input is responsible for so much of our success. I would also like to thank departing committee member Jeff Bowersox, who is stepping down from the role of membership secretary. Jeff has put in a huge amount of work for the Association, and his presence will be missed. To our current committee members – it has been particularly gratifying to see many new trustees joining, as well as others who have re-joined, steering the Association into new directions. To Alan Brown, Jon Flint, and all Social Club committee. To Jane Gallagher for her work and support with the Newsletter. A special thank you to all the volunteers who have given their time and effort – we are extremely grateful to you all. And to all our supporters and funders!

And a reminder that we are always happy to have new Trustees. If you would like to get involved with the running of the Community Association, do get in touch. We are particularly looking to fill the roles of secretary and treasurer. Being a trustee is a great way not only to get involved with what we do, but also to develop your skills and get experience in charity work, community engagement and outreach, and take on responsibility.